OVERTURE to OVERLORD

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by

Lt.-Gen. Sir Frederick Morgan, K.C.B.

(COSSAC)

With a Foreword by

GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

LONDON

HODDER & STOUGHTON LIMITED

FIRST PRINTED . . . . JANUARY, 1950

Made and Printed in Great Britain for Hodder & Stoughton, Limited, London,
by Wyman & Sons Limited, London, Reading and Fakenham

PREFACE

IT will be some time, probably, before there is published any comprehensive and connected account, in readable form, of all that went on in the world between 1939 and 1945. It will be longer still before it becomes possible to work out the full story of all that took place behind the scenes in front of which were enacted the visible tableaux.

Already, so soon after their happening in the eyes of all the world, the recollection of feats of arms without parallel in previous history is beginning to blur. The theatre of war was so vast, it all went on for such a long time. We had to learn so much geography, distances were so huge. So much has already happened since the "shooting wars" died down. The present takes up so much of our attention. Speculation on the future clouds the mind. One is inclined at times to wonder if indeed the record of the past will ever be of interest and, if so, to whom.

Everything passes. Equilibrium of a sort will some day be established. It may well be that even as we are now able to review and profit from the tribulations of our forefathers, so our descendents will gain something from the record of 1914, of 1939, and all that.

But that our sufferings should not have been in vain, it is so necessary that the history of them, that may later on be read, should be founded on fact. Facts are elusive. So I believe they should be fixed in some way before they slide into the shadows.

As for military matters, the admirable British Field Service Regulations enjoin upon the commanders of all units down to the smallest, the keeping of a War Diary. In theory this should suffice for the ultimate compilation of the British master record. But as in so many other things, practice here differs, often widely, from theory. Unit commanders are not selected for command by virtue of their powers of descriptive authorship.

War Diaries, even those purporting to record events of world-shaking significance, are apt to be deadly dull. Though every precaution is taken to ensure their survival, it is of the nature of things warlike that there are casualties among war diaries. And that goes for other armies as well.

So I hold it to be incumbent upon all those who have the opportunity to set down their recollections of things done or said or thought while still those recollections are fresh in the mind. Which applies to all ranks and ratings. How much of our knowledge of former times do we not owe to the writings of those who served in the humbler grades.

In what follows, I have done my best to set down what little I know of one little Anglo-American episode. Of itself perhaps it has no particular virtue, but it did so happen that what is here told turned out to be the first rough, black-and-white sketch for the great canvas that eventually bore the signature of the master artist, Eisenhower.

To relate this story to the whole it would be nice to set down here something of the chronology of those last war years, the years when for the second time the war that has been going on for most of our lives broke into flame. But even to outline the whole course of events would be too great a tax on the reader. Let me therefore restrict myself to the period covered by this book and see what was going on throughout the world at war during 1943.

In October and November of 1942 was launched the combined drive against Rommel in Africa from Alamein in the East, from Algiers in the West and from Lake Chad in the South. As an immediate counter measure, on Armistice Day, the Germans marched into what had hitherto been Unoccupied France and so carried their outposts to the Riviera. In November of that year began the great Russian counter-offensive in the Stalingrad area which continued with ever-increasing violence for the next several weeks until the Germans' final capitulation at Stalingrad in February, 1943.

In January, 1943, on the other side of the world, Americans and Australians were beginning to lop off the southernmost Japanese tentacles round New Guinea and Guadalcanal. In this month also the siege of Leningrad was raised, and the Russians reported successes on their Caucasian front. All the

time the air offensive based on Britain against Germany was increasing in intensity. In this month the U.S. heavy bombers struck their first blow at the Reich.

In early March a great Japanese convoy in the Bismarck Straits bound for New Guinea was destroyed by air action. In that month, too, the Americans bombed Kiska in the Aleutian Islands, while the R.A.F. from India were bombing targets on the Burma Front. Announcement was made of a new Russian offensive in the Lake Ilmen sector.

In April, first contact was made between our forces advancing from East and West along North Africa where the end was clearly in sight. This end came in May. During that month the home-based R.A.F. carried out their incredible exploits against the Möhne and Eder dams in Western Germany.

In June the small Mediterranean islands of Pantellaria and Lampedusa were captured. The Navy visited Spitzbergen. United States forces landed in New Georgia and New Guinea.

In July the Germans opened their last great offensive on the Eastern Front but made little progress with bitter loss. In this same month came the American and British landings in Sicily. The environs of Rome were bombed and Java was bombed from Australia. At the end of July came the fall of Mussolini.

On the 1st August, United States' aircraft bombed Ploesti in Rumania. Their strength in the South Pacific made itself increasingly felt against the Japanese-held islands. During August the Russians announced great triumphs on the Eastern Front at Bielgorod and Orel, and opened a new great offensive in the direction of Kharkov. Rome was declared an open city. United States and Canadian forces landed on Kiska. Enemy resistance in Sicily ended. By the end of the month the Russians were back in and beyond Kharkov, and the bombardment of Italy was increasing in intensity.

In early September, first landings were made in the toe of Italy. There followed a few days later the unconditional surrender of Italy and landings near Naples by the Fifth United States Army. It was announced that the Russians had recaptured the entire Donetz Basin. Shipping in Hong Kong harbour was bombed by China-based American aircraft. Mussolini was rescued and made his last attempt to re-establish the Axis. By the end of the month all was going well with the

Russian counter-offensive, while Americans, British and French were firmly established on the mainland of Italy and in Corsica, Sardinia having been evacuated by the Germans.

In early October, successes continued except that a Japanese offensive developed on the mainland of China. Celebes was bombed and *Tirpitz* was damaged by a midget submarine attack in Altenfjord. The Portuguese afforded us facilities in the Azores. Skoplje was bombed, as were targets in Greece. By the end of the month the Russians had isolated the Crimea. Famine appeared imminent in Bengal.

All through November the great Russian offensives were forging ahead. Kiev was retaken. In Italy the Allies were closing up to the German " winter line " which was shattered on the 1st December.

Japanese outposts in the south-west Pacific were receiving an ever-increasing weight of bombs. On Christmas Eve were announced to the world certain of the results of Allied discussions in Cairo and Teheran.

Thus may one summarise, possibly over-summarise, an infinity of " blood, tears, toil and sweat." But that was how it went, in very general terms. And it was against this background that was prepared the last act of the drama in the West.

To all those, both British and American, who helped in that preparation I take leave to dedicate this work. I dedicate it also to the spirit of true Anglo-American unity that was distilled out of all the immense upheaval and tribulation and suffering, this incalculably good thing that has come out of such immeasurable evil. Being in the nature of a personal account it cannot record other than the broad lines of development. Behind this of which I have written, I know there was a wealth of adventure and ingenuity, and my hope is that some day other " Cossacs " will be moved to give us their account in amplification. Maybe, as they did so often in the past, they will be able to put me back on the rails should I by chance have left them at any place.

In conclusion, I must thank all those friends—American and British—who have so kindly and patiently checked, both officially and unofficially, this produce of my memory.

F. E. M.

March, 1948.

FOREWORD

By General Dwight D. Eisenhower

IN April, 1942, the British and American Governments agreed that the complete defeat of Germany would demand an all-out, Allied invasion across the English Channel, the operation—later called OVERLORD—to take place as soon as practicable. From that moment onward this purpose stood as the guide-post to Allied strategy in Europe, but early detailed examination of the project quickly developed the inescapable fact that many months would necessarily elapse before there could be produced the troops and ships and planes and gear necessary to a real promise of success.

While awaiting the moment of feasible execution of OVERLORD, the Allies adopted various air, ground and sea programmes designed to seize and hold the initiative, weaken the enemy, assist our Allies, improve our own strategic, logistic and psychological position and to bring about a military situation that would enhance our chances of complete victory when once the full-scale effort could be launched. The North African Campaign was designed on this pattern.

At the Casablanca Conference, January, 1943, the Combined Chiefs of Staff concluded that the time had come to begin the detailed development of the OVERLORD Invasion Plan; up to that time it existed only as an agreed intention. To head the Allied staff collected in London for this work they fortunately selected Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Morgan, author of this book.

The investigation, studies and research, the organisational, training, operational and logistic planning he and his group of assistants then undertook extended over a period of many exhausting months. It was, first of all, an exercise in co-operation

among Allies and among services, an exercise made all the more difficult because General Morgan, Chief of Staff to a Commander who did not exist, had to carry the double burden of anticipating important decisions of his future Commander and of convincing military and political heads of two governments of the soundness of those decisions. In the outcome the results of this work proved remarkably applicable and valid, even though the plan he developed was somewhat more restricted than that finally executed. Some explanation seems indicated. When I was notified, in Africa, of my appointment to the European Command, I was only vaguely familiar with the scheme so far developed by General Morgan, but from information available I felt that there was contemplated an initial assault on too narrow a front. Unable, at the moment, to go to London personally, I communicated my concern on this point to my Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Smith, and to Field Marshal (then General) Montgomery.

Since the latter was then ready to go to the new theatre he was directed to act, pending my own arrival in London, as my representative in examining the details of the ground plan, with special reference to possibilities for broadening the front of attack. Montgomery found this to be essential and it was later done, but in justice to General Morgan it must be understood that he was charged with making the best plan possible out of the means specifically allocated by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, whereas a commander was in position to insist upon greater means, even at the expense of time. My decision to broaden the attack was earnestly supported by General Morgan. Moreover, generously accepting the post of *Deputy* Chief of Staff, in order that I might have with me the Chief of Staff who had already served with me through an entire campaign, General Morgan continued on in SHAEF, where he served brilliantly to the end of Nazi Germany. His vast store of knowledge and great ability were of inestimable value to all of us who were newcomers in the organisation.

No other man is so well qualified as is General Morgan to provide the record of the important features and problems in the development of the OVERLORD Operation from a strategic conception into a final attack plan. The work he did has been recognised by decorations from the two governments

that he served so well. Accomplishment of his self-imposed duty of recording the story of those trying but fruitful days will place all of us further in his debt.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER.

War Department, The Chief of Staff,
Washington. *13th March, 1947.*

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I

PERSONAL BACKGROUND

IT was on the 12th March, 1943, going up in the lift at New Scotland Yard, that I first got wind of the development in affairs that gave rise to this COSSAC business and to many high doings of which I shall attempt to tell.

I was on my way to attend a meeting at Combined Operations Headquarters and, just as the lift was taking off, in jumped Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten himself, fresh from discussion with the British Chiefs of Staff, who proceeded to congratulate me vociferously in spite of the presence of a full load of passengers of all ranks.

Before going back in history to trace out the beginnings that brought us to this turning point, I must interpret this cry COSSAC. It is made up of the initial letters of the title that was conferred on me at the time—" Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate) "—which all must admit is a bit much of a mouthful for constant, everyday use. It therefore became immediately necessary to coin some contraction that, while conveying all that was necessary to those in the know, could when used openly contribute nothing to the knowledge of those who did not need to know or of those who might put such knowledge to improper uses. The happy inspiration of this particular short title did not arrive in a flash. Strange as it may seem, its evolution took some days of thought and the eventual answer came to me in that situation in which so many happy thoughts seem to arrive, namely in a hot bath, in my comfortable billet at the Mount Royal Hotel, London, England. There is a lot in a name, as our war-time Prime Minister was so fond of preaching. In fact it was he himself who reserved the right on many occasions to pick the code names of our more crucial operations. Though he had nothing to do with this one,

I think he would have approved of it had he been consulted because it set the tone exactly for all that period of which I would write. It told the truth and nothing but the truth, yet it did not tell the whole truth. This perversion of the well-worn phrase might be taken as the *leit motiv* of all our plans as will be shown hereafter. Though, in fact, the title COSSAC came to stand for all the great activity which culminated in the invasion of Nazi Europe from the north-west, it had an essentially Muscovite sound about it and so in itself contained that element of deception without which victory can hardly be obtained. " Mystify, mislead and surprise," said the great Stonewall Jackson, and we were setting out right from the start to follow this sound advice. When COSSAC had been in existence for some months it was gratifying to overhear two French officers enquire of each other with obvious puzzlement, " *Qu'est que c'est—cette Cossaque ?* " The name caught on, and for many years to come will be found imprinted in a variety of State papers.

After which it is necessary to turn the clock back a few months to see how it all came about. In May of 1942 I had been appointed to command First Corps District with headquarters at Hickleton Hall just outside Doncaster, in Yorkshire, including the 48th (South Midland) Division stationed in Lincolnshire and the 55th (West Lancashire) Division stationed in the East Riding of Yorkshire. I had myself commanded the 55th Division through the previous winter before promotion. The First Corps District Command covered the area of Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire, and everything military therein contained. The Headquarters of First Corps had originally been located at this place by General Alexander, as he then was, on his return from Dunkirk, when the primary task had of course been the defence of the district against possible German invasion. As the months went by and the invasion threat diminished, activity had consisted less and less of defence preparations and more and more of reforming the Army for offensive action abroad and of elaborating the defensive organisation to whose charge the care of the Homeland could be committed when the field armies set about their main task of putting the Nazi where he belonged, namely under the soil of Germany. This of course meant organising, arming and equipping what was probably the finest Army that Britain ever

produced—the Home Guard, and further organising the whole elaborate and effective outfit of Civil Defence, Air Raid Precautions, Decentralised Civil Government and the rest of it, the doing of which was such a joy, mainly I think because it brought one into contact for the first time with the real spirit of our countrymen and women. But that, as Rudyard Kipling used to say, is another story.

It was in October of 1942 that I was sent for to the War Office, being told that I should be required only for a short conference after which I should be free to return once more to Doncaster. Being a reasonably old soldier and having in my time served on the War Office staff, I thought it prudent to take with me on this trip, not only my Brigadier, General Staff and my Deputy Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, my two Chiefs of Staff on the operational and administrative sides, but also a suit-case containing the requisite gear for at least one night in London. This turned out to be a wise precaution since in the event I never again returned to Doncaster.

During the early Autumn of 1942 in course of training my troops, it had become plain to me that the time had come when we should cease to concentrate upon training our soldiers to repel an enemy onslaught upon the Wash or the Humber, but should begin to figure out just where on the earth's surface they were likely to be called upon to give battle and then to get them used to the idea of operating, not on their native heath, but in some country in which they would arrive after a sea voyage and where they would find strange conditions among a population which might range anywhere from demonstratively friendly to definite hostile. Estimating the general situation on all fronts and assessing possibilities in the light of the reasonably complete information at my disposal, I decided to wager my modest half-crown on an Anglo-American invasion of North Africa. I caused to be assembled in my office the maps of this area, and had discussed possibilities with my senior commanders and staff.

It was with mixed feelings, therefore, that on arrival at the War Office I found that this was one of those very rare occasions on which I had backed a winner. I was handed a formal document placing me as Commander of the First Corps under the orders of General Dwight D. Eisenhower to participate in

this very operation, the invasion of North Africa, for which the leading convoys were just about to sail from the United States and from Scotland.

I say that my feelings were mixed because here at once was a problem of security. I had left behind in my office at Hickleton Hall a complete display of the very maps that I was now to use in earnest. I had talked at some length to my people on the subject of this very operation. Neither of these things of course would I have done at that time had I known the truth and not been merely speculating. Hasty consideration led one to the conclusion that is astonishingly often right, and that is easiest of all to put into operation, namely to do nothing whatever to emphasise the significance of what had been mere speculation, and let the whole thing dissipate itself as just another of the old man's brain-waves, which it did.

Here, right at the start, one cannot forbear to record how strange a thing is chance. For us soldiers, as a distinguished colleague was once fond of remarking, "ours is a chancy profession." It was some time later that I discovered by hazard that all which now began to happen to me depended from one pencil stroke on a list compiled in the War office. As was customary, there was a column of tasks to be filled opposite a column of names. In the original typing, my name was put opposite some quite different assignment from that which I now received. The list had been amended in pencil by some anonymous hand. The penciller has probably long since forgotten making this particular doodle. Anyway, it is a bit late now to apply the eraser.

I will not dwell at any length upon the great activity to which these new orders of mine gave rise. They included first the separation of the Corps Headquarters from the Corps District. The First Corps was completely reconstituted now to include the 1st and 4th Divisions and a mass of Corps troops located athwart Southern Scotland from Montrose in the east down to Ballantrae in the south-west, and there quickly came into being what was known as "125 Force" which was, I dare swear, as fine an expedition as was ever prepared in this country, complete down to the proverbial last gaiter button.

At the head of this little Army I was placed under command of General Eisenhower. My task was to prepare to execute a

subsidiary landing in the Western Mediterranean should events so shape themselves as to necessitate such a course of action, either to reinforce success already gained or to relieve pressure that might develop to our disadvantage elsewhere. It was largely the fear of the possibility that we might find ourselves confronted with a German thrust through Spain which obliged General Eisenhower to make his westernmost landing, the brilliant exploit that first drew the limelight towards that great soldier, General George Patton, at Casablanca, outside the Mediterranean. Had it been possible entirely to discount this fear the whole expedition could have been thrust well inside the Straits of Gibraltar, doing which might well have throttled the life out of Rommel's desert army much more quickly than was in fact the case. As the North African campaign proceeded with almost unbroken success for our arms from both East and West, the bogey of a German invasion of Spain faded and it became gradually less and less likely that I with my First Corps would be required either for the primary task of making a landing in the Western Mediterranean, or even for our secondary task of general reserve to be committed at General Eisenhower's discretion elsewhere in the North African theatre.

