

National Archives and Records Service
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

The following documents were
filed out of chronological order
among the originals. They
have been microfilmed as they
were filed.

Microfilmed at The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York

C O P Y.

PRIME MINISTER.

With reference to your Minute M.881/1 of the 8th September, I attach a Memorandum and a Print showing the alterations which would be required to American Merchant Ships to convert them to tank landing craft.

(Signed) DUDLEY POUND.

25th September 1941.

MODIFICATION TO CERTAIN AMERICAN MERCHANT SHIPS
FOR TANK LANDING.

The tanks and/or motor vehicles would be carried on the 2nd deck which would require to be lowered and possibly stiffened locally.

An opening approximately 40' long and 10'6" high would be cut in the shell plating amidships on each side for vehicles to pass through, either when being taken on board or when being disembarked. This opening would be fitted with a hinged flap door which when open would form a platform.

Two brows about 80' long by 13' wide, one each side, would be carried by the ship when tank operations are envisaged and would be stowed against the ship's side forward of the openings during passage to and from the scene of operations. The brows would be long enough to enable tanks to land on the beach if the vessels were aground or to land into T.L.Cs. should it be desired to keep the vessel afloat.

The biggest alteration is lowering the 2nd deck so that the height between this and the upper deck gives sufficient head room for the vehicles. A minimum headroom of 10'6" all fore and aft would be required, a passage-way at least 13' wide being provided on one side of the machinery casing. It is not possible to say with our present knowledge whether the existing machinery layout would permit the lowering of the 2nd deck in this area.

Openings 13' wide and 10'6" high would be necessary in the main transverse tween deck bulkheads to allow vehicles a clear passage fore and aft. These openings would have to be closed when the ship is used as a cargo carrier in order to provide the requisite transverse strength and watertight sub-division.

Although the openings in the side plating would be made watertight for the ship's ordinary service as a cargo carrier by means of the hinged steel door, these doors would not contribute to the longitudinal strength of the ship. The scantlings of the shell plating and bulwarks around the openings would be increased to compensate for the loss in strength due to the cutting of these large ports.

The above proposals would enable the ship to carry and land up to 40 ton tanks, probably 25 in number, and up to 3 ton army lorries; still heavier tanks could be dealt with by shoring the brow. The general scheme is illustrated on attached print.

It is assumed that these ships would be used after the first operation of landing and seizing the foreshore and country immediately surrounding, that is, the vessels would be Tank Landing Ships not Tank Assault Ships. A certain amount of accommodation would have to be provided for tank crews and maintenance staff and it would be necessary to devise some arrangement for ventilating the tank stowage space during the landing operation. The fitting of such accommodation and ventilation would involve taking the ships in hand a fair time before they could be used for tank carrying.

25th September, 1941.

PROPOSAL FOR CONVERSION OF AMERICAN MERCHANT SHIPS AS TANK CARRIERS

SCALE $\frac{1}{16}'' = 1'$

MODIFICATIONS SHOWN IN DED.

