Factors affecting the German decision not to invade the Iberian peninsula, 1940-1945

Gerard F. Rutan

The University of Montana
FACTORS AFFECTING THE GERMAN DECISION NOT TO INVADE THE IBERIAN PENINSULA, 1940-1945

by

Gerard Francis Rutan

B. A. Montana State University, 1957

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1958

Approved by:

[Signatures]

Chairman, Board of Examiners

Dean, Graduate School

AUG 18 1958

Date
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>Fear of a Peninsular War</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III</td>
<td>The Façade and the Spirit</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>Economy of Forces: Western Front</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Economy of Forces: Eastern Front</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI</td>
<td>Economy of Forces: Southern Front</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII</td>
<td>Zurückblicken</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

Introduction

"There can hardly be any doubt that if Germany were to shift the focal point of her strategy to the Mediterranean, she would have had to solve this task in a military sense."

Field Marshal
Erich von Manstein

German-Spanish relations for the century or more before 1936 by and large constitute a history of co-operation. Various German and Spanish governments have stood side by side against Republican France and Napoleon, and in 1822 at Verona it was Prussia who helped to commission France to restore Ferdinand VII's power as the Spanish monarch. In 1868 Leopold of Hohenzollern's consideration and refusal of the Spanish crown was a trifling incident that bore amazing results. During the Cantonal Wars (1873), it was Germany that sent the first battleship to crush rebel Spanish naval vessels, and Bismarck himself tried a campaign to influence public opinion by damning the Carlists and their methods of warfare.

The first serious German-Spanish dispute in recent times came in 1885 when Germany occupied some of the Caroline Islands. Although the Spanish press boasted of Spanish
military might—an army "equal in every respect to Meltke's helmeted legions"—the only result was an attack by an irate mob on the German embassy in Madrid. The Germans finally left the Carolines, and amiable relations were restored.

In World War I, the Spanish government, especially the more conservative element, was not so much pro-German as anti-French. But the king and the liberals favored the Entente, and Spain remained neutral despite the fact that England held Gibraltar, something the Spanish have never forgotten. Although German commercial competition with England for Spanish markets had been welcomed as beneficial to the country, the pro-Entente feeling was a matter of political principle because of the liberal types of government in England and France. In larger measure, however, the Spanish point of view was probably due to a certain practical, materialistic trait often seen in the Spanish character. For as Spaniards have pointed out, it would have been fatal for Spain to have sided with Germany in World War I, since her wide separation from the latter, coupled with British naval supremacy, would have made it unlikely that Germany could have been of any assistance to Spain.  

But it was after World War I that the cordial relationship between Spain and Germany grew to its fullest. In

---

1927-28, the German navy obtained the blessings of the Spanish king and his dictatorial prime minister, Primo de Rivera, and began in Spain the construction of a U-boat of new design. The vessel was built according to the specifications of the German naval ministry, and there were many German technicians on hand. This project, of course, was in violation of the Versailles Treaty. Completed in 1931, the U-boat was built in the Eche Varietta shipyard in Cádiz and became the pilot model for the U-25 and U-26 class boat.

And it was the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 that set the tone of German-Spanish relations during the first year or two of the Second World War. On July 18, 1936, strong elements of the Spanish Right rose against the newly founded republic. The rebels expected to occupy the whole of Spain, except perhaps for Barcelona and Madrid, within a few days. They had at their disposal the greater part of the armed forces of the country and were backed by a strong political party and a great part of the Church. But the rebels were disappointed. The country divided itself into two armed camps—the Loyalist government in the south and the Nationalist rebels in the north. In the bitter fighting that followed, the German Luftwaffe made possible the first gains

of the Nationalists by transporting their leader and reserves over the guns of Loyalist naval forces lying in wait in the Strait of Gibraltar. After their failure to bring down the republic with a quick coup, the Spanish Nationalists had appealed to Berlin to aid their cause just as they had aided Germany in years past. Hitler sent the Junkers-52s to Spanish Morocco, and gave the rebellion in Spain a new lease on life.

The first German infantry to arrive in Spain reached Cádiz on or about November 7, 1936. General Sperrle, the commander of the Luftwaffe Condor Legion in Spain, wrote in Die Wehrmacht of May, 1939, that 6,500 German troops landed in November, 1936. Before that, about 5,000 other volunteers of a "non-military" nature had arrived. Technicians and artillery were sent to the Nationalists via Portugal, and in Hamburg there was a dock that became known to the local citizens as "France wharf."

Although German aid continued throughout most of the civil war (it was reduced by Berlin in early 1939), its need was most keenly felt and its arrival most highly appreciated during those crucial months of the summer and

---

6 Ibid., 36.
fall of 1936. In the middle of November, Hitler sent one combat group (3 squadrons of Junkers-52), a fighter group (3 squadrons of Heinkel-51), a company of radio operators, a company of telegraphists, a company of "listeners," and a meteorologist unit, as well as the thousands of infantry troops mentioned above. The German Condor Legion (Luftwaffe), commanded at different times by Generals Sperrle, Volkmann, and von Richthofen, did yeoman service against the Loyalists. So proud was Hitler of his forces in Spain that he had nothing but praise for a German film, completed at the cost of several million marks, based on the exploits of the famous Condor Legion.

The civil war ended at 10:00 p.m., March 26, 1939. The rebels had won. And no mean share of that victory was due to Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Shortly before, in February, the Nationalist government had concluded a cultural agreement (see below) with the Third Reich. This, and the Spanish adhesion to the Anti-Comintern Pact (see below), were the only two tangible agreements that held Spain in bond to the Nazis. The Spaniards chose to ignore the debt owed the Reich for war aid, and most of the feeling of

---


8 Ibid., 260.

9 "Resume of the Cultural Agreement Between Germany and Nationalist (insurgent) Spain," *School and Society*, February 4, 1939, p. 150.
"fascist brotherhood" existed in the hearts of Hitler and Mussolini. General Franco, the new ruler of Spain, was grateful, but fiercely independent. His attitude was not to change, nor to be changed.

II

The *Curse Complete de Primera Enseñanza*, the standard elementary school textbook used today throughout Spain, defines the present Spanish regime as:

The Spanish State, born under the unity and greatness of the Fatherland, is a totalitarian instrument at the service of the Fatherland; National-Syndicalist in character in everything which signifies a reaction against liberal capitalism and Marxist materialism.  

By the end of June, 1940 (after the fall of France), this "totalitarian instrument" institutionally resembled the Third Reich. Much as in the German scheme of things, Franco and the Spanish government were indistinguishable. Franco in Spain, as Hitler in Germany, was Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Chief of the government, Leader of the only legal party, and Head of the State. His parliament, the Cortes, enjoyed only one dubious right: the approval of his decrees, if he submitted them for approval. Other apparent similarities can be noted between the two regimes. Germany had the Gestapo, Spain the Falangist Dirección General de Seguridad; Germany had the SA and the SS, Spain the Militia Armada.

---

Germany's attitude toward Spain as of the end of June, 1940, was one of benevolence. The Reich, of course, looked upon Falangist Spain as a fledgling member of the association of World Leaders—a member of the New Order. But more practically, Germany knew that Spain possessed qualities beneficial to Germany's war plans. First of all, Spain's strategic location was noted by Hitler himself when he observed that the Luftwaffe's attempt to block the Sicily passage from the air was but a poor substitute for the possession of Gibraltar. If Germany could have held the "Rock," she would have been in a position to gain a foothold in North Africa and to close the western Mediterranean to the British fleet. The German navy's interest in Spain stemmed from a desire to have Atlantic bases farther from the RA F's reach than those at Brest or Cherbourg, while the Canary Islands were ideal as bases—both naval and air—for submarine and surface fleets as well as for the Luftwaffe.

A second practical reason for Germany's interest was one of population. The Spanish people numbered over 25,000,000 possible allies, workers, soldiers, and if

---

11 Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, VI, 442.

necessary, slaves. In the third place, the armed forces of Spain (although not modern) were reasonably large and were certainly battle trained and tested. The regular Spanish army numbered, according to German estimates, 250,000 in peacetime, and 500,000 could be mustered. Hitler himself held the Spanish soldier in high esteem. When speaking of the troops of the "Blue Division" which fought with the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front in 1942-43, he said:

To (German) troops the Spaniards are a crew of ragamuffins. They regard a rifle as an instrument that should not be cleaned under any pretext. Their sentries exist in principle only. They don't take up their posts, or if they do take them up, they do so in their sleep. When the Russians arrive, the natives have to wake them up. But the Spaniards have never yielded an inch of ground. One can't imagine more fearless fellows. They scarcely take cover. They flout death. I know, in any case, that our men are always glad to have Spaniards as neighbors in their sector.

The fall of France gave to Spain yet another quality in the eyes of the Germans. Spain possessed coal, iron, copper, and especially tungsten—and with France occupied, a direct transportation route to the interior of the Reich lay waiting and ready. Germany could make good use of that tungsten, as well as the other natural resources of Spain. And lastly, Spain was led by men who were fascists, or at least appeared to be such in both London and Berlin. As far

---

13 Halder, V, 3.
as the Germans were concerned, the bond of "fascist brotherhood," the concept of the New Order, made Spain a partner, an ally, a comrade in arms.

But the German evaluation of Spain in that summer of 1940 ignored, wholly or in part, certain important factors that were active upon the Spanish scene. The greatest among these was the new ruler of Spain himself. For with the coming of peace in 1939, General Francisco Paulino Hermenegildo Teodule Franco Bahamonde commanded the Spanish state. Emmet John Hughes, in his work Report From Spain, gives an insight into the character of the Caudillo and his government:

This man is a Gallegan. By tradition these men of Spain's northwesternmost corner are striking prototypes of the Latin peasant character: they are stubborn, they are shrewd, they are cautious, they are adroit, they are tenacious. These adjectives not only apply accurately to the character of Spain's dictator, but also illustrate the whole nature and temper of his regime: its resolute clinging to power, and its sinuous, elusive capacity to reconcile the most flagrant contradictions, to rationalize the grossest inconsistencies.15

Spain, according to Hughes, has always been fond of paradox, and this singular quality is the key to the Franco regime and to the general himself. The Caudillo lacked the mandate from the people, he did not possess any such mass personal following as to support his exercise of power. In the final analysis it was dependent upon an alliance of those old,

15 Hughes, 5.
historic political forces which have always been on the Spanish scene—the Church and the army.

After his first chat with Franco in 1942, Carlton Hayes, the American ambassador, related what had transpired:

What really happened during those fifty minutes was a spirited conversation between General Franco and myself, with the Baron de las Torres interpreting and Sr. Serrano Süner sitting mute. The General, I soon perceived, differed notably from the caricatures of him current in the 'leftist' press of the United States. Physically he was not so short or so stout and he did not 'strut.' Mentally he impressed me as being not at all a stupid person, but distinctly alert and possessing a good deal of both determination and caution and a rather lively and spontaneous sense of humor.16

Hayes described the general as a professional military man and held that like so many others of his calling Franco possessed a limited knowledge of the complexities and potentialities of the world outside of his own. Also, the new ambassador thought he detected a note of admiration—or fear—in the general's discussion of the Wehrmacht.

Emmet John Hughes wrote that Franco considered himself the savior of Spain, the single force that "through God's grace and his own zeal"17 saved Spain in 1936-39 from Communism and atheism. Even if this claim be true, it is undeniable that Franco failed to save Spain from the depths

17Hughes, 6.
of economic chaos in 1939-40. Although the Third Reich had sent tons of war material and thousands of troops and planes to aid the Nationalists in the Civil War, Berlin had failed to deliver any type of aid needed to secure Spain's prosperity after the war. Even as the panzer legions of the Wehrmacht reached the Pyrenees at the end of June, 1940, the Spanish people drew ever nearer to starvation. Carlton Hayes noted that by July, 1941, the situation had grown so desperate that Secretary Hull explained to President Roosevelt that unless something were done to meet Spanish fuel requirements a situation would result which might have conceivably presented the Germans occupying France with an excuse for restoring order in Spain, i.e., intervention. Food distribution within Spain was completely dependent upon transportation, and transportation upon fuel.  

Even in 1940-41, German-Spanish trade was not in any volume, nor did it involve those commodities (food and fuel) that Spain needed so desperately.  

Thus, if the Spaniard cared to think like a fascist, he was inexorably bound to British and American trade:

The Spanish government of General Franco thoroughly appreciated the country's cardinal need for petroleum and its dependence upon the United States for making a supply of that commodity available to Spain.  

---

18Hayes, 80.  
19Ibid., 82.
The Germans failed, in large part, to recognize the dire economic situation of Spain as of June-July 1940. They failed to see that the Spanish were dependent on American oil. They did not realize that Spain had to obtain her rubber and wheat from overseas sources. And Spain herself continued to be the neutral—to commit herself in no way. Although she was economically dependent upon the democracies, as late as 1943 Spain was shipping some iron ore to a Germany that could give her none of the vital commodities she needed so desperately. General Blumentritt noted that "the convoys brought from Spain the raw materials (iron ore) which were lacking at home." Spanish reasons behind such actions remains hidden in the archives in Madrid.

But the Spanish charade was well played. After the victorious German army had reached the Pyrenees over a fallen France in the early summer of 1940 (June 27), there was every reason to believe, both in the Allied and Asix worlds, that Spain would soon take the logical step in her development as a fascist state, that she would join her victorious sister states of the New Order in the war of "European unity."

---

20 Hayes, 79.

III

When France surrendered on June 25, 1940, the German Reich was at the zenith of its power. Spain, on the other hand, was a weak and war ravaged Latin state, with less than one-third Germany's population and possessing a military force that could not have hoped to compete with the seemingly all-powerful Wehrmacht. In comparing German and Spanish military strength as of that year, one finds that in the West the Germans possessed a military machine of 165 divisions, with an airforce of 57 bomber and dive-bomber groups and 41 fighter groups. The Wehrmacht had on hand ten armored divisions, and ten more were being activated.\(^2^2\) French, Czech, and Polish arms and armor were available, and food stores, oil reserves, and ammunition and material depots had been captured. The German navy, in that early summer of 1940, held ports directly on the ocean at Brest, Cherbourg, Le Havre, Antwerp, Bordeaux, and Rotterdam. It had also broken British naval ciphers, which gave its submarine and surface fleets an advantage above and beyond the new high-seas ports, i.e., first hand knowledge of British convoys, their size, cargo, speed, protection and destination.\(^2^3\) Besides France, the Wehrmacht occupied half of Poland, all of Belgium, Holland

\(^2^2\) Halder, IV, 82-83.

Luxembourg, Czechoslovakia and Norway, and was contemplating the invasion and occupation of the British Isles.

In comparison with their own strength, German estimates of Spanish and Portuguese military potential are instructive. On November 13, 1940, General Halder noted in his War Journal the following report:

Spain: Army; 27 divisions of 9,000 peacetime strength, each. War strength of army 500,000; armament on hand. Lacking AAA (antiaircraft artillery). Armor consists of a great variety of models, as does aviation. Armaments industry; meets only peacetime requirements. Coastal artillery; ammunition stocks very low. Officers Corps; severely depleted, 50% were massacred. Morocco; border has only field fortifications, Ceuta obsolete harbor fortifications—2-3 24cm. batteries. Seven divisions (including five crack divisions) with full complement of divisional artillery regiments, plus three corps of artillery of six battalions (10.5cm. and 15.5cm.). Tangier; open roadstead. Canary Islands; little is known about artillery defences. No air force. Rio do Ora; only a weak police force.  

On the same day Halder received a report on the other Iberian state, Portugal, which would ultimately be greatly affected by any Spanish military or political action. Halder noted it thus:

Portugal: Army; five weak divisions in the home country. Azores; 3 (infantry)-0 (cavalry)-3 (artillery) and a few 15cm. guns. Madeira; one battalion, one btry. Cape Verde Islands; one company (completely insufficient). Paper strength of war-time army is 100,000. Time needed for mobilization cannot be estimated. Army deliberately neglected. Coastline; the army is not in a position to defend the home...

24 Halder, V, 19.
country, the islands and the colonies. Intention to defend them against Britain is at least doubtful. Porto and Lisbon are fortified. Obsolete installations, projected modernization has not been carried out. No officers corps in our sense of the word. Officers have part time civilian jobs. Armament being modernized, but process interrupted by war. Armament industry practically non-existent. 25

Spanish arms, and more important Spain herself, would have benefited the German war machine, but obviously presented no danger to the Reich in terms of military prowess or ability as of 1940. Spain was both militarily inferior to Germany and politically associated, at least in spirit, with the Axis. The Reich's superiority in terms of men and material, and in terms of military ability, was a fact. If Germany cared to force Spain to make a choice, i.e., alliance or occupation, Spain could have expected no aid from allies, for she had none, save the Axis themselves and perhaps Portugal, who might or might not have conceded a "common Iberian interest." In 1940, Spain stood with the Axis, or she stood alone. The Spanish government, whatever its reasons, stood with the Axis. The next step was for Germany and Italy to persuade Spain to march with them.

In the summer and early autumn of 1940, the German government attempted to gain two ends in Spain: first, inducing Spain to join the Tri-partite Axis alliance in

the interest of the solidarity of the New Order, and second, persuading Spain to become a belligerent, primarily in terms of a combined German-Spanish assault on Gibraltar. The first goal was all but achieved in 1940. Although Spain had not yet become a member of the Axis alliance, Franco had joined the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1939, and his intentions, as far as the Germans were concerned, were what they should have been, i.e., tending toward the Axis alliance. As John Hughes points out:

At Burgos, on March 27, 1939, Spain had joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, the protocol of accession going into effect at once: and the German delegate von Stohrer, the Italian Campalti, and the Japanese Makoto Yano felt that they could count on Spain in the days to come.\footnote{Hughes, 232.}

And Spain did not lag, not yet.

In early 1940, the German ambassador in Madrid, von Stohrer, was able to cable Berlin that the Spanish government was prepared to place German tankers in out-of-the-way bays of the Spanish coast, ready them, and even aid in servicing them. These tankers were to be used in fueling German vessels on the high seas.\footnote{Ibid., 237.} Von Stohrer also stated that "the Spanish government has already shown a similar obligingness in supplying German U-boats."\footnote{Ibid.} In 1940, after the fall of France, Spain occupied Tangier and permitted the Reich to
open a consulate which served as a key center for Nazi espionage activities throughout all North Africa. Franco and his government were careful to abide, by and large, with the provisions of the Cultural Agreement of January 28, 1939. Under it Spain and Nazi Germany were to have spiritual and cultural co-operation, and the agreement provided for the exchange of professors, students, books, the opening of schools, the arrangements of expositions, currency facilities in each other's country, privileged positions for the language of each country in the school curriculum of the other, musical and theatrical exchanges, motion picture co-operation, and all the other media by which Falangist Spain would be drawn nearer to the leader of the New Order—Germany.

But the test of Spanish sincerity was yet to come. By the fall (October) of 1940, the Germans seemed willing to allow Spain to join the Axis in victory, to enter the war on the basis of the Anti-Comintern Pact alone. In the fall and winter of that year there were other, more important matters to be considered than the Axis Pact and Spain's legal entry to it. Among these greater matters were (1) the defeat and occupation of the British Isles, and (2) the capture of the last remaining piece of continental soil still in British hands—Gibraltar, gateway to the

29 Hughes, 237.
Mediterranean. Once the Spaniards actively engaged in a combined assault on the "Rock," the die would be cast. Spain would be in the war.

IV

Franco had assured Hitler on June 3 that he looked upon the war as his own struggle, and that he rejoiced over recent German victories.\(^3\)\(^0\) He had concluded with an apologetic phrase, explaining that he could not enter the war because Spain suffered from a weak economic system, one that could not stand the strain of anything but neutrality. This attitude on the part of Madrid had been quickly countered by a communique from the German foreign office, dated June 17, 1940.

The attention of the Spanish government should be drawn to the impending collapse of France and its effect on German-Spanish relations. It is assumed that Spain has discontinued delivery of strategic materials to the Allies.\(^3\)\(^1\)

Hitler was certain that Franco would, as the Fuehrer put it, "come into the game."\(^3\)\(^2\) On July 13, he told Halder that Spain was to be drawn into the war and thus to serve as a vital part in the front the Fuehrer envisaged from the North


\(^3\)\(^1\)Ibid., 605.

\(^3\)\(^2\)Halder, IV, 116.
Cape in Norway to Spanish Morocco. Halder learned that the Nazi foreign minister, von Ribbentrop, had that same day been ordered to go to Spain to get the foundation of the German-Spanish undertaking well in place.