But during the period of suspense various other possibilities came into view. We were ordered to examine the feasibility of a descent upon Sardinia (operation "BRIMSTONE") and this gave us more admirable experience of the preparation of a large-scale amphibious operation. For this hypothetical task, First Corps was to be further reinforced by the British Marine Division and by two American Divisions to sail direct from the United States to the Island. When plans for this enterprise were well on their way its abandonment was ordered, and we were directed to consider the problem of Sicily. Here it early became evident that the conquest of Sicily would be an affair far larger in scope than either of our previous projects, larger in fact than could be contemplated with the use of so small a body as a corps, whereupon, as is now a matter of history, operation "HUSKY"—as the invasion of Sicily was code named—was transferred to the responsibility of the armies in North Africa. Incidentally, there is the basis here of many an intriguing study for future students at Staff Colleges and places where they calculate. It seems arguable that it might well have been

strategically advantageous to have made Sardinia the next objective after Tunisia rather than Sicily. It is not a matter for hasty judgment but rather one for deliberate calculation for which this is neither the time nor the place. But I commend the problem to future students of strategy.

On the 4th February, 1943, the 1st Division was removed from the First Corps for transport to North Africa as a division in reinforcement of the First Army. The 4th Division moved similarly early in March, and the whole of 125 Force was gradually dissipated in like manner. The cadre of First British Army having been calculated to allow for expansion to this extent, there was no place in it for another corps headquarters. First Corps was therefore to remain in England to be reconstituted once more with yet another object in view.

The "ANFA" Conference at Casablanca had meanwhile given to Western leaders the opportunity to review in company the whole strategic situation, and it was at this Conference that it was deemed that the time was approaching, even that it had already approached, for the delivery of the *coup de grace* in the form of an invasion of Europe from the north-west. The full implications of this decision were too great even for our greatest men to swallow at one gulp, so that their decision took the form of a determination in the near future to appoint a commander for this gigantic enterprise. It was understandably not possible, so far in advance, now to designate the individual who should hold this position, but meanwhile the necessity was recognised to tidy up and to give point to all the many and various projects of greater or less magnitude that had been considered in connection with the frontal assault on Nazi Europe. It was decided to appoint an individual in the position of Chief of Staff to the unspecified commander-to-be, the duty of this Chief of Staff being, in so many words, to "give cohesion and impetus" to preparations of all kinds. The authorship of this phrase it is easy to guess. It was to this post that I was nominated.

But before going ahead with my story, it is necessary to hark back once more and look at the background from rather a different aspect. I have touched lightly upon certain of the more formal, military circumstances that affected me personally, but there are others of a different type that proved, in the event, to be of even greater significance. For it was during the currency

of operation "TORCH," as the whole series of operations connected with the invasion of North Africa was called, that I had the inestimable advantage of making the acquaintance of many of those with whom I was destined to work so closely later, and whose names have since become household words throughout much of the world.

As I have said, it was in October of 1942 that I was first placed under the orders of General Dwight D. Eisenhower whom I was just able to meet before he left London for his Advanced Headquarters at Gibraltar. That which in British military parlance was known as my "125 Force" was to General Eisenhower his Northern Task Force. His invasion army was organised in four Task Forces. The Western Task Force, to land at Casablanca, under command of General George Patton, United States Army, a Centre Task Force, to land at Oran, under command of General Lloyd R. Fredendall, United States Army, an Eastern Task Force, to land at Algiers, under command of British General Kenneth Anderson, and my own outfit. Kenneth Anderson I knew well since we had been fellow students at the Staff College at Quetta. Patton and Fredendall I met later down in Africa, but it was on the eve of departure in London that I met Ike Eisenhower, his Deputy, General Mark Clark and his Chief of Staff, General Walter Bedell Smith, which last is the full name of one known to thousands probably simply by the affectionate nickname of Beadle or even Beetle.

I shall always be grateful for having had this little glimpse, short though it was, of Ike at this time. We met twice, on both occasions in Norfolk House. The first occasion was at the moment of success when Mark Clark had just returned from his famous one-man invasion of North Africa by submarine to clinch the deal with the French authorities which paved the way for the comparatively unopposed landings by the invasion forces shortly afterwards. Mark Clark pulled from his pocket the unexpended portion of his journey money, a little canvas bag full of notes of high denomination still sodden with sea water, and dumped it upon Ike's blotter to the accompaniment of what I took to be a flow of highly technical American military language but subsequently discovered to be something quite different. This gave me the opportunity to see for the first time the famous grin

that is Ike's most frequently used facial expression and which is alone worth an army corps in any campaign.

My second meeting with Ike at this time was when I attended his final conference just before he left for Gibraltar. Here again was the grin, but back of it one could feel the tension of the moment. It was only later that I found out something of what had gone before, of the months of bewilderment that Ike must have spent as a comparative stranger to this British country and its British methods. It must have seemed to him that we should never get anywhere, but here at last the moment of action had arrived and here he was, after a lifetime of comparative obscurity, at the head of a great expedition already launched upon a desperate adventure that might well, in spite of all calculations, end in spectacular disaster. Looking back on this short conference, I know full well that every possible consideration was present in Ike's mind but still here was the grin that allayed all fears and imparted the confidence that brings success.

From personal experience later I can well imagine what Ike must have been through. From what I can make of it, the training of the American soldier, far more thorough from the technical point of view in many ways than our training, does not include experience of the semi-political and social type that so often falls to the lot of the British soldier. Life on an Army post in the United States must be in some ways more like that which we lead in the outposts of Empire and must bear little resemblance to service in the larger British garrisons both at home and abroad. It must have been indeed bewildering for an American General, rapidly promoted, to find himself exposed to the full rigours of Mayfair and Whitehall. A lesser man might well have wilted, but not Ike with his firm and unfaltering grasp of essentials, his uncompromising commonsense and, above all, his unconquerable sense of humour. Though he can have enjoyed few if any of these early days, it is beyond doubt that without this experience he would have found that which followed even more difficult than in fact it was.

While Ike and Mark Clark, breathing no doubt sighs of relief, went on their way to Gibraltar, " Beadle " Smith stayed behind in London as whipper-in and as general connecting link with

both Britain and the United States. He was suffering at this time almost more acutely than at any other from the internal disorders which recurred at distressingly frequent intervals throughout the campaigns which followed. Like so many other great soldiers before him, Beadle was forced continually not only to fight against the enemy without but to subdue the enemy within, yet such was the spirit of the man that he was able to triumph over both. On the morning of the actual landings in Africa, while waiting for the news, I tried to help by engaging him in merry chatter for an hour and more on any and every subject but that of invasion in general and the invasion of Africa in particular. His tummy was giving him very particular hell at the time, and I think and I hope it helped to have the mind thoroughly distracted. But I must admit that for the first few minutes I was not quite certain whether my idea was in fact a good one. By the time he in turn left for Africa, we had established an understanding which stood us in good stead later on.

But one must be careful not to stress unduly the part of the Army in affairs of this nature. It was at this time also that I first met General James Doolittle fresh from his Tokio adventures. It was evident that he also was still wondering how he found himself in this galley. But with him as with so many other of these great Americans, one could sense the potential greatness struggling hard not to be overwhelmed by what must surely be surface considerations. Back of it all was the big idea, which was to find ways and means of wielding the immense power at their disposal for one purpose and for one purpose only, to blast the living daylights out of the Axis and get back home quick. I sat in at one or two of Jimmy Doolittle's conferences in Norfolk House, and it was grand to hear him groping for the essential principles of the thing which he subsequently found in Africa and brought back to England again later on to put into such devastating effect.

Opportunity to meet more of the American leaders and to see something of them in action came in the course of a trip to North Africa in early December, 1942. As will be appreciated, the commitment of my 1st Corps, had it come about, would have involved some nice problems in co-ordination as between the Western Task Force moving northward, the Centre

Task Force moving westward and my own Northern Task Force arriving by sea southward. By early December we had got the thing to a point where little more progress could be made from London. My happily hypothetical problems naturally were of secondary importance to the more pressing problems of the warfare actually in progress in Tunisia. And I did not feel justified in worrying Ike with lengthy cables over communications which anyhow were pretty congested with higher priority stuff. So I was lent a B-17 or Flying Fortress to make the trip down to Africa myself, in company with my sailor, Commodore Parry of the Royal Navy, and my airman, Brigadier-General Robert Candee of the United States Army Air Force.

This was my first long oversea flight, and the impression gained from it will always remain with me. I have been lucky enough to be able to undertake many long flights since, but I shall never cease to marvel at the way in which this form of transportation seems to annihilate both time and space. There runs always in my head the old jingle about the gentleman who "set out one day in a relative way and arrived on the previous night." After all we are rapidly approaching a point at which we shall be able to become airborne in London, fly for five hours and arrive in New York at precisely the same moment at which we took off. I make no doubt that a sumptuous luncheon will be served on board the aircraft in which case what will be the meal that will be pressed upon us on arrival in the United States, and what was the meal that we ate just before leaving London. It surely cannot be that we shall have eaten the same lunch three times over. But this will be only one of the many vexing problems that the younger generation will have to solve.

This trip of ours to North Africa certainly had its moments. To begin with, while waiting our turn to take off from Portreath in Cornwall in the small hours, we had the distressing experience of seeing two Coastal Command aircraft go down the runway ahead of us and crash one after the other before our eyes with the loss of all on board. This set a nice problem, since the cause of these disasters was not immediately apparent. It might conceivably have been due to sabotage of some kind in which case "Phyllis," our Fortress, might have been interfered with to give the same effect. Did one take off and chance it, three

being a lucky number, or did we wait for a proper check up by day which involved crossing the Bay of Biscay, then the happy hunting ground for German fighters, in broad daylight with our skeleton crew? Having looked the boys in the eye I chose the latter course, and we had a grand fly direct to Tafarui, the airport for Oran. This was my first landing on a runway of pierced steel planks, for which I found myself psychologically unprepared. I could have sworn that the whole apparatus was dissolving beneath me. This impression was heightened when, on arrival in our bay, the tyre of our tail wheel burst with a rousing report. But our luck was obviously still in. It was good to see the way the crew immediately took their coats off and got down to making a complicated repair which took them some days. " Phyllis " and her chaps seemed a well-knit little unit.

I will round off the tale of this flight which may still be of interest to some, though it will have little appeal to many thousands of far greater experience, and I should tell of the onward passage to Algiers and then of the return trip, for it was during this, my first experience of long distance aviation, that I gained some first slight impression of the potentialities of American air power and of the quality of the men who wielded it.

" Phyllis " having, as stated, burst her tail wheel on landing, we eventually flew on from Oran to Algiers in a borrowed C-47 or Dakota. This was piloted by my own General Bob Candee who, not having made the trip before, equipped himself with what looked to me like a cyclist's touring map of North Africa. We were to take the inland route, our Dakota being of course unarmed and the Italians still being fairly active over the sea. Many will remember this trip through the mountains with their habit of suddenly shrouding themselves in cloud, as happened on this occasion. I am a timid airman at the best of times, and it was definitely quite a little experience to sit in the co-pilot's seat beside Bob while he flew the machine with one hand and ate an orange with the other, taking time out now and again to spit the pips out of the window while skilfully dodging the murderous-looking crags that kept appearing through the mist. I think Bob noticed what may euphemistically be described as my apprehension for, after what appeared to me to be a

peculiarly near miss, he turned to me with his infectious smile and remarked : " These god-damned clouds are full of rocks."

" Phyllis " eventually came to pick us up at Maison Blanche, the Algiers Airport, and on the way home we had the thrill of stopping off at Gibraltar where the famous runway was still being completed. It was then at the stage at which a B-17 started with her tail wheel practically in the Mediterranean, set her fans going at full blast and just did not wet her front tyres in the Atlantic before taking off. On the last hop our luck was again put to the test when one motor failed off Lisbon and we did the rest of the trip on three, crossed the path of a small German formation which fortunately was not interested and then made landfall an hour earlier than we had expected, due to a change of wind of which we had not been notified. The meteorological service was still in its infancy in those days. Luckily I had myself previously flown over the Scillies and was able to confirm that we were not, in fact, flying up the Brest Peninsula. On arrival all in one piece at Bovingdon, outside London, the sailor sought confirmation of our good luck by means of the fruit machines in the bar from which he quickly derived a small fortune. It was not all luck. Acquaintance with " Phyllis " and her crew taught one a lot.

Back now to Oran. On arrival I was taken straight to General Fredendall's Headquarters where I was greeted by him and by Mark Clark, whose task at the time was to " ride herd " on both the Centre and Western Task Forces. Without delay I was put up to make my presentation, the first of many that I have since given in front of American audiences, and there immediately came to me a sensation that I have felt many times since. Many of the problems that had appeared to me in London to be infinitely complex, if not insoluble, seemed to have solved themselves by the simple process of transporting my mind physically, as it were, from London to North Africa. " Never telephone, go and see," said the great Marshal Foch, a precept that, oddly enough, becomes more rather than less sound, as distances increase and mechanical communications improve.

My reception at Oran was cordial and most delightful. All the more so since I had unwittingly coincided with a great occasion. Apparently George Patton and Fredendall had made

a side bet in connection with the original landings, the commander of the Task Force which first set foot ashore to receive from the loser a case of champagne. Fredendall had won and payment had been made on the very day of my arrival, so that I was able to participate in the celebrations. At their conclusion, there was no doubt that Centre and Northern Task Forces saw completely eye to eye.

On arrival at Algiers we were most kindly received by Ike who arranged a meeting for me next day with George Patton, who flew in from Casablanca. On arrival George was a bit out of breath, and no wonder. I have said that Italian aircraft were still active over the Mediterranean at this time. Our defences of course were not yet perfectly organised since a comparatively short time had elapsed since the first landing, and attention had rightly been focused on the more forward area. A few minutes before George landed, an Italian torpedo plane had appeared out of the fog and neatly picked off one of the guardships outside Algiers harbour. This had happened so quickly that the defences had not come into action. The next thing that appeared out of the fog was George's aircraft. This time the defences were taking no risks and George had been greeted, as he described it, with everything including the kitchen stove, but seemed little the worse for it except, as I say, he was a trifle out of breath.

The General chose to ignore the fact that I had once been an Anti-Aircraft gunner, and proceeded to give a concise, though pungent, statement of the affairs of his Western Task Force. Here again it took but little time and few words to adjust our business. Once more everything seemed so much plainer when looked at from Algiers rather than from London. George having been disarmed in the ante-room, we partook of a delightful lunch to the accompaniment of a hilarious sparring match between Ike, George and Brigadier-General T. J. Davis, a jovial "classmate," that categorisation that means so much in the States.

Back in London I felt much better about lots of things. Not only had I been able to link up most of the details of my projected campaign and brought home a rich cargo of oranges, bananas and other fruit that had been forbidden to us in England for so long, but I had had the inestimable advantage of seeing

the combined war machine in action at Oran, Algiers and Gibraltar, and of meeting up with the men at the controls. Best of all, probably, I had been able to see Allied Force Headquarters doing its stuff. I had been able to talk with old British Army friends, who formed part of Ike's team, to catch from them the spirit of the thing and to discover for myself the true inwardness of what is implied in the horrible phrase " Anglo-American co-operation " : to appreciate to what an extent amalgamation or integration of the two races had already taken place.

One more detail of this my first trip to Africa is, I think, worthy of record. It was during one of our final parties in Algiers that, as is so frequently the case at gatherings of this nature, the American Civil War flared up again and during a lull in the conflict it appeared that the Yankees were in the enjoyment of a considerable local numerical superiority. The Rebels in fact numbered two only, under the leadership of Admiral Hall of the United States Navy, his troops being Colonel Leonard R. Sims from the deep, deep South. One could not stand idly by as a spectator of massacre, so I and a few other " Limeys " charged into the fray traditionally in the Southern interest. When time was eventually called, I found myself elected an honorary Alabama Democrat, a distinction of which I shall always be proud. The status thus convivially acquired has stood me in great good stead ever since, one of its prized privileges of course being that in moments of emotion one is able to refer with comparative impunity to the " Damyankees."

Of a different character was my meeting at this time with Admiral Andrew B. Cunningham. He wanted to give me a few words before he went off to the Southward, and these were in direct connection with my plan. Our interview was measurable almost in seconds, for all he wanted to say to me was this : " Now look here, General, get this quite clear. During this present war I have already evacuated two British Armies, and I don't intend to evacuate a third. Good luck to you." Generally speaking, of course, it was regrettably true that the British Army was not doing itself justice up to that time. To the uninitiated it may seem that this remark by the Admiral did not savour of any great spirit of co-operation, that it was even frank to the point of brutality. But as in so many other instances, it is not so much what you say as the way that you say

it, and one thing that has been made plain to me over these past few years is that any form of co-operation that is not based on absolute frankness is quite worthless when it comes to the point.

