#7

SUBMARINE SAFARI

By

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By October of 1942, the pressure of TORCH Operation Planning had become so great that all of us at Norfolk House were working literally day and night. We stopped for sleep only when fatigue made further accurate work impossible. I finally told the staff that on Sundays at least, everyone should stay away from the office until 10 AM.

Thus, on the morning of Sunday the 17th, when I sauntered in, General Gruenther was the only other officer visible.

"There is a hot message here", he said.

The message was from Washington. It was addressed to General Eisenhower, but it was routine for communications of the highest priority to come to me as well, at Norfolk House. This was our secret planning headquarters, about two miles away from General Eisenhower's own office at 20 Grosvenor Square. He rarely came to Norfolk House, because his appearance - even incognito - might attract the attention of enemy agents, many of whom were then active in London. Ordinarily I went to see him at least three times a day, but there was also a direct telephone line between his desk and mine. Just as I was gulfing through my copy of the message, the phone rang. General Eisenhower was very brief.

"Come up", he said, "Come right away". With that he hung up.

I made quick time to Grosvenor Square and walked into Ike's office saying "Well, when do I go". He said "probably pretty quick". We sat down to study the message and its implications.

The cable from General Marshall had originated with Robert Murphy, then Counselor of Embassy on Special Mission to French Africa with Headquarters in Algiers and principal figure in the on-the-spot political maneuvers of TORCH, the code name for the North African Operation. The cable stated that General Mast, then French Commander in Algeria, who was our highest and best French contact in North Africa, wanted an American delegation to come immediately to a highly secret rendezvous for conferences which would include an exchange of information. The cable stipulated a "senior general officer" as chief of the mission. There was an implication that General Giraud might attend the conference, although we knew that he was still in France.

General Eisenhower handed me the whole job. The organization of the trip itself, the selection of my supporting staff, and the widest sort of latitude on what I could say to the French was my responsibility. But I was not to reveal to the French that TORCH was an actuality. Only that North African operations were in the planning stage. To say too much could cost us lives, saying too little would hurt our chances of French collaboration. Enemy discovery or capture of our group could mean irreparable damage to TORCH as well as to ourselves.

It seemed pretty important that Prime Minister Churchill should know what was going on and advise on the important steps about to be taken.

Most of the weekends leading up to the one of October 17th, General Eisenhower and I had spent at Chequers (the country place England provides for her Prime Minister). We had, with difficulty, begged off this weekend for the simple reason that we had really come to dread the cost in lost sleep of the all-night inquisitions to which the tireless and keen mind of Mr. Churchill invariably subjected us. But fortunately, we knew that he would be at Chequers now that we needed him in a hurry. I got on the secret phone to Chequers and was answered by General Sir Hastings Ismay, the Prime Minister's military Aide. "Pug, I've got something hot here", I said.

"How hot", Ismay questioned.

"Too hot to talk about on the phone."

"Wait a minute while I tell the Prime Minister", he said. Then Mr. Churchill came on.

"Pug tells me you have something hot, what is it?" he said, "This is a secret phone."

I handed my instrument to Ike. "We can't talk about it here", Ike replied, "It's much too important for that".

"Very well", said Mr. Churchill, "Come on down here".

"We haven't got time", said Ike.

"All right", said the Prime Minister a little formally, "is it sufficiently important for me to come back?"

Ike said "Yes" and made a date to meet at No. 10 Downing Street late that afternoon.

We almost immediately went into planning session. Sending for a French chart of the North African coast, we were pleased to be able to spot a mark intended to indicate a house in exactly the latitude and longitude called for in the cable. I called together the group that was to accompany me, and for over three hours talked out the details, as well as the imponderables, of our trip. We gave little thought to Darlan. Giraud was our choice for French leadership and that was that. If Darlan had to be dealt with later for the sake of immobilizing the French Navy, we could handle him.

We knew that a similar conference was being held in Washington, with President Roosevelt, Admiral Leahy and General Marshall, discussing the same questions. We also knew that by this time the Prime Minister and his political and military advisers were doing plenty of talking and thinking about what might be on our minds.

The War Department cable stipulated that the general officer in charge of the mission should be accompanied by one man thoroughly familiar with the details of TORCH Operations; one supply man; one Navy man; and one political

expert -- the latter to speak fluent French. Brigadier General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, head of the Allied Force Plans Section; Colonel A. L. Hamblen, our shipping and supply expert; Captain Gerald Wright of the U. S. Navy who had been our Navy Liaison man since TORCH was started; and Colonel Julius C. Holmes, a former State Department officer who headed up our Civil Affairs Branch of the TORCH plan, seemed to fill these specifications.

Until late afternoon we were hashing over the details of our trip. We would fly to Gibraltar in two Flying Fortresses. The air people pointed out that there was danger in this. No B-17 had ever landed at the Gibraltar field, and we did not know if it could be done. The party would split into two planes, so that in the event mine was lost, General Lemnitzer could carry on for me. From Gibraltar we would be taken to the Algerian coast in a British submarine. The cable was very specific as to how the final rendezvous would be made, a latitude and longitude some 15 miles west of the tiny port of Cherchel was given. On the night of October 21/22 our submarine was to surface off the position given; a single, steady, white light would be exhibited from a seaward dormer window of the house if the coasts were clear and the landing should proceed. This light would not be visible from the land side. Unfortunately, nothing was said about what was to be done if we could not make it by airplane and submarine in the short time granted, four days, and we immediately asked Washington to send a secret message to Murphy and his associates, urging them to set up an alternate time of rendezvous if we could not make the October 21 date as specified.