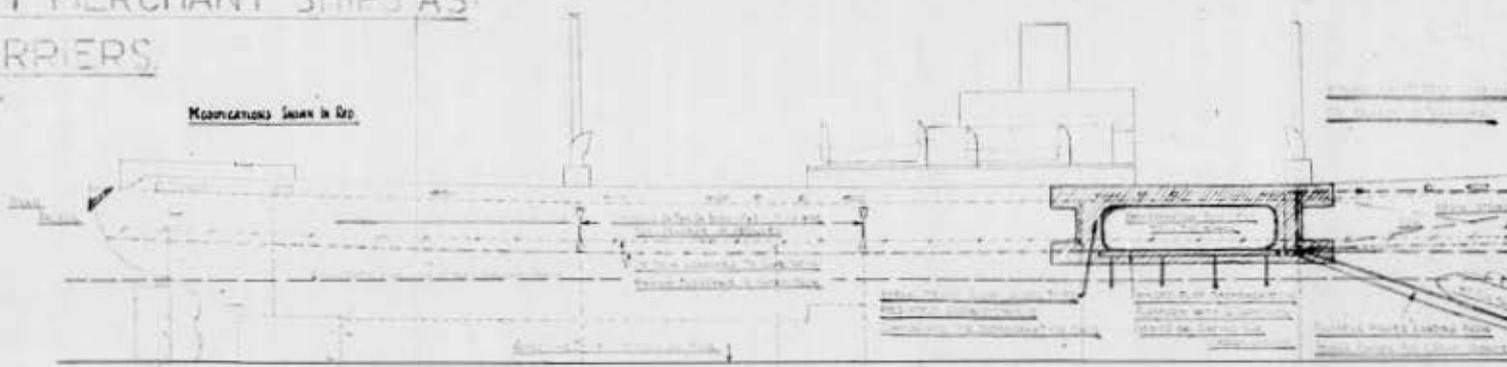


FIGURE 11 SHOWING LEVELS REACHED IN REGISTERING VESSELS. DRAWING ON 100-100' FULL OF TANKS

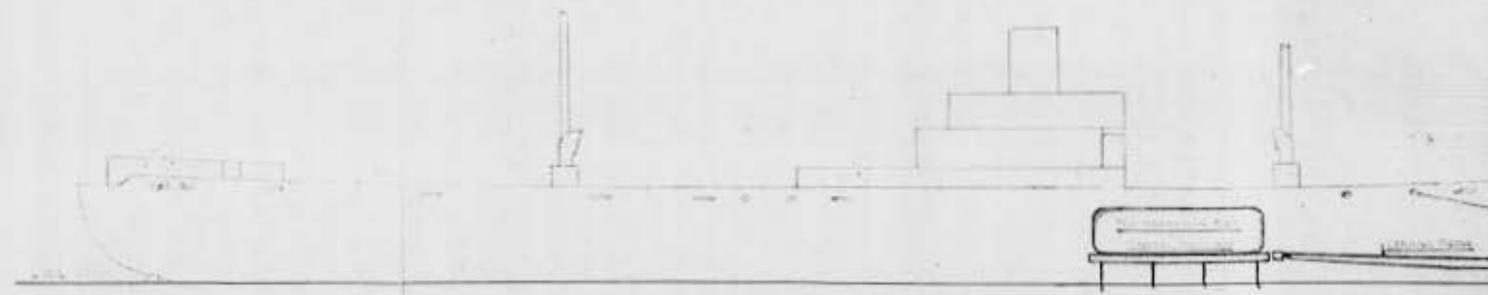


FIGURE 12 SHOWING AKAH APPROXIMATE DISPLACEMENT OF HULLS IN FULLY LOADED CONDITION

2 January 1942

The following documents were in an envelope handed to President Roosevelt by Prime Minister Churchill either on 2 or 3 January 1942:

1. Letter, dated 20 October 1941, from Churchill to Roosevelt.
2. Telegram, dated 18 October 1941, from Roosevelt to Churchill.
3. Telegram #T441, dated 25 July 1941, from Churchill to Roosevelt.

All the above messages filed under date of 2 January 1942.

FORMER NAVAL PERSON TO PRESIDENT.

PERSONAL AND [REDACTED]

I am most grateful for your message about the tank programme. This addition to our tank resources in the coming critical months is splendid. As to the longer term policy all our experience goes to show that more heavily armed and armoured vehicles are required for modern battle and we should therefore plan to increase the output of medium tanks at the expense of light tanks, but not of course at the expense of your air programme.

2. I am much interested in your suggestion that men for our Tank Corps should be trained in the United States. We are examining it here and will let you know our views as soon as possible.

3. We have been considering here our war plans, not only for the fighting of 1942 but also for 1943. After providing for the security of essential bases, it is necessary to plan on the largest scale the forces needed for victory. In broad outline, we must aim first at intensifying the blockade and propaganda. Then we must subject Germany and Italy to a ceaseless and ever growing air bombardment. These measures may themselves produce an internal convulsion or collapse. But plans ought also to be made for coming to the aid of the conquered populations by landing armies of liberation when opportunity is ripe. For this purpose it will be necessary not only to have great numbers of tanks, but also of vessels capable of carrying them and landing them direct on to beaches. It ought not to be difficult for you to make the necessary adaptation in some of the vast numbers of merchant vessels you are building so as to fit them for Tank-landing fast ships.

4. If you agree with this broad conception of bringing Germany to her knees, we should not lose a moment in:

- (a) Framing an agreed estimate as to our joint requirements of the primary weapons of war, e.g. aircraft, tanks, etc.
- (b) Thereafter considering how these requirements are to be met by our joint production.

