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Beachheads : a historical reconsideration of the U.S. landings at Anzio and Inchon

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BEACHHEADS: A HISTORICAL RECONSIDERATION OF THE U.S. LANDINGS AT ANZIO AND INCHON

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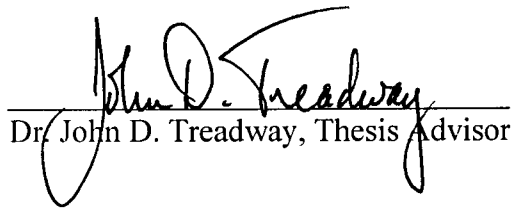
Abstract

Traditional thinking in American military history holds that the amphibious Allied landing at Anzio, Italy, on 22 January 1944 was a complete failure and represents one of the biggest blunders of World War II. This is especially true when Anzio is compared to the American landing at Inchon, Korea, on 15 September 1950 during the Korean War, that has been widely hailed as being one of the unrivaled amphibious successes in American military history. This thesis addresses the issues of whether Anzio was truly a "failure" and whether Inchon was truly a "success." Relying upon the personal paper collections of those commanders involved as well as the vast supply of secondary sources, this work attempts to answer the questions: First, if Anzio or Inchon was a failure, why? If not, why? What role did the commanders and their subordinates play in shaping the outcome of the landings? What is the state of the current historiographical debate? Deeper questions of American military doctrine and inter-service relationships are addressed in an effort to better understand why episodes in American military history are often labeled as failures or successes. A more balanced view of both landings is what emerges from the based on the conclusions presented in this thesis.

I certify that I have read this thesis and find that, in scope and quality, it satisfies the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History.



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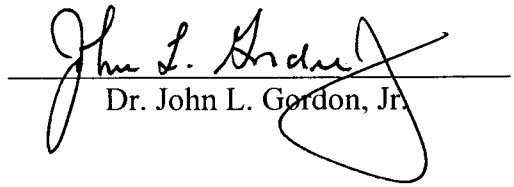

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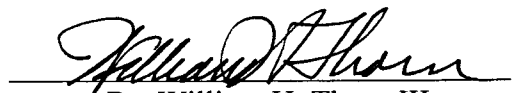

Dr. William H. Thorn III

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By

TRAVIS JAMES HARDY

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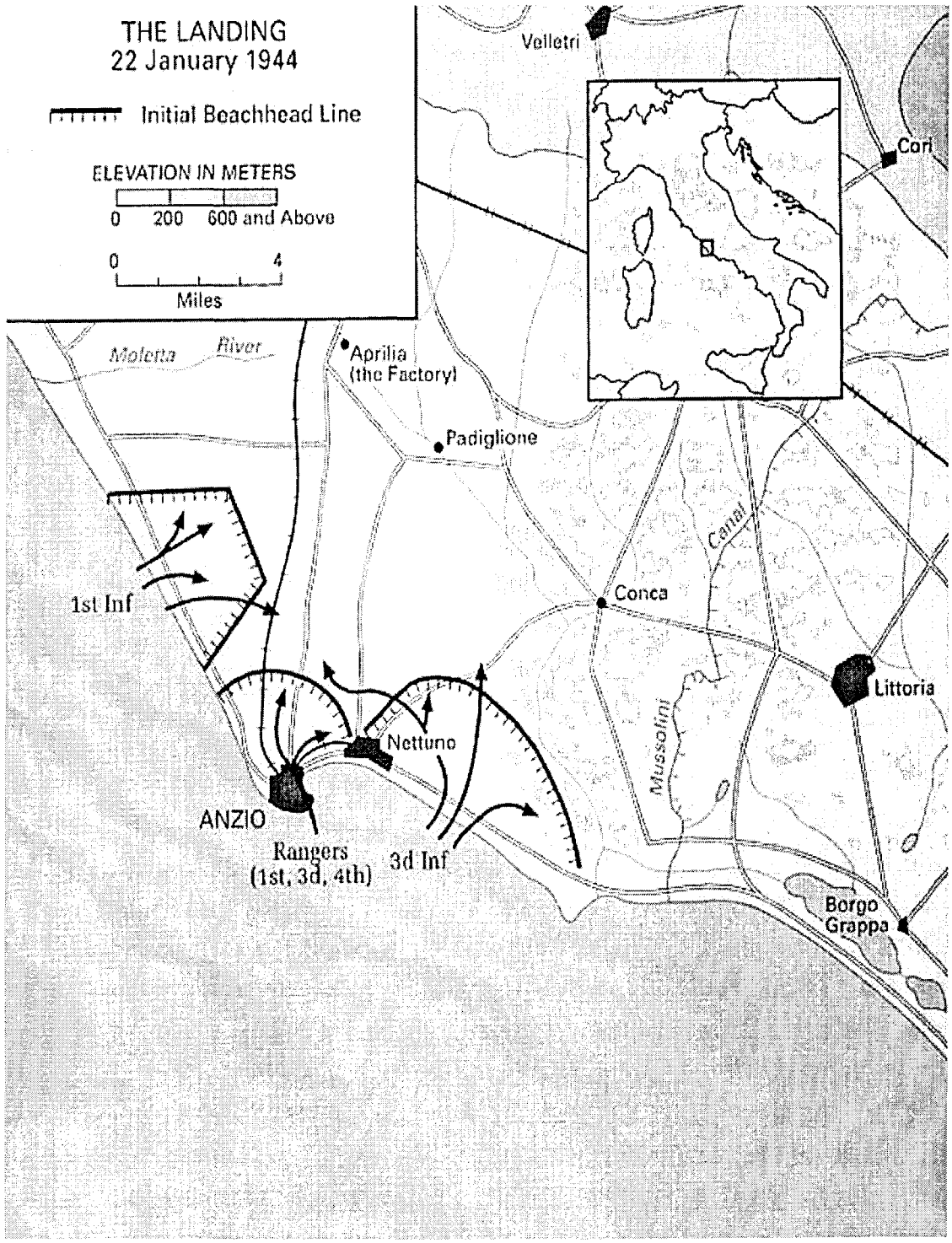

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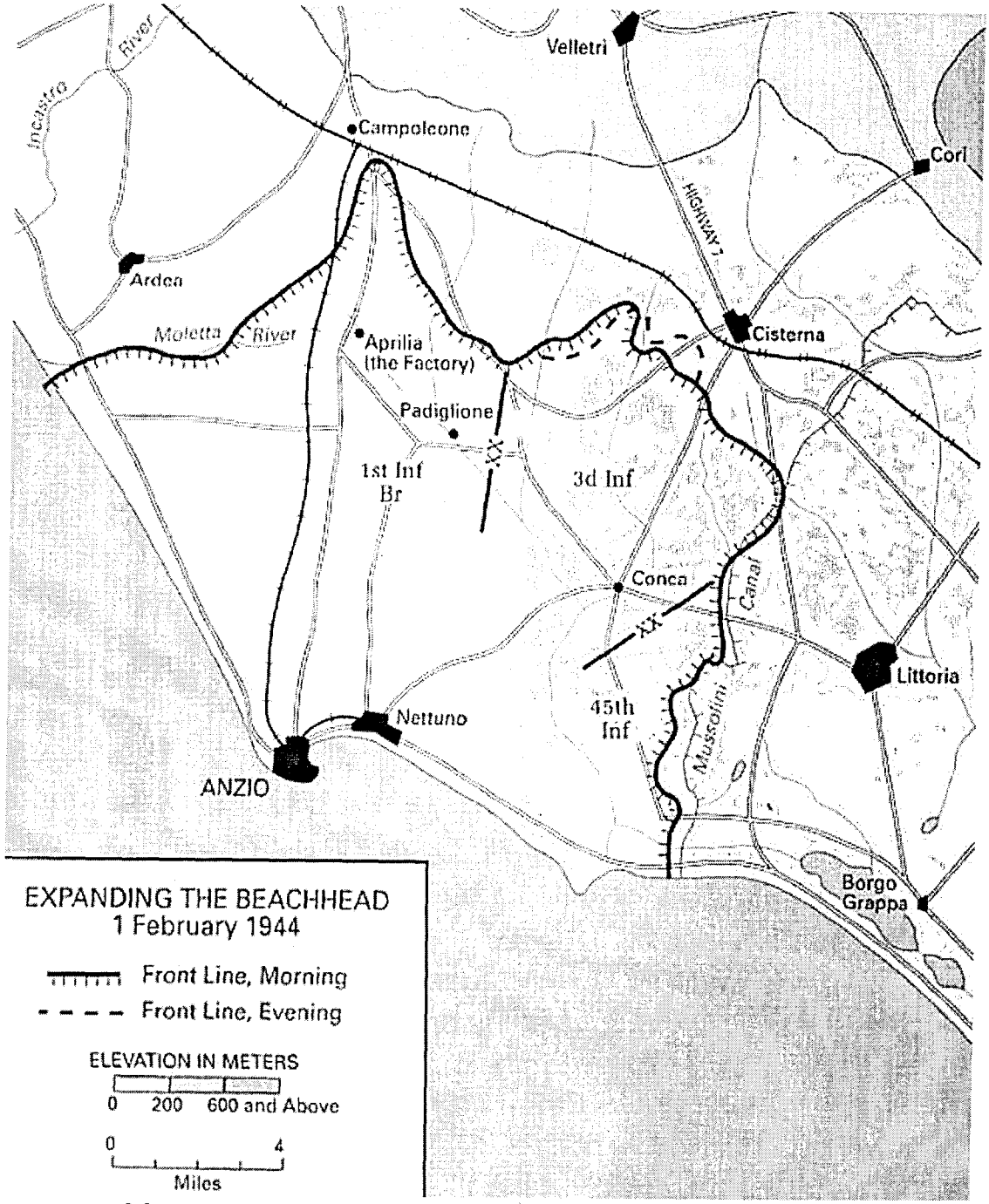

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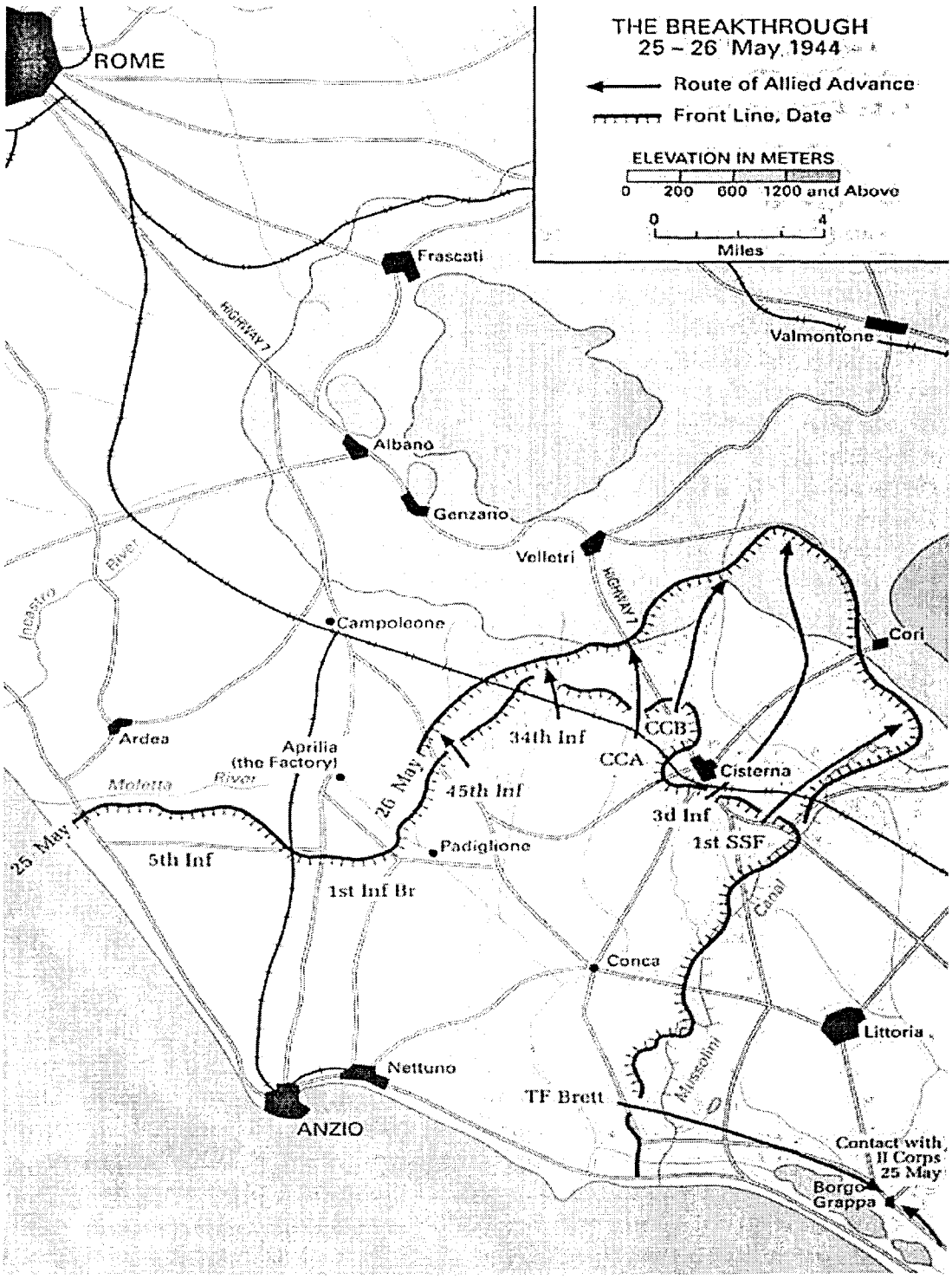

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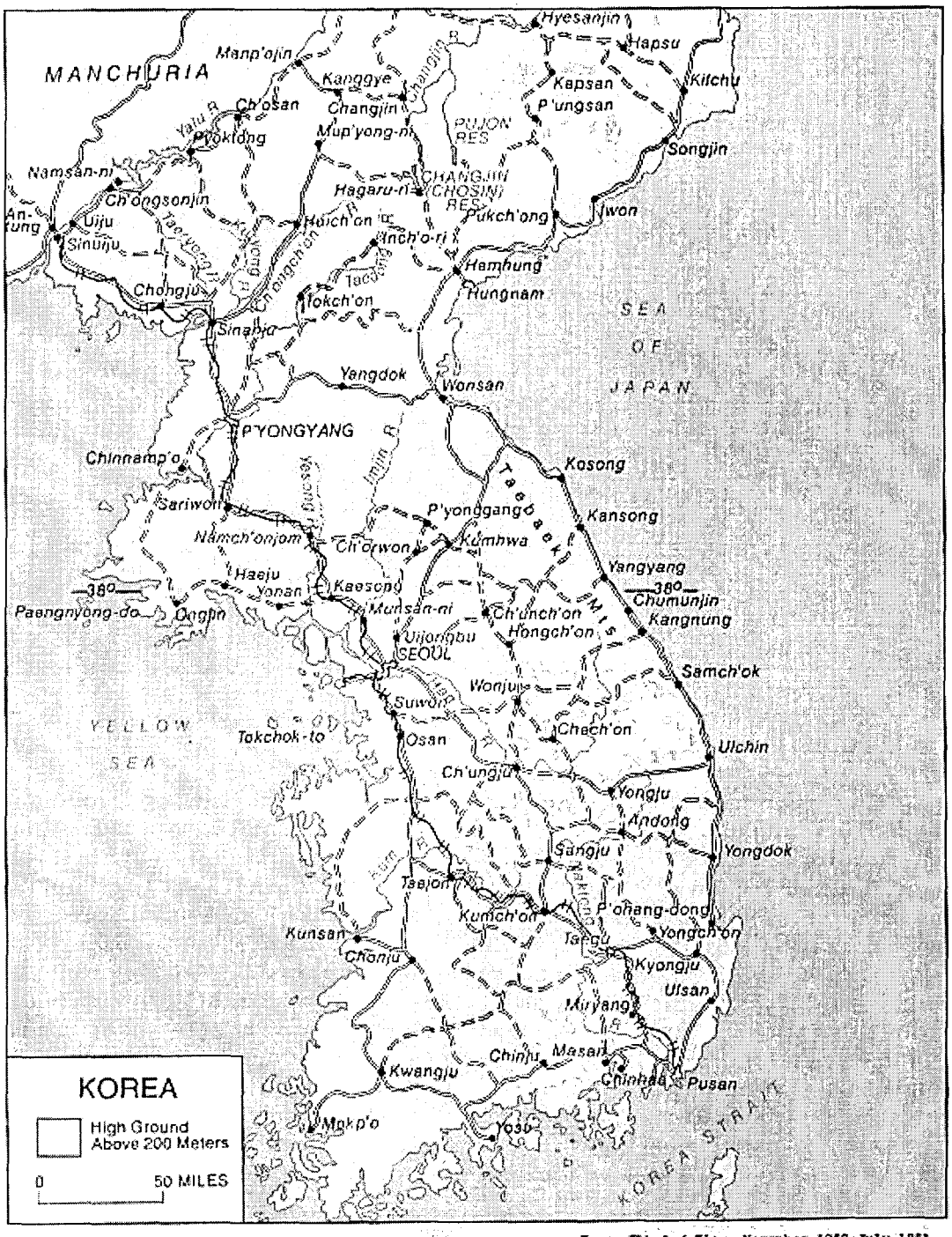
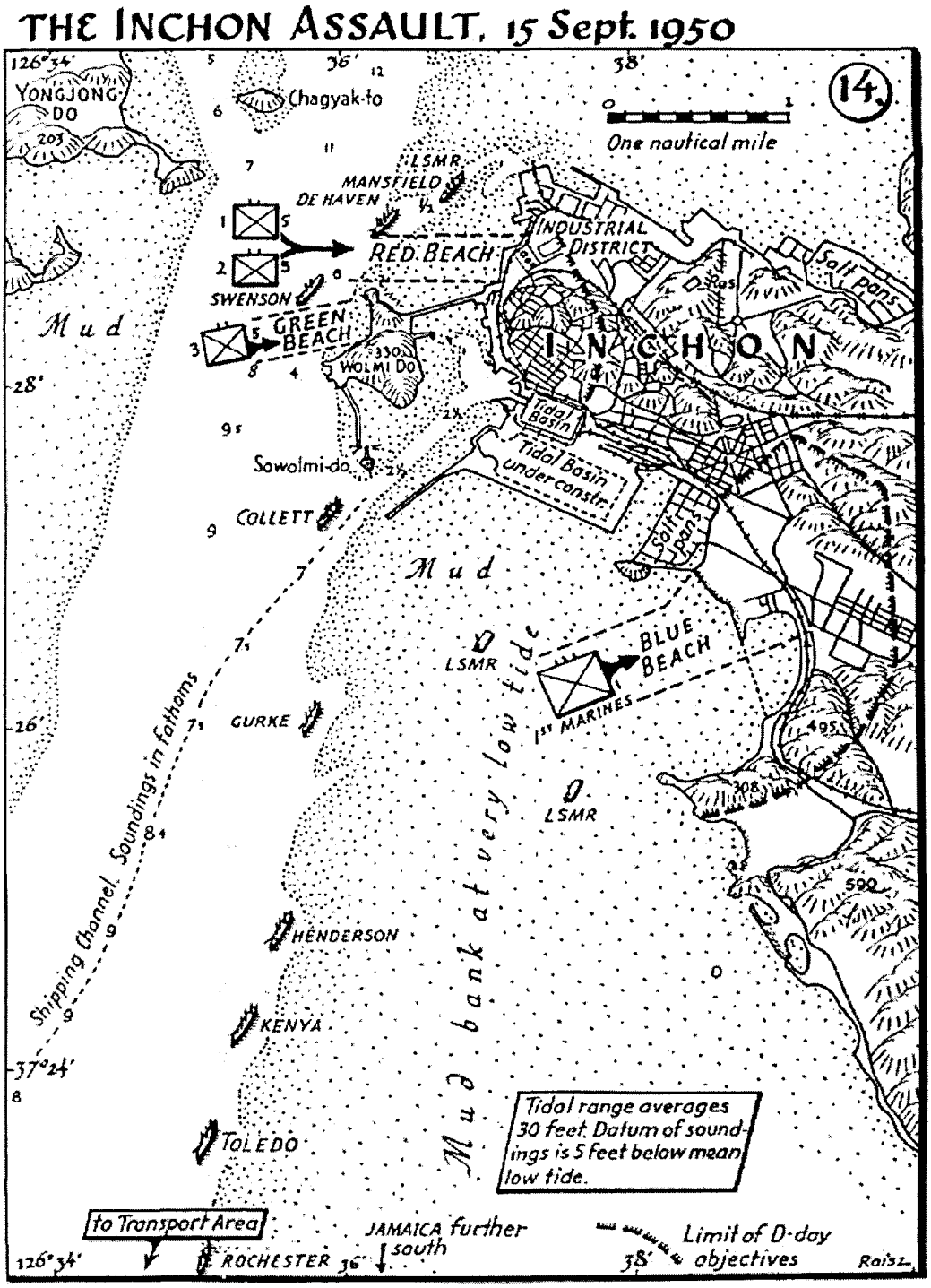


MAP 2

From: Ebb And Flow, November 1950-July 1951
Center of Military History, 1990
By Billy C. Mossman

Map Source: www.koreanwar.org/html/maps/map2_full.jpg



Map Source: www.history.navy.mil/books/field/ch7b.htm#map14

Acknowledgments

An African proverb states that it takes a village to raise a child. In many ways it takes a village of historians and researchers to help write a historical paper. I would like to take this time to thank those who helped to "raise" this paper from start to finish. Thanks must go to Jane Yates, director of the Citadel archives, for her help in sorting through the mass of materials related to Anzio and Lt. General Mark Clark housed at the Citadel. Her suggestions also helped lead the author to other material of relevance which would have otherwise gone unnoticed.