I have seen surprise expressed, for instance, at the stereotyped British form of order that is given to a British commander when he is placed under the orders of a commander of another nationality. It was an order of the usual type that placed me under the command of General Eisenhower. In this order I was instructed to carry out the commands of General Eisenhower unless I considered that by my so doing British national interests might in my opinion be imperilled. To those interested to construe such an order in that sense, of course, it could well appear as though something were being given with one hand and taken away with the other. But none of us was so interested. The thought would never cross our minds that this was anything but a purely formal, common-sense precaution. Especially at the start of a campaign there can be no certainty how any given individual will react to responsibility and precautions must of necessity be taken to guard against failure, however remote that may seem. In a word, this precaution is purely negative. Its existence is well known to both parties to the contract, and it detracts in no way from, in fact taken in the right sense it adds to, the spirit of open frankness that must prevail. To my mind there can be little doubt that the insertion of this particular phrase in orders of the nature described is political in origin. Our Ministers are responsible to the electorate for the fate of our Armed Forces, and it is little to be wondered at therefore that they do something to palliate their responsibility and farm out at least some of the burden. From this point onward, responsibility rests with the commander and in my view there is no unfairness in this. It is all part of the game as played by the British. And there is nothing new in it either. So far back as January, 1801, Abercrombie, the General, wrote to Dundas, the Minister, that: "There are risks in a British warfare unknown in any other service." This statement has not grown less true with the passage of the years.

To end this parenthetical passage I must record one more adventure that fell to my lot at this time, in 1942, and which had great bearing on all that followed. I have spoken of the

orders issued to me by the War Office placing me under General Eisenhower's command. It was in the natural course of events that I should next receive detailed orders from General Eisenhower himself as to the articulation of 125 Force—that is the Northern Task Force—in the general set-up of the whole plan for operation "TORCH," the invasion of North Africa. Sure enough, I received a weighty document from General Eisenhower's Headquarters which I read and re-read and studied until it dawned upon me that I did not understand one single word of it. Here was a vast assemblage of words each of which was undoubtedly English, but which in conjunction conveyed to me not one single thing, and I was eventually forced to call for skilled interpretation to have the order put out of the American military language into British military language. And this taught me a great lesson which must be fully understood by all of us, the British, which is that American English and British English are two quite different languages. I think it was Bernard Shaw who coined the crack that the British and the Americans are divided by a common language. But this is more than a crack, it is apt to be very true. The counterpart to this Shavian witticism heard on the other side of the Atlantic is of course that America is now the only place where English is spoken. But however it may be, it must never be forgotten that in spite of common ancestry and all sorts of other links, the world has developed to a point at which two different languages are both spoken and written in Britain and the United States. The youth of Britain, having been subjected now for a generation to oral treatment by the sound tracks of Hollywood, are many of them under the impression that they speak and understand the American language. This is only an impression. For the sake of the future of mankind, this question of language is deserving of deep study. To me, at any rate, the receipt of my first written order in American taught me a lesson that I shall never forget. We must strive to overcome our rather snobbish attitude towards those who, often unwittingly, interlard their conversation and correspondence with what we are apt to categorise contemptuously as Americanisms. There was a time when it was quite the thing to fire off the odd phrase of Latin or of Greek or even of French or German in order to create, perhaps without justification,

an impression of erudition. Why in common-sense should the production of an appropriate American phrase be regarded otherwise? After all it is comparatively few of the British that are able fluently to speak or write English. And though I says it, as possibly shouldn't, I have considerably more than a suspicion that difficulty was suffered by the Americans with our British English slightly more than somewhat.

To return to our main theme, I have told something of how, at the moment when I was setting out to reconstitute the First Corps, I was deprived of command of that formation and appointed as Chief of Staff to a non-existent Supreme Commander. The proposed reconstitution of First Corps was not without its bearing on the main issue. The project put forward was that my First Corps should on this, its second, reformation immediately begin to train for the part of spearhead for the eventual landings on the North-west coast of Europe. There was poetry in this. Who better suited to lead this enterprise than the First British Corps, not only by virtue of its lowest number but also by virtue of the fact that it proudly wore as its distinctive shoulder flash the symbol of a spearhead. But already in the preliminary stages I had begun to press my higher authorities to acknowledge that the time had come to be more specific in their directions. For many months past that powerhouse, Combined Operations Headquarters, under the dynamic leadership of Lord Louis Mountbatten had been experimenting in all kinds of directions on the problem of opposed landings in general. But Combined Operations Headquarters had of necessity to consider the evolution of technique for landing on any kind of beach under any conditions anywhere in the world. One important fact they had already deduced long since was that hardly any two beaches are precisely alike, just as no two military situations are ever exactly alike. For instance, quite a different approach was needed to the problem of landing on a Burmese mangrove swamp after a long sea voyage from the method required for landing at the foot of a European cliff. It seemed to me that before experiment and training could be carried much further forward with real profit, it was essential to narrow down the various possibilities with which one might be confronted on some future D-Day. In fact it was necessary almost at once to select the

precise area of operations and so to deduce the exact shape of things to come. Unbeknown to me, of course, very much the same line of argument was being followed almost at the same time at Casablanca.

Pursuant to order, I dispatched my First Corps Headquarters to Scotland to take possession of the premises that I had already found for myself during my visit to the troops of 125 Force in January of 1943. I had chosen headquarters at Skelmorlie, hard by Largs, where Lord Louis Mountbatten had the headquarters of his Scottish organisation which spread far up and down the west coast of Scotland. For myself, I stayed in the South, partly to secure as much definition as possible of the role of First Corps and partly to visit the Combined Operations Training Establishment at Appledore in North Devon, round about the combined estuary of the Taw and Torridge which, unfortunately for the local inhabitants and for its many golfing and salmon fishing fans and other wild fowl, possessed so many of the attributes of some of our possible objectives on the mainland of Europe. I never arrived at Skelmorlie, for I was summoned back from Devonshire to London to receive the news of my fate, and immediately from that point began my life of deception that was to be continued for so many months.

The first problem was to deceive my own Corps Staff and such as remained of my First Corps troops as to what I was at and as to precisely why I was about to desert them. This was comparatively easy, they being in Scotland and I being in London, and, I, moreover, being still far from clear as to precisely how things were to shape themselves. Many and big ideas seemed to be adrift in the atmosphere, so big and so many that it was difficult to know who was to start to do what.

In practice, I reported myself at the offices of the War Cabinet to another old friend, General Sir Hastings Ismay, Deputy Secretary to the War Cabinet and Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister. In his office there had somehow coincided the minutes of the Casablanca meetings, and my somewhat lesser observations on the practical problems connected with a North-west European campaign. There was also of course the mountain of paper that had accumulated over the years on the same subject topped off by the work of a body known as the Combined Commanders who had for some months past been allotted the task

of thinking up projects for a cross-Channel assault. I was made free of this vast bibliography and invited to produce for the British Chiefs of Staff my idea for a plan of what should be done next. The request to me was rounded off with the typical phrase: "No hurry, old boy, to-morrow will do." And to my own great surprise I actually did produce something by to-morrow. But I didn't think much of it when it was done, nor did the Chiefs of Staff, so I was given a second chance.

Be it understood that this which I was aiming to produce dealt with the affair only at the highest level. There was no question, for instance, of getting down to anything in the nature of tactics or even of strategy. The first thing to be done was to lay the foundations of an organisation which, while fitting in smoothly with the existing chain of command and control, should at the same time possess that degree of independent command over the striking force, without which no campaign could be fought. Right from the start I urged the vital necessity as a very first step of the appointment forthwith of the commander himself, but I recommended that—if such a step were in reality utterly impossible—then the least that could be done was to appoint a Chief of Staff, on the American model, who should in fact be endowed with many if not all of the powers of the commander-to-be. I recommended that this Chief of Staff should be equipped with a suitably articulated but small body of subordinates to be drawn from all three fighting services of both the United States and Britain, and I made so bold as to submit a first tentative organisational diagram.

My second shot, following, as it did, the theory evolved at Casablanca, received modified approval and became at any rate a point of departure from which all the rest followed, though there was continued argument as to the exact point at which the proposed Chief of Staff should fit in to the existing hierarchy. It was evident from the start that he must locate himself in or near London rather than in Washington, as close as possible, that is, to the start line, the South Coast of England. The question was therefore, should the Chief of Staff be the subordinate of the British Chiefs of Staff or of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Geographical considerations seemed to demand the former, whereas there were many obvious arguments in favour of the latter. As is almost invariably the case, a compromise

was eventually reached whereby the Chief of Staff, while being answerable to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, should communicate with them through the British Chiefs of Staff.

This in turn gave rise to the question of selection of the individual for the appointment of Chief of Staff, and for some while it seemed probable that whereas I might be considered suited for the appointment, should it be subordinated to the British Chiefs, it might be desirable to pick some more senior and experienced officer in the other eventuality. At this time there was of course no question but that the Chief of Staff should be British since it had been clearly determined at Casablanca that the ultimate commander was to be British, and this view held the field for quite some weeks after its formulation.

Two major points I had striven to make with the British Chiefs of Staff, who were good enough to accept them in substance. First, I had pleaded for rather closer conjunction, than had come to be the mode, between planning and execution, in this particular instance. I will deal later with the whole question of the institution of the military trade of Planner, but at this time in March, 1943, the custom had grown up for Planners to be detailed to plan, so to speak, *in vacuo*, their completed work being then subjected to various higher bodies and subsequently to the individuals appointed to take command of the operation in prospect. As was naturally the case each such revision was liable to call for variation or amendment of the plan put forward, in many instances necessitating cancellation or re-execution of work already put in by troops on the ground. One of the few things already clear about the cross-Channel invasion was the target date of early 1944 which, in my view, gave little enough time for all that had to be done. I therefore asked that right from the start it should be clearly fixed in the minds of all concerned that what was to be produced was not merely a plan on paper but that, in fact, the operation itself should as far as possible be deemed to have started from this time.

The second point that I thought fit to emphasise was the necessity for complete British/American amalgamation of staff, effort, troops and everything else from the very beginning. Having been fortunate enough to have seen General Eisenhower's

integrated Anglo-American Headquarters in action, I was able at once to perceive that nothing like the same degree of integration existed in England as between the British military authorities in London and the American command of their European Theatre of Operations. Such of course could never be the case in detail, there being no direct comparison between the work of a combined command conducting active operations in the field against the enemy and the type of relationship one might expect between the War Office and "ETOUSA." It is difficult to define accurately one's sensations, but my impressions held at this time of a certain mutual lack of sympathy were confirmed later when, on various occasions, I was privileged to attend the British Chiefs of Staff meetings in company with General Frank Andrews, United States Army, and after his most untimely loss with his successor, General Jacob L. Devers, United States Army.

However, the point I made was that it was utterly essential that United States' interests should be fully represented from the start in the organisation to be set up by the Chief of Staff on behalf of the Supreme Commander, the clinching argument being that on the long term the issue would rest with the United Nations' strategic reserve in the West which was of course the main body of the American Army. I estimated at the time that our armies on the Western Front would eventually amount to something of the order of 100 Divisions of which some 70-80 would be American. In many quarters, I may say, this prophecy was greeted with considerable derision, but to me it seemed for once a comparatively straightforward sum of which the main factor was arrived at by the simple expedient of asking the Americans how many Divisions they proposed to form. The answer was one hundred. Out of this, 25 Divisions seemed enough to allow them for the Pacific War, over and above the Marines. I knew roughly how many the British were likely to have available, and added two or three for luck to make it a round figure. As things turned out, of course, it wasn't a bad guess, but there were many who prophesied that if it ever were allowed to come to a question of the big battalions then inevitably the war would degenerate into the old-fashioned matter of push of pike, and there we should be back to 1914-1918 and all that.

Discussion and argument went backwards and forwards on these various topics during the latter half of March, and as the position gradually clarified attention was given to setting down on paper a directive that should be formally issued to the Chief of Staff to the Supreme Commander (designate) when he should be officially appointed.

My personal position at this time was an odd one. It was analogous in many ways to that said to have been adopted by Mohammed's coffin, half way between heaven and earth. In such a position of course it is always open to the individual to take one of two courses. It is possible to do nothing whatever or it is possible to indulge in intense activity guided by common-sense and one's personal predilections. I elected to do the latter with the help of my entire staff which consisted exclusively of Bobbie, my Aide-de-Camp ; my motor-driver, Corporal Bainbridge, whom together with his car I had frankly stolen from First Corps Headquarters ; and two batmen. The business premises of the firm consisted of a room we had found unoccupied in Norfolk House, and I regarded it as an omen that this was the room in which I had first met Ike Eisenhower. The equipment consisted of a couple of desks and chairs we found in the room, and we were lucky enough also to find a few sheets of paper and a pencil that someone had dropped on the floor. Having established squatters' rights, we made our peace with the office keeper and other similar functionaries, and made so bold as to borrow clerical help when needed from various of the offices representative of a variety of organisations that we found in the building. At night Bobbie retired to his flat, which became during the rest of the year an important centre of activity in connection with the preparation of our plans, I retired to my apartment in the Mount Royal Hotel and the remainder of the staff disappeared to one military establishment or another and appeared again in the morning.

As the days went by it became more and more plainly indicated that the lot was to fall upon me for this great task, and I spent many of my few spare moments reflecting on certain aspects of what lay ahead. By now I had got over the first shock which had been pretty severe on the occasion reported in the opening paragraph of this chapter. Then, so soon as I could emerge from Combined Operations Headquarters, I had

made for the nearest open space, the Temple Gardens, where I had walked with Bobbie, to regain composure, a process that was completed shortly afterwards at the Bar of the Cavalry Club. The first sensation had been one of intense regret at being once again deprived of command. From 8th August, 1939, until now—apart from four months spent as a Brigadier, General Staff, of the Second Corps—I had served as a commander in the ranks of Brigadier, Major-General and Lieutenant-General. As Brigadier in command of an extemporised Support Group I had served through a month's campaign in France in 1940 with the First Armoured Division. A brief episode, but one in which one gained an infinity of experience every hour. I had formed and commanded the Devon and Cornwall County Division during the Summer of 1941 and then, as I have told elsewhere, commanded the 55th (West Lancashire) Division and subsequently, First Corps. I had not been called upon to command in the higher ranks in action against the enemy, but I had had enough of command to savour its sweetness. Being, moreover, of an idle nature, I did not take too gladly to the idea of getting back from the comparative leisure of the quarter-deck to the ceaseless toil of the engine room. But on the other hand the new prospect appeared even at the outset to have attractions of its own, not the least being that it would be free from precise precedent and, in spite of a lifetime of training along severely orthodox lines, I fear I still cherish a distinct weakness for the unconventional. On balance so far I seemed to be on a good thing.

But on the other hand, even so early as the end of March, a suspicion had begun to cross my mind that a certain number of punches were being pulled on both sides. On the American side I had inclined to take at face value the protestations of enthusiasm for a cross-Channel invasion, since these entirely chimed with my own personal views. Possibly due to the fact that I had spent the whole of the First World War on the Western Front, I had always been a confirmed Westerner. Moreover, it is my reading of the true British character that, in spite of what foreigners may say or think, we usually prefer the direct straightforward line of approach and the shortest line from London to Berlin lies across the Channel. But there was also surely another consideration. As is usual with them,

the Americans, once having decided to go to war, determined to fight a bigger and better war than ever was fought before, and to enable them to do so had endowed themselves with colossal armaments on sea, on land and in the air. But in 1943, it seemed to me to be becoming difficult for them to find a means of employing all the tremendous weapons that they had conjured into being. In spite of the avowed combined determination on our side to annihilate first the Germans and then the Japanese, it was natural that the Americans should throughout, in their heart of hearts, give considerable attention to the Japanese problem. And as the Japanese war developed, over its early months, it became more and more difficult to see how a vast land army was to be employed in it. And the army having been created must employ itself somewhere for fear both of immediate political repercussions and of possible longer term repercussions on the future defence organisation of the United States. Europe provided the only possible stage for a large-sized land war. I was just wondering if this line of thought was not of more importance than would appear from the official points of view hitherto put forward.

On the British side I have written of the state of mind that I sensed in London. I had gathered that the British Chiefs on return from Casablanca were not best pleased at having been made to commit themselves to the cross-Channel adventure more than a year ahead of time. I was beginning to gather also that certain British authorities, at any rate, instinctively recoiled from the whole affair, as well they might, for fear of the butcher's bill. We British already sufficiently handicapped by the loss of almost an entire generation in 1914-1918 had now been at war again for three and a half years, for one of which we had stood out alone against overwhelming odds. We had sustained disaster after disaster, and the skin of our teeth was wearing a bit thin. Small wonder if those who bore the full responsibility were not over-enthusiastic about sticking their necks out further than they had ever stuck them out before.

Then the taunting from the Kremlin was already becoming more than a little annoying. On my various trips round London I was finding it harder and harder to laugh at the voice of certain of the people as recorded in whitewash on many a blank wall adjuring me to "open the Second Front now." I felt it

a pity that open publication was never permitted of the advice of our leading wit, " Let's hear less nonsense from the friends of Joe."

