

Between Preventive Attack and Collaboration: British Military Planning on Spain, 1940–1944

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journals.sagepub.com/home/wih**Juan José Díaz Benítez** 

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Abstract

In the early stages of the Second World War, Spanish dictator Francisco Franco and key regime figures were tempted to enter the war on the Axis side. This temptation was a serious concern for British wartime strategy. This article studies the British military operations prepared to confront the possibility of Spain entering the war between 1940 and 1944. These operations aimed to protect Gibraltar, maintain access through the Strait of Gibraltar, and reduce the Axis threat to maritime communications in the eastern Atlantic. The article sheds new light on three issues: the balance of advantages and disadvantages that the plans entailed and the preparations to carry them out; the simultaneity of planned operations to cooperate with the Spanish Armed Forces and ones to confront them; and the importance of Spanish non-belligerence as a differential factor with respect to other neutral European countries.

Keywords

Second World War, Spanish non-belligerence, British military planning, Gibraltar, Atlantic Islands, Iberian Peninsula

One of the most discussed questions on Spanish neutrality during the Second World War was the policy of non-belligerence. During the early stages of the war, Spanish dictator Francisco Franco and key regime figures, including his Minister for Foreign Affairs Ramón Serrano Suñer, were tempted to enter the war on the Axis side. There were ideological, economic and strategic reasons for the Spanish alignment with the Axis: Franco's regime, if not fascist, at least contained fascist elements; German and Italian support to Franco during the Spanish Civil War created a Spanish war debt with the Axis powers; and Franco needed Axis support to build a great empire in

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Northwest Africa.¹ These reasons help to understand why Spain was the only neutral European country to seriously consider entering the war alongside the Axis; and this menace led the United Kingdom to prepare for the possibility of intervention in Spain to protect Gibraltar, maintain access through the Strait of Gibraltar, and reduce the Axis threat to maritime communications in the eastern Atlantic.

British plans for military intervention in Spain during the Second World War are well known. Winston Churchill mentioned preparations for an operation to occupy the Canaries as an alternative base to Gibraltar in his memoirs, recorded also in the official British history of the war, which also referred to another operation against Spanish Morocco.² Since the 1970s, access to British archival records made it possible to delve into this matter. Thus, Víctor Morales Lezcano's study on Spanish non-belligerence was followed by works such as that of Denis Smyth on British policy towards Spain in 1940–1941, Antonio Marquina Barrio on the role of Spain in the strategy of the belligerents and Luis Pascual Sánchez Gijón on British military planning with respect to Spain between 1940 and 1942.³ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Spanish–British relations throughout the conflict were updated in the monographs prepared by Enrique Moradiellos, Richard Wigg and Carlos Collado Seidel. These monographs focused more on the diplomatic field than on military planning; a monograph on British military planning with respect to the Canary Islands was also produced at this time.⁴ In more recent decades, researchers have also paid attention to British intelligence activities in Spain: Megan E. Cokely addressed the counter-intelligence activities that occurred in Gibraltar; David A. Messenger studied the performance of the Special Operations Executive (SOE); Ángel Viñas and David Stafford analysed the bribery of a large part of the Spanish military

1 Enrique Moradiellos, *Franco. Anatomía de un dictador* (Madrid, 2018), pp. 260–74; Rafael García Pérez, *Franquismo y Tercer Reich: Las relaciones económicas hispano-alemanas durante la segunda guerra mundial* (Madrid, 1994), pp. 59–89; Ros Agudo, *La Gran Tentación. Franco, el Imperio colonial y los planes de intervención en la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Barcelona, 2008), pp. 126–28.

2 Winston S. Churchill, *Memorias. La Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Barcelona, 1989), vol. 2, pp. 182–83; J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 2: *September 1939 – June 1941* (London, 1957), pp. 238–39 and 430–34; J. M. A. Gwyer, *Grand Strategy*, vol. III: *June 1941 – August 1942* (London, 1964), pp. 1–8 and 93–5; Michael Howard, *Grand Strategy*, vol. 4: *August 1942 – September 1943* (London, 1964), pp. 162–67.

3 Víctor Morales Lezcano, *Historia de la no-beligerancia española durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Valencia, 1980); Denis Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy of survival. British policy and Franco's Spain, 1940–41* (Cambridge, 1986); Antonio Marquina Barrio, *España en la política de seguridad occidental 1939–1986* (Madrid, 1986); Luis Pascual Sánchez Gijón, *La planificación militar británica con respecto a España desde la derrota de Francia hasta el desembarco anglo-norteamericano en el norte de África (1940–1942)* (Madrid, 1984).

4 Enrique Moradiellos, *Franco frente a Churchill. España y Gran Bretaña en la Segunda Guerra Mundial (1939–1945)* (Barcelona, 2005); Richard Wigg, *Churchill y Franco. La política de apaciguamiento y la supervivencia del régimen, 1940–1945* (Barcelona, 2005); Carlos Collado Seidel, *El telegrama que salvó a Franco. Londres, Washington y la cuestión el régimen (1942–1945)* (Barcelona, 2016); Juan José Díaz Benítez, *Canarias indefensa: los proyectos aliados de ocupación de las Islas durante la II Guerra Mundial* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife, 2008).

leadership; Mark Simmons narrated the ‘Golden Eye’ operation; Emilio Grandío Seoane prepared an overview of the British intelligence networks in Spain; and Marta García Cabrera recreated a frustrated sabotage operation against the Axis ships in the Canary Islands.⁵

Most of these investigations do not focus on British military planning in relation to Spain but on the broader context of British policy towards this country or on the more specific scope of the intelligence services. The decision-making process in British policy towards Spain has been studied, both regarding the War Cabinet (CAB) led by Winston Churchill and the role played by other actors, such as the Director of Combined Operations (DCO), Roger Keyes, the British ambassador in Madrid, Samuel Hoare, the British naval attaché there, Allan Hillgarth, and the Chiefs of Staff (COS). The latter moderated or stopped many of Churchill’s initiatives on offensive operations against enemy territory and even against neutral countries.⁶

Decision-making by the COS was bolstered by advice from different committees and subcommittees that worked mainly at strategic and operational levels. The most noteworthy was the Joint Planning Sub-Committee (JPSC) or the Inter-Service Planning Staff (ISPS) entitled the Joint Planning Staff (JPS) that from 24 August 1940 drew up reports that were of great value in determining the factors that influenced strategic and operational decision-making. Although their plans were reviewed by the COS, the JPS reported directly to the Defense Minister. It was organised into three sections. The first was the Strategic Planning Section (S Section) whose objective was to analyse and report on strategic issues key to the three armies. The second was the Future Operational Planning Section (O Section) charged with the detailed plans of future operations that would form the basis for the work of the Executive Planning Section (EPS). Finally, there was the EPS (E Section) that prepared the executive actions necessary to apply the operational plans besides assisting the commanders of each operation to formulate the corresponding operations orders. The JPS, in turn, received counsel from the DCO on technical matters, although the DCO was also charged with planning and executing raids involving less than 5000 troops.⁷

The COS agreed to study plans for military intervention in Spain; however, they also considered that their execution should be postponed so as not to provoke the country to

5 Megan E. Cokely, ‘British counter-intelligence in Gibraltar: Deciphering Spanish «neutrality» during the Second World War’, *International Journal of Iberian Studies* 20 (2007), pp. 129–53; David A. Messenger, ‘«Against the Grain»: Special Operations Executive in Spain, 1941–45’, *Intelligence and National Security* 20 (2005), pp. 173–90; Ángel Viñas, *Sobornos. De cómo Churchill y March compraron a los generales de Franco* (Barcelona, 2016); David Stafford, ‘Roosevelt, Churchill and Anglo–American intelligence: The strange case of Juan March’, *Intelligence and National Security* 15 (2000), pp. 36–48; Mark Simmons, *Ian Fleming and Operation Golden Eye* (Oxford, 2018); Emilio Grandío Seoane, *A balancing act. British intelligence in Spain during the Second World War* (Brighton, 2018); Marta García Cabrera, ‘Operation Warden: British sabotage planning in the Canary Islands during the Second World War’, *Intelligence and National Security* 35 (2020), pp. 252–268, DOI: 10.1080/02684527.2019.1681140.