5. Meanwhile I suggest that our combined staffs in London should set to work as soon as possible on (a) and that thereafter our technical experts should proceed with (b).

25.7.41.

REGRADED
UNCLASSIFIED



10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

20. October 1941.

For yourself alone.

PART I.

My dear Mr. President,

1. Sometime this Fall, General Auchinleck will attack the German and Italian armies in Cyrenaica with his utmost available power. We believe his forces will be stronger than the enemy's in troops, in artillery, in aircraft, and particularly in tanks. His object will be to destroy the enemy's armed and, above all, armoured forces, and to capture Benghazi as quickly as possible.
2. Should this operation prosper, the plans which have been prepared for a further rapid advance upon Tripoli may be carried out. Should success attend this further effort, important reactions may be expected which it is provident to study in advance.
3. General Weygand may be stirred into joining in the war, or the Germans may make demands upon him or

Vichy for facilities in French North Africa which may force him into the war.

4. To profit by these contingencies, we are holding a force equivalent to one armoured and three field divisions ready with shipping from about the middle of November. This force could either enter Morocco by Casablanca upon French invitation, or otherwise help to exploit in the Mediterranean a victory in Libya.

5. In order to cover effectively these preparations, we have prepared large-scale plans for a descent upon the Norwegian coast, and also for a reinforcement of the Russians in Murmansk. There is substance as well as shadow in these plans.

6. It seems therefore probable that we shall have to send away from Great Britain four or even five divisions besides the 18th Division which will arrive at Halifax on November 7 on its journey round the Cape to Suez. We must expect that as soon as Hitler stabilizes the Russian front, he will begin to gather perhaps fifty or

sixty divisions in the west for the invasion of the British Isles. We have had reports, which may be exaggerated, of the building of perhaps 800 craft capable of carrying 8 or 10 tanks each across the North Sea, and of landing anywhere upon the beaches. Of course there will be Parachute and Airborne descents on a yet unmeasured scale. One may well suppose his programme to be:-
1939 - Poland; 1940 - France; 1941 - Russia; 1942 - England; 1943 - ? At any rate, I feel that we must be prepared to meet a supreme onslaught from March onwards.

7. In moving four or five divisions, including one armoured division, out of the United Kingdom in these circumstances, we are evidently taking risks. Should events happily take the course assumed in the earlier paragraphs of this letter, and should we in fact reduce our forces at home to the extent mentioned, it would be a very great reassurance and a military advantage of the highest order if you were able to place a United States Army Corps and Armoured Division, with all the Air Force possible, in the

North of Ireland (of course at the invitation of that Government as well as of His Majesty's Government), thus enabling us to withdraw the three divisions we now have in Northern Ireland besides the troops in Iceland (now being relieved), for the defence of Great Britain.

8. We should feel very much freer to act with vigour in the manner I have outlined if we knew that such a step on your part was possible. Moreover, the arrival of American troops in Northern Ireland would exercise a powerful effect upon the whole of Eire, with favourable consequences that cannot be measured. It would also be a deterrent upon German invasion schemes. I hope this may find a favourable place in your thoughts. I do not suggest that any decision should be taken until we see the result of the approaching battle.



10, Downing Street,
Whitehall.

Personal and [REDACTED]

**REGRADED
UNCLASSIFIED**

PART II.

9. A decisive success in the Mediterranean theatre would also, I hope, allay the doubts and anxieties of some of your Generals about the wisdom of our trying to hold the Middle East, and particularly the Nile Valley. The organization of the rearward services is steadily improving, but we welcome all helpful and constructive criticism. I had a long talk with General Brett, who lunched with me, and have carefully noted various suggestions which he made. He is of course a strong partisan for keeping the Air Force subordinate to the Army, and not having any independent strategic Air service. This may be sound so far as the United States is concerned, but over here we have needed to emphasize the dominance of the Air Arm in its independent aspect, and from this it follows that the parts of our Air Force associated with the Navy or the Army should only be subsidiary to the parent Service.

