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CHAPTER V

PLANS FOR AIR OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF  
THE INVASION

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1. Planning and Directives by the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe; Initial Preparations. So far as can be gathered from sources hitherto available it was only at a very late stage that the Luftwaffe Operations Staff concerned itself with plans for the commitment of the Luftwaffe in support of the intended invasion of Britain. Initially it considered that its main mission would be to conduct strategic air warfare against Britain, a task which had been assigned to the Luftwaffe in Directive # 17 of 1 August 1940. According to this directive the Luftwaffe was to employ all means available to neutralize the Royal Air Force and the directive opened with the express statement that these air operations were to create the essential conditions for the ultimate defeat of Great Britain. The directive also stipulated that, in the attacks scheduled against British ports as soon as local and temporary German air superiority was secured, every effort was to be made to spare ports on the south coast of England in view of the planned German amphibious operation. 260

Directive # 16 of 16 July 1940 had stressed that the most important task for the Luftwaffe was to prevent counteraction by the Royal Air Force. Concurrently, the Luftwaffe was to neutralize coastal defenses from which the 261

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British could take the German landing points under fire, and was to break initial British resistance and scatter British reinforcements moving into the landing areas.

The nature of air warfare is such that it permits a quick change of objectives. In other words, it was possible without any difficulty to adapt the operations of the Luftwaffe at short notice to a new operational concept--to divert the air effort from general strategic warfare against Britain to action in direct support of Operation Sea Lion.

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260. See p. 176 above.

261. See p. 79 above.

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The question remains open whether strategic warfare of the type planned at the time and executed later was the most suitable means to create the essential conditions for an invasion of England. A conclusive examination of this problem would exceed the scope of the present study, however, the sole purpose of which is <sup>to</sup> elucidate the operational plans prepared by the Luftwaffe against the eventuality of Operation Sea Lion being put into effect. It is necessary in this connection to stress that both the Wehrmacht High Command--as the highest German command authority--and the Navy High Command emphasized unequivocally time and again that the fundamental condition for an amphibious operation against Britain was uncontested German air superiority. It was assumed that it should be possible to reduce the combat capabilities of the British Royal Air Force to such an extent that Britain would be unable to offer any appreciable resistance in the air when the invasion was launched. Achievement of this aim, it was reasoned, would facilitate greatly the accomplishment of the numerous other missions for which the Luftwaffe would be responsible in the event of an invasion.

On 27 August 1940 the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe issued his first order to the air fleet commands

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concerning Operation Sea Lion. On 5 September 1940 he

issued his next order, supplementing and in some parts

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modifying the original order, and informing the air fleets

of the changes contemplated by the Army High Command in

its existing plans. These changes had become necessary

after a decision had been finally reached in the matter

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262. Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe, Fuehrungsstab, Ia, # 5925/40, g.Kdos., Chefsache, 27 Aug 40. These facts are evident from an order by the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe of 5 Sep 40 (see Footnote 263, below). The text of the first order is not available.

263. Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe, Fuehrungsstab, Ia, # 5944/40, g.Kdos., Chefs (op 1), 5 Sep 40. See source appendix # 26.

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of the landing base areas. The order of 5 September provided for direct support of the amphibious operation by the Second Air Fleet, employing its VIII Air Corps, in the zone of Army Group A (Sixteenth Army), and by the Third Air Fleet, employing its I Air Corps, in the zone of the Ninth Army. In the event of a later commitment of elements of Army Group B, these elements were to receive direct air support from units of the Third Air Fleet. Concerning the commitment of the two AAA corps it was thought impracticable to return the AAA regiments meanwhile transferred to Berlin and Central Germany, and they were to be replaced by units from the Second and Third Air Fleets. The boundary line between the two air fleets, including the AAA corps, for reconnaissance and combat activities was established as follows: St. Quentin (Third Air Fleet)-Boulogne (Third)-Hastings (Second)-Reigate (Second)-Mendon (Third)-Estres (Second)-Banbury (Third). Strategic reconnaissance for Army Group A and the Sixteenth and Ninth Armies under its control were to be carried out by the Second and Third Air Fleets, and the Luftwaffe General with the Commander in Chief of the Army had received instructions to employ the reconnaissance units assigned to the Commander in Chief of the Army only in agreement



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with the two air fleets. Particular importance was attached to complete reconnaissance coverage against hostile naval forces prior to commencement of the amphibious operations, for which purpose plans provided for the transfer of air reconnaissance units of the Luftwaffe General with the Commander in Chief of the Army to the two air fleets. Strong bomber forces were to be stationed near the coast at the eastern and western entrances to the English Channel. Through brief attacks against approaching hostile naval forces these bomber units were to protect the flanks of the amphibious operation. These tasks were to be performed without affecting the execution of the missions of direct air support and counter-air action. In accordance with an order by the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe of 27 August, both air fleets were again instructed to establish immediately contact with the appropriate Army and Navy commands. All preparations were

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264. Oberbefehlshaber des Heeres, Gen St d. H Op. Abt. (Ia), # 480/40, 5. Kdos. Chefs., 30 Aug 40: Anweisung fuer die Vorbereitung des Unternehmens "Seelowe." See Source # 24 and pp. 160-161 above.

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to be completed by 15 September.

A note dated 6 September 1940 in the records of the Luftwaffe Operations Staff specifies the following missions for the Luftwaffe in support of Operation Sea Lion:

(1) To prevent the approach of hostile naval forces to the sea areas involved; (2) To attack British ground forces moving from north to the south coast of England; (3) To protect German sea transports; (4) To protect debarkation operations; and (5) To conduct and provide air support for airborne operations.

For these purposes air reconnaissance was to be carried out over the eastern and western approaches to the English Channel. Plans provided for bomber and dive-bomber forces of the Second and Third Air Fleets to be held ready for action at short notice against seaborne targets, for fighter and twin-engine fighter support in the combat areas on the south coast of England, and for reconnaissance against British ground forces approaching the south coast. The Fifth Air Fleet was to attack the Royal Air Force in North Britain in order to contain strong British air defense forces there.

The plan of operations for the German air forces provided for opening attacks by strong fighter and

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twin-engine fighter forces distributed over the entire area of operations as far forward as their range permitted. It was hoped that this would make it possible to find and destroy large British fighter defense elements, thereby weakening the British air defenses in preparation for the bomber attacks which were to follow. Later, while the British fighter units were on the ground to refuel, strong German bomber forces escorted by twin- and single-engine fighters were to exploit this moment of weakness in the British air defenses for attacks against the northern areas of the combat zones. After the German twin- and single-engine fighter forces had prepared for a renewed take-off, the rest of the bomber units were to be dispatched in repeat attacks against the northern areas. In the next phase strong bomber forces escorted by twin- and single-engine fighters were to attack the southern areas. On the following day, air operations were to be concentrated against the British armament industry. Supplementary

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to these air activities, the Fifth Air Fleet suggested that, concurrently with the first opening attacks, it should dispatch its units in the forenoon in continuous attacks against the British airfields within its zone. These attacks were to be followed in the afternoon by attacks against British aircraft factories.

The tentative deadline for completion of Luftwaffe preparations, 15 September 1940, corresponded to that of the Army. As previously mentioned, the nature of air warfare would have permitted a quick change of missions in the conduct of air operations. Now, however, only ten days remained to complete all preparations. In this short time all detail agreements had to be reached with the Army and the Navy so that doubts are justifiable that the time still available was adequate for considered and thorough planning.

On the other hand it must be borne in mind that the air corps did not receive their first information at the beginning of September concerning the contemplated invasion of England, but rather that they had received preliminary orientations as far back as at the end of Juny or the beginning of August. Thus, a post-war report on the operations of the I Air Corps reveals that conferences between that corps and the Ninth Army took place as early as at

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the end of July 1940. The air units of this corps were to transfer to near-coast airfields only on the day of the invasion after their first take-off against England. Plans also provided for air signal liaison and aircraft reporting teams to cross the Channel with the first Army elements. According to this report the I Air Corps reported to the Second Air Fleet already at the end of August that it had completed all preparations. Another post-war study, on the operations of the VIII Air Corps, states that this corps in early August received an initial general directive

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265. Colonel Heinrich Push: Bemerkungen zum Einsatz des I. Fliegerkorps.
266. General der Flieger Hans Seidemann: Der Einsatz des VIII. Fliegerkorps 1 Jul-1 Oct 40 an der Kanalkueste Frankreichs (1953).

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as early as at the beginning of August instructing it to contact the Sixteenth Army, where it learned for the first time that it was slated to provide close air support for the army in its planned landing in mid-September in the Dover-Folkestone area. The report continues that only very general orders were received for some time, but that the air corps headquarters applied itself in full earnest to preparations for its new mission and that, after a small planning staff had been attached to the Sixteenth Army at the end of August, the air corps completed all preparations down to the last details by 15 September.

On the whole, however, the various Luftwaffe commands in August treated preparations for direct support of Operation Sea Lion as a matter of secondary importance because the requirement of first importance was to create the conditions essential to the execution of the operation namely, to establish clear German air superiority over the Channel area and the southern parts of England.

2. Air Fleets and Air Corps: Planning and Operational Orders. Unfortunately, the source material available is inadequate to permit a fully detailed examination of the planned air operations of the two participating air fleets. Only very few records of the Third Air Fleet

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have been uncovered, but the more complete data available on the Second Air Fleet to some extent make it possible to also draw conclusions concerning the plan of the Third Air Fleet.

On 14 September 1940 the Wehrmacht High Command issued an order postponing the execution of Operation Sea Lion.<sup>267</sup> the 17 September was set as a tentative date for a new order,<sup>268</sup> and all preparations were to continue.

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267. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L. # 33287/40, G.Kds., Chfs., 14 Sep 40. See Source # 27 in Source Appendix.

268. The reasons for this postponement will be treated in more detail in Chapter VII, 1.

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On the same day, 14 September, Army Group A and Naval  
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Command West issued their orders.

Plans provided for the air commands to establish headquarters as follows:

Second Air Fleet, southwest of Sangatte

Third Air Fleet, at Deauville

Eighth Air Fleet, at St. Inglevert

First Air Fleet, at Le Touquet.

On 17 September the Second Air Fleet issued a tentative combat directive for operations supporting Operation  
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Sea Lion, in which all previous fragmentary orders were consolidated, with certain modifications. According to this directive the mission of the Luftwaffe was (1) To neutralize the Royal Air Force in the Channel area where the crossing was to take place; (2) To protect the cross-Channel transportation movement against attack by British naval forces; and (3) To support the landing by attacking the British coastal defenses and British ground forces. The 7th Air Division was also to be committed for these purposes.

AAA, ground organization, and air signal elements were to cross together with the successive army echelons. Certain elements of the ground organization were to cross with the first echelon and prepare landing strips at various places for emergency landings by fighter and dive-bomber



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units and for regular landings by Ju-52 aircraft. Immediately after a large enough beachhead was established, 1 dive-bomber and 1 fighter wing were to be transferred across the Channel, to be followed at short intervals by additional dive-bomber and fighter wings of the VIII Air Corps.

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269. Heeresgruppenkommando A, Ia, # 1500/40, g.Kds.,  
Chefs, 14 Sep 40: Heeresgruppenbefehl # 1 fuer die  
Durchfuehrung von Seeloewe. See Source # 28.

270. Luftflottenkommando 2, Fuehrungsabt./Ia, # 7229/40,  
g.Kds., Chefs., 17 Sep 40: Vorlaeufige Kampfanweisung  
fuer Durchfuehrung des Unternehmens Seeloewe. See  
Source # 31.

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Special Air Administrative Area Command 300 was assigned responsibility for the proper and timely loading and unloading of the Luftwaffe elements slated for movement by sea, and was also required to make timely preparations for the necessary initial transportations and resupply movements by air.

The Second Air Fleet was assigned the mission of (1) Protecting the embarkation, the seaborne movement, the landing, and the advance of the Sixteenth Army against air and surface attack, and of supporting the army's operations. To perform this mission the air fleet assigned the following responsibilities:

9th Air Division. Protection of the right flank of one transport fleet against attack by British naval units. By means of repeated all-out attacks the division was to prevent action in any form by the British Navy against the transportation movement. In the night preceding the jump-off division units were to heavily mine the Thames River ports and the ports in which British light and heavy naval units were stationed along the east, south and west coast of England. These mining operations were to be repeated in the following nights to keep the naval units bottled up. This action was to be supported by destructive attacks car-

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carried out by other air corps against the ports, and the division was to release to these corps all bombers not required in its own operations. The bombing attacks were scheduled for the night preceding the actual invasion. The air fleet emphasized that the success of the entire Operation Sea Lion would be influenced decisively by the results achieved by the 9th Air Division in the execution of its combat mission.

VIII Air Corps. Support of the seaborne operations of the Sixteenth Army and the airborne operations of the 7th Air Division through neutralization of the British coastal batteries, pockets of resistance, and anti-aircraft artillery forces in the areas involved. Plans provided for reinforcement of the corps on the day of attack if necessary. In close cooperation with the Sixteenth Army after the landing, the air corps was to support the landed forces of the army and of the 7th Air Division, and was to prevent the movement of British reserves to the battle area. Main emphasis was to be on the destruction of fortifications and action against British armored and motorized forces. Particular value was placed on the maintenance of contact with the

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landed elements of the army and of the 7th Air Division.

II Air Corps. Prevention of the forward movement of the British operational reserves stationed north of London. If this could not be achieved in any other way, the air units were to block the entrances and exits to built-up areas in the line of approach. Concurrently, corps forces were to attack British airfields within its zone in order to prevent the participation of British bomber forces in the battle.