Thanks to Jim Zobel of the MacArthur Memorial Library archives for his help with the materials located at the library dealing with Inchon. His discussions helped me to explore several different avenues of thought concerning Inchon and MacArthur as well as helping to explain in depth the various small idiosyncracies of the Korean War which the author was unfamiliar with.

I would like to thank the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of the University of Richmond whose generous research grant made possible the author's trips to Charleston, South Carolina, and Norfolk, Virginia. The financial question is always an important one to any researcher and the University helped to insure that little time was spent worrying about money and more time worrying about the thesis.

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Finally the greatest thanks must go to my family, especially my mother and father whose unwavering support and financial sacrifices have helped me start down the path to becoming a professional historian. Without them none of the past six years of undergraduate and graduate schooling would have been possible. Their constant words of encouragement helped bring light to those dark periods when the completion of the thesis seemed unobtainable. Thank you Mom and Dad.

Chapter 1

Anzio – The Setting

Introduction

" The amphibious landing is the most powerful tool we have. To employ it properly, we must strike hard and deeply into enemy territory."[1] – Gen. Douglas MacArthur

The tangy salt air fills your nostrils as you slowly make your way down the rope ladder into the waiting Higgins boat below. It is the strange time of day between darkness and dawn, when a gray light filters through to illuminate the surroundings. In the distance a thin dark line reveals the coastline. In the semi-darkness it is impossible to make out any detail that could give you any hint of what awaits on that shore. In the boat, the gentle rolling of the ocean serves only to irritate the already tense stomachs of the men surrounding you. You are surrounded by the unmistakable odor of fear, fear of the uncertain – fear of death. From the loudspeakers of the destroyer near you comes the announcement you have been dreading and waiting for, "Landing craft, cross the departure line." The engines of the Higgins boats thunder as the landing crafts begin to swarm towards the shore. The young corporal next to you begins quietly to recite the Lord's Prayer under his breath. As suddenly as the craft started its voyage inland, it halts.

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[1]Walter Karig, Malcolm Cagle, and Frank Manson, *Battle Report: Korea* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1952), p. 168.

The ramp at the front of the boat drops to reveal twenty yards of ocean still separating you from the land and whoever or whatever may be waiting.

This is a scene that has been repeated numerous times in American military history. For many, it was indelibly etched into their memories from the opening scenes of Steven Spielberg's 1998 film *Saving Private Ryan*. The history of the United States is filled with instances of young men flinging themselves ashore on some distant island or even onto riverbanks in this very country. American military history abounds with examples: the British at New Orleans in the War of 1812, General McClellan's Peninsula Campaign of 1862, Operation Torch in 1942, Normandy in June 1944 just to name a few of the more prominent examples. The technology has changed over time, as has the tactics employed, but one fact has always remained the same: the amphibious landing constitutes the most difficult military maneuver to carry out, one fraught with danger, but at the same time offering the greatest military prize there is, a swift and total victory over your enemy.

World War II clearly demonstrated what the amphibious assault could accomplish. In Europe, the tactic represented the only way for American and British soldiers to crack Hitler's Fortress Europe. The geography of the Pacific theater dictated that the war would be one of successive amphibious landings. "While the average veteran of 1914-1918 in France is apt to have trenches and dugouts as his characteristic war memories, his son will be more likely to remember the Second World War in terms

of landing craft and beaches."[2] This statement by an unknown author reveals an absolute truth concerning the conduct of World War II. Almost the entirety of American forces, either in Europe or the Pacific, spent time on landing craft and took part in landings, some of them contested, some not. By 1945, the American Army, Navy and Marines had mastered this intricate operation, turning it into a fine science. This knowledge would continue to serve the United States well during the Korean War, Viet Nam and even into the 1990s, as witnessed when the first American troops entered Somalia in 1993 amphibiously.

If the inherent risks of the amphibious landing are so great, then why has so much emphasis been placed on it in the past. The first answer is that because of the geographical position of the United States in the world, oftentimes the only way American troops can intervene militarily around the world is through the amphibious insertion of troops. The primary reason though can be stated simply as, "One of the great advantages of amphibious warfare . . . is the ability to move great quantities of men and fighting equipment in a surprise strike from the sea faster than the enemy can bring in his reserve ground troops overland to meet the invasion."[3] The idea of skillfully landing a large force where it is not expected is one that has always appealed to military thinkers. It

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[2]Author Unknown, "The Amphibious Angle," Mark W. Clark Papers, Box 3, Folder 4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC (herein cited as MWC Papers, B.#, F.#, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC).

[3]Walter Karig, Earl Barton, and Stephen Freeland, *Battle Report: The Atlantic War* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart Inc., 1946), p. 279.

holds out the possibility of crushing the enemy with little loss to the side carrying out the landing. The Chinese martial philosopher Sun Tzu placed great emphasis on an army's ability to appear where it was not expected in order to disrupt the enemy. This is exactly what the amphibious landing accomplishes. An enemy would be hard pressed to guard the entire length of his coast in an effort to ward off any landings.

This idea is one that has always appealed to the American military establishment. Unlike many European nations, the American public has always had an aversion to high casualties in times of war. American military commanders, because of this, have stressed mobility as the greatest virtue of war. It was only natural then that the amphibious landing would become the favorite project of the United States. As mentioned earlier a long history of American involvement with amphibious operations exists. Over the years, as military historians have looked back on the operational history of the American military, two amphibious undertakings have come into focus, one as a perceived example of failure and the other lauded as the classical example of how an amphibious operation should be conducted.

The amphibious landing at Anzio, Italy on 22 January 1944 has been styled by historians as one of the great Allied failures of World War II. To many it represented the opportunity to shorten the arduous fighting taking place on the Italian peninsula, to help bring a quick end to the war. Some people felt that if Anzio had "succeeded" Germany would have been vulnerable to invasion from the south, making the Normandy landings unnecessary and also cutting off Soviet gains into Eastern Europe. The stigma attached to

the landing has rarely, if ever, been challenged by historians. It has become *de facto* that Anzio was a shambles and represented everything that an amphibious landing should not be. The question that needs to be answered then is whether or not this is a fair interpretation of the events that transpired at Anzio. This paper will argue that the traditional view of Anzio as a military failure needs to be re-evaluated in order to gain a more balanced picture of what took place and the landing's overall impact on the war.

The American/UN landing at Inchon on 15 September 1950 has been hailed as the quintessential amphibious operation. A favorite comparison used by many historians is that of Cannae, Hannibal's classic military victory over Rome in the Second Punic War. Inchon stands as the counterpoint of Anzio, hailed as perhaps the greatest military maneuver carried out by American forces in the twentieth century. Is all of this praise well deserved? Could it be that historians, especially American historians, have tended to over-amplify the impact of Inchon in an effort to give some light to what would otherwise be a very dark war in American history? Much the same as Anzio, the landing at Inchon needs to be re-evaluated. The wholesale praise of MacArthur and Inchon needs to be exchanged for a more balanced and complete picture of what Inchon truly means to American military history. That is the purpose of this study: to compare these two operations in an effort to bring a more balanced picture to the historiography of American military history.

The ramp is lowered. Let's hit the beachhead!

War Strategy in the Mediterranean

The year 1944 opened in the Mediterranean theater with more of a whimper than a bang. The Allied offensives of 1942 and 1943 had ground to a halt in the mountainous terrain north of Naples, along the lines of the Rapido, Garigliano and Liri Rivers, the infamous Gustav Line anchored on Monte Casino. The German forces in Italy, commanded by Luftwaffe Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, had stymied the advance of the U.S. Fifth Army, led by Lt. General Mark W. Clark, on the west coast and the British Eighth Army, directed by General Bernard Law Montgomery, on the east coast. Kesselring's masterful defensive stand in the south of Italy, after the Fifth Army landing at Salerno on 9 September 1943, the day after Italy surrendered to the Allies, convinced Hitler to fight it out rather than withdraw to a defensive line in northern Italy, the so-called Gothic Line, as had been argued by General Erwin Rommel. The Allied offensive had become nothing better than a slugging match up the length of the Italian peninsula with the resourceful German army. This was the military situation that faced American and British planners as the new year dawned.

The United States and Great Britain had been searching for a way to draw German attention from the Eastern Front and the Soviet Union. In Moscow, Josef Stalin pleaded constantly for the opening of a second front in order to alleviate some of the devastating losses the Soviets had incurred in 1941. American military thinkers began to plan for an immediate cross-Channel invasion to strike into the heart of Germany. British planners

argued instead for a more peripheral strategy, opting to wait for a more propitious time to attempt the tricky cross-Channel operation. Something had to be done in order to meet the Soviet demands and the compromise was the Mediterranean theater. Starting with the British victory over Rommel's Afrika Korps at El Alamein and the American landings in North Africa (Operation TORCH) in 1942, the Americans and British began to put their compromise strategy into play. The focus would always remain "[d]iversion of enemy strength from the Russian front as well as from the expected decisive area of operations – the Channel coast – [which] was the basic goal of Allied strategy in the Mediterranean."[4]

The next logical step after the success in North Africa was to gain control of Sicily, thereby helping to insure the safety of Allied convoys passing through the Mediterranean on their way to the Pacific theater. Operation HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily, was carried out on 9 July 1943 and helped place American and British forces in position to invade the mainland of Italy. Providence seemingly smiled on the Allies at this point as Benito Mussolini was removed from his position as Prime Minister by King

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Ernest J. Fisher, Jr., *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations: Cassino to the Alps* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), p. 4. Some works to consult for a general history of World War II include Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), Gerald Astor's three volume oral history *The Greatest War* (New York: Warner Books, 1999), Christopher Chant, *Warfare and the Third Reich* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1998), Len Deighton, *Blood, Tears and Folly* (Edison, NJ: Castle Books, 1993), William L. Shirer's classic *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1959) and Winston Churchill's six volume history *The Second World War* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1948 -- 1953).

Victor Emmanuel III and replaced by the anti-Nazi Marshal Pietro Badoglio, who secretly began talks with the British and Americans concerning the capitulation of Italy. Suspecting that the new Italian government of angling to surrender to the Allies, Hitler secretly ordered German forces in Italy to be prepared to disarm the Italian army and take control over the defensive installations of the country in an effort to oppose any Allied incursion into the Italian mainland.

A day after Italy formally declared its withdrawal from the war as an Axis power, the U.S. Fifth Army, under the command of Lt. General Clark landed at Salerno in southern Italy (Operation AVALANCHE). Many of the American leaders and soldiers had become convinced that their landing would be unopposed because of the Italian surrender and because of the ease of the British landings in the toe and heel of the Italian boot earlier. This was not to be the case. After receiving word of Italy's surrender, Hitler ordered the German armies to implement the disarming of the Italian army and begin an occupation of Italy. The American troops who waded ashore at Salerno were not received by smiling Italians but rather by the German Tenth Army, commanded directly by General Heinrich von Vietinghoff *gennant* Scheel, who was subordinate to Kesselring.[5] The Germans decided not to oppose the landing on the beach but rather to wait for the Americans to move inland some what before unleashing their attack. The effect was devastating. American troops reeled under the withering fire of the German guns and

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[5]The last name may also appear as Vietinghoff-Scheel or Vietinghoff gen. Scheel.

some, including Clark, began to consider the idea of evacuating the Salerno beachhead. Only the timely arrival of reinforcements from Sicily, and a daring night drop by the U.S. 82nd Airborne division, enabled the Americans to insure their survival. Kesselring had delivered a stiff rebuke to the first American attempt to land in Italy. This memory would become a haunting one to the Allied commanders in Italy for the rest of the war. As historian Martin Blumenson commented, "Despite the victory, the Salerno landing left the Allies a legacy that hung like a dark cloud over the entire Italian campaign. Anzio would suffer from it."[6]

Now safely ashore, Clark and his British counterpart, General Bernard Law Montgomery, head of the British Eighth Army, turned their attention to forcing the Germans out of Italy and on the greatest prize of all, the capture of Rome. The main question though was how to go about carrying out this mission? A glance at a map will show that Italy is a country custom built for fighting a defensive war, such as Kesselring planned to do. The mountainous terrain is crisscrossed by steep-banked, rapidly flowing rivers. But the same map also reveals that Italy, perhaps more than any other country in Europe, is also ideally suited for amphibious operations.[7] The Allies enjoyed almost complete naval and air superiority in the Mediterranean theater, two aspects indispensable

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[6]Martin Blumenson, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2001), p. 14.

[7]John T. Hoffman, "The Legacy and Lessons of the Campaign in Italy," *Marine Corps Gazette* 78 (1994): 68.

to carrying out landings from the sea. Allied leadership began to formulate plans almost immediately, looking for ways to bypass Kesselring's stubborn defense of the rough interior terrain. General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean in 1943, stated that "if we get a chance to make a strike behind him (Kesselring) that will hit him more squarely and decisively . . . ,"[8] then the Allies would do so.

It is the two factors of Italian geography and Kesselring's spirited defense that led the Allied command to consider a landing in the vicinity of Rome in an effort either to cut Kesselring off or to force him to evacuate the southern end of the Italian peninsula.[9] The overriding reason, especially in the minds of British military planners, was the need to lessen casualties in what was quickly becoming a very costly campaign in terms of manpower. For the British especially, Anzio was made a possibility by Hitler's decision to accept Kesselring's argument for defending as much of the Italian peninsula as possible, rather than immediately retreating to the north.[10] It was decided that any amphibious operations would be carried out by Lt. General Clark's Fifth Army, which occupied the western end of the Allied line in Italy. Thinking about an amphibious

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[8]Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Press Conference, 23 December 1943. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 3, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[9]*Anzio Beachhead 22 January – 25 May 1944* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990), p. 1.

[10]William Lusk Allen, *Anzio: Edge of Disaster* (New York: Elsevier-Dutton, 1978), p. 24.

landing had not been limited solely to the upper echelons of the Allied command structure. Clark himself had "given the most serious thought to the best means of hastening victory in the next phase of Fifth Army operations, and he considered that it was of critical importance to make an amphibious landing . . . . "[11] Still dangling in front of the Allies lay the prospect of capturing Rome, and it was widely held that the quickest road to Rome lay over the sea.[12]

Planning began in earnest in late October and early November 1943 as the Allies searched for the best spot on the west coast of Italy to make their landing. Attention began to be drawn to the small resort city of Anzio, thirty-five miles south of Rome. Anzio was a place rich in history. It was the birthplace of the Roman emperor Nero and the place where he supposedly fiddled while Rome burned. Historical considerations were likely of no importance to the planners of the landing, who chose Anzio because it "offered suitable beaches for an assault landing. The ports of Anzio and of its sister community, Nettuno, had enough capacity to nourish the men arriving on shore. The relatively open ground of the coastal plain was good for mechanized warfare."[13] This was a great attraction to the Allies who thus far had been unable to take advantage of their decided edge in armor in Italy due to the mountains in which most of the fighting was

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[11]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 21 October 1943, Volume 5, p. 95. MWC Papers, B. 64, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[12]Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark* (New York: Cougdon & Weed, Inc., 1984), p. 151.

[13]Martin Blumenson, "The Trouble With Anzio," *Army* 44 (1994): 41.

taking place. The first official order for the amphibious landing at Anzio appeared in Operations Instruction 31 of the Fifth Army, "Phase III – An amphibious operation south of Rome directed on Colli Lazialli (also known as the Alban Hills), together with a possible airborne landing by an R.C.T. (Regimental Combat Team) . . . . If Phase III takes place it must be timed so that Fifth Army are within supporting distance of the landing."[14] In its rough form, the landing would be primarily a diversionary attack, meant to draw attention away from the focus of the main blow, along the Gustav Line to the south.

As the Allies vainly hurled themselves against the formidable Gustav Line, the landing at Anzio began to become more attractive as a way to end the stalemate. To this end it was reconfigured to have more of an impact rather than just to be a diversion. The final form of the landing took shape in Operations Instruction 32, issued on 2 January 1944, "1. Fifth Army will prepare an amphibious operation of two divisions plus to carry out an assault landing on the beaches in the vicinity of Rome with the object of cutting the enemy lines of communication and threatening the rear of the German 14 Corps."[15] The reasoning behind the decision to launch an amphibious assault at Anzio has been echoed by many writers. John Hoffman wrote, "In an effort to turn the German flank and restore movement to the campaign, the Allied leaders decided to make an amphibious end

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[14]Operations Instruction 31, U.S. Fifth Army, Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 9 November 1943, Volume 5, pp. 123-24. MWC Papers, B. 64, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[15]Operations Instruction 32, Allied Fifteenth Army Group, 2 January 1944. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

run."[16] In their naval history of the Atlantic War, Walter Karig, Earl Barton and Stephen Freeland, seconded Hoffman's idea, "The object of the Anzio landings can be stated simply: to outflank the German Gustav and Adolf Hitler Lines by effecting a landing 55 miles to the rear."[17] Martin Blumenson stressed that besides restoring movement to what had become a static war, the landing would force the Germans to pull out of their defensive lines, thus opening the road to Rome.[18]

Examination of Fifth Army documents reveals that the same sentiment existed among the men charged with planning and executing the landing. One officer wrote, "The Germans can afford only to give ground in the south [the Gustav Line]. Any penetration from the bridgehead will be disastrous as long as he is committed to battle on the Cassino-Garigliano front."[19] Major Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, commander of the U.S. 3rd Division which was one of the two divisions to take part in the landing, wrote, "Before reducing his force opposite the beachhead below what he [Kesselring] considers to be necessary to contain it, he will abandon the defense of the Cassino position."[20] One can

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[16]Hoffman, "The Legacy and Lessons of the Campaign in Italy," 67.

[17]Karig, Barton, and Freeland, *Battle Report: The Atlantic War*, p. 279.

[18]Martin Blumenson, "The Controversial Landing at Anzio," *Marine Corps Gazette* 79 (1995): 69.

[19]Memorandum, U.S. Fifth Army HQ, 1 April 1944. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 6, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[20]Major Gen. Lucian K. Truscott, Notes on Future Operations. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 6, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

see then that the Allies expected the Germans simply to pull out once they recognized the landing for what it was. Very few questioned the validity of this thinking and from the beginning the operation was filled with a false sense of security and high hopes.

Getting permission to attempt the landing was not cut and dried. Inter-service as well as inter-national squabbling almost doomed the operation on several occasions, as will be discussed in the next section. By the time the final go ahead had been given, the planning staff of the Fifth Army had a little less than a month's time in which to prepare the specifics of the operation.[21] Both the American and British navies were the harshest critics of the landing. They felt that there was not enough time to properly prepare for such an undertaking and that the inherent risks to naval personnel and equipment was not worth the price. Clark was most outspoken in his frustration with the naval authorities involved in the planning. "He felt that the naval authorities must come to face the fact that any landing operation was hazardous and that it might have to be undertaken with some risk of failure."[22] This bickering between Navy and Army would be a persistent problem throughout the Anzio operation. After much wrangling and anguish though, the planning staff had completed all of the necessary steps to insure that the landing could at

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[21]Fred Sheehan, *Anzio: Epic of Bravery* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), p. 21.

[22]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 16 November 1943, Vol. 5, p. 135. MWC Papers, B. 64, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

least be launched with a reasonable chance for success. Clark noted the moment in his diary with the simple sentence, "Operation SHINGLE is on!"[23]

Political Strategy in the Mediterranean

Martin Blumenson wrote "Anzio was the result, in large measure, of resentment and conflict between allies. The seed of Anzio was a difference of opinion, and the seed was nourished on a long-term argument."[24] The Mediterranean theater, more so than the Pacific or the Western European, was a source of friction between the American and British general staffs. The two allies, who generally functioned as smoothly as was possible given the situation, could never see eye to eye when it came to fighting Hitler in the Mediterranean. This conflict stemmed from two fundamentally different sets of ideas concerning how each nation perceived the war and its own interests. The United States had always wanted to end the war in Europe as quickly as possible in an effort to shift their focus to the Japanese in the Pacific. For this reason, the Americans focused solely on the one means that would bring about this end. This was a cross-Channel invasion into north-western Europe which would open up an direct route into the heart of Germany. Anything else was viewed by the Americans as being a side-show or distraction.

The British on the other hand did not favor the immediate invasion of Western Europe for several reasons. First, the British empire was running low on men. As a

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[23]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 8 January 1944, Vol. 6, p. 13. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[24]Blumenson, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed*, p. 2.

nation, Great Britain was scraping the bottom of the barrel in order to find replacements in order to keep many of its divisions in the field. British authorities felt that a cross-Channel invasion in 1943 or early 1944 could only result in the utter destruction of what remained of the British army. To this end, the British generals favored operations on the periphery that would keep losses low but still maintain the facade of engaging the Germans in order to appease Stalin. Second, the British viewed the war in terms of their far flung empire. Unlike the Americans, the British had to worry about defending their interests across the globe in terms of the post-war world. The Mediterranean, which for more than a century had been considered a British lake, was an important consideration to London. Because of this, the British pressed for an active campaign in the region as a way to maintain British interests. The third and final reason was a feeling on the part of the British that the Mediterranean represented the one area in the war where they were still on equal footing with the United States and the Soviet Union. By 1943, the British had been forced into the role of a secondary partner by the two emerging superpowers. This did not sit well with the British, especially Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The Mediterranean, and Italy especially, gave Great Britain its last chance to exert any influence on Allied policy.

Another reason for the controversy over the Mediterranean and Italian campaigns is that British units sometimes operated under American commanders and vice-versa. Clark's Fifth Army had a British division under it and would later also control French and Italian troops. This represented a truly allied army. Many historians have viewed this as

one of the main reasons for conflict. "The grinding nature of the Italian campaign," wrote John Hixson, "with its high losses in infantry units, tended to make each Ally wary of exploitation by a foreign headquarters. This feeling, whether true or not, poisoned the atmosphere among the Allies."[25] This was especially true on the side of the British, who viewed their American counterparts as amateurs at the art of war, who took unnecessary casualties when attacking objectives.