6 Max Hastings, *La guerra de Churchill. La historia ignorada de la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Barcelona, 2010), pp. 158–60; Geoffrey Best, *Churchill and War* (London, 2005), pp. 288–89.

7 The National Archives (TNA), London, CAB 84/18, Note JP (40) 421, 6 September 1940.

enter the war. This consideration is present in the reports prepared by the JPS, where the balance of advantages and disadvantages of these plans are appreciated. To explain the wartime decision-making process, however, attention should not be focused only on outcomes and results, because such a view would be too limited. Rather, an examination of wartime decision-making requires a wider perspective, one that includes discussions also of discarded plans. Indeed, to gain a more comprehensive view of the final decisions that were made, it is necessary to know why discarded options were ultimately rejected. After all, these reasons provided the balance of advantages and disadvantages that led to the adoption of economic and diplomatic pressure as the main tools to confront Spanish non-belligerence.

The economic and diplomatic perspectives on British decision-making on Spain during the Second World War are well known, but the military perspective has been less studied by historians. This perspective is necessary, however, to explain British strategy on Spanish non-belligerence because it was not only the result of diplomatic action and economic interests but also the product of military considerations, especially in wartime and against the risk of Spain going to war on the Axis side. To fill this gap, this article analyses British military planning on Spain through the JPS reports available in The National Archives (TNA). These reports shed new light on three issues: the balance of advantages and disadvantages that the execution of these plans would entail and the preparations to carry them out; the simultaneity of the operations to cooperate with the Spanish Armed Forces and the operations to confront them; and the importance of Spanish non-belligerence as a differential factor with respect to other neutral European countries.

The Uncertainties of Spanish non-Belligerence, 1939–1940

The British policy of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War had negative objectives, such as to avoid the expansion of this conflict into a European-wide one, which can be considered a success. However, some of the results of Britain's policy stance were not as expected in London, since it could not prevent the emergence of a hostile regime in Spain that threatened the security of British communications, especially in Gibraltar.⁸ In fact, the help that Franco received from Italy and the Third Reich during the civil war was one of the factors that influenced the alignment of his regime with the fascist powers alongside which he also aspired to a more favourable colonial redistribution at the expense of France and the United Kingdom.⁹ However, in September 1939, Spain was not in a position to enter the war alongside the Third Reich; therefore, it was forced to declare itself neutral. This neutrality was quickly called into question due to the repeated breaches of neutral obligations, especially by allowing the supply service activities of the German Navy in its ports.¹⁰

8 Moradiellos, *Franco frente a Churchill*, 20–31.

9 Manuel Ros Agudo, *La guerra secreta de Franco (1939–1945)* (Barcelona, 2002), pp. 28–44; Rafael García Pérez, 'España en la Europa hitleriana', *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie V: Historia Contemporánea* 7 (1994), pp. 35–50.

10 Elena Hernández-Sandoica y Enrique Moradiellos, 'Spain and the Second World War, 1939–1945' in *European neutrals and non-belligerents during the Second World War*, ed. Neville Wylie, (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 243–49.

The British government was aware of the Spanish approach to the Axis; however, doubts about Spanish neutrality increased in April 1940, with the German invasion of Denmark and Norway. At the end of that month, the JPSC reviewed the strategic situation, and the possible occupation of the Balearic Islands by Italy became a worry. It was not worth going to war with Italy for this Spanish archipelago if it remained neutral. However, if Italy were belligerent and occupied the islands with Spanish consent, there would be a serious threat to Gibraltar and allied communications in the Mediterranean. Spain's belligerence would worsen the situation of the Allies; it would demand turning Gibraltar into a fortress, denying the use of the Canaries and other possessions to the Third Reich, and maintaining Portuguese neutrality. In mid-May, the JPSC considered that it would be very difficult to expel the Italians from the Balearic Islands if they finally occupied them. However, it would be necessary to support Spain if the latter opposed an Italian occupation. In fact, Allan Hillgarth considered that this support should consist of four battalions of infantry and aviation. In contrast, for the JPSC, the conquest of the Balearic Islands was initially considered an exclusively French operation in which the United Kingdom would limit itself to sending a military representative to discuss the French plan.¹¹

As collaboration with Spain against Italy to defend the Balearic Islands was being considered, the JPSC also contemplated a more worrying situation: the belligerence of Spain, in favour of Italy and the Third Reich. The political instability and economic and military weakness of the Iberian country put into question the value of its belligerence, which was reduced to the use of its territory as a base for the Italian and German forces. In that case, the JPSC anticipated the disablement of Gibraltar, a greater risk to Allied shipping in the western Mediterranean and the Atlantic, as well as the need to protect the French border in the Pyrenees and the loss of important supplies from Spain and North Africa. In response, the Allies would seek to isolate Spain through economic pressure, the control of communications in the western Mediterranean, the conservation of Gibraltar, the maintenance of Portuguese neutrality, the political destabilisation of the Franco regime and the execution of various military operations. The latter consisted of the occupation of Spanish Morocco, the Balearic Islands and the Spanish colonies in West Africa, as well as denying the use of the Canaries to the enemy. Meanwhile, the uncertainty over Gibraltar's security led the CAB to agree, at the end of April, to study the evacuation of the civilian population, which was subsequently ordered on 19 May, after the collapse of the Anglo-French position on the western front.¹²

The German victories encouraged Mussolini to enter the war on 10 June and Franco to declare non-belligerence two days later. This declaration was accompanied by the offer of Spanish belligerence to the Third Reich in exchange for a series of territories in Africa, which included the Oranesado and the French protectorate in Morocco. The Spanish offer was rejected since it was not only considered demanding compensation but also

11 TNA, CAB 84/12, reports JP (40) 107 (S) Draft and JP (40) 128 (S), 26 and 29 April 1940; TNA, CAB 84/13, notes JP (40) 151, 13 May 1940, and JP (40) 177, 17 May 1940; TNA, CAB 84/2, minute of JP (40) 46th Meeting (Mtg.), 25 May 1940.