Von Ribbentrop found conditions in the Iberian peninsula not what he had expected. The civil war had caused tremendous destruction in Spain, and World War II tended to hurt rather than aid her faltering economy. On May 10, he had curtly advised the Spanish government that her economy had to be built "from within," not "from without" by means of foreign (Allied) credits. His visit during the middle of July illustrated beyond all doubt the fact that he had been too hasty, and that Spain was truly in dire economic straits. This revelation of their potential ally's weakness did not dampen the Germans' spirits, however.

So confident were the leaders in Berlin that Spain would come "into the game" that Halder wrote on July 22 that an alliance between Spain and Portugal (which was rumored to be in the making) was agreeable to Germany—providing that Portugal sever her ancient relationship with Great Britain. And so important was Gibraltar that he wrote on July 30 that

---

33 Halder, IV, 116.
34 U. S. Dept. of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, IX, 318.
35 Halder, IV, 129.
if Germany decided she could not successfully invade the British Isles that fall, then the attack on Gibraltar from the landside would be an alternative line of action, along with possible movements into Turkey or against Suez. 36

But almost as soon as General Franco learned that something more than cultural agreements and statements of "fascist unity" was expected, he began to vacillate in his fervor for the Axis cause. Lt. Col. Hauck reported to Halder on August 9 the pessimistic findings of Admiral Canaris, Chief of the German Abwehr:

Spain will not do anything against Gibraltar on her own accord. German intelligence reports to date. Drawing of Spain into (the) war will be difficult. Economic problems. 37

But on August 23 Halder received a report from von Etzdorf, the military attaché in Madrid. It was of quite a different hue:

Spain is willing to enter the war on our side. Wants 700,000 tons of grain, in return. (Wants) disarmament of North Africa (Vichy-French). Post War claims: Gibraltar, Morocco, and Algeria as far as Oran. 38

Halder wrote directly below this entry, "Spain wants North-west Africa."

Sometime in late August, 1940, the Germans began to gain a better appreciation of the true picture. In his

36 Halder, IV, 140.
37 Ibid., 154.
38 Ibid., 170.
somber report to Halder on August 27, Canaris pointed out that all was not what it seemed:

Gibraltar: Franco's policy from the start was not to come in until Britain was defeated, for he is afraid of her might (ports, food situation, etc.). Now the Fuehrer is working on him to swing him over to our side. Suner is supposed to come here. Spain has very bad internal situation. They are short on food and have no coal. The generals and the clergy are against Franco. His only support is Suner, who is more pro-Italian than pro-German.... The consequences of having this unpredictable nation as a partner cannot be calculated. We shall get an ally who will cost us dearly.

Nowhere in Canaris' report can one find a cheerful note. Compare it, however, to the report Halder received from Bruns, another military attaché in Madrid, on September 4, only ten days later:

Franco still firmly in (the) saddle, supported by armed forces. General Vigon (Air minister and army chief-of-staff) friend of Germany. Internal tensions to be overcome by common effort at Gibraltar. (Gibraltar is conceived as an all-Spanish effort, a national goal, uniting all political factions.) Danger from Suner. Reconstruction of troop officers corps will take two to three years. Staff officers—good. Spain can furnish 350 - 400,000 men, without equipment. Has 60,000 white soldiers and 20,000 Moors in North Africa. Portugal: Spain wants to prevail on Portugal to permit entry of Spanish troops in event of invasion of Portugal by foreign power (England). Financially, Portugal is not tied to any foreign power. 

---

39 Halder, IV, 175.

40 Ibid., 183.
Neither the Fuehrer nor the Wehrmacht were pleased with these contradictory reports from the various intelligence sources in Spain. In order to settle the matter of Spain's role in the war, Hitler on September 14 called a conference during which he impatiently reminded the military that a long war was undesirable for Germany. He declared that the war could be brought to a close most swiftly by an invasion of the British Isles. That being immediately impossible because of failure to gain control of the air and bad flying weather (sic), Gibraltar had to be taken. Halder noted, regarding the Fuehrer Conference: "Gibraltar; no definite orders. Merely expression of intention to promise Spaniards everything they want, regardless of whether the promises can be kept." The most fantastic concessions were to be offered to Spain. She was to control West Africa as far down as twenty degrees south latitude, and even be granted southward expansion of the Spanish Cameroons (Rio Muni).

On September 23, Hitler wrote Franco with the object of "enlisting his participation in the attack on Gibraltar," and on October 7, Halder noted that the Duce was to draw Spain into the Axis. And on October 8: "There are to be

---

41 Halder, IV, 193.
42 Ibid., 195.
43 Ibid., 205.
44 Ibid., 223.
negotiations with Spain on a new basis." By October 15, Hitler was no longer vague in regard to his desire for Gibraltar. Halder wrote, between quotation marks, the words of his Fuehrer: "'Gibraltar must be taken!'" On that same day, Hitler met and talked with Serrano Sûner, the Spanish foreign minister, regarding German-Spanish co-operation vis-à-vis Gibraltar, but Sûner refused to commit himself to anything until definite colonial and economic matters were settled. When Hitler countered with the question of payment of Spain's civil war debt, Sûner's answer was: "Such mingling of idealism with materialism is incomprehensible for a Spaniard." Hitler is said to have felt "like a little Jew." Toward the end of his entries for October 15, Halder noted that the Fuehrer was writing a letter to Franco. The Spanish claim to Oran was just too much for Hitler to swallow, and "the Fuehrer is going to have a meeting with Franco on the French-Spanish frontier." Evidently Hitler thought he could get further with Franco than with the haughty, austere Sûner.

The conference took place on October 23, 1940, in the little French town of Hendaye, which rests at the foot

---

45 Halder, IV, 225.
46 Ibid., 233.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid., 235.
of the Pyrenees. The meeting was secret, and accounts of it are sparse. The only important available source is a German memorandum of the conversation between the two dictators.

After greeting his guest, Hitler told Franco that he was very happy to meet the Caudillo personally, especially since he had been with him in spirit during the civil war. The Fuehrer then informed the Caudillo that the war was over and that Britain would soon capitulate. He (Hitler) had re-organized the Wehrmacht so that:

Beginning in March of the following year (1941), the army would present itself in the following strength: of a total of 230 divisions, 186 were attack divisions. The rest consisted of defense and occupation troops. Of 186 attack divisions, 20 were armored divisions equipped with German material, while 4 additional armored brigades possessed captured material in part [sic]. In addition to this there were 12 motorized divisions. With this army strength Germany was grown ready for any eventuality. 49

Hitler told the Caudillo that Britain now knew that the war was lost; in any event she would be crushed and not even her hope in the USSR could save her. As for the United States, there was no need for alarm for there would be no change in the status quo, at least not for a considerable time. "Until America's military power (will) be fully armed," said Hitler, "at least two to four years (will) pass." 50


50 Ibid.
Fuehrer informed Franco that a considerable danger for Spain would result should the United States entrench herself on the islands lying off Africa in the Atlantic Ocean, or should Great Britain do the same. The danger was great because no one could be certain of the loyalty of the French troops stationed in North Africa to Petain:

The greatest threat existing at the moment was that a part of the Colonial Empire would, with abundant material and military resources, desert France and go over to De Gualle, England, or the United States.  

Hitler easily explained away the recent failure of the Wehrmacht to invade and occupy the British Isles. It had been the weather that had held up the invasion (sic). Since the middle of August, there had not been five fair days, and a major attack against the British naval forces by the Luftwaffe supposed favorable atmospheric conditions. Hence, the "cancellation" of the invasion. The Fuehrer went on to describe the state of affairs in which Germany found herself. According to Hitler, victory lay at his finger tips:

In the meantime, England, and especially London, was being bombarded day and night. On London alone, 3,500,000 kilograms of bombs had been dropped. Many harbor installations, factories, and armament works were thus being shattered; England's approaches were being mined; and an increasing U-boat activity was contributing to the further isolation of the Islands. At the moment, the number of U-boats being finished every month was 10. In spring, it would rise to 17; in July to 25, and after that up to 34

---

51 Gantenbein, 728.
...the concentrated activity of the air-arm, mine-layers, destroyers, and speed boats would do so much damage and harm to England that in the end attrition would set in.52

The Hendaye meeting ended with what might be construed as the Fuehrer's final argument in his attempt to win over the Caudillo to the Axis war effort. While German air and naval forces besieged the British on the sea and over the Home Islands, Hitler's troops in France and the Lowlands would be used to crush England's last hold on the Continent--Gibraltar. The combined German-Spanish assault would be crowned with victory, a victory that would be but one among many. Diplomatic victories had been won by Germany, and in his appeal the Fuehrer backed up his plan for the combined assault on Gibraltar by painting for Franco a striking picture of Axis solidarity, strength, and inevitable victory:

Naturally, Germany has an interest in ending the war in a short time if possible, since every additional month costs money and sacrifice. In the attempt to bring about the end of the war as soon as possible and to render the entry of the United States into the war more difficult, Germany has concluded the Tripartite Pact. This Pact is compelling the United States to keep its Navy in the Pacific Ocean and to prepare herself for a Japanese attack from that direction. In Europe as well, Germany is attempting to expand her base. He (Hitler) could

---

52 Gantenbein, 728-29.
confidentially report that several other nations had announced their intention of joining the Tripartite Pact.\(^\text{53}\)

And Spain should now join the winning side!

During the day-long conference the Caudillo was affable, dignified, and uncowed. At moments he even seemed detached. When he finally mounted his own railway coach to again cross the Bidassoa and return to Spain, he was fending off an insistent Fuehrer's

"I must have your answer now."

Answered the Caudillo:

"I will think about it." "I will write to you."\(^\text{54}\)

After the Hendaye conference there was correspondence between the two dictators and much going to and fro of ministers and generals. But Franco never got around to committing himself one way or another. He never specifically agreed to join the Three Power Pact, and he never allowed Spain to become a declared belligerent. He simply did—nothing.

Typical of the correspondence was an exchange in February, 1941. Hitler addressed the usual pleas to the Caudillo on February 6, 1941 (after the date set for the German-Spanish attack on Gibraltar had come and passed). Franco left Hitler's letter unanswered until February 26, when he

---

\(^{53}\)Gantenbein, 729.

\(^{54}\)Ian Colvin, Chief of Intelligence (London: Victor Gollancz, 1951), p. 129.
replied: "Your letter of the 6 makes me wish to reply very promptly..." 55

V

On November 1, 1940, Halder noted in his War Journal that the Fuehrer was very displeased with the results of the Hendaye conference. He had spent an entire day with Franco and had received in return nothing more tangible than statements about Axis "spiritual solidarity." Hitler did not enjoy being ignored by Franco, nor having his demands ignored. But Franco indisputably left Hendaye the diplomatic victor. He had stalled the German drive, at least for a little while, to push or drag—or both—Spain into the war. Halder noted between quotation marks the words of his Fuehrer regarding General Franco: "'Jesuit Swine'" and "'misplaced Spanish pride.'" 56

When Hitler had recovered from his herculean effort at Hendaye ("I would rather have four teeth pulled than go through it again" he told Mussolini in Florence), 57 he optimistically set about organizing the means, both political and military, necessary for an assault on Gibraltar. After all, the Caudillo had not refused to co-operate, and these "outline plans" (as they were called) existed for every

---

55 Colvin, 129.

56 Halder, V, 3.

57 Colvin, 131.
contingency, although they would not be put into detailed preparations until the political omens were favorable. Hitler and his Wehrmacht were not prone to overlook possible, and in this case highly probable, developments. Thus, on November 12, 1940, the "Fuehrer and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces (Wehrmacht) issued Directive No. 18:

Directive No. 18: Preparatory measures for the conduct of the war in the near future will be taken by the High Commands along the following lines:

1. Relations with France....
2. Spain and Portugal:
   - Political steps have been taken to bring an early entry of Spain into the war. The object of the German intervention in the Iberian Peninsula (code name, FELIX) will be to drive the British from the western Mediterranean. To this effect:
     a. Gibraltar must be seized and the Straits closed.
     b. The British must be prevented from establishing themselves on another spot in the Iberian Peninsula or the Atlantic Islands...

The orders for the preparation and execution of Operation Felix were laid down by the Fuehrer as follows: there were to be four phases to the action, the reconnaissance phase, the air attack phase, the land attack phase, and the occupation phase. In the first, the reconnaissance phase, teams of German officers dressed in civilian clothes were to go into Spain and arrange for the transport of troops and supplies through the Iberian peninsula to points of

58 Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, VI, 957.
concentration for the attack. These "teams" were also to secure landing fields for the Luftwaffe's air attacks on the "Rock" and British ships in the harbor.

In the air attack phase, Luftwaffe planes were to carry out a surprise attack from French airfields on the gun galleries in the "Rock" and against anti-aircraft and coastal batteries around Gibraltar. They were also to attack any shipping in the harbor. Next, of course, the German (and perhaps some Spanish) troops were to pour across the small, sandy isthmus connecting the "Rock" with the Spanish mainland. The troops were to capture and occupy Gibraltar. Additional Wehrmacht troops already in Spain were to be prepared to enter Portugal should the British attempt a landing there. These reserve troops were also to back up the attack on Gibraltar and in general to maintain order and to oppose an enemy landing anywhere on the Iberian peninsula.

In the final phase, German forces were to aid the Spaniards (if necessary) in closing the Straits. Some units were to go to Morocco with coastal artillery, while others were to utilize Gibraltar. With the Luftwaffe occupying Spanish airfields and patrolling the air over the Strait, with German coastal artillery on both sides of it, and with the German navy having mined it, the Strait of Gibraltar would be closed.
Hitler next concerned himself in Directive No. 18 with the Atlantic Islands. But no definite plan of attack was laid down. The commanders-in-chief of the three services were simply to examine the problem of taking the Atlantic Islands, as well as Madeira and the Azores, and report to the Fuehrer with their findings. With respect to Italy, Hitler simply stated that no Italian participation was foreseen.

With the passing of the autumn of 1940, Operation Felix became ever more complex and detailed. Halder made note of the fact that reconnaissance parties were being readied in Bordeaux. One of their duties, incidentally, was to ascertain the feasibility of introducing menthane gas into the galleries of the Gibraltar "Rock." Once introduced, the gas would be ignited and the galleries and gun positions demolished. 59 The artillery and intelligence sections made their reports, stating that preparations were progressing. By November 4, 1940, Halder was able to identify the units scheduled to take part in the action:

Against Portugal: Corps Schmidt, consisting of Fourth Armored Division and SS Deathhead Division. Over Schmidt and Kuebler (the commander of the SS Deathhead Division) will be Command Staff Reichenau. 60

---

59 Halder, V, 1.
60 Ibid., 7.
On that same day, Halder observed the readiness of the coastal artillery to be used in closing the Straits, as well as for bombarding Gibraltar:

Artillery: captured enemy (British) guns with personnel batteries from 13th Draft for Spanish and North African (Spanish Moroccan) coast.
Spain: get ready 15cm. and 10cm. guns; initially we may also lend some mobile batteries. Islands (will need) some captured enemy guns with crews.

In the same entry he mentioned that he and the Commander-in-Chief of the Army had discussed methods for crossing the Strait of Gibraltar to Spanish Morocco. By November 5 (seven days before the formal issuance of Directive No. 18) Halder noted that preparations were coming along so well that any lagging was noticeable. For example: "Readying of Armored units for Portugal: Sixteenth Armored Division, Sixteenth Motorized Division not ready yet—investigate." But by and large deadlines were met. By November 20, the Twenty-Second Division was fit for operations (reserve), and general furlough restrictions were imposed in the units earmarked for Gibraltar. Halder recorded that Reichenau was appointed commander of the operation, over the protests of Goering who wanted von Richthofen (former commander of the Condor Legion) and the Luftwaffe to have full control. Within eight days (November 14) Halder wrote that the Luftwaffe had declined

---

61 Halder, V, 7.
62 Ibid., 9.
63 Ibid.
the envisaged mission against the Cape Verde Islands, Canary Islands, and the Azores. This, noted Halder, was Goering's doing; Hitler had turned down Goering's demand that von Richthofen be given full control of the Spanish operation, and Goering had pouted and offered excuses for the inability of the Luftwaffe to carry out the operation against the Islands. 64

By November 11, the day before the general formal order contained in Directive No. 18 was issued, Halder noted that the OKW had been notified that three weeks alert notice would be needed to make sure of the proper movement and dispersion of troops and materiel. Preparations, although not highly advanced, were at least existent.

The success of Operation Felix depended on that element of synchronization that so worried Halder. There were numerous entries about shipping being late, or the airforce not knowing what to do when it had to do it, or the lack of coastal artillery 65 that would prevent the defense of the right place at the right time. Most of the entries, after November 12, dealt with shortages. There were not enough flat-bed trailers; the signal communications units were non-existent; coastal artillery was lacking. Perhaps one of the biggest concerns Halder had at that time was the Irun bridge. On November 25, he wrote that no decision had

64Halder, V, 21.
65Ibid., 48.
yet been taken by the High Command (OKH) regarding this weak but vital bridge. It would have to be strengthened to sustain heavy military rail transport into Spain, but any work of that nature would have been immediately and correctly interpreted by British agents. It therefore had to be put off until the last moment before the movement of troops up to the Pyrenees.  

The Fuehrer himself laid down some of the tactics to be used in the assault on Gibraltar. Every inch of the English territory was to be pulverized by Spanish-manned German guns. To accomplish this tremendous task, great quantities of siege gun ammunition were needed, and there was to be "unlimited expenditure" of it. Twenty to thirty ammunition trains were to go through France, or by sea to Malaga. The coastal artillery, said the Fuehrer, had to be there in time to prevent the escape of unsunk British ships from the devastated harbor. The attacking infantry forces were to make use of the heaviest tanks, each carrying 27 rounds of ammunition. General Halder noted the additional plan to blind the anti-aircraft artillery and fire control centers of the British by smoke bombs and heavy artillery shells. These latter tactics were evidently the innovations of the planning staff.

---

66 Halder, V, 36.
67 Ibid., 55.
68 Ibid., 11.
In regard to the Spanish and perhaps the Portuguese Islands, since the air force had refused the task of taking them the navy was to investigate that phase of the operation and plan accordingly. 69

But by December, 1940, only the most foolishly optimistic of the German leaders still believed that the German-Spanish assault on Gibraltar would ever take place. Yet, in the "Fuehrer Conference" of December 5, Hitler made known that he still wanted Gibraltar. Operation Felix was to take place as soon as possible—for Spain would surely resolve her doubts and take that step which would bring her into the war. The latest date, said Hitler, for "F" day was to be January 10, 1941. Hitler reminded the officers present that he wanted the shortest possible interval between the first air attack and the start of the heavy artillery bombardment. The decision to carry out Felix, said Hitler, was final. 70

The decision to put Operation Felix into effect may have been final in Berlin, but in Madrid the thinking was quite different. The Hendaye conference had solved nothing. On November 25, Halder noted that the Spanish question did not "seem to be getting anywhere." 71 And indeed it was not. As Halder himself stated "Spain is not going to be dragged

69 Halder, V, 27.
70 Ibid., 55.
71 Ibid., 37.
into war. They know that they would have to pay the piper even after German victories." On November 26 he noted that the Hendaye-Irun bridge was under "friendly consideration" by the Madrid foreign office, but the consideration was so "friendly" that absolutely nothing was ever done. And on December 3, two days before the Fuehrer Conference, Halder noted that Franco was more unpredictable than ever and that he had set no date for his entry into the war.

Halder recounted the Caudillo's own excuse: "Completion of preparations cannot yet be predicted." The day before (December 2) Halder noted that Spain had said that two months were too short to complete preparations and that Franco could accept no deadline. Six days later (December 8), the Caudillo told Admiral Canaris point blank that entry into the war by the time proposed by Hitler (January 10, 1941) was impossible, since no preparations had been made. The reasons, said Canaris, were mainly of an economic nature; food, fuel, etc. The Spanish transportation problem defied solution. Finally, the Canary's and the other Spanish overseas possessions would be lost, and the Portugese

---

72 Halder, V, 37.
73 Ibid., 41.
74 Ibid., 52.
75 Ibid., 49.
Islands would be occupied by the enemy. The Islanders, said Canaris, "would simply starve to death." 76

Even Hitler was becoming convinced of Spanish hesitancy, and on December 9 (a short four days after his "full-speed-ahead" Fuehrer Conference), Hitler told Halder that he now realized that "Spain has finally declined." 77 On the 12 of December, Halder made one short entry in his War Journal: "Operation Felix cancelled." 78

VI

Spain's failure to live up to Axis expectations is now a matter of history. Franco did not "come into the game." The reasons are many, some of them obvious, and some undoubtedly hidden. The full explanation will only be known when the Spanish government opens its archives. Until that time we can only ponder the different and varied facets of the Spanish paradox.