Much of this friction though was moderated by General Eisenhower, who acted as Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean (SACMED) from 1942 until December 1943. Eisenhower always went out of his way to insure that the British under him felt comfortable and had as little to complain about as possible. He realized the need to handle men such as Montgomery and Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder with kid gloves, and he made sure his own subordinates knew this. Eisenhower maintained an uneasy peace during his year in the Mediterranean. All of that changed with his transfer at the end of 1943 to become the commander of the proposed Allied landings in France (Operation OVERLORD). His replacement as SACMED was British General Sir Henry "Jumbo" Maitland Wilson, who had been serving as overall commander of British Forces in the Middle East. Put in overall command of the Fifteenth Army group in Italy (consisting of the British Eighth and U.S. Fifth) was General Sir Harold Alexander.

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[25]John A, Hixson, "Operation SHINGLE: Combined Planning and Preparation," *Military Review* 69 (1989): p. 71.

Montgomery was sent to England to command British forces in the cross-Channel invasion. His replacement as head of the Eighth Army was General Sir Oliver Leese.

The importance of this move was grasped by the American command structure in the Mediterranean at the time and subsequently by historians. "One of the consequences of the command changes was to give the British executive direction of the Mediterranean theater, making the theater, in effect, a British province," wrote Martin Blumenson.[26] This thought was echoed by Clark, who would be the American commander most affected by the change in the command structure. In a letter to his mother, he wrote, "The whole Mediterranean theater now, of course, is under British command, for they have the predominant interest in the area."[27] The British immediately made their presence felt. Prime Minister Churchill pressed his commanders to move the Italian campaign, which by this point had become bogged down, into high gear. The conduct of the campaign, in Churchill's estimation had become "scandalous."[28] The idea of an amphibious landing near Rome, which had been shelved in November due to logistical constraints imposed by OVERLORD, was resurrected and seized on by the British. Because of this, it has been perceived by historians that Anzio was a brainchild of the British, who force fed it to the Americans. This view was encouraged by American commanders who wrote items such

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[26]Blumenson, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed*, p. 43.

[27]Mark W. Clark personal letter to Mrs. C.C. Clark, 3 January 1944. MWC Papers, B.3, F.4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[28]Blumenson, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed*, p. 46.

as "[The] decision to attack Anzio was made by Allied C in C in Italy, who was British, on a calculated risk basis."[29] This has come to be a major point in the historiographical debate on Anzio and one that will be discussed in more depth later.

The question as to who would carry out that landing was one of the first topics that needed to be answered. The original planning had called for Clark's Fifth Army to supply the striking force but this did not suit Churchill. He articulated the reasons he wanted the assault forces to be drawn from British resources in the Mediterranean. "I thought the amphibious operation involved potential mortal risk to the landed forces, and I preferred to run them with British troops . . . ," wrote Churchill in his history of the war.[30] Churchill likely made this argument in an effort to preserve British prerogatives in the Mediterranean theater. The logistics of the situation, however, with the American forces supplying the bulk of ships for amphibious operations, coupled with the lack of British manpower settled the issue. It simply made better sense to carry out the attack with Clark's Fifth Army. Churchill did manage to gain a half-victory though in that the landing force would initially consist of one American division, the U.S. 3rd, and one British division, the British 1st.

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[29]Edwin Howard, memorandum, undated. Edwin Howard Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC (Herein cited as EH Papers, B.#, F.#, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC).

[30]Winston Churchill, *The Second World War* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1951), Vol.5, *Closing the Ring*, p. 435.

This decision has been derided by historians for the past sixty years. Differences in tactics and in material and equipment have been cited as the main reasons the idea of putting a mixed force ashore at Anzio was a bad one. The antagonism that existed among the decision makers in the Mediterranean was thought by historians to be evident among the fighting men themselves. This, however, does not seem to have been the case. Noel Moncks, a reporter for the *London Daily Mail*, traveled with the Fifth Army and wrote many pieces on the experience of the common fighting soldier. His stories give a vastly different picture of the situation that existed on the lower levels of the Fifth Army. "Cooperation," he wrote, "is so close and troops [of] both nations [are] so intermingled that it's difficult to believe [the] Fifth Army is anything but a 'one nation' army."[31] Moncks also took a more positive view of the progress of the campaign in Italy than many of his contemporaries. He wrote, "This is the first time that [a] combined British and American army has tackled Germans and [the] fact that men of [the] Fifth Army have pushed the Germans back every yard from [the] beaches to and through [the] mountains is best indication of the success of the experiment of operating [a] joint army."[32] It would seem then that the claim that the combined army approach used in the Fifth Army was a failure does not jibe with other evidence or has been overplayed by historians.

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[31]Noel Moncks, press collect #2 to the *London Daily Mail*, October 1943, p. 1. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 1, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[32]Ibid.

The greatest political obstacle facing the Anzio operation was not the bickering among the theater commanders, but rather the stubborn insistence of the American military not to get sucked into fighting a serious campaign in Italy. As pointed out earlier, the highest levels of the American military structure were placing the greatest emphasis on the cross-Channel invasion. To this end they would not allow anything to interfere with Operation OVERLORD. The big debate occurred over the question of retaining the requisite number of ships in the Mediterranean theater to make an amphibious landing a real possibility. Historian John Ellis emphasized that American inflexibility severely hampered Allied strength in the Mediterranean, especially in the carrying out of amphibious operations.[33] The greatest argument centered on retaining the always important Landing Ship, Tanks (LST). These large ships, designed to transport heavy equipment such as tanks and artillery to landing areas, formed the core of any amphibious undertaking. Planners for Anzio had figured that the minimum number of LSTs necessary to transport the two divisions and the supporting equipment was 88. The timetable for OVERLORD, however, specified that the majority of the LSTs in the Mediterranean would be released to Great Britain by 15 January 1944.[34] Along with OVERLORD, a proposed invasion of southern France (Operation ANVIL, later to be

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[33]John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking Books, 1990), p. 322.

[34]Alfred Gruenther to Mark W. Clark, Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 12 December 1943, Vol. 5, p. 169. MWC Papers, B. 64, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

Operation DRAGOON) complicated the lives of the Anzio planners. Martin Blumenson commented that "not only the timing of OVERLORD, but also the interrelationship of the ANVIL and Anzio operations and the conflict between them – both were to be mounted from resources in the Mediterranean theater – now threatened to eliminate one or the other."[35]

At this point fate again interceded on the side of the Anzio operation. Winston Churchill had taken ill after the Allied conferences at Tehran and Cairo and had been forced to convalesce in Tunis. It was during this pivotal time that the British Prime Minister turned his attention to the details of Anzio. He called together the Allied command group in the Mediterranean on Christmas Day, 1943, to discuss the feasibility of Anzio. At the conference Churchill, through the force of his personality, managed to get the Anzio landing approved. He had gained the agreement of President Roosevelt to maintain the requisite number of LSTs in the Mediterranean until the completion of the operation. Attached to this deal were four: First, nothing would be allowed to interfere with the set date of OVERLORD or the planning for ANVIL. Second, the current buildup of troops in Corsica for ANVIL would continue as planned. Third, there was to be no maintenance (re-supply) of the troops on the beachhead. Fourth, there was to be no

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[35]Martin Blumenson, *United States Army in World War II: The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, Salerno to Cassino* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1969), p. 298.

reinforcement of the beachhead.[36] Churchill, at the urging of the commanders, would later have points three and four changed so that enough shipping could be maintained to re-supply and reinforce the beachhead if necessary.

At the Tunis conference of 25 December 1943 Churchill and others overruled all objections to the landing. Colonel Edwin Howard, Clark's intelligence officer, was sent to deliver the Fifth Army's intelligence report on the proposed landing. Howard recalled that as he rose to give his report, Churchill remarked to Gen. Alexander "Now we'll hear the seamy side of the question."[37] This implies that Churchill considered the intelligence departments, which were not presenting as positive picture as Churchill was, to be pessimists intent on sinking the operation. Interestingly enough, Clark and the man whose corps had been selected to spearhead the landing, Major General John P. Lucas, were not present at the Tunis conference. Clark received word of the results of the conference from his superior, General Alexander, who wired Clark, "High level conference just finished at which following decisions were made firm: A strengthened SHINGLE is to take place during the last week of January. 88 LSTs will be made available which will allow us to mount an amphibious operation of two divisions plus."[38]

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[36]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 2 January 1944, Vol. 6, p. 2. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[37]Edwin Howard, memorandum, undated. EH Papers, B. 1, F. 2, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[38]Sir Harold Alexander wire to Mark W. Clark, Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 25 December 1943, Vol. 5, p. 182. MWC Papers, B. 64, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

With the go ahead given, Clark and the Fifth Army planning staff put together a final plan. It was decided that 22 January would be the best landing date due to tides. The U.S. VI Corps, under Major Gen. John P. Lucas, was selected as the landing force. The VI Corps was made up of the U.S. 3rd Division, commanded by Major General Lucian K. Truscott, the British 1st Division, commanded by Major General W.R.C. Penney, three battalions of U.S. Rangers, a battalion of British Commandos and a RCT of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division. The U.S. 45th Division and most of the U.S. 1st Armored division were to serve as corps reserves. Eventually the British 5th and 56th divisions would see action at Anzio along with the U.S. 34th and 36th divisions. "Thus at Tunis it was decided to hurl amphibious forces into Anzio, come hell or high water," wrote historian Samuel Eliot Morison.[39] The men of the U.S. Fifth Army and U.S. VI Corps had crossed the proverbial departure line and now could only wait and see what the results of their plans and dreams was to be.

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[39]Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II Volume 9: Sicily-Salerno-Anzio, January 1943-June 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1954), p. 325.

Chapter 2

Anzio – The Actors

The Amateur

The conception and planning of the landing at Anzio emerged from many different minds, each placing its own unique stamp upon the operation. This issue is one that historians have used as a point of criticism. Of all the men who have been pointed out by historians as having had a decidedly negative impact on SHINGLE, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill rates foremost in most histories of the landing.

The Anzio enterprise was not the first time that Churchill had dabbled in the planning of an amphibious operation. During his tenure as First Lord of the Admiralty during World War I, Churchill had been one of the primary thinkers behind the ill-starred landings at Gallipoli in 1915. On that occasion British, Australian, New Zealand and French forces to knock Turkey out of the war, by forcing open the Dardanelles, thus allowing shipments of supplies to reach imperial Russia through the Black Sea. Unfortunately, the planning and execution of the campaign lacked in many areas and after a year of stalemate, the Allied forces were withdrawn from Gallipoli. Churchill, more than any other public figure was blamed for the debacle and has subsequently been derided by historians for his role in that affair as well as his role in Anzio.[1]

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[1]Works to consult on the Gallipoli landing include Alan Moorehead's *Gallipoli* (New York: Harper Books, 1956) and John Masefield's *Gallipoli* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1916). Works to consult on Winston Churchill's life include William

Churchill's preoccupation with amphibious operations stemmed in part from his view of European affairs. Like many British statesmen, Churchill viewed the Mediterranean as an important component of British policy and thus he devoted much of his thought to insuring that Great Britain would remain the predominant power in the Mediterranean. Personally, Churchill had always been fascinated by what could be termed a "soft underbelly" approach to fighting in Europe. He held to the idea that an invasion from the south, via the Mediterranean, was a viable approach to winning a land war on the mainland of Europe. These two factors are what contributed to his wholesale approval of Anzio and his frantic work to insure that the operation got off the ground.

As mentioned in the preceding section, the political ramifications of the Mediterranean campaign were ones that oftentimes overtook the strategic necessities of the war. For Churchill, Anzio offered the opportunity for British arms to capture that crown jewel of Italy, Rome, and hence be able to reestablish itself on somewhat equal footing with the United States and the Soviet Union. In his diary, Clark documented why he thought Churchill had leapt at the chance of resurrecting Anzio: ". . . at the meeting with the Prime Minister in Tunis on Christmas Day [1943] when General Eisenhower, General Alexander and others were present, the Prime Minister had been inspired with a

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Manchester's *The Last Lion* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1983) and Trumbull Higgins' *Winston Churchill and the Second Front, 1940 – 1943* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1974). Continued from page 25.

desire to capture Rome and had determined that SHINGLE would take place."[2] One writer stated this point in a less flattering way, seeming to frame Churchill in the mantle of self-interestedness: "He [Churchill] wanted to seize Rome to prevent the OVERLORD cross-Channel invasion from permanently forcing the Italian campaign out of the spotlight."[3] Martin Blumenson, no great lover of Churchill and his meddling in the Anzio planning, offered this simplistic reason as to why Churchill supported SHINGLE; "The seizure of Rome, Churchill decided, would restore British preeminence among the Allies. The best way to Rome was through Anzio."[4]

If this then was the case, why would the other Allied leaders, Roosevelt and Stalin, have allowed Churchill to try to dictate the direction of the war, a direction that had already been decided on at the Tehran and Cairo conferences of 1943? The truth is that they did not just step aside and allow Churchill free rein. Randolph Churchill, the Prime Minster's son, revealed this in an interview with the *Chicago Times* in 1946. He stated that, "He [Winston Churchill] ordered and helped plan the entire Anzio campaign, against the protests of Mr. Roosevelt and other Allied leaders."[5] Only the fact that the

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[2]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 4 January 1944, Vol. 6, p. 7. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[3]Ronald W. Sassman, *Operation SHINGLE and Major John P. Lucas* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, 1999), p. 4.

[4]Blumenson, "The Trouble With Anzio," 43.

[5]Randolph Churchill interview in *Chicago Times*, 2 April 1946. MWC Papers, B. 39, F. 1, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

United States was still not fully prepared for the cross-Channel invasion in early 1944 insured that the Prime Minister had the cooperation of President Roosevelt. Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, a BBC correspondent at Anzio, later wrote in defense of Churchill that "A student of the Anzio operation cannot dismiss 'Shingle' out of hand as 'one of Mr. Churchill's Dardanelles schemes.'"[6] While some historians would make the comparison between Gallipoli and Anzio, the dissimilarities between the two make any such comparison null and void. While Churchill did indeed play an important role, to argue that the entire success or failure of the operation rests on him is somewhat unfair.

On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore the fact that Churchill did influence the operation. In a letter to Clark, Churchill urged speed as the greatest necessity of the landing, arguing that "it would be even better to start with three-quarters on the 22nd than with full numbers on the 28th or later."[7] Many students of SHINGLE have cited Churchill as the main force in securing the removal of Maj. General Lucas as commander of VI Corps in March 1944. In fact, Clark commented on the fact that it was Churchill's impatience with the progress of VI Corps that finally forced General Alexander to ask for Lucas's dismissal. Clark felt that Churchill was content to run the course of the battle

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[6]Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, *Anzio* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1961), p. 16.

[7]Winston Churchill personal letter to Mark W. Clark, 8 January 1944. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

from #10 Downing Street without a care for "tactical or logistical reasons."[8] In the United States, where Churchill's reputation was perhaps even greater than in Great Britain, only Anzio sullied that popularity. Newspapers across the nation echoed the sentiments of the of the *New York Herald-Tribune* which carried a front page story placing the blame for what was seen as the Anzio fiasco squarely on Churchill's shoulders.[9] The role that Churchill played is in some ways a mystery. To what extent can he be blamed for Anzio? Does he need to be blamed for Anzio at all as this implies that the mission was a failure? The answer may never be provided but as long as Anzio is written about, Churchill's figure will loom large over the debate.

The American Eagle

The United States was seemingly blessed with an inordinate amount of military talent during World War II. Men such as Eisenhower, Patton, Bradley, Marshall, MacArthur, and Nimitz have come to symbolize military excellence and the strength of the American war machine during World War II. Some American figures are often overlooked in the general public's memory, or perhaps overshadowed is a better word. One such man was Lt. General Mark W. Clark. Nicknamed "the American Eagle" by Churchill, Clark spent 1942 to 1945 running the U.S. Fifth Army in Italy. To historians,

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[8]Mark W. Clark Personal Diary, 27 January 1944, Vol. 6, p. 47. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[9]Alfred Gruenther personal letter to Mark W. Clark, 23 January 1946. MWC Papers, B. 39, F. 1, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

however, especially those with a keen interest in the Italian campaign, Clark is at best a controversial figure. He was a man praised and denounced, both by the men serving under him and by the press. William Lusk Allen commented that "General Clark's personality as a leader draws both criticism and praise; as with many things in wartime, there was an intense polarization of feelings – good and bad."[10] Ralph Lacy, who served under Clark in the Fifth, and later went onto to a seat in the Senate, wrote in a 1987 article, "I never liked Mark Clark. I hate that god-damned Clark and I don't care who knows it. His blunder put us into Anzio where we were quickly surrounded by superior German forces with advantageous ground positions."[11] This hatred of Clark is balanced by many men's unabashed praise of their general. One soldier told British journalist Noel Moncks that he liked Clark because "the boss thinks quick and moves quick."[12]

A fractured image of Clark has come down through history as regards his role in the Anzio planning. One view presents Clark as a whole-hearted supporter of the operation. Many felt that he wanted to capture Rome in an effort to enhance his own personal glory. Evidence for Clark's support of the operation is shown in a letter to Winston Churchill in which he wrote, "I am delighted with the opportunity of landing SHINGLE operation. I have felt for a long time that it was the decisive way to approach

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[10]Allen, *Anzio: Edge of Disaster*, p. 48.

[11]Ralph Lacy, "The Italian Campaign Through V-E Day," *Rendezvous* 22 (1987): 77.

[12]Noel Moncks, press collect #1 to the *London Daily Mail*, October 1943, p. 1. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 1, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

Rome."[13] But was this Clark's true feeling? Perhaps not. Martin Blumenson has argued that Clark took on the Anzio operation because his superiors, Eisenhower and Marshall, were urging him to get Rome as quickly as possible in an effort to insure the Italian campaign was wrapped up before OVERLORD.[14] Another point to consider is that Clark did not put up a fight when Anzio was initially cancelled in late November 1943. In fact, it was Clark who, as commander of the Fifth Army which would execute the landings, urged the operation be scrubbed. "I reluctantly recommend cancellation of Operation SHINGLE in early January," Clark wrote. "By adhering to date of January 15 for release of craft, Operation SHINGLE would if executed be based on an arbitrary data rather than on the tactical situation."[15]

It needs also to be pointed out that Clark felt that the Allied forces in Italy could outhit Kesselring's forces and by sheer weight force the Germans to retreat from the Gustav Line. He stated on more than one occasion that the Fifth Army was more than willing to slog its way up the peninsula if it had to.[16] In the beginning, Clark viewed the landings as merely a diversion, much as had been outlined in Operations Order 31 of 9

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[13]Mark W. Clark personal letter to Winston Churchill, 11 January 1944. MWC Papers, B. 3, F.4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[14]Blumenson, "The Controversial Landing at Anzio," 71.

[15]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 18 December 1943, Vol. 5, p. 175. MWC Papers, B. 64, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[16]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 4 November 1943, Vol. 5, p. 115. MWC Papers, B. 64, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

November 1943. He felt that the main thrust still had to be focused on the Gustav Line.[17] Anzio, in Clark's estimation, was never going to be as cut and dried as Churchill and his staff had prophesied. Clark worried that Churchill, in his effort to insure that the operation took place, traded away valuable resources to fulfill his own personal desires. This was particularly true concerning the compromises that Churchill had made regarding the shipping levels to be maintained in the Mediterranean to supply the Anzio landing forces. "One of my worries was the matter of support of the Anzio landings . . . ," Clark revealed, "My margin of safety for the Anzio landings was not a comfortable one."[18]

The leadership of Mark W. Clark is difficult to argue with. He may not have inspired the same devotion in his men as some other American leaders and he may not have garnered the laurels that others commanders did. But when the conditions that Clark fought under are taken into consideration, he must be seen as one of the unheralded American heroes of World War II. Clark enumerated these difficulties after the war, writing, "All of my battles in Italy were tough ones, complicated by many nationalities fighting side by side and with an Allied command set up, by inadequacies of men and material and by an offensive mission in rugged mountainous terrain against an enemy of

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[17]Hoffman, "The Legacy & Lessons of the Campaign in Italy," 67.

[18]Mark W. Clark quoted in *Fifth Army Attacks on Gustav Line Italy January 1944*, pp. 3-4. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

equal strength."[19] Clark carried out the Anzio landing because it was his duty as a soldier to do so. A reading of his personal correspondence reveals that he had a certain ambivalence towards the operation but he set out to implement it with all of his energy. The fact that he and his staff were capable of implementing the strategy with the material allotted and in the short amount of time available is a success story unto itself.

The Unknown Commander

Many of the figures involved with the landing at Anzio stand out for one reason or another. This is not the case with General Sir Harold Alexander, head of the Fifteenth Army Group in Italy, who has often been overlooked. In the command structure, Alexander was Clark's superior and in many ways the most senior ranking officer in the Italian campaign that dealt with the war on a tactical level. After Eisenhower's departure to head the cross-Channel invasion, Alexander had hoped to be raised to the position of SACMED but that position went to Gen. "Jumbo" Wilson, a point which may have contributed to Alexander's support for the Anzio landing. He felt that it represented a way for himself to gain the fame that had thus far eluded him in Italy.

In his study of Anzio, Carlo D'Este seems to place more importance on Alexander as one of the original planners of Anzio than many historians have. He states that the

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[19]Mark W. Clark, teletype conference, 1 February 1946. MWC Papers, B. 39, F. 1, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

"original architects were Eisenhower and Alexander."[20] While Eisenhower had envisioned the possibility of an amphibious operation to speed the campaign up, Alexander had a much more definitive vision of a landing in the vicinity of Rome. Many of the important decisions made concerning the landing were formulated by Alexander and handed down to Clark to implement. The issue of the target date for the landing is one example. Alexander, backed by Churchill, settled on the date of 22 January 1944 to carry out the landing due to the favorable tides around Anzio. This however, severely limited the amount of time the VI Corps would have to carry out a practice landing, which was pointed out to Alexander. He simply stated that the landing would be on 22 January regardless of the impact on the practice landing.[21]

Alexander also pushed for the landing force to be made up of British as well as American forces. His reasoning for this seems very similar to Churchill's. Both men openly stated that they favored the mixed force because "of the fact that it was a somewhat hazardous adventure and heavy casualties might be expected . . . it was desired that the casualties be shared by British and American divisions lest some undesirable reactions occur at home."[22] In reality Alexander wanted British troops to take part in the

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[20]Carlo D'Este, *Fatal Decision: Anzio and the Battle for Rome* (New York: Harper Collins Books, 1991), p. 72.