12 TNA, CAB 84/12, Note JP (40) 116, 13 May 1940; TNA, CAB 65/6, WM (40) 106, 28 April 1940; TNA, CAB 65/7, WM (40) 129, 19 May 1940.

unnecessary given that France was about to surrender.¹³ The United Kingdom tried to avoid Spanish belligerence through a policy of controlled economic aid, materialised in the agreements of 24 July and 6 September 1940, as well as the dispatch of Sir Samuel Hoare as ambassador on a special mission to Madrid. From there, he worked on a major bribery operation of several Spanish generals to influence the maintenance of neutrality by Franco.¹⁴

Despite these efforts, it was necessary to consider the possibility that Spain could eventually enter the war, which would render Gibraltar unusable. An alternative to this naval base had to be found, which the JPSC positioned on the Spanish and Portuguese Atlantic islands in mid-June. The Portuguese archipelagos of the Azores and Cape Verde were less defended and exposed to a German air counterattack from the Iberian Peninsula, while the Canaries hosted the only ports suitable for battleships and battlecruisers. However, the JPSC then considered that there were neither enough means of landing to attack the Spanish archipelago nor sufficient anti-aircraft artillery and fighters to defend it once occupied.¹⁵ The JPSC thus turned its attention to the occupation of the Azores, for which it already had plans prepared by the end of July, awaiting the right moment to execute them.¹⁶

As time passed, the fear of an imminent Spanish belligerence diminished. At the end of August, the JPS, a new name for the JPSC, feared an Axis attack in Egypt, but not a Spanish entry into the war. At the beginning of September, the COS did not expect the belligerence of the Spanish government, essential for the German advance towards Gibraltar and Northwest Africa. Despite this, if the Third Reich were to succeed in conquering Gibraltar and occupying French Morocco and the Atlantic archipelagos, British maritime communications would be threatened. It would then be necessary to occupy the Azores and Cape Verde islands and to support the Spanish resistance that could form if the Third Reich were to invade the country. Nevertheless, at the end of the same month and after the trip to Berlin of the Falangist and Spanish Minister of the Interior Ramón Serrano Suñer to negotiate Spain's entry into the war, the JPS requested the approval of the COS to prepare a plan to create a bridgehead in the Peninsula and take the Balearic Islands in case of Spanish belligerence.¹⁷

The aid to Spain Against a German Invasion, 1940–1941

Meanwhile, German planning to attack Gibraltar started in the summer of 1940, and at the end of November the Wehrmacht was ready to implement the operation known as 'Felix'. Hitler's directive 18 for this task included the study of the occupation of the Portuguese

13 Manuel Ros Agudo, *La Gran Tentación*. 215–25.

14 Moradiellos, *Franco frente a Churchill*, 134–70.

15 TNA, FO 371/24515, minute of COS (40) 184th Mtg., 17 June 1940; TNA, CAB 84/15, report JP (40) 257, 20 June 1940.

16 António José Telo, *Os Açores e o controlo do Atlântico* (Lisboa, 1993), pp. 308–15.

17 TNA, CAB 84/17, report JP (40) 373 (Draft), 21 August 1940; TNA, CAB 66/11, WP (40) 362, report COS (40) 683, 4 September 1940; TNA, CAB 84/19, note JP (40) 482 (O) (Revise), 23 September 1940.

Atlantic islands and the reinforcement of the Canary Islands.¹⁸ The extent of British knowledge about 'Felix' at that time remains unclear, but the possibility of a German entry into the Peninsula, and consequently the menace to Gibraltar, clearly was real. In German military planning, however, there is no evidence of a German move into Spain against the Spanish Army – merely a move to take Gibraltar. Meanwhile, Juan Beigbeder was replaced by Ramón Serrano Suñer as Minister of Foreign Affairs on 16 October 1940, but he maintained contacts with Hoare to oppose a Spanish belligerence, without being an Anglophile.¹⁹ In the conversation that Beigbeder and Hoare had in October, Beigbeder requested British support for the Spanish Army, since most of his generals would oppose the entry of German troops into the Peninsula.²⁰ The plan prepared in November by the JPS in response to this request aimed at maintaining control of the Strait of Gibraltar by retaining the south of the Peninsula with fifteen Spanish infantry divisions as well as four British infantry divisions and two armoured brigades, among others units. However, the JPS raised doubts about the strength of the Spanish resistance and the risk that the intervention of thirty German divisions could quickly reach Gibraltar. Another less risky and cheaper option was to help Spain resist a German attack in Morocco, an operation that was code-named 'Dazzle'.²¹

At the same time as they were planning the 'Dazzle' operation, the JPS was preparing another operation to conquer Ceuta, one of the two places of Spanish sovereignty, along with Melilla, in North Africa. Churchill proposed in late October 1940 the conquest of Ceuta and Tangier as an alternative to the loss of Gibraltar. In December, the JPS thought that if the Germans were to go ahead in Ceuta, it would not be possible to take the enclave, nor did they consider it viable to support the Spanish resistance in the south of the Peninsula. Taking Ceuta was also a very costly operation that would force the city of Tetouan to be taken as well to prevent a Spanish counter-attack.²² In November 1940, the Spanish government, which had occupied Tangier in June, annulled the international statute that regulated the administration of this city and incorporated it into the Spanish protectorate in Morocco.²³ The measure made Churchill think that Franco was advancing towards belligerence; thus, in December, the JPS was ordered to study the conquest also of that city. The operation, called 'Grind', was aimed at conquering Tangier and Ceuta, while the Germans entered the Peninsula with Spanish consent. The occupation of Tangier was considered viable; however, that of Ceuta, called 'Challenger', was not due to the lack of maritime transport capacity and the

18 Charles B. Burdick, *Germany's military strategy and Spain in World War II* (Syracuse, 1968), pp. 53–95. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (BA-MA), RW 4/v.519, Hitler's directive 18, 12 November 1940.

19 Javier Tusell, 'Los cuatro ministros de asuntos exteriores de Franco durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial', *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie V: Historia Contemporánea* 7 (1994), pp. 323–48.

20 TNA, CAB 84/21, note JP (40) 573 (O), 28 October 1940; Sánchez Gijón, *La planificación militar*, 67–68; Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy*, 104–5.

21 TNA, CAB 84/22, note JP (40) 628, 6 November 1940; TNA, CAB 84/23, note JP (40) 742 (S), 6 December 1940.

22 TNA, CAB 84/2, minute of JP (40) 119th Mtg. 30 October 1940; TNA, CAB 84/23 and CAB 84/24, notes JP (40) 728 (O) and JP (40) 733, 3 December 1940.