There is, however, another question—more intriguing and of more importance—that complicates the problem. When the Reich realized that Spain would not commit herself to war nor allow her territory to be crossed for a belligerent purpose, why did not Germany violate Spanish neutrality even if it meant war with Spain?

76 Halder, V, 60.
77 Ibid., 62.
78 Ibid., 67.
The advantages offered by such a move were obvious, and many have already been mentioned. The capture of Gibraltar and Ceuta would have been, of course, the primary benefit, since the possession of the "two pillars of Hercules" would have made the western Mediterranean an Axis lake and given the Germans and Italians a land route and a defensible sea route to North Africa. An occupied Spain would have provided naval bases and submarine pen sites on the Bay of Biscay, the Atlantic, and in the Balearic Islands. Permanent air bases in Spain would have placed the Luftwaffe within range of North Africa, the middle Atlantic, at least half of the Mediterranean, and almost all of southwest Europe. Military formations in depth would have been in a position to move northward against the southern flank of an enemy beachhead on the French or Spanish Biscay coast or in the south of France. The Canary Islands held out the promise of overseas naval and air bases, extending greatly the effective striking distance of the German navy and the Luftwaffe, and offering greater control of the south and middle Atlantic.

Spanish population resources would have been at the command of the German war effort and if necessary transported to Germany. Spanish iron, copper, coal, and tungsten would also have benefited the German war effort. The gains that would have accrued from an Axis occupation of Spanish North Africa were obvious. With their western entry closed, the
British would have had to move troops and supplies through a U-boat infested south Atlantic to the Suez Canal, which itself would have been in mortal danger as the Italians to the south (in Somaliland) and the west (in Libya) drove against a now almost isolated British outpost. "How well Rommel might have fared if the Straits of Gibraltar had been closed by German siege guns and Stukas in 1941!" With the Gibraltar entry closed, the British invasion and supply route would have been almost completely blocked, thereby strengthening that "soft under-belly" of Europe shortly to be almost entirely in Axis hands. The only way in which the Allies could have mounted an attack against any part of Mediterranean Europe would have been to come through the Suez Canal—if it were still open!

Finally, the capture of Gibraltar and the occupation of Spain would have helped lay the foundation for the "grand strategy" of Goering and Raeder. The Chief of the Luftwaffe and the Commander of the Kriegsmarine (navy) seldom saw eye to eye. But at least on this one point they did agree. Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff of the British Army (1939–1943), discussed the "grand strategy" in his work Turn of the Tide. He wrote that both Goering and Raeder tried to influence Hitler into joining Italy in an attack on Britain's weakly held bases in the

79 Colvin, 125.
Mediterranean and Near East, in capturing the Suez Canal and the Persian oil fields, and, in cutting the last link of the Balkan states and Turkey with the West, either forcing them to throw in their lot with the Axis or using them as involuntary corridors through which to encircle the Black Sea, establishing air bases within striking distance of the Caucasian oil wells at Baku, and outflanking Russia from the south. Goering and Raeder suggested that one German army group, under von Rundstedt, advance through Spain to occupy Gibraltar, Algeria, and Tunisia, another under von Bock through Italy and Tripolitania to conquer Egypt, and a third under von List through Yugoslavia and Greece to the Bosphorus and Anatolia.  

Lord Alanbrooke holds that it was precisely this strategy that those responsible for Britain's safety most feared. And, despite their inadequate armaments, the British had taken immense risks to prevent it. While with what might be called her left arm Britain guarded her home seas and skies, with the other she had to defend the Atlantic waters, the Strait of Gibraltar, the Egyptian desert, the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East. So long as she did so, despite their domination of Europe, Hitler and Mussolini

could not conquer the world. Short of defeating Britain by invasion or else attacking Russia, the Germans had to break that out-stretched arm before they could overrun Asia and Africa.

Yet in the winter of 1940-41 this did not seem difficult. Britain's military power was dangerously weak and extended, and the striking power of Germany and Italy appeared to be almost invincibly strong. There were only four British battleships in the eastern Mediterranean and two in the western, based on Alexandria and Gibraltar, and some fifty-five thousand British, Indian, and Commonwealth troops and two hundred air craft in the Nile Valley. 81 This force was all that stood between the Axis and its goal, i.e., domination of the Mediterranean area and North Africa. And not only was Italy, with her dominating strategic position and African bastions (Italy had 415,000 troops in Africa alone) in an ideal position to isolate and destroy these inadequate British forces, but the German army, which had overwhelmed France, was free to drive through Spain to Gibraltar, seal off the Mediterranean from the west, and pour into French North Africa. The question is: why did the Wehrmacht fail to do so?

The Wehrmacht, in 1940-41, possessed plans that could have affected just such an occupation of Spain and Gibraltar.

81Alanbrooke, 149-50.
82Ibid., 196.
In 1940 Berlin had become concerned over the possibilities of Allied action against Axis-held Europe via an invasion of Spain and/or Portugal and a subsequent drive into France. Blumentritt wrote: "On the Pyrenees the Spaniards presented no danger, but rumors were spread that the Allies might also land on the Iberian Peninsula." On April 30, 1941, Halder wrote that the Fuehrer ordered an investigation and appraisal of British possibilities for landings in Portugal, Spain, or Spanish Morocco. With the coming of May and the Balkan War, the Wehrmacht began to plan in earnest for a move into Spain—but only in case of a British landing. On May 2, Halder received a report from Heusinger in which was detailed military-political data of an operation against Spain and Portugal, and on May 3 he noted that a supply base for possible action on the Iberian peninsula was being readied at Bordeaux. And on the next day he mentioned a directive from Berlin on "preparations for a military operation on the Iberian peninsula in the event of British moves against Portugal, Spain, or Spanish Morocco." The code name of the new plan was "Isabella." It is important to note that Halder called it a code name for "defensive measures against

83 Blumentritt, 144.
84 Halder, VI, 91.
85 Ibid., 93.
86 Ibid., 97.
a possible Allied invasion of Spain." No German invasion of Spain was being planned with the sole object of occupying Spain.

Throughout the rest of May, 1941, Halder made note of the preparations for Isabella. He wrote that the Irun bridge had to be restored, replacement units called up, and the troops equipped in case of combat. Most of the troops in France were by then merely occupation troops, and did not possess the necessary equipment to wage a full scale campaign against British invaders. Also, the Balkan war and the buildup for the Eastern offensive had drained off men and supplies.

The War Journal entry for May 27 holds the first clue as to the real significance of Operation Isabella. On that day Halder wrote of Spanish military ability, not as against the German Wehrmacht, but rather as against the British army. The Germans still thought of Spain as a quasi-ally, not as a potential enemy:

Spain: mobilization takes 8 days. Alert period for march readiness 12 hours. Ammunition for one to three months (varying different weapons); tight on AA (anti-aircraft) ammunition. Fuel supplies for 2 months. Fighting quality of Spanish troops against British supposed to be good. /Italics mine/

General Halder reported to the Fuehrer at the latter's head-

87 Halder, VI, 101.
88 Ibid., 104, 122, 125.
89 Ibid., 135.
quarters on July 6, and found that Hitler envisaged an operation in Spain or Portugal against the threat of British landings there. Hitler maintained that at least four divisions—armored divisions at that—would have to go to France to be in readiness for the expected landings. These divisions would have to come from the Russian front, but the Fuehrer held that at least one of them would have to go to France soon. This, said Hitler, would bolster German prestige and show the world that Germany still had forces available over and above what was needed on the Russian front.  

Thus, the German Wehrmacht switched its program from one of German-Spanish co-operation to one of German protection of Spain. The fact is, Hitler was willing to send sorely needed troops and supplies to Spain to protect her from the British even after Spain had reneged on her promises (by deed if not by word) to stand with the New Order. The Germans still looked upon Spain as a sister fascist state, as a member of the New Order.

In 1942, the Isabella plan was dropped, or rather modified and renamed Ilona. In contrast to Isabella, Ilona provided that the ports of Bilbao and Santander were to be seized to forestall the British, and German troops were to move to the Spanish-Portuguese border, but not over it as

---

90 Halder, VI, 213.
under Operation Isabella. 91 Army Group "D" was to effect these operations. There was at that time (1941-42) only a Military Command France, since France was not an active theatre and troops and supplies were short. But in respect to possible military operations, the organization of Military Command France was synonymous with Army Group "D".92

Operations Isabella and Ilona never went into effect. The fabled German plan to invade and occupy Spain, and perhaps Portugal—the "bug-a-bear" mentioned by Alanbrooke93—remained a plan, an idea, and never even drew close to becoming a reality. Blumentritt wrote that Isabella and Ilona were worked out, i.e., had a shape and an organization and definite, recorded goals. Both plans were based primarily upon the defunct Operation Felix.94 But any plan for the invasion of the Iberian peninsula with the goal of defeating the Spanish and Portuguese was what Blumentritt called "a map operation," a plotting table exercise which "never left the cupboards of Western Command."95

It can be assumed, with comparative safety, that these "map operations" (like Isabella and Ilona) were based

92Halder, VII, 321.
93Alanbrooke, 195.
94Blumentritt, 182.
95Ibid., 182.
by and large on Operation Felix. One of them, Operation Kurfurst, was concerned with a frontal drive into Spain, much as Isabella was to bring the weight of the Wehrmacht straight down on newly-landed British forces. Another, Operation Gisela, was for the occupation of Spain after the defeat of the British invaders. These plans (Kurfurst and Gisela) were never worked out as were Isabella and Ilona, and as Blumentritt said, they "remained in the cupboard."

Out of all this "drafting table" work and "map operations," one point still emerges. Adolf Hitler was not interested in (1) invading Spain and fighting Spaniards, and (2) the occupation and utilization of Spain, the greatest asset being Gibraltar, if it meant fighting Spaniards. In the spring and early summer of 1941, and in the year before it, the German army in the West sat dormant. Gibraltar hung like a ripe plum. Hitler wanted Gibraltar, but Spain refused to enter the war, to "come into the game." And once Spain had refused, Hitler concerned himself not with taking his plum, if necessary by force, but rather with protecting his vastly inferior and obviously disloyal quasi-ally. With all the benefits to be gained, militarily, economically, and politically by the possession of Gibraltar and the exploitation of Spain, Hitler did nothing. Why?
CHAPTER II

Fear of a Peninsular War

"One sleeps where Southern vines are drest
   Above the noble slain;
   He wrapt his colors round his brest
   On a blood-red field of Spain."

The Graves of a Household,
by Felica Dorothea Hemans.

I

Although no historian, Adolf Hitler was a devotee if indeed not a student of history. He constantly found historical meanings in the events that took place around him. In Mein Kampf, he stated that "to learn history means to search for and to find the forces which cause those effects which we later face as historical events."\(^1\) Hitler developed a historical basis for his "intense love of my native Germany"\(^2\) and repeatedly said that during his school days history was his favorite subject. It was this training in history, under Professor Doctor Ludwig Poetsch, that made Hitler, by his own statement, "hate" Austria and "love" Germany.\(^3\)

\(^1\)Adolf Hitler, Mein Kampf (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1939), p. 18.

\(^2\)Ibid., 20.

\(^3\)Ibid., 22.
Although history was his favorite subject, Hitler was no historian, and historical accuracy was not his forte. His school report cards show that Poetsch gave him only "Fair" marks in history courses. Indeed, this grade was the usual one received by the young student of Linz. Hitler's academic career was anything but brilliant, and he never mastered mathematics, and even received an "Unsatisfactory" in practical geometry. But his interest in history was genuine, and he held the discipline in high esteem. Years after his study under Poetsch at the technical school in Linz, Hitler wrote that it was decisive for his entire future life that he had had a teacher "who was as kind as he was firm" and who taught him "to remember the important, to forget the unimportant."

In his more mature days, Hitler's interest in history did not flag. Ernst Hanfstaengl, the companion and social mentor of the young politician during the late 1920's and early 1930's, notes in his work *Hitler, The Missing Years*:

He (Hitler) was a voracious reader and positively stormed the historical library I was building up. He could not read enough about Frederick the Great and the French

---

Revolution, historical parallels out of which he was trying to distil a policy for Germany's difficulties. For years the great Frederick was his hero and he never tired of quoting examples of the king's success in building up Prussia in the face of overwhelming odds. This did not seem to me a particularly pernicious obsession, as Frederick had always been a man who knew where to stop.

It can be held with comparative safety that Hitler was conscious of the problems in, and the history surrounding, the Spanish Peninsular Campaign. He knew a great deal about Napoleon, and through his reading must have come to realize the obstacles that would face a modern attempt at the conquest of the Iberian peninsula, the first of which would most certainly be that of military resistance. Would the Spanish of 1940 fight an invader as they had in 1809, even if that invader were Germany, the leader of the New Order and a declared friend of Falangist Spain? And if they did fight, how effectively? General Blumentritt states that Field Marshal von Rundstedt "had such a high regard for the Spaniards that he was convinced that they would defend themselves against any attack, Allied or German."

Hitler himself recognized the risk:

Occasion of Spain without the consent of the Spaniards is out of the question, as they

---


9 Blumentritt, 182.
are the only tough Latin people and would carry on guerilla war in our rear.\textsuperscript{10}

On their own side, the Spanish were active in giving to the world the impression that they would resist. On February 12, 1942, General Franco and Dr. Salazar (the dictator-premier of Portugal) met in Seville. On December 20 of the same year, General Jordana met Dr. Salazar at Cintra and discussed "Iberian policy." The result of these meetings was the declaration on February 10, 1943, of the alliance of Spain and Portugal in defense of the Iberian peninsula. On that same date Spain announced her intention to defend her territory against all aggressors. Germany, it seems, was aware of the Spanish decision to defend herself before the announcement by Spain. On November 11, 1942--before the meeting at Cintra--Germany had informed Spain that her neutrality would be respected.

In so far as Spanish military ability is concerned, however, when one compares German estimates of Spanish military strength with the Wehrmacht's in 1940-41, (see Chapter I) it is obvious that in terms of men and material the German Panzer and infantry divisions would have had little trouble in defeating the numerically inferior and less well-equipped Spaniards. Spain would probably have fought the Germans with the fury the French had found so

horrible in their peninsular campaign, yet Spain's ability in terms of men and material was such as to make final victory for the Spaniards more than doubtful. If the Wehrmacht, then, were to come to grips with the Spanish armed forces, the action would most likely go well for the Germans.

But the Spaniards faced the German forces with not only between 250,000 and 500,000 armed men, but also with one of the greatest natural barriers to rapid movement in all Europe—the Pyrenees. Spain's entire northern border is a mountain range of great magnitude. It extends from the Bay of Biscay in the west to the Gulf of Lions in the east, across the entire neck of the Iberian peninsula. Its highest peak, Pico de Aneto, rises 11,169 feet, and the rest of the range is rugged and interlaced with narrow and usually undeveloped passes, some of them leading into natural box canyons. The Pyrenees act as an effective barrier between France and Spain, and the mountains extend in some places over one hundred miles in depth, and thus present not only a barrier in height but in breadth as well. There are only two principal highways across the entire range, one on each coast line, and the passes through the interior mountains are rugged and high. Those at Somport, Pourtalet, and Puymorens are all above 5,000 feet, and that at Roncesvalles is 3,700 feet. The Pyrenees through history have been nature's gift to the Spanish in the way of ready-made fortifications, much as the Channel has been to England.
The Wehrmacht, however, was not an organization to be dismayed by opposing armies and their fortifications, man made or not. The Germans had behind them a record of conquest of great armies and fortifications that some had even termed "impregnable." The Hela Peninsula, the concrete and steel fortifications lacing the tortuous fjords of Norway, the great Belgian fortress of Eben-Emael, the Maginot Line; all these "unbeatable" fortifications had been all-too-speedily crushed by the Wehrmacht.

There was yet another consideration that played a part in the thinking of the Wehrmacht and its Leader. For it one must turn, as indeed Hitler must have, to history. In April 1809 the British Army, once driven out of the Iberian peninsula by the French, returned and landed in Portugal. It was commanded by Lord Henry Wellesley. In the years that followed that landing, to the defeat of the French forces in Spain in 1812-13, there raged on the Iberian peninsula one of the bloodiest and most barbarous wars of modern times. Spain witnessed two armies of two of the most modern nations in the world decimate each other. The Spaniard himself joined in, and the accounts of the suffering of the French at the hands of the Spanish guerrillas behind the lines make morbid reading. Hitler knew that Napoleon had made mistakes, and he firmly maintained that he was not going to make the same errors. Throughout his Table Talks he again
and again mentioned the mistakes of Napoleon and condemned them as stupid and fraught with danger.\textsuperscript{11}

Considering the obstacles facing Hitler regarding an armed invasion and occupation of Spain: a small, and perhaps poorly armed but experienced and determined army, a natural belt of fortifications running across the entire length of the invasion route, a people historically proven for their natural fervor and ability in the face of an invader, and finally the biggest obstacle of all—the awful event of intervention by the British thereby opening up a new front in an area not fitted for tank warfare and the rapid transport of supplies, it is little wonder that the Fuehrer seriously questioned any plan for an invasion of Spain and turned his eyes elsewhere. The historical precedent—Napoleon—bore no good omen. And the British themselves had set out to give the Fuehrer more than Napoleonic history upon which to base his judgement.

In April, 1940, the British moved into Norway, under what they called the "Stratforce Plan." They were promptly driven back out again by a superior Wehrmacht. A year later, in the spring of 1941, the British went to the aid of the embattled Greeks against the Italians. The situation became so bad that German troops, indeed whole armies, had to be sent to assist the faltering Italians and secure the tip of

\textsuperscript{11}Adolf Hitler, \textit{Table Talks}, 310-11, 326, 456, 473, 573.
the Balkans for the Axis (see Chapter V). But the amazing thing about these British interventions is that they took place at a time—between April, 1940 to April, 1941—when not only were the British Isles for most of the time to be threatened with invasion, but the forces that were sent to Greece brought about the giving up of North African territory just wrested from the Axis armies (see Chapter VI). The British thus proved that they would intervene if their interests were seriously affected, as in Norway and Greece. A German invasion of the Iberian peninsula would have affected British interests in a manner that would have been intolerable, (see Chapter I) and any threat to Gibraltar and the Strait would almost certainly have been met by a strong British counter-action, as in Norway and Greece. These facts must have been plain to the Fuehrer in 1940-41.

II

Lord Alanbrooke, writing in his work Turn of The Tide, stated:

Until now (1940-41) the (Royal) Army had played a comparatively small part in the Government's calculations for winning the war. Though much the largest of the three services, it had counted for less in the struggle for survival than the navy and the air force. The first call on the nation's resources and skilled manpower had been naval and aerial. With the gradual extension of the call-up the Army by now (1941) numbered two and a quarter million men, with nine hundred thousand more in the Commonwealth, Indian and Empire forces....Yet only a small proportion of these were front line troops organized in mobile
field units. After two years of war there were still only half a dozen divisions in the country fully armed and equipped to fight the Germans on the Continent.\textsuperscript{12}

At Dunkirk only 337,131 men had been saved, but most of their equipment and heavy arms had to be left behind or destroyed. Many of these survivors were not British, but French, Czech, Dutch, and Belgian. But what is of real importance is that despite their weakness the British had gone to great pains to organize, equip, and keep in permanent readiness two divisions prepared to occupy the Atlantic Islands or French North Africa in the event of an Axis move through Spain or against Vichy. Lord Alanbrooke stated that these divisions "were able to proceed overseas at immediate notice."\textsuperscript{13}

And even more important, in 1942 and 1943 the Allies agreed that all preparations be pressed for a cross-channel invasion, and studies be carried out as to when and where the best landing on the Continent could be effected. But at this same time, Churchill insisted that the possibility of alternative action on the Iberian peninsula be "considered by the Combined Chiefs of Staff."\textsuperscript{14}

Thus, although it can be charged that their preparations were inadequate, the British had prepared to some

\textsuperscript{12}Alanbrooke, 260.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., 339.
degree for a peninsular war. Halder himself pointed out again and again the not too friendly attitude of the Portugese toward the Germans, and Blumentritt wrote:

From time to time anxiety arose at the headquarters of the German Wehrmacht that the Allies might land in Portugal or Spain...in the south, to invade the area of Western Command.

