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The failed Dieppe raid of 19 August 1942 resulted in over 4,800 British and Canadian killed, wounded, or captured. Not surprisingly, in the immediate aftermath many who were involved in the planning of the raid were busy either distancing themselves from the operation or attempting to invent success in order to rationalize the losses. After D-Day, many attempted to re-pronounce Dieppe a success; the lessons from which allegedly led to victory at Normandy. However, the facts do not bear this out; the official lessons learned from the raid were well known beforehand, or so obvious that they should have been considered in the plan to begin with. While some good did come of the operation in terms of meeting its strategic aims, it would be incorrect to state that the impact of Dieppe was felt in any significant way at Normandy.

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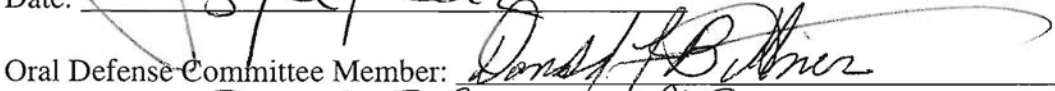
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Executive Summary

Title: Operation JUBILEE: Dieppe 1942- The Myth of Retro-Active Success

Author: Major Corey Frederickson, PPCLI, Canadian Army

Thesis: The official lessons learned from Operation JUBILEE were not new and therefore not lessons learned at all. The claims that the failure of Dieppe paved the way for the successes of D-Day are false, and are instead unsubstantiated assertions made in order to justify the sacrifices of so many men.

Discussion: The failed Dieppe raid of 19 August 1942 resulted in over 4,800 British and Canadian killed, wounded, or captured. Not surprisingly, in the immediate aftermath many who were involved in the planning of the raid were busy either distancing themselves from the operation or attempting to invent success in order to rationalize the losses. After D-Day, many attempted to re-pronounce Dieppe a success; the lessons from which allegedly led to victory at Normandy. However, the facts do not bear this out; the official lessons learned from the raid were well known beforehand, or so obvious that they should have been considered in the plan to begin with. While some good did come of the operation in terms of meeting its strategic aims, it would be incorrect to state that the impact of Dieppe was felt in any significant way at Normandy.

Conclusion: The link between the failure of Dieppe and the successes on D-Day is tenuous at best. There is no evidence to suggest that D-Day would have been any less of a success if the Dieppe raid had not occurred.

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Preface

As a Canadian Army officer, Dieppe has always held a special place in my heart. Even long before I enrolled in the Canadian Forces, I was led to believe by a succession of high school history teachers and low budget dramatic reenactments that the Dieppe raid was a gallant tragedy; one in which the Canadians were hard done by the British, but one that nevertheless bore fruit - a silver lining to the blood red beach. Even my subsequent time in the military did little to dispel these opinions. Sadly, I am ashamed to admit that I was woefully ill informed of the details surrounding the raid, and therefore of the raid itself.

It was not until I selected Dieppe for my Joint Campaign Analysis that my eyes began to open. Although I was only researching the causes of the raid's failure, I started to question the assertions that came after the raid – that the lessons learned at Dieppe led the way to subsequent successes on D-Day, assertions that I had always assumed to be true. I began to question what they were saying and to look for other information to either support or refute these claims. This eventually led me down the path to realization that the Dieppe lessons learned were really not lessons learned at all; they were either lessons previously learned or of such an obvious nature that they should never have needed learning at all, especially at the cost of so many lives. This train of thought eventually led to this paper.

I would like to thank my mentor, Dr. Gordon for his very sage advice and patience as I talked through my thought process; he always understood what I was saying even if I did not. I would also like to thank my dogs. As oddly as that sounds, as much as I bemoaned having to take them out for the occasional walk, it always allowed me the time to clear my head and contemplate what it was I was thinking.

Finally, most of all I would like to thank my wife, Summer. Always patient as I locked myself away in my office, she was nevertheless more than happy to review my work and act as a sounding board whenever I needed help. In the end I am pretty sure that I convinced her that my arguments are sound. Believe me, that is no easy task.

Introduction

In retrospect, Dieppe looks so recklessly hare-brained an enterprise that it is difficult to reconstruct the official state of mind which gave it birth and drove it forward.¹

--John Keegan (1982)

The disastrous Dieppe raid of 19 August 1942 was a defining moment in Canadian history, and not just Canadian military history, but of the history of the Canadian Nation. Well over 3000 Canadian soldiers were killed, wounded, or captured so it should come as no surprise that in spite of the seven decades that have followed there remains much debate about the factors surrounding the raid. Who called for the raid in the first place? Who was responsible for its planning? Who gave the order for the go ahead? Why did it fail? Did it fail? Unique among a plethora of military activities of the past two hundred years, Dieppe remains an operation shrouded in conjecture and mystery.

Conventional wisdom, due in no small part to the assertions in classroom textbooks in Canadian schools, has led many to believe that the failure at Dieppe somehow paved the way for the great successes that were to come almost two years later with Operation NEPTUNE.² In justifying this stance, many have pointed to the lessons learned from the Dieppe operation and claimed that it was in fact these lessons that allowed the Allies to triumphantly re-enter Europe in 1944; one of such claims even going so far as to assert that for every life lost at Dieppe, ten were preserved on D-Day.³ Be that as it may, this paper will argue that the declarations of grandeur regarding the long term value of the Dieppe raid are simply those: declarations – or better yet contentions – and not based in fact. The lessons learned at Dieppe were not really lessons learned at all, particularly with regard to the official lessons espoused by Combined Operations Headquarters, the British military organization responsible for planning and executing amphibious operations during the Second World War. Many of these so called lessons learned

were already learned in blood beforehand, while others were of the category that they need not have been learned in the first place; in other words, they should have been blatantly obvious to even the most junior of military neophytes. Still more, while perhaps not known directly by the British, were already identified by other militaries who were very interested in amphibious operations, specifically the United States Marine Corps. In reality, the claims of the worthiness of the official lessons learned from Dieppe, as well as the other fanciful assertions of the raid's retro-active successes are simply rationalizations; emotional attempts to justify the sacrifices of so many men, and perhaps as likely, to deflect blame.

Background

Not by any stretch of the imagination was the Dieppe raid the first ever joint combined amphibious operation. In fact, ever since man learned to travel the seas he has fought on and from the sea. Examples from antiquity include, but are by no means limited to, the Athenians at war against Syracuse, the Romans in Great Britain, and – if you believe in the mythology – the Greeks in Troy. Of course more contemporary examples exist and from them can be exhumed more pertinent lessons, such as St Nazaire,⁴ Vaagso,⁵ and of course the well-known Gallipoli campaign of the First World War.

It should also be noted that during the inter war period the British were not the only nation interested in amphibious warfare. Not long after the cessation of the First World War, the United States recognized that if another war were to come along, Japan would be its most likely antagonist. The American military, and specifically the United States Navy and the United States Marine Corps, were quick to point out that such a war in the Pacific would necessarily entail significant naval and amphibious operations as both opponents would be fighting to secure forward locations from which to base naval (and eventually air) forces from. The nature of the

pacific geography would mean that Japanese held islands, of varying sizes in land mass and in sea space between them, would likely require amphibious assaults for them to be taken; i.e. fighting directly on the beaches vice amphibious landing on undefended beaches and subsequent movement over land to contact.⁶ The Marine Corps began work on amphibious doctrine in the early 1920s and by 1934 had published the *Tentative Manual of Landing Operations*. By 1938 it had become the United States Navy F.T.P.-167, *Landing Operations Doctrine*. Note that this document and its doctrine were published and adopted a full four years before the Dieppe Raid took place. Further, it should be realistic to assume that the Dieppe planners could have had access to *Landing Operations Doctrine*, particularly with America by that time in the war. It is, however, unknown if the planners did in fact see it, and if they did, whether or not they incorporated the doctrine into their planning. From the results of the operation and the official lessons learned derived from the raid, it would not appear so. This is particularly remarkable since the Dieppe planners, as a group, were reported to have “very little knowledge of amphibious operations.”⁷ They, above all people, should have looked to both history and other contemporary militaries to compensate for their lack of amphibious expertise.

Strategic Conditions

The strategic situation that Winston Churchill found himself in in the early parts of 1942 was perhaps one of urgency of action. It had been two years since the British Expeditionary Force was evacuated from Dunkirk, effectively ceding the European continent to the Germans. The entry of the United States into the war at the end of 1941 was a brilliant ray of hope for the Allies; however, it did not come without its own provisions. The Americans had decided on a “Germany First” approach to the war, whereby the defeat of Nazi Germany would be the Americans’ main effort. It was considered a better strategy to knock out the strongest of the

Axis powers before America would turn its full might toward the destruction of Japan.⁸ Since Germany was their main effort, the Americans were relentless in pressuring the British Government for an invasion of the mainland. So much so that the Americans recommended Operation SLEDGEHAMER – a plan that would call for six British Divisions to seize a small section of the coastline of France, remain in place over the winter months, and, with reinforcements, break out onto the continent in the spring of 1943. The British were not amenable to the plan; nevertheless, the suggestion that America might choose to reconsider its Germany First strategy in favor of Japan was an incentive for the British to do something.⁹

Adding to the pressure for British action were the Soviets. After achieving some successes in the Russian winter counter offensive of 1941, the warming weather of spring 1942 was bringing a return to German advantage. Marshall Joseph Stalin was increasing his demands for a second front in order to force the Germans to divert resources from the East to the West. Ever the skilled negotiator, Stalin even proclaimed publicly that he would be amenable to discussing an armistice with Germany for the reason that the Soviet Union was not receiving the support it required from the western Allies.¹⁰ Due to this pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union, the British settled on a raid of a larger scale than what had been attempted in the past. Its strategic aim was to both placate the Americans and to divert German attention away from the Soviets in the East. Operationally, the aim of the Dieppe raid was to gain as much experience in amphibious operations as was possible. It was to be a practice, a drill, and in being so would fulfill the Combined Operations Headquarters mandate – “Raids in force designed to obtain information and experience in the enemy’s defense systems are to be pressed forward as the opportunities arise.”¹¹

The Plan

It has been argued that the story of Dieppe is really the story of the plan. It started as Operation RUTTER, a plan calling for the use of seven infantry battalions, a tank regiment, a parachute brigade, and two companies of glider soldiers. These land forces would be supported by four squadrons of low level precision bombers, and 150 high level bombers, as well as naval bombardment, anti-aircraft ships, and mortar firing barges. The paratroopers were to land south and behind the town of Dieppe, while the main forces were to land on the flanks in the vicinity of the towns of Puits and Berneval in the west and Varengeville and Pourville in the east. After isolating the town of Dieppe, the forces would seize objectives near and within the town. Once complete, the troops would return to the coast and be withdrawn to England.¹²

Unfortunately, the three months from the plan's inception resulted in significant changes. Primarily, in a decision that is still somewhat contentious even today, some historians contend that General Bernard Montgomery, Commander South-Eastern Command, amended the plan from a flanking to frontal one because he believed that the tactical objectives outlined in the plan could not be met in the timelines given if a flanking maneuver were used.¹³

Secondly, due to a fractured chain of command¹⁴, the required fire support was allowed to dwindle to ineffectiveness. First, the Royal Navy refused to provide one of its capital ships for the operation. Next, the Royal Air Force curtailed its commitment of bombers since Air Marshal Sir Arthur Harris believed that the Dieppe operation was little more than a "useless sideshow."¹⁵ Some believe that the Royal Air Force's real aim during the Dieppe operation was not to support the ground assault but to lure the Luftwaffe into open battle.¹⁶ In spite of these losses in support, the planning progressed, but replaced fire support with synchronization and strict timings in order to achieve surprise.

The final change to the plan was to come late in the process. Operation RUTTER was finally scheduled for the first week of July, 1942. However, a German air raid flew over the loaded flotilla as it was waiting for good weather to set sail. Assuming that the Germans would recognize the ships for what they were, the British cancelled Operation RUTTER; however, under circumstances that remain uncertain today, it was reborn within a fortnight as operation JUBILEE. The main difference between the finalized RUTTER and JUBILEE was the replacement of the parachute and glider troops with amphibious commandos, and the orchestration of the timings of the landings, so that the supporting attacks on the flanks would go in before the main landings in order to achieve surprise and knock out the German coastal batteries.