Totting up what I may call the red ink entries, I had already begun to wonder just why it had fallen to my particular lot to have to try to unravel this high-powered tangle, and I must admit that suspicion was born that what I was in for might well be nothing more than a bit of monumental bluff, which having been called, this obscure individual might be sacrificed as the scapegoat without loss of anything to anybody else. It did so happen that at this time I was personally more anonymous than most since, from some motive that I find it now hard to analyse, probably describable as inverted snobbery, I had resented all attempts on the part of the editors of " Who's Who " and similar publications to put out any details about me other than those they were able to glean from sources other than myself. This being so, needless to say, most of what little was recorded about me at that time, in other than confidential official records, was partly out of date and partly quite erroneous. Was this perhaps a factor in the equation?

In any event, my personal sensations, when all was said and done, had little to do with it. One of the maxims that I have always followed during a third of a century of Army service is that when in doubt one should obey orders and yet another twist was added to the possible chain of coincidence, the fact that the official orders appointing me from command of the First Corps to COSSAC reached me on that significant anniversary, the turn of the financial year, 1st April.

But there was one more purification to be gone through before I could begin in earnest to jump the international course. I trust that I may be forgiven for referring thus to an invitation to lunch at Chequers on Sunday, 4th April, 1943. The actuality was of course pure delight, including as it did, not only the meal itself with its brilliant conversation and sparkling wit, but also a rollicking game of Chinese billiards with Winston, Junior, who, at the ripe age of two, seemed already to have mastered much besides the orthodox technique of the game, and a private showing afterwards of the then new film " Desert Victory." This latter the Prime Minister was horrified to hear that I had not seen, and the omission was rectified on the spot in order

that I might be properly seized of the importance of insuring that the invasion army should be trained precisely on the lines followed so successfully by the conquerors of the Afrika Corps. I could not refrain from risking everything by suggesting that warfare in the North African Desert and warfare in Northern Europe, while they undoubtedly had certain resemblances, also presented certain points of difference. While if it was a question of spirit, there was nothing wrong with the spirit of the troops in England. My views luckily gained a modicum of support from others in the company, but the matter was not pressed to a division and, while the projector was being prepared, I was shown the Prime Minister's latest gift, a magnificent illuminated terrestrial globe together with a suitably curved, graduated glass protractor. There was something infinitely inspiring in watching the great man reach up for the special handle he had had fitted at the North Pole so that he might twist and twirl the whole inhabited world as suited the train of thought of the moment. We travelled together swiftly from theatre to theatre of operations, regarded them from every aspect and from every point of the compass, and I can never be sufficiently grateful for the lesson thus taught me which I was able shortly afterwards to put to good effect as will be told in a later chapter.

This was the one and only chance I had of real contact with the great mind. For my part I derived immense inspiration. He was good enough to tell the War Office that " I would do." Do for what? The question persisted.

II

GROUNDWORK IN LONDON AND THE DESIGN FOR PLANNING

THERE has been altogether over-much use of the first person singular in this narrative hitherto, but it is hard to avoid when dealing with the affair up to this point since it is the simple fact that until the beginning of April, 1943, what became later operation "OVERLORD"—namely the great invasion of Europe—consisted almost exclusively of myself. However, from the first week in April onwards things began to change very fast. Be it understood that word received from the War Office and Chequers was by no means the last word for, it had been decided, my masters were to be not the British Authorities but the Combined Chiefs of Staff whose place of business is in Washington D.C., United States of America. To them, therefore, were now referred the proposals evolved in England for the COSSAC set-up, for my directive and finally for my own personal appointment. But I was meanwhile told that it was all over, bar the okaying, so the way was clear for me to go to work in earnest, and confirmation of my appointment reached me on another auspicious date, 13th April, 1943.

The first and most immediate requirement was of course of high ranking personnel for the COSSAC Staff. In drawing up requirements I had decided to pitch the top staff level at the rank of major-general, which decision naturally invited, and received, considerable criticism. But my reason for so doing was eminently arguable, and the point was eventually conceded. The main argument here was British in origin. It was unavoidable that, in the early stages at any rate, much of the work of COSSAC would of necessity have to be done in the closest possible communion with the British War Office. I have already mentioned the necessity for speed in the execution

of our task and, incredible though it may seem to a lot of people, there are ways and means of getting the War Office to function with lightning celerity. The secret of so doing is to make contact with the War Office hierarchy at a sufficiently high level and from experience I estimated the proper level here to be that of the War Office Directors who operate in the grade of major-general. It was therefore conceded that the rank of major-general should be held by the Assistant Chiefs of Staff of COSSAC, to adopt the American phraseology which I hold to be in this, as in many other instances, so much more convenient than the British system of nomenclature. The intention was, and it was in the main carried out, to select carefully the major-generals, Assistant Chiefs of Staff in the various branches, to assign them their particular tasks and then leave them to pick their own next subordinates, and so on, as far as possible. It was obviously not possible to carry this system out completely, but I strongly recommend it as a good one in similar cases where an organisation is to be created from nothing, the principal advantage being that by doing this it is possible as often as not to ensure good team work from the start, since practically any senior officer who knows his business has by the time he reaches higher rank accumulated a following of those who have served him well in the past and will certainly be glad to do his work for him again.

I have mentioned the fact that in my original papers for the British Chiefs of Staff I made so bold as to produce a diagram of organisation, and the drawing of organisational diagrams occupies so much of the time of so many people in so many walks of life that it may be of profit to expand somewhat on the topic in the light of practical experience.

The basic principle to grasp, I think, both in drawing up and putting into operation any organisational diagram is that whereas a bad and theoretically unworkable chart can be made to work in practice by a well selected personnel, it is equally possible for the most polished and stream-lined chart ever drawn up to prove unworkable in practice if it is staffed by the wrong people. A point, however, on which I fear I am unable to be at all didactic is the definition of the precise level at which organisation must give way to personality, and that at which personality must give way to the demands of organisation. There

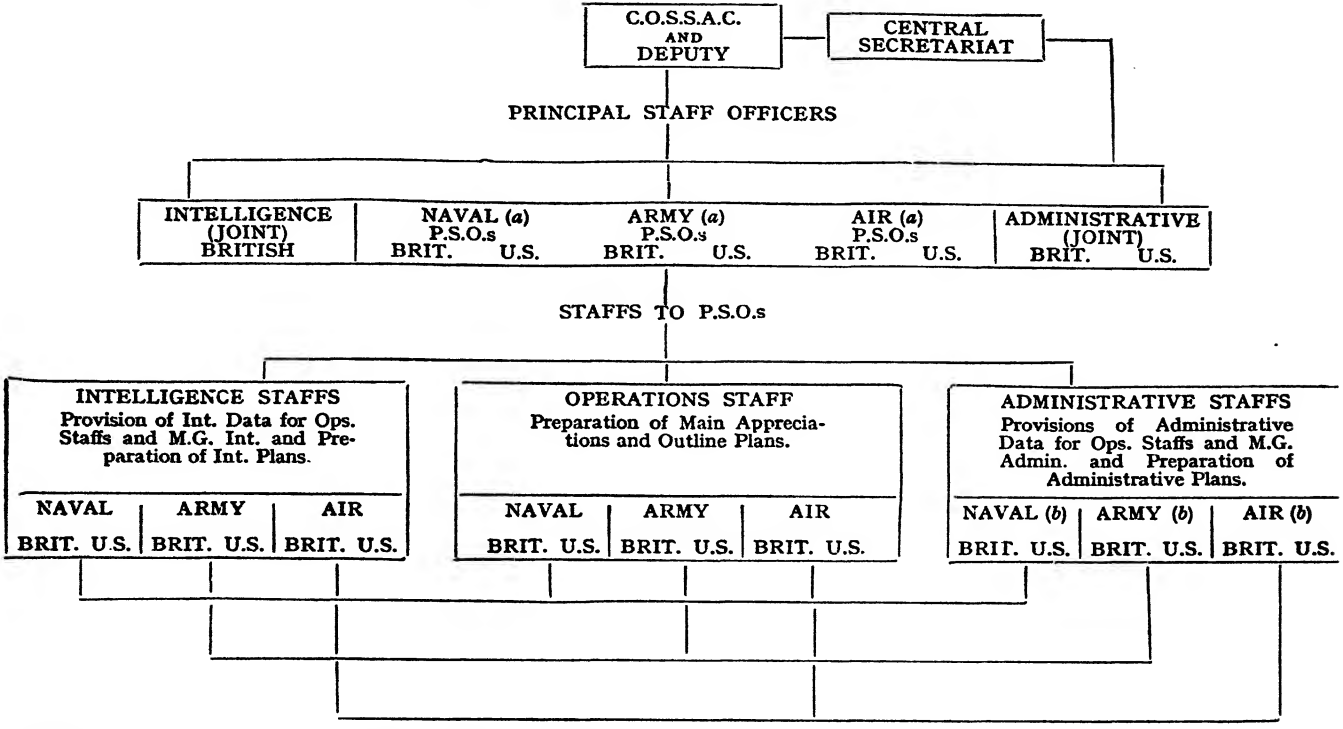
is certainly a plentiful supply of personalities, anyhow in the Western democracies, which take such pride in their individualism, who could never be fitted into any regular organisation and who are at the same time individually of such outstanding value that it is well worth while abandoning all the canons of organisation to retain their services.

This somewhat pompous passage implies that it is not entirely sufficient to draw neat little rectangular boxes on a sheet of paper and then to connect them with black lines, blue lines, green lines, firm lines, dotted lines or even chain dotted lines. Sooner or later a time will come when it must be taken off the paper and turned into flesh and blood on the ground, on the water, in the air or, nowadays most frequently, in the chair. While it is essential to have a chart, the more highly coloured the better, for purposes of academic argument and for bulldozing the personnel supply authorities, it is the chaps, not the charts, that get the job done.

Luck stood me in good stead here again. In 1936-7 I had been fortunate enough to fill an appointment as Second Grade Staff Officer in the Staff Duties Directorate in the War Office charged with the business of helping to select officers for all staff appointments throughout the British Empire. In the course of my duties at this time I had access to the records of every British Army Officer between the ranks of captain and major-general in any way eligible for staff appointment. Though possession of this knowledge has often been the cause of profound embarrassment, here was an occasion where it stood me in very good stead. Partly owing, I think, to the fact that I had once upon a time been in the racket, when it came to a question of creating the British Army portion of the COSSAC staff, the War Office authorities were good enough to give me practically *carte blanche* with the result that the British Army component was able to hit its stride in amazingly quick time.

It will be simplest, I think, if I reproduce here the original organisational diagram with which we set out, from which it will probably become apparent that we did not at the beginning immediately make for complete integration in all branches. The only branches that were able straightway to adopt their final form, that varied only in detail, were those dealing with Intelligence and Administration, and this was for two different reasons.

ORGANISATIONAL DIAGRAM I.



NOTES.—(*a*) Ops. P.S.O.s are responsible for representing Force Commanders' views to C.O.S.S.A.C.

(*b*) Heads of Adm. Staffs are responsible, through their respective P.S.O.s or Maj.-Gen. Adm., as appropriate, for incorporating the Force Commanders' broad adm. requirements in the adm. plans submitted to C.O.S.S.A.C. for approval.

As regards Intelligence, there was at that time no doubt in anybody's mind that British developments were far ahead of American developments. Once again it must be recalled that at this time the British had already been at war three and a half years, and had therefore had time to perfect their intelligence network throughout the world. They were well served everywhere by a variety of agencies and were already in possession of a stupendous quantity of information on every conceivable topic. The United States, on the other hand, had had little more than a year of war so far and, moreover, I understand that their neglect of military intelligence in peace-time had been even more glaring than our own, which is to say a good deal. The Americans were therefore happy to concede the direction of the intelligence set-up of COSSAC to the British. On the administrative side much had been learned already from the campaigns in North Africa, as well as from study, the principal lesson being that the two systems of administration (I use the word here in its British sense) differed so widely that there was little or nothing to be gained in even attempting amalgamation. On the other hand there was undoubtedly every advantage in doing everything possible to ensure that the two systems were kept severely apart. This principle was adopted although it was possible in so doing to spare time to deplore the necessity for its adoption.

There are plenty of both men and women in Britain who will remember how in 1940 the Americans came to our rescue when we were catastrophically short of small arms and sent us many thousands of weapons that they could in reality—as it came about—ill afford to spare, together with their ammunition. There will still be lively recollections of the exasperating jugglery that went on in consequence of the slight variation of calibre of .003 inch as between American small arms and ours. It needs little effort of imagination to picture what would have been entailed had any attempt been made to intermingle the complete equipment of whole armies, so we didn't even try it.

Of course there are many and cogent reasons why certain countries should make a particular point of differing from their neighbours in almost every respect, but if in future we and the Americans cannot trust each other to a rather greater extent

than we did before this last war, anyhow in matters such as those of which I write, there seems precious little point in struggling on.

Though the recruitment of the British Army portion of the COSSAC staff was, as has been said, done with comparative ease and speed, the same could not be said of the other components, either British or American. However, on the American side the first step taken was of such outstanding importance as to compensate for the subsequent delays in providing the main body of the American component. This first great step was the appointment as my deputy of Brigadier-General Ray W. Barker from the Headquarters of the European Theatre of Operations, United States Army, where for the past year he had been working in close conjunction with the British Combined Commanders on all the various projects in connection with the cross-Channel operation. Ray Barker was thus able to gallop straight on without missing a beat. He had already met most of the personalities connected with our activities, and his information was up to the moment. He was fully acquainted with all the complicated ins and outs of the Whitehall organisation, and moreover had no illusions whatever as to the difficulties that beset us.

In my view no better choice than this could possibly have been made. In the light of after events and developments, it is hard now to realise the depth of the ignorance that existed among British soldiers concerning the United States Army and all its works, and vice versa, before 1939. There can hardly have been a single case of a United States Army officer, other than the official attachés, paying more than a formal courtesy visit to any of our military units or establishments in Europe. A certain amount of polo was played, but that seems to have been the extent of the liaison that existed between the two forces. No doubt British military history, was studied in the States, and the history of the American Civil War was certainly known to many British officers, even better than to most United States' officers, but Ray Barker, possibly almost alone of his confreres, had all his life spent much of his leave in England and so had come to possess an up-to-date knowledge of the British and their way of life and habit of thought.

But being at heart 100 per cent. American, Ray Barker never

lost the ability to criticise everything British. His British sympathies, however, enabled him to criticise almost invariably constructively, an ability which is indeed uncommon. All in all, therefore, Ray Barker was an outstanding specimen of that rare species, the right man in the right place.

The cause of delay in providing the bulk of the American Army staff was not far to seek. It was due to no lack of goodwill or good intention but was, I am certain, entirely due to shortage of supply of suitably qualified officers. It was not generally realised at the time that the United States Army had, in the winter of 1942-43, only just got going on its immense expansion programme. We British thought we knew something about the difficulties of expansion, but I believe that our overall problem in this connection was child's play compared with theirs. It was about this time that the monthly intake into the United States Army was equal to the total pre-war strength of that Army, and it can easily be seen that by the time this had been going on for a very few months, high grade senior staff officers were, to put it mildly, in short supply. But with the Americans as with the British, it seems that the moment has the knack of producing the man, and the few American Army officers that were with us during the first few weeks did each the work of ten men, willingly and cheerfully, until help at last arrived.

At the start and for a long while to come difficulty was most acute with regard to Naval and Air Staffs. Sailors are said not to care, and it certainly seemed as though they didn't care in the least for COSSAC. It is only very recently that, what one may term for the sake of euphemism a dislike of staffs, has been more or less overcome in the Army. Up to the start of this last war, at any rate, sailors seemed to be lagging behind soldiers in this respect. In any case, the attitude of the Navy towards staffs is understandable. Living accommodation in capital ships must of necessity be limited, and it is asking a bit much that any portion of this limited accommodation should be given over to those who take no direct part in fighting the ships. The place for a sailor is the sea and, anyway, Nelson won the Battle of Trafalgar without a staff. But in actual fact the problem of providing Naval Staff was once again mainly a question of shortage of supply. The British Navy had

undergone huge expansion and had suffered not inconsiderable casualties while the United States Navy was only just beginning to recover from the misfortune of Pearl Harbour and to raise sufficient steam to blast the Jap out of the Pacific. So for the first few weeks, COSSAC's Naval component was very much of a makeshift. We had with us a real live American sailor on full time, but on the British side we had to accept a part-time arrangement whereby the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth and his staff spared what time they could from their onerous and exacting duties of active command in the mid-section of the English Channel. Actually this was nothing like so disadvantageous as it may sound, for in the Portsmouth Command was located the embryo of the one Naval Assault Force that the Chief of Combined Operations had been able to withhold from the Mediterranean for, as it were, breeding purposes. The whole arrangement, therefore, represented much more than the best of a bad job.

