PROBLEMS OF COMBINED COMMAND

by

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower

Presented at
The National War College
Washington, D. C.
(18 June 1948)

PROBLEMS OF COMBINED COMMAND

(18 June 1948)

by

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower

ADMIRAL HILL: Gentlemen, in welcoming our speaker to the platform this morning there are a great many ways in which I might introduce him. Actually he needs no introduction, but I might introduce him to this platform as the President of Columbia. I eschew those two words, particularly because "platform" and "President" in the month of June 1948 are ones I am sure he does not want to hear, and I am sure that when it comes to the question period he will be pleased if you forget those two words.

I do want to welcome him here today as a friend and booster of The National War College. I don't know whether you all appreciate the fact or not, but your very presence here in this wonderful layout of the Army War College building is due to a decision made by General Eisenhower himself. He wanted you to have this building, and it was his decision that gave it to you. Ever since the inception of this place, after he got back from Europe, he has been so extremely interested in The National War College that a great deal of the success that we have had in these two years has been due to the solid backing he gave to this whole program.

I asked him to come down today and talk to us in the final lecture that we have for the year about problems of joint command and combined command. In thinking about the problem of combined command I couldn't help reverting back a great many years -- as a matter of fact, to the book of Genesis. In the book of Genesis, if you remember, all the descendents of Adam and Eve were living peacefully in a reasonably small area. They all spoke the same language, they all thought the same thoughts. It wasn't until

they became a little obstreperous and built a tower to reach up into heaven itself that the heavenly powers decided they must do something about it. So, as you remember, they suddenly struck them all with the requirement they must speak different languages, and they scattered them all in groups to all the wide-spread areas of the earth.

General Eisenhower inherited all those troubles. When I looked up yesterday to see what combined command meant for him I found that his combined command consisted, among others, of these: United States, British, French, Italian, Canadian, Australian, New Zealander, South Africander, Sikh, Gurkha, Moroccan, Polish, Dutch, Belgian, Senegalese, and of course the Harlem air force and probably a good many other Ethopians in the woodpile somewhere around. So I don't think there is anyone better qualified or ever burdened with the problems of combined command more than our speaker today.

It is a great pleasure and a great privilege to welcome him again to this platform to talk to you on that subject. General Eisenhower.

GENERAL EISENHOWER: Admiral Hill, Mr. Secretary, gentlemen: I have been allotted roughly forty minutes this morning for my direct statement on allied command. Now that would seem to be plenty of time, and to assure that I don't fall into the habit of old soldiers and grow to garrulous, I am going to ask General Collins, an old associate of mine, to watch the time. If about five minutes before the expiration of my allotted time he will begin to look pained and, roughly two minutes ahead, if he will give me the sign to cease fire, we will pass into the cross examination period.

About five hundred years before Christ the Athenian council one day, in accordance with an agreed treaty, sent to Sparta and said, "Hurry up to send your forces as we have agreed because the Persians are about to land."

The Spartans consulted the oracles and found out it was a day on which they could not march because the gods would be displeased. It was an early example of an ally finding a convenient excuse for failing to carry out its obligations with respect to another.

That type of failure on the part of allies has been typical of the world's military history. Even Napoleon's reputation suffered in staff colleges when students finally found he always operated against allies. And even the great Napoleon himself, when in his invasion of Russia he attempted to operate as commander of an allied army, found with his first disastrous defeat that actually he had defections among his troops, and within a short time some were fighting on the other side.

In 1921 I had a very great privilege. I went to serve under one of the accomplished soldiers of our time, Fox Conner. Fox Conner believed that another war was coming, and I served under him intimately so he had plenty of time to expound his views to me. He said that the war he visualized was necessarily going to be fought with allies. He believed that tensions arising in Europe and Asia were certain sooner or later — he used to say within thirty years — to plunge us into war, and he said we must prepare ourselves to be ready to fight with allies. The one thing he insisted upon was they had to work out a scheme whereby control in the field would be under one command. There would be single responsibility and single authority, and he said no matter what else we did, we should insist upon it.

We have an unexpected guest this morning but he used to be quoted by Fox Conner. Fox Conner said there was one man in the Army who understood these things, and that man was George Marshall. He said, "When the war comes George Marshall will understand that we cannot be satisfied with the

coordination conception under which Foch was compelled to work. Even under Foch's final setup he really was a man trying to secure agreement among three or four commanders who felt themselves truly responsible to their own governments."

I was brought into the War Department a week after the Pearl Harbor attack. One of our earliest concerns was what to do in the Southwest Pacific. It was clear that at that moment no great land or air reinforcement could go into the Philippines. But lying just southward of the Philippines was the great Indonesian empire, very rich in natural resources, and the Allies were desperately anxious to keep it under allied control. It was, of course, a possession of the Dutch. As circumstances went from bad to worse, someone thought of the idea of getting the whole under a single command. So the British General Wavell was brought from India and set up with a title of Commander in Chief ABDA. I have forgotten just what those initials stood for, but ABDA was the command in the Southwest Pacific embracing everything except the Philippines where General MacArthur was in command, and which could not be reached anyway. Wavell never had a chance. He had far too little, far too late.

But there was one valuable thing which came out of the attempt. In Washington the representatives of the British Chiefs of Staff and the American staffs attempted to write a charter for an allied commander. We were not yet experienced, and therefore we thought everything had to be reduced to writing. One of our great problems was what to do about the matter of administration, and particularly about administration as it applies to supply. Each nation was going to be responsible for supplying its own forces, and therefore we felt there had to be clear, independent authority

residing in nationalistic command. But it was also clear that it is impossible to divorce strategy and tactics from supply. Therefore the job of writing a charter for General Wavell that would give him ample authority over the problem of logistics and still not interfere with the nationalistic rights of each of the participating nations was something that consumed days and nights.