23 Ros Agudo, *La Gran Tentación*, 110–111.

speed with which the German forces would react. For the JPS, the best option to settle in Spanish Morocco was with Spanish consent, an operation in December that received the name 'Humour' and involved a reinforcement of the units planned for 'Dazzle'.²⁴

Between June and December 1940, moreover, Spain, too, studied the occupation of the French protectorate in Morocco, initially postponed when France requested an armistice with the Third Reich. The lack of German guarantees on the ambitious Spanish territorial claims in Northwest Africa during the September and October negotiations decisively influenced Franco's decision to postpone his entry into the war, confirmed on 7 December to Admiral Wilhelm Canaris.²⁵ However, at the end of November, and in anticipation of a Spanish attack against French Morocco, the Executive Planning Staff (EPS) received the order to study the support that General Weygand, Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in North Africa, should receive to contain it. Faced with the dilemma of supporting Weygand against a Spanish attack, or Spain against a German attack, the JPS opted in January 1941 for the former. This required fewer forces; Oran and Casablanca would serve as alternatives to Gibraltar, which would attract part of the French Navy. Shortly afterwards the JPS added that the French Army in North Africa could resist a Spanish attack, but not a German one, which would depart from Spanish Morocco. Throughout February 1941, and without any insight into Weygand's plans or needs, the JPS estimated that an army corps with two infantry divisions, a tank battalion and four air squadrons would have to be sent. However, at the end of April, it recommended not to offer military aid to the French general, since they did not have enough military forces or the weapons that their army needed. In fact, at that time, the evacuation of British forces in Greece was concluding, and General Rommel was advancing through North Africa towards Egypt.²⁶

In studying how to support Weygand against a German attack, it was essential to deny the use of Spanish Morocco to the Axis forces, for which 'Operation Blackthorn' was prepared. The context of the operation is found in a memorandum by Hillgarth on proposed measures to help Spain resist a German invasion. It included sending a military mission to prepare for the deployment of an expeditionary force in the south of the Iberian Peninsula, irregular preparations by the SOE and supplies for Spain. The JPS favourably commented on Hillgarth's proposal, although if there was no Spanish invitation before the German invasion, it would have to be limited to the defence of Spanish Morocco. Consequently, the COS recommended forming a liaison delegation with the Spanish. With Churchill's approval, the directives of said delegation and the Blackthorn operation plan were drafted. 'Blackthorn's' main objective was to maintain control of, or at least to stop, the enemy from taking control of the Strait of Gibraltar.

24 TNA, CAB 121/518, minute of COS (40) 33rd Mtg. (O), 14 December 1940; TNA, CAB 84/25, notes JP (40) 784 (O) and (E), JP (40) 785 (O), and JP (40) 787, 14 and 15 December 1940.

25 Norman J. W. Goda, 'Franco's Bid for Empire: Spain, Germany, and the Western Mediterranean in World War II' in Raanan Rein, ed., *Spain and the Mediterranean since 1898*, (London, 1999), pp. 168–94; Ros Agudo, *La Gran Tentación*, 141–72 and 246–68.

26 TNA, CAB 84/23, note JP (40) 704 (E), 25 November 1940; TNA, CAB 84/25, report JP (40) 652 (S), 8 January 1941; TNA, CAB 84/26, note JP (41) 16 (S), 5 January 1941; TNA, CAB 84/27, reports JP (41) 115, JP (41) 120 (S), and JP (41) 154, 13, 14, and 25 February 1941; TNA, CAB 84/30, report JP (41) 337, 29 April 1941.

If Spain were to ask for help before the German invasion, the request would not be honoured to prolong Spanish neutrality until the last moment. On the contrary, if the request were to come after the German invasion, only Spanish Morocco could be defended, and then the liaison delegation would be sent to Gibraltar, in addition to helping the Spanish guerrillas in the Peninsula to delay the German advance.²⁷

In mid-February, and after having ruled out the conquest of Ceuta, which was not considered a valid alternative for Gibraltar, and the defence of the south of the Peninsula, the JPS continued with the preparations to support the resistance against a German invasion in Spanish Morocco (the 'Blackthorn' operation) and in French Morocco (the 'Persiflage' operation). Blackthorn included the dispatch of an advanced group to Gibraltar, which gave rise to 'Operation Ballast'. From the information provided by the liaison delegation in Gibraltar, it was estimated that the advanced group should consist of 1,500 men, 300 vehicles and thirty-two fighter planes. By March, the advanced group was awaiting the decision of the COS. If sent to Spain, it would enhance the Spanish resistance against a German invasion, although it would reduce the availability of fighters and the maritime transport capacity in other scenarios. However, the greatest risk was that Spain would not resist the German invasion or support the deployment of British forces in its protectorate in Morocco.²⁸

This led the JPS once again to study the possibility of supporting a Spanish resistance in the south of the Peninsula against a German invasion. Hoare continued the communications with royalist soldiers, such as General Aranda, in January 1941 and General Kindelán, in February of the same year. The British Military Attaché, Brigadier William Torr, also met with these generals, mainly Aranda and Kindelán, in December 1940 and February 1941.²⁹ After these interactions, the Foreign Office considered that the Spanish would distrust Great Britain if it were to limit the deployment of its military forces to the Spanish protectorate in Morocco. Consequently, the JPS revised the initial plan, which had been abandoned in favour of 'Blackthorn'. The new plan, called 'Sapphic', was less ambitious, since it was limited to an army corps with two infantry divisions and one armoured brigade, in addition to eight air squadrons. The British forces would be limited to covering the left flank of the Spanish deployment; however, the German troops would reach Cádiz earlier, and, as soon as the Spanish line fell, the British expeditionary force would be lost.³⁰ Finally, on 19 March, the COS decided to abandon the plan due to the lack of forces to carry it out and its excessively slow deployment.³¹

The proposal that Hillgarth had sent in January 1941 included conducting irregular operations. In March, the EPS prepared a plan called 'X.Y. Operations' for the

27 TNA, CAB 84/26, note JP (41) 29 (S) and (O), 12 January 1941; TNA, CAB 84/27, report JP (41), 26 January 1941; TNA, PREM 3/405/2, minute of COS (41) 1st Mtg. (O), 27 January 1941; TNA, CAB 84/27, notes JP (41) 81 (O) & (S), and JP (41) 99, 2 and 6 February 1941.

28 TNA, CAB 84/27, reports JP (41) 123, 18 February 1941, and JP (41) 156 (E), 25 February 1941; TNA, CAB 84/28, report JP (41) 169, 3 March 1941.

29 Sánchez Gijón, *La planificación militar*, 67–71 and 107–9.

30 TNA, CAB 84/27, note JP (41) 136 (S) and (E), and report JP (41) 142, 19 and 21 February 1941.

31 Sánchez Gijón, *La planificación militar*, 71–5.

destruction of port facilities and fuel depots in the main ports of the Iberian Peninsula. The Royal Navy would destroy the port facilities and the Army would target the fuel depots. The operations would be carried out by Army demolition groups under naval command, from Vigo to Gibraltar and from there to Barcelona. They would not be part of the SOE's activities and consist of a total of eighteen groups, with more joining from the United Kingdom, to carry out demolitions on the north coast of the Peninsula.³² Operation Golden Eye was added to this plan to preposition agents and saboteurs in Spain, with two variants: 'Sprinkler', if Spain resisted the entry of German troops and 'Sconce', in case Spain cooperated with the German forces. 'Operation Relator' was also developed to train the officers bound for Spain.³³

On 10 March 1941, a 'Golden Eye' delegation arrived in Gibraltar. After two weeks, the delegation informed the COS of its doubts about the Spanish will to resist a German advance through the Peninsula.³⁴ As a result, the COS decided not to send the advanced group for 'Operation Ballast' and not to undertake regular operations in Spain or Morocco, for which there would not be sufficient maritime transport capacity. In addition, the COS recommended dissolving the 'Golden Eye' delegation, since it had already fulfilled its mission. Instead, they maintained the need to carry out demolition operations and infiltrate leaders of the guerrillas.³⁵ In fact, in August of that year, the preparation of the 'Sconce' and 'Sprinkler' operations continued, although the 'Relator' operation was no longer considered viable.³⁶