It was here for the first time that awkwardness might have arisen in connection with the problem of relative seniority. Admiral Sir Charles Little, then commanding at Portsmouth, was, of course, considerably senior to any member serving or likely to serve on the COSSAC Staff. But in the event, the difficulty was far more apparent than real. In fact it was no difficulty at all, thanks to the infinite understanding and forbearance displayed by the Admiral. There were times, it must be confessed, when some of us at COSSAC were inclined to think hardly of the Naval authorities for what seemed like unreasonable deliberation both in the planning and in preparation. But for some centuries past the Navy has been in the habit of delivering the goods, and had we had more time for contemplation we should probably have realised that there was little likelihood of this particular operation providing an exception to the well-proved general rule.

It was some months before COSSAC acquired an Admiral of its own. Meanwhile, under the ægis of the Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, various more junior officers represented him at COSSAC Headquarters for varying lengths of time. The shortest commission was that of Admiral Philip Vian whose appointment seemed singularly appropriate in view of his famous exploits in command of H.M.S. *Cossack*. Though his arrival

caused us all tremendous uplift, it seemed doubtful from the start whether we should be fortunate enough to have him ashore with us for long. I have rarely seen gloomy foreboding so deeply inscribed on any sailor's face as on that of Philip Vian when he was convoyed to the Headquarters by the Commander-in-Chief to make our acquaintance. Nor was ever seen such a look of horror as he bore on leaving the Headquarters shortly afterwards, having verified that he was in for a long trick ashore. But his luck was in and ours was out within forty-eight hours, when an unfortunate air tragedy took him afloat again to replace the casualty caused.

The sailor whose individual contribution at this period to the ultimate victory was probably greater than any other was Commodore John Hughes-Hallet who doubled the parts of Commander of Naval Assault Force J, that spoken of as remaining uncommitted in the Mediterranean with headquarters at the Royal Yacht Squadron at Cowes, Isle of Wight, and special representative at COSSAC of the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth. He already had to his credit many remarkable achievements both afloat and ashore, including both formal and informal participation in the Dieppe raid and outstanding cycling achievements on the London to Portsmouth Road. His terrific drive and forcefulness overcame all difficulties connected with lack of staff and otherwise. It was he who was the real progenitor of the fabulous enterprise known as "MULBERRY," as will be told later. At the end of July came to us Rear-Admiral George Creasy, R.N., to be yet another instance of the very right man in the right place. His breadth of vision extended well beyond the beach, and his immense energy and iron determination were nicely concealed beneath a wealth of nautical "patati and patata" that won all hearts.

The picture on the air side was much the same as that on the Naval side. Parallel to the appointment of the Naval Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, to be responsible for Naval planning and preparation, there was detailed the Air Officer Commander-in-Chief, Fighter Command, to be in charge of planning and preparation on the air side. This was Air Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory who later, in the hour of triumph, was so tragically lost, with his wife, in flight to the East to take over command of British air operations against the Japanese.

But in the case of the Air even more difficulty was encountered than in the case of the Navy on the score of clashes of personality and inter-service and international rivalries. This is not the place in which to expand upon the domestic differences of the Royal Air Force. Suffice it to say that from the point of view of the layman, one of the most remarkable phenomena of the war was that there were so few displays of temperament in a service that lives and dies at speeds measured in hundreds of miles to the hour. But there was the added difficulty that at this period, in early 1943, what was in reality a healthy rivalry between the Royal Air Force and the American Army Air Corps was in an early state of development in which it looked to an outsider more like a dog fight.

In the first place, it is necessary to bear in mind that the American Army Air Corps was appearing in the Big League for the first time in this last war. Though many U.S. citizens fought with great distinction in the air during the First World War, the comparatively short period that elapsed between the entry of the U.S.A. into the conflict and the Armistice of 1918 was too brief to allow of the development of the Corps as a Corps to any notable extent. It had, moreover, experienced all kinds of adventures during the inter-war years such that the Corps entered the Second World War very much on its mettle. One can well imagine something of the circumstances attending the first arrival of the Americans to support and assist the Royal Air Force. The British airmen had already to their credit the greatest victory in the history of air warfare so far, the Battle of Britain, but they were still engaged in a protracted life and death struggle with the Luftwaffe. They could not afford for a second to take their eye off the ball, and one has a vision of a figure in blue with eyes glued to the sights, spitting out disjointed words of welcome, advice and encouragement to the American new-comer, seen out of the corner of the eye to be clothed in brown.

I have referred above to the American power of constructive criticism, and it seemed that there were three big points about the Royal Air Force that they could not quite swallow as dished up. The first was the vexed question of daylight bombing with heavy bombers. The Royal Air Force had of course long since abandoned thought of any such thing and had gone flat out

for the development of Air Marshal Bert Harris and his Night Bomber Command.

The second indigestible course consisted of the short-range fighter theory. Viewed from the point of view of the Royal Air Force, I have no doubt that there was no profit in arguing as to whether or not the Spitfire type was indeed the last word in fighters. By early 1943, British fighter production must have been indissolubly wedded to the production of this basic type, one of the attributes of which is its short range. This fact alone had of course inevitably coloured the whole of British thought on the subject, amongst other things, of cross-Channel operations. How many of us remember those rather disheartening maps of the Channel at which we used to stare, superscribed with circles of distressingly small radius centred upon the fighter fields in the South of England. The Americans were of course able to think these questions through unhampered by the various millstones from which the Royal Air Force could not shake themselves free.

And, thirdly, arising from the other two considerations, there was the suspicion that Fighter Command, R.A.F., in spite of its romantic title, was in essence nothing more nor less than a defensive organisation. The question therefore immediately arose, was it indeed the best foundation on which to build the air component of any future offensive operation and, to get right down to it, was the commander of such an outfit, however much he and his troops had distinguished themselves in the defensive role, the man above all others to lead the attack.

As regards this last, the Americans were, I thought, inclined to be a trifle unreasonable. However right they may have been on the broad lines of the theory, there was the undeniable fact that, already by 1943, Fighter Command, R.A.F., while holding the enemy off with one hand was with the other already striking deep into Europe with its intruders. And one had only to meet and to speak for a very short time with Trafford Leigh-Mallory to realise that his character could hardly be described as dominantly defensive.

The upshot of all this was that there was long delay in producing an integrated Air Staff to work intimately with COSSAC. The Bomber Barons remained throughout obstinately aloof, for which attitude they had ample justification in that their

mandate from the Combined Chiefs of Staff to execute operation "POINTBLANK," which was the name given to the all-out bombing of Germany, clearly took precedence over any other directives issued to anybody else. It was, I think, only after battle was joined that the American Army Air Corps became really reconciled to the general scheme of air operations for which the foundations were originally laid by COSSAC. But even then, as I believe history will relate, the stupendous results achieved by the Air as a whole were achieved, largely, in spite of rather than because of any organisation that was thought up by the organisers. It will, I think, be some considerable time before anybody at all will be able to set down in the form of an organisational diagram the channels through which General Eisenhower's orders reached all of his aircraft.

Far be it from me to imply that obstacles and difficulties were encountered only as regards COSSAC's Naval and Air components, whereas with the Armies of both the United States and Britain everything was sweetness and light. Difficulties minor and major, were encountered on every hand at every turn by reason of the simple fact that we were dealing with human material. There is hardly any form of human association in which friction does not develop sooner or later to a greater or less degree. Quarrels develop in the best regulated of families from the nursery onward; even, it is rumoured, the close relationship between husband and wife is on occasion inclined to become inharmonious. The COSSAC Staff, containing as it did men and women of six fighting services of two different nations, was bound of its nature to contain all the elements of discord. What is remarkable is not that discord existed, but that it was not merely suppressed but was indeed woven into the great symphony to the strains of which the victorious armies surged across the Continent of Europe. Who that has listened to the compositions of the more modern of musicians can for a moment contend that old-fashioned ideas of harmony are indispensable to the construction of an allegedly musical masterwork.

There were incessant clashes of personality and these, moreover, occurred not only between nation and nation or between service and service. It is no use denying the fact that there are Americans that cannot take British just as there are British

that cannot take Americans. But there are equally differences between individual British and between individual Americans. There were cases on the COSSAC Staff of British staff officers who inspired the admiration and affection of their American colleagues, but who lacked the power to collaborate with their own British comrades, and vice versa. I have mentioned the absolute necessity for speed in the elaboration of our plans. There was little time for argument or for the negotiation of personal reconciliations. It was necessary to resort to surgery rather than to medicine.

What was probably the most acute internal conflict was that which took place between the so-called movement staffs of the Navy and Army branches of COSSAC. The duties of these two sub-divisions of a combined staff are of course bound of their very nature to overlap, and it is almost inevitable that friction should be set up. Over long years the general line of demarcation between Army and Navy has been set as High Water Mark at Ordinary Spring Tides. But this last war has played ducks and drakes with many land and sea marks, amongst them "HWMOST." Largely owing to the great work of the Combined Operations staffs, it no longer rouses comment to find soldiers attired in lammies manning ships at sea or sailors dressed in khaki battledress driving trucks in the heart of a continent. But this didn't come about overnight. When, as was the case with the COSSAC Staff, the whole affair virtually hinged upon rates of movement of men, vehicles and material from shore to sea and from sea to shore again, there was present every sort of opportunity, not only for inter-service rivalry but for inter-service jealousy and ultimately inter-service conflict. At one moment a point was reached at which the soldier glared at the sailor saying, "This much has got to be done at this place in this time," or words to that effect. The sailor replied with equal or greater emphasis, "This cannot be done," or its verbal equivalent. For a few hours it seemed as though unbreakable deadlock was reached. Figures, which as the axiom says cannot lie (though as our American staff repeatedly pointed out, liars can figure), were overhauled and recalculated *ad nauseam* with ever the same result. "One shall have them," said the Army. "They shall not pass," said the Navy. And relief came in what one would like to say was the typical COSSAC way. One

of the soldier boys, though dead beat to the point of exasperation with hours and days of argument called up his last reserves of humour, sat up all one night and produced a notable document all by himself. This took the form of a complete plan down to the last detail of an imaginary operation which the author christened " OVERBOARD." Whereas our real project for the great invasion, operation " OVERLORD," was classified in the terminology of the time as American Secret, British Most Secret, the plan for operation " OVERBOARD " bore the proud heading, American Stupid, British Most Stupid. There followed an extremely witty skit on the whole of our activities, and the subsequent laughter completely cleared the air and brought about the reconciliation so earnestly sought after.

But even this little outburst of humour had its serious side and, in fact, brought us within an ace of disaster. Our security experts were quick to see that in spite of its lightness of touch and apparently nonsensical content, the plan set forth for this hypothetical operation " OVERBOARD " bore of necessity many marked resemblances to the original, the aping of which was the secret of its fun. We had, therefore, to ensure as far as we could that distribution of the plan for operation " OVERBOARD " was severely restricted. Apart from personal complimentary copies sent to the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, the Chief of Combined Operations and to the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, it was enacted that the whole affair should be kept strictly within the walls of Norfolk House. This unfortunately was not done, and a copy somehow made its way across the Atlantic. It certainly was tough that such a gem should be born to waste its sweetness on the confined spaces of COSSAC Headquarters, as the poet might have said but didn't quite. Anyway, if one had not had much experience of the necessity for absolute security, Washington D.C. was a whale of a way from Berlin, and what could it really matter?

But our luck held. Some weeks went by and the whole episode had been overlaid in the mind by many more pressing events before I received a note from General Gordon Macready of the British Army Staff in Washington in which he told me he had just been visited by a representative of *The Pointer*, the weekly publication by the Corps of Cadets, West Point, who considered himself fortunate to have obtained a copy of the

paper produced in London entitled "Plan for Operation 'OVERBOARD'." This seemed eminently worthy of publication even in this august periodical but, seeing as the material was produced in England, it was thought only right that before publication, official sanction should be sought from the British authorities. Without knowing too much of what was afoot at the time in England, these same British authorities were quick to perceive a distinct aroma of rat. Hence the friendly note to me and thus it was, not only that *The Pointer* was deprived of a notable contribution but what might have proved a serious leak of priceless information was effectively stopped.

But in truth, the universal solvent of most of our ills was the spirit that inspired every individual officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer, man and woman that reported for duty on the COSSAC Staff. Thanks to the luck that attended the formation of the original small nucleus, a leaven was created that conditioned the whole lump. The youthful enthusiasm of the Americans struck sparks, even in the unemotional British, from that unconquerable determination, the possession of which the British would die rather than admit. Deep though in many instances it had been overlaid by three and a half years of defeat and frustration, it was still there and still active. There was never for a moment, I believe, any thought in anyone's mind that we were planning for anything but victory.

At this stage reference is made chiefly to the formation of the principal component parts of the COSSAC Staff, the staff proper or "G's." In an attempt to avoid undue confusion of the narrative, something will be told later of some of the special staffs found necessary for the proper performance of our task which was, in its sum, of an intricacy possibly without precedent. Before we were through, we included in our ranks ambassadors, microfilm operators, bankers, agriculturists, newspapermen, lawyers, foresters and a host of others besides, each the master of some technique that was needed to help get us where we wanted to go.

But it was not only a matter of accumulating personnel. There was the almost equally involved affair of finding accommodation for the Staff, not only in its original reasonably small numbers, but looking ahead to the time, which was contemplated from the very start, when COSSAC should develop into

the Supreme Headquarters that should ultimately conduct the operation now in early 1943 to be not only planned but prepared. It was ordained that COSSAC should be born in Norfolk House, St. James's Square, a decision to which I immediately lodged objection. This objection was made almost exclusively on psychological grounds. Already, for a matter of some months past, Norfolk House had given office space to a succession of teams of planners who, with the dazzling exception of operation "TORCH" had in the main produced little but argument and paper. Notably, Norfolk House had been the centre of activity of the Combined Commanders who for reasons that were not far to seek had schemed in an atmosphere of frustration bordering at times, if reports were to be believed, on acrimony. One way and another, Norfolk House had acquired a reputation as a home of lost causes, and it had become sufficient for an individual to say that he was working in Norfolk House to cause a perceptible drop in the temperature surrounding any given conversation. Since purely negative objection is fruitless, I explored alternative possibilities with no success, even going to the extreme of suggesting that Norfolk House should be re-christened temporarily as Suffolk House, or something of the sort. This last suggestion, savouring as it did from the historical point of view, of the blasphemous, needless to say was short-lived. So Norfolk House it had to be, and once the decision was irrevocably taken it was of course possible to derive considerable profit even from the apparently unfavourable background mentioned. It might be as well to have our enterprise recorded in the public mind as just another of those Norfolk House projects, unworthy of more than a modicum of pitying scorn. I must admit that for my part it gave not a little satisfaction to conduct conferences in the very room where I could envisage at one time the Directors of Lloyds Bank in solemn conclave called to consider the matter of my own egregious overdraft. No instance was reported of an American Officer objecting to an assignment to work on the site of the birthplace of King George III.

The matter of office accommodation thus temporarily adjusted, there were other types of accommodation to be considered. In an organisation such as we were setting out to bring into being, there was even more importance than usual in the factor of

esprit de corps and this indispensable phenomenon it must be difficult enough to create at any time in London, even in an office that has more prospect of permanence than had we. Thought therefore ran on the lines of establishing some hostel where the COSSAC personnel could live and could associate in their off duty moments. But already London was hard put to it to accommodate its vast horde of official visitors on top of the high proportion of its normal population that at this time either remained unevacuated or had returned and was returning from evacuation. All available hotel accommodation was already taken up, principally by the American forces, and it was unlikely that they would make way for us seeing that what of them had so far arrived was merely the vanguard of the main bodies to come.

The hostel idea was therefore given up at an early date, and instead the possibility was explored of finding some sort of Mess or Club where it would be possible to carry forward the good work in the traditional British attitude with one foot slightly raised upon a brass rail. Accordingly, negotiations were tentatively opened with the Marlborough Club, most conveniently situated in Pall Mall, and a tentative figure of cost was arrived at for making use temporarily of these august premises, as part of the COSSAC organisation. As should invariably be the case in projects of this sort, an alternative was examined of creating some kind of eating and drinking installation actually in Norfolk House itself, and this too was roughly costed, happily at a much lower figure.

At this point we descended on the War Office, as a matter of habit, to try to obtain the necessary sanction for the expenditure. I say as a matter of habit because it took a little time to realise that the hermaphroditic nature of COSSAC gave us the right of access equally to all of the Service Ministries. This ability stood us in good stead at a later date on more than one occasion, notably when it became a matter of acquiring sporting rights in various training areas round the Coast.

In spite of the fact that millions were being poured out like water daily throughout the world for the prosecution of the war, the proposition that a very few thousands should be devoted to the temporary acquisition of the Marlborough Club caused the Army financial authorities to faint clean away,

whereupon Case B was immediately put into operation. As they came to, it was explained to them that they had not heard correctly what we said, which was that all we really wanted was a few hundreds for necessary repairs and improvements to the top floor of Norfolk House. The relief thus caused brought about a rapid recovery of normal temperature and blood pressure and the comparatively trifling demand was immediately approved, since it seemed that with any luck, the Office of Works might be stuck with the cost.