By the time General Eisenhower and I were ready to take off for No. 10, we were well briefed on the complex contents of the Murphy cable. It covered a lot more than just the details of the rendezvous. Murphy reported that when he had returned to Algiers from his visit to Washington, he had been asked for a secret interview by the head of the French Intelligence. The interview took place at an isolated spot outside of town to avoid German notice. The French said that both German and Japanese sources had reported the Allies were planning early military operations against Dakar, Casablanca, or both. The Germans were urging the French to take every precaution against this; likewise giving indications that this could constitute a pretext for Axis occupation of French North Africa.

"The Germans", Murphy cabled, "appear determined to settle the western Mediterranean issue during the coming weeks and will have the use of the Spanish mainland and of Spanish Morocco for this purpose. Gibraltar is under constant surveillance. In French opinion definite action is not a question of weeks, but of days. The French political situation is extremely delicate and collapse may be expected in as little as ten days. There is no question that the situation in French North Africa is moving fast. Information indicates the Axis have raised about 100,000 troops along the Tunisian frontier."

General Mast, by way of Mr. Murphy, raised another extremely troublesome problem; he suggested the possibility that the French would be better satisfied if the operation would include the occupation of some part of Occupied France by the French Army so that French Resistance fighters could be supplied. This seemed to us impossible from the beginning and we eventually had to talk the French out of it as we finally convinced them on the subject of the supreme command in French North Africa.

Murphy concluded: "Mast asserts we can gain entry practically without firing a shot through Giraud's command. It is suggested that the U. S. supply an American submarine to pick up Giraud and his party at night on the French Mediterranean Cost."

When General Eisenhower and I arrived at the Cabinet Room at No. 10 Downing, there was about as dazzling an array of Britain's diplomatic, military and naval brains as I had yet seen. The Prime Minister's mood, without knowing exactly what was on our minds, was as enthusiastic as a boy with a new electric train. When we read the cable he broke into a big grin behind a giant new cigar.

"This is great", he kept saying.

We discussed the implications of the trip at some length with Clement Attlee, Lord Louis Mountbatten, Sir Dudley Pound, and Lord Alanbrooke. What Ike wanted was a specific British viewpoint on how much I could tell the French about TORCH. We knew Giraud would want an important spot in the command set-up, and I offered, if it would help matters, to step down as Deputy Commander to Ike in favor of Giraud. That was rejected. At the end, we told Mr. Churchill, happy as a detective story fan, the more fantastic details of our plans for this secret rendezvous on which the fate of thousands of British, American, and French soldiers and sailors might hang. Almost as an after-thought, I asked the Prime Minister if we should wear civilian clothes or uniforms.

"Do you have civvies", asked Mr. Churchill. "If you have, take them along."

I eventually left the civilian clothes in the submarine. It would have made things just that much harder had we been picked up without uniforms on shore. Escorting me to the door, Mr. Churchill emphasized Britain's entirely cooperative spirit. We would have the submarine, destroyer, amphibious airplanes and facilities at Gibraltar which we needed. He has an unaffected way of speaking in ringing phrases at important moments.

"The entire resources of the British Commonwealth are at your disposal" he said in parting. "I want to assure you once more how important it will be to get this information and to cut down French resistance; you have my genuine support."

By this time General Spaatz had already laid on the two B-17's with specially-selected pilots. The weather people said we had better not try a take-off until morning. We spent the night sleeping very little, but getting a lot of details and equipment together in a minimum of space and weight. Army Finance had scurried around to get money, a thousand dollars in Canadian $5 and $10 gold pieces for possible use in buying our way out of a jam. "This is the money of which a considerable part was lost when our small boats over-turned in in the surf later.) We had no bribing to do, but at the end of the trip I had only four of the gold pieces I carried left; I purchased them for souvenirs for General Eisenhower, Admiral Cunningham and General Walter Bedell Smith; the fourth I still carry for a luck piece. We got money belts for the whole party and divided up the gold pieces. I had some U. S. dollars along too, but the whole amount was about $2,000 --- not the much larger sum mentioned in news dispatches. I had been scheduled to leave with General Eisenhower on the morning

of the 18th for an inspection trip of U. S. Forces training in Scotland. In order to attract no undue attention to my mission, General Eisenhower left on his journey as planned.

It was not until dusk of the 18th that my four colleagues and I arrived at the 8th Air Force Bomber Base at Polbrook, 73 miles NW of London. I wore Lt. Colonel's insignia on my shoulders when I left London. Even most of the people at headquarters thought I was on my way to join General Eisenhower in Scotland.

The weather was still bad on the evening of the 18th and the precious hours slipped away while we all waited in a tiny barracks, keeping out of sight of personnel on the field so as to attract a minimum of attention. I was plenty keyed up and, although I went to bed, I didn't sleep much. The most disturbing things were the time element and the difficulty of communications; not only with Murphy, but through him to the French, who might already be on their way to the rendezvous. I was afraid that if we did not arrive on time, the French would feel badly let down and might question our good faith. I must admit I was also pretty worried about the personal safety of all of us; the whole deal could be a trick. If we fell into Nazi hands it would be far from pleasant, and, of more importance, jeopardize the whole operation. I had left a short note behind to be delivered to Mrs. Clark in the event I would not return. I had carefully gone over procedures with General Lemnitzer and Colonel Holmes for them to carry on and to do the job if one or more of us dropped out for any reason. A final cable had been received from Washington saying that "AGREE", a code name for myself, "is to proceed at once with the mission". But nothing was said to allay my gnawing fear that we could not make it in time.