The plan was finally set for 19 August 1942. A commando battalion would attack the German coastal battery east of Dieppe at YELLOW Beach, while another commando battalion would attack the battery west of Dieppe at ORANGE Beach. Simultaneously, a battalion of infantry would land at GREEN Beach west of Dieppe in order to destroy a radar station and secure the high ground overlooking the town. Another battalion of infantry would land at BLUE Beach east of Dieppe to destroy a German field battery, machine gun posts, and heavy anti-aircraft cannons. Thirty minutes later, two battalions of infantry supported by a regiment of tanks¹⁷ would land at WHITE and RED beaches to seize Dieppe itself. Simultaneously, another battalion of infantry would land at GREEN beach, push through the forces in place, and link up with the tanks to seize and destroy objectives in depth. The floating reserve would consist of a battalion of infantry and a commando battalion.¹⁸ Supported by eight destroyers and Royal Air Force Hurricanes, the soldiers would seize their objectives, hold during the hours of daylight,

and withdraw before darkness to the coast for evacuation to England (see map of the Dieppe operation attached as Appendix A).

The Raid

In the actual event, the raid itself turned out to be a complete tactical failure. Fortune frowned upon the Allies early in the operation as a German convoy chanced upon the flotilla ferrying 3 Commando to their offloading points at YELLOW Beach. The uncertainty that followed resulted in the Commander and part of the Commando aborting the mission and turning back to England, while over 100 commandos, not having received the order, carried on with the mission and landed. With surprise lost, the best that the understrength commando could do was to distract the German battery. All but one of the commandos who put ashore were killed or captured.¹⁹ Concurrently, in what was possibly the only achievement of the operation, 4 Commando landed at ORANGE Beach and succeeded in destroying the target German coastal battery. Almost all commandos involved at ORANGE Beach were successfully withdrawn to England in what some have later dubbed a “textbook Commando operation.”²⁰

The South Saskatchewan Regiment²¹ landed at GREEN Beach on time and undetected; however, navigation issued resulted in their landing on the west side of the River Scie, which resulted in the necessity to cross the single bridge in the village of Pourville in order to secure the high ground to the east. The defile provided by this small bridge allowed the Germans excellent opportunity to block the progression of the Canadians.²² The majority of the Battalion’s objectives remained unattained. The Saskatchewan’s follow on force, the Cameron Highlanders of Canada, landed 30 minutes late and suffered much the same difficulties as the Saskatchewan. The Camerons did manage to penetrate past the village of Pourville; however, they never did link up with the tanks as planned.

Aerial fire support for the main landings at RED and WHITE beaches was on time but so light as to only be capable of keeping the Germans' heads down temporarily. The Essex Scottish Regiment and the Royal Hamilton Light Infantry landed roughly on time, but they had lost the element of surprise and the limited fire support had failed to suppress or destroy German fire positions. As a result they were met with crushing fire; very few ever got off the beach. The Calgary Horse eventually landed 29 tanks; however, the anti-tank obstacles on the beach proved impassable; few got off the beach and none were able to penetrate into the town.

Suffering from poor communications and a lack of situational awareness, Canadian Major General John Hamilton Roberts, the ground force commander, committed his reserve thinking that he was exploiting the success of the Essex Scottish.²³ Unfortunately, the reserve was exposed to the same horrendous fire. At 1100, Roberts gave the order to withdraw, and by 1240 it became clear that all who could be withdrawn had been withdrawn. In the end, the Royal Air Force grieved 67 pilots killed and the Royal Navy lost 550 sailors; 270 commandos and 3,376 Canadian soldiers were wounded, killed, or captured.

The Bluster

The damage control commenced almost as soon as the operation came to an end. In the public affairs war that ensued, British Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill first coined the phrase "reconnaissance in force" to describe the raid.²⁴ Later that year he would claim success in that the raid did in fact divert German attention away from the Eastern Front and the Soviets.²⁵ Later still he would attempt to add emotion to the argument:

"Strategically, the raid served to make the Germans more conscious of the danger along the whole coast of Occupied France. This helped to hold troops and resources in the West, which did something to take the weight off Russia. Honor the brave who fell. Their sacrifice was not in vain."²⁶

The claim that the strategic aim of the raid was met is quite legitimate; of note here is the penchant for emotional appeals to help justify the operation. Even the Canadian Army, whom one might think would be more recriminating in its assessment, was very supportive. Within two weeks of the raid the Canadian Headquarters issued a report of the raid touting it as a “vital learning experience.”²⁷ This was perhaps in stark contrast to the feelings of the Australians and New Zealand Armies regarding British leadership after the Gallipoli Campaign of 1915. Nevertheless, such was not the case with all Canadians; shortly after the raid Canadian business tycoon Lord Beaverbrook accosted Lord Louis Mountbatten, Chief of Combined Operations, with “You have murdered thousands of my countrymen...They have been mowed down in their thousands and their blood is on your hands.”²⁸ Clearly it was impossible to separate emotion from the issue.

The controversy over the raid continued to simmer over the next couple of years, while the ongoing war served as a distraction. Nevertheless, after the success at Normandy those who were involved in the Dieppe operation were very quick to point out how, in retrospect, the Dieppe raid laid the groundwork for D-Day. On the day following the invasion, General Crerar, commanding the 1st Canadian Army, stated:

“Although at the time the heavy cost to Canada, and the non-success of the Dieppe operation seemed hard to bear, I believe that when the war is examined in proper perspective, it will be seen that the sobering influence of that operation on existing Allies strategical conceptions...was a Canadian contribution of the greatest significance to final victory.”²⁹

Further, Canadian Military historian C.P Stacey added “The casualties sustained in the raid were the price paid for the knowledge that enabled the great operation of 1944 to be carried out at a cost in blood smaller than even the most optimistic had ventured to hope for.”³⁰ These kinds of claims, while certainly appealing to Canadian patriotism and the search for justification

for so many deaths, were rarely, if ever, followed by any evidentiary reasoning. They were, simply, unsubstantiated emotional assertions stated to rationalize the sacrifices and to serve as a rally cry for Canadian morale and patriotism, a Canadian “Remember the Alamo” as it were. Then and later some even went so far as to attack any disagreement with this opinion. For example, historian and author Terence Robertson stated, “To denigrate the Canadian sacrifice at Dieppe is to label the signatories of the letter as fools and by doing so proclaim oneself the biggest fool of all.”³¹ The implication is that any doubt of the validity of the Canadian sacrifice is an affront to those that died, even if the questions are aimed at the validity itself and not the righteousness of the sacrifice.

The motivations for such upbeat assessments by the Canadians involved were also quite practical in nature. Even to this day, the prevailing opinion among Canadians is that the British were at fault for everything that went wrong with Dieppe. While there surely is some truth to this theory, the reality is that Canadian decision makers of the time must also share their burden of the blame. The Canadian Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, was a pacifist by nature and extremely averse to casualties. While he understood that he would be obligated to come to the aid of Mother Britain during her time of need, he also needed to balance the political pressures at home between English Canada’s desire to fight side by side with the Empire and French Canada’s reluctance to sacrifice for the British Crown. His compromise was to offer the Canadian Army in defense of the Empire; in other words, they would remain in England to defend against a German invasion.³²

And so the Canadian Army arrived in England in 1939 and for almost the next three years performed garrison duties, participated in exercises, and manned battlements should the Germans decide to invade. Meanwhile, the Commonwealth armies were fighting in Greece, the Balkans,

and in North Africa, while the Canadians “waited in England while history happened all around.”³³ This so embarrassed the Canadian Generals that when the possibility of the Canadian Army participating in a limited raid in France the Canadians jumped at the chance.³⁴ For the Generals, it was a means of regaining lost credibility. For Prime Minister King, it was a contribution that was large enough to quell some of the pressure from English Canada, while not large enough to raise the ire of French Canada, and was certainly not permanent enough to necessitate a policy of conscription should things go wrong.³⁵

Further, General Roberts and his staff were intimately aware of the plan and its erosion over time, and he could have vetoed Canadian participation had he felt it necessary. Considering the political pressure involved, it is not difficult to understand why General Roberts would not be the man to deny the Canadian Army its duty to get in the war. With these matters in mind, it is easy to see why gentlemen such as Crerar and Stacey were so intent to draw positive associations from the operation. Dieppe was not a case of the British sacrificing Canadian soldiers instead of British soldiers; rather the Canadian decision makers wanted Canada to be involved and therefore deserve their fair share of the blame.³⁶ The Canadians had to look at the raid in as positive manner as possible. Not only was it necessary to maintain morale and justify the sacrifices, but it was also necessary to downplay their own responsibility for it.

Certainly others who also made these claims were not doing so for such noble purposes as memorializing the sacrifices. Captain John Hughes-Hallett, naval planner at Combined Operations Headquarters and the Naval Commander during the raid, avowed that the results of the raid were disappointing and the casualties “regrettable”, yet it was nevertheless meaningful as long as the lessons learned were put into practice at a later date and helped to gain ultimate victory.³⁷ As one of the lead planners and participants in the raid, Hughes-Hallett certainly

would have had personal, career motives for making his somewhat rosy assessment of the value of the operation. Hughes-Hallett would also chime in on the notion that the Dieppe raid proved the impracticality of seizing a port with its facilities undamaged.³⁸ It was inferred that this realization created the impetus to invent an alternative, notably the Mulberry floating harbor which was to be put to such good use at Normandy. In fact, the linkage of the Dieppe raid to the development of the Mulberry harbor is wishful thinking at best. While the design and the production of the Mulberry harbor did not occur until 1943, the inspiration existed beforehand. Churchill himself was aware of the concept when he wrote a memorandum to Mountbatten in May of 1942 – three months prior to the events at Dieppe – in which he asked about the construction of artificial, floating harbors.³⁹ It would be credible to state that the Dieppe raid reinforced the belief that a functioning port could not be taken intact and that another means of off-loading equipment would be beneficial; however, one cannot state that the Dieppe raid led to the invention of the Mulberry harbor since the idea was around before the raid. This is simply another case of an attempt to justify the operation *ex post facto*.

Perhaps the most vocal proponent of the after the fact success of Dieppe was Mountbatten himself, who claimed that “the battle of D-Day was won on the beaches of Dieppe”, and that “Dieppe was one of the most vital operations of the Second World War. It gave the allies the priceless secret of victory.” He went on to say “If I had the same decision to make again, I would do as I had done before.”⁴⁰

Firstly, it should be noted that only after the Normandy landings and the inferred benefits of the Dieppe raid were appreciated did Mountbatten finally allude to the fact that he was responsible for the Dieppe raid. Prior to D-Day, there remained much debate regarding who it was that had reincarnated Operation RUTTER as JUBILEE after RUTTER was cancelled on 7

July 1942. Churchill himself claimed that he had no idea that the operation was turned back on⁴¹, while Mountbatten referred to received direction - for surely he could not have orchestrated the entire operation on his own? Regardless, with no paperwork to confirm or deny any assertions, the mystery remained, until, of course, the success of D-Day could be translated as the success of Dieppe and therefore the same people who were distancing themselves from the operation were now more than happy to include themselves in the praise.

Second, Mountbatten referred to the “priceless secret of victory”; however, quite conveniently he omitted mentioning exactly what that secret was, or how it at all helped in the victory that was achieved on D-Day. In all likelihood it was simply another sweeping statement to justify the operation at Dieppe, although post D-Day these kinds of statements were now likely intended to accept credit in lieu of career protection. And third, both Hughes-Hallett and Mountbatten refer to the lessons learned of Dieppe and how they were used to great effect at Normandy. But what were these lessons learned and did they truly come about as a result of the Dieppe operation?