The Occupation of the Canary Islands, 1941–1942

As British distrust of the Spanish will or ability to face a German invasion grew, so did the urgency for an alternative to Gibraltar. In June 1940, the occupation of the Canary Islands had been studied; however, it was relegated in favour of the occupation of the Azores and the Cape Verde Islands. In December 1940, the JPS reminded of the need to invade the Azores as an alternative to Gibraltar in case Spain were hostile or could not prevent the German invasion. However, in February 1941, faced with the risk that the Third Reich could try to take over the Balearic Islands, the JPS recommended preparing plans to settle in the Canary Islands. The best port in the Atlantic islands, Puerto de la Luz, was located here, on the island of Gran Canaria, where the risk of a German air strike from North Africa would not exist. A month later, the Defence Committee ordered the preparation of a plan for the occupation of the Spanish Atlantic archipelago against the resistance of the Spanish garrison with German support. The objective of the JPS plan, initially called 'Chutney', was Puerto de la Luz, considered the best alternative to Gibraltar in a context marked by the unfeasibility of the planned operations to collaborate with Spain in the face of a German invasion. However, when the COS approved the formation of an assault force against the Atlantic islands, the Portuguese archipelagos still

32 TNA, CAB 84/28, report EPS (41) 161, 6 March 1941.

33 Grandío Seoane, *A balancing act*, 26–8 and 39–46; Simmons, *Ian Fleming and*, 77–80.

34 TNA, WO 106/5425, from "Golden Eye" to Director of Military Operations (DMO), and Minute on COS (41) 111th Mtg., 27 March 1941.

35 TNA, CAB 84/28, report JP (41) 241, 31 March 1941.

36 Grandío Seoane, *A balancing act*, 47–54.

took precedence. The minutes of the COS meeting on 28 March 1941 provides no explanation as to why the Azores and Cape Verde Islands were prioritised, but at the time the risk of a German occupation was certainly deemed more likely there than for the Canary Islands.³⁷

German victories in Yugoslavia, Greece and Libya in April 1941 seemed to promote the delayed belligerence of Spain. The British ambassador in Madrid believed that it would take place as soon as the Suez Canal fell into the hands of the Axis. For its part, the JPS recommended occupying the Canary Islands as soon as possible, giving preference to this operation over those planned against the Portuguese archipelagos, largely because of the Spanish islands' harbours and aerodromes, their situation in Northwest Africa, and the possibility of later American aid in taking the Azores. Finally, Churchill approved the formation of the expedition in charge of taking Puerto de la Luz, but not its immediate execution. From then on, this operation was called 'Puma'. Despite Roger Keyes' insistence in April and May of that year, Churchill refused to order the execution of the operation. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, agreed with the British Prime Minister that the execution of the operation would mean Spain's entry into the war, which was precisely what it was intended to avoid.³⁸

Meanwhile, the information transmitted by Hoare on the changes that had taken place in the Spanish government in favour of the most neutralist sectors, after a serious political crisis in May, also advised maintaining prudence. Consequently, the operation was repeatedly postponed until Spanish belligerence seemed imminent, although preparations continued to retain forces and ships to carry it out. The Spanish reaction to the German invasion of the Soviet Union at the end of June 1941 reactivated the alarms about a possible entry of the Spanish government into the war, especially with the dispatch of volunteers to fight in the German Army as well as a speech by Franco in the middle of July, in which he emphasised his sympathy for the Axis.³⁹ The organisation of a military unit to fight against the Soviet Union was considered by Suñer and other pro-Nazi leaders as the beginning of 'moral belligerency', another step toward the Spanish entry into the war on the Axis side. However, the information from the British ambassador in Madrid again influenced the postponement of the occupation of the Canary Islands. In addition, and although the JPS advised against its postponement until September, the Admiralty considered that it would be easier to carry out the operation that month and that it was not worth provoking Spanish belligerence by immediately occupying the Canaries. For these reasons, it was postponed until September. The assault force planned for the

37 TNA, CAB 84/24, report JP (41) 778, 12 December 1940; TNA, CAB 84/27, report JP (41) 85, 3 February 1941; TNA, CAB 119/29, Special Secret Information Centre, Operation "Puma" / "Pilgrim"; TNA, CAB 84/28, report JP (41) 202 (E), 12 March 1941; TNA, FO 954/18, extracts from minutes of COS meetings, 27 and 28 March 1941.

38 TNA, FO 371/26945, Hoare to Foreign Office, 23 April 1941; TNA, AIR 8/893, report JP (41) 313, 23 April 1941; TNA, CAB 121/478, minute of COS (41) 147th Mtg., 24 April 1941; TNA, PREM 3/361/1, Roger Keyes to COS, General Ismay and Winston Churchill, 24 and 30 April 1941; TNA, FO 954/18, Roger Keyes to Winston Churchill, 9 and 10 May 1941, and note by Anthony Eden, 6 May 1941.

39 Smyth, *Diplomacy and strategy*, 225–32.

Spanish archipelago received the name Force 110, absorbing the forces in charge of taking the Portuguese islands, and the operation received a new name: 'Pilgrim'.⁴⁰

Force 110 comprised about 24,000 men who were training to disembark in Gran Canaria. It was the largest British amphibious force available in 1941, with 100,000 tons of ships retained to transport it to its target. The plan continued to be revised and even led to two versions in September, one for a surprise landing and the other for a landing preceded by a naval air raid.⁴¹ The preparations for the operation were affected by the disagreements that the DCO had with the COS and the expedition commanders, especially on the occasion of the 'Leapfrog' exercise, after which Churchill decided to replace Roger Keyes with Louis Mountbatten and redefine his position as Adviser on Combined Operations (ACO).⁴² The expedition would be carried out in winter, which implied executing the 'Irrigate' operation consisting of sending part of the expedition to Freetown. The force stationed there until February 1942 was called the 'Journalist'. From that moment on, the COS decided that the planning for the occupation of the Canary Islands would continue without retaining ships or forces, part of which were destined for 'Operation Ironclad' to take over the Diego Suarez (Antsiranana) naval base in Madagascar.⁴³

The strategic devaluation of the archipelago at the beginning of 1942 was related to the new strategic situation created by the entry of Japan and the United States into war in December 1941. In May 1941, Churchill informed Roosevelt that he had prepared the occupation of the Iberian Atlantic archipelagos and, although the United States had also prepared an operation to occupy the Azores, the Canary Islands were an exclusively British objective.⁴⁴ This idea was maintained in the conversations held between Churchill, Roosevelt and their respective general staffs in Washington in December 1941. These conversations also reiterated that the occupation of these islands was to take place only if the Axis entered the Iberian Peninsula.⁴⁵ It was also during December that a new project, 'Breezy', to occupy the Canary Islands was proposed. It

40 TNA, CAB 121/478, Hoare to Foreign Office, 22 July 1941; TNA, AIR 8/889, report JP (41) 577, 22 July 1941; TNA, ADM 205/11, Director of Operations Division (Captain Ralph A. B. Edwards) and Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff (Rear Admiral Henry H. Harwood) to First Sea Lord, 23 and 26 July 1941; TNA, AIR 8/889, minute of COS (41) 266th Mtg., 29 July 1941, and note COS (41) 153 (O), 30 July 1941.