If we had been as wise as we later became, we would have saved ourselves lots of trouble because we would have understood that there is no charter that can be written for an allied commander and made to stick. As long as nations are sovereign they always have the right to reverse a prior decision, get out of any situation they think they can when they can cut their losses. Therefore there is only one basic thing that will make allied commands work, and that is mutual confidence.

That mutual confidence must start way back. First it must be between the political leaders of the associated countries, and then the highest military chiefs responsible for the direction of the war must have some type of organization where they can meet, decide upon things, and above all develop confidence in each other so that when they set up a single allied command in the field they know it will work because the confidence exists higher up.

I think that when the true and final history of this late war is written, that despite all argument and despite some of the heated discussions that lasted for days and far into the night, the true lesson and almost the glory of that history is going to be the fact that in the highest levels that kind of agreement was reached and that kind of confidence finally developed. I want to lay this background, gentlemen, because without that high-level

cooperation and confidence no allied commander in the field can be successful, and don't forget it.

An allied commander cannot, of course, relieve an officer of another army. That is administration. He cannot demote him; he cannot promote him. Therefore he is deprived of one type of authority which he has with respect to his own nationals, because in this war the Chief of Staff of our Army gave to me these instructions: "Every American officer you have under you is of your own choice. The fact that you keep him is evidence to me that you are satisfied with him." The Chief of Staff placed upon my shoulders the responsibility of determining who should serve under me in the American Army. But the British Chiefs of Staff could not possibly give me that in terms of promotion and demotion. But before the war was over -- I should say right here -- Mr. Churchill and his staff did give me this authority, repeated many times: "Any British officer with whom you are dissatisfied will be removed by us instantly." I couldn't do it but they could. But that was after the growth of a lot of confidence.

One of our early problems, as it affected us later, was the determination of a plan for the employment of the American forces in Europe. I shall not go back into the ABC agreements, with which I think most of you are familiar. But in April 1942 General Marshall went to England to secure the approval of the British Chiefs of Staff to the concept of attacking across the channel. Shortly thereafter General Marshall sent me to England to begin to organize the American contingents in England which would be necessary for the war in Europe.

It was not long until examination of British resources showed that that attack could not possibly take place, even though we saved everything we

could for it, before some time late in 1943. Now no one in his senses would attack across the channel after the middle of summer. Therefore it began to look very likely that the major, all-out, attack against northwest Europe could not take place before possibly early in 1944. That was a bitter blow. It was a bitter blow for all of us. It was particularly bitter for our political leaders because they had the job not only of organizing forces and turning them over to their military chiefs, but they had to maintain morale at home. They believed some kind of positive action should be taken against Germany earlier than the spring of 1944.

Out of that realization, out of that knowledge, the American Chiefs of Staff came to London, and from the ensuing conference was born Torch. Torch was the first Allied command in the Atlantic theater. As I recall, the final decision was reached on the twenty-fourth of July. If my dates are wrong, it is a day or so either way. I remember that General Marshall, and Admiral King had been there for some days. They were getting in very much of a hurry. I was called into the General's room in the Claridge Hotel. From his bathtub he spoke to me, just outside the door, and said, "You are Allied Commander of an operation going to Africa." That was my first notification that I was an Allied commander.

Instantly arose the basic question of how we were going to organize so as to take forces of more than one nation and put them together so they would operate effectively in a military operation. Within the Combined Chiefs of Staff the virtual head on each side of the water was the President, at least remember that the Joint American Chiefs of Staff were direct advisers to the President — and on the other side, the Defense Minister, who was also the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill. That meant that within that body any

question of British versus American interests had to be settled, and having been settled there, the first problem was to keep any of the differences from percolating on down to the field command. Therefore the decision was instantly taken to have no staff in which we would have a British part here and an American part there -- nothing based on nationalistic lines.

We ran into another, but relatively minor matter. The British staff procedure and organization are different from the American. The British do not give the same scope of authority to the man we call Chief of Staff as do we. They set up a Chief of Staff and a Chief Administrative Officer. The Chief of Staff is really for operations. We, on the other hand, give to the Chief of Staff supervision over all staff activity. That made a difficulty in organizing, but, as I say, relatively minor. The chief thing to remember is this: In every single part of our staffs which had to do with operations or which touched on any joint matter, British and Americans were thrown in indiscriminately throughout; the whole was treated as if it were a single body. That was done with the determination to keep out of Allied headquarters any possibility that subject was going to be decided upon nationalistic lines -- to make it impossible to consider it on nationalistic lines. All through the war we maintained the proposition that all such questions were settled by our superiors, and we would have none of them. It did take at times, of course, a very great deal of assistance, but it did work and by and large it was rarely violated.

We went into Africa, though, with certain preconceived notions, operational notions, for which we later paid a penalty. You will recall that Spain was sympathetic to the Axis, and here was an operation going in the Mediterranean with Spain in position to cut off its rear at any day that it

chose to go into the war. Moreover, even if it didn't go into the war actively, would it be subjected to such pressure by Germany that German air and, let's say, large guns could come down into Spain and deny us the use of the Strait of Gibraltar? It was a matter that engaged the attention of our governments, our military superiors and ourselves right down to the day of attack, and for many, many weeks thereafter. But because of the fear that our rear would be cut off — and also emphasized by this — that within Morocco we knew the warlike tribes were somewhat under the domination of a man named Nogues, a Frenchman serving as a Foreign Minister to the Sultan, and who conceivably could bring those tribes into action against the Allies very quickly — that fear had a very great influence on the American insistence that Casablanca be included in the scope of the attack.

