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Chapter 9

The Persian Corridor as a Route for Aid to the USSR

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During World War II, the United States and Great Britain carried on a massive supply program for the USSR based on the rationale that the Soviet Union's continuance in the war as an active and powerful ally was a fundamental condition for victory over Hitler's Germany. Until May 1945, common agreement on the necessity for defeating Germany totally and finally tended to obscure differences in political aims. American and British leaders-both military and political-agreed that without involvement of the major portion of the German Army on the Eastern Front, any invasion of Fortress Europe from the west would be rendered practically impossible. They therefore accorded aid to the USSR a claim of extremely high priority on Anglo-American material resources. But getting the promised supplies delivered and satisfying the demands of the Soviet Government, a most exacting ally, was an onerous task. It involved some of the most difficult decisions that the Western Allies had to make. One of the most important of these, reached in August and September 1942, was to give the U.S. Army control of the movement of munitions and supplies to the USSR through the Persian Corridor, and to accord that project one of the highest priorities in the Allied scale. (*See Map 6.*) This decision was made at a critical juncture of the war against Germany, in a period before the tide had definitely turned in favor of the Allies, when any commitment, however small, of ships, supplies, and trained men had to be carefully weighed in the strategic balance.

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(Map 6)

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Only the President and Prime Minister could make the basic decision that the Americans should have responsibility. But before this basic decision could be given any practical effect, military agencies at several different levels had to formulate plans and estimate the impact of fulfilling them. And it was the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) who gave the project the final stamp of approval after the military plan was drawn up. The whole process serves as a prime example of the complexity of the processes by which such politico-military decisions are arrived at in the conduct of coalition warfare. [1]

The Soviet Protocols and the Routes of Deliver

The supply program for the USSR took the form of a series of protocols, definite diplomatic commitments negotiated at the highest governmental levels stipulating exact quantities of specific types of supplies to be made available to the USSR by the United States and Great Britain over a given period of time. The First Protocol, signed at Moscow on 1 October 1941 while the United States was still at peace, covered the nine-month period from that date until 30 June 1942. The Second Protocol was negotiated to cover the period from 1 July 1942 to 30 June 1943 and the Third and Fourth for similar annual periods in 1943-44 and 1944-45. [2] These protocols were the bibles, so to speak, by which supply to the USSR was governed. In this way they differed from any other of the lend-lease commitments of the United States Government before and during World War II.

To be sure, adjustments in protocol quantities could be made by negotiation with the Russians, and each protocol contained a safeguarding clause stipulating that the fortunes of war might make delivery impossible, [3] but neither adjustments nor safeguarding clauses

[1] The present study is based primarily on Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943* (Washington 1956), and T. H. Vail Motter, *The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia* (Washington, 1952), both in UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II. Some use has also been made of two other volumes in the same series: Joseph Bykofsky and Harold Larson, *The Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas* (Washington, 1957) for certain details relating to the transportation problem in Iran; and Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1941-1942* (Washington, 1953), for the story of the development of Anglo-American strategy. On the convoys to North Russia, Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Battle of the Atlantic, September 1939-May 1943* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1947) and Winston S. Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950) contain useful information. Guides to the original source material beyond those cited herein may be found in the footnotes and bibliographies of UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II.

[2] For the text of the Soviet protocols see U.S. Dept of State, WARTIME INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS, *Soviet Supply Protocols*, Publication 2759, European Ser. 22 (Washington, no date).

[3] For instance, in the Second Protocol the safeguarding clause read as follows: "It is understood that any program of this sort must be tentative in character and must be subject to unforeseen changes which the progress of the war may require from the stand-point of stores as well as from the standpoint of shipping." See above, n. 2.

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provided any genuine avenue of escape from commitments except when the Russians were willing to agree. And pressure from the Russians was relentless not only for fulfillment of existing commitments to the letter but for additional quantities and for new weapons that the developing war on the Eastern Front led them to think desirable. The rationale behind the program gave these pressures almost irresistible force despite the sacrifices involved for the Anglo-American effort in the West.

These sacrifices were greatest during the years 1941 and 1942 when British and American resources were under heavy strain to meet even the minimum requirements of their own forces. Every military move required a close calculation of the availability of troops, of equipment, and of shipping to transport them. The supplies and equipment promised to the Soviets could be made available only at considerable sacrifice of an American Army in training and a British Army fighting for its life in the Middle East. Shipping, the most crucial resource of all in the period following Pearl Harbor, could also be put on the run to the USSR only by accepting limitations on the deployment of American and British forces to danger spots round the globe. Yet furnishing the supplies and the shipping in the end proved to be the less difficult part of the task of supplying the USSR; by mid-1942 the central problem had become that of opening or keeping open routes of delivery over which these ships and supplies, made available at such sacrifice, could move to the USSR.

These routes of delivery were long, roundabout, and difficult. With the Germans in control of most of western Europe and of French North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Baltic were closed to Allied cargo vessels. This left three main alternative routes for the transport of supplies from the United States to the Soviet Union. The first ran across the Atlantic and around the coast of Norway to Soviet Arctic and White Sea ports, principally Murmansk and Archangel, the second across the Pacific to Vladivostok and over the Trans-Siberian Railway to European Russia, the third around the coast of Africa to the Persian Gulf and thence across Iran to the Soviet border. (*See Map III, inside back cover.*) Each of these routes had its definite limitations. The northern route around Norway was the shortest but it also was the most vulnerable to attack by German submarines and land-based aircraft. Moreover, winter cold and ice frequently blocked Soviet harbors and rendered sailing conditions for Allied merchantmen scarcely tolerable even without the German threat. The route to Vladivostok ran directly past the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido. Ships flying American or British flags could not proceed through waters controlled by the Japanese once Japan had gone to war against Brit-

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ain and the United States. And even in Soviet flag shipping, a very scarce commodity in 1941-42, the United States did not dare risk supplies and equipment definitely identifiable as for military end use. Moreover, the rail line from Vladivostok to European Russia had initially a very limited capacity. The southern route via the Persian Gulf was the only one relatively free of the threat of enemy interference, but in 1941 it possessed an insignificant capacity. Iranian ports were undeveloped and the Iranian State Railway running north to the USSR was rated in October 1941 as capable of transporting but 6,000 tons of Soviet aid supplies monthly, hardly the equivalent of a single shipload.

In August 1941, by joint agreement with the USSR, the British moved into control of southern Iran while the Soviet Union took over the northern portion of the country. This joint occupation, regularized by treaty arrangements between the two powers and a new Iranian Government, secured the land area through which supplies transported by sea over the southern route could be carried on to the USSR. The question of the effort the British and Americans should devote to developing the necessary facilities in Iran to make any considerable flow of aid through this area possible was therefore a basic one from the moment the Western Allies committed themselves to a large-scale Soviet aid program. For a year after the initial occupation, preoccupation with other tasks in a period of scarcity of men and materials combined with Soviet intransigence to delay any positive decision or practicable plan. During that year the major effort was devoted to forwarding supplies to the USSR over the more vulnerable northern route. Only after the Germans had demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that they could make the northern route prohibitively costly, did the United States and Britain decide on a concentrated effort to develop the Persian Corridor as an alternate route.