It was upon these fears, of course, that the defensive operations of Isabella and Ilona were based, although these plans (see Chapter I) never reached any real measure of preparedness nor operational ability.

The Wehrmacht's, and Hitler's, fear that the British might intervene in the event of a German drive into Spain was valid. The intervention was not only possible, but in light of Norway and Greece, probable. As Lord Alanbrooke pointed out, both the British and the Germans realized that to control Gibraltar was to control the western Mediterranean and the gate-way to that entire area. If the Germans held Gibraltar they would threaten Britain in a way so vital as to be catastrophic. These threats, multitudinous in scope, have been analysed in Chapter I. Churchill realized the situation and made his plans accordingly. From an observation of the available facts, we can surmise with relative safety that the Fuehrer did the same.

---

15 Halder, V, 14, 46, 4; VI, 135.
16 Blumentritt, 182.
It cannot be held that the above mentioned obstacles to a German invasion of Spain were the main turning points of the Fuehrer's thinking. There were other more important considerations and events, but the threat of Spanish resistance in a tortuous and almost impassable mountain range, combined with the possibility of British intervention and Spanish guerrilla warfare, must have presented a sobering picture to the Fuehrer and his Wehrmacht. On the basis of such fears or "obstacles"—especially when they are considered in the light of history—a plausible argument can be put forth that one of the many reasons Hitler did not go into Spain with armed force and "pick his plum" (Gibraltar) was the fear of a peninsular war.
CHAPTER III

The Facade and the Spirit

"Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between thee and me, for we are brethren."

Genesis, xiii, 8.

I

Adolf Hitler felt no great attraction for the Spanish way of life, either its government or politics. Although Franco's dictatorship was ostensibly fascist and bore some similarities to Hitler's Germany, the Fuehrer found many of its aspects not to his taste. Throughout his Table Talks, he repeatedly referred to the bad effects in Spain of what he termed "Church control," of a slipshod political unity, of an unrealistic and anarchistic economic policy, and he bitterly denounced the "priests and monarchists who have joined together to seize power in Spain."¹ His subordinates, like Goebbels, who followed the Master's line, spoke of Franco during 1941 and after as "weak," or as "a useless politician," and characterized the Spanish

¹Adolf Hitler, Table Talks, 422.
government as "opportunistic," "disloyal," and "ungrateful."

But to have Hitler's liking, or respect, or comradeship in the New Order was no guarantee of freedom from either verbal abuse or military vassalage. Even Italy's "Elder Statesman" of fascism and Hitler's good "friend" was not immune from German insults, and considering the Fuehrer's treatment of the Duce—giving him orders, summoning him to conferences on short notice, intervening in Italian military affairs uninvited—it is understandable why, at least once, the Duce lost his temper, stamped his foot, jutted out his jaw, and declared that he would endure it no longer. Ciano heard his master denouncing the Germans as "dirty dogs," complaining that they (the Germans) "take everything and leave us only a pile of bones," and "that this cannot go on for long." The Duce roared that he was "sick and tired of being rung for." Nor did it please Mussolini's ego when he learned that the current German joke in that year of 1940-41 was to refer to him as the "Gauleiter of Italy."

As strange as it may seem, Spain and its leader, General Franco, never had to endure the affronts suffered

---


4Ibid., 360.
by Germany's prime ally, Italy. Until October 23, 1940, at Hendaye, the Fuehrer had never met his Spanish "ally," and the meeting was a test of whether or not Franco would become the "Gauleiter of Spain." Halder noted at that time (November 1, 1940) that Hitler heaped upon Franco's head the abuse due such "Jesuit trickery" and "misplaced Spanish pride." But verbal abuse was about the extent of it. Hitler returned to Germany without having achieved Franco's conversion to his--Hitler's--plans to take Gibraltar. At Hendaye the Chief of the Spanish State had been friendly and even enthusiastic, but according to the memorandum prepared by the German government on the meeting, no commitment was made by Franco to Hitler. The Spaniard preferred to wait and see what the future would bring before he took Spain into the war. And a full day of the Fuehrer's pontificating could not make him change his mind.

One reason why Hitler avoided military intervention in Spain--the desire to avoid a peninsular war--has been discussed. Lord Alanbrooke offers another:

The Spanish dictator was a declared friend to Germany and Italy and under great obligation to them. Yet when that October Hitler met Franco at Hendaye and asked him to join the Axis, that shrewd despot, aware that Britain had defeated the Luftwaffe and still held the seas around Spain, had been curiously evasive. He had been full of assurances but had promised nothing. And though

---

5 Halder, V, 3.
Hitler was very angry, he did not consider it worth while to shatter his ideological façade of a New Order in Europe...by forcing his way through the territory of a Fascist and ostensibly friendly state.

To what degree the Fuehrer let the façade of the New Order influence his thinking is difficult to measure. But from his writings, words, and actions—and from those of his immediate subordinates—it is possible to estimate their thinking and the effect on it of the façade.

The phrase New Order was not a glib bit of propaganda emanating from Dr. Joseph Goebbels' Ministry. Rather, the New Order was a real and visualized system for the reorganization of the world in general and of Europe in particular. John Robert Bengtson, in his work Nazi War Aims: The Plans for the Thousand Year Reich, states that the key to the thinking of the leaders of the German state, the basic consideration upon which was built the New Order, was the issue of race. The Nazis believed their racial theories, and one of the reasons they fought the war was to put their theories into practice. Hitler, as Germany's absolute ruler, stands out as the master planner of the New Order. Men such as Otto Strasser and Hermann Rauschning assisted him in his evolvement of the plan.  

---

7 Alanbrooke, 57.

The Nazis considered the English, Italians, and surprisingly enough the Spanish, as Nordic peoples. And in Hitler's New Order these peoples at least were to be nominally independent, and were each to rule over an empire of their own. An Anglo-German alliance was to have been one of the cornerstones of Hitler's foreign policy, and almost to the very end of the war Hitler believed that he somehow could reach an understanding with the English on the basis of which Germany would be free to build an empire on the European Continent while Great Britain would rule the seas, the home islands, and the colonies. Even when the end of the war was very near, in April, 1945, the Fuehrer rejoiced to learn of the death of President Roosevelt, for now, he felt, the Allies would quickly become racked by dissension and fall apart, and Germany would join the West, Great Britain and the United States, in a great counter-offensive against Communism in the East. The "miracle of the House of Brandenburg," however, was not to be repeated, and the Fuehrer soon saw his last fantastic hope dashed as the Wehrmacht continued to retreat on all fronts. The Anglo-German alliance, a main building block of the New Order, was a wish—not a reality.

---

9 Bengtson, 2, 3, 40.

The Italian empire in Europe under the plan for the New Order was to include the lands along the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea, Greece, and a portion of France. The rest of Europe was to have been annexed to the Reich or made into vassal states subject to Germany's disposal. Aside from Italy, the only exception was the Iberian Peninsula, where the Spanish were to have ruled supreme.\textsuperscript{11}

The available evidence would indicate that the Fuehrer was not a person lightly to throw aside, without the most serious reasons, so basic a concept of world reorganization as that of the New Order. This being so, it becomes a little more understandable why, as Lord Alanbrooke said, Hitler did not consider it worth his while to shatter the façade of the New Order by quixotic action in Spain. For an invasion and occupation of Spain, a proposed partner in the New Order, would tend to do just that.

II

With this unwillingness to shatter his ideological façade, Hitler faced the problem of the unoccupied Iberian Peninsula. But there were additional factors to be considered. Hitler was accustomed as a politician to thinking in terms of politics, international relations, economics, personalities, and prestige. These considerations were often contradictory

\textsuperscript{11}Bengtson, 134.
to purely military necessities. In other words, he allowed political, diplomatic, economic, personal, or prestige considerations to affect military decisions, often to the horror of the Wehrmacht. Felix Gilbert, in his work *Hitler Directs His War*, illustrates this vividly:

What Hitler found lacking in the professionals' (soldiers) approach to war emerges clearly from the conference records. He considered three aspects of modern war as of decisive importance. One is morale....Secondly, Hitler placed great emphasis on making full use of modern techniques. ...The third factor was politics. When questions like the retreat of the southern wing of the Russian front were discussed, political considerations such as the repercussions on Turkey or Rumania weighed most heavily with him. Emphasis on such factors as these, or at least a different evaluation of their importance, formed the chief dividing line between Hitler and the generals.¹²

The catastrophe of Stalingrad serves as an example. Hitler attached great political significance to the capture of Stalingrad:

To him it was not only a military but also a psychological objective, and he was convinced that, once this city, named after one of the two heroes of revolutionary Russia, had fallen into his hands, the political regime of the Soviet Union would crumble and collapse.¹³

Thus, Hitler committed one and a half million men against Stalingrad, an objective of no great military value and certainly not worthy of so high an expenditure of troops. But the winter of 1942–43 witnessed the Wehrmacht's loss


¹³Wheeler-Bennett, 531.
of 600,000 men at Stalingrad—all in an attempt to gain a "psychological objective." Further, as has already been mentioned (Chapter I), Hitler in 1941 ordered that sorely needed armored divisions be removed from the brittle Russian front and sent to France in order to "bolster German prestige and show the world that Germany still has available forces over and above what is needed on the Russian Front."\(^{14}\)

The fact that this removal of needed strength from the East would do more harm than good did not affect the Fuehrer. He was so interested in presenting a "good front," and if one had to send armored divisions to France in order to do so, then armored divisions would go to France!

Another illustration of Hitler's preoccupation with political aspects as against military aspects regarding a given problem is to be found in the work of Karl Bartz, *Swastika in the Air:*

In the Spring of 1942, the visual system of night-fighting was at its peak. Kills were increasing and Kammhuber (Chief of the Luftwaffe night-fighter squadrons) even hoped that they would rise enough to discourage the enemy. To bring this about he increased the strength of both the night-fighting squadrons and the search-light batteries. The successes obtained between Arnhem and Munster were particularly encouraging and it began to look as though Kammhuber might reach his objective (of discouraging British bombing raids). Morale amongst the night-fighters was particularly high. Then came sudden and unexpected orders from Hitler: all search-light batteries...were to be transferred to the anti-aircraft defences for co-operation

\(^{14}\)Halder, VI, 213.
with the guns. The justification of this order came from a source close to Hitler: 'The night fighters don't shoot down much anyway, and Kammhuber is imposing an intolerable burden on industry.' But the real reason was that the RAF had made diversionary raids on Munich and Vienna, and it was revealed that the air defences of those two big cities were anything but adequate. After the raids, their Gauleiter hurried excitedly to Hitler complaining bitterly and pointing to the damaging effect upon public morale. The result was the order concerning the search-lights. Once again the reasons for an important order issued by Hitler had been political. For prestige reasons and to please his Gauleiter Hitler interfered with Kammhuber's work to defend Germany from the air and deprived him of one of his most important weapons.15

Is it too difficult in the light of these observations to picture the Fuehrer in 1941 pondering and asking himself: 'If I do invade Spain, and assuming that I can subdue the Spanish and keep the British out, or defeat them if they come in, what have I won? Is Gibraltar worth the ill-will and suspicion of my allies? Will they think that if I have invaded one member of the New Order that I will invade others? What of the neutrals, Switzerland, Sweden, and Turkey. Can I invade a neutral state such as they and suffer no serious consequences? What of Vichy-France? How will Petain (ruler of Vichy-France) react? What of French North Africa? Can I afford such a gamble, especially in the light of the political considerations?"

In 1940-41, the Germans were attempting to build their New Order on something more than military conquest alone. Realpolitik, as Hitler saw it, was based on more than fighting. Hitler's favorite weapons, politics and political dealings, were in great part responsible for some of his notable war-time successes. Rumania was "peacefully occupied" on December 31, 1940. The following January, pressure was brought to bear upon Bulgaria, which became a party to the Three Power Pact on March 1 (exactly as Hitler had told Franco at Hendaye half-a-year before). Next, Yugoslavia joined the Axis camp on March 25, 1941. Could the Fuehrer afford to antagonize, to cause serious reservations, on the part of these new "allies" by an act of out-right agression in neutral (and yet quasi-allied) Spain?

During the spring of 1941 von Ribbentrop expressed the widespread German conviction when he stated that "the war is won."\textsuperscript{16} By this time the Germans had begun an intensive campaign to draw Vichy-France into the Axis camp, and after June, 1941, Goebbels mentioned that the Germans had managed to persuade Vichy to send battle units to the Eastern Front to fight side-by-side with the Germans.\textsuperscript{17} Halder noted in detail the German "toe-dance" to keep the

\textsuperscript{16}Ciano, 306.

\textsuperscript{17}Goebbels, 85.
Petain regime loyal and respectful, but at the same time affable. For example, he observed that in November, 1940, the Fuehrer had issued an order to the German military government in France to "go slow" in Vichy.

The behind the scenes Italian objections to a Vichy-German alliance were understood but met with little sympathy in higher German circles. Halder, for instance, wrote on November 18, 1940, that:

Eventually, the conviction that Italy is an unreliable partner became the determining factor in the decision to continue in our original policy (under the armistice) toward (Vichy) France.19

Although the Italian hatred of France is outside the scope of this thesis, suffice it to say that the Italian aspiration to humiliate a traditional enemy and acquire rich colonial and continental lands to add to the new "Italian Empire" under the New Order was in large part the motive for the underhanded Italian moves.

Considering the foregoing, then, it becomes a little clearer that while the military sub-leaders of the German Reich were primarily interested in the military considerations of the war, the Fuehrer, as both head of the military and head of the state, found it necessary to consider many facets of a problem, among which the military was only one.

18 Halder, V, 29.

19 Ibid.
While the Fuehrer was beyond doubt ready and willing to concede that invaluable military advantages were to be gained from a conquest of Spain and Gibraltar, he at the same time found this invasion and conquest a danger to, and in contradiction of, the entire concept of the New Order. How could he rightly invade and subdue a Nordic people, future leaders under his scheme for the future Europe? And what of the catastrophic effects upon the newly acquired allies, to say nothing of the Finns or the still relatively powerful Vichy-France, which possessed natural and population resources as well as the second largest colonial empire in the world?

What of the effect on the other neutral states? How would they view an invasion of a state that was strictly speaking exactly like them—neutral? In the spring and early summer of 1941 this question had real import. Could the Reich afford a possible Turko-Russian "interdependence" or worse yet their alliance? Might Sweden assume an attitude hostile to the point of denying Germany needed iron ore? And what of the outside world? How would it look to have two Fascist states fighting each other, with the British there to make capital out of the situation? This would most definitely not be a "food front."

Although these questions may seem somewhat trite at present, in the mind of the Fuehrer in 1941, they no doubt existed in some form. He made important decisions for political and prestige reasons of much less weight.
Undoubtedly Hitler weighed the gains against the risks. Even if the military problems regarding an armed invasion of the Iberian peninsula could be overcome, was the venture worth the terrible political risk? Was it worth the possible destruction of the basic war aim, the great and final goal? Was it worth shattering the façade of the New Order?

III

There is another aspect or "facet" of the problem that, while not strictly a part of the above, is akin to it. Adolf Hitler was the ultimate deciding force in Germany. As General Jodl said, "Apart from Hitler there was no powerful man; there was not and could be no influential man next to him."  

During his interrogation, General Falkenhorst, the commander of the Norwegian campaign, stated:

He (Hitler) talked to each single admiral. He listened to each general and had him explain exactly what his task was, even to the commanders of the boats, and discussed with them whether they would drop men to the left or right of a certain objective. He went into everything. It was his idea. It was his plan. It was his war.

Hitler, then, was the actual, not just the titular head of the Wehrmacht. His decision was final. An invasion of

---


21 Bengtson, 14.

22 Ibid., 13.
the Iberian peninsula was a decision that ultimately rested with the Fuehrer. The history of German-Spanish relations had been one of co-operation. The two nations, separated by the French land-mass, had never fought each other in modern times, and certainly could not be ranked opposite each other as traditional enemies in those two column charts that diplomatic historians so enjoy drawing up. Thus, there existed no grounds upon which it could be claimed that Germany could have invaded Spain in 1940 or in 1941 with similar reasons or nationalistic motivations that she gave for her invasion of France. In other words, there existed no precedent for war, no galling grievance, no ancient hatred.

Rather, the Nazi regime in Germany and the Nationalist regime in Spain found ground for mutual understanding and co-operation (except for the leading personalities involved). After all, they were both "fascist" and both members (as far as Hitler was concerned) of the New Order. But the important consideration is that the Fuehrer, despite his criticism of Spanish governmental methods, even after his denunciation of Spanish ways and his vitriolic condemnation of "Jesuit trickery," found that he could not move against Spain as he was to later move against Vichy-France and even Italy. For the fact is that Adolf Hitler liked Spain, and he liked the Spaniards.
In the Table Talks, those private, off-the-record, informal conversation notes that Hitler planned to use as source material for the books he intended to write after the war, he again and again talked of Spain and the Spaniards. And while he heaped scorn on the heads of the clergy, the monarchists, and finally even the governmental leaders, he praised the Spaniards, and the virtues of the common people of the peninsula. Hitler touted the Spanish troops of the Blue Division fighting on the Eastern Front (see Chapter I). On September 5, 1942, he went on to say:

I think one of the best things we ever did was to permit a Spanish Legion to fight at our side. On the first opportunity I shall decorate Muñoz Grande with the Iron Cross with Oak Leaves and Diamonds...When the time comes for the Legion to return to Spain, we must re-equip them on a regal scale, give them a heap of booty, and a handful of Russian generals as trophies.

It appears that Hitler felt that the Spanish were a noble people, and he held that the Spaniard and the American, for example, could never understand each other. "The Americans live like sows," he said, "in a most luxurious sty." The Spaniard, on the other hand, was cultured and intelligent, if not so materialistic. The Spaniard was of Gaulic and Arabic origin, maintained Hitler, and as such had the good

---

23 Adolf Hitler, Table Talks, 563.
24 Ibid., 492.
25 Ibid., 493.
qualities of both. It was the Catholic Church that had ruined Spain, corrupted her leaders, and made her backward. The Fuehrer punctuated this statement with another that in the light of Nazi actions seems quite out of place: "In Madrid, the sickening odour of the heretic's pyre remained for two centuries mingled with the air one breathed."26

As far as Hitler was concerned, it was the clergy and the crown that had made the Spanish people take brutal means to get rid of brutality. If the Spanish people were backward, that was the fault of their priests and their leaders, of that "Pontius," Franco, and the "grave-digger of modern Spain," Serrano Suñer.27 The true Spaniard was a noble person, and his great hope was Fascism. Once the Spaniard drove out the priests, he would rise.28 So thought the Fuehrer.

In the spring of 1942, Hitler stated that Vichy-France—toward whom German policy had greatly changed by that time—could still "save herself" and become a member of the victorious Axis if she would give up some continental territory and some colonial areas in North Africa. Germany would even compensate her with new colonies in Central Africa (to be taken from the British after the final victory). The surprising fact about this arrangement is that those North

26 Adolf Hitler, Table Talks, 235.
27 Ibid., 493.
28 Ibid., 418.
African colonies were to go to Italy and to the "ungrateful" Spanish. Almost two years after Franco had refused, by deed if not by word, to enter the war, Hitler was still concerned about the Spanish and their future empire.

Although he was periodically the butt of the Fuehrer's wrath, it was not until late 1942 that Hitler began to call Franco "the stirrup-holder" for a future Spanish king. This is a baser insult than it appears, for by then the Fuehrer hated royalty and all things connected with it. From that time on, the Spanish Chief of State came in for much more criticism. But all the while Hitler criticized the Spanish government and the Spanish Church, he praised the Spanish people. For example, Hitler mentioned that the Spanish workers in the Todt Organization—the German civil construction corps—were "first class." He went on to say that the more Germany could recruit the better, since they were very good workers, with excellent discipline.

Later yet, Hitler heaped more abuse on the Spanish leaders, and said that Franco and Suñer were "stupid parsons," "seduced by royalty," and were "ingrates. At the same time, he stated that the Spanish press was the best in Europe!  

