

COMBINED CHIEFS OF STAFF

TRIDENT

MINUTES

4TH MEETING, THE WHITE HOUSE, 5:00 P.M., 21 MAY 1943

PRESENT

British

The Prime Minister
Field Marshal Sir John Dill
General Sir Alan F. Brooke
Admiral of the Fleet
Sir Dudley Pound
Air Chief Marshal
Sir Charles F. A. Portal
Lt. Gen. Sir Hastings L. Ismay

U. S.

The President
Admiral Wm. D. Leahy
General G. C. Marshall
Admiral E. J. King
Lt. Gen. J. T. McNarney

SECRETARIES

Brig. General J. R. Deane
Brigadier E. I. C. Jacob

West Africa. However, apart from the one squadron which they had already given the French toward the build-up of a French Air Force, the entire project was in the hands of the United States.

7. BOMBING OF PLOESTI

After reading a paragraph on this subject, the *PRESIDENT* asked how far the Ploesti oil fields were from North Africa.

GENERAL McNARNEY replied that Ploesti was 895 miles from Tobruk and 875 miles from Aleppo.

THE PRIME MINISTER asked when it was envisaged conducting the proposed operation.

GENERAL McNARNEY said that it should be accomplished either in June or early July because of the excellent weather conditions which obtain in those months, and also because a blow struck then would coincide with the summer campaign in Russia. He said it would require two B-24 groups to be taken from the United Kingdom for a period of about four weeks, that is, two weeks prior to mounting the operation and two weeks after it had been completed. Additionally, one B-24 group on its way to the United Kingdom would be diverted to this operation and thus be about two weeks late in its arrival in Great Britain. He said that officers with special sights for low level bombing which would be required for the attack on Ploesti were now on their way to England and North Africa to give instructions in the use of these sights. Those going to North Africa were to present the plan to the Commander in Chief, Allied Force Headquarters, who was then to submit his comments to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.

SIR CHARLES PORTAL said that there were two considerations which were of paramount importance in deciding whether the proposed bombing of Ploesti should be undertaken. The first was whether or not aircraft should be diverted from pre-*HUSKY* preparation. The British Chiefs of Staff were doubtful if this should be done. The second consideration was that unless the operation was fully successful, it would make subsequent operations from more suitable bases, which might later beco.

available, more difficult. This could be attributed to the additional defenses that the enemy would install. He added, however, that since the prize was so great and because of weather conditions, the subject should be thoroughly explored before a decision was made.

GENERAL MARSHALL said that if there was a fair degree of success, an attack against Ploesti would be a staggering blow to the enemy, probably the greatest single blow that could be struck.

THE PRESIDENT pointed out that even if the operation were not successful, it would result in diverting considerable German anti-aircraft equipment from the Russian Front.

THE PRIME MINISTER then asked the Chiefs of Staff to consider the subject report in the light of the discussion that had taken place, with a view to making appropriate amendments.

SIR ALAN BROOKE informed the Prime Minister that the report submitted included only those decisions which had been agreed upon thus far. They were still to be related with the resources that are available. When this was done, the items which had been considered would be incorporated in a final report, which would be submitted on Monday.