I was sleeping at last when they called me about 6:30 AM. We had some breakfast and climbed into the planes for a quick take-off. General Lemnitzer was carrying all the secret documents in a heavily weighted tube. I instructed the pilots that under no circumstances was either plane to land in Spain or Portugal. The Base Commander had received some word about German fighters along the coast. We didn't have an escort, as possibly attracting too much attention, but the guns of our two B-17's were fully manned. My ship, "The Red Gremlin", piloted by Colonel Tibbits, broke out of the clouds and flew out of sight of earth for three hours. By the time the overcast broke, there was nothing below but open sea. We sighted only one ship, a small sailing vessel somewhere off Portugal. Even before we had properly identified Gibraltar, Spitfires were shooting up to look us over. General Lemnitzer's plane, "The Boomerang", went in first and we were all relieved to see the big bomber make it safely on Gibraltar's limited strip. One of the pilots had already climbed out of my plane when the British rushed up and motioned to everybody to stay inside. They explained that the Gibraltar field was alway under full observation by German agents in Spain. "The runway is only about 300 yards from Spanish territory). The arrival of two B-17's --- the first sent there --- would give the Nazis enough to think about without their spotting high officers on board. The British suggested that we leave our coats and hats; a big car with drawn curtains pulled up as close as possible to the plane and we jumped swiftly into it to be whisked off quickly to the Governor's house. Here Lieutenant General Mason MacFarlane and some British admirals, including Vice Admiral Collins and the Commander of British submarines

in the Mediterranean, Captain Barney Fawkes, welcomed us. I asked my four colleagues to stay in their rooms. The less seen of any of us on the Rock, the better. I conferred alone with General MacFarlane and his naval associates. I have hardly ever been less certain of the success of an operational mission in my life; I needed support, but got little encouragement from the British. The Navy people were taking a rather dim view of this whole crazy American adventure. They talked of thick shore patrols, plenty of spotting planes, and a French Navy and airforce bolder than it had been before. What I needed was someone to say, "Okay, we'll get you in there and get you out too!"

They talked on until I said, "Gentlemen, there is no help for this; we are going". "It has been decided by our two governments and I don't intend to call it off".

The most encouraging person I met at Gibraltar was Lt. Norman Ambury Auchinleck Jewel (we called him "Bill" later), Commander of the submarine HMS SERAPH - one of the smaller and slower British under-sea boats. He was described to me as "a fine youngster with plenty of experience in doing soundings along the North African coast". When I aksed to see him, they brought in a handsome young man with plenty of self-confidence. I asked if he knew what this was all about.

"All they told me was that I was to take some Americans someplace and land them at night on the African coast", he said.

I explained some of the details. Jewel was pleasantly reassuring: "I am sure we can get you in there and get you off again". He bucked up my confidence considerably. He told me he had three British Commandos and four falboots --- little collapsible, wood-framed canvas canoes --- on board. If we were to arrive at the rendezvous still in day-light and submerged, we would have to get going immediately. At that, Lieutenant Jewel warned, considering the number of hours we would have to run submerged, at very slow speed, he wasn't going to guarantee arrival on time. I had dispatched another message to Washington, via Lt. Colonel Eddy, our military representative in the international zone of Tangier, urgently requesting that the reception party wait for us from 9 PM on the night of the 21st until dawn and that in the event we did not show up on that night, we would attempt a landing on the night of 22/23. None of us took very well to the idea of lying close to shore in shallow water where planes could spot even a submerged sub.

There was no time to lose. We wanted to leave Gibraltar in the dark, and we didn't want to lose any of the night and its valuable opportunity for running on the surface. They took us down to the submarine tender, "Maidstone", where we had a drink and dinner in Captain Barney Fawkes' cabin. The P-219 was tied up to the "Maidstone". They were casting off its lines as we arrived aboard.

I had never been aboard a submarine before. I soon realized that they were not made for a lanky 6' 2" man. All the while I was in the P-219, I had to bend over and be careful of my head. The officers' quarters, the submarine crew had hospitably given up to their passengers, was just a cubby hold alongside the middle catwalk. When I went to the "head", I had to literally crawl on all fours. The submarine crew, almost all youngsters, welcomed us cheerfully

aboard. All they knew was that "we're going on a screwy mission with some Americans". While we were running on the surface that night, we passengers spent a lot of time on deck. A British destroyer led us the first fifty miles. Lt. Jewel and I, poring over the charts, agreed we couldn't possibly make the rendezvous if we had to run all the trip underwater. We decided to try as much as possible on the surface where we could make 10 to 12 knots compared to only two or three submerged. We would be ready for a crash dive at any time if spotted by an enemy ship or plane. During our first afternoon, the sea slipping smoothly along and sighting nothing, we had a detailed conference with our Commando Officers on embarkation and landing procedures. General plans concerning signals and possible action ashore were studied closely. The submarine would go as close to the beach as possible and survey it by periscope in daylight.

Our radio was alert for word from Gibraltar, but apparently nothing had been received from Murphy on the matter of a secondary rendezvous.