Early Failure of Develop the Persian Gulf

American and British transportation experts in September 1941 freely predicted that the southern route would eventually provide the best avenue for the flow of supplies to the USSR, but there was little immediate follow-up on this prediction. The Russians insisted on the use of the northern route, evidently both because it promised quicker delivery of supplies closer to their fighting fronts and because they feared the establishment of a strong British or American position in Iran so close to the Soviet border. The British, faced with the necessity of developing adequate supply lines for their own hard-pressed forces dispersed through the Middle East from Egypt to India, lacked

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resources to devote to developing facilities for Soviet aid. On the borders of Egypt and in Libya, the British Eighth Army was engaged in a seesaw battle with the Afrika Korps; in Syria and Iraq the British Tenth Army stood guard against a German drive southward through the Caucasus to the oilfields of Iraq and Iran whence the very lifeblood of the Commonwealth war effort flowed. Immediately after entry into southern Iran, the British prepared a plan for developing transport facilities through their zone to a point where they could carry by the spring of 1942, 72,000 long tons of Soviet aid supplies in addition to essential cargoes for British military forces and the Iranian civilian economy, but this plan proved to be more a hope than a promise. Soviet insistence on the use of the northern route left the British with no strong incentive to push developments in Iran when the limited manpower and materials available to them were sorely needed to develop supply lines more vital to their own military effort in the Middle East.

Initially the American position in Iran was anomalous and it remained so even after Pearl Harbor. The United States was not a party to the agreement with the Iranian Government. The American Government therefore had to limit its actions in Iran to supporting the British. And before American entrance into the war against Germany, this support had to be rendered through lend-lease channels in such a way as not to compromise the neutrality of the United States. At the urgent request of the British, two missions were dispatched to the Middle East in the fall of 1941, one to Egypt under Brig. Gen. Russell L. Maxwell and the other to Iran under Brig. Gen. Raymond A. Wheeler, with the justification that they were necessary to make lend-lease aid "effective." These missions were instructed to aid the British in the development of their lines of communication, under conditions where British desires as to projects to be undertaken were to govern. Projects were to be financed with lend-lease funds and carried out by civilian contractors.

The British plan for development of Iranian facilities was conditioned on the expectation of the assistance of Wheeler's mission as well as of large-scale shipments of American lend-lease supplies and equipment. Elaborate plans were drawn up but Pearl Harbor completely disrupted them. Mission projects were shoved far down the scale of priorities while the United States carried out its initial deployments to the Pacific and the British Isles. Mission personnel and materiel waited at dockside for shipping that could not be allocated. And even when initial U.S. deployments were completed, these priorities were advanced very little. Under arrangements made by the Combined Chiefs of Staff shortly after Pearl Harbor, the whole Middle East was designated a British area of strategic responsibility just

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as the Pacific was designated an American one. American strategic plans placed their emphasis on concentration of resources for an early invasion of Europe and Army planners sought to keep their commitments in support of the British Middle East to a minimum. In the running argument between the British and American Chiefs of Staff over a peripheral strategy versus one of concentration, the Americans won at least a temporary victory in April 1942. In a conference in London at that time, it was agreed that preparations should be made for both an emergency entrance onto the Continent in 1942 to prevent Soviet collapse (SLEDGEHAMMER) and for full-scale invasion in 1943 (ROUNDUP). The build-up in the British Isles for both these purposes (designated BOLERO) was placed at the top of the American priority scale from April through July and the Middle East missions continued to be treated as poor relatives.

A War Department decision in February 1942 that the missions should be militarized served only to produce additional delays and confusion. Requisite numbers of service troops to perform the tasks planned for civilian contractors were simply not available under the priority the missions were granted. Against a request for something over 25,000 men submitted by General Wheeler as the requirement to carry out projects planned, the War Department decided it could allot but 6,950 in the troop basis and only 654 of these could be moved to Iran before 1 September 1942. This decision, predicated on continuing use of contractor personnel, gradual rather than immediate militarization of contractor projects, and utmost use of indigenous labor, meant that the great bulk of Wheeler's projects had to be placed in a long-deferred second priority. Few even of the contractor personnel had arrived in the Persian Gulf by April 1942. During that month General Wheeler himself was transferred to India to become head of the Services of Supply there and was succeeded as head of the Iranian mission by Col. Don G. Shingler.

Without the extensive American assistance expected, the British were unable to devote sufficient resources to the development of Iranian facilities to increase significantly the transit capacity through their zone in Iran. Almost inevitably they concentrated their resources in the area on supply installations and facilities and the port of Basra in Iraq, designed to serve their own Tenth Army. The few American contractor personnel who did arrive were assigned the task of developing the port of Umm Qasr in Iraq, designed as a subsidiary port in the Basra complex. Thus the first opportunity to develop Persian Gulf facilities went largely by default.

[4] On these early developments see Motter, *Persian Corridor*, pp. 13-15, 28-100; Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 108-14, 503-07, 552-56, 567-59.

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The Northern Route and the Second Protocol

While the Persian Gulf languished, the Americans and British devoted their main energies toward forwarding supplies over the difficult northern route, basically in accordance with Russian desires. This effort mounted to its crescendo in April and May 1942, when the Americans, having completed initial deployments and finally found supplies and ships to transport them to the USSR, attempted to make up previous deficits in their commitments under the First Protocol. During April some 63 ships cleared American ports headed for north Russia, and plans were laid to send almost as many in May. For the long pull, the President proposed that some 50 American ships be placed in regular monthly service over the northern route from March through November each year, 25 from November through the following March. The Persian Gulf was given but a small role. The Russians indicated they wanted only trucks and planes delivered via this route. In accordance with their desires, the goal for the southern route was set, in January 1942, at 2,000 trucks and 100 bombers monthly, these to be shipped knocked down, assembled in plants to be operated by contractor personnel under the Iranian mission, and driven or flown to the Soviet Zone; only small additional quantities of general cargo were to be forwarded over the Iranian Railway and in the assembled trucks. [5]

This planning in early 1942 ignored latent German capabilities to interrupt shipments around the coast of Norway. Shipping over the northern route proceeded under convoy of the British Navy from Iceland onward. During 1941 and the early part of 1942, these convoys were virtually unmolested by the Germans. As of the end of March 1942, only one ship had been lost out of the 110 that had sailed over the route. But in February Hitler began to shift the weight of his naval and air strength to Norway and the March convoys, although they suffered small loss, were subject to heavy attack. As the daylight hours in the far north lengthened during April and May, attacks were stepped up, losses mounted, and each convoy became a serious fleet operation posing a heavy drain on British naval resources. Churchill and the British Admiralty, fearing that if British naval strength was concentrated too heavily in protecting the Murmansk convoys the Germans would shift their naval strength to the mid-Atlantic, decided in late April that only three convoys of 25 to 35

[5] (1) Rpt on War Aid Furnished by the United States to the USSR, prepared by the Protocol and Area Information Staff, USSR Br, and the Div of Research and Rpts, Dept of State, 28 Nov 45 (hereafter cited as Rpt on War Aid to USSR, 28 Nov 45). (2) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 555-56, 567-68.