41 TNA, CAB 121/478, note JP (41) 431, 5 June 1941; TNA, WO 106/2949, Operation "Pilgrim", Naval and Military Instruction No. 1 (PJ 1 (x)) and 110 Force operation order No. P.G.O. 1 (x), 20 and 29 September 1941.

42 TNA, CAB 121/478, note COS (41) 201 (O), 14 September 1941; Kenneth J. Clifford, *Amphibious Warfare Development in Britain and America from 1920-1940* (New York, 1983), pp. 133–34.

43 TNA, AIR 8/889, note COS (41) 182 (O), 28 August 1941; TNA, WO 106/3057, General Commander in Chief West Africa to War Office, 17 February 1942; TNA, CAB 121/478, report JP (42) 83, 28 January 1942, and General Ismay to Winston Churchill, 1 February 1942; Butler, *Grand Strategy*, 489–92.

44 Warren F. Kimball (ed.), *Churchill & Roosevelt. The Complete Correspondence* (New Jersey, 1984), pp. 201–2; Telo, *Os Açores*, 338–40.

45 *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS): Conferences at Washington, 1941–1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, 1968), pp. 63–5 and 152–56.

consisted of forcing the surrender of the garrison of Gran Canaria by threatening to bombard the main city of the island. Considered unrealistic and of undesirable political consequences in the event of the threat being carried out, it was soon rejected.⁴⁶

However, in January 1942, the development of the ‘Adroit’ operation began with the aim of settling in the archipelago by invitation. The plan had its origin in the contacts maintained with the monarchical and neutralist sectors of the Franco regime. If Spain were to enter the war, the monarchical and neutralist military would offer the British Government the possibility of settling in the Canary Islands, together with a national resistance movement. This offer had already been relayed by Hillgarth at the end of August 1941, influencing the postponement of ‘Pilgrim’, and was raised again in October of that year, although Torr and Eden did not believe that the monarchical generals would dare to force Franco to suspend Serrano Suñer.⁴⁷ However, as of December, the JPS began to study a plan to use Canarian ports and airfields by invitation (the ‘Adroit’ plan). It was never entirely clear who was going to invite the Allies to settle in the Canary Islands; however, the study of this operation was pursued in parallel with ‘Tonic’, the operation planned to take Puerto de la Luz by force and for which a new draft was created in July 1942.⁴⁸

‘Operation Torch’ and the end of British Military Planning on Spain, 1942–1944

In August 1942, Spanish foreign policy turned from non-belligerence towards strict neutrality. This shift was due to the replacement of Ramón Serrano Suñer by General Francisco Gómez-Jordana y Sousa as Minister of Foreign Affairs, after the serious political crisis caused by the Falangist attack against a Carlist act in the Sanctuary of Begoña. Most historians agree that this substitution was not due to a deliberate intention of Franco to modify his foreign policy but was a consequence of the political crisis caused by the rivalry between the monarchical generals and the *Falange*.⁴⁹ In any case, Gómez-Jordana showed from the beginning a clear neutralist intention with a more conciliatory style than that of his predecessor and supported by professional diplomats.⁵⁰ The change in Spanish foreign policy towards neutrality was slow and exempt from neither

46 TNA, CAB 121/478, report JP (41) 1112, 30 December 1941, and extract from minute of COS (42) 1st Mtg. 1 January 1942.

47 Alan Hillgarth to Winston Churchill, 12 August 1941, PREM 4/21/1, TNA; Sánchez Gijón, *La planificación militar*, 110–118; Smyth, *Diplomacy and Strategy*, 210–1; Moradiellos, *Franco frente a Churchill*, 243–7.

48 TNA, CAB 121/478, report JP (41) 1112, 30 December 1941; TNA, WO 106/2954, report JP (42) 591, 3 July 1942.

49 Klaus-Jörg Ruhl, *Franco, Falange y III Reich: España durante la II Guerra Mundial* (Madrid, 1986), p. 119; Javier Tusell, *Franco, España y la II Guerra Mundial: Entre el Eje y la neutralidad* (Madrid, 1995), pp. 348–49; Miguel Fernández Longoria, “La diplomacia británica y la caída de Serrano Suñer”, *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie V: Historia Contemporánea*, 16 (2004), pp. 253–68.

50 Tusell, “Los cuatro ministros”, 337–42; Emilio Sáenz-Francés, *Entre la antorcha y la esvástica: Franco en la encrucijada de la segunda guerra mundial* (Madrid, 2009), pp. 273–77.

the differences between Gómez-Jordana and Franco nor the reasons of tension with the Allies.⁵¹ However, it occurred on the eve of the Allied landings in Northwest Africa, known as operation 'Torch'.

One of the reasons for uncertainty regarding 'Torch' was the possible German reaction. At the beginning of August, the JPS stated that Third Reich troops could enter Spain to disable Gibraltar, however, in the short term, their immediate reaction would be to counterattack in Tunisia. A month later, the JPS studied how the German entry into the Peninsula would be carried out; at least twelve divisions and more than 400 aircrafts would be needed, in addition to another division to occupy the Balearic Islands. The German forces could reinforce the Canaries; however, they would not be able to occupy the Azores or the Spanish protectorate in Morocco. The Spanish Army would cooperate with the Germans, while the Portuguese government would withdraw to the Azores after a symbolic resistance. Ten days later, the JPS considered that this cooperation would allow the first German divisions to reach the south of the Peninsula in three weeks, and that the occupation of the Peninsula could be completed in four to five weeks. Consequently, the Allies could occupy Spanish Morocco with two divisions, the Balearic Islands with one division, the Canaries with two divisions and the Portuguese Atlantic islands by invitation, in addition to attempting the destruction of the Spanish artillery that threatened Gibraltar.⁵²

The occupation of Spanish Morocco required the most resources and the operation's preliminary draft was prepared by the Future Planning Section (FPS) on 11 August 1942. Its objective was to occupy the strategic points to prevent the deployment of German forces, in addition to the coastal artillery batteries that dominated the Strait; however, the existing forces were not sufficient to occupy the entire Spanish protectorate. In September, a more detailed study by the JPS divided this operation into three, destined to occupy Ceuta, Melilla and the cities of Tangier and Tetouan, once the Allies had consolidated in French North Africa and with significant forces: three infantry divisions, three brigade groups, two armoured brigades, one armoured regiment, two commandos and eight air squadrons. In October, the attack against Ceuta and Tangier was studied in greater detail; it would require a force of 45,000 men, embarked two weeks after the landings in Northwest Africa and available for a month and a half.⁵³

The JPS also studied offensive operations from Gibraltar to improve the security of that base. They did not consider it possible to destroy all the cannons that threatened Gibraltar; therefore, the Spanish headquarters in Algeciras would have to be attacked. The incursions against the batteries in the Tarifa area had to be carried out by an infantry division from North Africa and only after Spain entered the war. Occupying the Tarifa area would absorb more than one infantry division. Finally, with the help of Spanish dissidents, the attack on the coastal artillery batteries could be more ambitious. In any case,

51 Tusell, *Franco, España*, 331–49; Moradiellos, *Franco frente a Churchill*, 321–420.

52 TNA, CAB 84/47, report JP (42) 721, 5 August 1942; TNA, CAB 121/495, report JIC (42) 344 (O) (Final), 10 September 1942; TNA, CAB 120/693, report JP (42) 828, 20 September 1942.