The Official Lessons Learned

*It is as illuminating to say of Dieppe, as it was and is often said, that it taught important lessons about amphibious operations as to say of the Titanic disaster that it taught important lessons about passenger liner design... No improvements could compensate the victims... none could rectify an experiment which was so fundamentally misconceived.*⁴²

-- John Keegan (1982)

In October of 1942 Combined Operations Headquarters issued their *Combined Report on the Dieppe Raid*. The official lessons learned of the operation were included in Part V.⁴³ It is beyond the scope of this paper to argue the specific merits of each lesson learned, nor will all of the official lessons learned be discussed in this paper. Nevertheless, it is indeed arguable that the majority of the key lessons learned themselves were not solely the result of the Dieppe raid;

therefore, the claim that Dieppe was the secret to the success of D-Day can be called into question.

The initial official lesson learned was the requirement for overwhelming fire support⁴⁴ for a frontal assault on a well defended position. First and foremost, this was not at all the only time that this observation had been made after an operation. This same lesson was painfully learned from the ineffectiveness of the naval gunfire at Gallipoli,⁴⁵ only in this case the withering of the fire support was a function of poor planning and not lack of technology. The same lesson was learned, although in more positive manners at Vaasgo and St Nazaire, where in both cases the amphibious force had enough fire support to move from the landing sites to their objectives effectively.⁴⁶ Further, the United States Marine Corps had identified in published doctrine the necessity for sufficient and effective fire support, particularly against defended beaches.⁴⁷ The Marines went even further to identify how naval and aerial fire support should be coordinated to complement each other, particularly during the perilous phase when the troops have landed and naval gun support has shifted to targets in depth; close air support would be essential to allow the freedom of movement of the ground forces.⁴⁸ However, the real issue in this case is if this lesson needed to be learned at all. All military planners, even those of little worth, understand the basic military tenets of fire and maneuver. One must suppress the enemy's fire to ensure friendly mobility and freedom of action. This fact should have been more than obvious to the Dieppe planners, even from the distant perspective of 70 years later; it is inconceivable that this fact could have come as any surprise to them. This was not a lesson learned following the Dieppe raid; it was, in fact, a lesson ignored by the planners beforehand. Terence Robertson summed it up perfectly when he stated, "The lessons of Gallipoli twenty seven years before were forgotten, fire-power had been allowed to dwindle to nothing, and the troops would be expected to land on

heavily defended beaches with only a handful of bombers and cannon-firing Hurricanes to occupy the defenses.”⁴⁹ Further, it was claimed in the report that no naval vessel existed during the Dieppe raid to provide close-in shore support. While this may have been technically true, had the Royal Navy provided a capital ship as initially requested, it is quite possible that the ground forces would have had adequate fire support to help them fight their way to get off the beaches. Again, this was a planning failure, not an epiphany of how to achieve tactical success.

The next questionable lesson learned was titled under “Formation of Assault Forces.”⁵⁰ It essentially recommended that personnel and equipment who are slated to participate in an amphibious operation should be organized together as early as is possible, to the point that there should be some form of permanent amphibious capability within Combined Operations Headquarters. While Dieppe did indeed provide the impetus for the creation of Force J (a naval assault force with its own integral capabilities and enablers),⁵¹ it should not have taken a failure like Dieppe to point out the benefits of having a standing, experienced amphibious assault force. Further, the report stated that Army units who would be participating in amphibious assaults should train closely with the Navy. Again, this smacks of being self evident, or as Brian Villa sarcastically refers to it, “well-known gems of military wisdom.”⁵²

The report also noted that it would be desirable to have a plan that was flexible.⁵³ Even the Germans, who obtained a copy of the Dieppe raid operations order from an officer who very unwisely had brought a copy with him on the raid, noted that the directive was too long and detailed (121 pages in length). This factor acted, in the German opinion, to limit independent action, particularly if unforeseen events were to occur.⁵⁴ Perhaps this is more conventional wisdom; however, it is recognized that it is easier said than done. Any good military planner tries to offer as many options as possible within the scope of an operation in order to allow for

alternatives should something go wrong. To have the success or failure of a plan hinge on a single or a few factors or events is to invite catastrophe. In fact this is exactly what happened at Dieppe; with such a lack of fire support, the success of the raid relied almost entirely on achieving surprise. When surprise was lost, so was any hope of achieving the tactical aims. While flexibility is certainly noteworthy, Dieppe was by far not the first example of a complicated plan resulting in failure. Further, it had been noted before that flexibility had resulted in success, as evidenced by the Vaagso raid where it was noted that the real strength of the operation was its flexible plan.⁵⁵ Additionally, the United States Marines had included flexibility in planning as the first consideration of plans and orders.⁵⁶ It is perhaps more likely that the inclusion of flexibility in the report was less of a lesson learned and more of an admission of fault.

As stated earlier in this paper, the decision to change the Dieppe plan from one of a flanking attack to a frontal is still mired in controversy. Many historians, as well as Hughes-Hallett, claim that General Montgomery ordered the frontal because he believed that there would not be enough time to complete all tactical tasks if a flanking maneuver was conducted.⁵⁷ For his part, Montgomery stated he had no recollection of making such a decision, and instead claimed that it was Mountbatten who made the change to a frontal assault so that experience could be gained in using tanks in amphibious operations.⁵⁸ Regardless, it is interesting that this was included in the report as a lesson learned. The decision to attack directly into the enemy's strength when his weak areas were so obvious is contrary to even the most basic of military strategies. The maxim "never execute a frontal attack on a well-defended position – unless there is absolutely no other option" has existed in military circles likely since men first picked up clubs to fight one another. The planners themselves believed that the frontal was a bad idea, perhaps

Mountbatten most strongly of all.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, to include it in the report as a lesson learned and to tie it to the success of D-Day is less than credible. More likely, it was included in the official as a snub; a rebuke at Montgomery, whose arrogance and pretentiousness was becoming legendary.

The report also made a recommendation regarding the landing of tanks in the assault.⁶⁰ During the Dieppe raid, intense anti-tank fire, coupled with tank obstacles which precluded the armor from getting off the beach, allowed the Germans to easily target and destroy them. Therefore, the Dieppe report recommended that tanks should not be landed until the enemy obstacles have been cleared and enemy defenses have been destroyed. Essentially, the first landing waves should be made of infantry and engineers, while the armored forces should come in subsequent waves. It is interesting to note that this recommendation differed significantly from the established United States Marine Corps doctrine whereby tanks should be landed in the first wave, with the infantry, in order to mitigate the shifting of naval gunfire to targets in depth and to supplement whatever aerial support is available by providing close, direct fire support to the infantry.⁶¹ This illustrates a difference in mind set between traditional roles for armored forces and the role of armor in the United States Marine Corps. Whereby most armies consider their tanks a separate maneuver element, the *raison d'être* of tanks in the Marines is to provide close, intimate support to the infantry. In terms of amphibious operations, the primary mission of tanks is to ease and expedite the movement of the infantry off of the beach by providing cover and destroying the enemy's defenses and obstacles through direct fire.⁶² At Dieppe, both the tanks and the infantry were working to get off of the beach; however, they were, for the most part, going about it separately, uncoordinated. Even with hindsight it is not possible to state with certainty that had the tanks at Dieppe been given the mission of close, intimate support for the

infantry vice a separate mission that the results would have been different. Nevertheless, considering that one of the notable failings of the Dieppe raid was a lack of fire support, it follows that the Marine tactic would have been much more of a benefit to the infantry. It is possible that the Dieppe report came to the wrong conclusion in regard to this lesson learned.

Another obvious lesson learned mentioned in the report was the use of smoke. The statement “it might have been helpful in order to cover the landing craft during the final stages of their approach, and the initial stages of the landing itself, to have ended the Naval bombardment of the central beaches with some salvos of a smoke shell”⁶³ is, in reality, an understatement. The amount of fire support for the ground forces was so small that anything that could have helped them land and subsequently get off the beaches would have been beneficial. It should have been very apparent to the planners that as they stripped away the available fire support, measures of mitigation should have been generated. Admittedly, surprise is a mitigating measure; however, it either exists or it does not exist. The requirement for the use of smoke, as a further mitigating factor in case surprise is lost, should have been clear.

In the after-action report by Combined Operations, one of the recommendations was that airborne forces should be used as a means of achieving surprise and “be included in plans as often as possible.”⁶⁴ This is, of course, quite ironic considering that the use of paratroopers and glider troops was indeed part of the plan for RUTTER, and was deliberately removed for JUBILEE due to the fear of how adverse weather might affect their employment. Regardless, it should have been apparent to the planners that of the two options - amphibious commandos versus paratroopers - airborne forces would have provided a much better option for flexibility and the achievement of surprise. It is true that in the past amphibious commandos have succeeded in achieving surprise against an enemy; however, these operations were often smaller

in scope than was Dieppe. Even the Germans were taken aback that the British did not make use of airborne troops, noting “contrary to all expectations, the British did not employ parachutists and airborne troops. If they had attacked PUIITS simultaneously with airborne troops and from the sea, the initial position of the defenders at PUIITS would have been critical.”⁶⁵

The report also states that, due to the vulnerability of employment to weather conditions, the tasks given to airborne forces should not be so critical in nature as to require an entire operation to be abandoned if a drop is cancelled. While this may seem logical on the outside, it falls short when one considers that airborne forces, due to their ability to achieve tactical and strategic surprise, are often given tasks that are very important to the overall success of an operation. Further, once on the ground, airborne troops are extremely vulnerable from the standpoint of fire and logistical support; so much so that the value of their targets must be balanced with the risk associated with losing the airborne forces. In other words: if the target is not important do not send important, yet vulnerable, assets against it. This supposed lesson learned was certainly taken into account on D-Day, where airborne and glider forces were given extremely important, even mission critical, tasks of seizing bridges and blocking German counter moves.

There are many historians who would state that the above assessments of the official lessons learned could be described as second guessing, or arm-chair generalship. Of the lessons learned, Bernard Fergusson argued “they were not so obvious as they seem to us in retrospect. Even the Law of Gravity was obscure not so long ago.”⁶⁶ Granted, the world would have looked very different to those who were there at the time than it does to us looking back. Regardless, the assessments of these lessons learned were not made through the lens of seven decades, but based on information that was available at the time in 1942. Perhaps it is true that the Dieppe

planners did not see this information, or if they did, they did not consider it; regardless, *they should have – it was there.*

Other Lessons (Lessons Not Learned)

Notwithstanding the above, there were perhaps some lessons that did come out of the Dieppe fiasco, although they were not identified by Combined Operations and likely had little to do with the Allied success at Normandy. Firstly, it was alluded to earlier that the operation suffered from a fractured chain of command. Indeed, Combined Operations was responsible for planning and executing, but had to rely heavily on the input of the services for both acceptance of plans and resources allotted. Montgomery later noted, “It is axiomatic that the plan must be made by the commander responsible for the battle...but there was no one commander responsible for the battle....if you were to ask me ‘who was responsible for this’ I would say ‘I don’t know, the Trinity.’”⁶⁷ It is this lack of unity of command that allowed the plan to wither over time: first the (alleged) decision of Montgomery to conduct a frontal attack, second the Royal Navy’s refusal to provide a capital ship, and thirdly the Royal Air Force’s preference to commit resources to the engagement of the Luftwaffe in lieu of supporting the ground forces. The environmental representatives, more loyal to their services than to the operation, were apt to negotiate, compromise, and veto issues of import in the interests of their services.⁶⁸ Had one person, even Mountbatten, had the sole authority to plan and to task, the plan very likely would have been much more coherent than it turned out to be.

Second, the Dieppe raid suffered from a lack of linkage between the strategic, operational, and tactical objectives. As noted before, the strategic aim was to appease the Americans and to divert German attention and resources away from the Soviets fighting on the Eastern Front. The operational objectives (at least those which were specifically noted prior to

the operation) were to gain information on German defenses and experience in conducting amphibious operations. The tactical aims, however, had little to do directly with achieving the operational and strategic aims. The tactical objectives, destroying German military infrastructure and seizing port facilities, were simply tactical means with no operational ends. In the same vein, the operational aims had little to do with the achievement of the strategic aims. It is these truths, more than any others, which allowed the Dieppe raid to fail. In essence, the plan, and therefore the required support, was allowed to atrophy over time because of this lack of connection. It did not matter if the tactical and operational aims were achieved; *as long as the raid happened, successfully or not, the strategic aims would be realized.* As long as the strategic aims would be realized then there would be no reason to cancel the mission outright; therefore, resources were allowed to be slowly stripped away resulting in a failed operation.