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ships each could be sent through every two months. Since planned loadings in the United States had been going forward on the supposition that 107 ships would move in these convoys during May alone, the proposed curtailment came as a heavy blow to Roosevelt's hopes that American commitments under the First Protocol could be fulfilled. But deplore the decision as he might, the American President was in no position to offer American naval convoy as a supplement to British, and on 3 May 1942 he acquiesced in Churchill's decision, expressing at the same time the hope that the convoys could at least be kept to the maximum of 35 ships. Even this hope was doomed to disappointment. In the two convoys started out from Iceland in May only 57 ships sailed rather than 70 and of these 9 were lost, despite heavy naval convoy. Many of the 63 ships sent out from the United States in April merely served to create a log jam of shipping at the Iceland convoy rendezvous, a log jam that was liquidated only by unloading many cargoes in British ports. [6]

Curtailment of the northern convoys made it impossible for the United States to fulfill its promises under the First Protocol. Yet in the midst of these difficulties a Second Protocol was negotiated covering the period 1 July 1942 through 30 June 1943 based on the premise, as stated by the President, that strategic considerations required that "aid to Russia should be continued and expanded to the maximum extent possible." [7] The British and American shipping authorities, basing their calculations on the British plan to send through three convoys every two months, estimated the capacity of the northern route at slightly over three million short tons over the protocol year and optimistically added another million short tons to be carried via the Persian Gulf. The Pacific route was left entirely out of their calculations. Accepting these tenuous shipping figures as gospel, the President and his advisers offered the USSR a total of 4.4 million short tons over the Second Protocol year, about three times as much as was actually delivered under the First Protocol. Though this

Second Protocol was not officially signed until October 1942, it actually went into effect in July when the first expired, and from that date forward the Americans and British stood committed to the delivery of this massive tonnage to the USSR. And in contrast to the First Protocol, in which British and American obligations were approximately equal, the great majority of supplies under the second were to come from American sources.

This first crisis on the northern route inevitably threw the spot-

[6] (1) Churchill, *The Hinge of Fate*, pp. 256-66. (2) Morison, *Battle of the Atlantic*, pp. 158-71. (3) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 557-58.

[7] Ltr, President to SW, 24 Mar 42, AG 400.3295 (8-14-41), Sec. 1.

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light on the Persian Gulf as the only important alternative for forwarding war supplies to the USSR. The Russians, now taking a more realistic view of the situation, reversed their previous position and asked that not only planes and trucks but all sorts of military equipment in the largest quantities possible come via the southern route. In cutting back shipments scheduled to move over the northern route in May 1942, the shipping authorities decided to divert 12 ships to the Persian Gulf and to follow with 12 more in June. Harry Hopkins, the President's confidential adviser, wanted to increase this rate and send 8 more monthly if the Persian Gulf could handle them. The Second Protocol schedules, as noted above, proposed shipment of a million short tons via the southern route over the year beginning 1 July 1942. [8]

The Problem in Iran

This decision in May 1942 to speed up shipments to the Persian Gulf was a premature one made in an atmosphere of crisis. It was soon obvious that even the cargoes of the twenty-four ships sent out in May and June could not be unloaded and sent on to the USSR unless more drastic steps were taken to develop Iranian facilities. An effort began almost immediately to push this development but it was unaccompanied by any realistic appraisal of what was needed, any fundamental upgrading of priorities, or more logical division of responsibilities. The major effort was simply devoted to accelerating unfulfilled plans already on the books. On the American side, the Iranian mission was given a clear directive stating that its primary responsibility would be to facilitate the flow of aid to the USSR and not to aid the British, and that projects in Iran should be placed in first priority and those in Iraq and elsewhere in second. Colonel Shingler was told of the new million-ton goal for the Second Protocol year and designated the American representative for executing the program for "receipt, assembly and forwarding" of the material to be shipped through Iran under these arrangements. [9] As a consequence, the handful of American construction personnel at Umm Qasr quickly transferred the center of their activities to the port of Khorramshahr in Iran. Nevertheless, the position of both the mission and the American Government remained anomalous. The British retained strategic responsibility for the area and direction of the effort to forward supplies to the USSR; the American mission's task was still only that of aiding them to effect these deliveries. If the primacy of the task of

[8] Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 560-69.

[9] Msg 100, AGWAR to AMSIR, 10 Apr 42 Msg 177, 9 May 42, and Msg 208, 20 May 42, all in AG 400.3295 (8-9-41), Secs. 4 and 5.

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forwarding supplies to the USSR was recognized on the American side, the British were still in no position to place it above their own military needs. [10]

Nevertheless when the American mission shifted its activities from Iraq to Iran in April 1942, the dimensions of the task to be performed in developing Iranian facilities had at least been generally defined. Reduced to bare essentials, this task involved development of port facilities and of egress roads, increase of the capacity of the Trans-Iranian Railway as far north as Tehran at least tenfold, improvement of existing roads and construction of new ones north from the ports to the Soviet Zone, construction and operation of aircraft and truck assembly plants, and development of trucking facilities to supplement the carrying capacity of the railroad.

The best developed Iranian port was on the island of Abadan, the site of what was then one of the world's largest oil refineries, owned by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. But Abadan figured in British plans for supply to the USSR only as a site for delivery of cased aircraft for assembly and of particularly heavy equipment that could not be unloaded elsewhere. The rest of the capacity of the port was reserved for oil shipments. Similarly Basra in Iraq, the only other well-developed port in the area, was already overloaded with cargo for the British Army, although it also had to serve initially as the principal reliance for handling Soviet-aid cargoes. Any really significant augmentation of shipments to the USSR would require development of the Iranian ports proper-Khorramshahr, Bandar Shahpur, Ahwaz, and Bushire-and of the lighterage basin at Tanuma (or Cheybassi) across the Shatt-al-Arab from Basra in Iraq. Khorramshahr and Bandar Shahpur were the key ports, and each initially possessed only one berth capable of handling large vessels. Ahwaz was a small barge port one hundred miles up the Karun River from Khorramshahr; Bushire, a small port on the west shore of the Persian Gulf whence the main highway in Iran ran north to Tehran.

From Bandar Shahpur the railway ran north via Ahwaz and Andimeshk to Tehran and thence through the Soviet Zone to Bandar Shah on the Caspian Sea, through some of the most difficult mountainous terrain in the world. The railway was without adequate high-powered locomotives and rolling stock, the line was laid with light rail, and it lacked an automatic signal system to speed traffic. The British had placed the railway under military control and assigned a force of 4,000 soldiers to run it, but the locomotives and rolling stock promised from the United States were slow in arriving, and the increase in rail capacity came equally slowly.

[10] Motter, *Persian Corridor*, pp. 59-64.

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To supplement the railroad, the British had four trucking routes under development, all operated by a quasi-governmental corporation, the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation, using native drivers. Two routes ran wholly within Iran, from Bushire and Andimeshk, respectively, to Tabriz within the Soviet Zone. A third started at Khanaqin on the Iraqi railway, ran north from Basra through Baghdad, and also terminated at Tabriz. The fourth involved a devious route running by rail out of Karachi, India, to Zahidan in southeastern Iran and thence by truck to Meshed in the Soviet Zone in the northwest. This last route was used but infrequently and the Russians objected that deliveries over it provided supplies too far from the fighting fronts. All the routes were over the

poorest sort of dirt roads, and United Kingdom Commercial Corporation operations were seriously handicapped by lack of trucks and efficient drivers. [11]

Once it had been concentrated in Iran, the American mission was assigned some of the most essential tasks—construction of additional docks at Khorramshahr, operation of truck assembly plants at Andimeshk and Khorramshahr and of an aircraft assembly plant at Abadan, construction of highways connecting Khorramshahr, Ahwaz, Andimeshk, Tanuma, and Tehran, and assistance to the British in the performance of a variety of other tasks. The British Army and the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation remained in control of all transport operations. [12]

When queried by Lt. Gen. Brehon B. Somervell in May 1942 about Hopkins' project for sending twenty ships per month via the Persian Gulf, Shingler replied that the ports would not be prepared to handle that many (120,000 tons of Soviet cargo) until the end of October 1942, when planned improvements were scheduled for completion, and that even then inland clearance would be limited to 78,000 tons monthly and there would be insufficient storage for the excess until clearance capacity had been improved. He offered little hope that the ports would be able to unload and clear in expeditious fashion the 87,000 long tons of Soviet aid dispatched from the United States during May and the 91,000 tons shipped in June when these cargoes arrived in July and August. British shipping representatives in the area were even more pessimistic. Undeterred, the Washington authorities cut back these shipments only slightly in July and August, to 63,000 and 66,000 long tons, respectively. [13]

While forwarding these tonnages, Washington and London contributed more by way of pressure for accomplishment than they did

[11] Bykofsky and Larson, *Transportation Corps: Operations Overseas*, pp. 379–82, 403–04.