Fighter Commands. Destruction of all hostile aircraft appearing in the Channel-crossing, shelter, and battle areas and protection of German bomber units.

7th Air Division. In accordance with special orders.

Italian Division. In accordance with orders to be issued later which would also define the area of operations.

Night Fighter Division. Continued action against British night bombers. Concurrently the division was to prepare for operations over the English Channel.

II Flak Corps. Antiaircraft protection for the embarkation operations of the Sixteenth Army, concurrently with direct support of the army forces in ground combat, particularly in repelling British tank attacks. In addition units of the corps on specially equipped barges were re-

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responsible for protection of the transport fleets against attack by British destroyers and E-boats and aircraft during the crossing. Immediately after establishment of Luftwaffe ground service installations in England light AAA batteries were to be assigned for their protection.

Air Administrative Area Command Belgium-Northern France. Air defense of the port of Antwerp, the canal locks giving access to the sea ports, and the ground service installations in use within its command area.

Air Administrative Area Command Holland. Air defense of the port of Holland and the ground service installations in use within its command area.

The two administrative area commands were to make

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preparations to release the units of the I and II Flak Corps stationed at the ports of Ostende, Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, Etaples, and Dieppe, as well as at the alternate ports of Zeebrugge, Nieuwpoort, and Gravelines. In all cases protection of the ports of embarkation was considered the main mission in AAA operations.

The boundary line between the Second and Third Air Fleets for reconnaissance and bomber forces was established as follows: St. Quentin (Third Air Fleet)-Boulogne (Third)-Hastings (Second)-Reigate (Second)-Mendon (Third)-Estree (Second)-Banbury (Third)-Redditch (Third)-Wolverhampton (Second)-Stafford (Second)-Leek (Third)-Skipton (Second)-Brampton (Second)-North Sunderland (Second).

The Second Air Fleet had assigned its forces the following sectors:

Ninth Air Division. Sea areas east of the east coast of England, including the Thames estuary;

VIII Air Corps. During initial phase: Faversham-Lenham-Goudhurst-Mayfield;

II Air Corps: The areas north of the VIII Air Corps as far as boundary line with Third Air Fleet (Banbury-Kings Lynn-Colchester).

Operational air reconnaissance for the Sixteenth Army

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and the Second Air Fleet was to be conducted by the 122d  
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Reconnaissance Group.

The plan of operations for the Third Air Fleet in its  
zone was similar to that described above. To carry out its  
missions, the Third Air Fleet was assigned the I and IV  
Air Corps and the I Flak Corps.

The original plan for paratrooper units to seize  
Brighton had been abandoned because the Luftwaffe High  
Command desired to hold paratrooper elements in reserve  
for action in particularly threatened areas. 272

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271. For details on strategic and tactical reconnaissance  
see Appendix 31, Par. 12.

272. See p. 165, above.

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Paratrooper forces were to be committed only in the zone of the Sixteenth Army--in the Folkestone area, and on 18 September 1940<sup>273</sup> the Second Air Fleet issued the appropriate directive governing this mission of the 7th Air Division. According to this directive forces of the division were to seize the commanding terrain north and northwest of Folkestone as early as possible on the day of the landing. In detail the division had the following missions:

(1) To open the route across the canal at and west of Hythe in the line of advance of the right flank forces of the Sixteenth Army;

(2) To protect the German landings against British attacks from north and northwest, to be achieved chiefly by closing all routes from Canterbury towards Folkestone;

(3) To support army operations to seize Dover.

After the airdrop on hostile terrain the Seventh Army was to be under the command of the Sixteenth Army, and all details concerning the areas and timing of divisional operations in execution of the above missions were to be arranged directly with the Sixteenth Army. Fighter protection for the airborne operation was to be requested well ahead of time from the Second Air Fleet. If support was required from the VIII Air Corps prior to and during the air drop,



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arrangements were to be made directly with the corps and reported simultaneously to the Second Air Fleet. The air transport groups slated for use in the airborne operation by the 7th Air Division were to return after execution of their mission to their take-off airfields for other employment by the Second Air Fleet.

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273. Luftflottenkommando 2, Fuehrungsabt./Ia, # 7253/40, g.Kds., Chfs., 18 Sep 40: Weisung fuer den Einsatz der 7. Fliegerdivision im Fall Seeloewe.

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On 29 September 1940 the Second Air Fleet issued "special instructions for the sequence of activities in Operation Sea Lion up to and including S-Day." <sup>274</sup> These instructions were only to serve as an initial working basis. Approximately eight days prior to the landing the units of the VIII Air Corps were to commence their attacks against the British coastal batteries. From then on the 122d Reconnaissance Group was to conduct continuous reconnaissance over the probable areas of operations of the Second Air Fleet and the Sixteenth Army. To supplement the minefields laid by naval units, the 9th Air Division was to mine specified areas, particularly the Downs. In addition, the 9th Air Division, the II and VIII Air Corps, and the Italian air division were to launch destructive attacks against approaching British naval units and against ports in which British naval units were stationed along the east and south coast of England.

Operation Herbstreise, a deceptive operation from Norway, was to commence two days prior to the landing in England. Reconnaissance for this purpose was a responsibility of the Fifth Air Fleet. On the same day the 9th Air Division was to commence reconnaissance operations in its sector. The division was also responsible for protection of

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the flank of the transport fleet during the assembly and during the crossing against attack by the British Navy. The ports in which British naval units were stationed were to be mined with increased vigor. The mission of Air Administrative Area Command Belgium-Northern France, the II Flak Corps, and Fighter Commands 1 and 2 was to protect the transport fleet against air attack during embarkation and during the assembly. Deceptive radio communications by Naval Group Command West and the 9th Air Division were to create the impression that ships were en route toward

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274. Luftflottenkommando 2, Fuehrungsabt./1a, # 7245/40, G.Kdos., Chafs., 29 Sep 40: Besondere Anordnungen fuer den Ablauf Seelowe bis zum S-Tag einschliesslich. See Source 34. S-Day was the first day of landing on the English coast.

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the southeast coast of England.

On the day prior to the landing the 9th Air Division was to conduct reconnaissance along the English coast as far as the Firth of Forth, and bomber forces of the II Air Corps were to commence operations to interdict the rail routes and strategic roads from the presumed area in which the British operational reserves were concentrated--north west and west of London--to the battle area. Efforts were to be made particularly to block the entrances and exits to built-up areas and other traffic bottlenecks.

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Commencing at 8-Hour on the day of the landing, the units of the VIII Air Corps were to support the Sixteenth Army by attacking specified targets in the landing zones of the XIII and VII Army Corps.

Forward elements of the VIII Air Corps and sizable elements of the II Flak Corps were to cross the Channel with the first echelon together with reconnoitering detachments of the ground service forces and one construction battalion. During the landing of the Sixteenth Army and the air drop of the 7th Air Division the II and VII Air Corps were to prevent British flanking fire from the Channel positions. For this purpose the British defenses were to be attacked and neutralized in the following areas:

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- (1) Folkestone to Hythe (excluded);
- (2) Romney (excluded) to Dungeness to Rye (excluded);
- (3) The commanding terrain north of the Military Canal in the Marsham-Bonnington-Ham Street-Kingsnorth area, with main emphasis in the eastern parts.

The plan was to lay smoke screens in the Romney-Dungeness-Rye area if weather conditions permitted. The Marsham-Bonnington-Ham Street-Kingsnorth area was to be attacked with high explosives and oil bombs.

Direct arrangements between the II Air Corps and Ar-  
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 Hohmann  
 tillery Regiment/insured that the targets areas would be held under artillery fire during the intervals between

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275. S-Hour was the time at which the Sixteenth Army and the 7th Air Division were to land.

276. The regiment was under direct command by Sixteenth Army Headquarters.

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the individual air attacks and throughout the night.

The Italian Air division was slated for commitment in the Dover area where, in coordinated action with Artillery Regiment Hohmann, it was to neutralize the British flanking positions. Concurrently, units of the division were to attack British ground service installations in the battle area and other elements were to attack the approach routes of the British operational reserves.

If the situation at sea permitted, the 9th Air Division was to support the II Air Corps and the Italian air division in action against Folkestone and Dover. The division was to hold units in reserve, however, for commitment against seaborne targets if the need arose.

The 7th Air Division was slated to jump-land north and northwest of Folkestone. Here, the bomber forces of the VIII Air Corps and the fighter commands had the mission of neutralizing the local British defenses.

The II Flak Corps was to provide air defense for the em- and debarkation of the Sixteenth Army. In addition it was to support the army's operations and to provide covering fire for landed elements of the army forces, and was to repel British naval attacks during the crossing.

Fighter Commands 1 and 2 were to protect German

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bombers and to provide cover for the 7th Air Division during its airborne landing. In addition, they were to protect the transport fleet against air attack during the crossing and while landing.

In the zone of the Third Air Fleet the I Air Corps, committed as a tactical air support corps, was to support the Ninth Army. <sup>277</sup> The corps zone of operations was defined

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277. Generalkommando I Fliegerkorps, Ia, # 1028740 g.Kdo.s.,  
Nur fuer Kommandeure, 19 Sep 40.

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as follows: Mendon (included)-Winchester (included)-Portsmouth (excluded)-Hastings (excluded)-Reigate (excluded).

The corps informed its wings that their targets would probably be troops in movement and in prepared positions, artillery batteries, bunkers, troop camps, railroads, and naval units.

To insure secrecy, participation in the preparatory work was to be restricted to wing and group commanders, each with one assistant. All participants were required to take a special oath of secrecy.

Preparations were to commence immediately and were to include the following points: (1) A checkup of available bomb and detonator supplies with a view to the probable target types; (2) A check of available maps; (3) Map orientation courses for the aircraft crews, with emphasis on the coastal sector from Hastings to Worthing.

Planning was to be based primarily on the new series of vertical and oblique photo maps of this coastal sector in August 1940 and on the map of fortifications.

Orders also prescribed that the aircraft crews were to receive instructions on cooperation with ground forces. As many crews as possible were to receive training in night take-offs and night landings because it was



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essential to insure continued operations from the break of dawn to evening dusk. In addition, the 1st Bomber Wing received instructions to orient its crews in all detail on the use of smoke screening bombs.

To prepare for Operation Sea Lion as part of the current pattern of air warfare, each aircraft crew dispatched on an individual mission received instructions that, if it failed to reach its assigned primary or alternate target, it was to attack the following targets in the coastal area: Bexhill, south of the railroad; Eastbourne, the coastal and northern outskirts; the old artillery battery south of Newhaven; Brighton, the coastal outskirts with main emphasis in the east; and the old batteries south of Shoreham.

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In addition, the rule was established that every air photo reconnaissance plane would take photos each time it crossed the coastal area, even if it crossed outside the corps zone of operations, and all aircraft crews were instructed to be on the lookout for troop camps, fortification works, and artillery positions.

One day prior to this order, the corps had instructed its wings to detach liaison officers to the Ninth Army. These officers were to be allocated to the several army corps with the mission of maintaining contact with the air corps and with the air liaison officer at headquarters of the Ninth Army. In addition, in joint Luftwaffe-Army exercises in preparation for Operation Sea Lion they were to advise their army staffs both during planning and execution, and were to inform them on the capabilities of the I Air Corps in support of the army corps in various tactical situations and to assist the army staffs in requesting air support. The officers selected for these assignments were required to be able to judge precisely the capabilities of the bomber and dive-bomber units controlled by the air corps and above all had to be conversant with the principles governing the commitment of bombers with and without fighter escorts. Above all they had to be able to calculate

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precisely the time requirements for the issue of orders and for approach flights to targets. Each air liaison officer was assigned an air signal detachment. The officers designated for these posts were to report to I Air Corps Headquarters for orientation by 1000 on 29 September 1940.

3. Preparations for Reconnaissance and Ground Organization Activities. The plans for tactical and strategic reconnaissance for the preparation and execution of Operation Sea Lion will not be dealt with in detail in this study. However, the following points are of importance for an appraisal of the overall circumstances.

The close reconnaissance units of the Luftwaffe, which were responsible for the conduct of battle reconnaissance, were under the command of the Luftwaffe Generals attached to the various army headquarters. Complete source material

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278. Generalkommando I Fliegerkorps, # 10289/40, G.Koos.,  
Nur fuer Kommandeure, 18 Sep 40.

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on this subject is available only for the Sixteenth Army.

The Commander of the Luftwaffe attached to the Sixteenth Army will be referred to here as the Tactical Air Support Command. It was only on 30 August 1940 that this command issued directives governing the preparation and training of the Sixteenth Army reconnaissance for partici-

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pation in Operation Sea Lion, but the squadrons already had received a study on the subject of the employment of the army air and antiaircraft artillery units in the event of the execution of Operation Sea Lion. This study was to serve as a basis for the training which the squadrons were now to carry out and which covered the following subjects:

(1) Instruction on the military-geographical situation of England, climatic and maritime conditions in the Channel, and what aircraft crews were to do if forced down while at sea;

(2) Map exercises based on various tactical situations;

(3) Field maneuvers, including motor vehicle operation in dune sand, the loading of motor vehicles, cooperation with forward command posts, cooperation of air artillery spotters with seaborne artillery, air smoke screening operations, the defense of forward airfields, and air-sea rescue operations.

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On 14 September 1940 the Tactical Air Support Command issued orders concerning operations of the ground service organization of the Sixteenth Army air reconnaissance squadrons in the execution of Operation Sea Lion. Each reconnaissance squadron was to embark an advanced command post together with the tactical commander of the advance echelon of the army division to which it was attached.