There was then the not by any means simple question of actually getting the necessary work done in Norfolk House and of acquiring equipment and staff. None of these things under 1943 conditions was easy. But luck once more held. A high official of the Office of Works, a department not usually notable for its charitable outlook, having been suitably conditioned, was apprised of our proposition. What seemed like a miracle then took place: "Your proposal," said he, "is the most outrageous I ever heard, and appears offhand to me to involve total disregard of all our most cherished regulations. So let's do it. Incidentally, somebody will have to pay for it one day, if it doesn't all get bombed in the meantime. I am sure the Government won't, but with any luck it won't be you or me." So that was that. Gas-stoves, refrigerators and what-not, appeared out of thin air and the whole glittering project was crowned by the arrival of a super cocktail bar complete, wrenched, I believe, from Selfridges or some other similar premises being remodelled in some other part of London. Our wildest hopes were thus exceeded. There remained the question of staff. I have already mentioned the fortunate propensity there is in Britain for the moment to produce the man. In this case it was the woman. It seemed that under our very noses there was in Norfolk House an official, who was permitted to live with his wife and child in a small flat in the building. His wife was a superb cook and, moreover, her great passion in life was catering. During past experience in this line she had acquired a posse of girl-friends skilled in the business and willing to help her. Those appeared on the COSSAC Staff who were adept at the infinite complication of the drawing up of contracts to cover this type of activity, even when there was involved the contravention of countless government regulations.

Suffice it to say that the devoted labours of Mrs. Hoare came through the succeeding months to contribute very largely, not only to the personal well-being of a very large number of the COSSAC Staff, but to the successful accomplishment of our task.

Though the premises thus acquired were small in relation to our numbers, even from the start there was scarcely ever any real sensation of overcrowding, thanks to the sharp divergence in eating habits between British and Americans. According to British time scales, the Americans seem to like eating breakfast in the middle of the night, lunch half way through the morning and dinner at tea-time, which makes for a convenient staggering of meal-times in any combined establishment. But the catch came for many of our Americans in London when they found themselves, as General Ray Barker put it, getting up American and going to bed British, which did not leave much interval for sleep. When in my turn I had experience of the same phenomenon over in the States, I found it wasn't at all funny.

But it is not only a matter of hours. There was of course a vast difference in bulk as between the American and British ration at this time. And more than that there is a considerable difference between the composition of the two diets. Luckily, the management of our Club seemed to be effectively in touch with unauthorised sources of supply. We took scrupulous care not to investigate this. But in general there is no doubt that over a long period, the British do not eat happily and comfortably *à l'Americaine* any more than the Americans enjoy British food habits. Desirable though it may seem from many points of view, it does not appear to be a practical possibility completely to integrate British and Americans at meal-times. Mr. Punch once told his readers of the joys of what he termed " integrated breakfast." It was, to the British, funny to read about.

At the club bar there was never a moment's doubt with regard to the completeness of integration. When it comes to a matter of liquid refreshment, American and British habits seem remarkably similar, except that in 1943 the British had been for so long on short rations that they experienced at first some little difficulty in keeping up with their American colleagues. To lend an air to the proceedings, it was thought fit to provide our Club with a motto, and accordingly there was exhibited in bold lettering on the wall the appropriate tag :

"*Placet ore stat ordine et arte.*" Not only did the translation of this evidently classical excerpt provide the basis for many a round of drinks, but its effect on some of our more learned friends was a source of never failing amusement. Those who had not the benefit of a classical education often found the hidden meaning of the phrase more easily than their scholarly comrades, since it is, in fact, in English of a sort, "PLACE TO REST AT OR DINE. E(A)T (HE)ART(Y)E."

For operational purposes it was necessary, as has been said, to recruit the staff from each of the three armed services of the United States and Britain, but it seemed to us that for other reasons it was at least highly desirable to see what could be done to ensure representation on the staff of as many component parts of the British Empire as possible. Though the blow to be struck was to originate in the Home Country, the effort behind it derived from everyone of the King's subjects. A high proportion of the troops forming the expeditionary force were in fact, we knew from the start, to be Canadian. By special arrangement therefore with General Andy McNaughton, a Canadian observer was attached to the COSSAC staff in the person of Major-General Guy Turner, both these being old friends of mine since the days when I had served with the Canadian Army in France from 1915 to 1917. Further than this, taking advantage of our old friendship, I asked General McNaughton for help in filling certain of the vacancies on the COSSAC Staff. This help was as ever forthcoming in full measure. A secondary consideration that had of course not escaped us was that, whereas even now the supply of thoroughly competent British staff officers was hardly coping with the demand for their services, there was an ever increasing flow of first-class trained Canadian staff officers beginning to come forward. The Canadian Commander promised me the best that Canada could give, and he kept his promise.

I asked particularly for an outstanding Canadian officer to be my own Military Assistant, a request to the fulfilment of which General McNaughton gave his particular personal attention. The man he chose, Major Roly Harris of the Queen's Own Rifles, not being immediately available, he temporarily lent me Major Peter Wright of the Royal Canadian Engineers, and it was through him that the COSSAC Staff acquired an

entirely unofficial, most beneficial, though somewhat unorthodox, accretion to its strength. Peter Wright had been billeted for some time in the Baker Street neighbourhood, and in the course of the long winter evenings had become a regular at the " Black Horse " in Marylebone High Street. The clientele of the " Black Horse," like that in every other pub in the British Isles, took a keenly intelligent interest in the course of world events and were in the habit of debating nightly the proper steps that should in their opinion be taken to accelerate the downfall of the enemy. This was in their view clearly being delayed at this time only by incompetent leadership, by vested interests or by other similar well known obstacles to progress. At the time when Peter joined me the " Black Horse " Plan for the invasion of Europe was already far advanced, and he kept me abreast of developments. He and I had not collaborated for long before we found ourselves confronted by one of the many insoluble problems that continued to crop up. Peter's ebullient sense of humour produced the suggestion that the question be referred to the " Black Horse." I agreed, and from this the habit grew up of consulting from time to time, naturally without their knowledge, the thoroughly representative body of opinion that congregated at this hospitable bar. It was, of course, not every subject that was susceptible to treatment of this nature, but there were many points about which it was comfortable to know that others were thinking besides ourselves, and sound opinion is not the exclusive prerogative of those who are paid to give it. It is comforting also to be able to record that our operation was not launched without, at any rate, some consultation with that corner-stone of Western democracy—the English pub.

The COSSAC Staff was also reinforced from South Africa, Brigadier Pete de Waal being specially selected by General Smuts for appointment to us, and Australia lent us powerful aid in the person of Colonel MacNicoll, one of the most competent of our junior staff officers.

This naturally leads to some mention of the problem of security. Utter secrecy is of course mandatory in all affairs connected with military operations, but the business upon which COSSAC was to embark was in many respects of a higher order of secrecy than anything which had gone before. I say

in certain respects, because it was obvious to everybody on both sides that sooner or later the time must come when some form of expedition would emerge from the British Isles and strike at some target on the Continental mainland which immediately shows that secrecy centred upon time, strength and objective. These items of knowledge must at all costs be kept dark right up to the moment of impact. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to discriminate precisely as between one item of information and another when the two are closely inter-related. Endeavour had therefore to be made to achieve and maintain absolute secrecy about everything.

To our advantage was the reputation of Norfolk House, already mentioned. Of further advantage was the creation of the Club on the top floor of Norfolk House wherein those who felt that they must blow off steam or bust could do the former on the premises. For the rest there was of course the highly elaborate code of procedure that had been perfected over the years, but this of itself could not account for every possible source of leakage. Any high-powered official system caters of course for the regular employee of any given concern, but there is almost invariably bound to be the odd unofficial sort of individual who somehow or other picks up a spicy bit of information which he or she feels is intriguing though incomprehensible. With no ill intent whatever this little titbit may easily be dropped, maybe simply because its possessor wants to know what it means. But maybe also it will be dropped somewhere where it can be picked up by the next link in the chain, who has another such little piece of the puzzle that fits exactly. And so on, until the harm is done by a whole string of probably the best intentioned people whose very last thought would be to do any harm to anyone, least of all their country or their countrymen.

Though this type of leakage is largely a matter of chance or mischance, we decided to do what we could to reduce the possibility of mischance to the smallest practicable dimension. We had most of us had experience of the exasperating tedium of scrupulous following of official drills in the matter of secrecy. More than one of us, moreover, had had experience of narrow escapes from failure as a result of the same thing. What we wanted from our staff was not merely blind obedience to orders. We badly needed all the intelligent assistance that we could get

and intelligent assistance cannot be got from those ignorant of the object that they are trying to gain. It was, therefore, decided to take a bold step and instead of keeping the main secret to a small inner circle while the pick and shovel boys on the outer periphery worked in darkness, it was decided to tell the whole outfit just exactly what we were setting out to do.

So long as the whole COSSAC Staff was housed in Norfolk House it was quite possible to do this, and it was in fact done on two occasions—once right at the start, when COSSAC numbered but a couple of hundred, and once in the Summer of 1943, just before the Staff burst out of Norfolk House into additional accommodation elsewhere. But it was on this second occasion that it was possible to tell the Staff that their great labours had borne fruit and that their work had received the approval of no less authorities than the President of the United States and the British Prime Minister.

On each occasion all hands, including the cook, were ordered to assemble in the large room used for the NAAFI Coffee Shop on the ground floor of Norfolk House. On the first occasion there was ample air space. On the second occasion, the late-comers only got in by the use of commando technique. On both occasions, they were told exactly what had happened, what was happening, and their part in it, and what it was proposed to do next. The great secret that we were preparing to invade Hitler's Europe and how it was to be done was therefore known to every individual of the COSSAC Staff. It was also made known to them that any suspicion of leakage of this information to anyone not of our number would in all probability cause nothing less than catastrophic disaster to the cause of the United Nations. It speaks volumes, I think, for the spirit that inspired the average man and woman of the United States and Britain—for that is just what these people were—that not one word of what they were told ever leaked out.

American, British and Dominion soldiers, sailors, marines and airmen, WRNS, ATS, WACs, WAAFs, CWACs, VADs, NAAFIs, NFS, and what have you, whatever their origins, background or normal avocations, all alike made this outstanding contribution to victory. To each one it may not have seemed much in itself, but nevertheless utter trustworthiness is still, I hope, a matter for congratulation.

III

THE THREEFOLD TASK ALLOTTED TO "COSSAC"

IN the previous chapter I have told how there was evolved during March, 1943, a form of directive that appeared to the authorities in England (that is to the British Chiefs of Staff and to the Staff of the European Theatre of Operations, United States Army), suitable for issue by the Combined Chiefs of Staff to the officer nominated to become Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate). That is to say, as it turned out, to myself. The draft directive was submitted to the authorities in Washington—that is to the American Chiefs of Staff and to the Combined Chiefs of Staff—during the first week in April, but I was authorised to proceed on the terms of the draft, assuming American approval, before the final official issue of the document to me on the 26th April.

This first directive, while giving enough information to enable us to get under way, was found in practice to need subsequent interpretation and expansion as the work proceeded, and it was discovered by the test of trial and error what precisely were in this case the essential elements of information and direction.

After a short preamble wherein the Combined Chiefs of Staff recorded their determination subsequently to appoint a Supreme Commander over all United Nations forces for the invasion of the Continent of Europe from the United Kingdom, and meanwhile immediately to appoint his Chief of Staff, the directive went on to define the object of the exercise, so to speak, to be "to defeat the German fighting forces in north-west Europe." The Combined Chiefs of Staff included, as a form of subsidiary object, two resolves—first to endeavour to assemble the strongest possible forces (subject to prior commitments in other theatres)

in constant readiness to re-enter the Continent if German resistance weakened in 1943, and secondly they pledged themselves to be prepared to order such limited operations as might seem practicable, at any time, with such forces and material as they might have been able, under the terms of the first resolve, to collect.

As is well known to all those, both soldiers and others, who have at any time tried to write an order or directive of any kind, whether it be for a military operation or any other form of activity, the most important as well as the most difficult passage to phrase is that which defines the object to be attained. If the object is not clearly defined then there can be no clarity in the order itself, however long and detailed it may turn out to be. Ideally, the definition of the object should involve the use of a minimum of words. Every word must count and must be carefully weighed. A staff officer who knows his business will, as often as not, call upon his commander to write down the object or, at the very least, having written it down for him, will ask his commander to check what has been written for him before the order or directive is in any way elaborated.

Very early in the proceedings we felt obliged to question the object given to COSSAC in this first directive. The object given, be it remembered, purported to be that of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Was it indeed a fact that their sole object in invading north-west Europe would be to defeat the German fighting forces in that locality? It seemed to us doubtful.

It was true, as will be shown presently, that the particular task of COSSAC was strictly circumscribed, but of necessity the method by which COSSAC was to perform its allotted portion of the great design must depend on the overall general intention that was to inspire the movement of the forces across the Channel. It is of course true to say that one's overall object in any war is to win it, but to-morrow always comes and life has a way of going on even after the most famous victory. War has at various times been variously described by a variety of theorists. In essence it is a form, albeit a somewhat crude form, of international relationship. When victory is won, other forms of international relationship take the place of beating one's neighbour over the head with a hatchet. If the neighbour is killed in the struggle and his house destroyed, it is nowadays

a virtual certainty that some relation of his will survive somewhere and must be dealt with somehow. It may well be that, as a result of calculation, it is thought better instead of cleaving his skull with a hatchet merely to stun the neighbour with a club so that on recovery he may be made, under control, to compete with the possibly distasteful task of dealing with the relations himself. If this overall policy is made known beforehand to the assailant he will know to arm himself with a club rather than a hatchet. This much over-simplified example can be turned more or less into international terms so that the thesis may be put forward that it is desirable before opening a campaign that the openers should have some reasonably clear idea as to how it is intended to shape international policy when victory has been won. In this present instance we tried, but tried in vain, to obtain some such statement of a long-term political object. There are those who are still striving to obtain this information.

It is easy, especially for a soldier, to criticise in this manner. This was pre-eminently one of those occasions, that happen more often than many would believe, when that which is desirable and that which can be done are two very different things. Here is surely another fruitful study for future generations. The question is simply, What should have been the true object of the Western Allies and how should that object have been expressed in written words at the time when the fighting forces of these Allies set about the invasion of north-west Europe in 1944? The objective admittedly was Berlin, but an object and an objective are two different things. The objective, Berlin, was ultimately reached, but it would have made our task in many ways easier had it been possible to tell us beforehand the object with which we were to strive for our objective. Was the object to be the destruction of a city, of the country or of the Government? Was it to be partial destruction followed by withdrawal? Was it to be occupation for a period limited or unlimited? Was it to be for the purpose of creating a new German Government and a new Germany? Be it noted also that whatever answer the future student may submit to the question asked, it is of necessity bound to be wrong if it is framed only in negative terms.

This is no place in which to develop further this intriguing

theme, though it must be admitted there were times of stress when certain members of the COSSAC Staff pondered wistfully what appears now to have been the simpler task that confronted the Staff of the late Genghis Khan whose object, if history is to be believed, was to slaughter every living thing in his path and to raze to the ground everything that protruded above it, which must have simplified immeasurably both war and post-war staff problems.

But to return to the present, that is to the present of 1943, the operative part of the directive issued by the Combined Chiefs to COSSAC directed him to prepare plans simultaneously for three possible operations. These plans were to be, first, for an elaborate scheme of diversionary operations to extend over the whole Summer of 1943 for the purpose of pinning down the enemy in the West so that he might not reinforce at will his active fronts against the Russians in the East and against the Forces of the Western Allies in Italy. This summer scheme, it was directed, should include at least one amphibious feint with the object of inducing the Luftwaffe to give battle, on terms favourable to ourselves, with the metropolitan Royal Air Force and the United States 8th Air Force based in Britain.

The second plan to be drawn up was for a return to the Continent in the event of German disintegration, at any time from receipt of the directive onwards, the plan being such that it could be carried out at short notice with whatever forces of any and every kind happened to be available in Britain at the moment.

Thirdly, the plan was needed for a full-scale assault against the Continent as early as possible in 1944.

For the rest, the directive dealt with comparatively minor details. It was directed that Allied Military staffs other than British and American were not at this time to be brought into the planning. All previous directives relating to planning for amphibious operations to be launched from the United Kingdom were cancelled by this present order which was commendably brief, covering as it did merely a page and a half of foolscap.

So there was the order. All that remained was to carry it out, to put first things first and then get to it. But right here there was a catch. What precisely were these first things? First in relation to what, to time, to some scale of relative

importance, to magnitude, to cost or what was it? As the Staff proceeded to dissect this deceptively simple looking directive questions cropped up at every turn. It soon appeared that the three plans required were merely in fact three facets of the same plan. For it was of vital importance that nothing should be done in the course of the diversionary operations in 1943 that should in any way react to the detriment of the invasion plan for 1944. Similarly, the plan for the scramble across the Channel, should a rot set in on the other side, would merely partake of the nature of reaching the objectives to be deduced for the 1944 invasion plan in quick time by short cuts. The first thing to be done first, therefore, seemed to be that which came last in the directive and last in relation to time. In other words, in many respects, it looked as though we might do best to start at the far end and work backwards. But by so doing we might arrive at a starting plan which would be beyond our resources in some commodity or other, in men, in ships, in craft, in guns, in port capacities or in any combination of these or the thousand and one other critical items. Was the right answer, therefore, to start at both ends simultaneously and meet in the middle?