53 TNA, WO 106/2737, note FPS "Appreciation for the capture of Spanish Morocco", 11 August 1942; TNA, CAB 121/495, report JP (42) 770, 1 September 1942; TNA, WO 106/2737, report JP (42) 887 (E), 15 October 1942.

none of these operations should anticipate Spanish belligerence; and it was also necessary to remember that the Axis air attacks from Spanish airfields did not necessarily imply Spain's entry into the war.⁵⁴

The possibility of the Spanish Government initiating hostile actions during 'Torch' was also considered. General Eisenhower, commander-in-chief of the forces in charge of carrying out this operation, presented to the COS the options to consider in the event of Spanish belligerence before, during, or after the landings. In the first case, the belligerence of Spain before D-day, the COS agreed to continue with the operation, although diverting the eastern force to occupy Ceuta and Tangier. In the second case, the belligerence of Spain between D-day and two months after the landings, they agreed to form a Northern Task Force with British units to occupy these two enclaves, although without making any preparations yet. In the third case, the belligerence of Spain two months after D-day, they considered that the allied presence in North Africa would have been sufficiently consolidated to make it possible to reject any threat from Spanish Morocco.⁵⁵

The JPS recommended occupying Spanish Morocco and the Canaries in case Spain was hostile before the landings. The units that had been trained to take over the Spanish archipelago had been assigned to other operations; therefore, in October, the planning of 'Tonic' was entrusted to the 1st Army Corps of the Canadian 1st Army, under the command of General Crerar whose directive was organised by the COS at the end of that month. Simultaneously, another directive was organised for Brigadier Essame to carry out the 'Adroit' operation. The study of both operations continued long after the Allied landings in Northwest Africa. In February 1943, the EPS revised the draft of 'Adroit', while in June the JPS recommended Canadian planners not to reconsider the plan until the operation was to be executed and that, in any case, it would not be before 'Husky' (the operation planned to occupy Sicily) was consolidated. Finally, in September 1943, shortly before the Italian surrender, the JPS recommended the definitive cancellation of 'Tonic'.⁵⁶

At the end of October 1942, the greatest threat to 'Torch' foreseen by the JPS had consisted of the Third Reich occupying the south of the Peninsula. General Aranda informed the British military attaché that there was no German pressure on Spain and no threat of invasion. In fact, the British ambassador believed that if Franco were to allow the entry of German troops, he would be overthrown by the Spanish Army. At the time of the Allied landings in North Africa, Roosevelt's letter to Franco and the British note to the Spanish Government expressed Allied intentions to respect Spanish neutrality, but also insisted on Spain remaining out of the conflict. Immediately after, there seemed to be some Spanish fear that German forces would enter Spain; however, at that time, there had been no mobilisation or movement of troops. At the end of November, in Washington, Spain's

54 TNA, CAB 84/49, note JP (42) 856, 1 October 1942.

55 TNA, CAB 120/693, Eisenhower to Ismay, 11 October 1942, CAB 121/495, TNA; Ismay to Eisenhower, 19 October 1942.

56 TNA, WO 106/2955, note on JP (42) 905, 29 October 1942, Deputy Director of Military Operations (DDMO) to Director of Military Operations (DMO), 4 November 1942, and EPS to JPS, 4 February 1943; TNA, CAB 84/56, report JP (43) 144 (E), 30 June 1943, CAB 84/53, TNA; note JP (43) 316 (Final), 6 September 1943.

apparent neutralist attitude was doubted, especially since the mobilisation finally ordered in Spain was not directed against the concentration of German forces in the south of France but primarily to reinforce the units deployed in the south of the Peninsula. At that time however, the FPS believed that a German invasion of the Peninsula was unlikely, due to the situation on the Russian front, and that Spain would not enter the war.⁵⁷

In addition to a possible German threat from the Peninsula, the Allies also considered the risk of the Axis occupying the Balearics. At Churchill's request, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) studied the matter, concluding that it was unlikely that Spain would accept its occupation by the Third Reich or that this would take them by force, not only because of the cost of the operation but also because its political, economic and military consequences would not be outweighed by the advantages of owning these islands. The COS agreed with the JIC, although it did not rule out the possibility of the Germans trying to occupy the islands after being expelled from North Africa. In March 1943, General Eisenhower proposed to request from the Spanish Government the installation of allied bases in the Balearic Islands, in anticipation of a German invasion of the Peninsula. The idea was discarded by the Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS), because if Spain were to be allied with the Axis, the request would be rejected, while if Spain were to resist against the Axis, it would invite the Allies to settle in the Balearic Islands.⁵⁸

Since Spain did not demonstrate a hostile reaction against the Allies after 'Operation Torch', the idea of helping it in the event of a German invasion began to emerge. In December 1942, the JPS raised the possibility of securing Spanish Morocco and establishing a bridgehead in southern Spain; however, it also recommended not to extend the activities of the SOE, except in Navarra and outside the Peninsula, and, not to commit themselves to provide help to establish a defensive line north of Madrid. With the preparations for 'Husky' against Sicily, the JPS reconsidered the help to be provided to Spain to prevent German forces from neutralising Gibraltar. This implied establishing a defensive line in the south of the Peninsula, with ten allied and five Spanish divisions, in addition to fifty air squadrons. The problem was the speed of deployment; the Germans could deploy four or five divisions in eight weeks, while the first Allied forces required thirty-nine days to reach the south of the Peninsula and at least six months to complete their deployment.⁵⁹

However, doubts about Spanish neutrality remained during this same period; therefore, the study of operations in anticipation of a Spanish belligerence continued. The forces held in Britain for 'Backbone' were freed up in February 1943. However, since

57 TNA, CAB 84/49, note JP (42) 886, 20 October 1942; TNA, FO 371/31213, Hoare to Foreign Office, 8 and 27 October, and 11 November 1942, and Adjutant General, War Department (AGWar) to United States Forces in the United Kingdom (USFor), 30 November 1942; TNA, CAB 84/50, note JP (42) 979 (O), 26 November 1942.

58 TNA, CB 84/51, note JP (42) 1040 (S), 20 December 1942; TNA, CAB 121/517, report JIC (42) 485 (Final), 12 December 1942; TNA, FO 371/34835, Eisenhower to CCS, 8 March 1943, and CCS to Eisenhower, 13 March 1943; TNA, CAB 121/517, extract from minute of COS (43) 60th Mtg., 10 March 1943.

