

Side 2 - Stagg, Ike, Bertie, Leigh-Mallory, Spaatz

STAGG *opens the envelope and takes out a piece of paper. He reads it, then folds it and returns it to the envelope.*

IKE. Good news?

STAGG. No particular news.

IKE....okay.

IKE *assesses STAGG for a moment, then continues.*

Even if I support your view, Dr Stagg, I may still give the order to go. We've received information that the head of our code-breaking bureau in France has been captured by the Germans. We have no idea how much he has given away under Gestapo interrogation. If he cracks, years of planning and deception go up in smoke and Rommel will move his Panzer Divisions to Normandy. Any hold-up could be lethal. We cannot delay unless we absolutely have to.

Short silence. All eyes on STAGG.

STAGG. Sir...

Although superficially hesitant, there is strength in STAGG's next speech. His confidence starts to build.

I can't offer you certainty. I have always said that long-term forecasting is a gamble. What I do offer is twenty-five years of observing British weather. Despite every risk you've identified, instinct and experience tell me that the landings should be postponed. I am now confident that the storm L6 will pass through the English Channel on Monday morning. It is a storm of unprecedented malignity for the time of year. I anticipate storm-force winds throughout the day.

IKE. Okay... Okay...

IKE *walks to the French windows, his back to the room. Thinks for a moment, then turns.*

Assuming for a moment we trust Dr Stagg's prognosis - force-six winds, low cloud, considerable swell... what are the worst conditions we can tolerate? Bertie?

BERTIE RAMSAY. Anything above force five and the landing craft will capsize. Not just the troop carriers, but the LCTs and LCVPs carrying tanks and vehicles. Waves of four to six feet

would be dangerous but tolerable. Anything over six feet impossible. If Stagg's forecast is right, wind direction will be west-north-west causing wind against current. The subsequent swell must not exceed seven feet. My other concern is deterioration in the weather on Tuesday or Wednesday, which would leave a quarter of a million men stranded on the beaches with no possibility of landing more troops and equipment as back-up. (*To STAGG.*) Do you believe the weather could get worse on Tuesday and Wednesday?

STAGG. The weather could remain consistently as poor as Monday.

IKE. Trafford?

LEIGH-MALLORY (*to STAGG*). How complete would the cloud cover be on Monday morning?

STAGG. 10 10ths. Base: 0 to 500 feet.

LEIGH-MALLORY. Fog?

STAGG. Extremely likely.

LEIGH-MALLORY. Absolutely impossible. I won't be able to drop accurate markers for the gliders carrying the airborne divisions, so your flanks will be unprotected. My bombers won't be able to see their targets, so no guaranteed cover for the landings. Inaccurate bombing will put the lives of thousands of French civilians at risk. Under no circumstances could I support invasion in the conditions described by Dr Stagg. It would be a catastrophe.

IKE. Tooeey?

SPAATZ. Everything Trafford says is true and if base is as low as zero, you're gonna get mid-air collisions – lose a lot of aircraft, a lot of lives. But if we get ashore, the war is over... may take a while, but it's over. Could argue that any sacrifice on Monday is justifiable.

Silence. IKE walks round the room. All eyes are on him, but he is apparently oblivious to their presence as he struggles with his decision.

IKE. Thank you, gentlemen. I am inclined... (*Long beat.*) to believe... to put my faith in... (*Another beat.*) Dr Stagg's

forecast. And in that case I have no choice but to postpone Overlord by at least twenty-four hours. Compared with the enemy's forces, ours are not overwhelmingly strong.

We need every help our air superiority can give us. If the air cannot operate we must postpone. Are there any dissentient votes?

BERTIE RAMSAY. No.

LEIGH-MALLORY. No.

All eyes on SPAATZ.

IKE. Tooley?

They wait for SPAATZ's response.

SPAATZ....No.

IKE. So be it. D-Day will be postponed.

Blackout.

The following morning. 8.00 a.m. Sunday, 1944

A beautiful

STAGG

you?

sky. North

lcony

an

8.45 p.m.

off

examines them.

A

mother east, but the

curtains settle again. Sun