At one time I did not want to attack Casablanca. I said, as long as we are putting all our chips on the wheel, let's put them all on one number and go all inside. However, because of this threat to the rear, we went in this way: The Americans would take and hold Morocco and with their land and air forces provide solid protection to our rear. If the Germans tried to come down through Spain, we would be close by in protected airfields, and we would start operating against them right away. In addition we would have the little rickety railway from Casablanca through Oran. Once we were landed, the British First Army, which was called that by courtesy because it consisted only of three brigades of infantry and a brigade of obsolete tanks, was to land as far eastward as we could, which was Algiers, and from there conduct a rapid campaign against Tunis.

Because of this great separation of the two nationalistic forces we had an American air commander and an American ground forces in the West;

we had a British Army commander, Anderson, in the East to conduct that campaign, and a British air officer, Welsh, to support him. That looked all right, and we had no such titles as Service Commanders in Chief in that first operation except for a Naval Commander in Chief, who was that grand old sea-dog, Andrew Cunningham. The sea work was always perfectly coordinated throughout the campaign.

Within a short time it began to look less and less like any move would be made against our rear, and it became clearer and clearer that the Germans could reinforce in Tunisia far faster than we could bring any troops from the homeland, and indeed, faster than we could bring them from the West. But in the face of that situation, we began to throw all the forces we had — land, ground, air, everything we had — into the East in the desperate attempt to get Tunis before the winter weather should descend upon us.

That created a command problem. We had no Air Commander in Chief, but now we had air of two nations operating in the same areas, frequently, necessarily, from the same airdromes. We brought up land forces and we had made no preparation for their command. The only way to do it, therefore, was to give them by detachments to Anderson.

To make a start in re-organizing our command structure the Chief of Staff approved my application for Toohey Spaatz. He was brought down from England and given the title of Deputy Commander in Chief for Air, and he was given the job of coordinating the British and American air operations in Tunisia. Land operations became even more difficult as we tried to absorb the French. The French at that time were occupying the hilly masses through Central and Southern Tunisia. Very badly armed, poorly equipped, they were almost naked in the military equipment sense, but they were all we had to

occupy the hilly masses south of Pont-de-Fahs.

Now we ran into this: There was only one line of communication, and therefore there was only one real command on that front, and that was an Army command because there was only one supply line to be handled. But the French wouldn't serve under the British. They had the incidents of Syria, Oran and Dakar in mind, and it was a situation that would not allow Allied headquarters at that moment to straighten it out instantly in the only way it should have been. We, the Americans, within a few weeks began to shove to the South to protect an ever exposed right flank as the situation deteriorated to the North. So we had the British in the North, the French in the center, and the Americans in the South, and because the French were in the center they separated the command, and it was impossible to establish a unified command. The only thing we could do in this situation was to establish a forward command post for me, and I attempted to operate all the way from Oran through Algiers up to Souk el Arba, and then in addition on a battle line. It was an impossible thing.

The Combined Chiefs of Staff met in Casablanca in January, and they were quite aware of the situation that was developing, and that something had to be done to give us help. Another factor was that Alexander, who had started his attack at El 'Alamein on October 23 was now approaching Tripoli with every indication that if that port would give him any supply at all — and we believed it would — he would soon be on the southern border of Tunisia, and we were all going to come together. Therefore the Combined Chiefs of Staff organized the first complete unification of our forces by saying that when these forces all joined, they would come under one single command. There was to be a top Commander and three Commanders in Chief, the

three subordinate commanders of ground, sea and air. In this were included Alexander's forces and the British Desert Air Force. From that time on the history of Allied command was one of perfecting detail and growth of understanding and of confidence. The pattern that we used was never markedly departed from thereafter.

Now merely because you had a ground Commander in Chief didn't mean that every operation you did on the ground had to be carried out under his direction. For example, we decided it was a good thing to take Pantelleria. This decision was taken before Tunis had fallen, and the ground Commander in Chief was going to be very busy planning the attack on Sicily. So Allied headquarters staged the operation. General Alexander gave us a British 1st Division, amphibiously trained. We organized the air and the sea, and an expedition against Pantelleria was carried out without regard to the ground Commander in Chief.

What I am trying to show is that flexibility was always preserved. All through the Mediterranean campaigns we did preserve then the organization of a top Commander in Chief, and under him three distinct service Commanders in Chief.

I here should drop a little idea, I think, that I have never tried to express before. But there is some virtue in it. You may have a new and important subordinate who is of a different nationality than yourself. In the early days, while you are in this business of establishing confidence, make sure that one of the larger commands of that man's nationality contains some of the troops of your own nationality. Now this is not only good in the promotion of trust and confidence, but remember this: There is also a club there, too, because you, and you alone, can pull those troops out.

And a commander never like to lose troops. But you must work in every way you know to develop the confidence of your subordinates in the commander, in his common sense, straight-forward thinking, and absolute refusal to touch a problem on a nationalistic ground.

You must develop confidence with your superiors. They are far away in capitals. To give you an example — and I am sure that General Marshall will recall telling me this, because he is the source of my information — one day the British Chiefs of Staff made a rather informal or casual remark at a meeting that they were sorry that my headquarters always seemed to be so close to Bradley's because they thought that I would fall under the domination of his thinking. And the American Chiefs of Staff replied their only fear was that I lived so close to the British Chiefs of Staff, that it was their fear that I would fall under the British thinking. So there must never be any act on the part of the Allied command that gives either superior, and I don't care how many capitals with which you are operating, reason to believe that you are operating from nationalistic lines, because that will be the thing that will defeat you.