[21]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 9 January 1944, Vol. 6, p. 14. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[22]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 27 December 1943, Vol. 5, P. 183. MWC Papers, B.64

(continued...)

capture of Rome to increase both British and his own personal prestige. Most of the American commanders suspected as much and this caused a deepening sense of mistrust between Alexander and Clark as well as Alexander and Lucas. This would have a unfortunate impact on the Anzio operation.

That sense of mistrust went both ways. During the course of the operations, Alexander came to believe that many of his directives were either being altered by Clark or simply ignored. One of the most important directives, from Alexander's viewpoint, was his order that as soon as the beachhead had been secured, Lucas should immediately head inland, in the direction of the Alban Hills. This stemmed from Alexander's view of the landing as the main thrust of the Allied offensive in the winter of 1944. Clark, on the other hand, initially saw the landing as the opposite, a diversion for the main thrust in the south.[23] It is now widely agreed that Clark did indeed alter Alexander's order because he felt that to force Lucas to follow a rigid order would only doom VI Corps to the inevitable German counter-attack. In the words of Blumenson, he "did not want to commit the Corps to a single unalterable line of action."[24] The conflict between Alexander and Clark would have a deep impact on the battle at Anzio as well as symbolizing on a microscopic level the disagreements that existed in the Italian theater between the two allies.

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[22](...continued)
Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[23]Blumenson, "The Controversial Landing at Anzio," 70.

[24]Blumenson, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed*, p. 55.

The Scapegoat

No other figure connected to Anzio has drawn as much attention and had as much written about him as Major General John Porter Lucas, commander of the Allied VI Corps. On his head has fallen the brunt of the historical finger pointing for the perceived failure of the Anzio operation. Lucas had a distinguished service record in the Italian campaign until Anzio. He was a personal favorite of both Eisenhower and Patton. His temperament was quiet, introspective. Perhaps because of his personality, Lucas has come across as being overly cautious and non-aggressive. This is an image which has filtered down through the various traditional historiographical interpretations of Anzio and in some ways has become accepted as the truth of who John Lucas was.

Examples of this traditional view abound in the literature. Historian Christopher Chant cites as one of the reasons he feels SHINGLE was a failure was the "caution of the first Allied commander at Anzio, General Lucas, whose road to Rome was wide open on 22/23 January."[25] No less a figure than Winston Churchill has primarily been responsible for this image of Lucas. In his memoirs, Churchill wrote, "But now came disaster, and the ruin in its prime purpose of the enterprise. General Lucas confined himself to occupying his beachhead and having equipment and vehicles brought ashore."[26] Churchill once remarked that he had hoped the Allies were "hurling a wildcat ashore" but

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[25]Christopher Chant, *Warfare and the Third Reich* (New York: Barnes and Nobles Books, 2000), p. 230.

[26]Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 481.

instead had only dumped "a beached whale" on the coast.[27] Churchill continued to insist that Lucas had failed in his mission. Lucas had achieved surprise, argued Churchill, but had failed to take advantage of it. Churchill felt this was due to Lucas' "Salerno complex," which Churchill felt many of the American commanders in Italy suffered from.[28] The attacks by the Prime Minister would eventually lead to Lucas' removal as commander of VI Corps, a point which only served to heighten the tensions between American and British commanders in Italy.

Fortunately, recent historians have undertaken the task of rehabilitating Lucas' reputation. It has been pointed out that many of the planners of the Anzio landing felt that if anyone could succeed in the operation, than Lucas was the man.[29] Defenders of Lucas have come to the fore arguing that the idea that VI Corps could have raced to the Alban Hills and then onto Rome is laughable. Clark recorded such a thought in his diary, "allegations that he [Lucas] could have gone to his objective or to Rome were ridiculous for had he done so with any force he would have been cut off from his bridgehead."[30] This point is one that historians have seized on to defend Lucas. John Tharp argued that

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[27]Hoffman, "The Legacy and Lessons of the Campaign in Italy," 69.

[28]Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 487.

[29]Allen, *Anzio: Edge of Disaster*, p. 43.

[30]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 16 February 1944, Vol. 6, p. 84. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

no way existed for Lucas to drive on the Alban Hills without being cut off.[31] Others have argued that the size of the forces on hand could not have undertaken such an operation. To have done so would have extended an already tenuous position to the breaking point and would have led to a swift defeat for VI Corps and Lucas.[32]

Many of Lucas's contemporaries agreed with his course of action at Anzio. General George C. Marshall stated "that for every mile of advance there would be seven more miles added to the perimeter" and that Lucas had acted wisely in refraining from doing so.[33] Lucas himself was always a loud defender of his actions on the beachhead. He felt that the Alban Hills were completely outside of his reach and he knew that the German army excelled in cutting off exposed troop positions.[34] Many historians would now agree with William Breuer's estimation that "Authoritative evidence has mounted over the years that General Lucas acted with tactical prudence."[35] Others have discussed additional points that lessen the attacks of Lucas's critics. One important fact to bear in mind is that during the critical planning sessions for SHINGLE, Lucas had to play the

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[31]John J. Tharp, "Anzio – A Sedentary Affair," *Marine Corps Gazette* 68 (1984): 61.

[32]Sassman, *Operation SHINGLE and Major John P. Lucas*, p. 10.

[33]Blumenson, *Anzio: The Gamble That Failed*, p. 140.

[34]Morison, *History of the United States Naval Operations in World War II*, p. 353.

[35]William B. Breuer, *Agony at Anzio: The Allies Most Controversial and Devastating Assault Behind Enemy Lines* (New York: Jove Books, 1985), p. 277.

role of watcher while those above him formulated the plans. The man who would actually carry out the attack had very little say in the form that the landing took.[36]

Lucas, unlike many of his superiors, did not share the wholesale optimism concerning the landing. He lamented this fact time and time again and was always pointing out to his superiors that he truly believed that the Germans could build up their forces surrounding the beachhead by land faster than he could build up his forces by sea.[37] Lucas constantly pointed what he saw as the shortcomings of the plan to his superiors who chose to ignore him. One of his most pressing concerns was the fact that there would be almost no time for a proper practice. It was "politics, the desire to capture Rome for nonmilitary reasons" which dictated the schedule of the landing in Lucas's estimation.[38] Another feature which is just now being discussed is the impact of the Allied decryption of German codes (ULTRA) on SHINGLE and Lucas. By 1944 the Allies had become very adept at breaking the German Enigma codes and the information provided often proved the difference between victory and defeat for the Allies. Because of this, the maintenance of the secrecy of ULTRA was of primary importance. To this end, only the most senior level officials were allowed access to the decoded German

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[36]D'Este, *Fatal Decision*, p. 96.

[37]Martin Blumenson, "General Lucas at Anzio," in Kent Roberts Greenfield, ed., *Command Decisions* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, U.S. Army, 1960), p. 341.

[38]Gerald Astor, *The Greatest War* (New York: Warner Books, 1999), vol. 2, *D-Day and the Assault on Europe*, p. 125.

messages. Lucas was not in this elite company. Carlo D'Este points out "a postwar study of Ultra's impact reveals that VI Corps often *overestimated* German troop strength."[39]

A new picture of Maj. General Lucas has emerged that gives a more balanced depiction of the man who for so long has served as the whipping boy of historians. Lucas can not and should not be blamed for any perceived failure at Anzio. He, like many commanders before him and since, did what he thought was best to insure the survival of his men. It is possible that Lucas could have done something more to insure that the Anzio battle took a course different from the one which it did. It seems then that a final estimation of Lucas given by Ronald Sassman is both fair and accurate: "General Lucas was probably not the best choice to lead the Anzio landing. Nevertheless, he took what would prove to be the best course of action to deal with the circumstances in which he found himself and VI Corps."[40]

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[39]D'Este, *Fatal Decision,* p. 145. Italics added.

[40]Sassman, *Operation SHINGLE and Major John P. Lucas*, p. iii.

Chapter 3

Anzio – The Play Itself

An Unexpected Surprise

"Never before in World War II had such a large-scale endeavor taken place with so many involved in its planning and execution so divided over its objectives and so pessimistic about its outcome," wrote historian Flint Whitlock in describing the start of the landing operation.[1] The invasion fleet sailed out of the Naples Bay on 21 January, setting a course for Sardinia in an effort to try to hide the invasion force's true destination from the Germans as long as possible. Amazingly, the fleet never spotted any German reconnaissance plans on its journey to Anzio. Bad weather and Allied air power had severely limited the Luftwaffe's ability to fly any such mission by 1944. As the fleet made the turn in course to head for Anzio, Wynford Vaughan-Thomas, who was with the troops, wrote that in all minds, the specter of Salerno and the trap the Germans and set for them there weighed heavily on most minds.[2] Maj. General Lucas also had Salerno on his mind and to this end he had shifted the emphasis of the landing away from what he saw

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[1]Flint Whitlock, *The Rock of Anzio: From Sicily to Dachau – A History of the 45th Infantry Division* (Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1998), p. 138.

[2]Vaughan-Thomas, *Anzio*, p. 1.

as reckless movement to a more defensive minded stance in order to insure survival in case there was a repeat of Salerno.[3]

In the early morning of 22 January, American and British troops began slowly to make their way ashore. There had been no traditional pre-landing bombardment of the beaches in order to gain as much surprise as possible. No one, however, was ready to accept what happened as the first waves of men hit the beaches. Lucas, waiting offshore, wired a report to Clark stating, "PARIS BORDEAUX TURIN TANGIERS BARI ALBANY BT B," which decoded spelled out, "Weather clear, sea calm, little wind, our presence not discovered. Landings in progress. No reports from landings yet."[4] Those first reports stated only one word. Nothing. No sudden hail of fire from the beaches. Could it be that the Germans had been caught napping? Milton Lehman, writing for *Stars & Stripes*, reported, "We heard that the first wave had landed with no resistance and that the second wave followed them in. The men didn't put too much faith in the news. They feared a trap."[5] But the amazing had happened. The landing force had gained total surprise! As the British poured ashore on Peter Beach to the west of Anzio and the

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[3]Blumenson, *Anzio, The Gamble That Failed*, p. 56.

[4]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 22 Janaury 1944, Vol. 6, p. 37. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[5]Milton Lehman, "Yank Landing Forces Found Beach Too Quiet For Comfort," *Stars & Stripes*, 25 January 1944, p. 4. MWC Papers, Press #4, Vol. 7, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

Americans at X-Ray Beach to the east of the town, there were no sizeable German forces to be found.

How had such a large landing force managed to go unnoticed by the Germans? Why were they not waiting to repel the Allies the moment that the first Allied soldiers set foot on the beaches around Anzio as at Salerno? Some historians hold that the Germans placed too much trust in the few natural obstacles around Anzio, such as shallow sand bars off the coast.[6] Other reports showed that according to Italian civilians in the area, the Germans had never really paid that much attention to Anzio, thinking it too small to support any sizeable landing force.[7] Some historians have pointed out that Anzio was left undefended because of events to the south, along the German Tenth Army front on the Gustav Line. An unknown intelligence officer wrote, "[t]he extent to which the coastline was defended relied on the military situation on the Tenth (Ger.) Army Front. If an Allied offensive caused an emergency on the southern front, new units were dispatched from northern Italy. They were replaced by battle weary units and this tended to weaken the coastal defense."[8] It also helped that the intelligence sections of the U.S. Fifth Army and VI Corps had done superb jobs in figuring out German strength and dispositions in

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[6]Karig, Barton, and Freeland, *Battle Report: Atlantic War*, p. 282.

[7]Don Whitehead, "Italians Tell How Coastline Was Negated," *Cincinnati Times-Star*, 24 Janaury 1944. MWC Papers, Press #4, Vol. 7, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[8]"The German Operation at Anzio," p. 6. Charles D'Orsa Papers, Box. 1, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC (Herein cited as CDO Papers, B.#, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC).

the Anzio area. The "seamier side" of the operation, to borrow from Churchill, played a large and important role in the immediate success of the landing. As Edwin Howard wrote, "No one could ever hope to have better information about the enemy than we had at that period."[9]

The Germans tried to cover the fact that they had been caught by surprise. Out of Stockholm, German spokesmen intimated that the Allies had been allowed ashore and that at any moment the German forces in the area would spring a trap in order to destroy a large portion of the invasion force.[10] It was not until after the war that the Allies got a definitive answer as to why the Germans had not been ready for the landing. Field Marshal Kesselring stated in an interrogation, "The reason for our surprise as to its time and place when it finally occurred was that after two false night alerts I allowed myself to be persuaded during the third night (22 January) to give the troops a rest."[11] It seemed that all of the cards were going the way of the Allies.

By the morning of 23 January, the majority of American and British troops were ashore and the two ports at Anzio and Nettuno were safely in Allied hands. It is at this moment that the first debates over the success of Anzio occur. Lucas had managed to get

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[9]Edwin Howard, memorandum, undated. EH Papers, B.1, F.2, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[10]C.R. Cunningham, "5th Reported Athwart Appian Way," *Washington Daily News*, 25 January 1944, p. 3. MWC Papers, Press #4, Vol. 7, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[11]Albert Kesselring, Answers to Questionnaire Submitted by HQ, USAF, undated, p. 4. EH Papers, B. 1, F.11, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

all of his fighting men ashore along with their material. How would he take advantage of this situation? Churchill hoped that "the full fighting strength of the expedition" would be focused immediately on the capture of the Alban Hills and Rome.[12] Alexander and his Fifteenth Army Group staff also pushed for immediate action, cabling Lucas that the "momentum of advance must be maintained at all costs to the limits of our resources."[13] Lucas did not rush headfirst inland. Instead, he turned his attention to the harbor at Anzio, to insure that his precious lifeline from across the sea would be maintained. Lucas, it would seem had won the race of the invasion, "a race between two opponents, each of whom is trying to rush more troops than the other to the battlefield."[14] Kesselring had ordered any and all units in the vicinity to cordon off the landing zone until better suited units could be brought from elsewhere to deal with the threat. But for now, all seemed in favor of the Allies.

Praise for the landing was immediate and widespread. This would only help to contribute to the idea that the landing was a failure later on. "It is the greatest offensive achievement recently by the Mediterranean command," touted the *Wichita Beacon*.[15] One writer held that the landing "had all the elements of a brilliant primary success" and

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[12]Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 446.

[13]Operations Instruction 34, Allied Fifteenth Army Group, 12 January 1944, p.2. MWC Papers, B.3, F.4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[14]Blumenson, *Anzio, The Gamble That Failed*, p. 14.

[15]"A Master Stroke of Strategy," *Wichita Beacon*, 23 January 1944. MWC Papers, Press #4, Vol. 7, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

another argued that "it was one of the finest exemplifications of the classic flanking movements in military history."[16] Overshadowed by these declarations of triumph and self-congratulation, a few writers dared to point out that the battle was only just beginning and that the Germans were still capable enemies. A editorial in the *St. Louis Star-Times* cautioned readers against "over-confidence and over-evaluation of the achievement. There are still plenty of good German fighting men in the way of the Allied armies." Another writer pointed out the fact that "It is not going to be an easy march to Rome . . . . Hard, bitter fighting lies ahead, with the desperate Germans disputing every inch of the way once they get organized."[17]

Becoming organized was exactly what the Germans were doing as they sorted out their defensive alignment around Anzio. Intelligence officers in Fifth Army HQ began to piece the picture together and what they saw was the beginning of a German counter-attack. To this end, Clark wired Lucas, rescinding his earlier orders to move inland, and instead ordered Lucas to "consolidate your beachhead and make suitable dispositions to meet an attack."[18] Lucas was already ahead of Clark on this thinking and had ordered his

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[16]Col. Frederick Palmer, "Acting Stupid Fooled the Nazis," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, 26 January 1944; "Italian Strategy," *Bakersfield Californian*, 24 January 1944. MWC Papers, Press #4, Vol. 7, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[17]"Landing in Italy," *St. Louis Star-Times*, 24 January 1944; "Time for Plunge," *Bayonne* (NJ) *Times*, 27 January 1944. MWC Papers, Press #4, Vol. 7, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[18]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 4 February 1944, Vol. 6, p. 64. MWC Papers, B. 65,

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men to make ready to receive the expected German counter-thrust. Harold Macmillan, an advisor to Churchill, wrote prophetically from London, "We are all very hopeful, though we dare not hope too much. We know from experience that the critical time is three or four days after a landing, when the counter attack comes."[19] Macmillan's timing was off, but his feeling that the counter-attack was imminent was not. By 2 February, Kesselring had gathered an imposing force around the beachhead and was prepared to wipe out the Allies on the sandy shores around Anzio.

Counter-Attack

As January drew to a close on the Anzio beachhead, a communique circulated among the men of the Allied VI Corps reminding them that "it must be expected the enemy will [use] utmost efforts to counteract this threat."[20] The American and British soldiers digging into the beach knew deep down in their bones that this would be the case. As mentioned earlier, Field Marshal Kesselring had ordered all available units in the vicinity of Anzio to hold a line around the beachhead till better equipped units could arrive. Units from northern Italy, southern France, Yugoslavia and Germany were rushed to the beachhead. Arriving piecemeal they were fed into the lines creating what has been

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[18](...continued)
Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[19]Harold Macmillan, *War Diaries: Politics and War in the Mediterranean, January 1943 – May 1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984), p. 369.

[20]Record Background to Today's Special Communique, 28 January 1944. MWC Papers, B.3, F.4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

described as a hodgepodge defensive structure. Allied intelligence had its first great failing in the late days of January and early days of February. They felt that there was no way the Germans could rapidly reinforce the area around Anzio, especially when Allied air superiority was taken into account.[21]

Two problems arose which helped the Germans to prove the Allied intelligence branch wrong. The first was the overconfidence exhibited by the Allies in their air capabilities. It was not the German Luftwaffe which stymied the Allied air forces but Mother Nature and doctrinal differences between the Army and Army Air Corps (AAC). Jack Foisie, a reporter with *Stars & Stripes*, reported that "The recent low weather ceiling has hurt the Allied cause. Not only has it kept Allied fighter-bombers and medium bombers off German targets but it has also kept reconnaissance planes from checking on enemy troop movements."[22] The second weakness in the Allied air strategy was an inability by the Army and AAC to agree how to go about attacking the Germans. Lt. General Clark and the Army argued for the AAC to act as close ground support for their troops. The AAC pushed for a strategic bombing campaign to isolate the battlefield, concentrating on railroads and bridges. Clark vented his frustration to this personal diary,

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[21]*Anzio Beachhead 22 January – 25 May 1944* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1990), p. 6.

[22]Jack Foisie, "Germans Stiffen Defense of Rome," *Stars & Stripes*, 2 February 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 8, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

writing "I am disappointed in the air effort," and "Air force thought they could stop enemy move up and 'isolate' bridgehead area – they failed to do it."[23]

The second major element that proved Allied intelligence wrong was the efficiency and determination of the German army under Kesselring. Although devoid of air support and lacking the firepower of their opponents, the German army in Italy had developed the art of ground warfare into a fine science.[24] Kesselring had long suspected that the Allies would attempt an amphibious landing in an effort to bypass his defensive line to the south. In order to counter this threat, Kesselring had designed his rear defenses as a great mobile reserve force, capable of quick deployment where necessary.[25] Kesselring's defensive philosophy for dealing with any amphibious incursion was to block with what forces were in reserve. He never planned to remove forces from along the Gustav Line, which had been a major reason for the launching of SHINGLE in the first place. It is an unfortunate truth of war that oftentimes the enemy does not respond as one would expect. Kesselring proved no different.[26]

By the beginning of February, Kesselring had elements of 14 separate divisions in place to launch his counter-attack. His aim was simple: to split the British and American

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[23]Mark W. Clark, Personal Diary, 7 February 1944, Vol. 6, p. 69. MWC Papers, B. 65, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC. (The second quotation appears in a hand written note between pages 36 - 37 in Vol. 6 of Clark's diary.)

[24]Blumenson, *Anzio, The Gamble That Failed*, p. 29.

[25]Tharp, "Anzio – A Sedentary Affair," 62.

[26]Author unknown, *Anzio Beachhead,* p. 10.

forces and drive them into the sea. Hitler himself had ordered that the Anzio "abscess" be lanced. The Führer helped to plan the major attack of early February and ordered Kesselring to spare nothing in his efforts to wipe out the beachhead. Why was so much emphasis placed on this objective? It had become obvious that Kesselring could hold a defensive line for some time both along the Gutstav Line and the beachhead. Why risk failure? One writer of the time thought that "It is now apparent that for Germany the fighting around Anzio is of tremendous psychological importance. Berlin sees an opportunity here to gain a success which can be magnified to bolster the morale of the punch-drunk German people."[27] Martin Blumenson has also advanced the idea that Hitler hoped a victory at Anzio would force the Allies to postpone their planned invasion of north-western Europe.[28] Both ideas are credible and help explain why this battle was of such importance to Hitler and Berlin.