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279. Kommandeur der Luftwaffe beim AOK 16, Ia, # 1388/40, g.Kdos., 30 Aug 40: Richtlinien fuer Vorbereitung und Ausbildung bei den Aufklaerungstaffeln der 16. Armeefuer Fall Seelowe.

280. Ibid, # 1481/40, g.Kdos., 14 Sep 40: Befehl fuer den Einsatz der Fliegerbodenorganisation der Aufklaerungstaffeln der 16. Arme beim Unternehmen Seelowe.

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These command posts were to be staffed by 1 officer and 9 men. Tactical airfield operating detachments were also formed and were to embark with the several corps headquarters of the army with the mission of reconnoitering and constructing tactical airfields in England. The size and equipment of these airfield detachments was as follows:

1 Aircraft servicing team, 1 officer, 30 enlisted men.

Equipment: 1 car, 1 personnel truck, 1 fuel tank truck (3600 liters--approximately 900 gallons), 1 truck with 8 barrels each 300 liters/<sup>aviation fuel</sup> (approximately 75 gallons), 1 truck with servicing equipment, 1 armored caterpillar tractor (for ammunition), 1 truck with fuel barrels, small arms and antiaircraft ammunition, and type E and B ammunition, 3 motorcycles.

1 Type C radio team, 1 noncommissioned officer, 3 men.

Equipment: 1 truck.

1 light IOU-W radio team, 1 noncommissioned officer 5 men.

Equipment: 1 special type truck.

1 light telephone construction crew, 1 noncommissioned officer, 7 men.

Equipment: 1 Type 2 car, 1 truck.

1 AAA Section, 3 noncommissioned officers, 10 men.

Equipment: 2 Type 30 20-mm AAA guns.

1 Guard platoon, 30 men.

Equipment: 1 personnel truck.

1 motorized engineer platoon, 30 men.

Equipment: 3 trucks with engineer equipment.

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The main elements of the ground service organization for the tactical reconnaissance units were only to be shipped after tactical airfields were established in England.

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As a rule strategic air reconnaissance was a direct responsibility of air fleet headquarters. For the preparation and execution of the amphibious operation against Britain plans provided for each air fleet to instruct one strategic reconnaissance squadron to cooperate directly with the two participating armies. Their missions were to be assigned to them in accordance with the desire of the armies directly through the appropriate tactical air support command.

The Second Air Fleet assigned its 1st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, 22d Group, to cooperate directly with the Sixteenth Army in the manner just described. After conferring with Second Air Fleet Headquarters, the tactical air support command with the Sixteenth Army gave direct instructions to the squadron concerning preparatory measures and its missions during the amphibious operation. According to these instructions reconnaissance for the Sixteenth Army was to be conducted over the area Margate-Cheeriness-Thames River as far as London-Hyde Park-Uxbridge-Maidenhead (24 miles west of central London)-Woking (21 miles southwest of central London)-Dorking-Crewley-Uckfield-etchingham-Tenderden-Ashford-Folkestone-Ramsgate. The movements of the British operational reserves presumed in the London area were to be

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kept under observation. For this purpose reconnaissance was to be maintained over the main road and rail routes (including railheads) leading to the area in which the Sixteenth Army would advance. The main requirement was early detection of the movement of motorized units. Further, reconnaissance was to detect the location of developed and occupied lines of resistance. Main emphasis in reconnaissance over roads was to be over the following routes: London-Maidstone-Ashford; London-Chatham-Canterbury-Dover; Margat-Dover; Margate-Canterbury-Ashford; London-Sevenson-Tonbridge-Lamberhurst-Robertsbridge; Chatham-Maidstone-

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281. Kommandeur der Luftwaffe beim OK 16, Ia, # 1491/40, g.Kds., 15 Sep 40: Aufklärungsaufträge fuer die l. (F) 22 (Ergaenzungen zu den "Besonderen Anordnungen fuer die Luftaufklärung am X-Tag).

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Headcorn-Revelocn; Croyden-Grinstead-Maresfeld; Uxbridge-Tendington-Epsom-Redhill-Horley-Grinstead-Turnbridge Wells-Goudhurst-Bidden-Ashford; Maidenhead-Windsor-Egham-Chertsey-Leatherhead-Dorking-Redhill-Sevenoaks-Maidstone;

The following rail routes were to kept under observation: London-Chatham-Canterbury-Dover; London-Maidstone-Ashford; Guildford-Reigate-Tonbridge-Ashford-Folkestone; London-Sevenoaks-Tonbridge-Turnbridge Wells-Robertsbridge; London-Tandridge-Edenbridge-Mayfield; Tandridge-West Hoarthy; London-Redhill-Maywards Heath.

Attention was to be paid to possible detraining operations particularly around Canterbury, Ashford, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Grinstead, and Redhill. Other details to be kept under observation were troops concentrations in the wooded sectors southeast of London, south of a line from Turnbridge Wells to Grinstead, and around Canterbury; field fortifications; tank and other obstacles, particularly on either side of a line from Canterbury to Ashford to Turnbridge Wells and in the Maidstone-Sevenoaks-Redfield line; the ports between Folkestone and Margate as well as Sheerness; occupied airfields, and antiaircraft artillery and fighter defenses.

The reconnaissance units received instructions to

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report all large bodies of troops (marching columns, concentrations, particularly motorized and tank forces), rail transport movements, and detraining movements early enough to insure the quickest possible attack by operational forces of the Luftwaffe. Particularly good results were expected from attacks against British troops on roads in and near the exits from London. In order to be able to detect details, reconnaissance units were to operate at altitudes which would enable the observers to make precise visual observations, and the reports were to be turned in immediately by radio, message drop, or after landing according to the degree of urgency. The opinion was held that the interpretation of large masses of air photos in general would take up too much time for use by army tactical commands and for action by units of the operational Luftwaffe.

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Air photo missions were therefore to be restricted to ports, rail detraining operations, permanent field fortifications, tank and other obstacles, bridges, and similar targets, with a few photos of troop concentrations, marching troops, and rail transportation movements to confirm visual observations. In all urgent cases the desirability of immediate interpretation of air photos while still wet was to be reported.

To handle the reconnoitering, security, and equipment of ground service installations and of supplies for the Luftwaffe elements to be landed in England, two special air administrative area commands were established: the 16th to operate in the zone of the Second Air Fleet, and the 14th to operate in the zone of the Third Air

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Fleet.

Air Administrative Area Command 16 (Special) was to handle the requirements of the elements of the VIII Air Corps in England and to assist in supply operations for other Luftwaffe forces operating in the zone of the Second Air Fleet. On 27 September 1940 this administrative command had the following units with which to perform its missions:

Operational airfield commands: 6th, Air Administrative Area

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Command VI; 61st and 64th, Administrative Area Command XI.

Signal Troops: 1st Battalion, 8th Air Signal Regiment.

Construction troops: 9th Luftwaffe Construction Battalion  
(w/equipment platoon), Air Administrative Area Command VI.

Transport Troops.

Headquarters, 16th Special Transport Battalion with

2d and 6th Companies, Air Administrative Command VI;

2d and 8th " " " " XI;

5th " " " " 61.

2d Medium Fuel Transport Company, " " III;

8th " " " " " XI.

25th Operational Airfield Equipment Company, Air Admin-  
istrative Area Command VI.

8th Supply Company, Air Administrative Area Command IV.

24th Luftwaffe Motorized Workshop Platoon.

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282. Luftflottenkommando 2, O.Qu., # 7243/40, g.I., Chefs.,  
27 Sep 40: Befehl fuer den Einsatz des Luftgaustabes  
z.b.V. 16 im Unternehmen Seeloewe.

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Special Air Administrative Area Command 16 was dissolved later, and on 24 November its responsibilities were transferred to Special Air Administrative Area Command 300, which at the same time was redesignated Special Air Administrative Area Command E. This administrative command was responsible in all matters to Air Administrative Area Command Belgium-Northern France but was to receive its operational and tactical directives for the entire operation through the Second Air Fleet. At the appropriate time the Special Air Administrative Area Command E was to be assigned the units required for the execution of its mission in England. On 24 November 1940 it was assigned Debarcation Control Staff F (Luftwaffe) controlling Debarcation Control Detachments 1-4 (Luftwaffe); Embarkation Control Staff\* (Luftwaffe) controlling Embarkation Control Staffs 1 (Rotterdam), 2 (Antwerp), 3 (Ostende), 4 (Dunkirk), and 5 (Calais); and the labor forces required for the embarkation and consisting of Reich Labor Service units, Supply companies, and construction troops.

As will be explained later, the plans for Operation Sea Lion by this time had to all intents and purposes been abandoned.

The reason why the projected operations of the Luftwaffe

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in support of Operation Sea Lion were of such eminent importance was that the fate of the entire plan hinged upon the operational capabilities of the Luftwaffe and its chances of success. This was so because the German Navy, which had been decisively weakened in the Norwegian campaign could not under any circumstances guarantee adequate flank protection for the forces which were to cross the Channel, so that the Luftwaffe also had to accept responsibility for this mission. It is impossible to judge whether the Luftwaffe would have been able to execute this mission satisfactorily, but favorable weather conditions would have been an indispensable requirement. In examining the numerous missions which would have fallen

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283. Luftgaustab z. b. V. 300, Abt. Ia, # 190/40, g. Kdos, 24 Nov 40: betr: Organisation Unternehmen Seelöwe. Einsatzbefehl # 10.

\*. Debarcation Control Staff: Landungstab E  
Emberkation Control Staff: Ablaufstab.

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to the lot of the Luftwaffe if Operation Sea Lion had been executed, which would have included responsibility for the protection of the embarkation, the Channel crossing, and the debarkation, support for the Army in England, and at least in some measure continuation of strategic warfare against Britain, it must be borne in mind that the Luftwaffe had been weakened in its battle with the Royal Air Force, which at the time had been in progress for a number of weeks. What weighed most heavily was the loss in air pilots with combat experience.

4. Order of Battle. In September 1940 the Order of Battle of Luftwaffe forces committed against England was as follows:

FIFTH AIR FLEET

(From records of the Fifth Air Fleet dated 14 Sep 40)

X Air Corps.

Headquarters, 22d Reconnaissance Group with

1st Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, 120th Reconnaissance Group

2d Strategic Squadron, 22d Reconnaissance Group

3d " " , 22d " "

1st " " 121st " "

1 flight from GHQ Reconnaissance Group

506th Coastal Air Group with

1st, 2d. and 3d Squadrons.

Air Administrative Area Command Norway

2d Group, 77th Fighter Wing

Headquarters, 108th Special Bomber Group.



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SECOND AIR FLEET

(From records of the Luftwaffe Operations Staff  
dated 3 Sep 40)

Headquarters, 122d Reconnaissance Group with  
1st Strategic Squadron, 22d Reconnaissance Group  
2d and 4th " " 122d " "  
25th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron.

284. OKL/Chef Genst. 8. Abt.: Luftkrieg gegen England,  
Gefechtskalender, 1 AUG 40-31 Mar 41.

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## Second Air Fleet--cont.

I Air Corps.

5th Strategic Squadron, 122d Reconnaissance Group

4th Tactical " 32d " "

Headquarters, 76th Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 77th Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 1st Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 30th Bomber Wing with

1st and 2d Groups.

II Air Corps.

1st Strategic Squadron, 122d Reconnaissance Group

7th " " 2d Air Wing

4th Tactical " 31st Reconnaissance Group

5th " " 32d " "

Headquarters, 25 Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 34 Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 55d Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 1st Dive-Bomber Wing with

1st Group

4th Group, 1st Air Wing.

2d Group, 2d Air Wing.

210th Twin-Engine Fighter Group.

1st Group, 26th Dive-Bomber Wing.

2d Group, 26 Dive-Bomber Wing.

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Second Air Fleet--cont.

VIII Air Corps, in process of transfer from Third Air Fleet.

9th Air Division.

3d Strategic Squadron, 122d Reconnaissance Group.

Headquarters, 4th Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 40th Bomber Wing.

126th Bomber Group.

106th Bomber Group.

Night Fighter Division.

Headquarters, 1st Night Fighter Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

1st Fighter Command.

Headquarters, 76th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing with

2d and 3d Groups.

5th Twin-Engine Fighter Group, 1st Air Wing.

2d Fighter Command.

Headquarters, 53d Fighter Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 51st Fighter Wing.

Air Administrative Area Command VI.

1st Group, 52d Fighter Wing (1 swarm).

3d Group, 3d Fighter Wing (1 swarm).

Air Administrative Area Command XI.

Headquarters, 1st Fighter Wing.

2d Group, 52d Fighter Wing.

2d Group, 51st Fighter Wing.

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Second Air Fleet--cont.

Air Administrative Area Command Holland.

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups, 54th Fighter Wing (each 1 swarm).

2d Group, 51st Fighter Wing (1 swarm).

4th Tactical Squadron, 23d Reconnaissance Group.

\* According to Generalmajor Grabmann, at the time in command of the 76th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing, these units were only tactically assigned. Administratively they were assigned to the IV Air Corps. See p. 225.

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Second Air Fleet--cont.

Air Administrative Area Command Belgium.

1st Tactical Squadron, 21st Reconnaissance Group.

2d " " 21st " "

II Flak Corps.

1st Tactical Squadron, 13th Reconnaissance Group

3d " " 13th " "

4th " " 13th " "

## THIRD AIR FLEET

(From War Diary, Third Air Fleet, 23 Sep 40)

Headquarters, 123d Reconnaissance Group with

1st, 2d, and 3d Squadrons.

One weather reconnaissance squadron.