I want to say one thing more about flexibility in organization. I do not by any manner of means say that always a supreme commander in the field should have an air Commander in Chief, a ground Commander in Chief and a naval Commander in Chief. Ordinarily I should say that with respect to the air and the navy it would be better always to have one Commander in Chief, but I can even show you exceptions to that rule. The Strategic Air Forces of Europe, the 8th American Air Force and the British Bomber Command, had actually very wide missions, and it is probably true that they logically should have stayed always under the direct command of the Combined Chiefs of

Staff. But when the Combined Chiefs of Staff sent all that they had in the Overlord operation, it became clear that the crisis of that battle, lasting from some time before the actual assault started until some weeks after the troops were solidly on shore, was so important to our nations -- it wasn't an ordinary tactical battle -- it was so important they had to give to the tactical commander every available ounce of strength. And the United States Chiefs of Staff backed up the contention that the British Bomber Command and the 8th Air Force should both be under the command of the supreme commander during that period; and even thereafter when it was found or believed no longer necessary to keep them under command, there was maintained in the directive of those air forces an overriding paragraph that no matter what other operations were in sight, they would always answer the emergency calls of the supreme commander. So, as far as practical effect was concerned, they stayed under command down to the end of the war. Actually assigned to me was a tactical Air Commander in Chief.

So these two big strategic air forces came in, each with an officer of equal standing with my own Air Commander in Chief, and did not want to serve under him. Primarily they were frightened that the strategic air forces would be used incessantly by the tactical air commander for his immediate purposes, but they cheerfully came in under the command of supreme headquarters, because then they felt they would not be used every day just for fighter-bomber work along the front lines. But you did not have during all that time, from April 12 to September 15, a single air Commander in Chief.

On the ground this flexibility must be even more pronounced. The largest command, the largest headquarters that we normally use for actual supervision of battle lines is the Army Group Commander. When you get any

further back than the Army Group Commander it becomes almost impossible to give to the battle the hour by hour attention that coordination and cooperation so incessantly demand. Therefore, you try to get each army group, if it is at all possible, located in a natural channel of invasion or sector of defense. You try to fit it to the geography of the theater. And each of those men becomes for that area a ground Commander in Chief.

I can see no purpose whatsoever in placing any ground headquarters between an army group and a supreme commander because by the nature of his duty the supreme commander has control of the navy and the air. They are the only forces that can be allocated suddenly and in emergency. The only thing an intermediate headquarters can do would be to come to the supreme commander and propose or recommend help in some particular line. Therefore geography, as well as everything else, helps to determine the details of your organization -- and for goodness sake, apply it to allied as well as any other organization. I doubt, gentlemen, that it would ever be possible to take a large allied force organization and diagram it in the method that we are so accustomed to use in the G-3 section, with the black lines and dotted lines. I don't believe it can be done. But there is something there that is effective and will never fail, and that is confidence, after it is once developed.

Now so far we have talked about commanders, their staffs, how they operate to get together. The problems are not all confined to the staffs and to commanders. There will be definite problems far on down the line. One of them is this: The American is the highest paid soldier in the world. He is the best fed. He is entertained the most. He carries recreational services to the field that no other army in the world knows.

You have a big headquarters in Algiers or Caserta or Oran, and serving side by side are thousands of enlisted men of different countries. One is living on his rations, and that is all he gets. He has no clubs, he has no place to go, and he is doing it on very little pay. Therefore he is not able to buy the wine or entertain the girls in the same way that his more fortunate ally can. There is no rule, of course, to solve the problem, but I believe this: In the field there are many things that a commander must do that he probably doesn't even bother to tell his own superiors -- and in fact he should not do it. He must apply this truism to the problem of enlisted morale in allied command.

The American Red Cross, which is the big recreational facility we take with us, was bound by this: Their contributions, voluntarily made by Americans, were given to support Americans, and the Red Cross would not voluntarily do anything for the soldiers of other nationalities. Therefore I felt that as a commander I should do what I could with the facilities available to make decent recreation available to all the people who are dying on the same fields and bearing the same sacrifices day by day.

I would like to put one thought in your heads. I don't believe in time of war we should think that when America gives a rifle to a Frenchman that we are making a present to him. We were trying in that war to kill Germans, and if we could do it on the basis of furnishing only a rifle, instead of the rifle and a man, I think that lend-lease from that viewpoint was the finest thing our governments did as a prewar measure. I have never seen why we resented the fact we did give divisional equipment to the French as long as they stuck their necks out on the battlefields, and as long as they used that equipment and used it effectively. Then we were that much ahead.

I want to call your attention to a specific point of the experience in Europe. We had only the two Allies, the Americans and the British, who were absorbed into the high command. We were always justified in maintaining that basis because it was America and England that provided all of the supplies, the facilities, the equipment, everything with which the war was fought except men. Admiral Hill has already read to you the list of nations that provided some of the men, but they were usually considered segments or auxiliaries of the particular nation that was arming them. For instance, the Poles always served with the British Army because the Poles used British equipment. But when we came to operating with the French -- I have forgotten the exact number of French divisions that finally served, but in Italy and France combined there must have been eleven or twelve divisions, we did make provision for seeing that the French viewpoint was always clear to us. We had liaison officers and we had various types of interpreters and others around the headquarters to keep us informed of what General Juin and General De Gaulle and the others thought. But we did not incorporate them into the staff itself.

Now remember we did have problems, and what would happen if you had to put four or five together, I am not so certain, because then none would be predominant. Whereas two partners can frequently find a solution to a very difficult argument between themselves, when you put in four or five with maybe one or two of Latin temperament, I don't know what would happen. But I do thank the gods of war for this one thing, that we had only two to work with.

Arguments arose by the score, and sometimes, of course, when they were brought up by the Prime Minister the feeling was inescapable that they

involved nationalistic considerations. For example, the Prime Minister did not want to conduct Anvil, later known as Dragoon. He believed he saw definite disadvantages to that attack with great advantages to continuing on in greater strength in Italy and trying to force the Ljubljana Gap. From a purely military basis I believed he was wrong, and I urged him that if he was considering the postwar political situation he should take that to our President, that I was not allowed to decide things on that basis. Moreover if he were going to reduce it purely to military efficiency and speed in the destruction of the German Army -- which was the only mission I was given, the mission of destroying the German Army at the earliest possible date -- then I had to stick with that mission. That one argument lasted seven hours, and that was only one of the sessions.