In the late afternoon we played some bridge, and at 9:30 PM, when it was fully dark again, Lt. Jewel stopped the submarine for a rehearsal of falboot embarkation. The sea was choppy. Colonel Holmes and Commando Captain R. P. Livingstone launched their boat first, after practicing stepping into the frail and very tipsy craft on the dry deck. They paddled noiselessly away and from a distance of several hundred yards they tried out the infrared signal light with which we had been supplied. This light cannot be seen by the naked eye but with a proper sort of glass, it becomes a useful signal light. The light worked perfectly. Holmes and Livingstone returned to the submarine, with General Lemnitzer and Lt. J. P. Foote trying the next trip. The General got pretty wet but they made it all right. Colonel Hamblen and Captain Wright made it OK as well. Captain Godfrey B. (Jumbo) Courtney was my small boat pilot and we tried it last. He was the expert on these boats and was in charge of instructing all of us.

With the small boat exercises complete, the submarine was quickly under way again. I managed to get some sleep this night, in spite of the stuffy interior of the submarine, but at 6:20 AM, the dive klaxons sounded. We were too close to the North African shore to venture running on the surface again in daylight.

There was still no word from Gibraltar.

I fell back on another bridge game to pass some pretty worrisome hours moving along at slow speed under the Mediterranean. Our submarine was a rather old type, and by afternoon the air within it was warm and lifeless, leaving us inexperienced landsmen feeling pretty dopey.

It was not until the early morning hours of October 22 that we came in sight of our rendezvous point. We could spot a light in what we thought was the correct location, but it was too near dawn to risk a landing and we were not sure enough of where we were.

We prepared for another day of discomfort in the over-crowded underseas craft. When it was light enough, we ran up a periscope for a few seconds at a time and made sketches of the shore visible from three to four miles. We

were sure we had our house spotted okay. Soon after daylight two Algerian fishing boats came out and anchored right in front of "our" beach. They worried us, so we moved out to sea slowly.

Then a radio came in from Murphy. We had missed the first night's rendezvous and I was hoping against hope that word had gotten to the French about our alternative plan. The first "flap" about this message was when we got hold of a wrong code book. The first word that came out was "police". That gave me a sinking feeling that the people on shore had been detected. We finally decoded the message with great relief. Mr. Murphy understood our difficulty; but had changed my proposal to make the second rendezvous on the night of 23/24, skipping a night to make it two days later. However, to my relief, part 2 of the message said the "interested parties have been informed to expect you night of 21/22 and that if no contact then made to expect you night of 22/23 as well. You should assume therefore that you are expected tonight (22nd) and tomorrow night (23rd)".

There was nothing to do but stick it out. My feeling of working against time was by no means allayed by the knowledge that on this day some units of the TORCH Operation under General Patton were actually on their way from the United States.

That left us not knowing whether we were actually expected on the night then approaching, or not until 24 hours later. We had another conference and outlined some special plans for trouble ashore. If we arrived safely, we would signal the fact to the submarine by turning off the guide light. If we wanted to reembark later the same night, we would start it flashing. The submarine would stay off the beach directly in front of the house the whole of the first two nights we were ashore. Then, if no radio communication was established, and no word received from shore, the submarine would take a station 5 miles off an alternative rendezvous point a few miles along the coast, staying there for another full 24 hours. If nothing was then heard, the SERAPH would return to Gibraltar without us.

As darkness approached, I speculated upon what would happen that night. We surfaced as soon as it was fully dark; but there was no light showing from the shore. By 10:00 PM I was feeling plenty low with the prospect of another full day to "sweat it out". Just to keep things going, I bet each of my associates $10 the light would come on "tonight". In case something should be doing later, I decided to get all the sleep I could. At 10:30 I turned in.

At 12:00 midnight, they called me to say a light was showing from the shore. There was feverish activity on the submarine getting the small boats on deck, as the craft pulled shoreward to within a bare two miles from the surf. The embarkation was calm and pretty well organized. We followed the drill Captain Courtney had worked out for us and counted "one - two - three - four" as one after the other of each boat's occupants arranged his gear and stepped carefully into excatly the right place.

If we had not been so keyed up at the time, it would have been pretty laughable that "Jumbo" Courtney was the one who capsized his boat and lost his gear. This stalwart Commando was absolutely devastated at this accident

at such a crucial moment. I had to call Arch Hamblen back to swap boats with him while "Jumbo" repaired his boat to follow a little later.

We approached the beach in a V formation, Julius Holmes and Livingstone ahead. My boat and the others waited about 200 yards off-shore, until, through the darkness over the feathery surf, we saw the letter "K" flashed by a flashlight --- the signal that the first boat had made it ashore and all was well. We followed, making it pretty dry through a quite moderate surf. For a moment there was no one at all in sight on an embarrassingly wide beach on which we nocturnal arrivals felt very exposed to unknown danger.

There was a steep bluff at the other side of the beach. It was covered with scrub vegetation and knotty olive trees and on this dark night, looked just plain black. We rushed for the cover of this darkness, carrying our boats and gear.

Just as we reached the edge of the bluff, Bob Murphy and his French associates came down. No one showed any light. Murphy said, "Welcome to North Africa."

I had had a speech all figured out for prompt, and what I hoped, dramatic delivery in French. I was going to say "Lafayette, nous sommes arrives pour la deuxième fois". But somehow the whole idea escaped me. What I really did was to puff with relief from the exertion of clambering over the beach and say, "I'm damn glad we made it."

We climbed quickly up a steep and stony path over the bluff to the house. This was a rather typical French colonial villa of red-roofed white stone built around a courtyard, with the main highway to Algiers only 30 yards away. Its owner, M. Tessier, had sent his Arab servants away so that we would be undisturbed and unreported. It was this act which brought the police to search the house next day. The servants were suspicious and told the Cherchel authorities.