The counter-attack opened on 16 February as the Germans feigned an attack on the American-held portion of the beachhead line and launched the main weight of their attack against the seam where the British and American forces met. Their initial assault was devastating. British forces were forced to fall back, which in turn forced the American forces to change their lines so as not to leave their flanks exposed. Using infiltration tactics at night, the Germans at first caused havoc with the Allies. "Wounded

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[27]"Bad News," *Flint* (MI) *Journal*, 11 February 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 8. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[28]Blumenson, *Salerno to Cassino*, p. 419.

men, who had returned from the scene of this fighting, described their comrades as 'swarming over the tanks and killing the Germans inside with anything from hand grenades to pistols, regardless of their own lives.' It probably has been the bloodiest fighting since the landings," wrote one war correspondent.[29] After some days though, the American and British soldiers grew more adept at stopping these night infiltrations and Kesselring also made the tactical mistake of launching daylight attacks over the open fields around Anzio. Allied artillery chewed up the Germans as they surged forward. The destruction was horrible, reminding many of scenes from World War I. From Berlin, Hitler ordered the attack to be continued, but there would be no more offensive operations from Kesselring's forces. The loss in men made it impossible to follow up on the early successes and to this end a stalemate settled over the plains and hills around Anzio as both sides dug in to lick the wounds of the heavy fighting. The VI Corps had "battered the morale of some of the finest Nazi troops" but had barely survived itself.[30]

Stalemate

An editorial writer for the *Pueblo* (CO) *Chieftain* pronounced in April 1944 that "Stalemate is the only word that can be applied to the Anzio beachhead."[31] In the

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[29]Reynolds Packard, "Yanks Jump on Nazi Tanks, Blow Up Selves and Enemy," *Baltimore Sun*, 16 February 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 8. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[30]Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1950), p. 310.

[31]"It's a Stalemate at Anzio," *Pueblo Chieftain*, 8 April 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 9.

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aftermath of the VI Corps' offensive of late January and the German Fourteenth Army's offensive of February, both groups had seemingly hit the wall. Neither had the manpower nor the will to launch a major operation during the late winter and early spring months. An uneasy peace settled over the Anzio beachhead, punctuated by sharp skirmishes and artillery duels. Anzio had become, in effect, "a soldier's nightmare."[32] By April close to 100,000 Allied troops were bunched into an area roughly fifty miles in diameter. The famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle wrote that never before had he seen a war zone as congested as Anzio.[33] Men and material were piled into the beachhead to build up for the eventual breakout. When that would come no one was sure. To complicate matters further, Maj. General Lucas had been relieved of his command on 22 February and replaced by Maj. General Lucian K. Truscott, Jr., commander of the U.S. 3rd Division.

A history of the campaign during this two-month lull lacks much of the action of the previous two months but in many ways these times were the toughest for the Allied soldiers on the beaches at Anzio. The Italian weather proved to be as harsh an enemy as the Germans, tormenting the Allied troops with freezing temperatures, sleet, snow, and mud. To top all of this, the landscape at Anzio had come to resemble a World War I

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[31](...continued)
MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[32]Charles F. Marshall, *A Ramble Through My War: Anzio and Other Joys* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), p. 28.

[33]Ernie Pyle, "It Ain't No Picnic," Washington *Daily News*, 30 March 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 9. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

battlefield, with trenches zig-zagging across the plains and a shell-hole scarred no-man's land between the Allies and Germans. It was most definitely a "grim time."[34] Perhaps the worst enemy at times was boredom. The routine of holding the beachhead became for many unbearable, with the only excitement coming from the occasional German artillery piece or the stray Luftwaffe fighter. The men did what they could to entertain themselves but they all knew their hold on the beachhead was tenuous.[35] Many are amazed at the tenacity exhibited by the American and British soldiers at Anzio. Charles Marshall, a veteran of the battle, explained that it was really quite simple: "We had no alternative to a spirited defense. Our backs were to the sea. There was no place to retreat to. It was more than nail biting time. It was literally, stand or die."[36] This is exactly what the men at Anzio did.

The period of stalemate is important in the historiographic debate over Anzio because it was during this time that much of the criticism of the slow progress made by the VI Corps surfaced. At home, charges that the landing had been a mistake and that the Allies had blown the opportunity appeared in newspapers and began to circulate among the higher Allied military circles. The men on the beach knew that people back home

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[34]John MacDonald, *Great Battles of World War II* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1986), p. 112.

[35]Karig, Barton, and Freeland, *Battle Report: The Atlantic War*, p. 285.

[36]Marshall, *A Ramble Through My War*, p. 53.

were "referring to the attack as 'too little, too early.'"[37] In many ways the attacks on Anzio by second guessers was an attack on the whole conduct of the Italian campaign. The focus of the critics was often Lt. General Clark, whose Fifth Army was still pinned down by the Gustav Line. Clark, writing to his mother, defended himself by writing, "I decry some of the armchair strategists who publish their views as to how things should have been done without knowing any of the surrounding conditions. I can assure you that we have accomplished all that could have been expected."[38] Could the stalemate have been avoided, as some critics argue, had VI Corps taken a more aggressive stance earlier on?

The traditional answer is "yes" but a recent trend among historians of the Anzio campaign perhaps gives a better answer to the question. Many of these writers have placed a greater emphasis on the relationship between the beachhead and the campaign to the south, against the Gustav Line. These historians base their arguments on often overlooked writings from the time that make a similar argument. "The chief trouble with the Allied beachhead south of Rome, and its lack of progress," one newspaperman

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[37]Daniel DeLuc, "'It's Worse Than Salerno', Yanks Say of Anzio Bridgehead Battle," *Baltimore Sun*, 5 February 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 8. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[38]Mark W. Clark to Mrs. C. C. Clark, 27 February 1944. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 5, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

argued, "lies fifty miles to the south, in and around the holy city of Cassino."[39] An official account of the campaign against the Gustav Line produced by the Fifth Army openly admitted that failure to pierce the German lines of defense contributed to the course of the Anzio battle.[40] Samuel Eliot Morrison, the great naval historian of World War II, offered the precise observation that "defeat on the Rapido doomed the Anzio beachhead to a long stalemate, if not to failure."[41] This interpretation is one that must be kept in mind when discussing why the Anzio battle took the shape that it did and in any argument over the success of failure of the campaign. To put Anzio into a vacuum, devoid of any connection to other events, is both shortsighted and poor judgment.

Breakout

As April melted into May, the quiet that had dominated the front around Anzio continued. It was so quiet in fact that many of the top German commanders were allowed to travel to Germany for rest. The Allies however were busy preparing for the long awaited breakout through both the Gustav Line and the beachhead. Along the Gustav Line, General Alexander had ordered the moving of the British Eighth Army west from the Adriatic to focus as much power as possible on the German lines. At Anzio, Truscott

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[39]"Battle of the Beachhead," *Abilene* (TX) *Reporter News*, 10 February 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 8. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[40]U.S. Fifth Army, *Fifth Army Attacks on the Gustav Line, Italy, January 1944*, pp. 15-16. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 4, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[41]Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, p. 333.

was told to wait until the breakthrough had occurred to the south before launching his own attack in what was hoped to be a massive pincer movement. It was now that the true importance of the beachhead became apparent to the upper echelons of the Fifteenth Army Group. Martin Blumenson has commented that "From a tactical point of view, the beachhead offered a base for offensive action in probably the most favorable terrain in Italy, certainly better than anywhere along the Cassino front. Furthermore, an attack from the beachhead would strike against the most vital point in the German defensive system, their lines of communication."[42] The battle in Italy was no longer in the hands of Kesselring and the Germans. Instead the Allies, by building up such a large force at Anzio where almost 100,000 men lined the beaches by May, had in effect opened up a "miniature 'second front' against Kesselring" that would prove decisive when the attacks against Cassino occurred.[43]

The details of the battles along the Gustav Line lie outside the scope of this thesis but suffice it to say that the Allied forces, spearheaded by the French Expeditionary Corps and the Free Polish Corps, pierced the Gustav Line in several places. This forced Kesselring to order a retreat to a line north of Rome. As the U.S. Fifth Army and British Eighth Army surged behind the retreating Germans, Truscott's VI Corps finally launched its own offensive on 23 May which gained an quick initial advantage over the Germans

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[42]Blumenson, *Anzio, The Gamble That Failed*, p. 159.

[43]Chant, *Warfare and the Third Reich*, p. 240.

but was soon slowed down by the prepared defenses the Germans had erected during the two month lull for just this instance. Unable to fully cut off the retreating Germans, as General Alexander had hoped to do, Clark ordered Truscott to shift the focus of his attack from the north-east to the north-west in an effort to get to Rome before the Germans. This change in plans has been one of the many decisions made by Clark that has been second guessed and attacked. Overlooked in the discussion that raged between Clark and Alexander over the change was the linkup of the beachhead and the Fifth Army. A special communique was released by the Fifth Army headquarters to celebrate the event. It stated that "Patrols from the Fifth Army main front made contact with patrols from Fifth Army allied bridgehead force in the early morning of 25 May."[44] The battle of Anzio had officially ended. On 4 June, the first elements of the U.S. Fifth Army entered the Eternal City. Only two days later, the events in Italy were overshadowed by the Normandy invasion.

It was during the drive to Rome that full significance of the Anzio landing could be appreciated. The drive of the U.S. Fifth and British Eighth armies were given added impetus by the vast amounts of material and men that were already waiting in the beachhead. This helped to lessen the needs for resupply and allowed the Allies to push

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[44]U.S. Fifth Army HQ, Special Communique, 25 May 1944. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 6, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

faster than Kesselring could imagine.[45] Anzio did indeed prove to be the springboard needed to capture Rome. Clark wrote that the whole campaign of the VI Corps at Anzio was a "momentous occasion" where the men of the United States and Great Britain had proved themselves equal to the task set before them, no matter what the odd.

Final Analysis – Anzio

The debate over the success of failure of Operation SHINGLE represents the main point of historiographical significance. If the landing had been an unqualified success, however that may be defined, then most likely there would be little or no historical discussion of the landing. Historians have made Anzio the historical event that it is today. Without the traditional historiographical view of the landing as a failure then there would be no need for revision. But that is not the case. A brief synopsis of some of the various reasons traditional historians have viewed Anzio as a failure should be reviewed. This will be followed by counter-arguments, as to why Anzio was not a failure and indeed was a success.

Almost any history of Anzio will include a sentence similar to this one, written by historian Susan Godson: "Another amphibious operation at Anzio, designed to help the sagging ground war, nearly failed."[46] Generally these sort of all encompassing condemnations are used to explain Anzio. There are few monographs on the landing

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[45]Karig, Barton, and Freeland, *Battle Report: The Atlantic War*, p. 285.

[46]Susan H. Godson, *Viking of Assault: Admiral John Leslie Hall, Jr., and Amphibious Warfare* (Washington D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), p. 107.

which forces many historians of World War II to accept the universalist position that Anzio was a failure, without examining the subject in depth. Even the prominent military historian John Keegan, in his authoratative history of World War II, treats Anzio in this fashion. In a few brief sentences in a lengthy chapter about the war in Italy and the Mediterranean, Keegan writes Anzio off as a carnival-like sideshow that was not worth the Allies effort. Lack of in-depth study of Anzio and all of its intricacies counts as the first major obstacle to getting a more balanced picture of what the landing truly means in a historical context.

A second point of criticism of the Anzio landings is the idea that it was a stopgap operation. Ralph Lacy wrote that "The Italian campaign was a make-shift operation commanded by a very poor general and a very poor general staff. . .".[47] This is an idea that permeates many writers thinking on Anzio. It can be argued that they are confusing the speed with which the operational plans were produced with sloppiness on the part of Clark and the Fifth Army staff. As pointed out earlier, plans for an amphibious landing had been circulating among Allied headquarters since late October 1943. That Clark and his staff had such a short amount of time in which to produce the actual operating plans is no fault of their own. Rather the brunt of the blame should fall on the higher American command structure, who let themselves be ruled by the adherence to the OVERLORD timetable. This is what gave Anzio the facade of being a hastily put together plan.

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[47]Lacy, "The Italian Campaign Through V-E Day," 78.

A third, and the most traditional attack is the idea that the landing, which achieved total surprise, should have hastened the breakthrough of the Gustav Line. John Hixson wrote, "The reason for the controversy is simple; SHINGLE had the potential to break the stalemate on the Italian front and maybe even capture Rome, but it failed to achieve either."[48] The first point of contention with this line of reasoning is that it places Anzio in a void, totally without connection to other events. As argued earlier in this paper, Anzio had an important connection with the battles along the Gustav Line. The failure of the Fifth Army to quickly breakthrough the Gustav Lines hampered Anzio but did not cause any "failure". Martin Blumenson wrote that "Precisely what the landing was supposed to accomplish was never fully clear."[49] If this then is the case, it would seem writers such as Hixson, who view Anzio as having definite goals, are on shakier ground than they had originally thought. Blumenson's point is valid to some degree. The main difference revisionist historians have with him though rests not on the fact that the goals of Anzio were unclear but rather that two men, Clark and Alexander, had two separate views of what the landing was to be and both thought that their vision was the proper one. This helps explain the sort of vagueness that surrounds Anzio when talking about its "goals."

A fourth point of criticism revolves around the technical shortcomings of the landing, which admittedly there were many. The first was the failure of Allied air forces

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[48]Hixson, "Operations SHINGLE: Combined Planning and Preparation," 64.

[49]Blumenson, *Mark Clark*, p. 170.

to fulfill their promises to Clark and to the VI Corps. Their inability to cut off the Germans at Anzio contributed to the speed with which the German army cordoned off the area.[50] Many writers have argued that the original size of the landing force, two divisions, was insufficient to carry out the landings. One newspaper stated that the landing either "should have failed in the beginning or the landing force should have moved quickly inland . . .".[51] Again, the fact that the operation was limited by the OVERLORD timetable and the unwillingness of the American command structure to become involved in hard fighting in Italy must be kept in mind. The 88 LSTs available to the Fifth Army could only carry the two divisions. It was that or nothing. While some writers would argue that nothing would have been better, it must be argued that to not have made the landing would have significantly retarded the progress of the Allied armies in Italy. This would have doomed the Fifth and Eighth armies to a perpetual standoff along the Gustav Line.

Another technical aspect that receives a great deal of attention is the choice of landing spots. Many writers have viewed the geography around Anzio as being "unwisely chosen."[52] The fact that the Allies become bottled up in the low coastal plains

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[50]Astor, *The Greatest War,* p. 130.

[51]"At Anzio," *Colorado Springs* (CO) *Gazette*, 8 March 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 9. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[52]Luigi Villari, *The Liberation of Italy 1943-1947* (Appelton, WI: C.C. Nelson Publishing Co., 1959), p. 96.

surrounded by the Germans can be explained by three factors. First, the inability of the Allied air forces to carry out their promise to seal off the landing zone from the Germans. Second, the memory of Salerno lingered in many men's minds as the VI Corps waded ashore at Anzio. It is very easy from hindsight to argue that they should have charged inland but to be among the men at that moment, would give one a different viewpoint. Third, and finally, there was the weather, which was the single greatest enemy of the Allies at Anzio. It hampered the air force, it hampered the Allies use of armor, their one great strategic advantage, and it dampened Allied morale. Men were forced to live in foxholes which filled with water as quickly as they were dug and the freezing winter could hardly have been tolerable to live outdoors in.

These points represent some the traditional reasons why historians have argued that SHINGLE failed. This thesis offers an alternate viewpoint as to why Anzio succeeded. In many instances historians have offered reasons to view Anzio as a success without ever fully developing these points. It is hoped that these various thoughts can be made into a cohesive defense of SHINGLE. After all, as Carlo D'Este, a critic of the landing, admits in his book, "There was nothing wrong with the basic conception of SHINGLE."[53]

A great many writers have accused the critics of SHINGLE of not being able to view the landing in its own time. Too many historians and military writers have had the

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[53]D'Este, *Fatal Decision*, p. 401.

luxury of hindsight to prove what should and should not have taken place at Anzio. To say that Lucas should have rushed inland to the Alban Hills in the first few days after the landing is to say what that writer would have done and to ignore the facts that faced Lucas in January 1944. William Breuer supplies a scathing condemnation of these critics of Anzio when he wrote, "Much of what has been written and said was either self-serving, based on error, or theory which can never be tested. Armchair generals found it easy to isolate what went wrong at Anzio and offer magical tactical solutions – with the aid of infallible hindsight."[54] Breuer is right in his refuting of the traditionalist take on Anzio. The unspoken animosity that existed between the American and British commanders in the Italian campaign went a long way towards fueling the fires of controversy over Anzio. In World War II historiography there is a very evident split between the American and British views of Anzio. In American accounts of the campaign, the British are viewed as the instigators of the operation and vice versa in British accounts.

Writers of the time were also able to contribute sound defenses of Anzio. The *Columbus Citizen* carried an editorial which stated, "It seems to us that much of the criticism of the Italian campaign is uninformed and unfair. Granted that military and political mistakes have been made, nevertheless all four main objectives have been achieved."[55] This article is important because it readily admits that mistakes were made

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[54]Breuer, *Agony at Anzio*, p. 276.

[55]"Reverses in Italy," *Columbus* (OH) *Citizen*, 9 February 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 8.

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at Anzio but asserts that those mistakes in no way led to a failure of the landing. This covers any possible charges that those present at the battle created excuses to cover up the perceived flaws of the campaign. An editorial in the *Milwaukee Journal* states that it is "entirely futile to speculate on what might have happened 'if.'"[56] The importance of this statement is the simple fact that the great weight of criticism leveled against SHINGLE is based on the great "what if" question. Using this tactic, one is capable of arguing against even the most dearly held of historical ideals.

A second reason why Anzio must be thought of as a victory is the contribution the landing made to ending the stalemate on the Gustav Line. Critics argue that if this were the case then the stalemate would have ended much sooner. This is not the case. First, the German troops used to bottle up the VI Corps at Anzio could very easily have been used to stop gaps in the Gustav Line, a more easily defended position than the cordon around Anzio. Second, the speed with which the German front collapsed after the Allied breakout from Anzio tends to lend credence to this idea. Again, as has been stated earlier, Anzio and the Gustav Line campaign must be viewed as two parts of the same operation and not as two separate campaigns. As written in a memo from the VI Corps G-4 section (Intelligence) to the Fifth Army G-4, "The wisdom of this flanking attack was fully

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[55](...continued)
MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[56]"Grim News From the Anzio Front," *Milwaukee* (WI) *Journal*, 8 February 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 8. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

revealed when a combined attacks against Cassino and from Anzio was made . . . ."[57] The existence of the beachhead forced Kesselring, in effect, to extend the front at Cassino some fifty miles to his rear. Also, the beachhead severely disrupted the German lines of communication as they were forced to shift inland, away from the danger of a possible Allied breakout at Anzio. This severely hampered Kesselring's ability to conduct his defensive campaign in the south.[58] Wynford Vaughan-Thomas provides a very suitable summation to this argument. He wrote, "Without the breakout from Anzio the Italian campaign would have remained a costly, frustrating slog through the mountains."[59]

Perhaps the greatest reason for arguing for the success of Anzio goes back to the idea of not viewing the campaign in a void. The impact of Anzio on other Allied operations is the greatest success story of the beachhead. Primarily, OVERLORD and the Soviet offensives along the Eastern front in 1944 benefitted from the Allied presence at Anzio. Writers have commented on this feature, even from the time of SHINGLE. J. D. Sulzberger, a reporter with the *New York Times* wrote that, "This second front is indubitably aiding both the Russian advances and the western invasion potentialities by forcing the Germans to commit some of their best divisions and drain their shrunken

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[57]Daily report from advance G-4 section at Anzio to Fifth Army G-4, p.1. Ralph Tate Papers, Box 1, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC (Herein cited as RT Papers, B.#, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC).

[58]Addition to Background released by Public Relations Section, U.S. Fifth Army, 25 May 1944. MWC Papers, B. 3, F. 6, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[59]Vaughan-Thomas, *Anzio*, p. 235.

reserves on the virtual eve of the climactic spring."[60] Hamilton Howze, who served in the U.S. 1st Armored Division at Anzio, related that the primary importance of Anzio lay in the fact that it occupied the attention of a sizeable contingent of the German army in Europe, not just Italy.[61] In the final count, some twenty-seven German divisions were used in containing the VI Corps at Anzio. A standard German division generally held between 12,000 and 14,000 men, although by this point these numbers were generally lower, somewhere between 9,000 and 11,000 men. Still, this represents a sizeable force. Imagine if these men had been available on the beaches at Normandy or along the line of the Vistula? History may well have taken a very different turn. But they were not there. They were at Anzio, pinning down a force which barely numbered over 100,000 at its peak.[62]

In the end Anzio was a great success because the Allies won. In war the aim is to win. By inflicting casualties on the Germans, thereby draining their precious manpower reserves, holding down a significant number of German troops, battering the already poor morale of the German military, and forcing Germany to fight on a third front after OVERLORD, SHINGLE was a success. Much of the criticism of the battle has been fueled by national animosities and writers who have too often relied strictly on what they,

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[60]J.D. Sulzberger, "Italian Campaign Saps Foe in the West," *New York Times*, 7 March 1944. MWC Press #4, Vol. 9. MWC Papers, Citadel Archives, Charleston, SC.

[61]Astor, *The Greatest War*, p. 211.

[62]Allen, *Anzio: Edge of Disaster*, p. 242.

with the aid of the passing of years, would have done. It can only be hoped that a more balanced view of the campaign will one day become the dominant historiographic view, instead of the widely held belief that exists today. To sum up the tale of Anzio is difficult so it is perhaps fitting that Winston Churchill, a man partly responsible for the landing and the furor that exists over it today, supplied the ending. He wrote, "Such is the story of the struggle of Anzio; a story of high opportunity and shattered hopes, of skillful inception on our part and swift recovery by the enemy, of valour shared by both."[63]

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[63]Churchill, *Closing the Ring*, p. 496.