As I said, the miracle of the war was that these fights could occur and could never break up the soundness of the whole organization because the big men at the top saw the necessity of unity; and any one below who tried to break it wide open would have been crucified very promptly and very quickly.

I should have said, before I left the matter of dealing with the enlisted man, the action we took in one scheme was this: I went directly to the Government of Great Britain and I got them to put in a certain amount of money for the organization of a few Allied clubs. With even token support from them, I felt justified in organizing and supporting a few great clubs throughout Western Europe. One was in Brussels, a very large one in Paris, one in Frankfurt and so on. The great thing that Britain supplied for those clubs was the hostesses, and the proof that their hearts was in it was shown by the fact that many ladies of high birth and great station would

often be scrubbing floors in those clubs. The clubs were wonderful. I know of nothing around the headquarters where soldiers of different nationalities mingled that kept a more even and satisfied morale, one ally toward another, than those clubs.

In the field the matter is not so important, because you rarely have troops operating with each other in smaller units than the corps, and once in a while the division. They have their own little rest towns, they are separated more, and the problem is not so acute. But when you get around a great base, a great port or where both are using a great headquarters, the problem is always with you.

Another matter, and one of almost tremendous importance, is the press. There have been many differing ideas about the value of censorship. Frankly, I am one of those who opposes any bit of censorship you do not have to use. It always flares back in your face and you live to regret the imposition of censorship unless it is absolutely necessary, and then it should be imposed for only the briefest possible space of time. The first thing is that every press representative, every representative of the allied press should be treated as a quasi staff officer. You should put on that man's shoulders a sense of responsibility. You should use him as such, and you will find that much good comes to you from their observations all over a great theater.

But here is the particular problem you have with the allied press. Without a very high and intense degree of patriotism, nations could not possibly absorb the punishment they take in war, the casualty lists that come back, the tremendous taxes, the regimentation, and in the case of England, the bombing of her cities and finally the conscription of all her

women from eighteen to fifty-two. You have to have a very high degree of patriotism, and it is strictly national in character. Therefore each press representative, American or British tends to cater to this homeland feeling -- the British wants to make the British Army or the British Air Force look better in Britain, and the American wants to do the same back in the United States. And if he considers it necessary to go to excess in this matter, he will do it at the expense of his allies, not thinking of the over-all harm he does.

I think it is true to say that some of the longest hours of worry that I had in this war were brought about by stupid statements on the part of high officers, which, garbled, distorted and misinterpreted by the press, finally caused very great mental anguish in the minds of the Allies, on one or the other side of the house. I know of nothing which I would be more careful to get organized with a very splendid man at its head. And I would keep that type of organization running all down through the command, and I would make sure early in the game that every commander understood its tremendous importance.

For example, let me give you a small one -- I say "small" because it soon disappeared. We were going into Paris and we were very anxious to send the French in first. We sent Le Clerc's Second Division. They got there on the afternoon of the 25th of August. Now De Gaulle was not too sure of his position in Paris. There were great groups of the Maqui. Some were organized and responded to Koenig's orders. Others did not and there was great danger they were going to become brigands and so on. De Gaulle wanted to do something that would establish his prestige and authority, and he asked me for two American divisions because the British were far away to

the north. I said I didn't have two divisions to spare but that we had two divisions going through Paris on their way to battle, and that if he would take a reviewing stand in the city, these two divisions would march by on their way to battle; that General Bradley would come down to signify Allied unity, and that De Gaulle's position would then be assured. All very well! But the fact was that a British reporter wrote home that American divisions paraded in Paris, and mentioned that after all the 21st Army Group on the left had some thing to do with the liberation of Paris, and ended up with the remark that "After all, the Americans love a parade." The resentment that arose immediately was something that we had to move quickly to stop. That took a long and laborious explanation. I explained it in far greater detail than I have to you gentlemen. But you have to let the people of the opposite nationality see that in everything you do, in every move you make you are preserving strict impartiality. Literally you had to refuse in such a position to be wholly a citizen of your own country. You were half one and half the other. You had to recall that and keep it in the forefront of your conscious mind every single minute of the day.

Now I am not going to try, in drawing toward a conclusion of this rather rambling story, to point up any specific lessons that are to be remembered always. But there is one thing I should like to call to your attention, that in Europe the thing that won the war was first Allied unity, and second, balanced forces. There was no possibility that any one of the services could have won that campaign alone. It was a sheer impossibility. But by the proper or reasonably coordinated employment of all three services there were daily achieved results that brought the whole war to a very rapid conclusion.

I must tell you something of the actual results achieved in that campaign compared with expectations. Several times just before D-Day I had long talks with Mr. Churchill. He repeated this time and again, not only to me but to others of my associates — probably officers here have heard him say it. He would say, "If you by fall, by the time snow flies, have thirty six divisions on the Continent of Europe, and if you are holding the Brittany Peninsula and the Cotentin Peninsula, I shall say this is one of the most successful operations of the war. And if, by that time you have succeeded in crossing the Seine and seizing the great port of Le Havre, I shall say it is one of the most successful operations in all history." And I would say, "Mr. Churchill, we are going to be on the borders of Germany by winter, and the only question for the German to decide is whether he is going to hang on beyond that." He would smile, and then he would say, "It is well for commanders to be optimistic." But there was no great belief that we were going to sweep ahead through France at the speed we did. There was no wide-spread belief, and there was no thought expressed by anyone I heard on the morning of June 6, 1944 that eleven months from that day Germany would have surrendered.

No one can ever minimize the part that any one of the services played in that great achievement. The Air and the Navy, of course, had been in the war long before the land forces engaged in operations in that theater. The Navy had been watching the German surface units and combating submarines. The Navy had taken mountains of supplies to England. It had built up a supply depot that was so great that a facetious saying of the time was, "Except for the barrage balloons floating in the air, England would sink under the sea." All that the Navy did.