[12] (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 380–81. (2) Motter, *Persian Corridor*, p. 84.

[13] Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 569–70.

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by way of sending men and materiel to accelerate the pace of development. The British remained unable to spare men or resources, and the Americans were reluctant to commit significant additional resources to the Middle East. The handful of Americans present in Iran in April had grown to only slightly more than 1,000 by 1 July, 817 civilians and 190 military personnel. Though shipments of necessary transportation, construction, and port equipment were expedited, all too frequently delays developed in shipping the most critical items such as port cranes, rail equipment, and heavy construction supplies. The effects of a lack of centralized responsibility and a coordinated plan with high priority were all too apparent.

As a result, in no particular did progress during the three months after the May decision justify optimism. The heavy shipments to the Gulf ports inevitably brought an increasing threat of port congestion. Development of the ports lagged behind Shingler's predictions, and inland clearance, ever the biggest bottleneck, lagged even further. The Iranian State Railway, necessarily the primary reliance, was carrying, as late as August 1942, only 35,770 long tons of supplies for all purposes and of these only 12,440 were supplies for the USSR. The trucking operations of the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation, never characterized by a high degree of efficiency, were but a poor supplement. While the need for capacity for Soviet aid rose, The British found it necessary to add the burden of supply for the Polish Army they were evacuating through Iran to that of the British military and the Iranian civilian economy. While the two U.S. truck assembly plants at Andimeshk and Bandar Shahpur and the plane assembly plant at Abadan began operations in April, their capacity continued low and it was further limited by the lack of adequate port and inland clearance facilities. Such was the situation in the Persian Corridor when the Allies found themselves facing a new and more serious crisis in their effort to maintain even a limited schedule of convoys over the northern route. [14]

The July Crisis

On 27 June 1942, convoy PQ-17, the third of the three convoys the British had promised to push through during the two-month period of May–June, departed Reykjavik, Iceland, for the long run over the northern route. The convoy contained 33 merchantmen, 22 American and 11 British, and had an unusually large naval escort. In a grim running battle with German air and sea raiders, 22 of the 33

[14] (1) *Ibid.*, pp. 570–73. (2) Motter, *Persian Corridor*, pp. 85–101, and App. A, Table 5.

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merchant vessels were lost. Shocked by these heavy losses, the British Admiralty decided to suspend the northern convoys "at least till the northern ice-packs melted and receded and until perpetual daylight passed." On 17 July Churchill informed Stalin of the decision, saying that continuation "would bring no benefit to you and would only involve dead loss to the common cause." Stalin's reply was a brutal rejection of the British reasons for halting the convoys and a bitter protest, in the strongest language, against the action taken. [15]

The decision to suspend the northern convoys came at a critical juncture in the affairs of the Anglo-American coalition, at a time when the entire strategic concept for the year 1942 was undergoing drastic revision. In June the war in the Middle East took a dangerous turn. General Field Marshal Erwin Rommel launched a drive into Egypt opening up a new threat to the Suez Canal and the Middle East oilfields. At the same time, the German drive through the USSR was plowing relentlessly forward through the Caucasus, threatening these same oilfields from another direction, and raising the possibility of complete defeat of the Soviet Army. In this critical situation, the American staff was forced to reconsider its position and take immediate emergency steps to bolster the British position in the Middle East. Supply aid was stepped up and an American air force (the Ninth) established in Egypt. A new command was set up, United States Army Forces in the Middle East (USAFIME) under Maj. Gen. Russell L. Maxwell, formerly head of the North African mission, and Maxwell was allotted the quota of service troops he had previously been denied.

The crisis in the Middle East gave the final death blow to any hopes that SLEDGEHAMMER, the plan to invade the Continent in 1942, could be carried out. The American staff continued to hope that commitments to the Middle East could be kept from interfering with the execution of ROUNDUP, the invasion plan in 1943. But this hope ran afoul of the President's determination that American troops must be put in action against the Germans in 1942. In instructions given to his staff for conferences with the British at London in mid-July, Roosevelt made it quite clear that unless SLEDGEHAMMER could be carried out either an American Army must be committed to the Middle East or the invasion of North Africa undertaken. The decision taken at the conference (18–25 July 1942) was on the invasion of North Africa in the fall (Operation TORCH). [16]

[15] (1) Churchill, *Hinge of Fate*, pp. 262–71. (2) Morison, *Battle of*

the Atlantic, pp. 179-92.

[16] On the strategic developments of this period see Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning*, particularly pages 233-84; for the TORCH decision, see above, pages 173-98.

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The TORCH decision vastly complicated relations with the Russians at precisely the same time that the northern convoys were suspended. In conversations in May with Soviet Foreign Commissar Vyacheslav M. Molotov, President Roosevelt had given more positive assurances of the opening of a second front in 1942 than the British or even his own staff thought justified. The TORCH decision, in the Russian view, did not conform to these assurances nor did it promise to take much of the pressure off the USSR. While both Roosevelt and Churchill continued to hope that it would not prevent invasion of the Continent in 1943, both the American and British military staffs were convinced that it would. Thus the TORCH decision and the cancellation of the northern convoys created a doubly embarrassing situation for the President and Prime Minister vis-a-vis Stalin. Even if the convoys were resumed in September, they would probably have to be suspended again for at least two months to provide the requisite naval support for TORCH in November. Thus, while the Russians battled for their very existence, the second front in Europe that they had been clamoring for was not to become a reality, nor would they receive the supply aid promised under the Second Protocol unless some new means of delivery were found. It promised to be, as Churchill told Roosevelt in September, "a formidable moment in Anglo-American-Soviet relations." [17]

The July crisis evoked a diligent and almost frantic search for alternate means of delivery of supplies to the USSR. Churchill had long supported an operation (JUPITER) to secure the northern fringes of Norway and thus clear the route for the northern convoys, but neither his own nor the American staff ever looked with favor on this plan. It could, in any event, hardly be carried out except as a substitute for TORCH. The Pacific route to the USSR also inevitably came in for increased consideration. Plans were developed for delivering the majority of all planes to the USSR via an air ferry from Alaska to Siberia, but the Russians were at first un-cooperative and development of the ferry route was distressingly slow. For a brief moment, the Americans considered sending vessels on the long route through the Bering Sea and around the northern fringes of Siberia and actually turned over seven vessels to the Russians for this purpose, but the Russians themselves evidently found the route impractical and placed the vessels instead on the run to Vladivostok. The transfer of more ships to the Soviet flag in the Pacific for use on this Vladivostok run was of course a possibility, but in July and August 1942 it had little to recommend it. The greatest Soviet needs seemed

[17] Msg 151, Prime Minister to President, 22 Sep 42, ABC 381 (7-25-42), Sec. 4-B.