Conclusion

The Dieppe raid was, unequivocally, a tactical failure. The subsequent attempts to rationalize this costly operation as a retroactive success can be separated into two camps: those who have attempted to justify the sacrifices of thousands of lives in the name of patriotism and honor, and those who more selfishly have tried to conjure success out of disaster in order to disguise their own failings and misdeeds. Neither groups' assertions are borne out by the facts. Granted, many of the lessons learned provided in the Combined Operations Report are appropriate. However, they represented even at the time nothing new. As a matter of fact, many are simple regurgitations of lessons previously learned and apparently forgotten, only to be repackaged and reissued as novel observations. Moreover, the assertions that the Dieppe raid was a success when seen from the viewpoint of D-Day is plainly revisionist history. Ex post

facto claims are not new in military history; however, in this case there is little direct link between Dieppe and D-Day, other than one preceding the other.

One must simply ask oneself a few questions. First, would there have been a D-Day had there not been a Dieppe? The answer is clearly 'yes'. It is safe to say that eventually, Dieppe raid or not, the Allies would make the attempt to reenter the continent. Second, if there had not been a Dieppe raid, would D-Day have still been a success? Clearly, the answer is again 'yes'. Since the lessons of Dieppe were not new, they would have existed whether the Dieppe raid occurred or not. To say 'no' would be to imply that the Dieppe lessons learned were new and taken to heart on D-Day, a statement not supported by evidence. And lastly, if one believes that D-Day was a success because Dieppe failed, then does it follow that if Dieppe had succeeded then D-Day would have failed? It is doubtful that many would follow this logic.

It is clear that much more toner will be expended before the questions surrounding the Dieppe raid are at last put to rest, if indeed this ever happens. Nevertheless, all attempts should be made to see the raid for what it was. A tactical disaster – absolutely. Operationally it was of questionable value – absolutely. It was of limited, if any, direct value for the planning of D-Day, but it did convince the Germans to redirect resources from the Eastern front and therefore met the requirements of why the raid was conceived in the first place. It was a strategic success. We should leave it at that.

Endnotes

¹ John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1982) selected quotations http://homepage.eircom.net/~odyssey/Quotes/History/Keegan_Normandy.html (accessed 10 Jan 2012).

² Perhaps lesser known, Operation NEPTUNE encompassed the Normandy landings of 6 June 1944. It was a stage within Operation OVERLORD, the Allied battle for Normandy which was to continue for over two months.

³ Terrence Robertson, *Dieppe: The Shame and the Glory* (Boston, Little, Brown, and Company, 1962), p. 407.

⁴ The raid on St Nazaire, known as Operation CHARIOT, was the British commando amphibious raid on the Normandie dry dock at St Nazaire, German occupied France, on 28 March 1942. Of particular interest was the use of an obsolete British destroyer to ram the dock gates. Explosives, set on a timer, later exploded disabling the dock for the remainder of the war.

⁵ The raid on Vaagso, known as Operation ARCHERY, was the British commando raid on the Norwegian Island of Vaagso on 27 December 1941. The tactical objective was to destroy a fish oil plant, however the strategic aim was to compel the Germans to divert more resources from the Eastern Front to Norway.

⁶ Russell F. Weighley, *An American Way of War* (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 260.

⁷ Robin Neillands, *The Dieppe Raid: The Story of the Disastrous 1942 Expedition* (Bloomington, IN, Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 266.

⁸ Neillands, 73.

⁹ Neillands, 78.

¹⁰ Neillands, 71.

¹¹ Robertson, 20.

¹² Robertson, 48.

¹³ Robertson, 51.

¹⁴ Combined Operations Headquarters was responsible for planning and executing the operation, but the services (Army, Royal Navy, and Royal Air Force) owned the people; the services therefore held vetoes in terms of what resources would be allocated to the operation.

¹⁵ Robertson, 93.

¹⁶ Robertson, 34.

¹⁷ A regiment of tanks in the British and Canadian systems is the rough equivalent of an American tank battalion.

¹⁸ Ken Ford, *Dieppe 1942: Prelude to D-Day* (Westport Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2004), p. 33.

¹⁹ Ford, 44.

²⁰ Ford, 53.

²¹ The Canadian infantry units that participated in the Dieppe operation were of battalion size, in spite of some having the word “Regiment” in their official titles.

²² Neillands, 194.

²³ Neillands, 231.

²⁴ R.W. Thompson, *At Whatever Cost: The Story of the Dieppe Raid* (New York: Coward-McCann, INC., 1957), p. 174.

²⁵ Robertson, 397.

²⁶ Sir Winston Churchill, quoted in Thompson, 189.

²⁷ Brian Loring Villa, *Unauthorized Action: Mountbatten and the Dieppe Raid* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 17.

²⁸ Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, cited in Villa, 18.

²⁹ General Harry Crerar, cited in C.P. Stacey, *The Canadian Army 1939-1945: An Official Historical Summary* (Ottawa, Department of National Defense, 1948), p. 88, <http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/UN/Canada/CA/OpSumm/OpSumm-5.html> (accessed 16 Jan 2012).

³⁰ Stacey, 88.

³¹ Robertson, 409.

³² Villa, 214.

³³ Desmond Morton, *A Military History of Canada*, fifth ed. (Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart, 2007), p. 202.

³⁴ Morton, 203.

³⁵ Villa, 217.

³⁶ J.L. Granatstein. “Dieppe, 60 Years on: What is the Truth?” *National Post*, 2002, http://www.personaldigital.ca/rem_day/dieppe/dieppe-1a.html (accessed 18 Feb 2012).

³⁷ Robertson, 405.

³⁸ John P. Campbell, *Dieppe Revisited: A Documentary Investigation* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1993), p. 212.

³⁹ Neillands, 10.

⁴⁰ Lord Louis Mountbatten, cited in Neillands, 267.

⁴¹ Villa, 27.

⁴² Keegan, accessed 10 Jan 2012.

- ⁴³ Combined Operations Headquarters, C.B. 04244, *Combined Report on the Dieppe Raid*. London, England, October 1942, Part V. Included as Appendix B.
- ⁴⁴ C.B. 04244, p 38, para 344, p. 42 paras 357 & 358, p. 43 para 359, and p. 44 para 362.
- ⁴⁵ C.E. Callwell, *The Dardanelles; Campaigns and Their Lessons* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919), p. 339.
- ⁴⁶ Neillands, 12.
- ⁴⁷ United States Navy, F.T.P. 167, *Landing Operations Doctrine*, p 15, para 147.c.1.
- ⁴⁸ F.T.P. 167, p. 157 para 627.
- ⁴⁹ Robertson, 96.
- ⁵⁰ C.B. 04244, p. 38, para 345.
- ⁵¹ Bernard Fergusson, *The Watery Maze: The Story of Combined Operations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 184.
- ⁵² Villa, 3.
- ⁵³ C.B. 04244, p. 39, para 348.
- ⁵⁴ Canadian Military Headquarters, CMHQ Report No. 116, *Operation "JUBILEE" The Raid on Dieppe, 19 Aug 42 Additional Information from German Sources*. London, England, 10 May 1944, Appendix A, para 6 of the German Intelligence analysis of the Dieppe Raid <http://www.cmp-cpm.forces.gc.ca/dhh-dhp/his/rep-rap/doc/cmhg/CMHQ116.pdf> (accessed 17 Jan 2012).
- ⁵⁵ Joseph. H. Devins, *The Vaagso Raid: The Commando Attack That Changed the Course of World War II* (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Company, 1967), p. 206.
- ⁵⁶ F.T.P 167, p. 28, para 164.
- ⁵⁷ John Hughes-Hallett, "Interview With John Hughes-Hallett" for CBC *Close-Up: Dieppe*, 9 September 1962, <http://archives.cbc.ca/programs/156-13811/page/1/> (accessed 18 Jan 2012).
- ⁵⁸ Bernard Montgomery, "Interview With Bernard Montgomery" for CBC *Close-Up: Dieppe*, 9 September 1962, <http://archives.cbc.ca/programs/156-13811/page/1/> (accessed 18 Jan 2012).
- ⁵⁹ Robertson, 51.
- ⁶⁰ C.B. 04244, p. 45 para 365.
- ⁶¹ F.T.P. 167, p. 182 para 821.
- ⁶² F.T.P. 167, p. 181 para 817.
- ⁶³ C.B. 04244, p. 49, para 374.

⁶⁴ C.B. 04244, P. 48, para 367.

⁶⁵ CMHQ 116, Appendix B, German Combat Report and Experiences Gained During the British Attack on Dieppe 19 August 1942, p. 11.

⁶⁶ Fergusson, 168.

⁶⁷ Bernard Montgomery, "Interview With Bernard Montgomery" for CBC *Close-Up: Dieppe*, 9 September 1962, <http://archives.cbc.ca/programs/156-13811/page/1/> (accessed 19 Jan 2012).

⁶⁸ Villa, 11.

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Detailed Map of Operation JUBILEE

Appendix B – Copy of C.B. 04244 Part V: Lessons Learned

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Index A – Detailed Map of Operation JUBILEE



APPENDIX B

THE LESSONS LEARNT

I.—THE LESSONS IN SUMMARISED FORM

324. The need for overwhelming fire support, including close support during the initial stages of the attack.

325. The necessity for the formation of permanent naval assault forces with a coherence comparable to that of any other first line fighting formations. Army formations intended for amphibious assaults must without question be trained in close co-operation with such naval assault forces.

326. The necessity for planning a combined operation at a Combined Headquarters where the Force Commanders and their staff can work and live together.

327. The necessity to plan a raid so as to be independent of weather conditions in the greatest possible degree. A plan based on the assumption that weather conditions will be uniform is very likely to fail; therefore a plan which can be carried out even when they are indifferent or bad is essential.

328. The necessity for flexibility in the military plan and its execution.

To achieve this, the assault must be on the widest possible front limited only by the possibilities of control and the amount of naval and air support available.

329. The allocation to the assault of the minimum force required for success and the retention of the maximum force as a reserve to exploit success where it is achieved.

330. The necessity for as accurate and comprehensive a system of control and communications as it is possible to establish.

331. The dissemination of knowledge to officers and other ranks, each of whom should know the intention of his superior, the outline of the operation and the details of the task of his own unit and those on the flanks.

332. The value of special training, particularly in amphibious night operations. Such training must include rehearsals and the testing of inter-communication arrangements.

333. The necessity for fire support in any operation where it has not been possible to rely on the element of surprise. This fire support must be provided by heavy and medium Naval bombardment, by air action, by special vessels or craft working close inshore, and by using the fire power of the assaulting troops while still sea-borne. Special close-support craft, which should be gun-boats or some form of mobile fort, do not exist and must be designed and constructed.

Support by the Royal Air Force is effective within the limits imposed by time and space.

334. Assaults must be carefully timed. Whether to assault in darkness, at dawn or dusk or in daylight, must depend on the nature of the raid, and on certain conditions, such as tide and distance, which will vary in every case.

335. Tanks should not be landed until the anti-tank defences have been destroyed or cleared. L.C.T. carrying tanks must not linger on the beaches beyond the time required to disembark their loads.

336. Great and continuous attention must be paid to security problems and greater use made of subordinate officers who should be put partly into the picture, so that they can control the men under them. Only important extracts from Operation Orders should be taken ashore. These should be kept in manuscript form and have their official headings removed.

337. Briefing of the troops should take place as late as possible.

If airborne troops are used, arrangements must be made to increase the number of models available so as to cut down the time needed for briefing.

Airborne troops provide means of achieving surprise and should be used as often as possible subject to the limitations of the weather. It should be regarded, however, as exceptional for a plan to depend for success entirely on their use.

338. Unless means for the provision of overwhelming close support are available, assaults should be planned to develop round the flanks of a strongly defended locality rather than frontally against it.