The Air, in the meantime, was continuing its relentless pounding of the Continent. Some of that pounding was directed directly at the heart of Germany, some of it on communication centers and defenses to the westward, to help us. Each Army Group had its own Air Force subordinate. The Ninth Air Force supported Bradley's group. The Second Tactical Air Force supported Montgomery's group. Each army had its own tactical air command. All of the air was always retained under central control so that at any one moment all of it could be used in any sector. One shining example was when the enemy launched, at Mortain, the counterattack to try to get out of the terrific position we placed him in by the break-out at Avranches. On that morning all of the Second Tactical Air Force's Typhoons came over, equipped with rockets, and the effect of the rockets on the tanks, while not as great as the enthusiastic pilots reported, was certainly serious and terrifying to the Germans, as amply demonstrated by the reports of the time. We did similar things time and again, and on several different days of that war the combined air forces of the Mediterranean, England and our command flew fourteen thousand sorties in support of our land forces.

Coordination meant that the direction of the air was all of the time toward those things that would most definitely help the whole. For example, we early found that one of the critical shortages on the part of the German was oil, and that, of course, had a direct effect upon our land operations. Almost the first priority target, I think, from February 1944, was oil. Every oil resource of the Germans that we could hit was constantly pounded which helped us forward. This in turn reduced the territory the air had to bombard, and pushed forward their bases, particularly their fighter bases, so their fighters did not have to fly such terrific distances in

support of the bombers. All worked together for the common good.

I have spoken of the Navy. About the last time we used them in any strength was when we crossed the Rhine. They brought the landing boats up over land, put them down and crossed the Rhine, and they helped us make our last amphibious landing.

One other thing before I close: In such vast undertakings as an Allied force that finally reached a strength of five million of all arms, you must be prepared, whether you are a subordinate commander, staff officer, or higher commander, to accept minor inefficiencies as long as that is promoting the great and common purpose. You should not try to change ideas and concepts on the part of some subordinate of a different nationality because you disagree with him. If you can achieve the great over-all unity of purpose that inspires loyalty, inspires teamwork, never bother your heads about minor things in seeking perfection because too many difficulties can arise out of minor irritations and frustrations. You must not lose your sense of humor because if you do your allied command will blow apart.

Now I am ready for cross-examination.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Discussion following Lecture

on

PROBLEMS OF COMBINED COMMAND

by

General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower

Present at
The National War College
Washington, D. C.
18 June 1948

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Discussion following Lecture
on
PROBLEMS OF COMBINED COMMAND
(18 June 1948) by
General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower

COLONEL MEAD: General, will you discuss the factors entering into the selection of deputy commanders and how they should be employed in a unified or combined command?

GENERAL EISENHOWER: Normally the Combined Chiefs of Staff would select a Deputy Chief of Staff who was of differing nationality from the Commander himself. We violated that only once. That was when we went into Africa in Torch. I probably should have told you Torch was a rather unique sort of operation. It was an invasion by military force into a neutral country in an attempt to create a friend. Therefore, all of the basic considerations in the study and planning of that campaign were political. At that time, as I told you, the British were not in the good graces of the French because of unfortunate incidents of the war, and it was the belief, in which our governments were supported by our observers in North Africa, that if the whole operation could be made to look American, it would be very much better, and we would not have so much trouble in winning the French over to our side. So allowing for the fact that some accident might happen to myself, they picked for the initiation of that campaign an American Deputy Commander.

My own idea is that it makes little difference from what particular service a deputy commander comes. What you are looking for is brains and comprehension - comprehension of the basic purposes in which you are operating.

I have to mention the word "strategy" and I will even mention it

in the tones and terms in which I was just talking to a few of my friends. No officer of any nationality will ever admit that officers of another nationality are well-trained in strategy. That is a generalization that I have never yet found violated. They will admit that others are great tacticians, great organizers, great planners. Their admiration and friendship may be unlimited, but when it comes to that man's and that group's strategic training, it is too bad!

Actually the principles of strategy, as you men well know, are simplicity itself. The essential qualifications of a high commander, I believe, can be learned by any man who spends his life thinking of the burdens and responsibilities that devolve upon leaders in moments of crisis, and studying and planning as to how he would handle himself in such situations. I would see nothing particularly startling in designating as the supreme commander of a great campaign, such as the invasion of Europe, either an admiral or an air officer, provided his associated governments believed that he had the qualifications, backed up by study, for making great decisions on a simple basis when the crisis arose. The difficulty in strategy is making that decision in conformity with certain basic simple rules, and then the hardest job of all <u>is sticking to it</u>.

Strategy necessarily extends over considerable space, not only in territory, but in time. For example, we wanted to attack in Overlord on the fifth of May 1944, but we didn't have yet all of the LSTs and other landing equipment that we believed to be absolutely necessary, and we had to wait to get an additional month's production. Therefore, the strategy that was to be used in that operation influenced industry all the way back to the center

of the United States where LSTs were being built. The Navy went to the point of launching them the second they were built and putting on green crews which were trained as the ships went down the river to the sea. So strategy affects everything all the way back to the mine and the farm from which the resources come, and once adopted under cold-blooded, objective reasoning, must be adhered to. And that is the antithesis of tactical action, where the skillful commander takes advantage of every single opportunity that arises just as fast as it arises, and so gains great victories over a methodical commander who may succeed merely in pushing back the enemy or repulsing him.

Strategy, while simplicity itself in its essence, is difficult indeed to apply, but I do not believe the color of the man's uniform has a single thing to do with it. I believe you could prove this by going back to such men as Caesar, who was a politician until he was fifty, to Themistocles, who took a fleet out when he didn't know a single thing about sea warfare, and to others who were great commanders in fields in which they had not been specifically and technically trained.