10. In the Middle East, as I told you in a recent telegram, I have ruled that whenever a major military operation is in hand, the Air Force should be effectively subordinated to General Auchinleck. In practice, no difficulty has arisen between him and the Air Commander except the difficulty, so often present in war, of finding out what is the right thing to do. At the last action on June 15 - 18, our Air was so anxious to serve the Army that it allowed itself to be parcelled out among the various columns, affording a number of local umbrellas and losing its decisive power to strike at the enemy's Air force. We hope to profit by our previous mistakes.

11. "Unity of Command" could not be extended to cover the Navy. The Admiral, who invariably leads the Fleet to sea, must be at Alexandria or within an hour or two of it. In combined operations, of which we have a long and variegated experience, we have never followed the practice of subordinating the Navy to the Army, or vice versa. The very best relations prevail between the Naval and Military Commanders-in-Chief, and I do not know of any

inconvenience that has arisen, except of course that when the Admiral is fighting at sea, his Deputy cannot speak with the same authority. This coming battle will be entrusted on land to General Cunningham, and on sea to his brother, Admiral Cunningham, and, by an odd coincidence, the Commander of all the Air forces which are to be engaged is also named Coningham. Let us hope that the firm of Cunningham, Cunningham and Coningham will flourish.

12. The idea of having One Man in complete command of everything is more attractive in theory than in practice. No sooner has all power been placed in one hand, than it has to be divided up again. I have described the arrangements of the Command on which we are working. In organization we draw the line between the Q. services of the Army (which are under the Military Commander-in-Chief), and those of the rear (which are under the Minister of State and his Officer, the Intendant-General) at the point where more than one Service is involved. This solution, which has been reached after other alternatives have been tried,

leaves the field workshops and factories in the Delta under the Army, but assigns all common services, ports, landing facilities, rearward communications and long-term projects to the sphere of the Minister of State.

13. All my information goes to show that a victory in Cyrenaica of the British over the Germans will alter the whole shape of the war in the Mediterranean. Spain may be heartened to fight for her neutrality. A profound effect may be produced upon the already-demoralized Italy. Perhaps most important of all, Turkey may be consolidated in her resistance to Hitler. We do not require Turkey to enter the war aggressively at the present moment, but only to maintain a stolid, unyielding front to German threats and blandishments. As long as Turkey is not violated or seduced, this great oblong pad of poorly-developed territory is an impassable protection for the Eastern flank of our Nile Army. If Turkey were forced to enter the war, we should of course have to give her a great deal of support which might be better used elsewhere, either in French North Africa or in the Caucasus. We are

making promises of support to Turkey (contingent on the military situation) which amount to between four and six divisions, and twenty or thirty Air Squadrons, and we are actively preparing with them the necessary airfields in Anatolia. But what Turkey requires to keep her sound is a British victory over Germans, making all promises real and living.

14. These dispositions as I have set them out, do not allow us in the next six months to make any serious contribution to the Russian defence of the Caucasus and Caspian Basin. The best help we can give the Russians is to relieve the five Russian Divisions now crowded into Northern Persia. If these are brought home and used in the battle, I have pledged the faith of Britain to Stalin that no rightful Russian interest shall suffer, and that we will take no advantages in Persia at their expense. I do not however see how, in the period mentioned, we can put more than a symbolic force into the Caucasus, and the Russians retain a similar representation in Persia. The Russians much disturb Persia by their presence, their

theories and their behaviour, and the outbreak of disorders would mean that we should have to spread three or four British-Indian divisions to keep open the communications from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian. These communications, which are a vital part of our joint Aid to Russia policy, would thus be largely choked by the need of supplying the extra forces. I have been trying to get the Russians to see this point.

15. In my telegram of July 25, 1941, which I sent you before our Atlantic meeting, I spoke of the long-term project for 1943 of the simultaneous landing of say 15,000 tanks from hundreds of specially-fitted ocean-going ships on the beaches of three or four countries ripe for revolt. I suggested that the necessary alterations could easily be made at this stage to a proportion of your merchant ships now building on so vast a scale. I now send you the drawings prepared by the Admiralty, which illustrate the kind of treatment the vessels would require. You will see that it is estimated only to add about £50,000 to their cost, and I suppose a proportionate delay. It seems to

me that not less than 200 ships should be thus fitted. There is sufficient time, as we cannot think of such a plan before 1943. But the essential counterpart of the Tank programme you have now embarked upon, is the power to transport them across the oceans and land them upon unfortified beaches along the immense coast-line Hitler is committed to defend. I trust therefore, Mr. President, that this will commend itself to you.