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clearly to be for military equipment and supplies that could not be risked on the Pacific route; Vladivostok was a long way from the critical fighting front in the Caucasus; and the outright transfer of ships to the USSR involved a complete loss of control over their future use, a very serious thing in view of the general shortage of cargo shipping in 1942. [18]

The finger thus pointed to the Persian Gulf as the only logical alternative to the northern route for the shipment of military supplies; indeed it had already been pointing in that direction since the first difficulties with the northern convoys in April. But each turn of the strategic wheel had brought some new demand on British and American resources that prevented the assignment of sufficiently high priority and the diffusion of responsibility between British and Americans had prevented the development of any co-ordinated plan. Paradoxically enough, the decision to commit additional American resources to the Middle East in June had the practical immediate effect of slowing shipments of men and material to the Persian Gulf for the highest priority went to getting the Ninth Air Force to Egypt and supporting the British effort in the desert. There were no significant accretions of American personnel in Iran in July and August 1942. And under the new command arrangement, Colonel Shingler's Iranian mission was made a service command in the USAFIME Services of Supply.

The crisis in July produced a situation in which either facilities in the Persian Gulf would have to be extensively developed or else the United States and Britain would have to renege completely on their promises under the Second Protocol. Whereas, under the shipping estimates that originally lay behind the Second Protocol, one million tons were to be forwarded through Iran during the protocol year, that goal had now to be more than doubled if the southern route was to compensate for the deficiencies of the northern. It was set, in fact at 200,000 tons monthly, in a situation where the previous goal of 72,000 tons a month, proposed by the British in the fall of 1941, was still far short of attainment. The question for decision, by mid-July 1942, was less whether Iranian facilities should be developed than how, by whom, and to what extent. The welter of confused responsibilities that had characterized the earlier effort had to be resolved, and a clear-cut decision rendered on the priority to be given the project. From the very beginning it had been clear that only the Americans had the resources to accomplish the task; but to turn it over to them would require delicate adjustments in relationships as long as the area

[18] Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 564-66.

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remained one of British strategic responsibility and the military forces there under British command. In terms of priority, the basic question was the extent to which the BOLERO build-up for invasion of the Continent in 1943, already subordinated to TORCH, should be further subordinated to the effort to ensure continued deliveries of supplies to the USSR. These were questions that only the President, the Prime Minister, and the combined Chiefs of Staff could decide. And both because it was primarily American commitments for delivery of supplies that were concerned and because only the Americans had the resources adequate to the task of developing the facilities in Iran to the desired extent, the responsibility for decision lay mainly with the President of the United States.

The Decision on American Responsibility

The President showed no inclination to view the obstacles that had arisen to the continued delivery of supplies to the USSR as insuperable. In his instructions to his staff for the London negotiations in July he answered categorically the question of whether a serious effort should be made to meet the Second Protocol:

British and American materiel promises to Russia must be carried out in good faith.... This aid must continue as long as delivery is possible and

Russia must be encouraged to continue resistance. Only complete collapse, which seems unthinkable, should alter this determination on our part. [19]

In taking this position, the President indicated clearly that he thought this aid must flow mainly via the Persian Gulf until the northern convoys could be resumed.

An intensive exploration of the question of how this could be accomplished followed. On 13 July 1942, evidently anticipating the British decision to suspend the northern convoys, Averell Harriman, the President's personal lend-lease representative in London, cabled Harry Hopkins calling attention to the need for speed in expanding transit facilities through Iran. His recommendation was that the U.S. Army should take over operation and control of the Iranian State Railway in the British Zone. Admiral King, General Marshall, and General Somervell agreed generally that steps must be taken to increase Iranian transit facilities, but they stopped short of any positive recommendation that the Americans should take over the railroad, pending further study. The President, nonetheless, readily accepted

[19] Memo, President for Hopkins, Marshall, and King, 16 Jul 42, quoted in Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper & Brothers, rev. ed., 1950), pp. 603-05. See also Matloff and Snell, *Strategic Planning*, pp. 273-78.

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Harriman's proposal. Replying on 16 July to Churchill's formal notification of the suspension of the northern convoys, he placed it before the Prime Minister. Churchill accepted the proposal immediately with some enthusiasm and informally communicated his views to Harry Hopkins, then in London, though he delayed a formal response to the President until the whole matter had been subjected to further study. [20]

In a sense, then, the basic decision that the Americans would take over the task of developing facilities in the Persian Gulf had been taken by the President and agreed to by the Prime Minister by mid-July. But it took two months more to make that decision final enough to give it practical effect. Recognition on both sides that the matter needed further study reflected the immense complications of the problem and the fact that it seemed unlikely that merely turning the Iranian State Railway over to the Americans would provide an adequate solution. It was clear that a much more far-reaching decision was needed which would delineate clearly the dimensions of the task of supplying the USSR through Iran, the cost of carrying out such a task, the division of responsibility and the best organization for it, and the priority to be accorded this effort in relation to other essential military and civilian activities in the area. The "further study" consequently took over a month. Many hands entered into it. Brig. Gen. Sidney P. Spalding, Assistant Executive of the Munitions Assignments Board, went out to the Middle East on a special mission in late July as the personal representative of General Marshall and Harry Hopkins to determine on the spot what steps should be taken to increase Persian Gulf capacity for Soviet aid. Churchill and Harriman, after a visit to Stalin in August, returned via Tehran and Cairo also to investigate the situation at first hand. At the hub of the fact-finding stood General Maxwell in Cairo, who, as commander of USAFIME, had a newly assigned responsibility for American operations in the Persian Gulf.

It was less on the highly placed dignitaries, nevertheless, than on the pick and shovel men, British and American, in the Persian Gulf, that the real job of fact-finding fell. The final estimates on which action was based were gathered together by Colonel Shingler, largely on information received from British transportation authorities in the area. Shingler's tables were postulated on the use of all the Iranian ports and partial use of Basra in Iraq and Karachi in India for cargoes to be cleared through Iran. Against a current (August 1942) ca-

[20] (1) Motter, *Persian Corridor*, pp. 177-78, 190n. (2) Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, pp. 544, 600. (3) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, p. 574.

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capacity of 189,000 long tons for all these ports, Shingler proposed a target of 399,500 tons for June 1943. Rail clearance currently running at little more than 35,000 long tons he thought could be increased to 180,000 in the same period under American operation. By providing trucking lines to haul 139,500 tons per month, he would bring total monthly inland clearance capacity to 319,500 tons. Deducting estimated essential requirements of the British military in Iran and the Iranian civilian economy, Shingler figured it would ultimately be possible to forward 241,000 long tons of supplies monthly to the USSR. This would provide enough capacity to meet the currently accepted goal of 200,000 long tons per month of Soviet-aid supplies via the southern route, but it must be kept in mind that Shingler did not believe that target could be met until June 1943, much too late to meet the immediate need for an alternate to the northern route.