29 Adolf Hitler, Table Talks, 216.
30 Ibid., 563.
31 Ibid., 462.
32 Ibid., 563.
This was because the Spanish people were so "cultured." Again, the Fuehrer expounded the theory that the Russian people, unlike the Spanish, were slaves of their priests or their commissars. The Spaniards, he maintained, "hate their clergy and will soon throw their priests out." When that happened, Spain would enter upon a new and better day.

These are a few examples of the "liking" the Fuehrer felt toward the Spanish. One would not be justified in holding that the main reason Hitler failed to invade Spain was his affability toward the Spanish, but on the other hand this "liking" did bear some results, or rather aided in bringing them about. In May, 1943, the Commander-in-Chief of the German navy, Admiral Raeder, recommended to the Fuehrer "the occupation of Spain and Gibraltar," in order to give the navy needed ocean frontage and submarine pen sites on the Atlantic and Mediterranean that were relatively free from enemy air attacks. The Fuehrer, in answer to this recommendation, curtly replied:

This was still possible in 1940, carrying Spain along with us, but our forces are not sufficient for this purpose now, and it would be against Spain's will. (Italics mine.)

Also, one must not forget the statement of the Fuehrer contained in Chapter II:

Occupation of Spain without the consent of the Spaniards is out of the question, as they are

---

33 Adolf Hitler, Table Talks, 493.
the only tough Latin people and would carry on
guerilla war in our rear.35 Italics mine.

It is difficult to find another example where the Fuehrer's
decision to invade or not to invade a country was affected,
especially to the high degree seen in this case, by his
desire not to offend those who did not care to be invaded.

There are then, two closely related lines of thought
in the writings, words, and actions of the Fuehrer and his
Wehrmacht. One was the desire to maintain the façade, the
aversion to shattering the concept of the New Order. This
thinking manifested itself in Hitler's wish to keep on the
best relations with his new allies, Bulgaria, Rumania,
Hungary, Finland, and Vichy-France, especially in the crucial
year of 1941, as well as to present the best front possible
to the neutral states and to the enemy. The other was
Hitler's attitude toward the Spanish, his liking of the
Spanish as a people, his respect for their courage and
racial virtue. Hitler believed that the Spanish were a
Nordic and a worthy people, who would after the war rule
an empire that would be part of the New Order, that final
and supreme end which he sincerely felt Providence had
placed him on this earth to bring about.

35 Martienssen, 172.
CHAPTER IV

The Economy of Forces: Western Front

"We are waiting for the long-promised invasion. So are the fishes."

Winston Churchill, during a BBC broadcast to the French people, October 21, 1940.

I

During the warm summer days of 1940, after the occupation of Norway and the conquest of the Lowlands and France, German troops, flushed with victory, sat in cafes in Paris and Antwerp and Oslo gleefully singing the popular song of the day: Wir fahren gegen England. The confidence of both song writers and troops found official expression in Fuehrer Directive No. 16 of July 16, 1940—three weeks after the fall of France. This was Hitler's order for the invasion of England, for a massive assault of the home islands in an effort to defeat the British armed forces and force the British government to bring the war to an end.

Peter Fleming, in Operation Sea Lion, gives a detailed picture of the plans and preparations for the invasion and occupation of the British home islands during the late summer of 1940. General Halder, too, in his War Journal, recorded
the involved preparations in minute detail. The history of those preparations and of the failure of Operation Sea Lion is beyond the scope of this thesis. But it is essential that the part played by the planned invasion of Britain in the sphere of German-Spanish relations—and the Wehrmacht's failure to invade Spain—be brought out.

During the summer of 1940, when Germany controlled the shores of the Continent from the north of Norway to the Bay of Biscay, Hitler had other problems to consider besides Spain and the British-held "Rock" at its southernmost extremity. Those other considerations were of a military nature, and they were of the utmost importance. For in that critical period—July 1940 to June 1941—the Fuehrer was faced with an agonizing choice.

If he continued his westward movement, across the channel and into England, and failed, he would not only lose prestige and the bulk of Germany's available shipping, but, by depriving himself of the means of making another attack, release the growing British army and air force for operations elsewhere, perhaps even on the Continent. On the other hand, if he ignored the Islanders and attempted to move through Spain, capture Gibraltar, and invade North Africa, he would face them on a wider front with thinner defenses. He could not afford to leave the British alone after their refusal of a peace, for with the support of their backers in the United States they would grow steadily stronger, particularly in the
air, and ultimately confront him with that major war on two fronts, which it had been his object to avoid.

And there was still another factor of the problem to be considered, a factor of the greatest magnitude. Lord Alanbrooke puts it thus:

To the east of the Reich, incorporating the plains of eastern Poland and the Ukraine and the Caucasian oil fields he had resolved to conquer, lay the Communist empire of Russia, with its vast resources and population and its Ten-Year Plan of industrialization, threatening Hitler with a mechanized military power that would presently surpass his own. Sooner or later, if he delayed his eastward march, he knew that he would have to face a Russian attack—a possibility of which he had been unpleasantly reminded during his summer campaign in the West when the USSR had annexed the Baltic states and Rumanian Bessarabia.1

Hitler was convinced that in spite of all their admiration and fear of the mighty Wehrmacht, and all their professions of friendship, the Soviet leaders were only playing for time. It seemed essential, therefore, that if he could not induce Britain to make peace, he must either rid himself of her by sudden invasion and occupation, or keep her growing air and land forces tied down by the threat of invasion until the Soviet danger at the "backdoor" of the Reich could be dealt with.

Hitler himself best described his dilemma. As he put it, he was "in the position of a man with only one round

---

1Alanbrooke, 195.
left in his rifle; if he missed, the situation would be worse than before.\(^2\) He could not afford to leave the British alone, and he could not ignore the growing threat to the Reich in the East. He had one round left in his rifle. Which way should he shoot? East? Or West?

In the face of this problem the importance of the British outpost of Gibraltar appreciably lessened. The Fuehrer, especially in 1940, had a military machine he felt was capable of crushing any enemy including England or Russia, but only one at a time. From the events of that summer, from the actions of the Fuehrer and even more of his Wehrmacht, it becomes apparent that in the summer of 1940 Hitler chose to move first against England. He reasoned that the threat of invasion would force the English to retain most of their forces in the home islands, thereby freeing Africa, the Balkans, and the Iberian Peninsula from the danger of large concentrations of British forces and would keep Russia to the East primarily dependent upon her own resources for invasion or defense.

On July 30, 1940, General Halder made an entry in his *War Journal* that summed up the main points of the German strategy. That strategy (the invasion of England) was to be drastically changed in a short time, but was at that

\(^2\) Alanbrooke, 194.
time a real and deadly serious plan of action. General
Halder wrote:

The question whether, if a decision cannot be forced against Britain (surrender), we should in the face of a threatening British-Russian alliance and the resulting two front war turn first against Russia, must be answered to the effect that we should keep on friendly terms with Russia. A visit to Stalin would be desirable. Russia's aspirations to the Straits and in the direction of the Persian Gulf need not bother us. On the Balkans, which falls within our sphere of interest, we could keep out of each other's way. Italy and Russia will not hurt each other in the Mediterranean. This being so, we could deliver the British a decisive blow in the Mediterranean,...and with the aid of Russia consolidate the Reich we have created in Western and Northern Europe. That much being accomplished, we could confidently face war with Britain for years.  

The invasion of England was a project that had been worked on by the German navy since 1939.  Admiral Raeder, the Commander-in-Chief of the German navy, pushed the project himself, and finally won the Fuehrer's assent to it in June, 1940.  On July 2, Keitel, Chief of the OKW, issued instructions to the three services to prepare invasion plans, but it was not until July 16 that Hitler signed a directive fixing the middle of August as the time by which preparations were to be completed.  On July 21, Hitler made his famous  

---

3 Halder, IV, 141.

4 Bengtson, 95.


6 Bengtson, 95.
Reichstag speech, which was a warning to the British that he was coming and that their only hope was to capitulate.

II

In Operation Sea Lion Peter Fleming pointed out that in Germany after the war it became the custom to speak of the proposed invasion of England as an almost "whimsical project which nobody took seriously at the time." He quoted German wartime personalities who stated that the preparations went forward in the relaxed and academic atmosphere of a "Kriegspiel," a training maneuver. Other writers have advanced variations of the theme that the invasion was only a kind of strategic doodling. The facts do not support them.

The most important of these facts is that the Fuehrer ordered that the invasion be carried out. His order may have lacked the crispness, the detail that other orders of this type contained, but it did not lack the compulsion. Hitler issued Directive No. 16 before he realized the difficulties that the invasion would bring. But even after those difficulties had been made plain to him he in no way changed the order, nor did he, even provisionally, commit the great military machine which he had driven headlong to the Channel coast to any alternative strategy. On July 21, five days

---

7Fleming, 238.
8Ibid., 328.
after he had issued his order, Hitler told those present at a conference on naval affairs:

The invasion of England is an exceptionally daring undertaking, because even if the way is short this is not just a river crossing, but the crossing of a sea which is dominated by the enemy. This is not the case of a single-crossing operation as in Norway; operational surprise cannot be expected; a defensively prepared and utterly determined enemy faces and dominates the sea we must use. For the army forty divisions will be required...\(^9\)

Here, in the middle of July, the Fuehrer illustrated beyond all doubt the fact that he fully understood the gigantic problems the proposed invasion presented.

Further, had there existed a plan for the systematic reduction of England by the bombers of the Luftwaffe, it might be possible to maintain that the three Air Fleets which were set in a great half-circle facing the southern and eastern shores of the Island played all the while an ulterior role. One might hold that instead of being assigned only the duty of paving the way for Operation Sea Lion, that those forces were the real instrument of Hitler's design.

But no such ulterior plan existed. The air offensive against London and other British cities was not planned as an insurance against the invasion having proven impossible. In point of fact, the air offensive was not planned at all. Directive No. 16 stated:  "In this operation elements of the

\(^9\)Bullock, 545.
air force will do the work of the artillery..." And this is just what the bombers of the Luftwaffe were doing when Operation Sea Lion was cancelled. The only reason the bombers still flew over London after the cancellation (as Fleming points out) was that they had been given nothing else to do.

Fuehrer Directive No. 17, of August 1, 1940, called for an intensification of air and sea warfare against England but did not lay down a long-range bombing policy such as was devised by the Allies in 1943 and 1944. It was an order for more destruction by the "artillery," nothing more. It was in no sense an alternative strategy.

Hitler, in the summer of 1940, stood firm in his decision to conquer first the West and then the East. On November 23, 1940, he harangued his commanders-in-chief and stated that a move against the East could only be commenced when the West was secure.  

Operation Sea Lion, the invasion of England, was not a "Kriegspiel." It was, during the summer and fall of 1940, a real and serious project. And after all, the problem of Gibraltar would have been quickly solved by an invasion and occupation of Britain and the subsequent capitulation of the British government. It was not until October, 1940, that

---

10Fleming, 239.

11Ibid.
Hitler began to think seriously about a combined German-Spanish assault on Gibraltar, and then only through the urging of Goering and Raeder. By that time Operation Sea Lion was for all intents and purposes postponed. And the so-called "postponement" was its death.

The foregoing has been a brief explanation of Operation Sea Lion. This proposed invasion of England never took place, but it did play a role in the German decision not to invade Spain and Gibraltar, even after it was "postponed." And it is because of this role that it must be considered here. Between the fall of France in June of 1940 and the "postponement" of Operation Sea Lion in October of 1940 was a period of five crucial months. Those five months comprise the first period to be considered below. The even more critical months—those eight from October, 1940, to June, 1941—leading up to the invasion of the USSR, form the second period to be investigated.

III

It is an axiom of military science that you can do only so much with so many troops, that you can count on gaining only so many goals with the power you possess. The proper distribution and utilization of this power is known as economy of forces. From June until October, 1940, the German

12Alanbrooke, 196.
Wehrmacht was preparing for the invasion of England, Operation Sea Lion. It was engaged in no land combat, was fighting no continental enemy. All of the West was conquered and under control. Disregarding for the moment the reasons offered in the foregoing chapters for Hitler's failure to invade Spain and Gibraltar, and assuming, for the sake of investigation, that he could have ordered simultaneous operations against Great Britain and the Iberian Peninsula, why did Hitler refrain from an attack upon the Iberian Peninsula during those first five months, between June and October, 1940?

The German military position in the West for that year has already been discussed in Chapter I, but a short recapitulation reveals that in the West the Germans were maintaining 165 divisions, with an airforce that could put into the air 57 bomber and dive-bomber groups and 41 fighter groups.\(^\text{13}\) The German navy possessed ports all the way from Norway to Bordeaux, and the U-boats were fighting hard to interdict English sea traffic and whittle down the British fleet to a point that the German high-seas fleet could offer reasonable opposition with some chance of success.\(^\text{14}\) On July 31, 1940, Halder noted that the Wehrmacht could control the West with perhaps only 60 divisions (7 in Norway, 50 in France, and 3 in Belgium and Holland) thereby freeing about

\(^{13}\) Halder, IV, 82-3.

120 divisions of the 180 divisions in the West and the Zone of the Interior for movement elsewhere. The destination of those mobile forces is the most interesting part of the entry, especially when one considers it in light of the date the entry was made. But that destination—the eastern frontier—will be considered in a later chapter. The importance of the entry here is that General Halder wrote of the strength of the Wehrmacht, a strength sufficient to allow the withdrawal of 120 divisions from the West. And one must add to this that 40 more divisions were to land in England, and were to be "highly mechanized and numerically superior to the opposing armies." General Halder presented a picture of imposing strength in the German armed forces.

But the picture was a false one. Halder's day-to-day entries in his War Journal during this period give the real picture of the German military situation as of the summer and fall of 1940. Speaking in terms of divisions, the German army appeared strong. But when one considers the woes and worries Halder entered in his Journal for this five month period, the true aspects of the military situation become apparent, and the German Wehrmacht's strength as of 1940 is seen in a different light.

---

15 Halder, IV, 145.
16 Fleming, 41.
On July 22 Halder wrote: "Britain's position is hopeless. The war is won by us. A reversal in the prospects of success is impossible."\(^\text{17}\) This was an inspiring statement of faith, but not a statement of fact. For this entry was outnumbered a thousand times over by other entries that, for example, bemoaned the fact that the tire situation was "bad," the fuel situation "very bad."\(^\text{18}\) The troops, even in those comparatively happy days were short in number and whole divisions were needed in newly-conquered Norway and in the new allies of Rumania and Bulgaria, as well as for duty all over the West.\(^\text{19}\) Some troops in the West were without motor-transport, and had to make do with horse-drawn trains. Eventually, whole divisions in France were without trucks or light lorries, but dependent upon horses.

So bad was the transport situation, so short was the Wehrmacht of trucks, tires, and fuel, that Halder on July 26 was trying to figure out some way to get between 4,200 and 7,000 horses ashore with the first and second waves of Operation Sea Lion. His solution was that the Wehrmacht had to find some way "to decrease the number of horses" needed so desperately for transport by the proposed invasion forces.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^{17}\) Halder, IV, 126.  
\(^{18}\) Ibid., V, 51.  
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 44.  
\(^{20}\) Ibid., IV, 133.
Further entries of this type are numerous. In the fall of 1940, Halder wrote that the activation of General Headquarters troops for France would have to be curtailed, since the activation of a new SS division completely deprived the Wehrmacht in the West of new trucks. In October, he made a long and detailed entry bewailing the fact that the delivery of spare parts was almost non-existent, that there were no maintenance non-commissioned officers, no technicians, that they had received no tire replacements at all, and that the troops, inadequate in number, were burdened with construction work and had to live in lean-tos and tents.

If the Wehrmacht could count divisions in three digits, it may be asked, why was there a lack of troops? For an insight into this problem one can turn to an entry made by Halder in November, 1940. It reads:

The 250,000 men (about 15 divisions) with two months training set out in the General Army Office estimate actually do not exist... Military Districts have not called up enough recruits.

He went on to note that the next recruit class would not finish its primary training until March, 1941, almost half-a-year in the future.

21 Halder, V, 23.
22 Ibid., 21.
23 Ibid., 20.
In still further entries, one finds Halder trying to figure out how to supply divisions with sorely-needed transport. He finally proposed the cutting down on ammunition trucks and the handing over of these vehicles to the divisions. That meant, of course, that in time of emergency or even in the invasion of England the ammunition supply would either be reduced or the transport of so vital a commodity thrown back on more primitive means, namely, mules and pack troops.

Again, all through the entries for this period Halder complained of a lack of field artillery. There was not sufficient anti-aircraft artillery. The army suffered from a deficiency of reconnaissance planes. Officer personnel were short and the Wehrmacht had trouble finding 800 new Battalion commanders. The Luftwaffe, the Paratroops, and the Engineering units needed new officers, and the anti-aircraft units as well were short of command personnel.

The Navy, filled with confidence, announced that it had lost only one-third of its entire U-boat strength (28 out

---

24Halder, V, 20.
25Ibid., 8, 9, 33, 48, 49.
26Ibid., IV, 180.
27Ibid.
28Ibid., 182.
29Ibid.
of 76), and that if it were able to increase its active strength to 120 U-boats by the Spring of 1941, it might then be able to starve Britain into surrender. Halder noted on September 6 that 45,000 more railroad men were needed to run the railways of the West during the invasion of England. There was also a shortage of fodder for the horses depended upon for transportation, as well as a lack of stables, veterinary officers, and troops trained in horse care.

These are but a sampling of the entries made by Halder during the first five month period under investigation. In the face of such facts, any evaluation of the German practice of the economy of forces would depend upon the goals the Germans hoped to achieve with those forces. In other words, assuming for the moment that the Fuehrer might have wanted to invade the Iberian Peninsula in the summer and autumn of 1940, the period during which Operation Sea Lion was in preparation, could he or his Wehrmacht reasonably assume that a simultaneous operation against Spain, Portugal, and Gibraltar was feasible from the point of view of the economy of forces? Could Operation Sea Lion succeed while troops, supplies, transport, fuel, and munitions were being diverted to an action in or against Spain and Portugal.

---

30 Halder, IV, 184.
31 Ibid., 186.
32 Ibid., 230.
It is doubtful that these considerations would have been answered in the affirmative. The disparity between the ability and the goal loomed too great to be ignored. But it is even more doubtful that the Fuehrer was forced to weigh Britain against Spain and Gibraltar in terms of the economy of forces. As has been pointed out, in 1940 Hitler was in control of Western Europe. In that summer the Germans felt that Spain was as good as "in the game" anyway. And with the surrender of the British government, Gibraltar would be an automatic prize of war.

For the period from June to October, 1940, the five months between the fall of France and the postponement of Operation Sea Lion, the invasion and occupation of Spain and Gibraltar was not only improbable from the viewpoint of the economy of forces, but also because there appeared to be no need for any such action. Spain could be "counted on," and Gibraltar would fall like a ripe plum when the trunk of the tree, the Home Islands, was given a good hard knock.

IV

On October 12, 1940, General Halder wrote in his Journal: "OKW has decided to call off 'Seeloewe' (Sea Lion)." It was not until January of the next year that the "postponement" was made into a "change of tactics," but for all

33Halder, IV, 229.
intents and purposes Sea Lion was dead as of the middle of October, 1940. In his entry for October 15, Halder summarized the logic of the Fuehrer, the reasons Hitler gave his officers for the cancellation of the invasion of Britain.

Fuehrer on military situation. War is won, rest is mere question of time. Aim is to terminate war at earliest date. Review of preparations against British last summer. It was a mistake. Excessive crowding of invasion fleet (brought losses due to British air activity). The decisive factor was poor weather: Only five consecutive days of clear skies were needed, but they did not come.\(^\text{34}\)

The Fuehrer's statement may have sounded plausible to some of the officers, but once again the picture is not that presented in the official Fuehrer Conference report. One of the main reasons the invasion never took place was that the invasion was not a glorified river-crossing, a fact the Fuehrer well knew.\(^\text{35}\) The 40 divisions that were to have gone to England in glory in mid-August had by mid-September been cut down to 13. The reason was simply that the German navy did not have the wherewithall to transport 40 divisions to the shores of the Island.\(^\text{36}\) Only with the greatest difficulty could it secure sufficient sea transport to ferry and land 13 divisions.

---

\(^{34}\) Halder, IV, 232.

\(^{35}\) Fleming, 47.