339. A far higher standard of aircraft recognition is essential both in the Royal Navy and the Army. This should be achieved by means of lectures, photographs and silhouettes. If possible, personnel of the Royal Observer Corps should be carried in ships.

340. Beach Signal parties should not land complete with the first wave, but only when the beach has been secured.

341. The importance and necessity of using smoke cannot be over emphasized and larger quantities of smoke must be carried in any operation of the size of the assault on Dieppe.

342. Some form of light or self-propelled artillery must be provided once an assault has got across the landing place and is making progress inland.



II.—THE LESSONS IN DETAIL

343. **GENERAL OBSERVATION.**—Many lessons were learnt at Dieppe, not all of them new. The opportunity is taken of repeating and re-affirming the lessons learnt in previous operations as well.

344. NAVAL FIRE SUPPORT

The Lesson of Greatest Importance is the need for overwhelming fire support, including close support, during the initial stages of the attack. It is not too much to say that, at present, no standard Naval vessel or craft has the necessary qualities or equipment to provide close inshore support. Without such support any assault on the enemy-occupied coast of Europe is more and more likely to fail as the enemy's defences are extended and improved. Further remarks on close support vessels will be found in paragraph 362 (a) below.

345. THE FORMATION OF ASSAULT FORCES

- (a) For any amphibious campaign involving assaults on strongly defended coasts held by a determined enemy it is essential that the landing ships and craft required for the assaults shall be organised well in advance into Naval assault forces. These must have a coherence and degree of permanence comparable to that of any first-line fighting formations. The need for discipline, morale, tactical integration and flexibility and professional competence are not disputed in the case of troops, war vessels and air formations. Precisely the same applies to assault ships and craft.
- (b) The great importance of adhering to sound Naval procedure and organisation has been brought out not only at exercises, but also in operations. While it is one of the objects of the Navy to land troops on the beach in the formation the Army desires, this must not be attempted at the expense of sacrificing principles of sound seamanship or of sound flotilla procedure especially where a night landing is concerned. It is always the simplest form of organisation which has the best chance of success.
- (c) It is also essential that Army formations intended for amphibious assaults against opposition should be trained in close co-operation with the Naval assault forces that will carry them to the attack. The ideal to be aimed at is that they should think and act as one.

346. THE NEED FOR A COMBINED HEADQUARTERS

- (a) The Naval, Military and Air Force Commanders and the Supreme Commander or officer responsible for launching the operation, will usually have their own headquarters many miles apart. In Combined Operation Headquarters a permanent set of adjacent offices is provided specially for the Naval, Military and Air Force Commanders and their staffs, for all operations mounted under the Chief of Combined Operations.
- (b) The vital difference made to the planning of a Combined Operation when the outline plan is prepared by an experienced Inter-Service staff and the detailed plan by Force Commanders and their staffs working and living together, has been amply demonstrated in the Vaagsu, Bruneval and St. Nazaire raids, and was so again in the Dieppe operation.
- (c) During an assault, it is, of course, essential that the Naval and Military Force Commanders should be afloat in a specially equipped Headquarters ship, and thus able to get close enough to the battle to be in a position to take and implement decisions immediately affecting the course of the action.

347. PERIOD DURING WHICH AN OPERATION CAN BE UNDERTAKEN

- (a) The overriding factor of all operations against the enemy on the other side of the Channel is the weather. Weather conditions need not be the same for all types of operations. If a raid such as the assault on Dieppe is to be made, then the weather conditions under which it can be carried out differ from those which can be accepted in an operation involving a permanent landing on the enemy-occupied coast. The problem is further complicated by the fact that conditions required by the Royal Navy are not necessarily suitable for the Royal Air Force and *vice versa*.
- (b) The Dieppe raid showed clearly that for a raid in which the Naval and land forces are given full air protection, good visibility is essential, and this overriding factor must be added to others equally indispensable. The operation against Dieppe could not prudently have taken place if the cloud had been more than four to five-tenths at 4,000 feet, if the wind had been more than Force 3, or if there had been an appreciable swell. The sea had to be calm enough to make a withdrawal feasible. These conditions seldom, if ever, occurred during June, July and August, 1942. Furthermore, four previous operations had been postponed and subsequently cancelled because the weather conditions were worse than those required. Even on 19th August, conditions were not ideal, and the force was sailed by the Chief of Combined Operations on a forecast which was by no means as favourable as could have been desired. So much was this so that just before the actual

departure, the Naval Force Commander received a message warning him that the weather might deteriorate, but he nevertheless took the risk of continuing, a decision which was fully justified by events. It must also be borne in mind that the length of French coast within the advantageous fighter area is also open to prevailing westerly winds, which were one of the main causes for the postponement of the four previous operations. On the other hand, if Air co-operation can be dispensed with, then the number of days on which an operation can take place is increased, for calm days are often associated with fog and mist, conditions in which aircraft cannot operate with certainty, especially in the early morning.

- (c) The conditions governing an expedition in which the troops will remain on shore are different from those which must prevail during a raid. If troops have not to be withdrawn they can be put ashore in much worse weather, with a wind of force 5 or 6 and considerable swell. Here, however, the limiting factors are their reinforcement and their maintenance. To supply troops on shore over open beaches requires weather conditions similar to those needed for a raid, unless the abandonment on the beach, should the weather deteriorate, of the supply carrying craft in ever increasing numbers, can be accepted.
- (d) The conclusion must, therefore, be that since it is unjustifiable to mount an operation which cannot, with certainty, take place in the average year, it follows that a raid must be so planned as to be independent of tidal conditions in the greatest possible degree. This was so in the Dieppe raid which could have been carried out on 12 days in any lunar month, thus making it virtually certain that it could take place during the summer months. An operation, however, involving the occupation of enemy-held territory calls for a succession of days in which the weather conditions are favourable on the landing beaches. They are principally dependent on the time required to capture a port or sheltered waters of suitable dimensions. Such a succession of days can never be relied on when operating on beaches which all face one way and are lee shores in prevailing winds. Consequently an assault made with the intention of remaining ashore should be planned to take place in an area capable of being supplied over beaches which face in different directions, or in an area where a port or sheltered anchorage is likely to fall into our hands at a very early stage. In other words, a plan based on the assumption that weather conditions will be uniform is very likely to fail and, therefore, a plan which can be carried out even when they are indifferent or bad is essential.

348. FLEXIBILITY

- (a) The chances and opportunities of an assault landing are extremely difficult to gauge in advance. The military plan must, therefore, be flexible in order to enable the Commander to apply force where force has already succeeded.
- (b) The axiom, normal in land warfare, that it is unprofitable to reinforce a hold-up, is even more strongly applicable in the assault phase of an opposed landing, because, in the latter type of operation a hold-up almost invariably means that there is little or no room for manoeuvre.
Thus, to put in more troops, where the landing waves have not succeeded in penetrating the immediate defences, is likely to increase the target without increasing the prospects of success. This was again brought out at Dieppe.
- (c) If the military plan is to be flexible, then certain basic requirements must be accepted and must be embodied in the general arrangements for the operation. These requirements are discussed in paragraphs 349 to 354.
- (d) It must be recorded, however, that with the state of training of the landing craft crews which prevailed at the time of the Dieppe operation, a flexible military plan could not have been put into execution. It is only by the formation of the permanent Naval forces advocated in paragraph 345 (a) that the requisite standard of training can be achieved. The greater the number of experienced Royal Navy officers available, the shorter will be the period of training required by these forces.

349. THE WIDTH OF THE FRONT WHICH CAN BE ASSAULTED

- (a) If flexibility is to be a true characteristic of the plan, then the initial assault must cover several landing places. If, to take an extreme case, the assault is made across only one beach, then there is clearly little the military commander can do to make his arrangements flexible, for he will be dependent on success in one area, and must either batter his way through or fail.
- (b) It must be appreciated, however, that the following factors will qualify and limit the width of the front and the number of landing places which can be attacked with advantage:—
 - (i) The frontage which can be controlled by the Headquarters organization which it is possible to set up on the spot and the number of physically suitable beaches within that frontage;
 - (ii) The amount and type of support from the Naval forces and the air which can be made available;
 - (iii) The size of the military force and the nature and composition of the Naval assault force which have been allotted to it and the organization and skill of that force.



350. STRENGTH OF THE ASSAULT IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOW-UP FORCE

- (a) In a combined operation there are always present two strong, but natural, tendencies both of which militate against flexibility. The first is to allocate too great a strength to the assault in order to ensure success in this essential phase, while the second is to issue precise and comprehensive orders to the whole force in advance so that each unit and sub-unit shall know exactly what it is required to accomplish and how to do it.
- (b) In a small scale raid, such an allocation of strength to the assault and such precision in the orders may be permissible, because the operation will, in all probability, depend upon immediate penetration in a certain area and upon the completion of definite tasks within a restricted time limit.
- (c) In larger operations, however, it becomes more and more necessary to weigh the balance with care and judgment, bearing in mind that the greater the strength allotted to the assault, the weaker the force that can be held aloft—the more rigid the plan and the less the chance of switching landing craft and troops to areas where success has been attained and through which it should be exploited.
- (d) From the military point of view, therefore, the aim must be to allocate to the assault the minimum force required for success and to retain aloft the maximum force ready to follow in and exploit success wherever it has been achieved.
- (e) From the military point of view, however, there can be no objection if the support given by Naval vessels or Air forces to the assault is excessive and the criterion should be the maximum which can be made available rather than the minimum which might be adequate.
- (f) The problem is, however, easier to state than to solve.

351. CONTROL AND COMMUNICATIONS

- (a) The more flexible the plan and the greater the sub-division of the military force, the more essential it becomes that the control and communication arrangements should be of the highest standard.
- (b) It will not, in fact, be possible to carry out a flexible plan successfully unless the Commanders receive a constant series of accurate pictures of the situation on shore and unless, when in possession of such information they are able to take rapid executive action.
- (c) The following are the essential requirements:—
 - (i) A joint organisation, in which the arrangements for each service fit in with those of other services, and are available for emergency use by all. This must be centred in an H.Q. Ship, which should be duplicated as far as possible to meet the risk of loss.
Such a ship must include carefully laid-out arrangements for Command, Staff-work and communications, planned conjointly. These can only be satisfactory if the ship is properly fitted in permanent form.
 - (ii) Adequate Naval Signal organisation for the control of the numerous ships and landing craft engaged in the operation.
 - (iii) Alternative channels for the passing of information from shore to ship and *vice versa*. In this connection, it is to be noted that reliance must not be placed on a single method. For example, wireless links should be duplicated whenever possible, and visual signals, loud-hailers and any other available means, should be fully exploited.
 - (iv) On Army channels of communication no effort must be spared to establish and exploit alternative channels by which information can, if necessary, be passed. The fact that the same intelligence may reach the Military Commander from various sources and at about the same time, is not in practice either a waste of effort or over-insurance. The essentials are that the information should be sent, that it should arrive and that links should be available by which it can be acted on with the minimum delay.
 - (v) In the Naval organisation, on the other hand, although duplication of channels must be practised as far as possible, the large number of units with limited equipment which it is generally necessary to keep under centralised control makes essential the most rigid discipline and economy of signalling, and the duplication of reports cannot be accepted. The originator of any signal must, therefore, first consider whether or not his signal is really necessary for the conduct of the operation.
- (d) Good information and the power to act upon it are essential in all operations. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that the need for such facilities is particularly apparent in the assault phase of a combined operation when a narrow stretch of water may, through lack of them form an impenetrable barrier.
- (e) Much may depend upon the efficiency or otherwise of the communications between ground or ship and the aircraft supporting the operation.

352. KNOWLEDGE OF THE OPERATION AMONG ALL UNITS AND ALL RANKS

- (a) The more flexible the plan the more important it is that every officer, N.C.O. and man should know the intention of his superior and the outline of the operation as a whole and the detail of the primary task allotted to his own unit and to those on his flanks. Without such knowledge, units and individuals faced by unexpected circumstances cannot be expected to know how best to take advantage of a particular situation or how to further the operation as a whole.
- (b) Dissemination of knowledge to the extent contemplated in the preceding sub-paragraph requires time and access to certain facilities such as models, photographs and silhouettes. The use of such facilities is, of course, bound up with the difficult problem of security which is dealt with later. (See paragraph 367.)