3d Fighter Command.IV Air Corps.

3d Strategic Squadron, 121st Reconnaissance Group

2d Tactical Squadron, 12th " "

1st " " 41st " "

Headquarters, 1st Air Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 3d Dive-Bomber Wing with

1st and 2d Groups.

2d Dive-Bomber Wing.806th Bomber Group.Headquarters, 27th Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

1st Group, 40th Bomber Wing.

100th Bomber Group.

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606th Bomber Group.

3d Strategic Squadron, 31st Reconnaissance Group (tactically  
assigned to the Ninth Army).

IV Transport Squadron.

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Third Air FleetIV Air Corps--cont.

Headquarters, 75th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing\* with  
2d and 3d Groups.

5th Group, 1st Air Wing.

Headquarters, 53d Fighter Wing\* with  
1st 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 3d Reconnaissance Group.

2d Tactical Squadron, 13th Reconnaissance Group

4th	"	"	22d	"	"	)Tactically )assigned to )Ninth Army
2d	"	"	41st	"	"	

V Air Corps.

Special Air Administrative Area Command 112 .

4th Strategic Squadron, 121st Reconnaissance Group.

4th " " 14th " "

Headquarters, 51st Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 54th Bomber Wing with

1st and 2d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 55th Bomber Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

V Transport Squadron.

Headquarters, 25th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 2d Fighter Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

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Headquarters, 27th Fighter Wing with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups, still receiving logistical support from VIII Air Corps.

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\* See footnote on p. 223, above.



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Third Air Fleet.V Air Corps -- cont.21st Reconnaissance Group with

1st Tactical Squadron, 12th Reconnaissance Group

5th " " , 13th " "

4th " " , 21st " "

Air Administrative Area Command Western France with

Special Air Administrative Area Command 12

Air-Sea Rescue Command Cherbourg

Coastal Reconnaissance Squadron Cherbourg (administrative-  
ly controlled by 606th Bomber Group).Air Administrative Area Command XII/XIII.Air Administrative Area Command VII.I Flak Corps.

5. Summary. It would exceed the scope of this study to go into all details which have become known fortuitiously because of the preservation of certain sources, such as the details on the reporting channels for the tactical air support commands attached to the subordinate units of the various armies which would have participated in Operation Sea Lion. 285. The intention has been rather to portray the fundamental operational considerations on which the commitment of the Luftwaffe was planned in support of the amphibious operation.

In that connection it is important to stress the late stage at which the Luftwaffe actually commenced preparing in earnest for the landing in England. On 17 September, the

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same day on which Second Air Fleet issued its tentative operational directive, the Wehrmacht High Command gave out the information that issue of the order for the landing in England had been postponed indefinitely. On 19 September

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285. Kommandeur der Luftwaffe beim OK 9, Abt. Ia/Ic/I NW, # 443/40, g.Kds., 26 Sep 40; betr.: Verbindungen zur Meldeerstattung im Fall Seelowe.
286. Teletype message: OKW/WFSt/abt.L, # 00761/40, g.Kds., 17 Sep 40 to Ob.d.H. (Op.Abt.), Ob.d.M. (SkI), Ob.d.L. (FüSt. Ia).

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1940 the Wehrmacht High Command informed the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe High Commands that, insofar as it was not completed, the assembly movement of the transport fleet was to be halted.

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This meant to all intents and purposes that the plan for Operation Sea Lion had been abandoned, a subject which will be dealt with in more detail later. However, another ten days passed before the Second Air Fleet issued its special instructions for execution of Operation Sea Lion.

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In the month of September the singular situation evolves that, insofar as was at all possible with the available means, the German armed forces were prepared for the invasion of England--although the Luftwaffe had initiated its preparations at a comparatively late stage--but that Hitler time and again postponed the execution of Operation Sea Lion and in the end did not issue the order at all which would have set the operation in motion. Actually, he had already given up the idea in September 1940 because the risks seemed too great to him. In order to avoid unfavorable political and military repercussions, however, it was thought advisable not to let it be known generally that plans for the invasion had been abandoned. It was only on 12 October 1940 that Hitler gave the definite order to cease preparations and postpone the operation until the spring of 1941.

In making this decision, Hitler was influenced largely by the military-political developments between June and September 1940, particularly by the interrelations between the conduct of the war against Great Britain and his decision to attack in the East.

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287. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht WFSt/abt.L # 33294/40, g.Kdo a., Chfs., 19 Sep 40 to OKH, OKM, and Ob. d.L. See Source 33.

288. See Chapter VII, 1.

289. See pp. 210-212, above.

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CHAPTER VI

MILITARY-POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

July-September 1940

1. General Developments. In times of war all decisions made in the political field are influenced by the existing military situation. Before making important political decisions, a shrewd statesman will have his military experts inform him on the current situation and seek their advice concerning the existing possibilities. This presupposes a clearly defined organization at the highest levels of the Government and the military command.

The circumstances were exceptional in Germany at the time under study here, since there was no division between the highest level of political and military control. The "Fuehrer" of the Reich at the same time was the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht.

In this respect there was thus no difference between the political and the military leadership. The Head of the State, who had everything under firm control, personified the unity of political and military control and leadership. In the interests of a uniform control of the State this was a sound arrangement as long as there was a man at the head of affairs who would have taken the advice of his military experts into consideration before making his decisions and who would have been willing to listen to the advice of wise politicians. Neither of these conditions was given in Germany.

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In view of Hitler's unbridled claim to absolute power, the organizational solution described above was a source of grave peril. At the time when Hitler came to power and during the first few years which followed, he could be considered in every respect as a layman in military subjects, and at that time he was remarkably modest in all matters of the military profession. Later events, however, and particularly those connected with the planning, preparation, and execution of the campaign in France, were destined to have fateful repercussions on future developments. Against the expressed

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290. Friedrich Hoesbach: Zwischen Wehrmacht und Hitler, Wolfsbuettel and Hanover, 1949, pp. 22, 45.

291. Hans-Adolf Jacobsen: Hitlers Gedanken zur Kriegsfuehrung im Westen, Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau 5 (1955), p. 433.

opinions of the highest Army authorities, Hitler had proved right in his estimate of the French capabilities of resistance. After his ideas on the conduct of operations in the western offensive had found confirmation in the views of an outstanding military expert,--Generalleutnant Erich von Manstein, former Chief of Staff of Army Group A--and had proved of undoubted significance in securing the quick success in the French campaign, he considered himself a genius in the field of military strategy. In his presumptuous estimate of his own abilities, he even went so far as to believe that he was a better judge of military possibilities in general in the operational field than his military experts. The ultimate outcome of all this was he became increasingly independent in his decisions but at the same time also more and more capricious.

In this connection an important problem is that of what relation existed between Hitler's decision to attack in the East and his conviction that there was no possibility to bring about a decision of the war against Britain by military means--neither by means of an invasion nor by means of strategic air warfare. The conviction of Britain's military invincibility naturally developed only gradually, but it



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had an important influence on his decision to attack in the East. Before entering into details in deducing from Hitler's conviction of the impossibility to defeat Britain directly his decision to attack Russia, an effort will be made here to present briefly and in broad outline a review of general developments in the military-political field from July to September 1940.

Following the conclusion of the campaigns in Norway and France, the German Navy had to assume responsibility for numerous and large missions in defense of the occupied coastlines and of friendly shipping. However, the German

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Naval Operations Staff still considered war against British seaborne communications as its primary mission. The execution of this mission fell primarily to the submarine arm and auxiliary cruisers, but the units available were too few to produce really decisive effects. Matters were further complicated by the necessity to withdraw from operations the crews of a number of units which were to receive special training for the extended program of submarine operations, so that in the summer and autumn of 1940 an average of only 10 to 15 submarines were committed at any one time.

Operations against seaborne targets were further complicated by numerous restrictions and prohibitions. Some of these issued by reason of International Law had been rescinded in the meantime, but in terms of an order issued by the Wehrmacht High Command on 24 August 1940<sup>292</sup> naval operations and air operations at sea were still subject to the following restrictions:

Within the declared blockade zone around Britain, armed action was prohibited against Irish ships within ten nautical miles of the Irish coast and against ships in possession of a special pass and specifically marked as such.

Out side of the blockade zone around Britain immediate

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armed action was prohibited against all ships not unmistakably identified as of hostile nationality and against all hostile ships travelling unarmed and without escort and recognizable as passenger ships. Spanish, Japanese, Russian, and USA ships as well as ships chartered by these States or by Switzerland for the movement of their supplies were not to be stopped or sunk under any circumstances outside of the blockade zone around England.

In spite of their high morale and courage the units of the German Navy committed for the purpose were in no position to place British naval supremacy in jeopardy and far less to break it. It might have been possible to achieve telling results against British seaborne supply traffic if both the Navy and the Luftwaffe had concentrated their efforts on this objective alone, but no such attempt was made in 1940. On the contrary, the attention of the German command focussed with steadily increasing intensity on the east. This resulted in the cancellation of Naval and Luftwaffe priorities in armament in favor of the

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292. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L (Chef), # 00 665/40, B.K., 24 Aug 40; betr.: Bestimmungen zur Einschränkung von Kampfhandlungen.

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the Army, which was stepping up its armament program. In deciding these priorities, Hitler acted on the premise that after eliminating Russia it would be possible to allocate to the Navy and the Luftwaffe adequate armament priorities to enable them to maintain warfare against Britain over a long period.

With the exception of air warfare against Britain, the war as a whole had come to a standstill after the resounding victories in Poland, Norway, and France.

In the Mediterranean theater military and political developments were also in a state of stagnation. In the absence of any clear German political concept it appeared practically impossible to reconcile the conflicting interests of Italy, France, and Spain. A settlement of these differences, however, was the first condition for action against Great Britain in this theater.

In Northern Africa Italy was involved in an attempt to defeat the numerically far weaker British forces there. After hesitating for a long time the Italians on 13 September launched their offensive against Egypt. After advancing as far as Sidi Barrani in the wake of the planned British withdrawal, the Italian advance was halted.

At the end of September Italy ceased planning and

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and preparations for a campaign against Yugoslavia, after Germany had refused military support in this venture because of the desire to preserve peace in the Balkans in the current situation. The surprise was all the greater when Italy attacked Greece a little later, on 28 October.

Hitler found himself faced by steadily mounting political difficulties, which caused him particularly grave concern in the East. He was also disappointed by the apparent weakness of his Italian ally and by the impression that in September once again no really tangible success was being achieved in the air battle against Britain.

It was in these circumstances that Hitler had to make his decision concerning the execution of Operation Sea Lion, and he had to make it immediately if the operation was to be carried out at all in 1940.

2. Interrelations Between the Conduct of Warfare

against Britain and the Decision to attack in the East. It is safe to assume--and can even be proved by numerous of his oral and written statements--that in his overall political concept, Hitler's real interest was to gain territory in the East. The pact concluded with the Soviet Union in the summer of 1940 was merely a temporary agreement with a specific purpose, that of isolating Poland and, after the elimination of Poland as an opponent, being able to attack in the West without fear of a Russian threat in the rear. As early as in November 1939 Hitler had stated that treaties are only observed as long as they serve a purpose, and that Germany could only face Russia if covered in the West. When making this statement Hitler certainly was not thinking of armed conflict within the near future, but he indubitably had the possibility of such conflict in the more distant future in mind. At all times he maintained a careful watch on the East.

Given this fundamental political viewpoint, one can understand Hitler's intention to attack in the West in order to be prepared for whatever might happen in the East after France and Britain had been settled. The attack in the West was to lay the foundation for German hegemony

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in Europe and at the same time create the essential conditions for an attack in the East, even though the time for such an attack in the East was by no means fixed.

In view of the above particular significance attaches to the fact that after the capture of Abbeville had been reported on 20 May 1940 Hitler was overjoyed and stated that, following the return of Germany's former colonial possessions, he would be prepared to sign a separate peace with Britain at any time.

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On 2 June 1940, after conclusion of the first phase of the French campaign, Hitler stated to the Commanding

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293. Notes on Hitler's conference with the Commanders in Chief of the Army, Navy and Luftwaffe on 23 Nov 39, IMT XXVI, 336; NSJ Doc. PS-789, 331.

294. Jodl Diary (Wehrmacht Operations Staff), 1 Feb-26 May 40, 431.

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General of Army Group A that if Britain now was willing to end the war and agree to a reasonable peace, which he expected her to do, he would at last be free for his real big mission: the conflict with Bolshevism. <sup>295</sup> Hitler thus at that time counted on the possibility that Britain might be willing to accept peace if he could bring the French campaign to a successful conclusion. Apparently he still nurtured this hope throughout the month of June, and a change of mind only becomes evident in early July when he approved the first preparations for an invasion of England. Even then the preamble was remarkably careful in its wording in the first order by the Wehrmacht High Command on 2 July 1940 as well as in Directive # 16 of 16 July 1940.

A significant factor in arriving at an overall critique of the plans for Operation Sea Lion is that throughout the preparatory period the German political command, and under its instructions also the military command, was already considering an attack against the East.

Hitler must have had mention of these considerations to the military command at an early stage, even if only in vague indications. As far back as on 3 July the Chief of the Army General Staff noted in his diary that at the



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moment there were two operational problems in the foreground: Britain and the East, and that the latter problem was to be considered chiefly from the angle of how Russia could be dealt a military blow which would compel her to recognize Germany's paramount position in Europe. <sup>296</sup>

In a conference on 13 July 1940 Hitler expressed his opinion--in agreement with the views of the Commander in Chief of the Army and the Chief of the Army General Staff--that Britain was not willing to accept peace because she

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295. Written information by General der Infanterie von Sodenstern to the present author on 4 Apr 55.