Tessier was a well-to-do owner of farmlands; a little, disheveled, and rather frightened-looking Frenchman when I first met him. He was a true patriot and risked his life to let us meet at his house. Later I helped him enter the French Army and arranged for him to be assigned on liaison duty at my Fifth Army Headquarters,where he remained and served me well throughout the Italian Campaign.

The house was pretty messy by our standards and it certainly was not a very impressive setting for a conference of any sort.

General Mast and his staff were not yet there when we reached the house, and we were told by his representatives that they could not arrive until almost 5:00 AM, coming by car from Algiers some 60 miles away.

I directed our Commandos to store their falboots in a downstairs room off the courtyard where they would be thoroughly out of sight, and to lock the door to that room. I asked the Commandos themselves, being British, to keep out of sight, as the French had made something of a point of this being strictly a Franco-American affair. They were not feeling too friendly toward the English

after the naval attacks at Dakar and Mers el Kebir. Tessier took me to an upstairs bedroom where an unkempt and much-used bed was awaiting me. A lot of my doubts of previous days had slipped away and I was relieved enough to sleep a little until 5:00 AM, when I was called and told that Mast had arrived.

General Mast spoke little English, but said "Welcome to my country". One of the first things he told me was that he had once been a Military Attache at Tokyo where he had come to know an American, Colonel William C. Crane, He wanted to serve with him and I later arranged to send this colonel as liaison with Mast.

Mr. Murphy, General Mast, and I ate a typical French petit-dejeuner of coffee, bread and jam, and sardines in the living-room while we talked military strategy and North Africa. What I could not tell Mast, and had to be extremely careful not to reveal any slip of the tongue, was that a TORCH Operation, or anything like it, had actually gotten anywhere beyond the planning stage --- and this with the leading elements of our armada actually at sea. I could not tell him why North Africa had been selected for the first American offensive in the war.

The history of this was that in the previous July, with two American divisions already in Northern Ireland and one in England, President Roosevelt had sent General Marshall, Admiral King, Harry Hopkins, Steve Early and others to London for a conference in which they were to specifically demand that U.S. troops get into battle during 1942. The group met at Claridge's for two days of fantastic discussions. The U. S. proposed that, together with the British, we mount a cross-channel operation on the Cherbourg peninsula in the fall of 1942. I was supposed to command the American element of this expedition and there was so much heat on it that we had already sent radios to Washington outlining equipment and special units which would be needed, when the British Cabinet turned it down cold. Ike and I went to Chequers and the Prime Minister kept saying over and over again, "no, it isn't France, North Africa is the place". British and American GHQ had worked together on planning a Dakar operation. Washington was disappointed but asked, "What can you do to give us action this year?" They did not want the troops sitting idly around Ireland. We discussed Dakar, Casablanca, and points further inside the Mediterranean.

The Mediterranean seemed to be increasingly important. We wanted to get the pressure off the British 8th Army by striking at Rommel's rear.

The Prime Minister had hammered away at "slitting the soft under-belly of the enemy in the Mediterranean". After two grim years of fighting in North Africa and Italy that under-belly didn't look so soft. If we had obtained the French data at Cherchel a bit earlier into our TORCH planning we might have arranged to debark deeper into the Mediterranean in addition to the Algerian landings. As it was, this data was successfully used in mounting various small seaborne expeditions from Algiers to the eastward. In hindsight, the original TORCH landings were not daring enough. We could have gotten away with following Mast's suggestion of striking deep into Tunisia and in so doing might have saved a lot of time, lives, and over-land fighting.

We quickly settled down, the three of us, Murphy, Mast and myself, to talking details. We put a lot of time into discussion of Giraud'd demands that

French prestige required his being supreme commander of any Allied Force fighting on French soil. I wanted to dodge a commitment on that, one way or another.

But since Giraud did come into our picture and Darlan was quickly eliminated by assassination, the question of alternative French Command did not eventually arise. Neither Darlan's name nor a possible place for him in our plans was mentioned at Cherchel.

I was very quickly impressed with Mast's sincerity. He certainly sold me on the idea that he was entirely at our disposal and would do everything possible to help us carry out an operation which to him was only a hope. Before we called together our respective staffs, I asked Mast, "with reference to a hypothetical landing", "How would you do it?" I was very pleased that his conception was very close to ours, although it called for the South France bridgehead which I already knew to be impossible.

Later when things got hot General Mast delivered all the goods he had promised us. He took great personal risk in ordering the French troops defending the Algerian coast to help the Allies. I consider him a great French patriot.

About 9:00 AM we brought our staffs around the dining room table in order to have a frank discussion of the situation. Remembering my instructions not to reveal the facts of the impending operation, I was in a difficult position. Mast asked how big an American effort could be made. I tried to keep a poker face while saying that half a million Allied troops could come in and I said that we could put 2,000 planes in the air, as well as "plenty of U. S. Navy." Mast was pretty impressed. "We actually put 112,000 Americans and British ashore in the first landings."

Mast suggested that Giraud be picked up in an American submarine as quickly as possible. I was convinced that none of the French realized the imminence of an operation. Although they knew something was in the works, nothing definite had leaked to them. Much later Mast told me this was precisely the case.

Mast said that he was afraid of a German attack on the French North Africa. "If they do attack", said Mast, "we will fight immediately, no matter how little we have to fight with." Mast said, with what seemed like utter sincerity, that the French Army would implicitly follow his and Giraud's orders, with resistance expected only from the French Navy.