353. REHEARSALS

- (a) No combined operation should be launched until it has been adequately rehearsed.
- (b) Rehearsals need not necessarily always be complete. For instance, the operation on land can be practised frequently without the actual disembarkation from landing craft being included. Similarly, the inter-communication system between ships, shore and air can be worked up without all sea, air and land forces being present.
- (c) After partial rehearsals, rehearsals on a larger scale may be desirable. No general rule can be laid down and commanders must consider each case on its merits.
- (d) It is particularly important that all sea-borne military headquarters should be given adequate opportunity for practice. They will, at any rate, during the initial stage of an operation be working in unfamiliar and probably cramped conditions. The best lay-out of the headquarters and the best placing of the inter-communication and intelligence staffs cannot be satisfactorily settled by discussions over a diagram. Such discussions must terminate in full-dress rehearsals with all shore headquarters fully represented.

354. VALUE OF SPECIAL TRAINING

- (a) There is no doubt that units or sub-units allotted specific tasks require specialised training for that task. For example, training for tasks which include street fighting or demolition work or attacks on pill-boxes or on battery positions should all be carried out over similar ground and distances and under conditions of light the same as those which may be expected in the operation itself. The more perfect the training the more perfect is the execution likely to be.
- (b) It should be realized that the number of persons possessing night vision *above* the normal is very small and that there are many more who have night vision *below* the normal. It is, therefore, imperative that tests should be carried out with the object of selecting personnel for key positions in the assault whose night vision is adequate. Admiralty Fleet Order No. 3977/42 gives the details of a simple little instrument for carrying out these tests. Special training is also needed to develop and improve night vision.
- (c) Without adequate sea training and opportunities of practice, military assault units will inevitably find themselves hampered and at a disadvantage. Though such training is necessary, it must however, come after that of the Naval formations taking part in the assault.

355. SUPPORT FOR THE ASSAULT

- (a) Leaving out of consideration the long preparatory bombardments for the reduction of "key" major coast defences which would be a necessary feature of invasion plans but cannot, for obvious reasons, be a preface to raids, the assault, in both raids and invasions, of a defended coast requires fire support while it is in progress, unless complete surprise can be obtained.
- (b) Surprise is likely to become progressively more difficult with the passage of time, and support fire more necessary as the enemy increases his defences.
- (c) If the assault is to take place under fire support, it must, in volume and effect, be comparable to that which would be available to a brigade attacking a strongly defended position in normal land warfare. The latter would, assuming a normal allocation of army field and medium artillery, amount to:—
 - (i) *Close support weapons*—One-6-pdr. for each 100 yards of objective.
 - (ii) *Neutralising weapons*—One-25-pdr. for each 20 yards of objective.
 - (iii) *Counter-battery weapon*—5.5-in. and 7.2-in. Howitzer. Sufficient to engage each enemy battery covering the assault beaches with 30 rounds every 30 seconds, or a total of about:—
140 guns on a brigade front of 2,000 yards.

This figure ignores the support of mortar fire which would be available to a brigade and the greater accuracy of guns on fixed platforms as compared with ship or craft-borne guns, and should then be regarded as a strict minimum.

- (d) The equivalent of these weapons must be available in the form of ships or craft used afloat or beached, in addition to self-propelled artillery, to cover the period between the beginning of the assault and the deployment of the artillery of the assault formations.

356. THE FOUR TYPES OF SUPPORT

- (a) Support for the assault can be most easily studied under four main headings :—
- (i) Support by heavy and medium naval bombardment (para. 357).
 - (ii) Support by air action (para. 358-361).
 - (iii) Support by special vessels or craft working close inshore (para. 362).
 - (iv) Military support during landing (para. 363).
- (b) The bombardment of Maaloy Island by H.M.S. "Kenya," a 6-in. cruiser, enabled landing craft to approach within 100 yards of the shore before it was considered necessary to cease fire. This was, no doubt, a special case, for the "Kenya" had been able to approach within point-blank range without detection. Such good fortune cannot be counted upon in operations against the coast of France and it must be borne in mind that cruisers are very vulnerable. At Dieppe, no ship larger than a "Hunt" class destroyer could, with safety, have been used, unless recourse had been had to a capital ship. The effect produced by the broadsides of a battleship at close range can justly be described as devastating. It may be recalled that on the 25th April, 1915, during the attack on Gallipoli, H.M.S. "Implacable" covered the landing at X beach from only 450 yards, firing 10 rounds of 12-in., 179 of 6-in. and 154 12-pdr. shells.

357. SUPPORT BY HEAVY AND MEDIUM NAVAL BOMBARDMENT

- (a) At Dieppe, the central assaults against the town itself were supported by a short bombardment carried out by destroyers. This bombardment did not prove effective support for the assault. It was neither heavy nor accurate enough to flatten strong defences, nor could destroyers follow the landing craft in close enough to support the actual assault at short range by dealing directly with such elements of the enemy's defences as had survived.
- (b) On the other hand, if larger ships could have been employed, and if they could have been supplied with bombardment charges and could either have observed their fire with accuracy or have it observed for them by aircraft, more satisfactory results would have been possible.
- (c) Thus the conclusion drawn is that if Naval bombardment is to be an effective means of preparing for the assault and supporting it, the following requirements must be met :—
- (i) Cruisers, monitors or even larger ships must be available for support fire, and should preferably be capable of indirect bombardment with air spotting.*
 - (ii) The position of the targets must be accurately ascertained beforehand.
 - (iii) Close support fire by special vessels or craft working close inshore with the assault craft is essential. Any smoke-screen laid must be laid clear of the line of close support fire which in its action must be direct.

358. SUPPORT BY AIR ACTION.—I. ACTION BY CANNON-FIGHTERS

- (a) The attacks on the central beaches and the final assault on the Varengeville battery were both preceded by cannon-fighter attacks. The attack on the Varengeville battery was particularly effective because "B" and "F" troops of No. 4 Commando waited until the cannon Spitfires went in and shot up the position, before delivering their final assault.
- (b) Such support has considerable moral results and is effective in that the enemy's attention is drawn away for a few invaluable minutes from the craft coming into land or the troops forming up to attack. At the same time, the enemy's attention cannot wholly be given to the cannon-fighters and experience showed that A.A. fire was much less intense than usual.
- (c) It must be appreciated, however, that air action of this kind is essentially fleeting in its nature. For instance, it cannot be expected to keep the enemy's defences quiescent for sufficient time to allow the leading troops to disembark and cut their way through beach wire, mines or other obstacles. Neither can cannon fighters be expected to put fixed defences out of action. Furthermore, cannon-fighters cannot at present operate in close support under cover of darkness and their activities are thus restricted to daylight action.
- (d) Lastly, it is particularly necessary for as large a number of close support squadrons of cannon-fighters as possible to be available. These aircraft have only a limited range and can therefore normally participate in a programme capable of only limited variation when operating towards the limit of their endurance. Unless a change in the programme is notified a sufficiently long time in advance, the cannon-fighters may be unable to synchronize their attack with that of the assaulting infantry. Cancellation, however, is possible almost up to zero hour and a new attack can always be delivered within 30 to 40 minutes if provision has been made for an adequate number of aircraft.

*Note.—In the Channel or the North Sea it is very probable that the use of cruisers would not be justified, because of their vulnerability to air attack.

- (e) In these circumstances, it is concluded that support by cannon-fighters should be regarded as a most valuable adjunct to an assault, but that when including them in the plan it must be borne in mind that the effect of their action is likely to be diversionary in character and of only very short duration. Cannon-fighters are rarely competent to silence a strongly protected position permanently.

359. II. SUPPORT BY HIGH LEVEL BOMBING

- (a) The plans for Dieppe did not include high level bombing prior to the assault. Had suitable day bombers such as American Fortresses been available in sufficient numbers this decision might well have been different. In the circumstances, the main objections to support by night bombing were :—
- (i) Surprise would have been lost because the bombing would have had to take place some time before the assault in order to allow the bombers to get clear of the target area by dawn, and to have been effective, the weight of the attack would have had to be larger than it is in the normal periodic raids on French ports.
 - (ii) It would be wasteful effort in view of the inaccuracies which must be expected.
 - (iii) The rubble from damaged houses might fill the streets and prevent the movements of tanks.
 - (iv) High level bombing was unlikely to damage many of the sea-front positions from which heavy fire was brought to bear on the landing places.
 - (v) In order to enable H.M.S. "Locust" and the cutting-out party to perform their tasks, it was necessary to avoid damage to the harbour installations and the power house.
- (b) As against these points, however, it may be argued that :—
- (i) Surprise would not necessarily have been given away had the bombing been part of a programme of attacks on coastal ports, including perhaps one or two previous raids on Dieppe itself.
 - (ii) Inaccuracies might to some extent have been overcome by the use of a few expert "path-finders" who could have indicated the target by flares.
 - (iii) Rubble in the streets might not have proved a worse obstacle than the undamaged road blocks and obstruction walls which were encountered.
 - (iv) Though particular defence positions might not have been damaged the personnel might have been killed or wounded while on the way to man them.
 - (v) The moral effect of a heavy raid and the dislocation that it causes cannot be overlooked.
- (c) The fair conclusion to draw seems to be that the question whether or not high level bombing should be included in the plan is an open one and that no hard and fast deduction should be drawn.
- Each case must be judged on its merits having regard to the *pros* and *cons* mentioned above and to the possibility of diverting bomber effort from other and perhaps more important programmes.
- (d) In connection with air support, generally, it is of obvious importance to note the recent developments in daylight bombing and to consider how they may effect the planning of an assault.
- (e) It is only fair to add that large scale night bombing of towns in France is against the general policy of His Majesty's Government, although an exception might have been made in the case of Dieppe had the Force Commanders really wanted it.

360. III. AIR ATTACKS ON ENEMY REINFORCEMENTS

- (a) Once an assault on any scale has been launched it will almost invariably be important to prevent or at least delay the move up of enemy reinforcements. If air action to this end is likely to be required, then it must be arranged for in the plan.
- Probably the easiest way of doing this is to hold suitable squadrons at call for the purpose and to organise operations by intruder aircraft at night and Tactical Reconnaissance aircraft by day along the likely approaches so that early warning can be obtained that enemy forces are on the move. Tactical reconnaissance by aircraft proved adequate at Dieppe though the casualties suffered were heavier than those inflicted on aircraft employed on other tasks.
- (b) There is little doubt that in a large scale operation, or when an assault is made in an area particularly suited to rapid reinforcement by the enemy, air action against enemy communication centres, barracks and camps will have to be undertaken as part of a set programme, which may have to be initiated some days or even weeks before the raid.
- When summing-up the relative importance of retarding or preventing the moves of enemy reinforcements it should be borne in mind that though the coastal defences may be formidable, they are fixed in character.
- Thus, once a breach has been made, the danger of serious counter-attack comes not so much from the garrisons of other fixed defences in the neighbourhood as from mobile reserves outside the immediate area of the assault. These reserves should be attacked from the air as and when opportunity offers.



- (c) In these circumstances, accurate intelligence data concerning the location of enemy formations is a necessity if the Commanders are to arrive at the proper decision regarding the allocation of aircraft as between this and other tasks. The ideal to be aimed at is for the presence of reinforcements to be detected by tactical reconnaissance aircraft and subsequently attacked.

361. IV. THE SCALE OF AIR SUPPORT AT DIEPPE IN RELATION TO THE SCALE OF THE LAND OPERATION

- (a) It is of particular interest to note that at Dieppe 67 Squadrons were employed on various tasks directly concerned with the operation. This was not abnormally high in view of the anticipated scale of the enemy's air opposition and proved adequate to cover the operation.* That opposition, however, would decrease :—

- (i) if operations on the same scale took place at several different points ;
- (ii) if they were continued over a longer period of time thus progressively reducing the enemy's air resources.