296. Halder Diary, 3 Jul 40.

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hoped for support from Russia. <sup>297</sup> In his next major conference attended by the Commanders in Chief of the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe, on 21 July 1940, he already propounded the basis for his views in more detail, as follows: Britain's situation was hopeless, and the war was already won for Germany; it was impossible that the chances of success could be reversed. England was continuing the war in the hope of a reversal of public opinion in America and in the hope of Russian support. Possibly Britain thought trouble might be caused in the Balkans through Russia in order to deprive Germany of Rumanian oil deliveries and thereby paralyze the Luftwaffe. Operation Sea Lion therefore was to be executed only if no other possibility existed to force Britain to accept peace. The whole operation, he considered, was predicated on the condition that Britain must first be paralyzed by the effects of German air and naval operations.

On the following day the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe passed on to the Chief of the Army General Staff Hitler's instructions to study the problems involved in a campaign in the East. <sup>299</sup>

In a memorandum prepared on 28 July 1940, the Naval Operations Staff also concerned itself with the problem of

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a campaign in the East. This memorandum opens with the statement that Britain is the main enemy. It continues that the only possible ally for Britain on the continent was Russia; that the offensive in the East would require strong air support; that it could only be undertaken after a successful conclusion of air warfare against Britain; that it would still be necessary then to continue air and naval operations against British seaborne supply shipping, the naval contribution being in the form of submarine attacks; that it would not be possible for the Navy to continue preparations for Operation Sea Lion until the spring of 1941 and at the same time support the attack against Russia; and that therefore the Navy should only be required to commit small forces against Russia.

The memorandum stipulated an examination, however, of what effects the loss of Russian oil supplies would have

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297. Halder Diary, 13 Jul 40.

298. Ibid, 22 Jul 40; CINC, Army-Hitler, 21 Jul 40.

299. Halder Diary, 22 Jul 40.

300. I./SkI.: Betrachtungen ueber Russland, 28 Jul 40.

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on a campaign in the East and on a later execution of Operation Sea Lion.

Evidence is thus found in this memorandum of the idea: after paralyzing Britain by means of intensified air warfare to attack Russia before the end of 1940 and then possibly to carry out the invasion of England in the spring of 1941.

Hitler also must have entertained thoughts of attacking Russia already in the autumn of 1940, but was persuaded to relinquish the plan by a memorandum from the Wehrmacht High

<sup>301</sup>  
Command. Thereupon Hitler on 31 July 1940 decided to plan on a campaign against Russia in the Spring of 1941. <sup>302</sup> He suspected that contacts were maintained between Britain and Russia. He further conjectured that if Russia were eliminated, this would destroy Britain's last hope since it would increase Japan's power in the Far East considerably, and because Britain then no longer could expect support from the USA. He mentioned expressly that he would prefer to open the attack in the East in the autumn of 1940, but that this was no longer possible.

This correlation between the conduct of war against Britain and the decision to prepare for a campaign in the East must be borne in mind constantly for a proper understanding of the attitude Hitler adopted towards Operation

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See Lion. While Hitler made his decision concerning the invasion of England contingent upon the effects achieved in air warfare against England, he was fully aware at the same time of the fact that if the decision against England was to be sought in air and naval warfare alone, this would take at least one to two years.

303

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301. Information received by present author from General der Artillerie Warlimont on 12 Jul 54.

302. Halder Diary, 31 Jul 40.

303. Ibid.

In an address on foreign affairs Molotov declared on 2 August 1940 that Russia could not be satisfied by the successes hitherto achieved. This statement strengthened Hitler's views that a conflict with the Soviet Union was unavoidable. Russo-German relations were further strained by the decision awarded in the Vienna Arbitration of 30 August 1940 and by the Tripartite Agreement of 27 September 1940, while Germany's changed attitude toward Finland also contributed to intensify Russia's distrust of Germany.

With the tension mounting steadily between Germany and Russia in Eastern Europe, and while the German political offensive in the Balkans was adding constant fuel to Russia's eternal distrust, Hitler was not full-heartedly interested in the preparations for the invasion of England. Time and again he stipulated that the operation was not to be launched if any risk of loss was involved. It was for this reason that he made the execution of the operation contingent upon the successful conduct of air warfare by the Luftwaffe against the Royal Air Force.

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304. Tippelskirch, 126.

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CHAPTER VII

THE POSTPONEMENT OF OPERATION SEA LION

241

1. Military Decisions. Within the Wehrmacht High Command thought was given at an early stage to the problem of what measures were to be taken if the invasion of England was not carried out. Whereas in the past campaigns Hitler had <sup>devoted</sup> himself with fanatic energy and the utmost concentration to the plans and preparations he now showed signs of a reluctance which increased steadily as the deadline for the final decision on the execution of Operation Sea Lion approached. This attitude can be understood for many reasons.

As far back as on 30 June 1940 the Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff had stated in his first memorandum on continuation of the war against Britain that in his opinion a landing in England could only be taken into consideration if air supremacy was first established, if the British economy was paralyzed as the result of German naval and air action, and if the Royal Air Force was first rendered practically incapable of action. He further stated as his considered opinion that these conditions could not materialize before late August or early September.

Directive # 16 ordering preparations for the invasion of England stipulated that all preparatory measures must be completed by mid-August. In this directive also



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the neutralization of British air power was described as an indispensable condition for the execution of the landing operation.<sup>305</sup>

On 31 July 1940 Hitler stated that he would make his decision concerning execution of the operation after the Luftwaffe had attacked England for a period of eight to ten days.<sup>306</sup> Probably he expected that such attacks would have annihilating effects similar to those achieved in the Polish and French campaigns.

However, the Luftwaffe first had to create the

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305. Chef, WFA: Die Weiterfuehrung des Krieges gegen England, 30 Jun 40, IMT, XXVIII, 301-303; NSJ Doc. PS-1776. See Source 8.

306. Cf. Directive # 16, p. 77, above.

307. B. 107, above.

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conditions--had to develop a ground organization adequate for operations on a scale large enough to warrant hopes of success. Unfavorable weather conditions delayed the opening of intensified air warfare and already on 29 July the Navy pointed out that the first time period suitable for the amphibious operation would occur in the second half of September because preparations could not be completed earlier. 308

The Wehrmacht High Command thereupon on 1 August specified that all preparations were to be completed by 15 September, intimating at the same time that the decision concerning execution of the operation would be made between eight and fourteen days after the air battle over England commenced.

On 6 August the Naval Operations Staff reported that, owing to the constant air threat, mine-sweeping and mine-laying operations were still not possible in the Channel, and that this placed the deadline for Operation Sea Lion

310  
in jeopardy. On 10 August the Naval Operations Staff stated that the action of the Luftwaffe in delaying its operations was hampering mine-sweeping operations and again pointed out that this circumstance in a certain measure had already jeopardized fulfillment of the established deadline. 311

The instructions which the Army and the Navy received

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from the Wehrmacht High Command on 12 August calling for tentative planning to support the Italians in Northern Africa if Operation Sea Lion was not launched in 1940 could not possibly create the impression at Army and Navy High Command Headquarters that the invasion of England

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308. See Source # 12.

309. See Source # 15.

310. War Diary, SKL A 12, 65, 6 Aug 40; according to KA SL B, 35.

311. KTB SKL A 12, 115, 10 Aug 40; according to KA SL B, 37. The Naval Operations Staff remarked in this connection that the Luftwaffe currently was hampered by unfavorable weather "after having failed, for reasons unknown in detail to the Naval Operations Staff, to exploit a recent spell of favorable weather."

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was to be carried out no matter what happened. 312

On 14 August Hitler stated, among other things, in a conference, that the threat of an invasion definitely must be maintained even if the invasion itself was not launched. 313

It is obvious, thus, that at this juncture he must already have concerned himself with the possibility that he might cancel the invasion plans or postpone their execution because of other operations.

After having drawn attention repeatedly to the effects of hostile air operations on the German preparations, the 314

Naval Operations Staff on 30 August 1941 <sup>stated</sup> that, because of the results of these British air operations, and because of the inadequate protection afforded the German surface craft by the Luftwaffe against air attack, the deadline set for 15 September could not be met. 315 The report further stated that the objectives set in German air offensive activities were not such that a quick achievement of the conditions essential for the invasion, namely, the elimination of hostile air and naval power in the Channel--, could be expected. The earliest deadline which could be suggested, the report went on, was 20 September, at the same time stating that even this tentative deadline could be met only if the air offensive made favorable progress and if it was

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exclusively to prepare the ground for Operation Sea Lion.

On 2 September the Wehrmacht High Command at the request of the Naval Operations Staff approved a ten-day postponement of the deadline. The 21 September 1940 was

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312. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L (I), # 33217/40, g.K., Chefs., 12 Aug 40.

313. KTB, Skl, A 12, pp. 161 ff, 14 Aug 40; according to KA SL B 38-39.

314. Ibid, p. 308, 26 Aug 40, pp. 334 pp., 28 Aug 40, and 340, 29 Aug 40; according to KA SL B 46 and 47.

315. Ibid, p. 352, 30 Aug 40; KTB Skl Handakte Seeloewe, pp. 247 ff, 30 Aug 40; both according to KA SL B 47-8.

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set as the earliest deadline for execution of the amphibious

316

operation. The day for the landing was designated S-Day.

Initiating orders were to be issued on S-Day minus 10 and thus not before 11 September. S-Day and S-Time (time at which the first echelon was to commence landing) were to be fixed definitely on S-Day minus 3. All measures were to be so carried out that the operation could still be halted up to 24 hours prior to S-Time.

The important influence which the outcome of the air battle for England had come to have over the decision concerning execution of Operation Sea Lion has been discussed in detail previously.

317

In an oral report to Hitler on 6 September 1940 the Commander in Chief of the Navy considered the execution of the invasion operations feasible if favorable conditions existed in respect to air supremacy and favorable weather. 318  
Hitler, however, was by no means certain as yet whether to carry out the operation or not. He still considered that Britain could be defeated without an invasion although he did admit that an invasion was the best means to bring the war to a swift end. He had no intention of carrying out the operation if the risks appeared too great. Everything possible was to be done to eliminate any possibility of

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failure, and the consequent prestige Britain would gain.

It is thus clear that, even in the circumstances now ruling, Hitler was by no means determined to carry out the invasion. However, the preparations were almost completed and the decision had to be made within the next few days.

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316. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht WFSt/L, # 33255/4: . G.Kdos.,  
Chefs., 3 Sep 40; see Source # 25.

317. See pp. 166 ff., above.

318. See Ob. d. M.-Hitler, 6 Sep 40, Source # 4.

319. KTB, Skl, C VII/40, p. 277, 6 Sep 40 and KTB Skl A 13,  
pp. 67 and 79, 6 and 7 Sep 40; according to KA SL B  
51-52.

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On 7 September 1940 the Luftwaffe commenced its large-scale attacks against London. Within three days the Naval Operations Staff conceded that the systematic bombing of London for a protracted period might produce conditions in which an invasion would be unnecessary. For this reason the Navy did not request Hitler to have the air attacks directed in concentration against targets directly connected with preparations for Operation Sea Lion.

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On 10 September 1940 Hitler decided to postpone issue of the order to launch the invasion for three days because, as he put it, it was not yet possible to judge fully the results achieved in the intensified air operations against England. An appropriate order was issued to the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe High Commands on the same day.

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Four days later, on 14 September 1940, Hitler held a conference with the Commanders in Chief of the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe. At this conference he explained that in his opinion it would be unwise at this early juncture to abandon plans for Operation Sea Lion. The Luftwaffe had been successful in its attacks, although these had not produced the results that could have been expected in favorable weather conditions. He considered that the results were not serious enough as yet to have created the air situation essential for the execution of the amphibious operation.



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Britain would be subjected to a considerable strain, he pointed out, if the fear of an imminent invasion were added to the strain of continued air attacks. In his opinion the decisive point was not an attack but the aggregate effect of all pressures. If the invasion plans were abandoned at this juncture, he continued, this would relieve the strain on British public opinion, and the British would be in a better position to hold out under the air attacks. Following Hitler's address, the Commander in Chief of the

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320. KTB, Skl, A 13, p. 120, 10 Sep 40; according to KA SL 53-55. See also pp. 187-9, above.

321. OKW/WFst/abt. L, # 00735/40, G.K., 10 Sep 40.

322. KTB, Skl, A 1e, p. 184, 14 Sep 40, and KTB, Skl, C VII/40, 283, 14 Sep 40; both according to KA SL B 59-60. Also KTB OKW/WFst/L, 14 Sep 40; and Ob. d.M.-Hitler, 14 Sep 40.

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323

Navy made his report on the situation. After again stressing the risks a landing would involve, he recommended further intensification of the air attacks, particularly against London, for the time being. He offered the opinion that these attacks might decide the outcome of the war. Concerning a deadline for the invasion he recommended October, stating certain dates. The Commander in Chief of the Army agreed with these views, but suggested that the Army should act independently of the deadline dates suggested by the Navy and exploit fog conditions or use smoke screening in the amphibious operation. Among other factors he pointed out the air menace to which the German ports of embarkation were exposed. Hitler thereupon re-emphasized that the all-important factor at the present was for the air attacks to continue without pause.

The Chief of the Luftwaffe General Staff then expressed the following views:

The damage done by the Luftwaffe exceeded all expectations. However, the attacks had produced no mass panic in England because attacks against residential quarters still were not authorized. He requested this authorization because the bombing of important military installations in London were not

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sufficient to produce mass terror and compel the population to leave London. The dock and industrial areas were too small in comparison with the giant size of the city and were also too far distant from the residential areas.