So in the selection of the deputy commander I should say normally it would be best for the public opinion in both allied countries if you get him from the opposite nationality from the supreme commander, but above all, get a man who has brains.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: General, I think there is a mistaken notion afoot that a supreme commander makes very broad decisions, that he usually has a long time to study them, and that he makes those decisions within rather broad directives that are passed on to him from above. I recall a decision that you made in Bizerte, which was a major decision when Marshal Badoglio maintained

he could not go through with the surrender terms, and that you made that decision in a matter of minutes. Would you discuss the types of decisions you were called upon to make?

GENERAL EISENHOWER: General Lemnitzer, it is like everything else when you are attempting to define scope of authority and the types of things which a man exercising a particular responsibility is called upon to face. I was talking about a strategic concept being studied out and then being adhered to - that is the broad commitment of your forces to action. In the back of your head you develop the line of action and the amount of force, which you will apply at the earliest date to bring about the complete destruction of the enemy. Now within that plan which you are sticking to, certainly unless you find that it just won't work, you have decisions that range all the way from three months ahead to a decision of this very minute.

To give you one of the first type, as we started into Europe we decided that because we were going to a rather constricted beachhead there would initially be one ground commander. Montgomery by reason of his rank, prestige and experience was chosen as that commander. He was specifically given the job of coordinating the action between the First American Army and the Second British Army during the early days of the operation. But then we had to plan for the time when that scheme would disappear and when the eventual organization of each army group under its own commander, reporting directly to SHAEF, would come about. So that decision tended to be made a month or so in advance, based upon our own guess of when these army groups would get sorted out in the proper channels of invasion.

In March 1945 we were just waging the battle of the Saar. We were just ready to close the doors. The British forces, and the U.S. First Army

and the Third had cleaned out everything north of Moselle. The German, with his usual stubborness, was hanging on to the Saar and we were ready to close the trap. We gave to the Seventh Army on the south fifteen full divisions, in addition to certain French forces. As the battle started, we saw it was impossible for Devers to use all those forces, whereas Bradley could.

Now I happened to be at that exact spot. It was a decision only a supreme commander could make because it involved the transfer of troops from army group to army group, that is not from army to army. So on the spot these troops were transferred to the 12th Army Group and the next morning they were fighting.

In the Battle of the Bulge, by the evening of December 18, we had enough information of both the enemy power and intentions and our own strength to determine upon definite lines of action. Now long before Bradley and I had agreed what would be our general line of action if the attack should come about, it became time for a specific order. So I went to Verdun and met with Devers, Bradley, Patton and Air Chief Marshal Tedder, who went with me as my deputy. We met with quite a group on the morning of December 19, and then we issued the orders for the counterattack from the south. It was clearly evident the German was going to continue attacking on the north. He was certainly going to try to go toward Antwerp, and we thought his immediate objective would be Liege, but by crowding from the south and cutting into his lines, we would embarrass him badly. And by the morning of the twenty-sixth we had weakened his forces to the north and they turned to the south. But that decision was made on December 19, the attack started on the twenty-second, and

the orders of the southern flank were never thereafter changed. I just quoted a few that came to mind to show you the difference in scope and the length of time involved.

ADMIRAL HILL: General, I wonder if you could cover one thing which I think we have discussed a good deal around here in some of the problems - that is the question of the advisability of the theater commander in an overseas theater being also a commander of operating forces, of his own forces?

GENERAL EISENHOWER: This is what I believe: I believe that at least under the American system - and the British did it also - a field commander should retain the administrative control that is vested in a theater commander. Without that his position is never nearly so strong. But I do not believe he should be in actual direct operational control of any of the services. His command should normally be exercised through a series of subordinates which may vary from three possibly up to six senior commanders, and he exercises his authority through them, but he should not command any specific part himself.

Suppose we had had an American army group and a British army group. I think it would have been fatal for me to take command of the American army group and try to command the others. As a matter of fact, every time that proposal was made - and it was made several times - that a man would take one formation and at the same time command another formation of equal size - I repudiated the idea. It is a fatal mistake and should never be made in my opinion.

However, I do believe this: that any supreme commander you establish in a theater should retain administrative control of his own nationalistic forces, that is such administrative or other power as his own nation gives

him, because there is a direct action and a direct possibility there that cannot be obtained if he is just simply sizing up and asking them to do it. I believe that is all that is necessary.

I do believe in SHAEF we may have made one error. In the anxiety to save qualified people we never really set up an American theater headquarters. I believe, in view of some of the troubles I had, that if I had to do it again I would set up a definite headquarters which I would call an American theater headquarters. But ours did work, and we did save a lot of personnel by being more efficient and thereby saving a little anguish, but by no means would I ever let a man command the day-by-day direction of a force and then command something absolutely parallel.

COLONEL BEEBE: General, would you comment on what steps might be taken in times of peace to prepare for combined command in war?

GENERAL EISENHOWER: I personally believe that we should never balk or hesitate on conducting staff conferences, visits and conversations with nations whose basic purposes and ideals in this world today seem to be the same as ours. If I should have to go back and take the place of Fox Conner of twenty-five years ago and now project ourselves into the future, there is one thing I would say to which I believe we all would agree: If there is a struggle that is arising in the world that is going to take it into war, that struggle is ideological, and therefore it is easy enough to determine our probable and potential allies. Anyone who wants to live under the concept of the dignity and the freedom of the individual is a potential ally of ours, because any conflict will be between that system and a system of statism. Therefore with the staffs and with the countries which are practicing that kind

of system, I believe we ought to encourage consultation; indeed, during my many months in Washington I worked hard for that, not only with respect to the Allies we worked with in the war but with the South American countries. I believe great progress has been made.