While we conferred, some lieutenants from Mast's staff kept watch out of the windows and walked periodically around the gardens and patio, keeping an eye out for interference of any kind. No one had appeared by lunchtime when Tessier, with the help of one of the French, cooked chicken with a hot Arab sauce and served it with some red wine and oranges. General Mast was forced to leave at lunchtime to return to Algiers to tend to his duties as Commander of the Algerian Division.

Before lunch I wanted to stretch and went out to the patio for a bit. I told one of the French guards I should like to see what it looked like around

the house. He offered to change uniforms with me. I put on his French uniform and left my hat off while I walked around a bit outside the wall and in view of the highway. Fortunately, no car came by during my tour in the garden.

During the early afternoon we split up into special groups for detailed discussions of various phases of our plans. The French were ready with voluminous written information which later turned out to be accurate in every respect. They gave us locations and strengths of troops and Naval units; told us where supplies, including gasoline and ammunition, were stored; related details of airports where resistance would be heaviest and information as to where airborne troops could safely land.

I had said in the morning we would have to get out to the submarine the following evening, but as conversation piled up after Mast's late arrival, it became increasingly difficult to see how we would make it. Furthermore, I had the surf on that wide, flat beach always on my mind. Through the windows I could observe the sea showing more and more white caps as the day wore on. There was a windmill near the house whose increasingly rapid clacking told me audibly that a light breeze was building up into a fresh onshore wind.

It was mid-afternoon when the phone rang. Tessier answered and quickly turned from the instrument yelling, "The police will be here in a few minutes". Instantly a full-scale French "flap" broke out. Officers ran in every direction. Some of the Frenchmen changed into civilian clothes with a speed I have seen exceeded only by professional quick-change artists. Before I had quite decided what was going on, one of General Mast's officers ran past me, with a suitcase in one hand, out to his car which immediately took off in the direction of Algiers. Other Frenchmen went out the windows and disappeared into the brush along the beach; I can't say that I blame any one of the, for their lives would certainly be in jeopardy if caught.

Finally only Tessier and one French Officer, Murphy and his assistant, Ridgeway Knight, remained behind. I was feeling pretty deserted, as well as pretty agitated as to just where we could go to escape the police. I knew it would not be safe inside the house and I had strong anxiety that some telltale object might be left around our meeting room by accident. Furthermore, our British Commandos were sleeping upstairs. I flew up the stairs and called them. To their questions, "Where shall we go", I said, "Take to the woods on the beach and get the boats out of here --- fast".

But there was no time! Only one, carrying the walkie-talkie, made the beach to warn the SERAPH of what was doing. Tessier relocked the room containing the boats just as the police car pulled up.

"Where can we hide", I asked.

He motioned all of us to rush down through a trap door in the patio into a wine cellar. There was no time for discussion. We had our musette bags with us, stuffed with the incriminating French documents which, if found upon us, would make it pretty tough.

Tessier, his French associate, Murphy and Knight remained visible to the police.

It was pitch black in the small cellar at the foot of the steep, open stairway. We could so plainly hear every word and every move above us that we knew it was imperative to keep absolutely still.

Tessier, Murphy and the two others put on a good show for the police. They clanked bottles around, sang a little, and were very jovial indeed.

It turned out the Arab servants had been suspicious about being sent away; then, when they had seen footprints on the beach, they had told the police about it.

Murphy identified himself as the American Consul in Algiers. He boldly indicated a little party was in progress and that there were women in the upstairs rooms and urged the French Police not to embarrass him. We could hear the police tramping around looking in corners and behind furniture. Every time their feet approached our trap door, seven hearts popped into seven throats.

I knelt at the foot of the stairs with a carbine in my hand. It was my intention, if they came down the stairs, to try to fight our way clear without shooting; but all of us were prepared to shoot if it were necessary. I whispered that no one was to fire unless I did. It might be hours before we would be able to get through the surf to our submarine, and anything we could do to avoid further police trouble was of the utmost importance.

Poor Courtney, who had had the trouble with the over-turned boat the night before, was seized with a coughing fit. He choked and sputtered in the darkness and finally whispered to me, "General, I'm afraid I'll choke."

I answered, "I'm afraid you won't!"

I slipped him a wad of chewing gum on which I had already worked for a while. This quieted him. The police were moving around above us for a full half hour. They finally agreed to go back to town and check with their chief for further instructions. They were frankly suspicious and they told Tessier so.

Finally there was quiet up above, but we did not dare move until Murphy opened the door and said, "This is Bob. They've gone, but they'll be back."

"How long?", I asked.

"Just a little while," he said, "better clear the house."

We got the boats down to the beach and hid them in the woods, staying there ourselves, out-of-sight.

Captain Livingstone had made contact with the submarine with our walkie-talkie and told them we were in trouble. Later we learned they were pretty frantic on board, but it was just dusk and we could easily see that the waves were too high to take off in small boats.

Tessier and the remaining Frenchmen were pretty excited too; we were a

terrible liability to them and there was nothing they wanted more than to get rid of their remaining guests.

The waves looked impossible, but we had to make a try as it got full dark or risk ruining the whole mission. I decided to make the experiment with Courtney. I knew I was going to be soaked, so I stripped to shorts and my OD shirt. It was cold paddling around in the water. We tried one spot and were immediately overturned by a wave. I had put my money belt in my rolled-up trousers, not wishing to be weighted down by all that gold in a turbulent surf and heavy undertow. That's when the pants and my money --- later so notorious in news dispatches --- were lost. (I was amazed when we finally landed at Algiers to get those pants back from Murphy all cleaned and pressed. They had been picked up on the beach after our departure; but the gold was never seen again.)