The Commander in Chief of the Navy supported the above views of the Chief of the Luftwaffe General Staff, but Hitler at the time flatly rejected them. It was his opinion that the attacks against important military targets were the most important requirement, because such attacks alone could lead to the destruction of irreplaceable objectives; for this reason priority must be given to attacks against such targets as rail depots, objectives in the outlying districts, water and gas supply installations. He considered that attacks designed to produce a mass panic should only be carried out as a last resort. He furthermore feared that the British would retaliate by attacking German cities.

Following the conference Hitler decided to postpone until 17 September the initiating order for execution of the invasion. In view of the ten-day initiating period, this meant that 27 September could be considered the

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323. See p. 190 and Footnote # 252, above.

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earliest possible date for the start of the invasion.

A corresponding directive by the Wehrmacht High Command on 14 September 1940 required among other things that preparations were to continue for Operation Sea Lion, and stated that further instructions would follow on 17 September. The Luftwaffe received instructions to attack the British long-range artillery batteries, and to continue the attacks against important military targets in London in an expanded area. Terrorization attacks against the civilian population remained subject to express approval

324

by Hitler.

In the next few days the Royal Air Force became increasingly active, inflicting losses on the transport

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fleet.

There can be no doubt that the unsettled weather, which hampered German preparations and air operations against England in September 1940, had a significant impact on the decisions taken by the German Supreme Command:

326

Weather Conditions in General in September: The weather during the first part of the month will be determined by a bad weather area moving slowly east-south-east across the Continent. Forecast: Strato-cumulus and cumulus clouds, unsettled, rain and light showers in entire western regions. Clearer weather

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with better visibility conditions over England not before 8 September, but new bad weather fronts will again approach on 10 September. Apart from slight local improvements in a few areas, these will continue until 23 September. Then weather conditions in general will change to steady autumn weather with increasing haziness and fogs. Another bad weather front, with strong northwesterly winds, will arrive on 27 September, bringing solid cloud banks and rain showers. On the whole frequent high pressure areas from the Atlantic will cause unsteady, stormy, and changeable weather conditions in general throughout September.

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324. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/abt. L, # 33287/40, g. Kops., Chefs., 14 Sep 40; See Source # 27.
325. KTB, SKL, A 13, 199, 15 Sep 40; according to KA SL B 61. KTB, SKL, A 13, 209 ff., 16 Sep 40; " " KA SL B 61-62.
326. OKL, Chef Genst., 8. Abt. Anlage 2 zu Br. B. # 2328/44, g.: Luftkrieg gegen England, Gefechtskalender ab 1 Aug 40-31 Mar 41.

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The assembly of the transport ships had been delayed and in some cases the necessary mine-sweeping operations had been prevented entirely. It had not been possible to neutralize the Royal Air Force to the extent considered essential by the Supreme German Command for execution of the invasion. On the contrary, the Royal Air Force had become increasingly active in the past few days. Any improvement in the general weather conditions was also not to be expected in the next few days. <sup>327</sup>

Under these circumstances, Hitler on 17 September 1940 decided to postpone indefinitely the issue of the order for execution of Operation Sea Lion. Theoretically, <sup>329</sup> the possibility still existed for an invasion in October. However, two days later already the Wehrmacht High Command approved a request by the Naval Operations Staff for authority to disperse the transport ships in order to reduce losses through hostile air attacks to a minimum. Authority was also given to reduce the scope of preparations for the diversionary operation to be launched from Norway. <sup>330</sup> That the plans for an invasion would be abandoned was becoming increasingly clear. Even before receiving the order just mentioned above, the Navy had received telephoned assurance from the Wehrmacht High Command that the interval between

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the initiating warning order and the jump-off order would  
 be increased to 15 days.<sup>331</sup>

In this connection it is necessary to deal once more  
 with the matter of losses in ships, referred to so fre-  
 quently by the Navy. By 21 September the following ship-  
 ping was lost or damaged by enemy action:

51 barges sunk or so badly damaged that they were  
 useless

163 barges damaged

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327. KTB, Skl, A 13, 226, 17 Sep 40; according to KA SL B 62.
328. Teletype message OKW/WFSt/L, # 00761/40, g.Köps., 17 Sep 40 to Ob.d.H. (Op.Abt.), Ob.d.M. (Seekriegsleitung) and Ob.d.L. (Führungsstab Ia).
329. Corresponding entry in KTB, Skl, A 13, 226, 17 Sep 40; according to KA SL B 62.
330. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L, # 33294/40; g. Köps., Chfs., 19 Sep 40. Betr.: Unternehmen Seeloewe.
331. KTB, Skl, A 13, 268, 19 Sep 40; according to KA SL B 63.

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12 Steamers sunk or completely lost through damages

9 steamers damaged

4 tugs sunk

1 tug damaged.

Although these losses were heavy, reserves were avail

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able to replace them, a fact which deserves special attention. It was thus not the British air attacks and the losses they inflicted on the German invasion fleet which compelled the German command to abandon plans for the invasion of England.

In a closed session at which no other persons were present, the Commander in Chief of the Navy on 26 September expounded to Hitler his views on the overall military situation, without restricting himself to naval affairs. <sup>333</sup>

He considered that everything possible must be brought to bear against Britain before the USA entered the war. Therefore, he considered it imperative to settle the Mediterranean problem before the end of the winter of 1940-41. This would place the entire problem of Russia in a totally different aspect, and he thought it questionable whether there would then be any necessity for an offensive from the North against Russia. After discussing various other matters, the Commander in Chief of the Navy then informed



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Hitler that from mid-October on preparations for Operation Sea Lion could not be maintained on the existing scale.

Available sources contain no evidence that the Luftwaffe participated in these fundamental discussions concerning the continued conduct of the war. It remained fully occupied, with all its forces, in air warfare against England.

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332. KTB, Skl, A 13, 296, 22 Sep 40; according to KA SL B 63-64.

333. Ob.d.M.-Hitler, 26 Sep 40, see Source 4; KTB, Skl, A 13, 351, 26 Sep 1940 and KTB, Skl, C VII/40, 288, 26 Sep 40; both according to KA SL B, 64.

334. For details see Source # 4.

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As was the case with the Navy, the Army also on 30 September 1940 requested a decision by mid-October at the latest concerning preparations for Operations Sea Lion. <sup>335</sup>

After the matter had been given careful consideration in the National Defense Branch (Abteilung L), the Wehrmacht Operations Staff <sup>336</sup> on 12 October 1940 replied that Hitler had decided to maintain preparations for the invasion of England until the spring of 1941, but that these preparations were to serve only to exert political and military <sup>337</sup> pressure. If the invasion was to be carried out in the spring orders to make the necessary additional preparations would be issued in good time. <sup>338</sup>

This order contained one of the most important decisions taken in World War II.

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335. Letter OKH, GenStabH, Op. Abt Ia, # 562/40, g.K., Chfs., 30 Sep 40 to OKW/L. in KTB, OKW, WFSt/L, 2 Oct 40.

336. See KTB, OKW/WFSt/L, 2 and 8 Oct 40.

337. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt.L (I) # 33318/40, g.K., Chfs., 2 Oct 40.

338. For details see Source # 35.

2. Continued Planning and Preparations. It is not possible in this study, which is devoted to an examination of plans for German air operations in support of Operation Sea Lion, to enter into details on the correlation of politics and the conduct of war. This is true in particular of political developments and the military situation in the autumn of 1940 and the later history of Operation Sea Lion up to the beginning of the Russian campaign, as well as the highly interesting correlations between the military decisions taken and the political situation and the ultimate cessation of all preparations, so far as military material is concerned, for the operation. The present author intends treating these subjects exhaustively in a separate study. Consequently, the later phases of planning and preparation will be presented only briefly and only insofar as they have an important direct bearing on the subject under study here.

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after the close of military operations in the West, German interest in the Mediterranean and Eastern areas increased. Numerous political conferences between Hitler and foreign statesmen were designed to clear up the general situation. The tension between Germany and the Soviet Union increased. The situation in the Balkans became complicated

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by Italy's unsuccessful attack on Greece. Hitler's endeavors to reconcile the controversial attitudes of France, Italy, and Spain in the Mediterranean failed. What was of

339. In the 1957 summer semester of the Faculty for Philosophy of the University of Hamburg the present author intends submitting a dissertation under the title: Operation Sealion, The Planned German Invasion of England -- A Study on the Correlation of Politics and the Conduct of the War in Germany in the Summer and Autumn of 1940. The Study is to be completed and published by the Musterschmidt Verlag, Goettingen in late 1957 or early 1958 in the Studien und Dokumente zur Geschichte des Zweiten Weltkrieges. Series.

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paramount importance now was to bring about a complete clarification of Russia's attitude as speedily as possible.

In a conference with Mussolini on 4 October 1940 Hitler had stated among other things that the unfavorable weather conditions had been the decisive factor in his decision to postpone execution of Operation Sea Lion.<sup>340</sup>

On 4 November he reiterated that there could be no question of invading England before the spring of 1941, but that the status of preparation for the operation must be maintained.<sup>341</sup> He stressed prominently the requirement to do everything possible to be ready for the big settlement with Russia.

Molotov's attitude during the Berlin Conference on 12 and 13 November 1940 strengthened Hitler's conviction that Russia was a constant menace and that it therefore would be wisest to attack Russia as soon as possible in order then to have a safe rear while seeking a military decision against Britain.

Among other items, the directive by the Wehrmacht High Command dated 12 October 1940 required action to improve conditions for the execution of Operation Sea Lion in the spring of 1941. Pursuant to this directive, the Army and the Navy continued their preparations, although

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not as vigorously as in the past summer and early autumn. The Army in particular continued for a long time to concern itself with map exercises, maneuvers, and the revision of prepared orders designed for Operation Sea Lion.

In October and November the Luftwaffe continued bombing London besides launching concentrated attacks against targets in Liverpool, Bristol, ports on the southern coast of England, and the industrial area of Birmingham-Coventry, but remained unable to achieve a measure of success which could have decided the war against Britain.

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340. Greiner, p. 187.

341. Halder Diary, 4 Nov 40; KTB, OKW/WFSt/L, 4 Nov 40; Greiner, pp. 159-60, 188, 314-5.

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The Order of Battle of the Luftwaffe forces committed  
 against England in October 1940 was as follows: 342

#### FIFTH AIR FLEET

(from records of the Luftwaffe Operations Staff,  
 26 Oct 40)

#### X Air Corps.

Headquarters, 22d Reconnaissance Group, with  
 1st Strategic Squadron, 120th Reconnaissance Group  
 2d " " 22d " "  
 3d " " 22d " "  
 1st " " 121st " "

1st Group, 26th Bomber Wing.

2d Group, 77th Fighter Wing. (slated for transfer to  
 Brest after arrival of 3d Group, 76th Twin-Engine  
 Fighter Wing).

9th Squadron, 76th Twin-Engine Fighter Wing.

#### Air Administrative Area Command Norway.

Headquarters, 108th Special Bomber Wing, with  
 1st and 2d Groups.

#### SECOND AIR FLEET

(from records of the Luftwaffe Operations Staff,  
 26 October 1940)

Headquarters, 122d Reconnaissance Group, with  
 2d Strategic Squadron, 122d Reconnaissance Group  
 4th " " 122d " "  
 1st " " 22d " "  
 7th " " 2d Air Wing.

26th Weather Reconnaissance Squadron.

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Second Air Fleet--cont.

II Air Corps.

1st Strategic Squadron, 122d Reconnaissance Group

4th Tactical Squadron, 31st " "

5th " " 32d " "

Headquarters, 2d Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 3d Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 53d Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

4th Group, 1st Air Wing.

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342. OKL/Chef Genst. 8. Abt: Luftkrieg gegen England, Gefechtskalender, 1 Aug 40-31 Mar 41.



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Second Air Fleet--cont

II Air Corps--cont.2d Fighter Command.

Headquarters, 3d Fighter Wing, with  
1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 25th Fighter Wing, with  
1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 27th Fighter Wing, with  
2d and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 51st Fighter Wing, with  
1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 52d Fighter Wing, with  
1st and 2d Groups plus 1st Group, 2d Air Wing.

Headquarters, 54th Fighter Wing, with  
2d Group.

1st Group, 77th Fighter Wing.

Headquarters, 53d Fighter Wing, with  
1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 1st Dive-Bomber Wing, with  
2d and 3d Groups plus 1st Group, 3d Wing; 2d  
Group, 2d Air Wing; and 210th Group.

VIII Air Corps.

2d Strategic Squadron, 11th Reconnaissance Group.

Headquarters, 2d Dive-Bomber Wing, with  
1st and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 77th Dive-Bomber Wing, with  
1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

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Second Air Fleet--cont.IX Air Corps.

Headquarters, 4th Bomber Wing, with  
1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

Headquarters, 40th Bomber Wing, with  
126th Bomber Group and 106th Bomber Group.

Headquarters, 30th Bomber Wing, with  
2d and 3d Groups.

Night Fighter Division.

Headquarters, 1st Night Fighter Wing, with  
1st, 2d, and 3d Groups.

1st Group, 2d Night Fighter Wing.

4th Group, 2d Night Fighter Wing.

1st Group, 3d Night Fighter Wing.

II Fleet Corps.

1st Squadron, 13th Tactical Reconnaissance Group.

Air Administrative Area Command XI.

Headquarters, 1st Fighter Wing, with

1st Group, 54th Fighter Wing, and 2d Group, 76th  
Twin-engine Fighter Wing.