Chapter 4

Inchon – The Setting

War Strategy in Korea

The years between 1945 and 1949 saw a massive demobilization program undertaken by the United States. A virtual monopoly on atomic weapons had given the nation a sense of security that allowed for a massive scaleback of all branches of the military service with the exception of the now independent United States Air Force. Especially hard hit was the Marine Corps. Many military and political thinkers espoused the idea that atomic weapons had made large scale amphibious operations a thing of the past. By 1949, almost the whole of American conventional forces were directed towards defending Western Europe. In the Far East, the loss of China and the development of a Communist regime in North Korea did nothing to stir the American military to buttress U.S. forces in the region. On the contrary, "[i]n 1949, despite knowledge of a North Korean military buildup, the United States withdrew its two Army divisions stationed in South Korea because the Korean peninsula was outside of the United States' strategic interest in the Far East."[1] The only evidence of an American presence was a skeletal

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[1]Eric D. Sweeney, *The United Nations Landing at Inchon: Operation Chromite* (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 2000), p. 1. Some works to consult for a general history of the Korean War include Clay Blair's *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950 – 1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), William Stueck's *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), Richard Whelan's *Drawing the Line! The Korean War 1950 – 1953* (Boston: Little, Brown &

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force assigned to occupation duty in Japan under the overall command of General Douglas MacArthur.

The year 1949 wrought a great change in American Far Eastern policy though. The detonation of an atomic weapon by the Soviet Union and the triumph of Mao Tse-Tung's Communist forces in China helped to stir some discussion in the halls of the Pentagon as to American readiness. The truth as to how unprepared the United States was to meet a threat was revealed on 25 June 1950, when the North Korean People's Army (NKPA) launched a surprise invasion across the 38th parallel in an attempt to re-unify the peninsula under the Communist regime of Kim Il Sung. The NKPA borrowed heavily from the Soviet Red Army, who at the time was the staunchest supporter of North Korea. The NKPA was modeled on the Soviet Army and relied heavily on the T-34 tank, which had been the mainstay of the Red Army in World War II.[2] The idea that the North Koreans were lightly armed mobs that could be swept aside by American force was quickly proven wrong. MacArthur, having visited the battlefront in South Korea, wrote that, "It is now apparent that we are confronted in Korea with an aggressive and well trained professional army equipped with tanks and perhaps other ground material quite

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[1](...continued)
Co., 1990), John Toland's *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950 – 1953* (New York: William Morrow & Co.,1991), and Bevin Alexander's *Korea: The First War We Ever Lost* (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1986).

[2]Ibid., p. 2.

equal and in some categories superior to that available here."[3] MacArthur was authorized to deploy all available American forces in the region to aid the South Koreans who were being overrun. This act had little impact on the advance of the NKPA though. By early September, the U.S. Eighth Army in Korea (EUSAK) under the command of General Walton Walker was clinging tenaciously to a small plot of land surrounding the port of Pusan at the southern tip of the Korean peninsula. MacArthur faced not only the loss of an army but also of the peninsula which could be used as a springboard for an invasion of Japan, which the United States could not allow.

To this end, MacArthur turned to his past to come up with a solution to the dire emergency now facing the American forces inside the Pusan perimeter. As the leading Army general in the Pacific theater during World War II, MacArthur had made his reputation on the back of the amphibious assault. He now turned these years of experience to his advantage and began to plan in July 1950 an amphibious assault that would strike a devastating blow against the NKPA. However, the quick collapse of Walker's Eighth Army and its subsequent retreat to Pusan forced MacArthur to feed the troops he had wanted to use for the landing into the perimeter.[4]

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[3]Douglas MacArthur, General Headquarters, Far East Command, Memo #C57379, 7 July 1950. MacArthur Memorial Archives, Record Group 6, Box 9, Folder 4, Norfolk, Virginia (herein cited as MMA, RG.#, B.#, F.#, Norfolk, VA).

[4]Karig, Cagle, and Manson, *Battle Report: The War in Korea*, pp. 88-89.

MacArthur did not give up on his idea of an amphibious end-run to destroy the NKPA. He realized that Korea offered, just as Italy had, "extensive opportunity for amphibious employment."[5] By early September MacArthur had settled on the point where he wanted to deliver his knock out punch. Situated about twenty miles to the southwest of Seoul, the capital of South Korea, was the port of Inchon. MacArthur realized that due to geography, the NKPA was forced to run all of their supply lines and lines of communication through Seoul. A landing at Inchon followed by a rapid advance on Seoul would cut these lines and the NKPA would wither on the vine. MacArthur's strategic vision was encapsulated in Plan 100-B, the operational directive for the Inchon landing, "Forces of the FEC (Far East Command) and assigned forces of the United Nations will land on D-Day in the Inchon area and seize the communication center of Seoul in conjunction with a continuation of the attack in southern Korea in order to cut off and destroy NK forces south of Seoul."[6] To carry out the landing, MacArthur created the X Corps, under the command of his chief of staff Lt. General Edward "Ned" Almond. The X Corps would consist of the Army 7th Division and the 1st Marine Division. To complement the landing at Inchon, MacArthur also ordered General Walker to launch an attack out of the Pusan Perimeter in order to tie down enemy forces there and stop any

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[5]Douglas MacArthur, GHG, FEC, Memo #C57553, 10 July 1950. MMA, RG. 6, B. 9, F. 4, Norfolk, VA.

[6]Operation Plan, Commander-in-Chief Far East (CINCFE), No. 100 B. MMA, Papers of Lt. General Edward M. Almond, RG. 38, B. 5, F. 1, Norfolk, VA. (Hereafter cited as EMA Papers).

flow of reinforcements north to Inchon.[7] If all went according to plan, MacArthur hoped the landing at Inchon would be "a decisive and crushing blow."[8] MacArthur, though he had a high initial opinion of the NKPA, had a higher opinion of his own sense of strategy. He was convinced the landing would result in the virtual disintegration of the NKPA. In his mind, there was no possibility of failure.[9] The landing, even if the possibility existed that the X Corps would be outnumbered by three to one, had to be undertaken so as to not "commit us to a war of indefinite duration, of gradual attrition and of doubtful result."[10]

MacArthur's optimism, however, was not shared by all. Historian R. D. Heinl wrote that "Few military operations in history have been as strenuously opposed as Inchon."[11] People on MacArthur's own staff, even Almond, at first were skeptical of MacArthur's plan. Many felt the two divisions were insufficient and worried of possible Soviet moves towards an undefended Japan, denuded of all American military units.[12] Chief of Staff of the Army, General Omar Bradley, nominally MacArthur's superior,

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[7]Wilson A. Heefner, "The Inchon Landing, "*Military Review* 75 (1995): 69.

[8]Douglas MacArthur, GHQ, FEC, Outgoing Message # C58473, 23 July 1950. MMA, RG. 6, B. 9, F. 4, Norfolk, VA.

[9]Douglas MacArthur, GHQ, FEC, Memo # C62423, 8 September 1950. MMA, RG. 6, B. 9, F. 4, Norfolk, VA.

[10]Jeffrey A. Bradford, "MacArthur, Inchon, and the Art of Battle Command," *Military Review* 81(2001): 84.; Douglas MacArthur, GHQ, FEC, Memo # C62423, 8 September 1950. MMA, RG. 6, B. 9, F. 4, Norfolk, VA.

[11]R.D. Heinl, "Inchon," *Marine Corps Gazette* 51 (1967): 124.

[12] H. Pat Tomlinson, "Inchon: The General's Decision," *Military Review* 47 (1967): 29.

stated that he thought Inchon to be "the riskiest military proposal" he had encountered.[13] For many in the American command structure with World War II experience, the memory of the perceived failure at Anzio caused worries about the possible repercussions of a landing at Inchon.[14] The most imposing obstacle to undertaking Operation CHROMITE, as the landing had been named, came from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who were always very hesitant to approve the landing outright in case of a repeat of what had supposedly occurred at Anzio.[15]

Adding to the list of detractors were a number of men in the Army, Navy and Marines who pointed out all the geographical flaws of Inchon. The port at Inchon has one of the highest tide ranges in the world ranging from three to thirty-one feet. Vast mud flats, which appear at low tide, surround the bay stretching out from the coast for thousands of feet. The approach to Inchon consists of a narrow channel with an extremely fast current. The approach is also dominated by the island of Wolmi-do, which the North Koreans had heavily fortified to ward off any possible attack. "In the words of Almond, Inchon was 'the worst possible place we could bring in an amphibious

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[13]Richard Whelan, *Drawing the Line: The Korean War, 1950-1953* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1990), p. 188.

[14]Max Hastings, *The Korean War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987), p. 100.

[15]D. Clayton James, *Command Crisis: MacArthur and the Korean War* (Colorado Springs, CO: USAF Academy, 1982), p. 8 ; Korean Institute of Military History, *The Korean War*, vol. 1 (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), p. 598.

assault.'"[16] The Navy especially was quick to point out the various difficulties that any landing force would encounter. There were no open beaches on which to land troops but rather American forces would be forced to clamber over sea walls, some standing eight to ten feet tall, and then the fact that the assault was being made directly into a city went against all amphibious doctrine. It was feared that the North Koreans could easily convert the numerous warehouses and residences into mini-forts that would bog down the landing, allowing time for North Korean reinforcements to arrive.[17]

Also plaguing MacArthur's planning was the lack of intelligence on the port itself. Though it had been used by the Army at the end of World War II, it was discovered that no trustworthy tidal charts existed for Inchon. Estimates of North Korean forces varied somewhat, but the generally accepted estimate was that 1,800 to 2,500 enemy troops garrisoned in the immediate area around Inchon and the city itself.[18] Another problem that threatened the operation was the lack of any secrecy. It became a well known fact that the American forces were planning an amphibious operation against the NKPA. Dock workers in the ports in Japan where the X Corps was assembling were thought to be potential communist spies. The North

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[16]Heefner, "The Inchon Landing," 67 ; HQ, X Corps War Diary Summary, p. 4. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, b. 3, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

[17]General Staff Summaries, G-4 Section, X Corps, p. 3. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 3, F. 2, Norfolk, VA.; Karig, Cagle and Manson, *Battle Report: The War in Korea*, p. 163.

[18]Heinl, "Inchon," 47 ; Heefner, "The Inchon Landing," 71.

Koreans had no need for spies though. As historian Robert Leckie pointed out, "As the Inchon invasion plan progressed, it became known among Tokyo newsmen as 'Operation Common Knowledge.'"[19]

Despite all of these drawbacks, in the end MacArthur's determination to land at Inchon won out. Securing the approval of President Truman and the Joint Chiefs, MacArthur then turned his focus upon convincing his staff of the wisdom of his choice. It did not take long for a change to take place among the men of the Far East command. By the first week of September, MacArthur had an operational plan in place and had begun the process of pooling the necessary troops to carry out the landing. It was still a waiting game, but in MacArthur's mind, the North Koreans were already beaten and the game had been won.

Political Strategy in Korea

The political situation surrounding Operation CHROMITE was multi-faceted. Several key factors played a role in shaping the operation and also influenced the subsequent outcome that CHROMITE had on the Korean War. International and domestic considerations went hand in hand with inter-service questions of primacy. The single most important political factor that had to be considered was the result the landing at Inchon would have on the international scene. North Korea stood to lose badly if MacArthur's plan succeeded. How would the Soviet Union and Communist China react

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[19]Robert Leckie, *Conflict: The History of the Korean War, 1950-1953* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1962), p. 131.

to the possibility of an American-led UN invasion across the 38th parallel designed to wipe out Kim Il Sung's government? For many in Washington, there was a distinct sense that MacArthur was "getting ready to bite off more than the United States could chew."[20]

The possibility of Soviet or Chinese intervention was one that was taken quite seriously by American policy makers. It was a well known fact that Soviet air force pilots, who acted as "volunteers," were flying combat missions for the North Koreans. Would a reversal of NKPA fortunes lead the Red Army to cross the border into North Korea to repel any UN attack? Some thought yes and some thought no. Stalin still ruled the Soviet Union and was as inscrutable as ever. There were those who thought that he would be willing to risk a global war in Asia but this view was not taken by many of the Eurocentric thinkers in the State Department, who held that Europe was the main sphere of Soviet interest. This was essentially the case. Stalin contented himself with offering North Korea military aid and allowing some Soviet air force personnel to take part in the war. The Chinese reaction was a wholly separate question. Contact with Beijing was sporadic at best in the late 1940s and early 1950s as Mao consolidated his power. Further complicating the issue was the problem of Formosa (now known as Taiwan), recognized by the United States and the United Nations as the legitimate government of China. This served as a serious sticking point in American-Chinese relations. MacArthur was quite outspoken in his dislike for Communist China, going as far as to make unauthorized

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[20]James F. Schnabel, *United States Army in Korea: Policy and Direction: The First Years* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1972), p. 149.

visits to Chiang Kai-Shek in Taipei to promise American aid in the event of a communist invasion. These two important points were not hidden by Washington either. In a memo sent to MacArthur's headquarters in Tokyo, they were clearly spelled out, "If the amphibious operation now in progress in Korea are [sic] successful, it is **likely** that in the very near future there will be either (1) Soviet or Chinese Communist direct intervention . . . .".[21] The answer to this question would only come after the success of CHROMITE.

A second point to discuss is CHROMITE's impact on the United Nations. The Korean War represented the first major challenge to the institution. How it was handled would go a long way towards ascertaining if the UN was a second coming of the League of Nations or a legitimate international peacekeeping entity. The North Korean invasion was condemned by the UN and in a Security Council vote, at which the Soviet representative was absent, it was decided that the UN member nations would supply the necessary force to throw back the North Korean aggressors. With the initial success of the NKPA, it seemed as though the UN was doomed to the same fate as its predecessor. The landing at Inchon changed all of this. One newspaper editorial argued that, "The striking victory won by MacArthur in Korea will probably do more to build up the United Nations as an instrument for maintaining peace than any other thing."[22] There is no

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[21]GHQ, FEC, Memo #W92083, 21 September 1950. MMA, RG. 6, B. 9, F. 5, Norfolk, VA. (Emphasis added.)

[22]"The Genius of MacArthur," *Kansas City Star*, 29 September 1950. MMA, RG. 25, F. 5, Norfolk, VA.

arguing that Inchon seemingly legitimized the UN as a peacekeeping force in the world's eye. The immediate diplomatic impact of CHROMITE was a flurry of activity between the UN / Western bloc and the Communist bloc through the intermediation of India.[23] There is an interesting corollary to this point. While CHROMITE and the war in general strengthened the UN in western eyes, it discredited it in the eyes of the Communist bloc. The Soviets and Communist China viewed the UN as a proxy for their western opponents.

One of the important domestic considerations that the landing at Inchon influenced was the debate over the future of the American military. As stated earlier, there was a growing sentiment in the United States that the next war would be one fought in the air with atomic weapons. To this end, the idea of the Army, Navy and most especially the Marines, whom President Truman genuinely disliked, had been labeled as obsolete and insignificant.[24] Severe cutbacks in these three service's budgets helped to exacerbate the already perilous situation facing the American military when North Korea launched its invasion. An already tiny military was asked to supply the brunt of defending Western Europe in case of a Soviet move there and was now being asked to fight a full scale conventional war in Asia. Many military thinkers, especially among the

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[23]William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), p. 86.

[24]Lynn Montros and Nicholas A. Canzona, *US Marine Operations in Korea, 1950 – 1953, Vol. II: The Inchon – Seoul Operation* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Marine Corps Historical Branch, 1955), p. 97.

Navy and Marines, felt that this situation had been brought on by a misunderstanding of the "maritime basis of American defense policy and strategy" by both President Truman and the Defense Department.[25] Some assuredly felt that the higher ups in the Pentagon and the Air Force had this rude awakening coming to them. In the end CHROMITE reaffirmed the fact that America's strength rests on its ability to exercise power on the seas. MacArthur's operation helped to bring back a more balanced view of the military in the United States.

These two separate yet intertwined issues helped to make the landing at Inchon in many ways more dangerous than any landing carried out in World War II. The threat of World War III hung over the heads of the men in Washington. Regardless of this fact, though, there were men, MacArthur foremost, who held the landing had to take place. Now was the time to check communist aggression and in the process try and save certain branches of the military, most especially the Marine Corps, from becoming a mere memory.

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[25]Bernard Duffy and Ronald Carpenter, *Douglas MacArthur: Warrior as Wordsmith* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), p. 95.

Chapter 5

Inchon – The Actors

The God of War

Douglas MacArthur was a soldier. In fact, some would contend that MacArthur was *the* soldier in American twentieth century military history. The image of "Mac" in his cap and aviator glasses, with his corn cob pipe jauntily cocked and that famous bulldog jaw jutting out is the one that often comes to mind when people are asked about the military. MacArthur lived and died with the armed forces. His family had a rich tradition in the Army and he would be no different. A veteran of World War I, superintendent of West Point, Chief of Staff of the Army, supreme Army commander in the Pacific theater in World War II, the man who accepted the surrender of Japan and then ruled the island as his personal fief during the American occupation, supreme commander of UN forces in Korea until 1951, all of these things MacArthur could list on his résumé. He has inspired an incredible division of opinion among historians up to this very day. For some, he was the greatest of Americans and the greatest of soldiers. For others, MacArthur was a megalomaniac of the first degree who almost dragged the United States into World War III. His personality must be taken into consideration when discussing the landing at Inchon.

It is hard to argue against the military successes of MacArthur. He was a consummate tactician and strategist. He constantly studied military history in order to

gain new insights into modern warfare.[1] In fact MacArthur used the example of General James Wolfe's surprise attack on the French at Quebec as an argument in favor of launching CHROMITE at Inchon. Blaine Taylor described MacArthur as "lofty and serene in his genius, utterly convinced in his purpose, and absolutely determined that he would see all his plans through to completion or die in the process."[2] There is no arguing the fact that often times MacArthur bullied people into accepting his point of view by sheer determination or stubbornness, both of which can be admirable traits in a military leader. It is difficult to say exactly what set MacArthur apart from other military thinkers. Most likely it was his uncanny ability to judge timing and the enemy's reactions.[3] MacArthur sometimes seemed to know what an enemy would do before the enemy did. This gave him a confidence few men could match, but, as his critics point out, this confidence inflated an already superhuman ego.

Critics have attacked MacArthur ever since he dispersed the 1928 Bonus Army in Washington D.C. His rightist leanings made MacArthur a popular target for Democrats and others. Others within the military structure could hardly stand his high handed ways and what they perceived as cockiness. Some attributed MacArthur's string of military

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[1]"How Inchon Korea Was Chosen for the X Corps Amphibious Landing There on 15 September 1950," p. 1. MMA, RG. 38, B. 3, F. 5, Norfolk, VA.

[2]Blaine Taylor, "Lightning Strike at Inchon: A 20th Century Cannae," *Military Heritage* 2 (2001): 32.

[3]Schnabel, *United States Army in Korea*, p. 144.

success to "good fortune. He was a lucky general . . . . He was lucky again at Inchon."[4] Could this be simple professional jealousy or is there some truth in this statement? Many of MacArthur's operations, Papua during World War II for one example, were very touch and go but in the end worked out. Would Inchon be the same? As discussed earlier, many American leaders felt the advantages to be gained from the landing may not have been worth the price. General Omar Bradley, now Chief of Staff of the Army, felt that MacArthur should have been concentrating on stabilizing the weakening Pusan Perimeter instead of "dreaming up 'a blue sky scheme like Inchon.'"[5] However, and this is another criticism, MacArthur had invested too much personal interest in CHROMITE to see it dismissed. In effect, MacArthur became unwilling to consider alternate possibilities offered up by others because he saw this as an affront to his ability as a commanding general. He could not see that others could possibly offer suggestions to improve on his original plan since in his mind the original was flawless.[6]

The Inchon landing was MacArthur's brainchild – true or false? This is a point that has only recently been discussed by historians. The traditional view is that "Out of

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[4]Gavin Long, *MacArthur as Military Commander* (London, Princeton: B.T. Batsford Ltd. & D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1969), p. 227

[5]Edwin H. Simmons, *Over the Seawall: US Marines at Inchon* (Washington D.C.: Marine Corps Historical Center, 2000), p. 6.

[6]John Toland, *In Mortal Combat: Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1991), p. 176.

his [MacArthur] immense ego and supreme genius sprang a daring invasion plan."[7] Drawing on his years of experience in amphibious operations, MacArthur developed the concept of a plan that would lead to a total victory over the NKPA and also "rescue the Western world's falling prestige throughout the Orient."[8] Recent scholarship had uncovered a slightly different picture though. Historians working among Defense Department documents have uncovered a new piece of evidence that seems to show that MacArthur can not take total credit for the success of Inchon. Historian Clay Blair writes, "The Pentagon, which produced war plans for every conceivable contingency, had only recently (June 19, 1950) approved and distributed a plan known as SL-17, which assumed a NKPA invasion, a retreat to and defense of a perimeter at Pusan, followed by an amphibious landing at Inchon."[9] So it seems as though the original idea for a landing at Inchon was not MacArthur's. This, however, does not mean that he did not put his own unique stamp on the operation. He most likely adopted the Pentagon plan to his thinking because it matched his "grand sense of tactics" and appealed to his "gambler's nature."[10]

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[7]Earle Rice, Jr. *The Inchon Invasion* (San Diego: Lucent Books, 1996), p.45.

[8]Stanley Weintraub, *MacArthur's War: Korea and the Undoing of an American Hero* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), p.105; Sweeney, *The United Nations Landing at Inchon*, p. 12; Malcolm Cagle and Frank Manson, *The Sea War in Korea* (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1957), p. 77.

[9]Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987), p. 87.

[10]Roy E. Appleman, *United States Army in the Korean War: South to the Naktong, North to the Yalu (June – November 1950)* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military

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The most important thing that MacArthur did though was to push the plan through the resistance emanating from both Washington and Tokyo. Without his persistence, the landing most likely would not have taken place or would have taken a vastly different form.

This is not to say that MacArthur himself was without worries about the operation. He was faced with launching a major amphibious landing in little less than three weeks time after receiving the permission of the Joint Chiefs on 23 August. He also had to figure out where the soldiers to carry out the landing were going to come from. The two divisions tapped to make the landing, the Army 7th and Marine 1st, both were substantially below fighting strength. Recruits and reservists were used to fill in the ranks as quickly as possible and the 7th even went as far as to adopt a "buddy system" with the South Koreans, were American soldiers were partnered with South Koreans in the hopes of teaching them how to fight like Americans. Needless to say this was the major problem that MacArthur faced.[11] The second problem the worried MacArthur was the distance that would separate the X Corps at Inchon from General Walker's Eighth Army at Pusan. If Walker failed to break out of the NKPA cordon around Pusan, then the strong possibility existed that the NKPA could hem in the X Corps and this, many

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[10](...continued)
History, 1961), p. 488; Leckie, *Conflict*, p. 125.