It is pointed out, however, that if more than one assault is delivered simultaneously at several different points, the enemy is free to concentrate all his air forces against any one of them, for it will scarcely be possible for the Royal Air Force, unless its strength is enormously increased, to give the scale of fighter cover provided at Dieppe to all of them at once. Landings must, therefore, take place with a sufficient interval of time between each to enable maximum fighter cover to be given to each landing in turn, or the enemy's strength in the air must have been reduced before the operation begins. If it is necessary for several landings to take place simultaneously, reliance must be placed on Intelligence and early warning R.D.F. Such information is normally sufficient indication to enable the Air Force Commander to divert fighter cover from one landing to another and, in the case of one landing only, to intercept enemy air forces on their way to the landing. It is, however, emphasised that this method at the present moment cannot be depended upon, though further developments should increase the probability of its successful use.

- (b) Enemy air attacks on ships were at times intensive but the volume of A.A. fire achieved by the close concentration of the ships greatly reduced the effectiveness of the enemy's low attacks. Such concentration of fire may make it possible for air cover to be reduced in its neighbourhood and used for other purposes. Broadly speaking ships and craft were only hit when detached. The moral is "Unity is Strength."
- (c) The enemy failed at any time to develop serious air attacks against the troops on shore.

362. SUPPORT BY SPECIAL VESSELS OR CRAFT WORKING CLOSE INSHORE

- (a) The assaults at Dieppe, particularly on the central beaches, showed in the most clear fashion the need for overwhelming fire support during the initial stages of the attack. It is during these vital minutes while troops are disembarking, cutting or blasting their way through wire, clearing beach mines and finding routes over obstacles that the need for close support is at its greatest. At the same time it is during this very period that the troops are least able to support themselves because there has not been time to organise and deploy supporting arms. The support that is so necessary must, therefore, come from outside sources ; for without it, the assault will almost inevitably lose momentum and may end in a stalemate with the troops pinned to the beaches, unable either to advance or to withdraw. Overwhelming support of the kind now envisaged should not only make the assault possible, but would also be of the greatest value in protecting the craft themselves from being disabled during the final closing on the beach and while beached.
- (b) It is quite certain that the "Support Craft" which are now available do not meet the requirement envisaged in the preceding paragraph. They are too lightly armed and too lightly armoured for continued action against the type of defences which the enemy have erected at all important points on the occupied coast-line.
- (c) It must be remembered that though an assault may take place to a flank of the main objective, it is in itself a frontal attack. Thus, once the assault is discovered, there is little room for subtlety. The main necessity is to batter a way through in the shortest possible time.
- (d) In order to achieve this object, it is considered that an entirely new type of support vessel is required, which might be described as a shallow-draught armoured gun-boat. There is also the technical possibility of a specially designed small mobile fort, constructed on lines permitting it to be brought to the scene of action and there sunk in position for as long as may be needed, leaving only the gun turret above water. This, however, would, in the nature of things, be more for barrage and counter-battery work than suitable for direct close support against beach defences in the opening stage of the attack.

* Note. See also paragraph 371.



- (e) No such gun-boats or mobile forts exist. The need, however, does and it can only be met by new design and new construction. This is a matter not only of real urgency but is one which will grow in importance. There are two sides to the question. On the one hand, each week that passes allows the enemy more time to strengthen the already strong coastal crust through which we must break, before large forces can be deployed. In carrying out this work, we must anticipate that the enemy will naturally give priority to important areas and ports. On the other hand, the necessity on our part to include in any major attack or even in any major raid the very areas which are most likely to be strongly defended, does not grow less.

363. MILITARY SUPPORT DURING LANDING

The attacking troops can add themselves to the volume of covering fire developed during the landing in various ways:—

- (i) Self-propelled mobile artillery provided that it is put ashore immediately will prove of great assistance in covering the initial assault. In addition to fire from specially designed and fitted support craft, such as the L.C.S. (M) and L.C.S. (L), much assistance can also be given by the troops from the actual landing craft. In each of these latter type of craft, one or two Bren guns and, whenever possible, a 2-in. mortar should be mounted ready for use. The Bren guns may be required against either land or air targets while the 2-in. mortar will be particularly valuable in providing smoke cover and in blanketing searchlights which may open up on the landing places.
- (ii) It is to be noted that firing from landing craft requires a considerable amount of practice and that frequent opportunities for such practice must be arranged during the preparatory training period.

364. THE TIMING OF THE ASSAULT

- (a) In the Dieppe operation the assaults which took place in the first faint light of dawn (i.e. a visibility of 200 yards) succeeded, whereas those that came in after dawn were unable to make so much progress. It would be very unwise however to draw any definite conclusions from these facts because the daylight assaults which were those against the town itself were faced by defences which were far stronger and by difficulties which did not exist on the flanks.
- (b) Thus it is considered that the problem whether to land in darkness or in daylight is an open one and that each particular case must be judged in relation to the broad questions stated below:—
 - (i) Do the conditions of tide and moon, and the time which will be taken by the ships and craft on passage permit of a choice between a day and a night assault?
 - (ii) Do the circumstances of the operation indicate that a night assault will give a reasonable chance of tactical surprise? If the answer to this question is in the affirmative, then it is considered that a good many risks and disadvantages can profitably be accepted in order to gain surprise. In this connection, the importance of having vessels and craft of sufficient speed is to be emphasized for good speed will very often not only make an assault possible that otherwise would be impracticable, but in many cases will achieve the additional advantages of a tactical surprise.
 - (iii) If a daylight assault is thought best, can it be said that the available means of support (including smoke) will be sufficient to deal with enemy defences unhampered by darkness?
 - (iv) If a night assault is thought best, can the following questions be answered satisfactorily?

Is the Naval assault force capable of accurately conducting an approach in the area concerned and does it possess the latest navigational aids necessary to make an accurate landfall?

Is there sufficient time available for the specialised training required by the Naval and Military personnel taking part?
- (c) All these questions are comprehensive and each one of them has many ramifications which must be examined by those who have to take the decision.
- (d) Before reaching this decision there appears to be one further and fundamental question which the Commanders concerned should ask themselves; it is this:—

"Will a night assault allow me to accomplish something which I do not think I can equally well accomplish by a daylight assault?"

365. THE LANDING OF TANKS IN THE ASSAULT

- (a) At Dieppe the tanks, which were all landed in daylight with the leading waves in the face of defences which dominated the beach and against tank obstacles that had not been breached, found themselves in grave difficulties. The deduction to be drawn is that, unless overwhelming fire support is available, tanks should not be landed until defences have been captured and the obstacles cleared.



- (b) The L.C.T. offer a big target when used with the assaulting waves and must not be delayed on the beaches beyond the time required to disembark tactically their loads of tanks and other troops if these are carried. At Dieppe they drew most of the fire, and suffered heavily.

366. BEACH RECONNAISSANCE

As soon as it is known that a project involving a combined operation is under consideration, the question of beach reconnaissance in all its aspects must be investigated. In many cases, sufficient information can be obtained from existing publications and personal knowledge. As the project develops, the beach reconnaissance plan should also develop, not side by side but ahead of it, so that when the outline planning stage is reached, the reconnaissance of the beach is complete in every detail with photographs, silhouettes and information concerning the nature and slope of the beach and the waters off it, whether tanks and track vehicles can land on it with or without the use of track laying devices, etc. Information concerning the beaches at Dieppe was very complete and much of it was obtained by the study of oblique and vertical air photographs. Naval reconnaissance methods should also be used but care must be taken that they remain undetected.

367. SECURITY

- (a) One of the most difficult problems to solve in the mounting of a combined operation is that of security.
- (b) The Dieppe operation was a particularly complex case as it had been mounted, postponed and cancelled before being re-mounted in the form in which it eventually took place. Thus many hundreds of people were aware of the objective and there was clearly a risk that security might have been jeopardised during the 41 days which intervened between the original cancellation and preliminary order to sail the expedition. Very special steps were therefore taken, and it is gratifying to note that all intelligence sources agreed that the landing came as a surprise and that no abnormal manning of defences or reinforcement of the area had taken place.
- (c) The conditions of each operation will vary so much that it is impossible to lay down rigid and detailed rules for the maintenance of security. Common-sense and the particular circumstances of the operation must dictate the measures to be taken.

Attention is drawn to the following points:—

- (i) The maintenance of security among the Naval force is more difficult than in the case of the other Services since the relatively higher trained men who man the craft cannot be prevented from indulging in speculation when unusual preparatory steps are being taken. Such steps are usually necessary at a comparatively early stage. Although speculation may be wide of the mark it may easily focus the attention of a trained agent on the ships concerned and he will at once divine what is in the wind. The only persons who can allay such speculation or direct it into harmless channels, are the Captains of the ships concerned. It must, therefore, be a cardinal principle for these officers to be put into the picture before any overt action is taken in connection with an operation.
- (ii) The aim should be to disseminate intelligence at the earliest moment without divulging either the date or the place of the operation. Without naming date or place, much can be done to render training realistic by giving units the details of their tasks, the distances they will have to cover, the type of country and obstacles they will have to move over, and the time limit, if any, within which they must complete their tasks.

It will be necessary also to say whether they are to concentrate on day or night work and to indicate whether there will be other units operating on the flanks.

Armed with this information unit commanders will be able to relate their training to actual operational requirements and to concentrate on the subjects that really matter. It is inevitable that those of an enquiring mind will sense that an operation is being prepared but they will not know when or where.

- (iii) In certain cases, it may be found possible, without endangering security, to issue maps, models and photographs which bear no names.

The preparation of such aids requires time and demands must be foreseen at an early stage in the planning if they are to be of real use.

- (iv) It will be necessary throughout the preparatory stage to keep a careful record of all those who are aware of the operation. In this connection the issue of cards bearing the code name of the operation and the name and details of the holder has been found useful. Such cards, the issue of which should be severely restricted, authorise the holder to speak to another holder, but to no non-holder, regarding the operation.

- (v) Throughout the preparatory stages, the "G" and "Q" staffs of all three Services must work closely together. If this is not the case, it may be found that the most carefully veiled arrangements by one branch are rendered entirely useless, through lack of knowledge on the part of the other.

- (vi) It goes without saying that the number of officers in each headquarters who know of the operation should be kept to the minimum.
- (vii) The early production of a "cover" plan for the forces engaged including not only their training but their moves is an urgent necessity.
- (viii) It must be realized that strategical surprise may be completely compromised and the constitution of the force given away by the use of wireless, particularly in a well-known operational training area, unless this problem is carefully thought out and regulated. The co-operation of units outside the force may be necessary to adjust or sustain traffic at the required level.
- (ix) The administrative and movement aspects of the security problem are dealt with in Annex 12, but it may be said here that the issue of large quantities of stores, equipment and explosives to units, ships and craft is apt to provide much cause for speculation and rumour.
- (d) The difficulties encountered in trying to select an area in the South of England which can be completely "sealed" appear to be insurmountable. For various reasons it proved impossible to get even an island like the Isle of Wight completely "sealed" before the operation. Much can be done, however, to offset this disadvantage by the imposition of postal and telegraphic censorship, monitoring of telephone lines and by the installation of plain-clothes police in hotels, public houses and places where gossip is likely to occur.
- (e) During the Dieppe operation, complete copies of the Military Force Commander's Operation Orders were taken ashore. It is not considered that there is any justification for such a step and that only important extracts such as code words or time-tables need be landed. Even in these cases the numbers carried should be reduced to the minimum. Force Commanders, will, in most cases, be well advised to indicate in orders the portions which may be landed, and those who are authorised to carry them. To prevent the enemy being in a position to quote any of these portions which may be captured as being "official operation orders," these extracts should be copied in manuscript and have their official headings removed.