\(^{36}\) Bengston, 96.
But by the beginning of September, ships and barges started to move to their embarkation points, and operational orders for the invasion were issued on September 3. It was all in vain. The Luftwaffe had failed to achieve air superiority and to crush the British will and ability to put up overwhelming resistance. The final order for the invasion could not be given. On September 14, Hitler decided to postpone the operation. But the preparations for invasion went on up to October 26, the day Halder noted its official postponement. The following January Mussolini told Ciano that in a conference with the Fuehrer he had found:

A very anti-Russian Hitler, loyal to us (Italy), and not too definite on what he intends to do in the future against Great Britain. In any case it is no longer a question of landing in Great Britain. 37

One can imagine that had Hitler pursued the invasion of England with his characteristic vigor he might have ordered his soldiers, if need be, to cross the Channel in rowboats, horses and all. But he did not, for his eyes had turned elsewhere, toward Russia.

But what of the second period, the eight months from October, 1940, to June 22, 1941, the date Hitler threw everything available into the assault on the Russian colossus? What was the German military position during those trying days, the same period during which Hitler and Franco met at

37 Ciano, 338.
Hendaye, during which Operation Felix was hatched and buried, and during which Franco—much to the anger of the Fuehrer—refused to come "into the game?"

It was in this period that Hitler ordered the advance of the Wehrmacht into rebellious Yugoslavia, into Crete, Greece, and the vastness of North Africa. These movements will be considered in detail below, but suffice to say here that they put a great strain on the Wehrmacht, and spread it thinner than ever. In the West, from October, 1940, until June 1941, the Wehrmacht could still count divisions in three digits. But it had been weakened by the abortive invasion preparations against Britain, and the constant drain it had suffered in troops and materiel to the Balkans and North Africa.

The Luftwaffe had by this time engaged the RAF in the Battle of Britain, and on September 26 Halder had written that the British were winning:

They (the British) still have 300 fighters available, including 200 older types, which, however, are more than a match for our bombers. We have suffered considerable losses in long-range fighters, 25-30%, with losses in our bombers going up to 300.38

This entry was made before the real power of the RAF had been felt by the Luftwaffe. In 1941, Halder's figures would seem infinitesimal. By October, the RAF had destroyed 1,733 German

---

38 Halder, IV, 209
aircraft. The best the Luftwaffe could ever do was to achieve a ratio of 5-7, and that was on their brightest day when they lost 378 aircraft and the RAF 277. This "good" day occurred on September 6, 1940, twenty days before Halder's prophetic entry.

By the end of 1940, and even more so in the Spring of 1941, the German losses grew. By the beginning of 1941, the mighty German Luftwaffe could mount in the air only some 300 serviceable fighters. Over their eight month period, the Luftwaffe had lost more than half of its total first line strength. And with its remaining aircraft and pilots, the Luftwaffe during this second period had to support German moves all the way from Crete to the Sahara to the North Sea.

During this eight month period, 1940-1941, British air and naval potential and real strength were growing, and the Wehrmacht found itself hard pressed on land and on sea. As Spain had become the "bleeding ulcer" of Napoleon, so North Africa had become a drain on the Wehrmacht, and the soldiers of the Afrika Korps were fighting for their lives.

---

39 Fleming, 231.
40 Ibid., 236.
42 Lee, 85.
by the end of the year. The German navy, never really strong, had by June of 1941 lost much of its high-seas strength, including the powerful Bismarck. The submarine war did not progress as Doenitz had expected and as Halder had recorded back in 1940. England was not being starved out, and the U-boat arm had not risen to 120 first class vessels.

It was also during this period, even as he was considering the German-Spanish alliance and the capture of the outpost of Gibraltar, that Hitler turned his eyes to the East. As Lord Alanbrooke has said, Hitler had to break the "ring" around him. The Fuehrer had to either crush England, secure Africa, or conquer Russia.

It can be held, then, that another reason the German Wehrmacht failed to invade and occupy the Iberian Peninsula was that from the early summer of 1940 until the fall of that year it was engaged in planning Operation Sea Lion, a project Field Marshal von Brauchitsch described as:

A frontal attack against a defence line, on too narrow a front, with no good prospects of surprise, and with insufficient forces reinforced only in driblets. 44

From the autumn of 1940 until the early summer of 1941, the German military machine suffered from a lack of available forces, induced in part by the abortive invasion preparations,

---

43 Alanbrooke, 198.
44 Fleming, 252.
as well as the advance into the Balkans and the campaign in North Africa. It was too thinly spread, and did not care to engage itself in yet another campaign which held out the prospect of a long and costly war on an inhospitable terrain against a probably strong army of foreigners to its front and fanatic guerrillas in its rear. And even more, the invasion of Spain and Portugal, and the assault on Gibraltar, would take needed troops from the Balkans, North Africa, and the gradual buildup so painstakingly being scraped together for the Eastern offensive.

In terms of the economy of forces, especially in the West, the invasion of Spain and Portugal (even if it had ever been seriously considered in this period) would have been beyond all doubt turned down as impossible. Spain was considered to be something between an ally and a friendly neutral, and Gibraltar, when weighed against Britain and then Russia, was a secondary objective, an outpost.
CHAPTER V

Economy of Forces: Eastern Front

"In Russia, Germany has started a hemorrhage that will have incalculable consequences."

Count Galeazzo Ciano,
July 18, 1941.

I

During the first week of October, 1940, the German ambassador to Rome, Ulrich von Hassell, wrote in his diary:

As the scheduled defeat of England did not materialize this fall, Hitler and Mussolini are like two tigers in a cage who hurl themselves against the bars. For the time being they express themselves in words rather than in deeds; first the one and then the other makes new war plans.¹

Hitler realized at the time that there were any number of military moves he could make. But he also realized that no matter what course was adopted, it had to bring the war to an end. The Fuehrer had tried diplomatic negotiations with the English during the summer and had found the Islanders unwilling to capitulate. Diplomacy having failed, military methods were used, and the invasion of the British Isles was prepared. But in order to be successful, Operation Sea Lion had to be executed with both dash and considerable military

¹von Hassell Diaries, 152.
strength. Hitler had found that he did not possess the necessary armed might to invade and occupy Britain. Rather, by the beginning of 1941 the British stood as the main enemy, whose strength grew greater every day.

After the cancellation of Operation Sea Lion in October, 1940, the Fuehrer took under consideration a number of different military projects, including the proposed attack on the British base at Gibraltar, an attack on Turkey, and the invasion of the USSR. Ciano wrote the next spring (1941) that Hitler had no precise plan of action, that Russia, Turkey, and Spain (Gibraltar) were in his (Hitler's) opinion only places to disperse forces, and that one could not find the decisive engagement, the sought after "Battle of Decision," in those outlands. Ciano recorded the words of his master, the Duce, regarding the Axis problem of where to go and what to do: "They (the Germans) are now sick of victories. They now want the victory—a victory which will bring peace."

But the war the Fuehrer was prosecuting against the British was not bringing peace. Hitler found that rather than having manoeuvered the British into a "Battle of Decision," he had manoeuvered himself into a dilemma. The British refused to negotiate with him, the British Isles

---

2Halder, V, 24, 35.
3Ciano, 361.
4Ibid.
could not be invaded by his Wehrmacht for lack of military strength, and the Royal Navy and the RAF were now too strong to be defeated by inferior German naval and air forces. Hitler possessed no means by which to beat down the enemy, let alone invade and crush him.

But, as has already been pointed out, Hitler could not afford to ignore the British, for their strength was growing, especially through the aid of their American supporters. If he left the British alone, they would grow steadily stronger and ultimately confront him with equal or possibly superior forces, especially in the air. Thus, some other means had to be found, some other method to defeat Britain.

War, someone has said, is four-fifths geography. Hitler appreciated (as his subsequent actions proved) the geographic problem facing him in 1940. The Reich was almost encircled. Britain bounded it on the west with air and naval might, and on the south with yet more naval and air power, and in both directions with a growing and determined army. Hitler recognized that in order to dominate Europe he had to break out of Europe, especially if he were ever going to defeat Britain. The very daring of Britain's offensives in the air over Germany, in Africa, and in the Near East caused him to think her stronger than she was,

---
5 Alanbrooke, 195.
and led him to praise the British and their "toughness."  
These British offensives, either political as in the Near East or military as in Africa, caused Hitler (among other factors) to refrain from attacking Turkey in 1940 and so securing the oil of the Near East, and a dominating position on Russia's southern flank.

The British held at least a thinly garrisoned line from Iraq to the Shetland Islands and with their air and naval power extended it to India and the Arctic Ocean. Faced as he was by this geographic encirclement, the Fuehrer decided to move in the only direction left open to him. On June 22, 1941, the impatient German dictator launched his armies in a frontal assault on the USSR. Barred by the tenuous ring of British power from breaking out of Europe, he struck eastwards into the boundless plains of Russia. On July 18, less than a month after the start of the campaign, Ciano wrote in his diary: "In Russia, Germany has started a hemorrhage that will have incalculable consequences."

II

The Fuehrer had his reasons for the attack on the USSR. He was not by any means ignoring the dilemma presented

---

6 Table Talks, 43.
7 Alanbrooke, 198.
8 Ciano, 379.
him by the British, and he was solving, or so he thought, the problem of the Soviet threat to his "backdoor," the danger of a Russian invasion of the Reich. This threat was real, maintained Hitler. The Russian movements in Rumanian Bessarabia and in eastern Poland were all part of a build-up for the attack on Germany. As far back as the fall of 1940, the Wehrmacht had been ordered to protect the eastern border, and by December Halder noted that he was engaged in map operations dealing with the "line Minsk-Kiev" of the "Eastern offensive."9 Throughout his entries for the late winter and spring of 1940-1941, Halder made note of Russian military strength, transport facilities, and political situations, among other things.10 By March, the notes were of such length and detail that one can see that the campaign was being planned with great care. During the preceding December, the Fuehrer had ordered the training of military interpreters—in the Russian language. This order, dated December 10, came only a little over a month after the cancellation of Operation Sea Lion.11

The motives for the invasion were complex; yet they fitted into a pattern of logic which Hitler held and defended. According to Halder, Hitler called the invasion an "inducement"

9Halder, V, 49.  
10Ibid., 74, 78, 85, 87, et al. VI, 1, 3, 4, 5, et al.  
11Ibid., V, 63.
that would bring England to the point of surrender.12 Just before the invasion, Hitler wrote to Mussolini that "the war against Russia is aimed at England."13

On Sunday, March 30, 1941, the Fuehrer called a general meeting of his military chiefs. The topic of conversation was the planned invasion of the USSR, and the Fuehrer began by stating that the British had made a terrible mistake in not taking advantage of the German peace offers of the previous summer. But since they had not, and since the invasion of Britain or the defeat of their navy and air force was not possible at that time, Hitler declared that the Soviet Union was to be invaded and quickly occupied. Britain, said Hitler, based her entire hope for victory on two factors: the United States and the Soviet Union. The British assumed that the former would supply Britain and also enter the war against Germany in the not too-distant future, and that the latter would soon declare war on Germany and present Hitler with a second front. Recent Anglo-Russian negotiations and Russian military movements in the east, held the Fuehrer, supported beyond doubt his contention that the Soviet Union was preparing for an attack on the Reich.14 It was therefore

12 Halder, V, 54.
13 Ibid., VI, 171-72.
14 Ibid., 41-42.
necessary, Hitler told Goering, to "anticipate a quick and sudden stab in the back from the Soviets." ¹⁵

This being the situation, Hitler stated that the best move would be to ignore the United States for the time being and to invade and quickly crush the Soviet Union. He held that the United States would not be able to reach her maximum war production for at least four full years and even then would face a shipping problem. Also, there was strong agitation in the U.S. against entering another European war. As for the Soviet Union, the Fuehrer simply stated:

Only the final and drastic solution of all land problems will enable us to accomplish within two years our tasks in the air and on the ocean (defeat of the Royal Navy and RAF), with the manpower and material resources at our disposal. ¹⁶

Hitler's motives for the invasion of the Soviet Union could thus be given as: a desire to attack Russia before she attacked him; the wish to deprive Great Britain of one of her remaining diplomatic-military weapons, i.e., the threat to Germany of a two front war with the Russians forming the new front; the "clash of ideologies" as propounded by Hitler; and the desire to gain living space for Germany's surplus population and to extend his New Order over the rich lands of Eastern Europe. The oil of south Russia and the agriculture of the Ukraine would have been great boons to the

¹⁵Shulman, 56.
¹⁶Ibid.
German war effort against Britain when the time for the drive West came once again.

This was his plan. Tactically, it was well thought out and the Fuehrer believed in its success. Intelligence reports, as recorded by Halder, showed the Russians to be defeatable; that they would fall, even though they resisted, before the might of a summer blitzkrieg. As Hitler once stated before the war, "I shall advance (toward world conquest) step by step. Never two steps at once." The strategy of Russia first and Great Britain second did make sense—but only if Russia could be defeated in a lightning summer campaign and only if the U. S. A. did take four years to get it production up to an important wartime level, and only if the British did not succeed in becoming too powerful in the air and on the sea.

Shortly after the invasion of the Soviet Union, the Russian armies west of the Dvina and the Dnieper had been scattered. Soviet forces were reeling under the impact of the German blow. Halder wrote with genuine sincerity:

It is probably no overstatement to say that the Russian campaign had been won in the space of two weeks. Of course, this does not yet mean that it is closed. The sheer geographical vastness of the country and the stubbornness of the resistance, which is carried on with all means, will claim our efforts for many more weeks to come.  

---

18 Halder, VI, 196.
Those "weeks to come" mentioned by Halder turned into months and then into years. And the campaign was never "won." Yet at that time the general had good reason, tactically if not strategically, to feel that he was making a factual statement of truth. For it indeed appeared that the Russians were beaten and that by fall the occupation of the Soviet Union would be well under way. Then, of course, by the spring or perhaps the summer of 1942, the greatly expanded and stronger Reich could commence its campaign against the all-but-beaten British. Their last remaining hope, the United States, would still be two or three years away from a war production level of importance, and would undoubtedly be overawed at seeing German troops and guns in eastern Siberia opposite the Alaskan coast. Such a situation, combined with the powerful Japanese threat in the Pacific, would be enough to keep the Americans from entering the war. And Great Britain would stand alone.

III

The two periods of the first year of the war in the West, June to October of 1940 and October, 1940, to June, 1941, have already been discussed (see Chapter IV). The reasons for the German failure to invade Spain and Gibraltar for those thirteen months have been set forth. The next "period", that from June, 1941, to the Allied invasion of France in 1944, is of interest in so far as it
illustrated the factors affecting the German decision not to invade Spain and Gibraltar during those years.

Due to the opening of the Eastern Front in June, 1941, and the military diversion in the Balkans just before it, the possibility of conducting any campaign on the Iberian Peninsula was all but nil. Hitler ordered that the war in the West could be carried on in so far as necessary to protect the continent from invasion or to drive the British out of Africa, but it was the war in the East in which he hoped to win the "Battle of Decision." It was in the East, felt Hitler, that the war would be won or lost.

And it was in the East that the Fuehrer made his greatest effort. By the end of 1942, troops and supplies were going mainly to Russia. Rommel, commanding the German forces in Africa, felt the lack of troops and supplies to be the main factor in his defeat. For the great bulk of German men and material was going East, into "Moloch Russia."

The attack on the Soviet Union, known as Operation Barbarossa, was first scheduled to take place on May 15, 1941. The Wehrmacht was on that day to begin the destruction of Soviet armed forces, to occupy the land, and to "crush and annihilate" the Communist government and ideology. But the attack did not take place on May 15. It had to be

---

19 Rommel, p. 280, 318, 360, 363-4, 484, 487.
20 Bengtson, 72.
 postponed for over a month because of the unexpected Balkan campaign, the result of the Duce's meddling in Albania and Greece.

Mussolini had earlier informed the Fuehrer that he was going to fight a "parallel War." By this he meant that Italy would fight the same enemies as the Reich, but without closely connecting her actions to those of the Wehrmacht. On October 19, 1940, the Duce wrote Hitler to inform him that Italy planned to launch an attack on Greece. The Fuehrer was at this time in France, on his way to Hendaye for the conference with Franco on the 23rd. On the 24th the Duce's letter caught up with him. Hitler was not pleased. He did not want the Balkans disturbed and he feared a British invasion of the Greek islands, particularly of Lemnos, from which bombers could reach the Rumanian oil fields. He quickly travelled to Florence where he tried to dissuade the Duce from the invasion. Mussolini, delighted with his trick and the fact that for once the Fuehrer was begging him for something, reported to Hitler that the operation had begun and could not be stopped. General Jodl, who was traveling with the Fuehrer, said "we arrived just a few hours too late." 21

Hitler, of course, was vexed, and Mussolini soon realized that he had committed a blunder. The Greeks

actually drove the Italians back across the Albanian border at many points. By December of 1940, the Italians were in such a state that Mussolini told Ciano:

There is nothing else to do. This is grotesque and absurd, but it is a fact. We have to ask for a truce (with the Greeks) through Hitler."^22

Ciano wrote that the shame was almost too much. "I would rather," he said, "put a bullet through my head than telephone Ribbentrop!"^23

At this same time, Yugoslavia approached the Italians with the offer of an alliance. Hitler, who had been concerned over the failure of the Italians in Greece, changed his mood when Rome informed him of the possibility of an alliance with the government in Belgrade. Although the Italians had appealed in December, 1940, for German intervention—diplomatic or military—the Fuhrer had then informed them that he could do nothing until March.^24 But now he responded to that appeal and planned an attack on Greece through his new allies of Rumania and Bulgaria while Yugoslavia remained passive. The alliance with Belgrade was successfully concluded, and on March 25, 1941, Yugoslavia joined the Axis. On the very next day, March 26, General Simovic and his anti-fascist followers brought

\[^{22}\text{Ciano, 318}.\]
\[^{23}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[^{24}\text{Ibid., 326.}\]
off a coup d'état in Belgrade; in Hitler's opinion this meant that Yugoslavia did not intend to abide by her one-day old alliance with the Axis. He decided, without even waiting to be contacted by the new government in Belgrade, to liquidate Yugoslavia. Labeled Operation Marita, this action had been in preparation for some months and had as its objective the defeat and occupation of Greece. It was now quickly expanded to include Yugoslavia. Thus, on April 6, 1941, Hitler struck without warning. German troops that had been amassed in the east for the Russian offensive were ordered to strike to the south.

The war in the Balkans was one of speed, a blitzkrieg. The Greeks were unable to stop the German advance, even with the aid of the British who sent some troops from North Africa. By April 19, the king in Athens recognized the hopelessness of the situation and ordered the Greeks to aid the British in their evacuation. By the 27th the entire mainland was in German or Italian hands. Yugoslavia had capitulated on the 17th. Only Crete remained, and it was taken in a savage battle the last week in May, after heavy expenditure of Luftwaffe aircraft and paratroops. In two months it was all over.

The Balkan campaign is important because it delayed the start of Operation Barbarossa and placed a great strain on the already thinly-spread Wehrmacht. Although the fighting had been brief and successful, many of the divisions
diverted to the Balkan peninsula had to be moved back to their original jumping-off places for Operation Barbarossa. This movement itself took a great toll of fuel and equipment. And the troops, after two months of battle, were now to be thrown into the vastness of Russia, because there were not enough reserves to relieve them. Many of the Panzer units needed a thorough overhaul and partial re-equipment after their battles and long treks over the Greek mountains. But even more, the Balkan campaign took troops from all over Europe, especially in the East, and rendered the possibility of any action in the West out of the question. It weakened the Wehrmacht. Halder best stated the situation in his entry for April 5 in which he wrote that the conduct of the campaign was dictated by:

political considerations, and what is more, considerations of a purely transitory character. This precludes any planning with clear goals and harbors the danger of dissipating our strength in a series of isolated operations.

IV

The German Wehrmacht was dissipating its strength.

As early as June, 1940, before the proposed invasion of

25 Halder, VI, 122, 123, 124, 125, 127, 130.
27 Halder, VI, 134-6.
28 Ibid., 53.
England, it was obvious that the German military suffered from a critical lack of siege artillery, motorized transport, tracked vehicles, command unity, and respect for the combative will of other peoples. As was shown (see Chapter IV), the Wehrmacht in 1940-1941 was in no position in terms of men and materiel to invade Great Britain, let alone engage in a simultaneous operation on the Iberian Peninsula.

With the beginning of the Russian campaign in June, and even before when the Wehrmacht moved into the Balkans in April, the supply and manpower situation was such that to have engaged in a campaign on the Iberian peninsula was impossible.