In mid-August most of the interested parties-Harriman, Churchill, Spalding, Maxwell, Shingler, and British commanders in the Middle East-gathered at Cairo in a conclave that lasted several days. Using Shingler's estimates as their point of departure, but modifying them in several ways, they arrived at a general estimate and plan for action. This plan and estimate Maxwell forwarded to the War Department on 22 August. Excluding Shingler's figures for Basra and Karachi, it set the target for the Iranian ports at 261,000 long tons monthly. The monthly target for the railroad remained at 180,000 tons, but the trucking goal was expanded from 139,500 to 172,000 tons, making a total inland clearance target of 352,000 long tons monthly. To achieve these goals, Maxwell recommended that the U.S. Army take over the operation not only of the railway, but also of the ports-Khorramshahr, Bandar Shahpur, Bushire, and Tanuma-and operate a truck fleet to supplement that of the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation. Troop requirements to meet these objectives were calculated to be 3 port battalions, 2 railway operating battalions, 1 engineer battalion, and 2 truck regiments-a total of approximately 8,365 men, all of whom, Maxwell said, had been included in the troop basis for the Middle East on a deferred priority. Materiel requirements, in addition to organizational equipment for the service troops, were set at 75 additional steam locomotives, 2,200 20-ton freight cars or their equivalent, and 7,200 trucks averaging seven tons in capacity. [21]

Maxwell's recommendations were contingent on receipt of "specific requests . . . from the British authorities." The specific request

[21] Motter, *Persian Corridor*, pp. 180-90. (2) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 574-75.

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came from Winston Churchill to the President on the same day. Churchill said:

I have delayed my reply until I could study the Trans-Persian situation on the spot. This I have now done both at Tehran and here, and have conferred with Averell, General Maxwell, General Spalding and their railway experts. The traffic on the Trans-Persian Railway is expected to reach three thousand tons a day for all purposes by the end of the year. We are all convinced that it ought to be raised to six thousand tons. Only in this way can we ensure an expanding flow of supplies to Russia while building up the military forces which we must move into North Persia to meet a possible German advance.

To reach the higher figure, it will be necessary to increase largely the railway personnel and to provide additional quantities of rolling stock and technical equipment. Furthermore, the target will only be attained in reasonable time if enthusiasm and energy are devoted to the task and a high priority accorded its requirements.

I therefore welcome and accept your most helpful proposal contained in your telegram, that the railway should be taken over, developed and operated by the United States Army; with the railroad should be included the ports of Khorramshahr and Bandar Shahpur. Your people will thus undertake the great task of opening up the Persian Corridor, which will carry primarily your supplies to Russia. All our people here agree on the benefits which would follow your approval of this suggestion. We should be unable to find the resources without your help and our burden in the Middle East would be eased by the release for use elsewhere of the British units now operating the railway. The railway and ports would be managed entirely by your people, though the allocation of traffic would have to be retained in the hands of the British military authorities for whom the railway is an essential channel of communication for operational purposes. I see no obstacle in this to harmonious working. [22]

Harriman followed with a cable to the President the next day, strongly reinforcing the Prime Minister's arguments and Maxwell's recommendations. Maxwell, Spalding, and he all agreed, Harriman said:

- (a) that with proper management and personnel and with additional equipment the capacity of the railroad to Teheran can be increased to six thousand long tons a day,
- (b) that the British have not the resources or personnel to carry out this program even if we should supply the equipment,
- (c) that unless the United States Army undertakes the task the flow of supplies to Russia will dry up as the requirements of the British forces in the theatre increase,
- (d) that the importance of the development of the railroad to its maximum cannot be over-emphasized,
- (e) that the condition in the Prime Minister's cable of the British retaining control of traffic to be moved is reasonable, offers no practicable difficulty and should be accepted. [23]

[22] Msg, Churchill to Roosevelt, 22 Aug 42, quoted in Motter, *Persian Corridor*, p. 190.

[23] Msg, Harriman (signed Maxwell) to President, 22 Aug 42, CM-IN 8657, 23 Aug 42.

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While placing his main emphasis on the railroad, Harriman also recommended the dispatch of the three port battalions and asked favorable action on the request for trucks and personnel to increase road transport, though he placed the last in a priority second to the railroad and the ports.

The Military Plan

On 25 August, the President turned both Churchill and Harriman's cables over to General Marshall with a request that he have a plan drawn up to accomplish what was being proposed and give his judgment as to whether the United States should accede to the request. Marshall assigned the task to General Somervell's Services of Supply (SOS). Within the SOS primary responsibility fell on Col. D. O. Elliot, head of the Strategic Logistics Division, working under the general supervision of Brig. Gen. LeRoy Lutes, Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations, SOS. Somervell told his subordinates that he wanted to present the Chief of Staff with "a complete study in every respect . . . one that can be regarded as a model." [24]

The resultant SOS Plan, presented by Lutes to Somervell on 4 September 1942, met this high standard in almost every respect. [25] It brought all the earlier proposals on the railroad, ports, and trucking organization together in one single plan for a balanced and self-contained American service command in the Persian Gulf. This command was to be formed in the United States and shipped to Iran by increments to take over from Shingler's sparsely staffed mission, absorbing the latter in the process. Thus, while the SOS Plan was built on the recommendations drawn up at Cairo, it expanded the personnel and materiel recommendations contained in those recommendations considerably, producing a far more accurate estimate of what the project to develop the Persian Gulf would actually cost other efforts. In order to provide for a balanced service command,

[24] (1) Memo, Somervell for Lutes, 29 Aug 42, Hq Army Service Forces (ASF) Folder Operations. ASF records have been retired to National Archives. (2) MS Index to Hopkins Papers, V, Aid to Russia, Item 69. A copy of this index to Hopkins papers in the Hyde Park Library is in OCMH. (3) Motter, *Persian Corridor*, pp. 191-92.

[25] (1) Plan for the Operation of Certain Iranian Communications Facilities Between Persian Gulf Ports and Tehran by U.S. Army Forces, 3 Sep 42, Persian Gulf Command Folder 235 (hereafter cited as SOS Plan). The Persian Gulf Command folders (PGF), at present with Army records in Federal Records Center, Alexandria, Va. consist of some of the documents used by T. H. Vail Motter in preparation of the volume *The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia*. (2) Control Division, ASF, folder of same title as above contains most of the papers used by Colonel Elliot in preparation of the plan, including memorandums from various persons who rendered advice and from chiefs of technical services. It is to be found with the rest of the ASF records in National Archives.

troop requirements were expanded from the 8,365 in the Maxwell cable to 23,876. While 4,515 of these, road maintenance personnel, were placed in a deferred category, they were to prove in the end as necessary as any of the others. Though the target figures and the estimated numbers of trucks, rail cars, and locomotives remained the same in the SOS Plan as in the Cairo recommendations, the additional organizational equipment for the service troops vastly expanded the total amount of materiel required.

Meeting these requirements, the planners found, would be difficult. The pool of service troops available was small, and a large proportion of those activated had either been earmarked for BOLERO or would be necessary for TORCH. The production of heavy equipment-locomotives, rail cars, and large trucks-was limited, and, outside domestic requirements, most of that under production had been earmarked for the British. As usual, shipping was the most critical commodity of all. The SOS Plan noted that "all troop and cargo ships have been assigned missions [and] any new operations must be at the expense of other projects." If the project was to succeed it must be given a priority second only to the operational requirements of TORCH, and above those of the build-up for the invasion of the Continent in 1943.

Presupposing this high priority, the SOS planners proposed that of the 19,361 troops considered essential for early shipment, 8,969 could be made available by diversion from BOLERO, 8,002 from other troop units already activated (mainly for second priority objectives in Iran and North Africa), and 1,501 from new activations. Of the road maintenance troops in a delayed category, 1,503 would also have to come from the BOLERO troop basis, the rest from miscellaneous sources. One port battalion of 889 men was to be diverted from General Wheeler's Service of Supplies in Karachi where it was reportedly not doing port work. Provision of the locomotives and rail cars would also require diversions from other sources in the Middle East and India, but the major portion would have to come from new production or from the domestic railroads. Trucks presented the most difficult problem of all. It was thought that 500 of 10-ton capacity could be repossessed from a number turned over to the British under lend-lease and 600 of capacity unknown withdrawn from a stock at Karachi intended for shipment into China; but for the rest it would be necessary to substitute 2 1/2-ton cargo trucks in larger numbers for the trucks of 7-ton capacity requested.

