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September 16, 1943.

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 11652, Sec. 3(E) and 5(D) or (E)
JND 730069
By ERE NARS. Date 6-13-74

My dear Mr. President:

I have been thinking hard about our command problem in Overlord. I have come to these conclusions:

1. It is very important that we should unite under our American commander the Overlord problem with the Italian problem. Otherwise there will be inevitable and injurious competition for resources between the two, with the great probability that it will be Overlord that will suffer. I have a hunch that just at present the P.M. will make almost any concession to get Marshall over to England and that this is a concession he would make.

2. To help Marshall's influence, both abroad and at home, I think that he should be given by Congress the rank of General of the Armies rather than Field Marshal. With American soldiery that title carries a unique distinction far beyond Field Marshal, of whom they have seen many — some of little consequence.

I have reason to believe that Congress would readily give that title to Marshall. But, knowing Marshall as I do, I think he would not accept it unless assured that it met with Pershing's approval. I think Pershing would acquiesce in it if you asked him.

3. The British should of course have the operational command in Italy.

4. The problem of operational command in Northern France is more difficult, for there must be no non-conductors between Marshall and the invading troops, and I am afraid that the P.M. will try to occupy so much of Marshall's time in London as to dilute his direct influence over those troops. Therefore I think we should try for an American deputy in France. In any event, the direct command of the American contingent must of course be American.

Perhaps the appointment of an American deputy would be made easier if the actual announcement was postponed until we had accumulated as large a force as possible in the U.K. But the union of the northern and southern theatres under Marshall could not be postponed without the possibility of disastrous competition.

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5. I do not think we can safely postpone the date of his taking command beyond November first. The fatal delays and diversions which may sabotage Overlord will begin in the U.K. this autumn and nothing but his direct presence and influence will save us from them.

6. No one dreads more than I do the loss of his influence in theatres other than the European theatres, but I hope that the rank and title which I have suggested will help to preserve that influence indirectly in those far away theatres even if not directly.

I have talked this matter over with Harry and I think on most of these points he is in full sympathy with me.

Faithfully yours,

HENRY L. STIMSON

Secretary of War.

The President,
The White House.

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OFFICE SECRETARY OF WAR
Sept 16/
AUG 13 1943

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