According to Halder, the Wehrmacht found itself "extremely weak when compared with the Russians" on March 25, 1941. It was his belief that the divisions would arrive in the East in such numbers as to eliminate "all danger." But when the date for the invasion came, the Wehrmacht could count only 141 German divisions matched against 213 Russian divisions. This tremendous superiority of numbers in the Russian forces seemed to cause the Wehrmacht no great concern. According to Generals Bodenschatz and Milch the Luftwaffe was not prepared for the Russian war—and would not have been ready until 1943 or 1944.

---

29 Halder, VI, 35.
30 Ibid., 160.
31 Bartz, 103.
In November, 1940, after the cancellation of Sea Lion, German troops were withdrawn from the West and sent to Rumania. Halder noted that upwards of 10 divisions left for the East. A little later he wrote that the diversion of military strength to outlying areas was going to restrict any major campaign. This, of course, was obvious, and was one reason why an invasion of Spain never took place. The Balkan campaign, served as an example of this "diversion," and was not approved of by Halder!

Other signs of the Wehrmacht's material strain were evident. For example, about 500 planes were used by the Luftwaffe in the conquest of Crete. Of these 250 were damaged and 130 destroyed. When the invasion of the Soviet Union began one month later, the Luftwaffe could put into the air 320 planes for Operation Barbarossa. In other words, the invasion of the little island of Crete received more air support than did the invasion of the Soviet Union in the initial stage. The reason, in part, was that paratroops were used on Crete. And the parachute divisions of the Luftwaffe had suffered high casualties as well, so high that the invasion of Crete was the last big paratroop operation on the part of the Wehrmacht in the war.

---

32 Halder, V, 21.
33 Ibid., 43.
34 Ibid., VI, 142.
All in all, the Wehrmacht in 1941 did not possess the ability to invade Russia with the force that it had used against Poland two years before, let alone conduct a simultaneous peninsular campaign. It was charged with garrisoning and defending Europe from the north of Norway to the south of France, thence east to the Greek Islands and north to the forests of Finland. It was fighting in Africa and in Russia. In terms of the economy of forces, it was simply too much. To add to all of this a peninsular campaign against Spanish and possibly British forces would have been catastrophic, as was clearly evident to the Wehrmacht and to the Fuehrer. The pet project of Admiral Raeder (the drive through Spain, across North Africa, over the Suez, and into the Near East) was flatly turned down by the Fuehrer in 1941. According to Alan Bullock:

he (Raeder) soon came to realize and later admitted that Hitler was not interested in a major offensive in the southern theater, that he had no intention of diverting sufficient forces away from his proposed Russian campaign to be able to achieve anything effective in this area. 

By 1942, Rommel was fighting desperately in North Africa, yet he never received enough men and materiel to give him an equal chance of success against the British. In order to aid Rommel, the capture of Malta, the British strong-point in the central Mediterranean, was necessary.

36 Bullock, 551.
But by 1942 it was too late for such an attack, for the Luftwaffe had been absorbed by the requirements of the Eastern Front.\textsuperscript{37} In April, 1942, Kesselring had to announce that the pressure on the Russian Front forced the OKW to withdraw a large portion of the Luftwaffe units based in Sicily.\textsuperscript{38} And perhaps most striking of all, the OKW had recognized the problem even as it was developing, and had announced back in February of 1941 that: "It is clear that in view of Operations Marita and Barbarossa the troops held in reserve for Operation Felix will have to be used in the new undertakings."\textsuperscript{39}

In considering the years after 1942, i.e., during the great Soviet offensives of '43 and '44, it is unnecessary to explain the German inability to muster sufficient forces and materiel for a campaign in the Iberian peninsula. It is common knowledge that the Fuehrer did not possess enough men and materiel to fight on his existing fronts, let alone on a new one.

Thus, Ciano was right. In attacking the Soviet Union Hitler had indeed opened "a hemorrhage of incalculable consequences." And with that "hemorrhage" and the months of preparation and diversion before it, there existed another

\textsuperscript{37} DeBelot, 157.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
reason not to invade the Iberian peninsula. That reason can best be stated Economy of Forces: Eastern Front.
CHAPTER VI

Economy of Forces: Southern Front

"No longer (in 1943) could we carry the burden of three fronts. ... Only with great difficulty and by using our last reserves have we been able to improvise new fronts, both east and west. The sky over Germany has grown very dark."

Erwin Rommel, writing on the economy of forces, Summer of 1944.

I

In 1939-40, the British government became concerned over the expansionist policies of Mussolini and the creation of a potent Italian navy and air force. This concern had existed in London for some time, but by 1940 the problem had reached such a degree that there existed a threat of an armed division of the Mediterranean into two parts, if the Italians so willed. The Mediterranean would then no longer be an arm of the Atlantic and an avenue of British policy. Indeed, it was feared that it might become an Italian lake.

The British had attempted to prepare for such an event. By 1940, their military strength in North Africa and the Near East was not great, but was at least recognizable. In June of that year, the British army counted 36,000 men in Egypt, 27,000 in Palestine, 9,000 in the Sudan, 8,500 in Kenya, and
1,500 in Somaliland.\(^1\) Obviously, these forces did not possess the strength necessary to wage an African war. All these forces were without much heavy equipment, no formation was completely outfitted, and their weakness in anti-aircraft and anti-tank armament was serious. The Royal Air Force in North Africa and the Near East had only about a hundred machines of obsolete types, and another hundred planes of more serviceable character.\(^2\) Despite this materiel weakness, however, the British forces in the summer of 1940 were ready and willing to fight their new enemy, the Italians.

The most potent British strength in the Mediterranean and Near East in 1940 was provided by the Royal Navy. In aircraft carriers and battleships, the British were superior to their enemies, although the Axis at that time possessed a slight lead in escort and small battle craft. In the Mediterranean there were two British aircraft carriers, five battleships, one battle cruiser, five light cruisers, two destroyer flotillas, and eight submarines. Although the sea was seriously threatened by the Italians, the Mediterranean was still for the most part in British hands.\(^3\)

This seems all the more remarkable when one remembers the multiplicity of dangers which faced the British in that


\(^{2}\) Ibid.

\(^{3}\) Alanbrooke, 194-6. See also DeBelot, 61.
summer of 1940. They had to wage war on three separate fronts: on the oceans in defense of their trade routes, in the Channel to protect the home islands against a threatened invasion, and in the Mediterranean, where they were outnumbered by the Italians on land, on sea, and in the air (see Chapter I). Although the immediate dangers on the Channel and ocean fronts were the most pressing, loss of the Mediterranean would have been in the long run hardly less fatal. The British knew this, and thus did what they could to prepare for the defense of the area.

But, by the end of June, 1940, after the fall of France and during the height of German preparations for Operation Sea Lion, the British position in the Mediterranean area did not appear to be very good. The threat of invasion of the home islands served to deplete the Mediterranean fleets, and Lord Alanbrooke wrote:

...Malta was left an isolated outpost,...and Gibraltar was dominated by the guns of Franco's Spain. It was scarcely surprising that most of the American Service Chiefs regarded Britain at this time as a bad risk. The French High Command (in Vichy) ...predicted that within three weeks Britain's neck would be 'wrung like a chicken's'.

The British were, however, just as Hitler had once said, "tough". The Eastern Mediterranean Fleet, under the command of Admiral Andrew Cunningham, was able to establish

---

4Alanbrooke, 150.
from the very start of the war such a "moral ascendancy" over the Italian sea forces that, despite their central position and naval air power, the Italians were unable to prevent the British from holding Malta and even passing occasional convoys through the Sicilian Narrows to reinforce Egypt and reassure Greece and Turkey. The German navy at the outbreak of the war was in no way capable of challenging the British control of the Mediterranean. Owing to their great numerical inferiority, German surface forces could not hope to penetrate the Mediterranean, and the German submarines were fully occupied in the Atlantic.

II

In November, 1940, the Italians struck at Greece across the Adriatic (see Chapter V). Cunningham was able not only to protect the Greek archipelago and islands from immediate Italian invasion, but also to launch torpedo-carrying aircraft against the Italian fleet in Taranto harbor and thus sink or immobilize three of Italy's six battleships. The balance of sea power in the Mediterranean was transformed in the course of a single night.

A month later Marshal Graziani, furiously prodded by the impatient Duce, began to move eastward with his long, strung-out battle army of nearly a quarter of a million men

---

5 Alanbrooke, 150.
to occupy Alexandria and thus deprive the British navy of its base. "Never," wrote Ciano of his country's generals and their reluctance to advance against the British, "has a military operation been undertaken so much against the will of the commanders." 6 General O'Connor, backed by the daring and ability of a few RAF squadrons, fell on the Italian advance guard at Sidi Barrani, and with one weak armored division recently arrived from England and a single Indian infantry division proceeded to destroy the Italian advance forces and drive back the invasion. At the same time General Wavell launched his attack upon the Italians in Eritrea and Abyssinia.

The attacking Italian forces under Marshal Graziani were quickly checked and forced to retreat. The troops under O'Connor had more trouble trying to keep up with the routed Fascists than in fighting them. In a campaign conducted five to six hundred miles from his base and sustained by captured enemy transport, O'Connor overwhelmed the Italians in Cyrenaica and parts of the middle Libyan plain. The Italian African army of 341,000 men 7 reeled under the impact of the British counter-offensive. And although the opportunity afforded by this tremendous campaign—of driving on to Tripoli and, by securing air bases, of restoring Britain's

6Ciano, 291.

7Rommel, 91.
control of the central Mediterranean—was subsequently thrown away in order to send an expeditionary force to Greece (see Chapters I, II, and V), its impact and that of Cunningham's naval victories had a profound effect on not only Italian morale, but on Turkish and Spanish opinion as well.  

At an early date in the war the German Wehrmacht had made an offer, with certain selfish conditions attached to it, to send forces to the Mediterranean theater. In Directive No. 18 of November 12, 1940, (the same Directive ordering the preparation of Operation Felix) Hitler stated:

> Intervention of German forces is not envisaged (in Africa) until after the Italians reach Mersa Matruh. Even then the Luftwaffe will be employed only if the Italians place the necessary bases at our disposal.

The Fuehrer ordered that the Wehrmacht hold one armored division in readiness for transport to North Africa, and ordered the navy and the Luftwaffe to prepare for transport duties, and the bombing of the Suez respectively. Halder noted on November 14, two days after the Directive was issued, that the Third Armored Division "will continue to stand by for Libya."  

---

8 Alanbrooke, 197.
9 DeBelot, 93.
10 Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, VI, 960.
11 Halder, V, 21.
The Italians wished to restrict German assistance to the shipment of supplies. They were at that time yet to feel the crushing weight of O'Connor's counter-offensive. Mussolini stated: "If the Germans ever get here, they will never go home." He had by this time begun to realize that he was no longer an equal partner in this alliance and on his instructions Badoglio had refused Keitel's offer to send self-contained German units to Africa. But by the time O'Connor had captured 130,000 Italian prisoners, 400 tanks and 850 guns, and had driven the Duce's forces all the way back to the middle of Libya, Mussolini was not only forced to accept but actually had to beg for help from Hitler at a time when assistance would like rescue—which it most assuredly was.

III

In his diary entry for December 21, 1940, Ciano noted that the Germans were then considering the Italian position and the request for assistance. He wrote that two armored divisions were proposed as the forces to be sent to Libya. General Halder noted two days later in his War Journal that Italy was to receive raw materials and arms for two divisions. On December 24 he wrote that the

12 DeBelot, 93.
13 Ibid.
14 Ciano, 326.
15 Halder, V, 80.
beleaguered Italians were making "insane demands for arms." Halder felt that the Wehrmacht, even in those happy days of 1940, did not possess the materiel strength to meet the "insane" Italian demands. On January 16, he wrote that the Wehrmacht was having "difficulties" securing armored reconnaissance cars for Libya. These vehicles, he noted, would be ready by February 10 at the very earliest. Once again the lack of wheeled and tracked transport in the German army was evident.

During December, 1940, and January, 1941, the Tenth German Air Fleet, known to the Italians as "X Cat" (Corpo aero tedesco), moved into Italy and was stationed on the airfield of Reggio Calabria, and on the Sicilian airfields at Catonia, Comiso, Trapani, and Palermo. This force possessed a strength of about four hundred aircraft, including ME 110's and Stuka dive-bombers. In March of 1941 some Heinkel 111's were added. The Tenth Air Fleet, however, had no torpedo planes, a fact which was to prove disadvantageous to the Axis and a boon to the Royal Navy.

At last, in January, 1941, the Fuehrer decided to move military forces to Libya to aid the Italians and to stabilize the situation. These forces were to be kept comparatively

16 Halder, V, 83.
17 Ibid., 85.
18 DeBelot, 94.
small in size so as to avoid placing too great a strain on the Wehrmacht and weakening its build-up for the coming Eastern offensive. Only two divisions and one Panzer regiment were to be sent. Halder wrote on January 20 that General Funck was to be the commander of the African forces of the Wehrmacht, and that those forces were to leave by February 10th, with their supplies going ahead of them. 19 By February 27, the British encountered their first opposition from German patrols on the Libyan desert. It very quickly became obvious that the Germans of the Afrika Korps were of quite a different character than the Italians.

It appears that Halder was wrong when he wrote that General Funck would command the German forces in Libya. Rommel wrote that he was instructed on February 6 by Field Marshal von Brauchitsch to take command of the German Afrika Korps, and that he was "to move off as soon as possible to Libya to reconnoitre the situation." 20 The middle of February, according to Rommel, saw the first arrival of German troops in Africa—the Fifth Light Division—and by mid-April all troops of that division were in Africa. By March 11, the Fifth Panzer Regiment had completed its disembarkation at Tripoli, and the Fifteenth Panzer Division was move in toto by mid-May. 21

19 Halder, V, 89.
20 Rommel, 98.
21 Ibid.
On March 31, Rommel began his advance against the British. Although he himself called it "the raid through Cyrenaica," the Axis offensive in Libya in 1941 is often called "Rommel's first offensive." Erwin Rommel, who was in command of the German-Italian forces in Libya, was under the orders of General Gariboldi of the Italian Commando Supremo in Rome. According to a written agreement between Italy and Germany, Rommel could appeal to the OKW in the event that the instructions received from the Italians were unacceptable. But in Libya Rommel's personality soon came to be the dominant factor, not only with the Germans and Italians, but with the British as well. Rommel was personally popular with Hitler—he was the Fuehrer's "general in the sun." He rapidly gained overriding influence in Axis councils and frequently bypassed his Italian commanders by dealing directly with the OKW. After the first successes, namely the drive through Cyrenaica all the way to Sollum on the Egyptian–Libyan border, nothing could stand against his influence.

Thus, the term "Rommel's offensive" is in fact justified, for without Rommel there would have most likely been no offensive. And it was that offensive that served to turn the African war into a major campaign for the Wehrmacht, a third front to be fought for and on which to spend and even squander men and precious material. It was
the African campaign that served as another factor in the German decision not to invade the Iberian Peninsula.

By May, 1941, the German Wehrmacht was engaged in a full-scale drive to conquer Africa, with over 30,000 men and hundreds of tanks, to say nothing of the Tenth Air Fleet in Italy and Sicily and subordinate Luftwaffe units in Africa. By November the African Campaign had taken on such proportions that the OKW was forced to regard it as a major front.

IV

Just as in Operation Sea Lion the previous fall, the transport situation in the spring of 1941 was very critical, especially sea transport. According to Halder six German ships were needed to transport supplies to the Italians alone during January. 22 By the 21st of that month the German railway service was running twelve trains a day over the Brenner Pass to Naples, but the navy could only handle six a day. Thus, wrote Halder, since 110 train loads of Afrika Korps supplies were to be ferried across, the Italian-German convoys would require at least 45 days to load and unload, to say nothing of the time required to cross the sea. 23 But the most interesting aspect of all the War Journal entries for this period, Spring, 1941, is that while Halder lamented the shortage of transport and supplies for Rommel,

22 Halder, V, 86.
23 Ibid., 91.
he spent a great deal more time noting the preparations for the coming invasion of the USSR, and from April to May the "Blitzkrieg" in the Balkans. In other words, with the coming of June 22, 1941, the Wehrmacht found itself engaged (as planned) with the Russians, occupying the recently conquered Balkans (unplanned), and conducting a major campaign (unplanned) in the south under Rommel. This latter front, as Rommel himself bitterly complained, was ignored as much as possible by the OKW and OKH:

I was not very happy at the efforts of Field Marshal von Brauchitsch and Colonel-General Franz Halder to keep down the numbers of troops sent to Africa and to leave the future of this theatre of war to chance.\textsuperscript{24}

On November 7-8, 1942, Operation Torch—the Allied invasion of North Africa—began. Units of the United States Army, Navy, and Air Force, together with British troops supported by the RAF, landed simultaneously at numerous points on the North African coast. So gigantic was the Allied invasion that it was transported in a convoy of 500 ships and escorted by 350 more.\textsuperscript{25} The invasion was, of course, a serious threat to the Axis position in Libya. Not only would Rommel have to fight the British to the east, but now also the Americans to the west.

\textsuperscript{24}Rommel, 106.

\textsuperscript{25}Chronology of the Second World War, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1947.) p. 151.
With the greatest effort, and by stripping many occupation garrisons to the absolute minimum, reserves were sent to Africa. On November 9 German troops began arriving at El Aouana airport outside of Tunis. It is to the credit of the German Luftwaffe that this rapid and surprising reinforcement took place. Troop-carrying aircraft flew constantly between the continent and Tunis. At its peak the airlift was bringing in 1,000 men or more a day. But once again the tremendous efforts of the German military were in vain. The number of troops brought to Africa was not large enough to counter the overwhelming superiority of the Allies. And supplies, so critically needed, remained as short as ever.

And what is more, with the Allied invasion of North Africa the Nazis discarded the Vichy regime and Vichy-France was occupied by German troops on November 11, placing yet another burden on a weakened and faltering Wehrmacht. The end of 1942 saw the German military machine fighting for its life in the south, attempting to crush growing resistance movements in the Balkans and in the West, and in the East feverishly preparing for the catastrophic winter of 1942-43, the winter of Stalingrad.

The history of the Afrika Korps and its defeat at the hands of the Anglo-American forces in 1942-43 is beyond

26 Fuller, 243.
the scope of this thesis. Suffice it to say that the war in Africa served as a further tax on the Wehrmacht's strength, as well as a further reason not to attempt an invasion and occupation of the Iberian Peninsula. As in the case of the West (Chapter IV) and the East (Chapter V), the Wehrmacht did not have the necessary men, transport, nor supplies to sustain its existing fronts, much less a new one.

Rommel held that one of the main, if not the main, reasons that Africa fell to the Allies was the lack of materiel and fresh reserves of troops. By the end of 1941 he was writing of convoys that never came and Allied aircraft that flew unopposed—for the Luftwaffe, as shown in Chapter V, "had been absorbed by the Eastern Front." Rommel himself best summed up the situation:

Anyone who has to fight, even with the most modern weapons, against an enemy in complete command of the air, fights like a savage against modern European troops, under the same handicaps and with the same chances of success.

How can one fight a war with one eye on the enemy and the other on the gas gauge? This, of course, was another of Rommel's supply problems, and one that he lamented most bitterly. So bad was the German position in Africa, so

---

27 Rommel, 234, 521, 287.
29 Rommel, 285.
30 Ibid., 333, 354-5, 278-9, 280.
short were the numbers of men and sorely needed supplies, that a saddened Rommel wrote just before his death in 1944:

Colonel-General Halder told me in 1941 that the Army High Command regarded North Africa as a lost cause and that they were setting the German troops no other task but to delay the collapse of Italian resistance in Libya for as long as possible. Herr Halder asserted...that it would be impossible to keep an army of more than two or three divisions supplies in North Africa for long.31

Thus, the war in Africa served as another drain on a bleeding Wehrmacht, or in a more mundane context, its "ulcer," just as the Peninsular War of 1809-12 was Napoleon's. North Africa was the "ignored" front, and yet it too took away men and materiel. It too made an invasion of the Iberian Peninsula out of the question, for the Wehrmacht knew that such an invasion would be still-born in the light of the Economy of Forces: Southern Front.
CHAPTER VII

"Zurückblicken"

"Thou shalt make castels than in Spayne,  
And dreme of joye, al but in vayne."

---

Goffrey Chaucer,  
Romaunt of the Rose, B. 1.,  
2573.