Now with respect to the countries who are going to have to provide the materials and the munitions of war, I believe the connection should be even closer. I believe we should not only exchange students in colleges such as this on the freest kind of basis and without apology - I admit I am opposed in that view - I believe we should do it in other service schools as well. I believe we should do our utmost to decide which is the kind of weapon that our industries are best equipped to make, that we should get a nation which does not have ready access to raw materials to make things which do not demand great stocks of raw materials, and that we should definitely work out planning on the basis of the logistic support and the operational control of forces in time of war. This would have to be done largely secretly and confidentially, and there may arise some diplomatic differences and difficulties in doing it, but I notice that no one else has ever hesitated to do such things, and I believe it is only good common sense for us.

CAPTAIN O'BEIRNE: General, in conducting a combined operation, would you attempt to keep the national forces involved separated in the largest possible groups or units? And if you had a small combined operation, what principle would you use in selecting the commander?

GENERAL EISENHOWER: I will tell you what I would do. So far as it is possible I believe you will save yourself lots of trouble if you don't allot forces in a size less than an army because of the fact that the army,

in the ground forces is the group that deals directly with the service of supply, your lines of communication. You can allocate a corps to another nationality, but when you do it by corps that corps, geographically, should lie next to one of your armies where it can be supported logistically. The whole difficulty settles down to one of logistics. If you should allocate by divisions, supply is likely to get complicated. We had the 84th Division serving way up in Holland and once the 104th, and the problem of getting American supplies and American rations up there became a little difficult.

Now if you had to do it with a small task force, I would try to put all supply and administration in the hands of one nationality, and if I possibly could, I would try to get them armed similarly. That would be the simplest thing to do. If we had to take the British with their equipment and ourselves with ours, I would try to get them to turn over to a single commander all the necessary ammunition, spare parts to fit their stuff, and I would still supply through one service. I think it would be far easier.

COLONEL MC GUIRE: Sir, if you would accept a question a bit afield of the present topic, would you discuss the possible advisability of including in the present unification program a Secretary of Logistics of Materiel, to be on the same level as the Secretaries of Air, Navy and Army?

GENERAL EISENHOWER: Of course, that is a subject which has been batted around in this city since the first World War, and it has been fought back and forth. While I was in the Procurement Section of the War Department back in 1930 and 1931, I rather doubted that we would secure much efficiency through it. This is what I believe: I believe we are never going to get the true effect of unification until it starts at the bottom. Frankly, if I had

my way, every boy who goes through Annapolis would spend one year at West Point and vice versa. I would start to make these kids friends from the first time they put on the uniform of their country, and I would insist they wear the uniform of their country and not that of a special service. If we don't get the proper kind of unification, we will never make anything work; and if you have the proper kind of unification, then through the Army, Navy Munitions Board and their understanding of the common problem, you won't need a separate logistics bureau.

There are certain parts of this logistics business that each service, after all, has to do for itself. The Army is not interested in the way the Navy takes an oiler out to sea and refuels a ship. Certain things each service must do for itself, and I believe with the proper development of the spirit that we should seek we will never need a central bureau. That is my own belief.

CAPTAIN KANE: In covering our problems here I have noticed a tendency to avoid moving into Russia, just moving up to the border and stopping, on the basis that a land army can't take Russia. Will you discuss that point?

GENERAL EISENHOWER: Well, I am going to approach it a little bit backwards, Captain. Suppose you do overrun Russia, what do you do with it? In our occupational experience in the past two years, which is far more extensive than it was following the first World War, it has been proven that we couldn't even take Japan and one segment of Germany and occupy them long enough with sufficient force really to be safe and to do the job well. I shudder to think of what the occupation forces of Russia would be as you tried to go through it, establishing a government, reconstituting the place and

getting it going again. But that is starting at the back end.

If you take the proposition of invading Russia, there is no question in my mind that if we could have Western Europe, together with Great Britain, as solid allies of ours, there is no power on earth today that could stop the combined might. The 270 million people of Western Europe are far more advanced than are the Russians in economy, in their thinking, in their skills. We are separated from those people ordinarily by from one to ten or twelve generations. They are exactly the same kind of people which we are, although we have probably been amalgamated. So the power we can generate with our resources is irresistible. But in such an invasion you would undertake the most costly thing any army or force could lay out for itself.

Just after V-E Day I flew to Moscow. Between the western borders of Russia and the outskirts of Moscow I could not find a standing house. Industry was obliterated. You could find no signs of habitation. I was assured by Marshal Zhukov there were people living in caves that they had dug in the sides of ravines. In 1941-1942 that country lost a huge portion of its territory in which its cities were destroyed, its houses burned, its agriculture lost.

And yet that country, after all it had undergone, finally generated a terrific power. If I were directed to invade Russia, and given all the forces to invade via the Black Sea or directly from the Berlin area, I would be sure of one thing, that I would have a winter line objective. I would go to that line as hard as I could and I would pile up ten times as much to finish the campaign the next spring with the sea, the land and everything I could get. Because if you didn't do it hurriedly you would begin to exhaust yourself because it is a terrific job due to space and numbers. There are lots

of people.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I regret that our time has run out. I regret it not only because it ends this very interesting period, but also because it ends the lecture program for this year at the National War College. I am sure you will all agree that we could not end it on a finer note than that which General Eisenhower has given us this morning, that of mutual trust and confidence between services and nationalities.

General, on behalf of the two colleges and the very many guests who have joined us this morning, I want to thank you for a very splendid talk.

GENERAL EISENHOWER: I would like to say one more word. In the last few years I have been called upon to address many audiences. This is the second time I have had the privilege, rather than the duty, of coming to this one. There is no audience in the world that could evoke from me the same admiration, the same affection and the same feeling of comradeship. I am proud of every man who establishes a record in the service which entitles him to come to this school, whether he be State Department, Army, Navy or Air. And I assure you that I find in this school one of my greatest hopes for the future of my country. Thank you a lot.