

Upon East

the Italian Army
rani. Our casualties
and wounded, and
about five times as
150 vehicles des-
with their communi-
ed by 60 miles, the
down to spend the
s. They were con-
by our small mobile
ffered serious main-
es.

I had a fear for
h seemed almost

for C.I.G.S.
21.ix.40

(from Governor
Malta) confirms my
out Malta. Beaches
average battalion
s, and no reserves
worth speaking of,
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You must remember
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appears to be

ve thought four
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moment. We must
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said on his death-
ad a lot of trouble
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ly this is true of
ember, 1940. The
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t, by this date
y turned his glare

id not press their
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round the Cape
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ans to reinforce
y serious attack
made upon it, and
y a landing upon
st any time. Thus

(continued)

1949
HL

Plans To Send Free French Forces To W. Africa

ON the evening of August 3, 1940,
I sent my general approval from
Chequers to a proposal for landing
Free French forces in West Africa.
Gen. de Gaulle, Maj.-Gen. Spears and
Maj. Morton had evolved a plan in
outline, of which the object was to
raise the Free French flag in West
Africa, to occupy Dakar, and thus
consolidate the French Colonies in
West and Equatorial Africa for
Gen. de Gaulle, and later to rally the
French Colonies in North Africa.

On August 4 the Chiefs of Staff
Committee considered the details of
this plan as worked out further by
the Joint Planning Sub-Committee,
and drew up their report for the
War Cabinet. The proposals of the
Chiefs of Staff were based on the
three following assumptions:

First, that the force must be
equipped and loaded so that it could
land in any French West African
port;

Secondly, that the expedition
should consist entirely of Free
French troops, and have no British
elements, except the ships in which
it moved and their naval escort;

Thirdly, that the matter should
be settled as between Frenchmen,
that the expedition would land with-
out effective opposition.

It soon became clear that General
de Gaulle required more British sup-
port than the Chiefs of Staff had con-
templated. They represented to me
that this would involve commitments
larger and more enduring than those
which had been foreseen, and also
that the expedition was beginning to
lose its Free French character.

Our resources were at this time so
severely strained that this extension
could not be lightly accepted. How-
ever, on August 6 I conferred with
General de Gaulle, and at 11 p.m.
on August 7 I presided over a meet-
ing of the Chiefs of Staff Committee
on the project. It was agreed that
the best place to land the Free
French force was Dakar. I stated
that the expedition must be suffi-
ciently backed by British troops to
ensure its success, and asked for a
larger plan on these lines.

On Aug. 13 I brought the matter
before the War Cabinet, explaining
that it went farther than the origi-
nal plan of a purely French expedi-
tion.

The details of landing six different
parties at dawn on the beaches near
Dakar and thus dispersing the efforts
of the defenders, assuming there
was opposition, were examined by
my colleagues. The War Cabinet ap-
proved the plan, subject to consi-
deration by the Foreign Secretary
upon the chances of Vichy France
declaring war. Measuring the situa-
tion as far as I could, I did not be-
lieve this would happen.

I had now become set upon this

venture. I approved the appoint-
ment of Vice-Adml. John Cunning-
ham and Maj.-Gen. Irwin as the
commanders of the expedition. They
visited me at Chequers on the night
of Aug. 12, and we went through
all the aspects of this doubtful and
complex affair. I drafted their in-
structions myself.

I thus undertook in an exception-
al degree the initiation and ad-
vocacy of the Dakar expedition, to
which the code name "Menace" was
assigned. Of this, although I can-
not feel we were well served on all
occasions and certainly had had
luck, I never at any time repented.

Dakar was a prize; rallying the
French colonial empire a greater.
There was a fair chance of gaining
these results without bloodshed, and
I felt in my finger-tips that Vichy
France would not declare war.

OUR two dangers were now delay
and leakage, and the first aggra-
vated the second.

At this time the Free French forces
in England were a band of exiled
heroes in arms against the reigning
Government of their country. They
were ready to fire on their own fel-
low-countrymen, and accept the sink-
ing of French warships by British
guns. Their leaders lay under sen-
tence of death.

Who can wonder at, still less
blame them for, a tenseness of emo-
tion or even for indiscretion?

The War Cabinet could give or-
ders to our own troops without any-
one but the commanders and the
Chiefs of Staff circle having to be
informed of our intentions. But
General de Gaulle had to carry his
gallant band of Frenchmen with him.
Many got to know. Dakar became
common talk among the French
troops. At a dinner in a Liverpool
restaurant French officers toasted
"Dakar!"

Our assault landing-craft had to
travel on trolleys across England
from near Portsmouth to Liverpool,
and their escort wore tropical kit.

(To Be Continued)

MAY 31 1949
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