I

In his work Chief of Intelligence, Ian Colvin gives what is perhaps the best statement of the problem, and the answers to it, that make up this thesis:

On the white cliffs of Dover, the sands of El Alamein, and the banks of the Volga at Stalingrad there are monuments to three turning points of the Second World War, where the flood of Hitler's fire and steel was stemmed and turned back. But if our grandchildren ask why it was that Hitler stopped at the Pyrenees and how Spain remained neutral against all historical likelihood, there is no simple answer that we can give them.¹

There is no simple answer. Why Hitler did not invade Spain, and with it the strategic bastion of Gibraltar, cannot be explained with one or two or even several well constructed reasons. The answers put forth in this thesis are not offered as the only or the complete explanations to that question. Rather, the major factors which helped

¹Colvin, 124.
shape the German decision are given here in what might be called points of consideration, aspects of research that offer some insight into one of the most enigmatic turning points of the war.

What are these factors, these "aspects" of research? Why did the Germans not strike against Spain? Military scientists and historians may conclude that Hermann Goering was correct in stating that the failure of the Wehrmacht to do so was perhaps the most fatal blunder of the war. But, despite all the gains that were calculated to result from such a campaign (see Chapter I), the prospect offered too many deterrents and too many grave risks. First there was the awful specter of a peninsular war. With the British strong enough, and fervent enough, to fight in Norway, Greece, and Africa it could not be doubted that they would intervene in any action on the Iberian peninsula, especially since that action would be a direct threat to Gibraltar. British successes in Africa proved only too well their ability to make such intervention harmful to a thinly-spread Wehrmacht.

Then there was the added factor of Spanish resistance, or more correctly, guerilla warfare. The Wehrmacht would have had to assume the enormous additional responsibility of occupying the Iberian peninsula with its long, jagged coastline. It simultaneously would have had to fight the British and suppress the Spaniards. The appearance of Nazi forces
would have quickly set off nation-wide explosions in a country rife with hatreds and superlatively skilled in the art of guerilla warfare.

Nor would the task of seizing and occupying Spain have been an easy one. Transportation would have been a grave problem, for Spanish railroads were of different gauge from the French, were badly disorganized, and rolling stock was scarce and antiquated.\(^2\) The Irun bridge, which was of such concern to Halder, was a good example of the tremendous transport problem.

The supplying of the invading forces would have been another difficult matter, as there was not enough food in Spain to allow an occupying army to live off the land, and lines of supply from France to the north, which could pass through the Pyrenees at only a few well known points (see Chapter II) would have been easy targets for guerilla units or British bombers.\(^3\) Thus, the prospect of a long and bloody peninsular war may be said to stand as one factor upon which the decision not to invade Spain was taken.

Another factor is that of the "façade"—the ideological edifice that Hitler would have preserved. Closely connected with this was his personal liking for the Spanish people, his desire, simply stated, not to offend them. The Fuehrer


\(^3\)Ibid.
realized that the invasion of one member of his New Order by another would bring the whole concept crashing round his ears, and he did everything possible to avoid such a catastrophe. When Italy left the war in 1943, for example, Hitler ordered that Mussolini be rescued and established as the ruler of fascist North Italy. Hitler could not, he would not, allow his grand ideological façade to be destroyed. Spain's prestige with the Fuehrer, his genuine liking of the "Nordic" Spaniards, only strengthened his conviction that such an invasion would be a danger to and in complete contradiction of the entire concept of the New Order.

Spain was fascist, but also neutral. Hitler the politician recognized the danger that such an invasion would bring. He knew that he could not afford to panic Turkey into a dependence on Russia or England, and feared that the invasion of a neutral state after two or more years of war might cause ore-rich Sweden to adopt a hostile attitude. Whether or not Turkey and Sweden would have viewed such an invasion with alarm is difficult to say. But the Fuehrer felt that he could not risk it. Nor could he risk the alarming of his newly won "allies": Bulgaria, Hungary, Rumania, the strife-torn Czechoslovakia, Finland, and the subservient but still potentially powerful Vichy-France. Hitler needed their space and their manpower, their oil and their industry. He did not want to see his organized Europe
crumble—even theoretically. He did not want his "allies" to possess any attitude but one of affability, tempered with respect. He could not afford to be bothered with revolts and the noxious problems that would result, especially that of occupation. And he liked the Spaniards!

The above reasons or explanations are theoretical. We do not know that England would have intervened on the Iberian peninsula had the Wehrmacht launched an offensive across the Pyrenees. We only have Churchill's order that the Combined Chiefs of Staff "consider the possibility of alternative action on the Iberian peninsula." 4

It cannot be held that Hitler's "liking" of the Spanish people alone would have stayed his hand. After all, he said that he liked the Greeks, admired them, and yet he invaded Greece. We cannot say that Spain would have resisted an invasion by Germany, especially before 1943, but we have Hitler's words that "they (the Spanish people)...would carry on guerrilla warfare in our rear." 5

All these answers may not be factually or historically correct, but they are important. For it was the thinking of the Fuehrer that decided the Iberian issue as it was his decision to make.

---

4 Alanbrooke, 339.
5 Martienssen, 172.
It cannot be held that Germany's allies would have been alarmed at the invasion of Spain and Portugal by the Wehrmacht, or that the neutral states, particularly Sweden and Turkey, would have been panicked into action of one sort or another. Yet Hitler the politician felt that he could not endanger his "system" of alliances nor burden Germany with more fighting and occupation duties, especially as the invasion of Russia demanded all of his country's efforts, to say nothing of the previous preparations for the invasion of Britain, the fighting in North Africa, and the war in the Balkans.

These explanations, then, are theoretical in that they never took place. They are not historical facts. Spain was not invaded, and we will never know if the Fuehrer's logic was correct. But even if these explanations are not historical facts they are realities, concrete explanations, in so far as they affected Hitler's thinking and that of his military chiefs.

II

There are additional reasons, however, that if not "simple," are less theoretical than the above. These may be stated as the Economy of Forces—the axiom of military science that at any given time only so much can be done with so many troops and so many guns in so many places. In the West from June, 1940, until October, 1940, the
Wehrmacht was busily preparing for Operation Sea Lion, the invasion of the British Isles. This tremendous offensive was to require all available strength and precluded the engagement of forces in any other major campaign. Besides, if the British Isles were forced to surrender, Gibraltar would most likely have become an automatic prize of war.

From October until June of the next year (1941), after the cancellation of Operation Sea Lion, preparations were in progress for the Eastern Offensive. Hitler hoped to find in Russia his badly needed "Battle of Decision."

The combined German-Spanish action against Gibraltar (Operation Felix) was to have taken place during this period. It was to have been a quick and a secondary engagement, involving neither large numbers of troops nor much time.

Unfortunately, for the Germans, it was based on the concept of Spanish co-operation, and was stillborn because that co-operation was not forthcoming. With the opening of the

---

6 It has been held by some writers (Ian Colvin, Chief of Intelligence; Karl Heinz Abshagen, Canaris; Anthony Martienssen, Hitler and His Admirals; Milton Shulman, Defeat in the West) that Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, Chief of the German Military Intelligence (Abwehr), played a very great role in keeping Spain out of the war and to a high degree was responsible for the tempering of Nazi pressure on Spain to assume a belligerent status and join the Axis war cause. The career of Admiral Wilhelm Canaris is one of shadows, for he was a secretive man who was simultaneously fighting the Russian, British and American secret services, the infringements on his organization by the Nazi Party Intelligence Service (Sicherheitsdienst), and the Gestapo who were interested in his alleged anti-Nazi and treasonable activities. Some claim (Ian Colvin for one) that he was an
unofficial agent for the British Secret Service. Others hold that he was a pessimistic man who merely had a weather eye out for the future turn of events and the best he could personally make out of them for no other than Wilhelm Canaris. Paul Leverkuehn, author of *German Military Intelligence*, was an immediate subordinate of Canaris in the Abwehr. He holds that the Admiral had no knowledge what-so-ever of illegal peace negotiations with the Allies through his organization, nor did he become a willing conspirator against Hitler's life and regime in what is known as the 20 July plot. Gerald Reitlinger, in his work *The SS, Alibi of a Nation*, maintains that Canaris was a good friend of the mass-murderer, Reinhard Heydrich, and notes that it was Canaris who gave the impassioned funeral oration for Heydrich after his assassination by Czechoslovak partisans. Canaris called Heydrich "his true friend and a great man." (See Reitlinger p. 216; also Abshagen p. 149). Other writers, Constatine FitzGibbon for one (20 July) make Canaris out as a loyal Christian and a decent fellow, if not an active conspirator against the Nazi regime. Thus, the picture and role of Wilhelm Canaris are shadowy, for he was a man skilled in keeping in the shadows. But most writers agree that Canaris did coach Franco before the Hendaye Conference, and give the Caudillo an idea of what Hitler would demand and how best to avoid those demands, yet keep the Fuehrer from becoming too enraged. It appears that Canaris did much to present the worst possible picture to the German High Command of Spanish military ability and economic strength, thereby getting Spain "off the hook." (See Chapter I). But it also seems that Canaris' only interest in Spain was to keep it neutral, to prevent its being ravaged by the war. After the Hendaye Conference, and especially after the opening of the Eastern offensive, it appears that Canaris had little or no interest in protecting Spain, for there was little danger to the "ungrateful" Spanish from the Germans. Rather, according to most reports, Canaris was active in Spain before the Hendaye Conference in an effort to keep Spain neutral. This is an interesting line of investigation, but it is outside the bounds of this thesis. Why Spain remained neutral is another question, a question that cannot be accurately answered until Madrid opens its archives. What is of importance is that the Abwehr and Admiral Canaris had no direct role in preventing a German invasion of Spain, although it cannot be denied that his pessimistic reports on the conditions in Spain must have had some indirect effect on the later thinking of the Fuehrer and the Wehrmacht. To assess that indirect effect is obviously impossible. The reports by Canaris are included verbatim in Chapter I.
Balkan war during this period, and the invasion of Russia immediately thereafter, the Wehrmacht was in no position in terms of economy of forces to engage in a costly peninsular campaign. On top of all this, there was the African "holding action," a major campaign that the Wehrmacht found impossible to supply with even minimum necessities, such as fuel. In the face of the weakening economy of forces on the German side, an invasion of the Iberian peninsula during the period 1940-42 was out of the question.

By the end of 1942, as has been shown, the German army had suffered through its first catastrophic winter in Russia, had all but lost North Africa, and had suffered tremendous defeats at sea and in the air. Yet no victorious "Battle of Decision" had been fought. The Russians, the British and the Americans were fighting with ever growing strength. The strength of the Wehrmacht was ebbing, and it had grown weak. The Moloch of Stalingrad was soon to cost the Wehrmacht 600,000 troops, and can be said to have been one of the major turning points of the war. It was the highpoint of the Russian campaign, it was the "Battle of Decision," and it ended in disaster. After that awful winter of 1942-43, Germany was never again to possess the opportunity, let alone the ability, for the opening of a new front. It could not even hold those upon which it was
forced to fight. Desperate endeavors, such as the air-lift of troops to Tunis in November, 1942, were rare exceptions. That air-lift was the enervated gesture of a dying Afrika Korps. At any rate, the few thousand troops so painfully gathered and air-lifted to Tunis could never have launched an invasion of Spain through the Pyrenees, much less have sustained it.

Hans Speidel, Rommel's Chief of Staff in Europe, wrote in his work Invasion 1944: "By the year 1943 Germany had passed the peak of her military strength. Disintegration was spreading through her political leadership and her military command."  

Rommel himself wrote regarding Africa: "No longer could we carry the burden of three fronts." 

He went on to point out that in 1944 the Russians had broken through the lines to the east, and the Allies had invaded the west. In 1944 only the front in Italy was holding, and that at tremendous costs in men and materiel. Rommel wrote that only with great difficulty and by using their last reserves had the Wehrmacht been able to improvise new lines, both east and west. He then concluded his writings with that now famous phrase: "The sky over Germany has grown very dark."  

---

7 Hans Speidel, Invasion 1944 (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1950), p. 3.  
8 Rommel, 524.  
9 Ibid.
Thus it was that from June, 1940, until the end of the war the Economy of Forces prohibited any movement by the Wehrmacht into Spain and Portugal. There were simply not enough men, guns, tracked vehicles, fuel stores, planes, railway engines, naval craft, etc., to allow the German military to open a new and what promised to be a very costly front in an area that would in no event (according to Hitler) give the needed "Battle of Decision." As the months passed, the supplies, the men, the materiels grew ever shorter, and the war ever more terrible.

And then of course, there was the question of timing. There never arose a lull, a period during which the invasion could have been launched. Operation Sea Lion, the build-up for Operation Barbarossa, the Balkan war, the North African campaign, the Italian defection, the partisan wars in Yugoslavia, and so on, always prohibited any unnecessary engagement. The holocaust of the Eastern Front would have in itself been enough to make the opening of another front, especially in the West, insane. But Hitler had much more to deal with than the Eastern Front, and at no time was he bothered with a surplus of troops or supplies during a "slack period." There were no slack periods!

The Economy of Forces may be judged the prime reason for the failure of Hitler and the Wehrmacht to invade Spain and Portugal. One, of course, cannot disregard the other factors which affected the problem and resulted in the
decision not to launch an invasion. But in terms of material realities, and for the moment disregarding the personal and political feelings of Hitler toward the Spanish, the Economy of Forces still stands as the single great explanation of the German decision not to invade, or what is more, of Hitler's refusal to even consider such a thing. Field Marshal von Manstein gave what is perhaps the best precis of this factor:

The capture of Gibraltar could only have been carried out with Spanish consent—which was in fact never obtained—or by bringing pressure to bear on the Spaniards. Either course would have meant the end of Spanish neutrality. The Reich would have been left with no other choice than to take over—with or without the agreement of Madrid and Lisbon—the protection of the whole Iberian coastline, as well as to guarantee the supply of that area. Resistance could have been expected from both countries—most of all from Portugal, who would have seen her colonies immediately occupied by England. Anyhow, the Iberian peninsula would have swallowed a considerable portion of the German Army in the long run, and the repercussions in the U.S.A. and Latin America to a forcible occupation of Spain and Portugal could have been disastrous.¹⁰

It is little wonder that Hitler looked aghast at an Iberian war.

Who can say what the results would have been had he done otherwise; had he not invaded the USSR but rather followed the advice of Goering and Raeder in 1940-41, had he struck south and west through Spain and then across

North Africa? A great single campaign of lightning speed which would have closed the Mediterranean at Gibraltar, seized Suez from the weak British force there, and then swept through the poorly defended Near East to link with the Japanese somewhere in Afghanistan or India. The reflections of Field Marshal Rommel would seem to be particularly apt in this regard:

Victory in battle—save where it is brought about by sheer weight of numbers, and omitting all questions of the courage of the troops engaged—never comes solely as the result of the victor's planning. It is not only the merits of the victor that decide the issue, but also the mistakes on the part of the vanquished.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11}Rommel, 519.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Public Documents


Gantenbein's work is useful in that it contains many memoranda otherwise difficult to locate. The documents are quoted verbatim and by and large offer the reader a good diplomatic collection. Documents dealing with internal politics in Germany or with the military situation are in the minority. The German Foreign Office publications (usually known as the German White Books) serve to illustrate the Nazi propaganda line of the period. Of course extreme caution must be exercised when use is made of them for factual research. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, in eight large volumes and two supplements, is an excellent source that cannot be praised too highly. It offers the
researcher everything from military documents stamped TOP SECRET to tables of statistics drawn up by the Germans before and during the war and dealing with anything from potato production to mass executions. These primary sources are, however, in what might be called a very "raw" stage. Care and judgment must be exercised in handling the copious materials the volumes offer. A military report, for example, having one line of thought, will be completely contradicted by another report of about the same date in another of the volumes. The State Department documents are good for background of a general nature and for the Allied side of the picture. They contain very little of the Nazi side for this period. Documents on German Foreign Policy, on the other hand, serves as the supplement to Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression, in that the former gives the diplomatic picture and the latter the international and military situation. The internal situation (domestic politics) is best handled by Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression however. Both sets of documents are of great value in a study of the period. No study would be complete without use of the primary materials they offer.

Books


Dino Alfieri's *Dictators Face to Face* is good as a source for Hitler the Warlord and strategist. The works by Karl Bartz and Asher Lee give a good insight into the Luftwaffe, its strength and its weaknesses, its growth and decline. For a study of Hitler the man, Bullock's *Hitler* is excellent. Ian Colvin's *Chief of Intelligence* is of the utmost value. Some tend to distrust it, but it is a work of real research, and came out after Abshagen's *Canaris*. Colvin has made use of unpublished and formerly secret works and documents. Felix Gilbert gives yet another keen insight into Hitler as a strategist. The books by August Kubizek and Ernst 'Putzi' Hanfstaengl tell the story of Hitler as a lonely and bitter youth and as an active but violent young politician. Both are excellent sources for background studies on Hitler, as is Bullock's work.
In the military field there is no match for Rommel. He saw things the way no one else did, and he could see the reasons for failure where there was but confusion to others. Goebbels kept an accurate diary, but his deductions are mostly faulty. Ciano was better, but tended to let his personal pride color things. Only Rommel could see the real trend in military events, and only he predicted accurately what was to come.

On the political side, the von Hassell Diaries are a veritable mine. Ulrich von Hassell, although no soldier, was possessed of an astute understanding of political events. His diaries give the real reasons, or what he suspected to be the real reasons, behind some of the more unfathomable moves of the Reich.

Paul Leverkuehn's German Military Intelligence is a personal account of his own actions during the war, and the actions of the Abwehr of which he was a member. It is based only on his own memory, and misses some important events, e.g., Admiral Canaris, Leverkuehn's own superior, and the 20 July 1944 conspiracy.

Admiral Raymond DeBelot's The Struggle for the Mediterranean and Lord Alanbrooke's The Turn of the Tide are the two best sources for a study of the Mediterranean theatre. The former deals more with the naval war, and the latter with the land conflict. Hans Speidel's Invasion 1944, Milton Shulman's Defeat in the West, and Heinz Guderian's Panzer Leader are all excellent sources for a study of the military situations at various times and on various fronts. But one must be very careful not to let the political feelings and justifications of these soldiers color one's thought. The same is true with Trevor-Roper's Hitler's Secret Conversations (Table Talks). This collection of the table conversations of the Fuehrer is of extreme value, but the reader must be careful and try not to be misled by Hitler. Most of Hitler's observations are accurate and were his genuine feelings, but Hitler did not always mean what he said. Therefore, a careful investigation of and comparison of dates and events with the Fuehrer's statement sometimes brings out the true motive of his statement, the real reasons behind his praise or his rage.

For general background in the period Wheeler-Bennett's The Nemesis of Power, Craig's The Politics of the Prussian Army and Fuller's The Second World War are excellent. Churchill's voluminous work is full of interesting observations, but tends to skip over the military aspect.
Articles and Periodicals


Although tinted by the passion of war, Edward Bock's article on Spain and the Axis offered an acute observation of the pressures on and in Spain during the period. The interview of Lequerica by Mannes, in Nation of 1943, served as one of the best illustrations of the Spanish ability to talk and say nothing. The interview is worthless as a source for research, but remains an excellent example of what the Spanish were saying and doing during the period, toward Axis and Allies alike. Churchill's statement in the House of Commons in 1944, quoted in the Illustrated London News, can be taken as the official granting of pardon by the Allies to Spain and General Franco for earlier "indiscretions," i.e., words and actions beneficial to the Axis. The article in School and Society concerning the German-Spanish Cultural Agreement is of value because of the observations contained in it and the penetrating deductions made regarding future German-Spanish relations.

Unpublished Sources


The dissertation by John Robert Bengtson proved to be of inestimable value. Besides being a source for information concerning German plans for the post-war period, it offered explanations for German actions during the war, i.e., in regard to the invasion of such areas as Greece and the USSR, and the failure to invade the British Isles. The Halder Diary, of course, can be called the primary source for this thesis. It offered a larger and much more detailed insight into the German military machine than any other source. The chapters dealing with Economy of Forces, for example, are based largely on the Halder War Journal. But it must be mentioned that the events as recorded by Halder are not always accurate. It cannot be denied that in matters of army supply or battle tactics the Diary (War Journal) is correct, but when Halder made note of grand strategy or the over-all conduct of the war he at times tended to come out with the wrong conclusions, mainly because Hitler was not a man to tell his generals everything he was thinking or was planning to do in the near or distant future.