16. I send you a short note which I have made upon the use of artillery, both Field and Flak. This has its bearing upon the approaching offensive in Part I, as well as upon the organization of our Home Army to meet invasion. All the authorities are agreed upon the principles set forth, and you are very welcome to show this paper, should you think it worth while, to your Officers.

17. I also send, for your own personal information, a note I have made on the structure, present and future, of the British and Imperial Armies which we are endeavouring to organize in 1942. Of course the figure of about 100 divisions does not, as is fully explained, mean

100 mobile standard Field Divisions. Some are Garrison; some are Anti-Aircraft; and some are equivalents in Brigade groups. Broadly speaking, however, it represents a much more considerable deployment of military strength than we had planned at the outbreak of the war. This has been rendered possible by the fact that we have not been engaged to any serious extent since the losses of Dunkirk, and that munitions and reserves have accumulated instead of being expended on a great scale.

18. I have not referred to the Japanese menace, which has seemed to grow so much sharper in the last few days, nor to the splendid help you are giving us in the Atlantic, because we discussed these great matters so fully at our meeting, and events are now telling their own tale in accordance with our anticipations. I still think, however, that the stronger the action of the United States towards Japan, the greater the chance of preserving peace. Should however peace be broken and the United States become at war with Japan, you may be sure that a British declaration of war upon Japan will follow within

the hour. We hope to be able before Christmas to provide a considerable Battle-squadron for the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

19. Lastly, Mr. President, let me tell you how I envy the Lord Privy Seal in being able to fly over to the United States and have a good talk with you. My place is here, and therefore I have taken this opportunity of writing you so long a letter. Might I ask that all reference to the forthcoming operations shall be kept absolutely secret, and for yourself alone? For this purpose I have separated the first part of the letter from the rest in the hopes that after reading it you will speedily consign it to the flames.

*With kindest regards + every
good wish. Believe me Mr. President*

Your sincere friend,

Christoph. Church

His Excellency
The President of the United States.

COPY

FROM THE PRESIDENT FOR THE FORMER NAVAL PERSON. ^{T. 713}

The view expressed in your note transmitted by Ambassador Winant in telegram of October 8 has been carefully considered. I fully agree that the Wheat Agreement should avoid any impression of forcing wheat importing countries of Europe, as a condition of immediate post war relief, into commitments which they had no part in formulating and see no objection to your instructing your delegation to emphasize this consideration in the discussions. I should like, however, to offer the following general comments with respect to our attitude on the subject of the wheat discussions.

We have not looked upon these discussions as a conference in any formal sense but rather as a meeting of competent experts in a position to reflect the views of their respective governments on one important problem in the general field of Anglo-American collaboration.

REGRADED
UNCLASSIFIED

We ...

We hope that it will be possible to find a large area of agreement on the part of the four overseas exporting countries and the United Kingdom as to the means of tackling the world wheat problem on an international basis. It is our feeling that marked progress was made in this direction in the discussions during last July and August.

So far as the forthcoming discussions are concerned, I may say that we hold no brief for the precise form or wording of the draft prepared during the meeting of last July. There are undoubtedly a number of points that will need to be revised in the light of the study that has been given to the question by the various governments since the discussions were adjourned last August. We attach special importance at this juncture to what seems to us to be two vital aspects of any effective international wheat agreement, namely, first, the equitable sharing of such post war market as may be available to
the ...

the four overseas exporting countries, including the questions of distribution of wheat for relief after the war, the establishment of the principle of an international ever normal granary on a practical working basis, and, second, the co-operation of the United Kingdom as the world's greatest wheat importing country in constructing an international Wheat Agreement which will work to the mutual benefit of both importing and exporting countries.

I am entirely in agreement with you as to the importance of considering the interest of Russia in this matter but it seems to me it should be entirely feasible to arrive at a framework which will leave the way open for Russian adherence.

Copies sent to:-

Buckingham Palace.
Sir E. Bridges.
Foreign Office.
Chancellor of the Exchequer.
Minister without Portfolio.

Recd. 18.10.41.

Handed to the President
by Winston Churchill
Jan 2nd or 3rd, 1942

~~Part of
the original
document~~

The Lord Privy Seal.

Prime Minister

0567