Air Administrative Area Command VI.

1 Swarm from 3d Group, 3d Fighter Wing.

Air Administrative Area Command Holland.

3d Group, 54th Fighter Wing.

10th Squadron, 1st Night Fighter Wing.

4th Tactical Squadron, 23d Tactical Reconnaissance Group.

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Second Air Fleet--cont.

Air Administrative Area Command Belgium.

1st Squadron, 21st Tactical Reconnaissance Group.

2d S " 21st " " "

4th " 32d " " "

Italian Air Corps.

112th Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron.

15th Bomber Brigade.

13th Bomber Wing with

11th and 43d Groups, 13th Bomber Wing.

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Second Air Fleet --cont.

Italian Air Corps --cont.15th Bomber Brigade.43d Bomber Wing with

98th Group, 43d Bomber Wing

99th Group, 43d Bomber Wing.

36th Fighter Wing with

18th and 20th Groups.

## THIRD AIR FLEET

(from Records of the Luftwaffe Operations Staff,

26 October 1940).

Headquarters, 123d Reconnaissance Group, with

1st, 3d, and 3d Squadrons.

3d Group, Special Purpose Bomber Wing, with

10th and 12th Squadrons.

3d Fighter Command.I Air Corps.

5th Squadron, 122d Strategic Reconnaissance Group.

4th " , 32d Tactical " " .

(tactically assigned to Air-Sea Rescue Command).

Headquarters, 1st Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 26th Bomber Wing, with

2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 76th Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

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Headquarters, 77th Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

1st Air Transport Squadron.

IV Air Corps.

3d Strategic Squadron, 121st Reconnaissance Group.

3d Strategic Squadron, 31st " "

2d Squadron, 12th Tactical Reconnaissance Group.

1st Squadron, 41st " " "

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Third Air Fleet -- cont.

IV Air Corps -- cont.Headquarters, 1st Air Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 27th Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

1st Group, 40th Bomber Wing.

100th Bomber Group.

606th Coastal Reconnaissance and Naval Support Group.

1st Group, 27th Fighter Wing.

2d " 27th " " .

IV Air Transport Squadron.

Headquarters, 31st Reconnaissance Group (attached to  
Ninth Army), with

4th Squadron, 22d Tactical Reconnaissance Group

2d " 31st " " "

2d " 13th " " "

2d " 41st " " "

V Air Corps.

4th Squadron, 121st Strategic Reconnaissance Group.

4th " , 14th " " "

Headquarters, 51st Bomber Group, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 54th Bomber Wing, with

1st and 2d Groups.

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Headquarters, 55th Bomber Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups, and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 3d Dive-Bomber Wing, with

1st and 2d Groups.

806th Bomber Group.

Headquarters, 26th Twin-Engine Fighter Group, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups, and Replacement Squadron.

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Third Air Fleet--cont.

V Air Corps--cont.

Headquarters, 2d Fighter Wing, with

1st, 2d, and 3d Groups, and Replacement Squadron.

Headquarters, 21st Reconnaissance Group, with

1st Squadron of the 12th, 5th Squadron of the 13th, and 4th Squadron of the 21st Tactical Reconnaissance Groups respectively.

V Air Transport Squadron

2d Squadron, 106th Coastal Reconnaissance and Naval  
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Support Group.

On 12 November 1940 the Wehrmacht High Command issued a directive establishing policies governing the preparatory measures to be taken by the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe High Commands for the conduct of the war in the near future. 344

Separate sections dealt with Germany's relations with France, Spain, and Portugal, the Italian offensive against Egypt, and the situation in the Balkans and German-Russian relations. The last section dealt with the plans for an invasion of England. The text of this section was as follows:

Since changes in the overall situation might bring about a possibility or the necessity to execute



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343. Details concerning the conduct of air warfare against England are contained in the Schedule for Operations against England (OKL/Chef Genst., 8. Abt., Jnl. 2 zu Br. B # 2328/44 g.: Luftkrieg gegen England, Gefechtskalender ab 1. 8. 40-31.3.41). The document also contains precise monthly compilations of the directives and orders, the forces committed, the overall weather conditions, the sources from which this information was taken, and the results achieved in operations, together with details on the number of missions flown, the tonnage of bombs delivered, and German losses. The following are the more important detail orders issued in this connection: Ob. d. L., Fuehrungsstab Ia (Robinson) # 7647/40 g.K. (Gr. II), 12 Oct 40 (Teletype message concerning bombing of London and general instructions concerning the execution of night attack missions); Ob. d. L., Fuehrungsstab Ia #7682/40, g.Kds. (op.1), 19 Oct 40 (order concerning continued conduct of air warfare against England); Ob. d. L. (Caesar 2) Fuehrungsabteilung Ia op. # 415/40, g.Kds., 24 Oct 40 (teletype message concerning fighter-bomber attacks against London).
344. Der Fuehrer und Oberste Befehlshaber der Wehrmacht, WFSt/abt. L (I), # 33356/40, g.K., Chéfs., 12 Nov 40: Weisung # 18. IMT XXVI, 41-46, Nuremberg Document FS-444.

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Operation Sea Lion after all in the spring of 1941, the three branches of the Wehrmacht must endeavor earnestly to improve the conditions for such an operation in every way.

Hitler ordered

On 5 December 1940 that all preparations were to commence in full swing--in accordance with the plans prepared by the Army High Command--for an offensive to be launched against the Soviet Union in May 1941. He confirmed expressly that Operation Sea Lion could be disregarded.

The Army High Command was fully alive to the perils inherent in the fact that Britain still was by no means defeated. In the previously mentioned conference, the Commander in Chief of the Army therefore asked Hitler whether the Luftwaffe had enough forces to continue air warfare against Britain concurrently with the execution of its combat missions in the impending Russian campaign. Hitler endeavored to brush aside these doubts by reference to a ".....brief Russian campaign."

In a big conference held at the Berghof on 9 January 1941 Hitler, among other things, expounded the following ideas:

He considered an invasion of England possible only if complete German air supremacy was secured

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and if England was paralyzed to a certain extent. Otherwise the attempt would be a crime. Britain's ultimate goal was to defeat Germany on the continent, but the means available to her were inadequate for this purpose. Hopes of American and Russian support were what was keeping Britain in the field. If Russia were defeated, Britain would give up the struggle because this would destroy her last hope on the

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345. Halder Diary, 5 Dec 40.

346. KTB OKW/WFSt/L. 5 Dec 40.

347. KTB OKW/WFSt/L., 9 Jan 41. Ob. d.M.-Hitler, 8-9 Jan 41 and Halder Diary, 16 Jan 41 (in all essential details the account by Halder corresponds to the above).

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continent. On the other hand, if Britain could muster 40-50 divisions, and if she were supported by the USA and Russia, a difficult situation would result for Germany. Therefore, Russia must be overthrown. Then either Britain would give up the struggle, or Germany could continue the war against Britain in favorable conditions, since then only 40-50 German divisions would be required in the East, the Army could be reduced, and the entire industrial capacity could be made available for air and naval armament. Germany's position then would be unassailable.

On 10 January 1941 the Wehrmacht High Command ordered cessation of all preparations for Operation Felix (planned for an attack against Gibraltar), and for Operation Sea Lion. So far as plans for an invasion of England were concerned only such activities were to continue which served the purpose of developing special types of equipment and camouflage.

On 18-20 January 1941 Hitler expressed views to Mussolini which were similar to those he had expressed on 9 January:

He described the invasion of England as the

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ultimate goal, but considered that in this case Germany was in the position of a man who has only one round of ammunition left. If the attempt were to fail, the materiel losses incurred would make any repeated attempt impossible. In the autumn of 1940 the existing conditions had not been favorable. What he considered of paramount importance was the development of strong antiaircraft artillery defenses, because he considered it possible that a situation might develop in which the war against England could only be continued by the Luftwaffe and the Navy.

Time and again in the months preceding the Russian campaign Hitler endeavored to overcome the reluctance of the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe Commands by stressing the necessity for the campaign. On 30 March 1941, for example, he declared that a final and complete settlement of all problems on the continent must be brought about. Then

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348. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, WFSt/Abt. L (I), # 44011/41, g.Kdos., Chafe., 10 Jan 41.

349. KTB, OKW/WFSt/L, 22 Jan 41; see also Greiner, p. 151.

350. Halder Diary, 30 Mar 41.

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Germany would be strong enough in man power and materiel within two years to cope with all air and naval situations which might develop. After the end of the Russian campaign, he went on, 50-60 divisions would be adequate to leave in the East. In a final big conference prior to the Russian campaign, on 14 June 1941, he once again expressed the view that the fall of Russia would compel Britain to end the war against Germany.

Hitler's arguments concerning the necessity to attack in the East at this time thus were essentially the same as those he had used in July 1940. An added factor was the steadily increasing number of troops concentrated by Russia along the German border since the close of the Polish campaign. These concentrations could be regarded as a threat which might endanger Germany seriously if the German military forces were committed in the West.

As far back as in November 1940 Hitler had admitted that the operations of the Luftwaffe had not produced the desired results. The Luftwaffe nevertheless continued to launch as intensive air attacks against England as weather conditions permitted. In Germany the results of these attacks were considered so serious that the Commander in Chief of the Navy on 3 December 1940 thought that the con-

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continuation of these attack and submarine action against British seaborne supply traffic would produce decisive results in the long run, and that the combined effects might even produce results fatal for Britain as early as in the winter of 1940-41. However, weather conditions in the winter seriously restricted the operations of the Luftwaffe, and it <sup>was</sup> mid-March before the attacks could be stepped up again. In April and May the air offensive again increased to full intensity, but then the impending campaigns in the Balkans and against Russia necessitated the withdrawal of the bulk of the Luftwaffe forces from the Western Theater.

On 10 December 1940 the Wehrmacht High Command ordered that the barge construction projects of the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe were to be consolidated under the Navy for

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351. Halder Diary, 14 Jun 41.

352. Ob. d.M.-Hitler, 14 Nov 40.

353. Ob. d.M.-Hitler, 3 Dec 40. KTB, OKW/WFSt/L, 3 Dec 40.

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uniform handling.

The deceptive measures employed against Britain and designed to tied down as large forces as possible in England were maintained until the opening of the Russian campaign and produced good results.

Prior to the opening of the 1940 campaign in France no German plans had existed for the continued conduct of the war after the successful conclusion of the campaign. To prevent a recurrence of this situation, thought was given from the outset of the Russian campaign to the problem of what measures were to be taken within the overall pattern of the war in the event of a swift and successful termination of the campaign. Following suggestions by the Army High Command, the Wehrmacht High Command on 19 June 1941 forwarded to the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe High Commands a first draft of Directive # 32, dated 11 June 1941, as a general basis for future planning. In this directive plans for an invasion of England were given the lowest priority, with first priority for the time being awarded to measures to clear up the situation in the Mediterranean area.

On 22 June 1941 the German troops jumped off to their attack against Russia. In spite of initial successes, the attack failed to annihilate the Soviet armies. Operations



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were hampered and finally brought to a complete halt by the conditions of a severe and exceptionally early winter.

On 7 December 1941 Japan attacked the USA. Since Japan continued to adhere to the Non-Agression Pact concluded with Moscow, however, Russia was able to withdraw forces from the Far East and commit them against Germany.

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354. OKW/WFSt/L I # 33398/40. g.K., Chefa., 10 Dec 40. See KTB, OKW/WFSt/L, 10 Dec 40 and Greiner, p. 150.

355. Cf. Karl Klee: Der Entwurf zur Fuehrer-Weisung # 32 vom 11. Juni 1941--Eine Quellenkritische Untersuchung, Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau, 6 (1956), pp. 127-41.

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The Red Army assumed the offensive in a counterattack, and in the winter of 1941-42 the German armed forces for the first time found themselves involved in a grave crisis, which they succeeded in surmounting but from the results of which they never fully recovered.

The European war, planned by Hitler as a blitz war, had assumed global proportions; it had become a world-wide war, the duration and ultimate scope of which were unforeseeable, which far exceeded Germany's military capacities.

Faced by this situation, Hitler on 13 December 1942 approved the recommendations of the Commander in Chief of the Navy to abandon completely all plans for Operation Sea Lion and to cease all preparations in the field of material

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356. Ob. d. M.-Hitler, 13 Feb 42. See also Churchill II/2, p. 28.

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CHAPTER VIII

CRITIQUE

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1. Problems of Military Command. Numerous causes contributed to Germany's failure to achieve a uniform and firm armed forces command. The idea was conceived at an early stage in Germany that the conditions of modern warfare, particularly in view of the new element introduced by the advent of air warfare, called for the establishment of a central agency to direct the efforts of all branches of the armed forces. This is not the proper place for an examination of progress this idea made or of the organizational structure the joint command finally assumed in Germany. For a proper understanding of the subject under study here, however, some information on the circumstances as they existed in the summer and autumn of 1940 will be helpful.

The Commanders in Chief of the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe were subordinate to Hitler as the Supreme Commander of the Wehrmacht. Hitler exercised his military command through the Wehrmacht High Command, more specifically through the Wehrmacht Operations Staff--known as the Wehrmachtfuehrungsamt until August 1940, when it was redesignated the Wehrmachtfuehrungstab. The most important department within the Wehrmacht Operations Staff was the National Defense Branch (Abteilung

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Landesverteidigung) under General Warlimont. This branch was staffed by officers from all three military branches--the Army, the Navy, and the Luftwaffe--and it was here that the operational directives for the conduct of the war were prepared, frequently on the basis of recommendations from the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe High Commands. These directives were issued as Fuehrer Directives to the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe High Commands, and established in broad outline the policies for the planned conduct of the war as a whole, for individual campaigns, or for specific operations. In preparing their directives, the three high commands were allowed a relatively large scope of freedom of action. As long as operations of only one branch of the armed forces were concerned, the relative independence of the high commands was not likely to have harmful effects. The danger of strained relations and friction existed, however, when operations called for joint action by more than one branch of the armed forces.