59 TNA, CAB 84/51, report JP (42) 1041, 31 December 1942; TNA, CAB 84/53, report JP (43) 159 (E) (Draft), May 1943.

January of that year, the US 5th Army was preparing 'Backbone II' to occupy Spanish Morocco. There were three plans for this latest operation, which required three infantry divisions, an armoured division and an armoured brigade, in addition to numerous air forces. On 27 July, 'Backbone II' was passed to the Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ), releasing the 5th Army from this task, and stopping its study, since it was considered that a German attack on Spanish Morocco was unlikely. 'Operation Bantam' was also prepared in March 1943. It comprised an amphibious incursion by Command No. 3 from Gibraltar to destroy the Spanish artillery batteries that could bombard it, later re-embarking for Casablanca. In May, this plan, which was called 'Operation Buffalo', was revised, adding among other forces, an armoured squadron and replacing the re-embarkation with a land retreat covered by British artillery.⁶⁰

On 18 June 1943, Britain requested permission from Portugal to install bases in the Azores, for which Churchill asked the COS to study possible German reactions to the British presence in the Portuguese archipelago. Consequently, the JPS prepared a report in which it ruled out both a German invasion of the Peninsula and the Balearic Islands and the belligerence of Spain. Although it did consider it possible that the Third Reich could gain more economic concessions from Spain as well as more breaches of its neutrality in favour of the Axis, which would not be a great inconvenience for the Allies. However, at the end of July, the JPS prepared another report with the operations to be carried out in the Peninsula in case of invasion by the Third Reich. If Spain were to oppose the entry of German forces, two infantry divisions and eight air squadrons would have to be sent to Spanish Morocco, in addition to eleven infantry divisions and thirty-eight air squadrons to the Peninsula and the Balearic Islands. If Spain did not oppose the German entry, it would be necessary to take Spanish Morocco with five infantry divisions and fifteen air squadrons, in addition to destroying the Spanish artillery batteries on the northern shore of the Strait of Gibraltar. Helping Portugal against a German invasion would require four more divisions, which would need to be sent eight weeks before the German entry into the Peninsula. The preparations that these operations required would seriously affect 'Overlord' and the operations after 'Husky', to the point of handing over the initiative to the enemy. As such, the JPS recommended not to do anything in case of a German invasion of the Peninsula, except to send to Portugal the aid for the air defence of Lisbon and Porto foreseen in operation 'Lemonade' and to develop an Anglo-Portuguese defensive plan against a Spanish attack that the JPS considered unlikely.⁶¹

The Italian surrender in September 1943 and the installation of the British in the Azores in October of that year, without there being a German intervention in the Peninsula, ultimately made the plans for a possible Allied intervention in Spain unnecessary. From then on, allied pressure on the Spanish government intensified, forcing it to fulfil its obligations as a neutral and to put an end to the exports of tungsten to the

60 TNA, WO 106/2737, CCS to Eisenhower, 5 February 1943; TNA, WO 204/1801, G-3 Section, AFHQ, to COS, 5 February 1944; TNA, WO 204/1890, Fortress Headquarters (FHQ), Fortress Operation Instruction No. 1 and Fortress Operation Instruction No. 2, 10 April 1943, and May 1943.

61 TNA, CAB 84/54, reports JP (43) 222 Final, 22 June 1943, and JP (43) 223 (Final), 22 July 1943; TNA, CAB 119/31, report JP (40) 370 (Final), 28 October 1943.

Third Reich.⁶² However, at the end of 1944, the possibility of a military intervention in Spain was once again briefly considered. In studying the post-war British strategic needs in the western Mediterranean, the JPS stated that taking bases in Spain and Spanish Morocco by force would require many forces not available at that time, whereas with a friendly Spain, there would be no threats to maritime communications in the Strait or in the eastern Atlantic, and this could even allow the installation of aerodromes and radar stations in North Africa. Simultaneously, at the request of the Foreign Office, the JPS studied the possibility of taking Tangier, occupied by Spain since 1940, reaching the conclusion that, at that time, there were not enough forces to face the Spanish garrison in Morocco. Thus, it was advisable to send only an infantry battalion if Spain were to voluntarily withdraw from that city.⁶³

Conclusions

The studies carried out by the JPS in December 1944 on the possibility of military intervention in Spain and Tangier constitute the epilogue of a series of draft plans that, from April 1940 to July 1943, considered the advantages, disadvantages and requirements of such intervention. Changes in the strategic situation throughout this period influenced this planning, which began with the German victories in Scandinavia and France, regaining importance with the German advance across the Mediterranean in the spring of 1941, and the invasion of the Soviet Union in June of that year. The plans re-emerged on the eve of 'Operation Torch' and finally languished throughout the first half of 1943, as a German intervention in the Peninsula was considered increasingly unlikely, until it was definitively shelved towards the middle of that year. The preparations to carry out the operations designed to intervene in the Peninsula were not limited to abstract plans on paper; they also included, in some cases, the retention of military forces and transport vessels, as happened in 1941 with the 'Puma'/'Pilgrim' operations or at the end of 1942 with 'Backbone', although these forces were necessary for other contexts.

At first, British military planning regarding Spain does not seem to be an exception with respect to the other neutrals in Europe. There were also plans for military intervention in Ireland, Portugal, Sweden and Turkey. France and Switzerland studied the defence of the Alpine country against a German invasion. However, in most cases, these military interventions were not aimed at confronting the armed forces of these neutral countries but instead at supporting them to defend themselves against German aggression.⁶⁴ The

62 Moradiellos, *Franco frente a Churchill*, 321–44; Carlos Collado Seidel, *El telegrama que salvó a Franco. Londres, Washington y la cuestión del régimen (1942-1945)* (Barcelona, 2016), pp. 134–54.

63 TNA, CAB 84/67, reports JP (44) 288 (Final) and JP (44) 289 (Final), 7 and 11 December 1944.

64 Robert Fisk, *In Time of War. Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality 1939-45* (London, 1985), pp. 233–44; António José Telo, *Portugal na segunda guerra* (Lisboa, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 325–28; John Gilmour, *Sweden the Swastika and Stalin. The Swedish Experience in the Second World War* (Edinburgh, 2011), pp. 41–43; Christian Leitz, *Nazi Germany and Neutral Europe during the Second World War* (Manchester, 2000), pp. 85–87; Hans Rudolf Kurtz, *Die Schewiz in der Planung der Kriegsführenden Mächte während des Zweiten Weltkrieges* (Biel, 1957), pp. 19–24.

only exception was the British plans against the Portuguese Atlantic islands, for which military forces and transport ships were also retained in 1940, although only in anticipation of Portugal being invaded by the Third Reich. The difference in the case of Spain is that the British plans were not limited to studying collaboration with the Spanish Armed Forces against the Third Reich; in many cases, they were aimed at confronting them, in preparation for a Spanish belligerence in favour of the Axis.

The main factor explaining this difference is Spanish non-belligerence. The uncertainty generated by the prospect of Spanish belligerence, together with the supporters of neutrality within the Spanish Government and its Armed Forces, influenced the practically simultaneous development of British plans to collaborate with the Spanish Army on the one hand and plans to confront it on the other. Thus, after the initial plan to conquer the Canary Islands in the mid-1940s, a series of studies were developed to support Spanish resistance in the south of the Peninsula and Morocco. These coincided with drafts to help the French to resist a possible German or Spanish attack in North Africa. Doubts about the viability of these plans, along with the successes of the Axis in the spring of 1941, led to the resumption of the operation against the Canary Islands, which, since January 1942, was studied simultaneously with 'Operation Adroit', to settle peacefully in this archipelago. In turn, 'Operation Torch', carried out shortly after the return of Spanish foreign policy to strict neutrality, prompted the study of plans to collaborate or fight Spain in the Iberian Peninsula, Morocco and the Canary Islands until their definitive cancellation in the middle of 1943 when it was already clear that the Third Reich would not perform a military intervention in the Peninsula and that Spain would not enter the war.

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