[11]Curtis A. Utz, *Assault From the Sea: The Amphibious Landing at Inchon* (Washington D.C.: Naval Historical Center, 1994), p. 18.

thought, would result in a repeat of the experience the Allied VI Corps had undergone at Anzio.[12] MacArthur, however, had convinced himself that CHROMITE could not fail. It would be up to his subordinates to insure that it did not.

The Subordinates

One of the great distinctions that exists between the landings at Inchon and Anzio is that, for the most part, the shape that Inchon took was molded by one man, MacArthur, whereas Anzio had been shaped by many hands. In the end, however, MacArthur could not land at Inchon himself or be with the Eighth Army as it fought its way out of the Pusan Perimeter. To insure that his plan was executed flawlessly, MacArthur relied on three men: General Edward M. Almond, General Walton Walker, and Major General O. P. Smith. The personalities of these three men and their personal rivalries have been cited by historians as a reason to view CHROMITE as a failure and not the success that it has traditionally been lauded as.

Edward Almond could perhaps be best described as a desk-soldier. He served as MacArthur's chief of staff in Tokyo, where his close proximity to MacArthur gave Almond no small amount of power. He jealously guarded his prerogatives against all challenges and in many ways came to imitate his superior. Almond did not have a spectacular command record. During World War II, he had commanded a division in Italy with no great distinction. It came as a great surprise then when MacArthur named

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[12]Michael Langley, *Inchon Landing: MacArthur's Last Triumph* (New York: Times Books, 1979), p. 48.

Almond to command the X Corps, which would be directly responsible for the landing. To exacerbate the situation further, Almond had absolutely no practical experience with amphibious landings. This was immediately pointed out to MacArthur by Marine and Navy planners who urged that the command of X Corps instead be given to General Lemuel Shepperd, head of the Pacific Fleet Marine Force.[13] But MacArthur stayed with his choice of Almond. Most likely because he could exercise a more direct influence on the course of the battle through Almond if necessary. It may also have been that MacArthur truly felt that Almond deserved the opportunity after years of faithful service.

This decision is perhaps the one that has most often been second guessed by historians. Almond's personality was in many ways similar to MacArthur's. He could be imperious and arrogant to those he thought beneath him. He showed an undisguised dislike for the Marine Corps and this would play an important role in the landing and in later X Corps operations. Many officers, particularly those with experience in amphibious landings, were disgusted that Almond brushed off worries about CHROMITE because he felt that the landing was simply delivering Army soldiers to a beach. These officers "thought Almond arrogant and dictatorial and a person who 'often confused himself with his boss.'"[14] The strained relations that existed between Almond and the Navy and Marine Corps at times threatened to impact the landing's potential for

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[13]Rice, Jr., *The Inchon Invasion*, p. 50.

[14]Simmons, *Over the Seawall*, p. 4.

success. Only the unconditional support of MacArthur for Almond insured that the landing went off on schedule. This is not meant to give the impression that Almond was in any way a sub-par officer. He was not. Many, especially those among the Army staff, felt him to be "a very outstanding soldier."[15] His personality more than anything caused the trouble in the first place.

Plan 100-B, the operational plan for CHROMITE, was designed as a two-pronged offensive. One prong would be the X Corps landing at Inchon, the second would be the U.S. Eighth Army punching out of Pusan. The Eighth was under the command of General Walton "Bulldog" Walker. Walker was a veteran of the European theater in World War II and had a solid background as a commander. The early setbacks he suffered at the hands of the NKPA did much to damage MacArthur's opinion of Walker, and thus Almond's opinion of Walker. From the onset of planning for CHROMITE, Walker felt as if his Eighth Army, which had borne the brunt of the fighting and had successfully stymied the NKPA advance, was being snubbed in favor of Almond's X Corps. Walker thought Inchon should be viewed as a supporting operation for the main blow, the breakout from Pusan. The media's attention, however, was to be focused on what was seen to be the stunning victory at Inchon and Walker and the Eighth was left to slug its way through still tough NKPA resistance in order to link up with X Corps.[16]

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[15]E.K. Wright, Oral Reminisces, 1971. MMA, RG. 32, Norfolk, VA.

[16]"Korea 'History in Reverse," p. 4. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 4, F. 5, Norfolk,

(continued...)

Walker could never forgive what he felt was slight to the honor of his men and himself. Walker had not been overly enthusiastic about the landing from the beginning. He and many of his officers did not agree with the rationale being put forward by MacArthur's headquarters that a successful landing at Inchon would take the pressure off of the Eighth, especially since in Walker's view, "the enemy could still move men and supplies against the perimeter over alternate routes along the east coast."[17] In the ensuing campaign after CHROMITE, Walker and Almond would clash regularly as Almond accused Walker of being too slow and Walker thought Almond to be a pompous fool. In many ways the relationship between Walker and Almond seemed to represent the numerous problems that the American command structure suffered from in the Korean War. As D. Clayton James described it, "The command crisis at the level of Washington and Tokyo (Truman and MacArthur) had its counterpart in microcosmic form on the Korean peninsula . . . . Almond and Walker developed a deep-seated animosity towards each other, as did Almond and his main divisional commander, Major General O. P. Smith of the First Marine Division."[18]

O. P. Smith was the opposite of Almond. Whereas Almond was high strung and arrogant, Smith was calm and humble. A native of Virginia, Smith brought many

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[16](...continued)
VA.

[17]Schnabel, *United States Army in Korea*, p. 175.

[18]James, *Command Crisis*, p. 11.

qualities of the South to his profession. He "was a cautious man . . . his byword was 'you do it slow, but you do it right.'"[19] Smith was a veteran of the numerous Marine amphibious operations that had taken place in the Pacific during World War II. His knowledge of amphibious landings was second to none in the Marine Corps and MacArthur held his opinion in high esteem. Almond, however, did not. The two never liked one another from the start of the operation. Almond once referred to Smith as "son," though Smith was Almond's senior by almost five years. The Marine was not one to forget such insults easily. The animosity that developed between the two men went beyond disputes over tactics and logistics. One writer has stated that their relationship was "a very unfortunate personality conflict. The same could be said of the relationship between the U.S. Army and the Marine Corps."[20] This is a very perceptive statement. The landing at Inchon was unusual in that it would be carried out by mixed units, Marines and Army. Traditionally landings had been made by forces drawn only from one branch. Generally the Marines would land first and the Army would follow or the two would land in separate areas. Inchon brought both of them together, with all of their doctrinal differences as well as the traditional dislike that exists between the Marine Corps and Army.

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[19]Simon Foster, *Hit the Beach: The Drama of Amphibious Warfare* (London: Cassell Publishers, 1995), p. 99.

[20]Rice, Jr., *The Inchon Invasion*, p. 69.

These relationships that developed between these men has been cited by both supporters and critics of CHROMITE as being among the most central and contentious issues of the operation.[21] The conflicts between each of these men would lead to the loss of American lives and helps to explain why the war took the turns that it did after the UN forces came ashore at Inchon.

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[21]Langley, *Inchon Landing: MacArthur's Last Triumph*, p. 146.

Chapter 6

Inchon – The Play Itself

The Storm Unleashed

The harbor at Kobe, Japan, was filled with every type of ship imaginable. MacArthur had scraped together every boat in Japanese waters that could be used to transport men and machines to Inchon. The reduction in the American defense budget between 1945 and 1949 had hit the Navy's fleet of LSTs badly. These ships, which formed the backbone of any amphibious operation, were desperately needed and MacArthur used every means to secure what he could. After the war a number of LSTs had been sold to Japan to use as fishing trawlers. These ships were pressed into service with their Japanese crews which gave rise to the belief among the Americans that they were being ferried to Inchon by a Japanese admiral who had taken part in the raid on Pearl Harbor. The fact that X Corps had assembled so quickly was almost a miracle. Whether that luck would hold or not was a different question.

As the invasion fleet was preparing to sail, a typhoon swept into the Sea of Japan and hammered Kobe. Amazingly, little damage was done to the fleet and their timetable was only set back a few hours. Some among the command group of X Corps considered it a bad omen and doubly so when the fleet narrowly averted a second typhoon just west of Kobe. Many of the common soldiers that made up the 7th Division and 1st Marine Division had some combat experience from World War II. For them Inchon was just

another operation, similar to ones they had carried out before.[1] The unique geographical features of Inchon, however, made this anything but another landing. The difference in tides proved to be a major obstacle to the planners. The LSTs required a minimum draft of twenty-nine feet. This would happen on only two occasions on 15 September, the date chosen for the landing. The first high tide would occur at 6:30 A.M. and the second would not occur until 5:30 P.M. It was impossible to land the full force at once with the limited room in Inchon's harbor. There was also the problem of what to do about the fortified island of Wolmi-do, which dominated the approaches to the harbor.

In solving one problem, the X Corps staff solved both. It was decided that the first wave of Marines would be used to take out Wolmi-do. They would then hold the island, which was connected to the mainland by a long causeway which was uncovered at all times, until the second wave of landings later in the day. It was risky but it appeared to be the best way to handle the situation. The landing area was divided into three beach zones: Green Beach would be on Wolmi-do, Red Beach, which ran to the north of Inchon and Blue Beach, which ran to the south of the city. The latter two would form the later part of the attack. These initial attacks would be made strictly by the 1st Marine Division. After the beachhead was secure the 7th Division would be put ashore in order to push out towards Seoul. To soften up Wolmi-do, the Navy subjected it to intense aerial

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[1]Edward Craig, Oral Reminisces, 1971. MMA, RG. 32, Norfolk, VA.

and naval bombardment starting on 10 September. By the time the bombardment was finished, the island resembled a lunar landscape.

In the early hours of 15 September 1950, the main invasion fleet made its way up the channel that leads into Inchon harbor. From aboard the cruiser *Mt. McKinley*, MacArthur and the other command staff watched as the first wave of Marines took off for Wolmi-do. "At 0628 hours 15 September 1950 the 3rd Battalion Landing Team (BLT 3) of the 5th Marine Regiment crossed the line of departure and initiated the first amphibious assault landing of American forces against an enemy since Easter Sunday 1945 when the U.S. Tenth Army landed on Okinawa."[2] The Marines were not sure how effective the bombardment had been. It was still possible that the North Koreans on the island had survived in bunkers and were now training their guns on the slow moving assault craft which were making their way towards Wolmi-do. Once they hit the beaches though, the Marines realized how successful the bombardment had been. About 400 soldiers of the NKPA Eighteenth Division had the duty of defending Wolmi-do from any attack. After the days of almost constant attack by Navy Corsair fighters and Navy destroyers, the NKPA troops were in no shape to put up any resistance. Many surrendered "in a state of

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[2]X Corps Headquarters, X Corps War Diary Summary, p. 9. MMA, EMA Papers, Rg. 38, B. 3, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

shock" or were killed by the Marines.[3] The Marines on Wolmi-do now settled in to await the coming of the second wave.

Aboard the *Mt. McKinley*, MacArthur was in a jubilant mood. He had watched the mornings operation come off without a hitch and all at the cost of only fourteen Marines killed and wounded. The landing had achieved almost complete surprise, even with all the information leaks that had plagued the operation from the outset. How was it that the NKPA had been caught unaware of the landing? Historians have answered that question with many versions of the same theme. The most obvious reason was that at this time, the bulk of the NKPA was being used to hem in Walker's Eighth Army around Pusan.[4] Other historians have extrapolated on this theme. Historian John Toland wrote that, "Ignoring advice from his subordinates, he [Kim Il Sung] had insisted on launching, on September 1, his all out assault on the Pusan Perimeter, expecting to destroy Walker's Eighth Army, end the war, and receive world wide acclaim as a military leader."[5] The success achieved by X Corps at Inchon can be attributed to the simple fact that the NKPA had neither the men nor the equipment in a position to counter any amphibious landing.[6] Other historians have viewed the NKPA's move to attack along the Pusan Perimeter and

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[3] "Narration to Reel #1 – Inchon Landing," pp. 4-5. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 4, F. 10, Norfolk, VA.

[4] "Korea 'History in Reverse," p. 4. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 4, F. 5, Norfolk, VA.

[5]Toland, *In Mortal Combat*, p. 198.

[6]B.F. Halloran, "Inchon Landing," *Marine Corps Gazette* 56 (1972): 29.

leave other areas of the peninsula open to attack as a calculated risk, one that backfired badly. Clay Blair argued that the attacks against Walker's Eighth Army represented not only the best but "the only feasible defense" to counter a UN landing on the peninsula. Success at Pusan would have rendered the *raison d'etre* of CHROMITE null and void.[7]

Other reasons that have been brought forward to explain the early success of X Corps center on the NKPA's lack on intelligence, which is hard to understand given the problems that X Corps staffers fought over security leaks. As noted earlier, the operation had become common knowledge in Japan and this information surely made its way to the North Koreans. Another important point was the NKPA had failed to mine the channel leading into Inchon harbor. They had received magnetic mines from the Soviets but had not received the important detonating devices along with the mines. Marines found a warehouse full of the mines, waiting to be deployed.[8] Another point that can not be overlooked is that the American forces enjoyed complete air superiority at Inchon and made the most of it. An official history of the landing notes that "American aircraft covered the countryside during the day, isolating the port to a distance of twenty-five miles, and naval gunfire the closer approaches to Inchon."[9] In a manner similar to operations of World War II, artillery played an essential role in the success that X Corps

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[7]Blair, *The Forgotten War*, pp. 238-239.

[8]Edgar O'Ballance, *Korea: 1950-1953* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), p. 56.

[9]*The Korean War: The UN Offensive 16 September – 2 November 1950* (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1972), p. 7.

enjoyed at Inchon. Heavy naval gun support and close ground support from Navy fighters took a heavy toll on NKPA units thrown into Inchon. North Koreans who surrendered told of how artillery barrages and aerial bombardment were the leading causes of casualties among North Korean troops. In many instances formations of NKPA troops were broken up before they could mass for an attack. This lack of discipline among the NKPA can be attributed to the fact that many North Koreans were receiving only from fifteen days to two months of military training by this time.[10]

The second wave of landings took place in the late afternoon. The attack on Red Beach, to the north of Inchon, proceeded smoothly. To the south on Blue Beach, however, problems immediately emerged. Along this section of coast a seawall had been erected to prevent flooding from the harbor. In some spots the wall reached a height of almost eight feet. The Marine regiments that were designated to take this stretch of the beach had to clamber over the seawall blind. It was only here that the NKPA put up stiff resistance. Firing from protected bunkers that had survived the pre-invasion bombardment, the NKPA units managed to inflict moderate casualties on the Marines before being overrun themselves.[11] By the late evening of 15 September, the majority of the 1st Marine Division was ashore and had staked out a beachhead and were preparing for further operations inland. The 7th Army Division now began to make its way ashore

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[10]HQ, X Corps War Diary, p. 26. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 3, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

[11]Rice, *The Inchon Invasion*, p. 59,

in order to provide support for the Marines advance inland. Although the battle up to this point was being called a success, among the men in the foxholes on the shore a feeling of uneasiness settled over the landing zone. Many thought that the landing had been too easy and that the North Koreans were simply waiting to spring a trap or at least would now push units to Inchon to set up a heavy defensive line.[12] The total price paid up to this point was twenty-one Marines dead, many of them dying on Blue Beach, one missing and 174 wounded. There has never been an accurate count of the casualty figures for the NKPA.[13]

MacArthur had achieved his objective. He had caught the NKPA by surprise and had delivered a sledgehammer like blow to their most vulnerable spot. The operation now turned its eyes on the next great goal, the capture of Seoul and in many minds that meant an end to the NKPA and an end to the war. Unfortunately, the success of Inchon would create a snowball effect of optimism. MacArthur now had no doubts that he could do no wrong. He would begin to push not only the men serving under him but his nation into a war unlike any the world had yet experienced

The Move Inland

Looking at maps of troop placements in the aftermath of CHROMITE, it was easy to see MacArthur's strategy beginning to unfold. To the south Walker's Eighth Army,

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[12]Langley, *Inchon Landing: MacArthur's Last Triumph*, p. 110.

[13]Foster, *Hit the Beach*, p. 120.

after initial heavy fighting, had broken through the NKPA cordon around Pusan and was racing north to meet up with Almond's X Corps. The anvil, X Corps, had been formed and was now awaiting the blow of the hammer, the Eighth Army to crush the NKPA in southern Korea between the two of them in "the stroke of complete annihilation."[14] However, the American commanders knew that in order to insure the destruction of the NKPA, they had to move swiftly inland to cut off the possible avenues of escape.

Relying on their complete control of the air and overwhelming artillery advantage, the X Corps began to move to the north-east on the morning of 17 September. Between Seoul and Inchon lay several important tactical locations that needed to be taken, chief among these being Kimpo Airfield, the largest and most modern in South Korea. The 1st Marine and 7th Army divisions would also encounter heavy street fighting in the suburbs of Suwon and Yongdungpo and crossing the Han River to the south of Seoul.[15] The NKPA had finally admitted to itself that its position in the south was untenable and had ordered an immediate withdrawal. To insure that the troops in the south could escape, the NKPA filtered all available units into a defensive line facing the advancing X Corps. For the first time, the American forces were faced with stiff resistance. "On 17 September after a quiet night the 5th Marine Regiment was attacked at 0600 by enemy T-34 tanks and approximately 200 infantry in the zone of the 2d battalion. All tanks were destroyed . . .

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[14]Charles A. Willoughby and John Chamberlain, *MacArthur 1941 – 1951* (New York: McGraw - Hill Co., Inc., 1954), p. 375.

[15]*Korea – 1950* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, 1997), p. 148.

all enemy infantry were either killed or wounded."[16] Reports from other units show that this was not an isolated incident. The North Koreans began to throw themselves at the American lines piecemeal in an effort to stem the tide of American advance. These efforts ultimately proved to be futile. They did delay the American advance enough to allow the first units from the south to begin to make their way back across the 38th parallel.

To the south, Walker's advance began to slowly pick up speed as the resistance in front of it crumbled. MacArthur had been displeased with Walker's progress thus far and made it openly known that he expected Walker and the Eighth Army to pick up the pace. It did not help that the X Corps to this point had experienced spectacular results. By 19 September, elements of the 1st Marine Division had crossed the Han River and entered the outer suburbs of Seoul. To the south, near Suwon, the first elements of the 7th Division made contact with elements of the 1st Cavalry Division of the Eighth Army, sealing off the southern end of the Korean peninsula. This closed the last hole the remaining NKPA forces in South Korea had in order to escape.[17] Success would shortly be spoiled by one of the most controversial decisions of the campaign. MacArthur had wanted Seoul in American hands by 25 September so that he could return the seat of South Korean government back to President Syngman Rhee exactly three months to the day after the

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[16]HQ, X Corps War Diary, p. 11. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 3, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

[17]HQ, X Corps War Diary, p. 22. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 3, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

NKPA had overrun the city. He began to put pressure on Almond to make sure this happened.

Almond would turn this pressure onto Lt. General O. P. Smith, whose 1st Marine Division was closest to Seoul. However, Smith did not want to rush blindly into a position which the North Koreans were sure to defend tooth and nail. His men had begun to cautiously creep their way into the city relying on air and artillery support to hurry the North Koreans out of the city. The pace of advance was no good for MacArthur and hence no good for Almond. The X Corps commander began to hint to Smith that if the 1st Marine Division was not capable of taking the city then he would use the 7th Division to do so. This was the final insult for Smith, who agreed to take the city rather than see his men go without the honor of retaking Seoul. Almond's decision and Smith's agreement would cause great damage to the X Corps and the relations between Almond and Smith. Taking heavy casualties in house to house fighting the 1st Marine Division slowly began to push the remaining Korean forces out of the heart of the city and into its northern suburbs. On 25 September, MacArthur got his wish and was able to present Rhee with a liberated Seoul. However, during the ceremony, gunfire could still be heard to the north, vivid proof that the battle was not fully won.

The final casualty totals of the campaign from Inchon to Seoul gave evidence of the superiority that the American X Corps enjoyed in tactical air and artillery support. American casualties stood at 3,948 while North Korea had lost nearly 14,000 men killed

and another 7,000 captured, according to the count of the X Corps.[18] In the immediate aftermath of the landing, MacArthur was hailed in the western world as a genius and Inchon was viewed as the end move in the conflict. Praise came from all around. The *Christian Science Monitor* wrote, "By a move demonstrably logical as it is breathtakingly daring a truly United Nations amphibious force has turned the Korean campaign overnight from a bitter, nip-and-tuck defensive into a roaring offensive."[19] In many corners of Washington there was the realization that MacArthur had shown up those who had doubted the wisdom of launching an operation at Inchon. The operation had brought MacArthur what he enjoyed most, the full attention of both the American public and that of the world. Now MacArthur and his staff disseminated the official version of what had taken place at Inchon and the ensuing march inland rather than Washington. They were the ones who detailed why the North Koreans had fallen so easily. The NKPA had made two mistakes in MacArthur's estimation, "He permitted himself to suffer delays due to a lack of knowledge of the actual American and South Korean strengths," MacArthur told the *New Orleans Item* and, "his second was extending his supply lines to their present attenuated length."[20]

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[18]HQ, X Corps War Diary, p. 25. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 3, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

[19]"This Is It," *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 September 1950. MMA, RG. 25, F. 2, Norfolk, VA.

[20]"MacArthur Sees 2 Enemy Errors," *New Orleans Item*, 16 September 1950. MMA, RG. 25, F. 10, Norfolk, VA.