368. WHEN TO BRIEF TROOPS

- (a) In the first mounting of the Dieppe operation troops were briefed and embarked on the first day and thereafter had to remain "sealed" for the whole of the five days during which the operation was kept mounted, waiting for the weather to improve. In some of the smaller ships, which were only intended to ferry soldiers across, the discomfort and lack of space and facilities decreased the efficiency of the troops day by day.
- (b) It is therefore desirable to refrain, not only from briefing, but from embarking troops until a long range weather forecast shows some prospect of the weather becoming sufficiently settled to give really good chances of the operation coming off shortly after embarkation and briefing. This was done when the Dieppe operation was finally mounted.
- (c) The briefing which has to be given to the aircrews and troops of the airborne division is of necessity much more complicated and, at present, the minimum time required is about four days for the aircrews and two days for the troops. Except in periods of set weather no weather forecast can extend to cover so long a period. It follows that briefing for the airborne division has to take place before there is any real prospect of knowing when the operation is coming off. Further, since the aircrews and troops are not embarked in ships but are scattered in camps, efficient "sealings" can only be done at the expense of focussing attention on the imminence of an operation. The time taken for briefing could probably be reduced to about twelve hours for airborne troops if facilities could be made available for the airborne Division to reproduce the requisite number of "models" for simultaneous briefing of all units concerned.

369. THE USE OF AIRBORNE TROOPS

- (a) In the original plan for the Dieppe operation Airborne Troops were included to deal with certain important batteries.
In the final plan for the operation they were omitted.
The participation of Airborne Troops calls for certain weather conditions, especially as far as light is concerned, and in so doing increases the odds against a particular operation taking place within the favourable period for moon and tide.
In this respect the Dieppe report makes it clear that though the conditions on the day of the attack were satisfactory for ships and landing craft, they would not have permitted the use of Airborne Troops at the time required in the original plan. In fact, weather conditions suitable both for landing craft and Airborne Troops did not occur at all during the period. Thus, had the latter been included, the operation would have had to be cancelled.
- (b) It should be observed, however, that technique, equipment and methods are continually improving and that conditions which would be considered hazardous or impossible today may become far from impracticable in a few months time.



(c) It is considered that the correct deductions to draw are the following :—

- (i) Airborne Troops provide a means of achieving surprise and of getting over difficulties both literally and figuratively which other arms do not possess. They should, therefore, be included in plans as often as possible.
- (ii) However, so long as the present weather limitations apply, it is advisable that Airborne Troops should not be allotted to tasks of such importance as would entail the cancellation of the operation if adverse "airborne weather conditions" prevailed.

Thus, they should be employed on tasks which, though extremely helpful, are not vital to the plan as a whole. If so used, then their possible non-participation will not necessarily mean the cancellation of the entire operation. It should, however, be borne in mind that the tendency of recent inventions is to overcome the main obstacle—the necessity for suitable light conditions—to the use of Airborne Troops. The new navigational aid is now giving most satisfactory results and, provided one or more men can be landed before the operation, troops can be dropped accurately under almost any light conditions.

- (iii) The question of briefing and "sealing" of Airborne Troops and their aircrews must be taken into consideration when deciding whether to employ them.
- (iv) Close touch should be kept with Airborne formations so that those responsible for preparing plans are kept aware of all progress made and of the weather and light conditions in which improved methods and equipment may allow them to operate.

370. CHOICE OF ASSAULT LANDING PLACES

- (a) The choice of assault landing places is limited principally by the tidal conditions at the time of the landing, the beach gradients, and the exits from the beaches. In addition, the time that can be allowed on shore has a direct bearing on the choice of landing places in raiding operations of comparatively short duration.
- (b) It is considered, however, that whenever the conditions permit the assaults should be planned to develop round the flanks of a strongly defended locality, such as a town, rather than frontally against it.
- (c) It is recognised that the defences along the whole occupied coast are becoming formidable. But the intense difficulties caused at Dieppe by well-concealed and reinforced positions in houses, by road-blocks and obstruction walls are very evident from the report on the operation. The landing places at Dieppe were peculiarly difficult, for in addition to the frontal defences they were flanked by high cliffs from which coast defence guns and other arms maintained heavy enfilade fire. These defences could not be neutralised by the bombardment, bombing, or assault landings. What happened at Dieppe points to the wisdom of avoiding frontal attacks on such areas whenever possible.

Naturally, the situation would be radically altered if very powerful fire support was available during the early stages, or if the defences had been subdued by action before the assault, but in the absence of such support or preparatory action it will be wise to envelop a strongly defended locality rather than to make a frontal attack upon it.

This by no means excludes a frontal feint staged in order to fix the enemy's defences and perhaps his reserves as well. On the contrary, every form of feint deception and diversion should be practised in order to mislead and confuse him during the all-important period when the leading troops are being landed and are fighting to make good their bridgeheads.

371. AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION

- (a) During the Dieppe operation, there were many cases of our own aircraft being engaged by our own guns. Such incidents are always likely to occur in the heat of an action, but every possible step must be taken to reduce them to an absolute minimum.
- (b) The following measures are recommended :—
 - (i) The early issue to all ships and units of photographs and silhouettes showing the types of aircraft which will be acting in support of the operation, and of enemy aircraft likely to be seen. Lectures should also be given as frequently as opportunity offers.
 - (ii) Arrangements to be made for aircraft of the various types to fly over ships and units during training and rehearsals. On such occasions personnel of the Royal Observer Corps should, whenever possible, be present so as to indicate the type and the distinctive features by which it may be recognised.
 - (iii) During the operation itself, it will be invaluable if specially trained personnel (possibly from the Observer Corps) can be allotted to ships and landing places so that they are available to distinguish friendly from hostile aircraft at the earliest moment.
 - (iv) Pilots to be instructed to avoid as far as possible flying straight at ships, as the guns' crews are bound to treat all aircraft flying straight at their ship as hostile.
 - (v) The greatest possible use should be made of the present schools for aircraft recognition established at the various ports.



372. LANDING OF BEACH ORGANISATION PERSONNEL

- (a) Beach parties at Dieppe were put ashore as complete detachments in the first flights with the object of getting the landing places organised from the earliest moment.
- (b) In practice, however, it was found that the landing of complete beach parties had two major disadvantages. The first was that their presence meant leaving out an equivalent number of the leading sub-units. The second that, if, as happened, the action did not proceed according to plan, the beach party was likely to become embroiled in the fighting ashore and as a result to suffer casualties which might be great enough to prevent it functioning as an organised body for some considerable time.
- (c) It is recommended, therefore, that beach signal organisation personnel including beach parties should be distributed evenly between the escorting craft for each Group of landing craft and that it should be the Beachmaster himself, in one of these craft with the Beach Signal Officer, who should decide at what time the various elements of beach organisation personnel parties can safely be landed. Situation reports from reasonably close inshore could then be passed before they had landed.

373. PROTECTION DURING PASSAGE

During its progress across the Channel, the force attacking Dieppe was very vulnerable to surface attack. None, in fact, developed, but it will be imprudent to assume that such a risk can again be taken with impunity. It is therefore necessary for a heavier Naval escort to be provided than was available for the operation against Dieppe.

374. THE USE OF SMOKE

- (a) Given reasonable atmospheric conditions smoke properly used can be a very valuable aid to a combined operation.

It can, nevertheless, become a double edged weapon if its employment is not most carefully planned between the three Services.

- (b) At Dieppe, for instance, it might have been helpful in order to cover the landing craft during the final stages of their approach, and the initial stages of the landing itself, to have ended the Naval bombardment of the central beaches with some salvoes of a smoke shell or, alternatively, to have laid a curtain of smoke across the front of the town by aircraft. If, however, smoke had been put down by either of these methods, then the cannon fighters could not have gone in to make their attacks just before the landing, and in the case of smoke laid by aircraft, bombarding ships would probably have lost sight of their targets too soon. The comparative advantages of a fighter attack and no smoke as against a smoke screen and no fighter attack had to be weighed and a decision reached. This isolated incident appears an excellent example of one of the numberless points directly affecting all three Services which inevitably crops up during the planning of a combined operation and which can only be settled by joint consideration and a joint decision on the part of the Force Commanders.
- (c) The conditions for smoke during the Dieppe operation were excellent and the following methods were employed for producing it :—
 - (i) by special smoke apparatus (Chloro-Sulphuric Acid) carried in certain ships and craft ;
 - (ii) by smoke-floats carried by ships and craft ;
 - (iii) by aircraft, some dropping phosphorus smoke-bombs and others laying smoke curtains with S.C.I. ;
 - (iv) by 2-in. and 3-in. mortars.
- (d) It is considered that attention should be drawn to the following points which indicate the periods during which smoke will probably be especially required and to certain qualifications which should be borne in mind :—
 - (i) If the assault is carried out in daylight it is virtually certain that smoke will be required to cover the landing craft during the final stages of the approach. Similarly, if ships or craft are required to lie comparatively close to the shore during daylight hours, then they will require smoke to cover them from shore batteries and from air attack. Such screens may have to persist throughout the daylight hours. A long period of this kind entails the carriage and employment of very large quantities of smoke equipment which may require special provision.
 - (ii) The withdrawal from a combined operation, especially if the enemy is in close contact and can still bring fire to bear from fixed or mobile batteries, is bound to be a difficult undertaking and constitutes a phase of the operation during which smoke will without doubt play a big part. Experiences at Dieppe more than proved its value at a critical time of this sort.
 - (iii) The smoke laid to cover craft as they approach the landing places must follow and not precede action by fighter aircraft against these landing places, and the preliminary Naval bombardment.



- (iv) A screen of smoke lying between the Headquarters ship and the shore makes visual signalling impossible and signalling by pyrotechnics a doubtful means of inter-communication. If such conditions are likely to continue for any length of time, then it becomes all the more important to ensure that alternative wireless channels exist in order to replace any that may become for one reason or another, unworkable. (See Annex 10.)

- (v) The blanketing of a battery by smoke just prior to an assault upon it is obviously possible and more often than not desirable, but the blanketing of a battery by smoke in order to prevent it shooting is very likely to prove disappointing.

The former is an offensive use of smoke and is followed by immediate action at close quarters as in the case of the Varengeville battery.

The latter is a defensive use of the weapon and though it may reduce the battery's effort by making the local conditions unpleasant and inconvenient it is unlikely to prevent it shooting as the remote observation post which usually exists, will not necessarily have been effected.

- (vi) Various actions at Dieppe showed the value of smoke to infantry. When a definite target, such as a defensive position or pill-box or battery is the objective, it can be studied in precise detail from air photographs and the attack on it rehearsed under varying atmospheric conditions over ground which is similar.

- (vii) The smoke plan, like the plan as a whole, should be flexible so that the arrangements can be accommodated to fit a change in the weather. Such flexibility will probably demand the provision and carriage of additional smoke stores so that a task which would have been undertaken by aircraft under certain conditions can, if necessary, be undertaken by another method. It took approximately two hours to change a squadron from smoke-curtain installation to smoke-bombs or *vice versa*. Thus if it is uncertain whether smoke-bombs or S.C.I. will be used, it will be necessary to have some aircraft loaded with S.C.I. and some with smoke-bombs. This may be uneconomical in aircraft, but in order that the flexibility of the smoke plan may be retained the extra aircraft will be necessary.

Steps are now being taken with the object of discovering how far it is possible to reduce the time taken to load S.C.I.

- (viii) Force Commanders will require frequent meteorological reports throughout the operation, and a meteorologist should be attached to their staff.

- (ix) The Dieppe operations showed the necessity for a careful assessment during the planning stage of smoke requirements. These proved higher than were anticipated and there is evidence to show that a greater quantity, particularly of smoke-grenades, should have been carried.

375. PROVISION OF SOME FORM OF LIGHT ARTILLERY

- (a) Once an assault has got across the landing place and is making progress inland, one of the main and urgent requirements will be adequate supporting fire so that momentum should not be lost and so that strongly defended areas can be assaulted without delay.
- (b) It is considered that such support can only be provided rapidly by self-propelled artillery and by weapons which can be manhandled ashore because beach roadways will not have been laid and proper clearance of obstacles will still be uncompleted. In such conditions equipment which is in any way cumbersome will not fulfil the requirements.
- (c) In these circumstances it is suggested that the allocation of 3.7-in. howitzers and heavy mortars to assaulting units should be considered.