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In planning and preparing for Operation Sea Lion, an amphibious undertaking on an exceedingly large scale and of a type never before executed by the German armed forces, a tightly organized joint command from the outset should have issued unequivocal and clearly defined directives. If necessary, it even should have issued detailed instructions on matters which the three high commands normally could have decided among themselves. The necessity for such firm control existed because the German armed forces had no possibility to conceive uniformly the implications of a large-scale landing on a coastline defended by hostile forces. The urgent necessity for a firm control of this type was to be brought into evidence soon by the controversial opinions of the Army and the Navy on the subject of operational base area, a matter in which Hitler finally had to take personal action. Similar intervention by Hitler became necessary when controversies developed between the Luftwaffe and the Navy concerning the control of air reconnaissance operations at sea.

Hitler expressed himself on this subject to the effect that a firmly established Supreme Joint Command was essential to decide difficult issues, if necessary through the medium of direct orders. As long as he remained alive he

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thought the need for a strong Supreme Joint Command was not pressingly urgent, but he considered it would become the prerequisites to success if he were succeeded at some future date by a person who did not enjoy the degree of personal authority he could exercise.

With the relatively small staff it had at the time, it must be admitted that the Wehrmacht High Command in any event would have been unable to formulate independently any really important decisions. At the time under discussion the circumstances were that the commanders in chief of the three branches reported personally to Hitler, submitted to him their recommendations for the commitment of their forces, received his approval, and on the basis of this oral approval proceeded to draft their plans independently, submitting these completed plans later to the Wehrmacht High Command or, in the case dealt with in this study to the Wehrmacht Operations Branch. It thus happened frequently that the three high commands carried out planning for various undertakings of which the National Defense Branch of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff was completely ignorant, as

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in the case of the initial preparations for the Russian campaign. Another interesting feature in this connection is that the first suggestions about an invasion of England were made by the Commander in Chief of the Navy to Hitler directly and not to the Wehrmacht High Command.

The fact that the three commanders in chief had the privilege of direct report to Hitler undoubtedly had advantages. Hitler had the possibility of hearing personally the opinions held by the persons responsible directly under him for directing the three branches of the military services, was able to clear up current problems in direct discussions with them, and could express his views directly to them. On the other hand, however, the danger existed the sometimes widely differing views of the three commanders in chief might complicate uniform direction of the overall effort and compromise overall concepts.

The Chief of the Wehrmacht High Command, Field Marshal Keitel, and the Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff admittedly were present at most of the conferences, but both of them were heavily dependent upon Hitler and were in no position to press their point in fundamental issues if their opinions differed from those of the three commanders in chief. The gravest danger was, however, that



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Hitler became involved necessarily in details outside the province of the head of a state.

What was lacking in the military field was a Joint Commander in Chief of the Military Forces with a strong personality who could have relieved Hitler of many details. It would have been essential, however, for this Joint Commander in Chief to possess the confidence of Hitler and of the Commanders in Chief of the Army, Navy, and Luftwaffe. Another complication was that the special relations existing between Hitler and the Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe and the very especial position the latter enjoyed by virtue of the numerous offices he held, made it seem unlikely that he would have submitted to a strict military hierarchy such as that suggested here. On the contrary, the Luftwaffe in many cases went its own way without any evidence that it felt the need for a strong joint command. The Chief of the Army General Staff, on the other hand, frequently complained about the lack of firm control by the Wehrmacht High Command. How widely apart the views of the Wehrmacht and the Luftwaffe High Commands were is evident, for example, from the fact that they held differing views on the basic strategic concept of air warfare against Britain. Thus, Directive # 17 of 1 August 1940 governing

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the direction of air and naval operations against Britain states explicitly in the opening paragraph that air and naval warfare against Britain were to be intensified "to create conditions for the final defeat of Britain...."and contains no mention that Britain was to be compelled through air and naval action to accept peace. The Luftwaffe High Command, however, did not direct air operations in a manner calculated to prepare for the execution of Operation Sea Lion. This subject will be treated more fully elsewhere.

Although a fundamentally appropriate command organization existed, there was no real firm joint command in Germany. There was also no agency which could have given thought at the appropriate time, before the opening of the French campaign, to the problem of the continued conduct of the war after the successful conclusion of the campaign. Other complications were due to the great distances separating the three high commands during preparations for Operation Sea Lion and the resultant difficulty to maintain permanent close contact between the decisive military authorities.

All of these circumstances had seriously adverse effects on the planning and preparations for Operation Sea Lion, and could not be offset by cooperation at

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the intermediate and lower levels of command, although cooperation was sound and smooth at these levels.

2. General Critique of Operation Sea Lion. The decision to carry out the invasion of England was not taken. The question arises what the basic causes were which influenced Hitler in forming his decisions. In the search for an answer to this question no consideration will be given to the numerous problems which had a significant bearing on the operation, such as the lack of a comprehensive plan for the overall conduct of the war or the correlation between the decision to attack in the East and the conduct of the war against Britain.

The questions of fundamental importance for the history of air warfare are as follows: (1) Was it possible for the Luftwaffe to achieve the air supremacy described repeatedly by the Supreme Command as the paramount condition for an invasion? (2) Was air warfare conducted against England exclusively in preparation for the execution of Operation Sea Lion? and (3) Was the invasion of England postponed and finally cancelled solely because the Luftwaffe was unable to execute its assigned mission?

Once it had become evident that Britain had no thought of capitulating after the French campaign but was determined, on the contrary, to continue the war with everything available to her and was bending every effort to prepare

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for the defense of the British Isles, the necessity arose for the German command to consider ways and means to compel her to accept peace. It was only with great reluctance that Hitler accepted the idea of an invasion. In common with the Chief of the Wehrmacht Operations Staff-- General Jodl, and the Commanders in Chief of the Army and the Navy, he held the opinion initially that German air superiority in the Channel areas and over Southern England was an indispensable condition for the invasion.

After the end of the French campaign the Luftwaffe had to concentrate exclusively on warfare against Britain. For this purpose it was necessary first to establish the required ground service organization. This work and the

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studies conducted to determine the most effective methods for the offensive took up the time up to the beginning of August. During this time the other two branches of the Wehrmacht were already preparing their plans and carrying out their first preparations. Although these preparations had to be made with improvised means, they were essentially completed by mid-September. The dates suggested in September represented the last opportunity to carry out the invasion in 1940, so that it would have been essential to achieve air superiority by then.

In Poland and France the air offensive commenced concurrently with the jump-off on the ground. After the hostile ground service installations had been put out of action by the Luftwaffe the German Army, with air support, was able to occupy the enemy's air fields. In the case under study here--the planned invasion of England--the air offensive started in advance of the projected jump-off time for the amphibious operation, in direct contrast with past operations on the continent. The same circumstances prevailed later in the war, in 1944, for the Anglo-American invasion, which was preceded by an air offensive.

Roughly speaking, the air battle for England thus conformed to the ideas propounded by General Douhet on

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the subject of air warfare: the air offensive was launched while the ground and naval forces remained on the defensive. However, the conditions existing on the two opposing sides were not those on which Douhet had predicated his theories.

In comparison with Britain, Germany admittedly was in an exceptionally favorable strategic position. Norway, Denmark, the Bight of Helligoland, Holland, Belgium, and France, in short the entire coastline from North Cape to the Pyrenees was occupied by German forces. In this situation, however, Germany lacked a navy of appropriate strength, which could have challenged the British Royal Navy. Once again British naval supremacy was to prove decisive for the history of Great Britain. Dunkirk had shocked Britain into expending all efforts to prepare the island for the defense in order to be prepared against all eventualities. In the initial stages the Royal Air Force was to carry the whole burden of the defense. A widely dispersed and widely ramified ground service system enabled the Royal Air Force to withdraw certain of its units

to airfields in Middle England. Here, they were relatively safe from German bombing attacks because of the inadequate operating range of the German fighters, lacking the protection of which German bombing operations would have been too costly.

The Luftwaffe initially conducted warfare against England with the strategic objective of eliminating the British defenses. In the initial phase of the battle for England the attacks therefore were directed at the ground service organization in Southern England. The withholding tactics of defense employed by the British Fighter Command made it impossible for the Luftwaffe to secure air superiority.

The second phase of the air battle took the form of attacks against the British armament industry. The object here was, if at all possible, to bring about a decision of the war through strategic air warfare alone. In this phase air operations were conducted completely in line with the theories of General Jodl, who had expounded the opinion repeatedly that an invasion of England could only be undertaken as a coup de grace against an England whose armament industry was paralyzed and whose air forces were barely capable of action.



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The resounding successes of the Luftwaffe in September influenced even the Commander in Chief of the Navy to believe in the possibility that continued unremitting air attacks might compel Britain to capitulate without any necessity for an invasion. All concerned had overestimated the effects of the air attacks on Britain.

Far from deciding the war through strategic air warfare alone, the Luftwaffe failed in its efforts to achieve the air superiority required from the outset by the German Supreme Command as the prerequisite for the invasion. With the experience since gained it is evident in retrospect that with the means available at the time no possibility existed to decide the war through strategic air warfare alone.

A factor which contributed decisively to defensive victory which the Royal Air Force indisputably gained in spite of heavy losses was the organization of the British Fighter defenses, which was superb under the conditions

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and concepts then ruling. This organization enabled the command to exercise a clever tactical control which made large successes possible against an attacking force. Another significant factor was the early establishment of a radar network in England, which made it possible to alert the fighter forces in good time.

On the other hand, the Luftwaffe was not prepared for the conduct of full-scale strategic air warfare. It had been able to render highly effective strategic and tactical air support in the past blitz campaigns. For an all-out strategic air war against England, in accordance with the strategic concepts of General Douhet, the Luftwaffe lacked fast, heavily armed, long-range heavy bombers and escort fighters which could operate at a corresponding range. The German bombers could meet the stated requirements neither in speed, bomb load, nor armament. Owing to their inadequate defensive weapons they required strong fighter escorts, and for this purpose the German Me-109 was only conditionally suitable because of the short time it could remain airborne.

What has been said above is not intended to belittle the great successes achieved by the Luftwaffe against

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Britain. The damage done in England and the way in which the Royal Air Force was weakened created conditions in which it was possible in 1941 to employ the Luftwaffe in the Balkans and later in the Russian campaign without exposing German cities for the time being to any considerable threat of air attack by units operating from Britain.

Air warfare was conducted by the Luftwaffe High Command against Britain without the declared purpose of preparing the way for an invasion, but nevertheless in the belief that if the operations it had initiated were successful, the conditions essential for an invasion would be created. The basic motivating factor for the air offensive was the effort to bring about a decision of the war through strategic air warfare alone. The course of the air offensive and the untimate results are evidence that this objective was not gained.

Nevertheless, the negative results of the air offensive were not the only factor responsible for the postponement of Operation Sea Lion. In fact, the postponement cannot be attributed to any one single cause. That the invasion of

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of England was not attempted was due in part also to a number of factors which must be mentioned here in their connection with what happened and their influence on the decision taken. First, there was the weakness of the German Navy, which found itself face to face with a sheerly impossible mission. Even if the bulk of the German Army units had made the crossing successfully and gained a foothold on the English coast, the Navy considered that it would be faced by insurmountable difficulties in carrying across the necessary supplies. Secondly, there was the previously mentioned political factor involving Russia and what had happened in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans, which played a major role in bringing about the decision to postpone the operation.

Hitler was unwilling to undertake an operation against Britain which he considered extremely risky, and the success of which he considered dependent upon German air supremacy, which the Luftwaffe was unable to achieve in spite of all-out and extremely courageous efforts. Furthermore, he felt that he understood the threat Russia would constitute to Germany in the East if the German armed forces were tied down in a costly operation of long duration against England

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and there was no way of insuring that such an operation could be brought to a speedy and successful conclusion.

He also may have been influenced by fear of the political repercussions of a possible German failure.

There is no possibility to answer with any degree of reliability the question as to what the chances of success would have been if Operation Sea Lion had been launched. This question is a problem of military speculation. The British opinion stated occasionally since the war can be rejected, however, that the operation would have been doomed to failure from the very outset if it had been attempted. If the British were so firmly convinced that their navy and air force could repel any German attempt at invasion they would hardly have spent so much effort on preparations for the defense of their island ashore.

It appears thus that there was a certain chance that an invasion might have succeeded. This chance was greatest

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immediately after Dunkirk, but Germany was not prepared for such a case. The chances became steadily smaller after the French campaign, in spite of the feverish German preparations, in proportion to the time and opportunity England had to reorganize her forces and develop her defenses. In the end the chances of success were so small for Operation Sea Lion in comparison with the political and military risks involved that Hitler abandoned the plan.

This abandonment of the plans for an invasion constitutes one of the most important decisions in the history of World War II. Although Britain was by no means defeated in the military sense, Germany turned her attention to the Mediterranean Theater, the Balkans, and the East. The result was the very multi-front war Hitler had tried constantly to avoid. America's entry into the war turned what had been a continental war into a war of global dimensions in the truest sense of the word. Although thoroughly armed, Germany, together with her allies, was too weak in the long run for a conflict with all the major powers of the world and logically had to succumb in the end.