MacArthur played on this wave of popularity to begin to pressure Washington to allow him to continue his offensive northwards. He argued that Washington, especially the Joint Chiefs, had doubted his intuition at Inchon and this had produced all that he had promised. Why shouldn't a drive north across the 38th parallel be any different?[21] The NKPA had been effectively neutralized as a fighting force and North Korea was undefended. This was the opportunity to re-unite the Korean peninsula under a western supported democratic regime and to hand the Communist bloc a setback in Asia. The only thing that still troubled the minds of some of MacArthur's planners was the unknown factor of Chinese intervention and the now unlikely possibility of Soviet intervention.[22] MacArthur brushed aside these worries arguing that the Soviets would not risk a nuclear war over Korea and that if the Chinese attempted to intervene then the Air Force would turn the Yalu River, the border between China and North Korea, into "the bloodiest stream in history." Looking back on the success of the landing many historians have wondered how an operation seemingly thrown together in less than six weeks had come to have what appeared at the time such a decisive impact. Many have simply agreed that although the NKPA had appeared to be a formidable enemy in the first three months of the war, they were simply overmatched once the United States had decided to

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[21]Geoffrey Perret, *Old Soldiers Never Die: The Life of Douglas MacArthur* (New York: Random House, 1996), p. 548.

[22]"Pincers Will Soon Destroy Enemy as Organized Army," *Buffalo Evening News*, 20 September 1950. MMA, RG. 25, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

fully engage in a war in Asia.[23] The NKPA inability to overrun the Eighth Army at Pusan before X Corps landed at Inchon doomed any hope of victory the North Koreans may have harbored. In losing at Inchon, however, the North Koreans actually may have saved the existence of their state. MacArthur, flushed with victory, would now make one the great strategic errors of the twentieth century, all in order to complete his "decisive victory."[24]

Final Analysis – Inchon

As discussed earlier, the aftermath of CHROMITE brought nothing but praise for MacArthur. It is arguable that this hero-worship spilled over into the historiographical views of the operation and of the Korean War. Historians have cited a number of different reasons why CHROMITE must be considered a success. Most of them center on the short term impact of the landing, which is hard to argue as anything but a success. Very few have argued for the landing as being a success in the long term. Those that have done so have pointed out that the success of X Corps "demonstrated afresh the incalculable value of amphibious operations."[25] This is most likely the single most important positive impact of the landing. It is easy to make the argument that Inchon helped to preserve the Marine Corps from extinction and proved that reliance on air

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[23]Hastings, *The Korean War*, p. 109.

[24]"Landing Won War, MacArthur Tells UN," *Chicago Journal of Commerce*, 21 October 1950. MMA, RG. 25, F. 2, Norfolk, VA.

[25]Cagle and Manson, *The Sea War in Korea*, p. 102.

power is not foolproof. The landing also demonstrated that the proper combination of military forces could overcome even the most daunting of obstacles. Inchon indeed became the "standard Army doctrine for peninsular warfare, wherein an overextended enemy force, lacking air and sea power, becomes ever more vulnerable on its flanks."[26] This formula for amphibious success is one that both the Army and Marine Corps have maintained into the twenty-first century.

Others have argued that Inchon was a success because of the number of difficulties the operation overcame. The recalcitrance of the Joint Chiefs needed to be overcome, along with the problem of bringing a moribund military back up to fighting strength. The extreme time limits placed on CHROMITE by MacArthur also contribute to the feeling that the landing was a success since it was launched on time. The logistical nightmares that the planners in Tokyo faced were very uncommon in amphibious landings. The physical features of Inchon also brought a truly unique challenge to the table to face MacArthur and his staff. For all of these reasons, historians have argued that Inchon is a success. As historian Max Hastings wrote, "Inchon remains a monument to 'can do,' to improvisation and risk taking on a magnificent scale, above all to the spirit of Douglas MacArthur."[27] In many ways, Inchon was the proto-typical American operation. Overcoming vast odds through imaginative thinking and an unwillingness to quit

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[26]Duffy and Carpenter, *Douglas MacArthur: Warrior as Wordsmith*, p. 83.

[27]Hastings, *The Korean War*, p. 99.

symbolized for many the American ethic at work in the battlefields of Korea. But as a historical argument, this seems very flimsy. While it is quite fine to respect what the American forces pulled off, the simple fact that they did so in no way warrants labeling Inchon as a success. If this were the case then one could argue that the German armies of 1944-1945 were successful because they managed to fight on under extreme duress. Most historians though would be hard pressed to accept this argument.

The aspect of timing is crucial to many historians argument of the success of CHROMITE. The fact that at the darkest moment, MacArthur was able to pull a rabbit out of the hat to save the Eighth Army at Pusan and reverse the earlier gains made by the NKPA, is for many adequate reason to see Inchon as a smashing victory. Many historians find little to argue about the timing of the operation. The fact that it took only three days for American forces to move from the beachhead to the Han River and across is remarkable. Bernard Duffy and Ronald Carpenter describe it as "one of the easiest landings in the history of the modern warfare."[28] The *Vancouver News-Herald* stated that "MacArthur succeeded because of the perfection of his unexpected timing. He struck back at a moment the Reds thought he did not dare to take such a chance."[29] However, those who make this argument tend to ignore the information that shows that the NKPA in many ways contributed to the success of X Corps at Inchon by deciding to launch their

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[28]Duffy and Carpenter, *Douglas MacArthur: Warrior as Wordsmith*, p. 99.

[29]"A 'Most Delicate Decision' By General MacArthur," *Vancouver News-Herald*, 19 September 1950. MMA, RG. 25, F. 13, Norfolk, VA.

final assault against the Pusan Perimeter at the exact same time. Devoid of anything remotely resembling a mobile reserve, the NKPA could do little but watch while X Corps clambered over the sea walls at Inchon. Is the fact that in three weeks time X Corps had inflicted over 30,000 casualties on the NKPA a measure of the effectiveness of American arms or NKPA incompetence? The answer appears the latter more than the former. This is not to take anything away from the men who fought at Inchon. As historians however, we must consider the full picture, and this includes NKPA thinking.[30]

Those historians who have criticized CHROMITE have made very substantive points but have often been overlooked. Many of them have been willing to look beyond the feel good approach that the supporters of CHROMITE have espoused. These criticisms are at times harsh but when viewing the event of the landing in the whole light of the campaign they seem justified. To counter the argument that Inchon was an example of the underdog coming out on top, Max Hastings retorts by stating, "It has been a mistake by some historians to presume that Inchon represented a great triumph for the underdog of the Korean campaign, against all odds."[31] X Corps enjoyed complete air and naval superiority at Inchon. They had a decided advantage in artillery and armor also, as the new M26 Pershing tanks proved themselves superior to the NKPA T-34s. The NKPA was outnumbered at Inchon and along the Pusan Perimeter, where 70,000 NKPA troops

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[30]"Big X in Korea," pp. 4-5. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 3, F. 14, Norfolk, VA; Taylor, "Lightning Strike at Inchon," p. 38.

[31]Hastings, *The Korean War*, p. 103.

faced almost 140,000 American troops. This hardly seems to cast the Americans into the role of the underdog. The main problems that the United States faced at the outset of the conflict in Korea were logistical in nature and would be solved in time.

Other critics have argued that it should be no surprise that X Corps triumphed so easily during the initial landing. Facing them were a small number of poorly trained and poorly armed North Koreans. As one veteran of the Inchon landing commented, "If those beaches had been defended by Germans or Japanese of World War II caliber, we would not have gotten ashore . . . . But they were defended by second-rate troops. And not many of them."[32] A number of the North Korean troops surrendered almost immediately to the American forces. This would indicate an unwillingness on the part of the NKPA at Inchon to hold out no matter what the cost. Unlike the Germans and Japanese in World War II, who were indoctrinated with a strong conviction in what they were fighting for, the average North Korean soldier had very little interest in the aims of his government. The majority of them were farmers who had little taste for war.

One of the major points to consider when discussing Inchon as a failure is not placing the operation in a vacuum. As discussed in the earlier section on Anzio, military campaigns can not be seen as an island unto themselves. Supporters of CHROMITE have done exactly this. Michael Langley makes the same point in his study of the landing, arguing that to place Inchon outside of the context of the Korean War hides its true

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[32]Weintraub, *MacArthur's War*, p. 139.

importance. Langley describes Inchon as "the fulcrum on which the whole military and diplomatic conduct of the war balanced."[33] This leads to the most important point of criticism concerning CHROMITE. In many estimations, after the liberation of Seoul, CHROMITE and MacArthur took a vastly different direction. It could be said that instead of CHROMITE existing because of the Korean War, the Korean War would now exist because of CHROMITE. Simon Foster stated this point very well when he wrote, "It [Inchon] was a classic example of how a military opportunity becomes the driving force behind a policy with total disregard for the political consequences."[34]

MacArthur now argued to his superiors that to take full advantage of the success of the landing, the American forces in Korea should head north. This had been one of the original problems that planners in Washington had with CHROMITE. If it succeeded, how would the Soviets and more importantly the Communist Chinese react? The Joint Chiefs at this point had lost almost any ability to curb MacArthur. He was now an international hero and played on that popularity to cow Washington into accepting his push for a northen offensive. O. P. Smith recalled that Inchon gave MacArthur so much prestige in the public eyes, very few men were willing to questions any of his decisions.[35] It was this immunity from criticism that led MacArthur to turn his forces north across the

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[33]Langley, *Inchon Landing: MacArthur's Last Triumph*, p. 5.

[34]Foster, *Hit the Beach*, p. 126

[35]Oliver P. Smith, Oral Reminiscences, 1971. MMA, RG. 32, Norfolk, VA.

38th parallel. He saw the opportunity to destroy the NKPA as an effective force and to reunite the Korean Peninsula. MacArthur, however, never fully weighed the possible outcomes to his decision to cross the 38th parallel with American troops. Some historians have stated that this decision completely nullified any advantage gained by the landing at Inchon.[36]

The full burden of criticism cannot rest solely on MacArthur's head. The Joint Chiefs and planners in Washington must bear some responsibility for the ensuing debacle. The orders that MacArthur received from the Joint Chiefs lacked specificity, as if the JCS were unwilling to take responsibility.[37] "We want you to feel unhampered," stated the JCS order to MacArthur, "tactically and strategically to proceed north of the 38th parallel."[38] This order is highly interpretable. Someone like MacArthur would of course read them to mean he had a free hand militarily to cross into North Korea and topple the regime there. Others have argued that the order lacked specificity in order to pass any blame onto MacArthur. This order is also highly problematic for another reason. In an earlier decision, the JCS had decided that the United States did have a legal basis for launching attacks north of the 38th parallel "provided that at the time of such operations there have been no entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese Communist forces,

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[36]Heefner, "The Inchon Landing," 76; Langley, *Inchon Landing*, p. 21.

[37]Langley, *Inchon Landing*, p. 23.

[38]JCS Memo to Douglas MacArthur, 30 September 1950. MMA, RG. 6, B. 9, F. 5, Norfolk, VA.

no announcement of intended entry, nor a threat to counter our operations militarily in North Korea."[39] If the JCS had included these restrictions on their order of 30 September, then perhaps MacArthur would have thought twice about attacking North Korea.

The reason this is a possibility is because one of those conditions had been met. Because Inchon had so rapidly reversed the tides of the conflict, it had been viewed by many as an example of western/capitalist superiority over eastern/communist ideology. MacArthur's landing was too much of an embarrassment to both the Soviets and the Chinese to allow it to go unchallenged.[40] Beijing began to pass along to the western world that it could not stand by while the North Korean government was overthrown by western forces. MacArthur and also Washington chose to ignore those warnings or else they underestimated the seriousness of the threat. The Chinese obviously felt threatened by the presence of American forces so close to their borders, which they interpreted as a possible prelude to an invasion of China. It is essential to remember MacArthur's highly publicized visits to Chiang Kai-Shek in 1949 and his open denunciations of Communist China.[41] When Chinese forces spilled over the border from Manchuria in October 1950, as U.S. forces neared the Chinese border, the one great question that had been on

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[39]GHQ, FEC, Incoming Message #W91680. MMA, EMA Papers, RG. 38, B. 5, F. 1, Norfolk, VA.

[40]Langley, *Inchon Landing*, pp. 3-4; Karig, Cagle and Manson, *Battle Report: The War in Korea*, p. 164.

[41]Whelan, *Drawing the Line*, p. 196.

Washington's mind was answered and the nature of the war in Korea had changed permanently.

Critics of Inchon also point out that some of the reasoning behind the landing was faulty. MacArthur had contended while arguing for Inchon that it was a necessity to spare the Eighth Army trapped inside the Pusan Perimeter. Historians have called this idea into question though, feeling that MacArthur perhaps played on the traditional American aversion to high casualties in an effort to gain approval for his plan.[42] Clay Blair points out in his history of the Korean War, "The proponents of the 'beaten' theory argued in retrospect that Inchon was not necessary to defeat the NKPA, that considering the overwhelming manpower and weapons superiority of Eighth Army (150,000 men versus 70,000; 500 tanks versus 50) it was simply unthinkable that the Eighth Army . . . could not roll over the NKPA."[43] Some historians have taken this angle in a different direction altogether. They point out that one of the main objectives of CHROMITE was to destroy the NKPA. These historians argue that the uncoordinated manner in which X Corps and Eighth Army operated allowed the escape of a number of North Korean units. If the Eighth Army had focused on surrounding those NKPA units in front of it instead of

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[42]Heefner, "The Inchon Landing," 76.

[43]Blair, *The Forgotten War*, p. 297.

rushing to link up with X Corps, then it is quite possible that the entire NKPA in southern Korea could have been bagged by MacArthur.[44]

It is easy to see a direct correlation between MacArthur's "success" at Inchon and the subsequent Chinese intervention that would subject America to another three years of grueling war. This may have been the biggest shortcoming of Inchon. MacArthur had the war won in late September 1950. He instead gambled it all on an invasion of North Korea which led to a draw at best, strategic loss at worst for the United States. Bernard Duffy and Ronald Carpenter provide an excellent summation of the impact that Inchon had not only on the Korean War but also on subsequent world history: "Strategically, implications of Inchon are felt today . . . the triumph created an almost superstitious regard for General MacArthur's infallibility . . . when China entered Korea . . . the nature of warfare changed . . . . Henceforth, wars would be fought in limited arenas with limited objectives. And Korea remained divided."[45] Korea thus, because of Inchon, became the first of America's limited wars. It would begin a process that would lead American soldiers into the jungles of Viet Nam and into other spots the military was ill equipped to deal with.

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[44]Utz, *Assault From the Sea*, p. 47.

[45]Duffy and Carpenter, *Douglas MacArthur: Warrior as Wordsmith*, p. 101.

Chapter 7

Epilogue

In his operational history of X Corps in Korea Edward Daily wrote, "Of all the operations in combat, nothing quite captures the imagination as an amphibious assault."[1] Of the many military operations in American military history, the most venerated remains the amphibious assault on Normandy. It is much more than the scale on which the landing took place that captures the public imagination. There is a notion of romanticism about the landing, the idea of the valiant soldier being hurled onto some impossible situation only to emerge victorious. Most of the time little attention is paid to the complex technical and logistical aspects that go into an amphibious landing, which rank among the most difficult.[2] It could be said that there exists a mythos of the amphibious assault, just as there used to exist the mythos of the cavalry charge in the nineteenth century. Both Anzio and Inchon have suffered or profited by this mythos.

The word mythos is meant to imply a sort of idealized image of what the amphibious landing is or should be. The D-Day landings stand as the quintessential image of the amphibious assault against which all others are measured. Because of this, the landings at Anzio have been traditionally viewed as an abysmal failure. Historians

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[1]Edward Daily, *MacArthur's X Corps in Korea: Inchon to Yalu 1950* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Co., 1999), p. 15.

[2]Donald Chisholm, "Negotiated Joint Command Relationships: Korean War Amphibious Operations, 1950," *Naval War College Review* 53 (2000): 65.

have propagated this view in light of the success enjoyed by other amphibious operations conducted by the Allies in World War II. Because Lucas and the VI Corps chose not to immediately seize Rome, even though as subsequent research has shown this would have been a disaster for the Allies, the landing has been seen as a disaster. Most people either forget or choose to ignore the fact that the landings at Normandy were initially bottled up by the Germans and it was not until late June that the Allies broke out of the Normandy area.

One must bear in mind several key points when discussing Operation SHINGLE. First, VI Corps would have been completely unable to move inland on the 22 or 23 January to seize the Alban Hills and subsequently Rome without the probability that those forces would have been surrounded and destroyed by the Germans. Second, the fact that VI Corps did not move with more speed was not an aberration of the Italian campaign at all. The entirety of the fighting on the Italian peninsula was marked by slow advances. One must bear in mind when Germany surrendered in May 1945 the Allies had not yet forced the German army out of northern Italy. The Allies were facing a highly trained and dedicated enemy who had developed defensive war into a highly specialized art by 1944. Third, the fact that historians to this day have viewed Anzio as separate from the rest of the Italian campaign has been the single most important factor in propagating the view of Anzio as a failure. No operation can be viewed as a separate entity. In war, especially a war as World War II where so many strategic and geopolitical considerations had to be taken in to mind, this cannot be done. SHINGLE was linked not only to the

fight along the Cassino front but to OVERLORD and to the invasion of southern France. The idea that the failure of the U.S. Fifth and British Eighth armies to break through the Cassino line in mid-January 1944 caused Lucas to settle into a defensive posture holds much merit.

Anzio succeeded because VI Corps held against determined German assaults. It succeeded because the men of the VI Corps were able to help in the capture of Rome, which was fueled by the great stockpile of equipment built up at Anzio. It succeeded because it lessened the resistance faced by the American, British and Canadian forces on the beaches of Normandy as well as the resistance faced by the Red Army in its march westwards towards the heart of the Reich. To argue that Anzio was a failure simply because it did not produce immediate results is to show a lack of understanding of the nature of both the Italian campaign as well as the world-wide strategic view that World War II demanded.

Inchon on the other hand has received the opposite treatment because of the mythos of the amphibious landing. It seems to satisfy in every way the view of what an amphibious landing should be. X Corps stormed ashore under perceived great odds and yet successfully managed to destroy the NKPA forces defending Inchon and march onto Seoul and liberate the capital. The point this work has been trying to make is not that Inchon did not enjoy great localized success, it did. However, in terms of long term strategy, Inchon must be considered a failure. MacArthur had won the war by the end of September 1950. The NKPA had been badly mauled, though not totally destroyed as

MacArthur had promised. South Korea had been freed, which had been the original impetus for United Nations involvement. But because of MacArthur's own personality and the hubris engendered by the immediate success of Inchon, the Korean War became the first war lost in the twentieth century by the United States. Some may say it was a draw, if one can ever label wars as victories or defeats or draws. But it must be admitted that in light of the position the United States enjoyed at the start of October 1950, the end result of the war was a failure.

The race into North Korea set off a series of events whose repercussions are still being felt today. Communist China is again viewed as a great potential threat to American interests in Asia. Would this be different had not American forces moved into North Korea in 1950? The late 1950s and early 1960s saw a serious split in the communist camp between the Soviets and the Chinese as traditional politics proved more powerful than any unifying ideology could be. If the Korean War, in the form it had taken, had not been fought, it might have been possible for the United States to exploit this split earlier than it did. The corollary to this point is the impact on the American domestic scene. The Korean War proved to a midwife to the raging paranoia of the McCarthy era and the tensions of the 1960s. It can be argued that Korea led to American intervention in Viet Nam in the mid 1960s. Because American prestige had been tarnished in Korea, American policy makers saw Viet Nam as a second chance to get it right. In many minds, the situations were not that dissimilar. This thinking proved to have serious consequences for American history.

A second point which the landings at Anzio and Inchon stress is the fact that the United States was and remains a maritime power. It was an American, Alfred Thayer Mahan, who scripted the first philosophy of naval power. Many of the great heroes in American folklore are linked with the nation's naval history: John Paul Jones, David Farragut, Chester Nimitz just to name a few. Simon Foster wrote that, "Amphibious warfare was, and is, an art at which the U.S. armed forces excel."[3] The amphibious attack combines all the aspects that have made the United States one of the great military powers in world history. It brings together the modern industrial might of the nation with the traditional bravado that has marked this country of cavaliers and pioneers. American forces often have only one way to intervene in a ground war and that is through an amphibious insertion.

In the second half of this century, many American strategists and political leaders have became enthralled with the concept of winning a war through air power. This requires the minimum expenditure of life on the part of the United States, always a traditional concern. But World War II, Korea, and Viet Nam, wars were American air power was dominant, proved that no war can be won strictly through the use of air power. Winning a war requires a balanced doctrine of arms. This means the use of air power to unbalance an enemy's industrial base, naval power to cut off his flow of supplies, and land forces to defeat the enemy's armed forces and occupy his territory if necessary. And

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[3]Foster, *Hit the Beach*, p. 85.

often the best way to introduce American ground forces is through the amphibious invasion. Foster remarked about Inchon that it "reminded the Pentagon of what they had tried so hard to forget since 1945 – that the United States is a maritime power."[4] The same could be said of Anzio.

The United States' position as a great power will continue to depend on its ability to execute the amphibious assault. The history that Americans have to draw on teaches many valuable lessons. Anzio and Inchon teach the most important lessons. First, never confuse speed of movement with successful movement. Second, follow up to any local initial success is as important as the initial success itself. To have victory in the palms of your hand and then to waste it away on a careless or ill-thought out plan of action is the worst fate that can befall an amphibious landing. Oftentimes, an amphibious operation becomes a sort of siege where the object is to break out of the encircled position rather than to break in. This was the case at both Anzio and Inchon. In both instances the stockpiling of immense quantities of resources led to American victories so it may not necessarily be a drawback for the amphibious landing to take this form rather than a quick breakout and sprint to objectives. The continued historiographical stress on citing Anzio as a failure symbolizes America's inability to cope with a perceived "loser." The truth is that Inchon, more than Anzio deserves the title of failure. One can only hope that future

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[4]Ibid, p. 130.

generations of military historians will come to see this and will rehabilitate the memory of Anzio.

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