This attempt convinced us that a launching was impossible under present circumstances. We went back into the woods to wait, posting sentries in each direction. The French kept rushing back and forth to the house, but reported that nothing had happened there.

We sent one Frenchman to Cherchel with a pocketfull of gold to try to buy or rent a fishing boat to take us out to the submarine. He had no success. The fishermen were afraid to take a chance on such a mysterious mission even for any amount of money.

We talked about possible alternative ways of getting off. Somebody proposed false papers and an automobile ride to Spanish Morocco; but I vetoed that as too risky. I had told Lt. Jewel that we might have trouble and to stand by in the second rendezvous one mile east on the second night, if we didn't make it the first. We had pretty good radio contact with the submarine by walkie-talkie, using coded phrases. The sub was then only a dangerous 3/4 mile off shore --- almost at the edge of the breakers. This was a very dangerous spot, but Jewel was a "Can do boy". It was getting toward midnight. The police had not returned; I was cold, wet, and almost naked, to say nothing of being very hungry. None of us had had anything to eat since Tessier's impromptu luncheon. I decided to climb up for a look at the house and to see what I could do about some food and possibly a sweater.

Tessier was very upset. He didn't want me in the house and urged me to get out as quickly as possible. I held out for some bread and wine, a pair of pants, and two of Tessier's sweaters, all uncomfortably tight. I had just started to put the bread and a couple of bottles of wine under the sweater when the police arrived again. Tessier was the most frightened man I had ever seen. He said I dare not use the path but "Please, for God's sake, get out of the house". I was barefoot and my feet were already cut up from the stones on the path, but I jumped over the cement wall on the sea-side of the house and dropped painfully some 10 feet to the path over the bluff, making my way down to the beach. I groped my way back to the waiting party about 1:30 AM. Captain Wright, our Navy man, had been making a careful study of the beach to see if there was any place where the surf was a little lighter than elsewhere. The submarine was telling us over the walkie-talkie that they needed a guide light and that none was visible from the house. By this time the French reported the police had gone away again and I sent one of the men to make Tessier turn on the light in the window. He had turned it off during the excitement after the police search.

We surrounded our little party like the plainsmen in Covered-Wagon days with sentries, armed with carbines, lying down at all sides. At 3:30 AM, I felt I could not remain inactive any longer.

"Maybe you and I", I said to Jerry Wright, "can make it; let's have a try".

At 4:00 AM, Knight, Tessier, and Murphy all stripped and carried our boat out into the water to try and steady it through the breakers. We passed the first one all right, and I heaved a sigh of relief. Just then the second loomed up ahead, gleaming just a little in the starlight and appearing about a hundred feet high. I knocked Wright's Navy hat off trying to call his attention to what was coming and he grabbed it in mid-air. We made it and were in the clear after we had passed the second breaker. The other boats followed immediately, but, without exception, capsized; our musette bags and brief cases loaded with the secret papers were soaked as were the papers I had stored inside my borrowed sweater. We seemed to be paddling for hours without seeing anything before we spotted the loom of the Seraph in the blackness.

The others finally arrived; the last being Holmes' boat. A big wave knocked it against the side of the submarine and broke the framework of the falboot. Colonel Holmes just barely made it up the side as the boat filled and disappeared with his musette bag inside it. This was a dangerous clue to leave behind. A falboot has an airpocket at each end which might keep the wreck afloat. It could be washed up on the beach and either with or without the bag of papers it could cause us and our associates ashore plenty of trouble. Worst of all, the bag contained secret letters Murphy had given Holmes to deliver in England. This would reveal Murphy's presence at our rendezvous. My anxiety over this material possibly being found overshadowed my elation at having completed the most delicate part of the mission.

I wanted to stay and look around a little, but the sky was already glowing with approaching day, and Lt. Jewell said he was most anxious to submerge. We reluctantly went below and started back toward Gibraltar.

We were all soaked and exhausted; I asked Lt. Jewell, "Haven't I heard somewhere about the British Navy having a rum ration, even on submarines?"

"Yes, sir," answered the Lieutenant, "but on submarines only in emergencies."

"Well," I said, "I think this is an emergency. What about a double rum ration?"

"OK, sir," said Lt. Jewell, "if an officer of sufficient rank will sign the order."

"Will I do?" I asked.

It seemed that I was a satisfactory signer and I actually put my name to a formal written order for a double rum ration to crew and passengers of the P-219.

As the morning wore on, my worry increased. I felt I simply had to get a message back to General Eisenhower for relay to Murphy. Much against Lt. Jewell's better judgment, we surfaced long enough to send a coded radio to Gibraltar in which I reported the lost boat and urgently requested Murphy to have the beach searched. The boat and musette bag were never found although my trousers and a light raincoat lost at the same time did later turn up.

Throughout the next night we travelled on the surface, and, after drying ourselves off and sleeping a bit, my group devoted themselves to sorting out wet equipment and carefully drying the secret papers in the submarine's engine room.

On October 24, being far enough away from the African coast, we ran on the surface again. I sent a radio to Gibraltar asking for one of the two flying boats the Prime Minister had assigned to us to rendezvous as soon as practicable and fly us to Gibraltar.

The Catalina picked us up by mid-afternoon and we transferred in falboots, taking off for Gibraltar while Lt. Jewell and his gallant crew gave us a cheer from their deck.