Shipping requirements for men and materials added up, according to Transportation Corps estimates, to a total of 471,000 ship tons. The SOS Plan provided for movement of 11,000 men on the *West*

Point and *Wakefield* in late October, the rest on British troopships to be released from deployment of U.S. air forces to the Middle East in January 1943. Both movements represented diversions from BOLERO. Cargo shipments should begin 1 October and continue through January at the rate of 110,000 tons, approximately 10 ships per month-again a diversion from BOLERO, but partially compensated by the fact that the shipping pool would be increased by release of cargo ships originally scheduled to sail over the northern route. [26]

The most difficult question of all was timing. Shingler had estimated that the final targets for port capacity and inland clearance could not be met before June 1943. Both General Spalding and Averell Harriman insisted that this target date could be moved forward to February 1943 and Spalding presented estimates to Somervell on this basis on his return to Washington. The British, remembering their own experience, were extremely dubious that more than half the target could be achieved by February and felt that June would be far more realistic. The SOS planners refused to commit themselves definitely but postulated a "material advancement" of the June target date set by Shingler. [27] The SOS Plan for movement was geared to this "material advancement." Priorities were proposed as, first, rail operations; second, ports; and third, road operations. The 5,004 troops required for the railroads and the 5,016 for the ports (including miscellaneous service and headquarters elements necessary to complement them) could be taken care of in the first troop movement scheduled for October. The equipment for their operations could be made available and shipped in coordination with the troops. They should be in the theater and ready to take over operation of the ports and railroads by the end of the year. The 8,114 troops primarily for truck operations and in third priority, would follow in January and should be in the theater at least by early March. The heavy trucks, whose availability was most in question, or smaller substitutes for them, could probably be made available by this time. The essence of the conclusion dictated by General Somervell was that, if high enough priority was given to the movement of troops and supplies, the whole operation was feasible. He ended with the recommendation "that this plan be accepted as the basis of future operation of supply routes in the Persian Corridor." [28]

[26] Memo, Maj Gen C. P. Gross, CofT, for Gen Somervell, 30 Aug 42, sub: Transportation Service for Persian Gulf. Control Div, ASF, folder on SOS Plan.

[27] (1) SOS Plan, par. 4. (2) Memo, Spalding for Somervell, 4 Sep 42, sub: Target Estimates of Persian Gulf Supply Routes, and Memo, Spalding for Elliot, 5 Sep 42, with Incl, Comments by Lt Col W. E. V. Abraham of British Middle East Command on American Estimates, both in Control Div, ASF, folder on SOS Plan.

[28] SOS Plan, Synopsis, pars. 7, 8.

The CCS Decision

Somervell submitted the plan to the Chief of Staff with a draft cable for the President to send to the Prime Minister indicating his acceptance of the latter's proposal and his approval of a plan to put it into effect. But final approval of the plan was not to come through this channel. The Persian Gulf project involved both matters of combined strategy and division of military responsibility in the Middle East that required consideration by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. General Marshall therefore placed the plan before them, and it was they who rendered the final decision.

In consideration of the plan before the Combined Staff Planners (CPS), the British had their opportunity to present their views. The British planners in general accepted the SOS Plan but they remained more pessimistic about the possible rate of development. They pointed to one glaring contradiction in the American calculations. Persian ports would be unable, during the months following, to handle shipments of supplies on the scale contemplated for the new American command "without cutting the scheduled Russian shipments and the essential civil and military maintenance commitments." They therefore insisted on a reduction in the schedule of these cargo shipments from ten to five ships per month at the outset, stipulating that it might be increased later at the discretion of the authorities on the spot. Beyond this, the only other revision in the plan proposed by the CPS was to add the barge port of Ahwaz to the list of

facilities to be operated by the American command. [29]

Having made what they considered necessary revisions in the plan, the CPS turned to the question of its strategic implications and the problem of division of responsibility between British and Americans in Iran. Its strategic implications were clear. It would "increase the dispersion of . . . U.S. military resources" and "divert personnel, equipment and ships that are at present set up for other theaters." The greatest effect would be on the build-up in the British Isles for invasion in 1943 and this effect would be felt most severely in the diversion of cargo shipping. The CPS noted:

Transportation required for this plan will reduce the number of sailings for BOLERO to the extent of about 2 1/2 times the number of sailings for the project. On the assumption that 44 cargo ship sailings are required to complete the move the cost to BOLERO would therefore be a total of 110 sailings during the period of the move. The longer turnaround to the Persian Gulf results in a proportionately larger quantity of shipping being removed from other military operations. The number of cargo sailings

[29] CCS 109/1, Rpt by CPS, 22 Sep 42, title: Development of Persian Transportation Facilities.

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monthly may be increased in direct proportion to the reduction of ships allocated to the Persian Gulf for handling lend-lease to Russia. Personnel shipping in ships of 20 knots or better can be made available without interfering with present planned operations of higher priority. [30]

The planners could see no alternative to accepting this cost. "If our shipping losses continue at their present excessive rate along the Northern Russian route," they noted, "it may become necessary to use the Persian Gulf route entirely." This statement had additional force in view of developments since July when the planning for American operation of Persian Gulf facilities had begun. After the two months' suspension during July and August, the British resumed the northern convoys in September using a very heavy naval escort, only to lose some thirteen cargo vessels out of forty. Neither this scale of escort nor this rate of loss could be sustained during the early stages of TORCH and the President and Prime Minister were forced to the decision that the convoys must be canceled again during October and November. While the Combined Staff Planners were weighing the Persian Gulf plan, Churchill and Roosevelt were pondering the question how to break the bad news of the new suspension of convoys to Stalin. "My persisting anxiety is Russia," wrote the British Prime Minister, "and I do not see how we can reconcile it with our consciences or with our interests to have no more PQ's till 1943, no offer to make joint plans for JUPITER [the invasion of Norway], no signs of a spring, summer or even autumn offensive in Europe." [31] It is not therefore surprising that the CPS recommended to the Combined Chiefs "favorable consideration" of the proposition that "the U.S. Army accept responsibility for developing and operating the transportation and port facilities in the Persian Corridor" in accordance with the SOS Plan. [32]

In making this recommendation, the CPS had to resolve finally the old question of the relative responsibilities of British and Americans for movement control. The general principle of Churchill's cable that the United States should operate the transport facilities subject to British allocation of traffic required some definition, and the first version of the plan presented by the British raised definite fears on the American side that they wished to control shipments from the United States as well as internal traffic through the corridor. American strategic planners, in General Marshall's Operations Division, never very enthusiastic about this diversion of American resources

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] (1) Msg 151, Prime Minister to President, 22 Sep 42, ABC 381 (7-25-42), Sec. 4-B. (2) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, p. 583.

[32] CCS 109/1, 22 Sep 42.