In the event, of course, the usual compromise was reached and the whole affair was thrashed backwards and forwards many times. For the sake of clarity in this narrative, it will probably be best to follow briefly the fate of each separate part of the plan as defined in the directive in the order therein adopted.

But first it should be made clear exactly how the time factor affected us at COSSAC. It was not as though there was available to us as Planners the whole time interval between the date of issue of our directive, April, 1943, and the projected D-Day some time in May, 1944. Far from it.

In the first place the diversionary operation for 1943, if it was to deceive anyone, must in fact culminate at a time at which cross-Channel operations on a big scale would be practically possible. Quick investigation showed that the British sailors, whose knowledge of Channel conditions is not to be disputed by anyone, closed their invasion season in September. This gave us a bare five months to cook up a plan, sell it and put it into effect. Anyone with even the smallest experience of

salesmanship will see where the big catch came here. In this case the product to be sold, put out by a new international firm which was obliged by the terms of its Association to avoid most scrupulously any form of publicity, had to be forced upon a strictly limited market, justly famous for its sales resistance, and that in a strictly limited time. By the time we were through, I believe our COSSAC boys could have sold anybody anything at almost any price. But now there was no time to waste.

Then there was the plan for the scramble back to Europe should the Germans begin to wilt. Though such an eventuality looked depressingly unlikely at that time, there were always to be remembered the undeniable facts of the history of the year 1918. In that year, it will be remembered, the Germans, fighting only on one front, were in tremendous form in March during which month they all but had us defeated in the West. By November, 1918, they were down and out. A rapid comparison of the general state of affairs that had existed at the beginning of 1918 with those now existing at the beginning of 1943 showed quite a number of points of coincidence. And we were now in the month of April, 1943. There could obviously be no let-up here.

Then the Master Plan of invasion for 1944, the carrying out of which would be conditional of course on the general situation remaining as it now was in April, 1943, in north-west Europe. Though it was essential for the business of preparation to be put in hand at once, it was inevitable that such plans as we made should be scrutinised and dissected and discussed and approved at all the various levels of authority up to the topmost before it could be said that the affair was well and truly under way and before there could be any question of issuing authoritative orders or directives to any of the constituent portions of the armies of invasion. Any speculation on our part as to how long all this might involve was cut short by clear directions that we were to submit our work to the British Chiefs of Staff by early July. Two months or so for that one.

So there wasn't much time to be wasted anywhere, and the best way not to waste time is to avoid mistakes. The problem here was first therefore to find some way of not making errors in a process for which there was no precedent and of which there was no blueprint, against which to check our work, step

by step, as it proceeded. The answer to this one was quickly produced by some of " the boys " who had had previous experience of planning and knew the ins and outs of all the tricks of the trade. Principal amongst these same " boys " was Brigadier Kenneth McLean of the Royal Engineers, a weaver of plots beyond compare and, moreover, an expounder of same who " appeared " in the next few months before crowned heads and chiefs of state, earning universal applause and none more justifiably.

Mention has been made of the practice whereby plans put forward by lower to higher echelons of command have naturally to be referred by the higher commander to his own gang of planners for check. Planners were most irreverently compared at times to the jesters of the Middle Ages. Just as no nobleman of olden times was apparently a nobleman unless he employed his tame jester, so, in 1943, no commander was alleged to be worth his place in the field unless he retained his own planner. However, the trick was obviously to nobble the higher echelons of planners so that, when the time came for them to be formally consulted, they should already be fully in the know and could give their approval to their own chief with no delay.

Let it not be inferred that there was anything underhand in these arrangements. Everything was above board. So far as the British planners of all three Services were concerned, things were easy. The problem was to keep the United States planners in Washington abreast of our doings, but this too was done by means of exchange visits and by the telephone that the United States forces installed and which was really secret, as distinct from that on which Transatlantic conversations were held in the early days of the war of which the security was gravely suspect.

This alone was not enough. Not only had we to check progress, but we had also to ensure that no time was wasted on non-essentials. To do this it appeared impossible in the available time to go back and ferret out the whys and wherefores of all the planning that had gone before at the hands of several generations of planners who had studied the many and various aspects of the main problem that was now ours. Practically none of these past planners had enjoyed the advantages given and to be given to us. It seemed that they had in the main

been asked to tackle the problem in a way which seemed to us the wrong way round. Starting with a blank sheet, so to speak, they had been asked to deduce what tools would be necessary to finish the job. Almost invariably they seemed to have been told on completing their proposals that while their plans as plans were good, there was no prospect whatever of the resources needed to put them into effect being made available so that either the first proposal must be varied or a new one must be thought up. This type of frustration is possibly the worst of all.

The question came to us quite differently. By early 1943 most production programmes of given items were either set and in operation or else so far developed that the output that would be available for 1944 could be reasonably well assessed. We could therefore ask ourselves the question: "With these tools can the job be finished or can't it?" To this would have to be added of course the supplementary question: "If so how, and if not why not?" The next step, therefore, was to get our minds attuned suitably to respond to these questions. This seemed to demand the laying down of a set of ground rules for COSSAC which came out roughly as follows.

First, we must be absolutely convinced in our own minds that we represent the embryo of the Supreme Headquarters of 1944 that is going to command the armies of liberation that will finish the war in Europe by means of the utter defeat of Germany.

Arising from this thought came the necessity for adjusting our mental perspective to the right scale. The armies with which we shall have to deal will contain a number of divisions of the order of one hundred. The climax of the campaign will be the defeat in battle of the main body of the enemy's reserves. This will definitely not take place on or near the beaches. The crossing of the enemy's coast line must, therefore, to us be merely the opening incident of the campaign and a passing phase. It is of course true that upon the success of this opening phase depends all else, but we must never lose sight of the fact that the assault on the beaches is merely a first step to what must follow.

As a logical sequel to all this we must, from the beginning, see that we function on the right map. This map will not be merely one that shows the South of England and the North of

France, it must be a map that stretches clear from San Francisco to Berlin on the one hand and from the Arctic Circle to North Africa on the other.

All this may sound rather highflown and ambitious, but it seemed to us essential to take this view of our task if we were to take the proper steps to avoid any failure through lack of foresight. It would be unforgivable, for instance, were we, after successfully clearing the first jump, to have our effort peter out ignominiously a hundred miles or so inland for want of some essential supply, say, of bridging material or trucks or Lines of Communication troops. We must do our best to see that not only the front line combat troops but the whole indescribably intricate war machine right back to the factories was properly geared to see us right through to the end.

Possibly the biggest thought of all that arose from these considerations was that, beyond any doubt, as we saw it, some means or other had to be found whereby COSSAC should exert some kind of executive authority and here it was for the first time, but by no means the last, that we found ourselves slap up against the major obstacle in the whole affair which was that we did not possess a commander. Right from the beginning we all made up our minds to accept as a fact that we were serving Generalissimo X, not merely producing ideas and papers. Which was a grand idea for internal consumption within COSSAC but didn't seem to go so well in contact, and often in conflict, with other outside bodies of greater reputation and stature who were sufficiently fortunate as to possess high-ranking commanders in the flesh. We were forced to take what comfort we could derive from the last, pithy, verbal directive issued to me by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff: "Well, there it is; it won't work, but you must bloody well make it."

Having made all these high resolves, the next thing to be done was to look round and see how we could save ourselves trouble. First, there was the question of seeing what, if any, of the work of our predecessors we could readily turn to our advantage, and here we found a rich store of information. There was already in existence a vast amount of detailed knowledge with regard to every foot of the enemy's coastline. Every conceivable item of fact was available at a moment's notice, and there was a perfect service for watching the enemy by land,

sea and air, so that he could make no move that was not immediately known to our side. But owing to the fact, as has been explained above, that our predecessors had been directed to consider operations with limited objectives to be reached with indefinite but small forces, we were not able to get much help as regards tactical or strategical suggestions. Many projects had been worked on, probably the best favoured having been one which envisaged the biting off of the Cherbourg Peninsula and its development as a starting point for further penetration into Europe, but practically all of them appeared to us to savour, quite understandably, of the defensive. In any case, the failure to materialise of all these projects had developed, again quite comprehensibly, somewhat of a *non-possumus* attitude of mind among some of the previous planners. We were told, for instance, that it was quite useless even to start making any plan unless we could be absolutely assured from the beginning that landing craft would be available to mount ten assault divisions simultaneously. This recommendation seemed to us to be based partly on the results of intensive study of the enemy's coast defences which, according to some authorities, seemed to consist of an unbroken line of impenetrable wire, backed by a serried line of pillboxes proofed in ferro-concrete to unprecedented thickness, bristling with automatic weapons of every calibre, manned by bullet-proof human wildcats to whom raw meat was regularly fed. Since the least unfavourable avenues of approach to this considerable defence system appeared to involve scaling sheer cliffs some hundreds of feet high, the whole outlook seemed remarkably unpropitious and rapid success difficult of attainment.

As distinct from this question of conjecture as to what might or might not be the case on the far side of the water, it was easy to appreciate that on the British side of the Channel there was already in existence a very considerable mass of groundwork that had been executed under the direction of our many generations of predecessors in the planning line. The more we became aware of what had been done, the more we came to realise that we were heirs to a considerable fortune. Now, whatever plan may be eventually adopted for launching an expedition from the British Isles against the Continent of Europe, it is a virtual certainty the main effort must spring from some

place along the south-eastern coast of England. Over the preceding years many and various ideas had sprung up, had their day and had withered away from various causes, chief among which had naturally been lack of available resources to put them into effect. But almost every such idea must have left its mark, great or small, somewhere or other in South England between Plymouth and the Wash, whether it was in the form of embarkation " hards," that is, specially prepared places for the quick loading of landing craft, of the erection of camps or depots, of road construction or rail construction projects, of airfield projects, of pipeline systems or in any one of a hundred other ways. There were devoted souls who in spite of repeated disappointments had persisted through thick and thin in painstakingly laying the foundations of what they knew must one day be built. From all kinds of unexpected quarters, men of all ranks and all services came into Norfolk House telling us of the bits and pieces on which they had been working, and suggesting how they might be fitted in to the broader picture. There was in actuality little that was needed of original work. COSSAC's original mandate, it will be remembered, had been to give " cohesion and impetus " to the planning that had been going on for so long. In fact, had not planning and preparation been carried out for many months before the COSSAC organisation was conceived, there could have been no possibility whatever of launching the operation in 1944.

Then once again there was the problem of the absent commander. Whatever sort of plan we cooked up for him could probably be relied upon to unroll itself according to time-table up to the point at which the first American or British soldier met the first German soldier. From that point onwards, events could not precisely be predicted, and everything must depend upon the functioning of the system of command and control that was to be set up.

Then there was the question of the manipulation of this army of 100 divisions with which we had endowed ourselves. It could never be contemplated that the whole of this army could at any time be concentrated in the British Isles. Not only did the necessary breathing space for such a host not exist in these crowded islands, but it was quite pointless to contemplate carting the whole lot, bag and baggage, across the Atlantic

to the British Isles and then having to load them all up again in different types of vessel to cart them across the Channel. The strategic map showed us at once that at this time our Army lay with its head in South England and its tail in the neighbourhood of the Western seaboard of the United States. The problem in its simplest terms was first to concentrate this Army forward on to the line of the Rhine and then to advance into the heart of Germany. There was only in the British Isles a small vanguard. The tactics would obviously be to reinforce this vanguard up to the status of an advanced guard of which the task must be to seize and hold a locality on the mainland of Europe of such dimensions and containing such facilities as would enable us to concentrate therein our main body. The main body would then debouch through the defensive lines held by the advanced guard to do battle with the enemy's main body. What we needed to know therefore at an early date was the strength for this strategic advanced guard that we could count on as being available in early 1944.

Discussion on these lines with our higher authorities culminated, but not until so late as the 25th May, with the issue of a supplementary directive by the Combined Chiefs of Staff which got us down to brass tacks.

This supplementary directive gave us a more tangible object, namely to secure a lodgment on the Continent from which further offensive operations could be carried out. To this end we were to draw up plans for the seizure and development of Continental ports in order that the initial assault and build-up of forces might be augmented by shipments from the United States or elsewhere of additional formations at a rate of three to five divisions per month. It was confirmed that the target date for the operation was to be the 1st May, 1944, and that the outline plans were to be in the hands of the Combined Chiefs of Staff by the 1st August, 1943. The supplementary directive went on to specify that a total of 29 divisions in all would be available for the assault and immediate build-up, in other words for the strategic advanced guard. Of these, five Infantry Divisions were to be simultaneously loaded in the landing craft and shipping to be made available, of which details were given, with two more divisions to follow up immediately. We were also to count on two airborne divisions

so that there would be a total of nine divisions in the assault and immediate follow up. Arrangements were to be made for the remaining 20 divisions to be available for movement to the lodgment area as quickly as this could be done. It was stated that, in addition to all this, one French division might take part in these initial operations.

All this pretty much completed our essential elements of information. But the gathering of them had taken time, over a month. Meanwhile, a hundred activities had been going on in many other directions. The COSSAC Staff had slowly increased itself in all branches and in all services, and contact had been made with all sorts and conditions of agencies in London with whom we were bound sooner or later to have dealings. From the start, touch was intimate with Combined Operations Headquarters, of which the Chief, Admiral, General, Air Marshal Lord Louis Mountbatten at this time was an active member of the British Chiefs of Staff Committee. All the way also, we had intimate daily contact with the planning and intelligence organs of the War Cabinet organisation. We got every help from the three British Service Ministries, and indeed from all sections of the British Government machine from whom we needed help and with whose business we were likely sooner or later to interfere. We were also of course in daily contact with the Headquarters of the European Theatre of Operations, United States Army in all its staff sections and specially so with its Service of Supply organisation. This latter organisation particularly we had cause to enlist to our aid very early. Its task was prodigious since, for the first half of 1943, the American combat ground troops in Great Britain amounted only to one solitary division. For our project to have any chance of success, therefore, it was essential for the United States Services of Supply, not only to bring into Great Britain in much less than twelve months from across the Atlantic an Army whose effective strength would be over the million mark, but it had simultaneously to make arrangements for the onward transmission of that Army in battle array southward across the Channel and further, to maintain it in the lodgment area on the Continent of which mention has already been made.

Further still it was necessary to organise, create, equip and staff an immense advanced base, not only for the troops that

would form the American portion of the so-called advanced guard that was to strike from Great Britain, but also for the American main bodies that would proceed direct from the United States to the Continent after the operations of the advanced guard had made it safe for them to do so. It was necessary to work out in fact what services it would be more economical to perform in Great Britain on behalf of the entire American force in Europe rather than that they should be solely dependent on their home bases three thousand miles away across the Atlantic.

And it was not as though Great Britain was at peace at this time. It is true that for a merciful space the enemy's direct attack on the Island was at a low ebb. The Luftwaffe was pretty busy elsewhere, and such of it as was detached to the Western Front was being steadily forced on to the defensive. But nevertheless, Great Britain was very much at war on the sea and in the air. British troops were all the time pouring out of the country to reinforce the fronts in the East and in the Mediterranean. In the latter theatre during this Spring, our Armies were busy polishing off the Afrika Corps and its satellites and preparing for the big jump into Sicily. General Ray Barker went down to look over the preparations for operation "HUSKY" to learn what would be of use to us therefrom.

All the time too there was going on the immense business of organising and controlling from London all the various underground activities that were already becoming so many thorns in the enemy's side all over occupied Europe. These underground operations had their ever increasing cost to us in men and women, in planes, in weapons, ammunition and explosives.

Not only was there a drain of British resources to these other theatres, but they also levied their tax on American resources as also did the demands of the war in the Pacific. It was not as though COSSAC was to have a clear run.

But nevertheless, it already seemed evident that there would be available by 1944 to the Western Allies ample power in the numerical and mechanical sense to do all that was needed and more. It was at the same time possible to see that the German armies were beginning to suffer to an extent from which they might well find it hard to recover. The tide seemed definitely

to have turned at Stalingrad, and the Russians were on their way back Westward.

Summing it all up in early 1943, it looked as though whereas the curve representing the total resultant of Allied power was on the upgrade, that illustrative of German power was beginning to descend. The two curves might well intersect by early 1944, if not indeed before then.

In the Far East the Japanese seemed to have passed their zenith. We were secure in the knowledge that the Combined Chiefs of Staff had clearly enunciated the principles, first, that the war against Germany was to take precedence as regards resources over the war against Japan and, moreover, that the operation in north-west Europe was to be regarded as the primary interest for 1944. So while the more mechanical details of our work were being organised and put in hand, the major task seemed to be the mobilisation of intention on the part of all concerned. The Americans and British seemed likely to have at their command at the relevant time a sufficiency of means to carry the war into north-west Europe, but the question seemed to be had they the will to do so?