I had this cable ready for immediate coding and transmission:

Following cable from CLARK TO COMMANDING GENERAL EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS LONDON FOR EISENHOWERS EYES ONLY. BEGINS.

Brief summary of events to date are given below pending more complete details to be furnished on our arrival. It was necessary to stand off rendezvous point for thirty-six hours submerged under water waiting signal to land because had not heard from MCGOWAN (MURPHY) as to exact time of meeting. Finally made definite contact with him and weather being favorable we went ashore in four canvas canoes about midnight twenty-second. Held conference with General Mast who represented General Giraud and five staff officers commencing at 0700 hours on twenty-third. Following general line anticipated by you our discussions are considered satisfactory. Mast is contacting Giraud today. Giraud expected to give definite decision by Tuesday which is anticipated to be favorable. I base this conclusion on their favorable reaction to the size of the force the United States could make available for such an operation. All questions were settled satisfactorily except for the time the French would assume supreme command. My view on this question was submitted to Giraud through Mast for his consideration with the definite understanding that my proposal must yet be confirmed by you. Have obtained extremely valuable intelligence data which will be prepared as soon as I return for immediate radio transmission to commanders concerned. Our operations plans appear to be sound considering discussions and information received. Necessity for our being prepared promptly to occupy Tunisia with airborne units confirmed abundantly. Anticipate that the bulk of the French Army and air forces will offer little resistance whether Giraud assumes leadership in North Africa or not. I promised during conversation with Mast delivery of two thousand small arms with ammunition by submarine at earliest practicable date to vicinity of our landing. Also promised to furnish submarine to bring Giraud from France to North Africa. French insist this submarine must be American. Initial

resistance by French Navy and coast defenses indicated by naval information which also indicates that this resistance will fall off rapidly as our forces land. Detailed conferences continued throughout day until 1900 hours when local police intervened having become suspicious of increased activity in rendezvous area. This event brought conference to abrupt conclusion. While Frenchmen flew in all directions our party hid in empty repeat empty wine cellar of the house while an argument ensued with the police. We made for woods near beach during lull in conversation with police. There we awaited favorable surf and conditions to permit us to reembark. One boat capsized and was damaged in our first effort to reembark and further attempt was futile in view of high waves. Remaining in hiding we made another attempt to embark at 0430 on the 23rd. After two had capsized at beach all boats reached submarine but one was broken while boarding submarine. Except for brief surfacing to send message to Gibraltar ran submerged during daylight hours of 23rd. With conditions ideal for the transfer to flying boat available morning 24th Gibraltar was asked to dispatch Catalina to rendezvous with us at sea to expedite return. Will inform you time and place of arrival in UK. ENDS.

Gibraltar offered us a number of pleasures, not the least of them hot baths and the opportunity to be a little smug with the admiral who had taken such a dim view of our mission. I had a conference with the British about sending 2,000 small arms to General Mast by submarine near our own rendezvous point.

Our B-17's took off for England late on the night of the 24th.

On arrival after a rough, cold trip, I went directly to Telegraph Cottage, General Ike's country place, where he and Bedell Smith were waiting for me. I gave them a complete account of the affair. Ike was delighted and phoned the Prime Minister to tell him that I was back. He asked us both for supper that night. The others were in London getting detailed messages moving to implement what we had learned in Africa.

Generals Patton, Anderson, Fredendall and Ryder, the field commanders of various parts of TORCH, were given detailed data as it might affect their units. It was reassuring to them to know we had corroborated much of our own original intelligence work.

The Prime Minister was bubbling over with enthusiasm as he, Ike and I talked things over at a little table. He made it clear that he would have loved to have made such a trip himself.

A few days later I was summoned to Buckingham Palace where King George wanted to talk with me about the trip. The date was for 11:30 AM and General Eisenhower was with me, as the King wanted to bid him goodbye before we took off for North Africa via Gibraltar. My pants had already begun to make history, for the King's secretary when introduced to me said, "I know all about you. You're the one who made the fabulous trip; didn't you get stranded on the beach without your pants?"

We walked down a long, cold hall. The Palace was even more chilly than most English houses, apparently for fuel conservation reasons. The King was waiting for us in a huge room from which all the chandeliers and pictures had been removed because of bomb damage. King George shook hands and immediately plunged into a discussion of TORCH. He had heard all about my trip and said, "I thoroughly enjoyed the statement in your cable that you had been forced to hide in an 'empty repeat empty wine cellar'".

We talked for 40 minutes, discussing Giraud at some length. The King said, "No one trusts Darlan". He recalled meeting the French Admiral at a luncheon and said he clearly remembered "Darlan's shifty eyes". I was most favorably impressed by King George's grasp of the military picture and the up-to-dateness of his information.

I felt he was rather moved when he finally bade us goodbye and said to each of us in turn, "goodbye, and God speed".

What then remained was to convert the detailed information obtained on this story-book trip into detailed plans and to make it pay off. Without exception the data the French gave us turned out to be accurate. Their confidence in us was, I am sure, strengthened by our being able so quickly to come through, not only with information, but also with a far greater operation than even they had hoped for.

From the American and British viewpoints our few days of tough travelling, our anxiety when the police raided the rendezvous house, our cold wet vigil on the African beach paid off in spectacular terms of lives saved. We were much surer of where we were going in North Africa and how to get there, as well as of how much or little French opposition we would meet and where we would meet it. There are a lot of American and British boys back home with their families today instead of being buried in North Africa as a result of General Mast and his group of patriots meeting with us at Cherchel.