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from their primary objective of a cross-Channel invasion, thought the United States should not undertake the project with responsibility so divided in the theater. They wished to give first priority to supplies for the USSR. But British counter-objections to this produced a compromise, if not satisfactory to all at least acceptable, in the tradition of nearly all Anglo-American wartime relations. The British were to continue to exercise strategic responsibility for the defense of the area against enemy attack and for security against internal disorders. In view of this responsibility, the British commander-in-chief of the Persia-Iraq Command would control "priority of traffic and allocation of freight" for movement from the Gulf ports northward. But, recognizing the primary objective of the United States as increasing and ensuring the uninterrupted flow of supplies to Russia, the CPS proposed this statement: "It is definitely understood that the British control of priorities and allocations must not be permitted to militate against attainment of such objective, subject always to the military requirements for preparing to meet a threat to the vital Persian Gulf oil areas." The U.S. commanding general in the Persian Gulf was granted the right of appeal though the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on any British decision which he thought would prejudice the flow of supplies to the USSR. General priority of movement was stated as follows: "Over and above the minimum requirements for British forces consistent with their combat mission, and essential civilian needs, Russian supplies must have highest priority." [33]

These provisions meant that the British control over allocation of freight would not be exercised except in case of imminent threat of a German attack or an Axis-inspired uprising. In normal circumstances there would be fixed allocations for British military forces and for civilian needs which would be transported as first priority, and all additional capacity would go to the movement of Soviet-aid supplies. This delicate matter decided, the Combined Chiefs approved the CPS recommendations on 22 September 1942 without any recorded discussion.

In rendering its decision, the CCS made no definite stipulation as to the priority to be given the Persian Gulf project, apparently on the theory that this must be left to the President. They had, nevertheless, in mid-August adjusted their shipping priorities to give Soviet aid cargoes going via the southern route priority equal to that of military shipments for TORCH and the Middle East and above those

[33] (1) All quotations above from CCS 109/1. (2) Memo, Elliot for Lutes, 4 Sep 42, OPD 334.8, CCS, Case 16. (3) CCS 109, 2 Sep 42, title: Development of Persian Transportation Facilities. (4) Research Draft prepared by OPD Hist. Unit, USSR in U.S.-British Plans and Operations in 1942, pp. 83-85, MS, OCMH.

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for the BOLERO build-up. A Presidential directive giving virtually the same priority to the project for developing Iranian facilities to handle these shipments was therefore almost a foregone conclusion. It was forthcoming on 2 October 1942 when the President instructed the Secretary of War that "the project for the operation and enlargement of the Persian Corridor be given sufficient priority and support in the form of men, equipment and ships to insure its early and effective accomplishment." [34] With this directive the SOS Plan as modified by the CCS decision was put into action.

The Results of the Decision

Persian Gulf facilities under American operation eventually provided an adequate substitute for the northern route for delivery of supplies to the USSR but this development came much later than the planners in August and September 1942 had hoped and much too late to permit fulfillment of American commitments under the Second Protocol. Shipments of both supplies and personnel for the Persian Gulf Command were delayed well beyond the schedule proposed in the SOS Plan. Mistakes were made both in the planning and in the early operations. A trucking fleet that would carry anything like the 172,000 tons proposed in the SOS Plan was never sent. The transition from British to American operation took longer than planned, and the Americans also took longer to make their operation effective. Under British operation, improvement was slow during the latter half of 1942. Approximately 40,000 long tons of Soviet aid were delivered through the Corridor in September 1942, only 51,000 in January 1943. Total tonnage on the Iranian State Railway expanded only from 36,000 in August 1942 to 52,000 in January 1943. Between January and May 1943, the Americans assumed operation step by step and the turnover was generally complete by 1 May. During this transition period total tonnage delivered to the Russians expanded to 101,000 in April, while the railroad carried 65,000 tons in March. Under complete American operation, the figure for tonnage delivered to the USSR was nearly doubled by September 1943, reaching 199,000, and the railroad achieved a capacity of 175,000 tons in October. This achievement of the target loads came six months after the date predicted by Harriman and Spalding and three months after the more pessimistic goal proposed by Shingler in August 1942. After October 1943 the Persian Gulf was in a position to forward even more cargo than it proved necessary to send by that route. In the peak month

[34] (1) Memo, President for SW, 2 Oct 42, AG 400.3295 (9-1 42) Sec. 12.
(2) Motter, *Persian Corridor*, p. 180. (3) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 578, 584.

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of July 1944 some 282,097 long tons of supplies were delivered to the USSR through the Corridor. [35]

The effects of the ultimate success achieved by the American command are clearly apparent in the figures on performance under the various protocols. On the first and second, deliveries were only about 75 percent of the material promised, while on the third the United States exceeded its promises by 30 percent and on the fourth had already met 95 percent of its commitments when the war in Europe came to an end on 8 May 1945 and the schedules were revised. True, a shift in Soviet priorities, after Stalingrad, from military equipment to civilian-type supplies that made possible a far greater use of the Pacific route during this later period also influenced the result, but in large measure it was the opening of the Persian Gulf that made possible so high a scale of shipments, with the northern route intermittently closed throughout the war. [36]

Despite the delays in fulfillment of the goals then, the decision must be evaluated as a sound one if the rationale of the program of aid to the USSR is accepted. The cost involved to the build-up for invasion of the Continent was not a determining factor in postponing that operation until mid-1944. By the time the decision was finally rendered, there were so many other diversions and dispersions of American resources under way or in prospect that the Persian Corridor project was simply one of the minor factors contributing to the delay in concentration in the British Isles.

The principal criticism of the decision then must be that it was belated, unduly slow both in the making and in execution. It was reasonably apparent in October 1941 that the Persian Corridor would have to be extensively developed if supply commitments to the USSR were to be met and the crisis on the northern convoy route in April and May 1942 made it doubly certain. For a long period, there was a clear contradiction in American policy on aid to the USSR. Supplies and the ships to carry them were accorded almost the highest priority possible while the means of developing the only secure route for delivery of the supplies were accorded one of the lowest. This situation had reached the point, by July 1942 when the northern convoys had to be suspended, where only a decision at the highest level could resolve it. The President made that decision, ending the contradiction in policy. Yet the necessity for carrying out, almost *de novo*,

[35] (1) Estimate for August 1942 is based on Msg, AMSIR to AGWAR, 12 Oct 42 CM-IN 05027. All other figures are from Motter, *Persian Corridor*, App. A, Tables 4, 5. (2) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 577-83.
[36] (1) State Dept Rpt on War Aid to USSR, 28 Nov 45. (2) Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics*, pp. 583-97.

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a survey of requirements needed to perform the task and the means of meeting them delayed even the beginning of fulfillment of the decision for almost two months. It took another year for its complete effects to be felt. The lesson then appears to be that the plans for development of any line of communications must be prepared well in advance and a decision taken as early as possible on the means to fulfill them. Otherwise, amidst the competing claims of a global conflict, the relatively small requirements of such a project tend to get lost in the shuffle of major undertakings despite the importance they may have for over-all strategy.

In 1942 the importance of the Persian Corridor project for overall strategy was not inconsiderable. The need for speed must be evaluated in terms of developments on the Russian front in that year. While the Persian Gulf decision was in the making the Germans were moving steadily forward to their rendezvous with destiny at Stalingrad. If the Persian Gulf facilities had been ready, the amount of British and American supplies reaching the Russians during this critical battle would have been much greater. As it was, the Russians won with what they had and what the British and Americans did in fact contribute. But had the battle gone the other way, British and American leaders might well have had good cause to regret the fact that the decision to make a concentrated effort to develop the southern route had not been made earlier.

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