Mention has already been made of the doubts that assailed us on the first formation of the COSSAC Staff in relation to the intentions of the British. And these doubts tended to increase rather than to decrease as time went on. A study of the record of the meetings at Casablanca which originated our business was not helpful. Such records rarely are, since what is of real value in such affairs is usually that which is not written down. Enquiry of the British Staff verified the impression that the British had not been best pleased at being made to commit themselves in writing to a long term policy when, as the events of 1942 had already shown, a lapse of twelve months or more could bring about such kaleidoscopic changes in the war situation. There was much talk of the need for flexibility in our strategy. Now the word flexibility is a good one, and the principle of flexibility, properly applied, has many advantages, especially when one's resources are slender. But there is danger in such words, specially in this one. It is well enough to be flexible only if, at the end of the period of flexibility, there is a firm intention of doing something definite. One is always mindful of one of the profoundest military sayings of modern times,

coined by General Wavell, as he then was. "Sooner or later," he said, "the time will come when Private Snodgrass must advance straight to his front." There must in fact eventually come a time when something must actually be done, and it seemed to more than one of us that the British authorities had at this time no real plan for the day when they would have to stop being flexible and Private Snodgrass would have to carry out his famous manœuvre.

Then there was the undeniable fact that British resources were continuing to pour out of Great Britain. That this should be so to a certain degree was of course inevitable for the nourishment, as the phrase went, of the various British fronts all over the world. Over and above everything else there was always the oft repeated fact that Britain had been at war now for three and a half years, and there were unmistakable signs in various quarters that three and a half years of mainly defensive warfare freely interlarded with resounding disasters had made their mark. Britain had taken it on the chin and on most other parts of the anatomy as well. Was Britain really determined to give it back and give it good?

Right in the early days a little episode occurred which added point to the suspicions that lurked not only in our minds at COSSAC, but in minds of others elsewhere. Our great Prime Minister was liable at any hour of the day or night to give off tremendous thoughts on any and every topic including principally the subject of the conduct of the war. A large proportion of these were committed to paper in the form of minutes by his staff and were distributed to the various Government offices. Soon after COSSAC was set up as an international installation, one of these pieces of paper was sent to me personally from the Cabinet Offices. It contained in brief outline a project for applying the whole united strength of Britain and the United States to the Mediterranean. This, be it noted, well after all the various agreements with regard to north-west Europe had been signed, sealed and delivered. Now we, the British, knew the value of this type of minute from this particular source. Such communications were admirably suited to keep everyone on his toes and to oblige him to keep at his fingertips all the arguments for doing whatever he was doing at the moment. This particular paper was sent on to me because it was thought

that I would have readily available for transmission to the Prime Minister all the pros and cons of the North-western European strategy as compared with the Mediterranean strategy. (Though I could not know it at the time, I was to be called upon later for an impromptu rendering of these same arguments for a similar purpose in the White House at Washington !)

But the point here was a nice one. As I understood it, COSSAC had been set up as an allied organ, neither British nor American, but equally answerable to both British and American Governments. It therefore seemed my duty, nothing less, to show this particular piece of paper to my American deputy and *alter ego* General Ray Barker. Which I did with illuminating results. He in his turn felt he could do nothing less than communicate the gist of the paper to the American Commanding General in England, and sparks began to fly. Naturally, there was no practical result, except perhaps that I, personally, received yet another communication from the War Cabinet Offices which, being strictly personal, this time I did not pass on to anyone. However, it gave an admirable opportunity to establish the fact that COSSAC was indeed international in character, and that if by any chance there should be anything that the British authorities deemed it unnecessary for the American authorities to hear about, then they must not send it to COSSAC. All this fortunately took place very early in the day, and nothing of the sort ever happened again on the British side. There were one or two later episodes on the American side of this nature, but by that time our unity was so strongly and clearly established that the occasions merely served to provoke gales of laughter. In particular, there was a very memorable Transatlantic telephone conversation, listened to at both ends of course by several people, when the voice speaking from the Pentagon finished a long harangue with the words : " But for Christ's sake don't tell the British." When the speaker asked indignantly why this recommendation had been greeted with such merriment, he had to be told by the principal speaker in London, a senior American general, that every word had been keenly listened to by two British generals and one British admiral.

But to turn back to the beginning again, it was not easy in the early days of 1943 to find in London any very authori-

tative source from which could be obtained a real insight into the minds and intentions of the highest United States authorities. After the tragic death of General Andrews in the mountains of Iceland he had, after an interval, been succeeded by General Jacob L. Devers who, when appealed to, was forced frankly to say that he for his part had no great feeling of certainty as to what the intention of the United States might be in regard to the campaign that we were contemplating. There was no doubt, however, as to what a lot of individual Americans were thinking. At least one keen amateur observer has gone on record most eloquently on the subject. Part of the trouble of course was that quite a large proportion of the American observers in Britain at that time were amateurs and were incapable of any great flights of constructive imagination. Of material for destructive criticism to the British disfavour, of course, there was plenty, the latest and greatest from the American point of view being that such small bodies of ground forces as they had hitherto been able to send across the Atlantic had been diverted to North Africa at the dictates ostensibly of an exclusively British strategy with the result that there had been opened a new American Theatre of Operations in the Mediterranean which would inevitably create a demand that had to be met on the resources that, to certain minds, would have been better applied in north-west Europe. The Americans as a race are not remarkable for their patience, and are therefore apt to categorise this quality in others as undue deliberation. Those who had not devoted any deep study to the profession of arms took time to realise that there was a little bit more to this invasion business than merely driving across the Atlantic, changing gear a couple of times in England and then jumping the Channel.

It was not until later in the year when COSSAC was honoured by a visit of the American Secretary for War, Mr. Henry L. Stimson, that doubts in our minds with regard to American intentions in relation to north-west Europe were lessened. This grand old man, after making the most searching personal enquiries into everything that was going on in Norfolk House, gave us his benediction and just that feeling of assurance that we needed to cheer us on. But that was not the end of it by any means.

It may well be asked what, if any, alternative course could

have been seriously put forward for ending the war. The chief cause of mud in the waters at this time, I believe to have been the theory that the defeat of Germany could be brought about by air action alone. This proposition was supported, for obvious reasons, in both American and British air circles, and at the time it seemed the project held at first sight certain attractions. The arguments for and against such a line of action will no doubt exercise the ingenuity of many more qualified thinkers and writers for some time to come. But, in the light of after knowledge, there must be few who will maintain that the course of action actually pursued in the years 1943 and 1944 was anything but the correct one. Those tempted to indulge in discussion on this topic must not restrict themselves to tactical or strategic factors. Calculation must include assessment of the industrial resources of all kinds necessary to support an air formation in the air over the target for the delivery of its load, the bombs, bullets, airborne troops or what-not. One would say off-hand that there would be a distinct and early limit to the number of British plane loads that could be thus delivered. And moreover a decision to go full out for an air war would immediately have put any alternative course out of court. Well enough perhaps so long as during the interval between decision and execution, the enemy did not revolutionise his defensive technique.

It was not only as regards the unilateral British and American opinions that we had our doubts. It seemed to us that the combined "machinery" had up to date no very great record of reliability. For instance, there did appear some justification for thinking that the decision to wage war against Germany before turning attention in earnest to Japan had been followed by a considerable increase in the tempo of the Pacific War. And in our own case, almost immediately after the Conference at Casablanca had decided that the command of the North-west European expedition was to be exercised by a British leader, persistent rumour had circulated that the Supreme Commander would in fact be an American officer. In May it seemed to have got down to a choice between Generals Marshall and Eisenhower, and by June it seemed all but a certainty that General Marshall would be nominated.

However, it is useless in war to take counsel either of one's

fears or doubts. Discounting all rumours and apparent disagreements, there remained the written directive. We were in doubt, so we obeyed orders.

It did not take us long to appreciate that the lines of approach of American and British to a military problem, as to so many other things, were separated by 180 degrees. They came at it from exactly opposite directions, but fortunately had the knack of arriving at the same point at the same time.

On facing an American with a problem, one first of all naturally had to convince him that the suggested course of action was in fact a good one. As soon as he agreed to the proposition response was enthusiastic and whole-hearted. "Yes, Sir, we certainly agree with your proposition. We will deliver what you demand up to not less than 110 per cent. You bet. And as for your skedule, it's a cinch. The boys will be there a week ahead of time. This is right up our street. Why, this little outfit of mine when we was way back in Texas . . ." and so on. Sure enough the dirt would begin to fly in prodigious quantities all over the place. The inevitable snags would be encountered. There would be a series of rousing reports, a certain number of individuals would cross the Atlantic at high priority, and sure enough the goods would be delivered right on time at 100 per cent. of requirement.

The same problem put to a British officer would evoke first a look of incredulous horror followed by some such pronouncement as: "My dear old boy, is all this really necessary. Well, if it really is, couldn't we do it just as well with half the bother. At any rate we can't get anywhere near the numbers you want: 90 per cent. of your figure would be the absolute limit. And as for time, I don't see how it can possibly be done in less than at least a week longer than you seem prepared to give us. If you insist we'll have a crack at it only don't expect much of a show. But we will do our best." In the event of course it would happen exactly as required. Once we had all grasped this simple principle, we got along fine.

It must be admitted, though, that there was more than a little skill entailed in deciding whether one should deliver an unpalatable demand to an American outfit by hand of a British officer or to a British unit by means of an American. When we got going of course it made not the slightest difference who

did what. All spoke the same language and all seemed to get the same idea at the same moment.

Having assembled all the various ingredients, it was necessary then to elaborate the method of work which, while being designed to digest the raw materials and turn them into the finished product, should be readily understandable by, acceptable to and operable by all the various classes of person of whom the COSSAC Staff was to be composed. Since the work was to be done in London and in close concert with British Government offices, the set-up of COSSAC must be such as to ensure proper contact and smooth working with the British agencies. This implied for a start getting Americans to accept to the minimum extent necessary the famous or infamous British committee system.

Though this system has many merits it has of course almost equally as many glaring disadvantages, especially to those who have not been brought up with it and gained experience of how to cope with it. To the American mind, the committee system appeared just exactly what was not needed if indeed it was a fact that what we were after were positive results and rapid action. For the committee can be described as a negative organisation. It can hardly ever fail to impede progress or to obscure a main issue. On the other hand, it provides a form of safety valve and an admirable alibi in the event of misfortune. To the shrewd American observer it seemed that one of the safest ways of ensuring that positive action is postponed indefinitely when such a course seems desirable, is to refer the question to a properly constituted committee. Where, on the other hand, action seems desirable and the assembly of a committee seems unavoidable, then the adroit selection of a chairman, who will reduce chatter to a minimum, and of a secretary, who can write the minutes beforehand to ensure that the proceedings keep to the proper course, will go far to minimise delay and obstruction. At the same time, it will be possible subsequently to certify that the matter in hand has been referred to all concerned.

It was hard altogether to reject American arguments.

The committee is of the essence of the British way of life which is pleasantly easy-going and inefficient. For this negative way of life there is of course ample mandate. Are not

the Ten Commandments almost entirely negative in form? And a committee loves a precedent which can so often be used as a substitute for thought. If only the rest of the world could be persuaded to adopt the British committee system, what a pleasant place it would be to live in.

Thought is a painful process. Arriving at a conclusion is torture and to maintain that conclusion when arrived at is positive agony. All these horrors can be so well avoided by the formation of a committee in the hopes that it will undertake some part of this unpleasant process for us. The findings of the committee can always be either rejected or quoted in extenuation.

It took time and patience to explain to our good Americans that in spite of the fact that COSSAC had a definite directive, it was necessary to placate the British by playing at any rate certain stages of the game in accordance with their local rules. Something had to be done immediately, however, when, on taking up the threads of the work of the abolished Combined Commanders Organisation, it was discovered that on the administrative side of the business, some master hand had elaborated a network of, if I remember rightly, some twenty-nine interweaving committees. It seemed to us that the majority of these had by now shot such bolts as they were capable of shooting, so out of this cunningly devised system of potential obstacles, greatly daring, we abolished all but four, which not only constituted a small concession to the British way of life but which were ultimately found convertible into indispensable operational agencies. So far as was possible, the COSSAC Staff refrained from using the deceptive term "machinery" as applied to assemblies of open and on occasion, vacant, minds brought together for nebulous negative purposes. And the forbearance shown by our American members in swallowing that which they had unavoidably to swallow, was worthy of all praise.

It seemed that to their way of thinking, affairs should have been dealt with straight along command channels in simple military fashion. COSSAC was a military organisation, and to it had been issued a military directive. The catch was of course that it was not entirely a matter of issuing directives to subordinate formations. There were no subordinate formations

until later on in the proceedings and once again, above everything else, there was no commander. As ever, a compromise was found and a drill was introduced whereby the principal staff officers, that is to say the Assistant Chiefs of Staff of the Army component and corresponding members of the Naval and Air Staffs, met once weekly in conclave to report progress and to compare notes. Once a week was found to be quite often enough to keep matters on the rails, yet not too often to interfere unduly with the business of the individuals. In between whiles, the Assistant Chiefs of Staff and their *confrères* were kept acquainted, by means of memoranda, with progress on the higher levels and with new factors and considerations affecting our work as a whole that cropped up from time to time or were gathered in from various outside sources.

There was one method of work which seemed to be common to both Americans and British alike, the method of discussion during digestion. The British authorities were unwontedly generous to the COSSAC Staff in the matter of allowances for entertainment purposes, and it was particularly in this line that Bobbie, my Aide, proved himself quite invaluable. Having served in London throughout the war, he had by early 1943 acquired an accurate knowledge of the whereabouts and contents of practically every surviving wine bottle in London. Having throughout his life been a keen student of gastronomy, he was able to organise, even in these times of scarcity, luncheons and dinners that would have been remarkable in times of plenty.

We had many memorable gatherings, when we were honoured by the presence of most distinguished company of both nations and many were the vitally useful conversations that took place in an atmosphere that could not have been more congenial. To the purist, of course, such methods of procedure at times like this may well seem abhorrent, but human nature has its little weaknesses, and I dare swear that human destinies have been shaped as often at the festive board as at the conference table or at the office desk, if the truth were known, which it so rarely is.

One episode at one of our early gatherings stands out. The guest of honour on this occasion was the American Ambassador to a group of the smaller Allied countries of Europe who, for

obvious reasons, was *en poste* in London—the Honourable Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, Junior. In the course of a highly variegated career this distinguished diplomat and soldier has acquired amongst other things a truly remarkable knowledge and appreciation of wine. This particular party had been built round some very special claret which Bobbie had located in the cellars of the Savoy Hotel. As the first sip of this wine reached our distinguished guest's palate, I saw come over his face what I feared might shortly turn into a look of horror and disgust, but far from it. Turning to me he said : "Surely this can't be so. If my memory serves me right, I have only tasted this particular wine once before. As you know, in 1940 I was in Paris and obliged to take part in the general movement from that City to Bordeaux when disaster overtook the French. We quit Paris late and couldn't make the trip in one day, stopping overnight at a small château on the roadside. This was the home of one of those delicious château wines that one tastes so seldom. To the best of my recollection the vineyard was small, and there can have been little of its produce for export. Oddly enough, I would be prepared to swear that this wine comes from that vineyard." And, believe it or not, it did !

Such parties as these of course were confined to the highest levels, and since they were organised primarily for business purposes attendance at them had to be limited to those who were in a position to take advantage of the contacts to be made thereat. But the same tactics are equally applicable and equally enjoyable on the lower levels, so it was ordained that on an appropriate date the whole of the COSSAC Staff should give itself a party. The day deemed most appropriate for the first COSSAC party was that on which we wrapped up the whole of our work in a parcel and deposited it fairly and squarely in the laps of the British Chiefs of Staff. And was it a party. Here too, we could not afford to relax for a moment security precautions, and participation had to be restricted almost entirely to members of the COSSAC Staff. Such few others as were invited had to undergo searching scrutiny before the hospitality was well and truly uncorked. The COSSAC Club pulled out all the stops, the Board Room of Lloyds Bank on the top floor of Norfolk House made an admirable ballroom, and the normally rigidly repressed atmosphere of St. James's

Square was shattered in a thousand pieces by the onslaught first of a British dance band and later in the night by one of those red-hot combinations that America seems to own in such numbers. For a space, in fact, Norfolk House became itself again, and many a gay ghost must have been called back to the scene of many a famous rout. All entered wholeheartedly into the spirit of the occasion, and by the time in the early hours that the troop-carrying lorries with their dimmed headlamps pushed their way to the door through the shades of sedan chairs, link boys, hackney coaches and hansom cabs, one could say that the integration of the COSSAC Staff was complete.

There was fun to be got out of small episodes such as this, but of relaxation in the full sense of the term there was little or none. Time pressed, and at the back of every mind was a very full appreciation of the responsibility that lay in our hands. Every day, every hour that went past added its quota to the sufferings of those whom it was our sacred task to liberate. For our younger staff members it was an added task to try to form some mental picture of what we were up against, but amongst the COSSAC Staff were more than a few who had met the German enemy five and twenty years before, and some indeed who had met him again in this war. For those who needed visual incentive, it was easy to find all over London amidst its ruins and its drab dilapidation. Ever-present reminders of the need for urgency were the black-out and the sirens. All these added to the urge that drove us on.

IV

OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT IN 1943

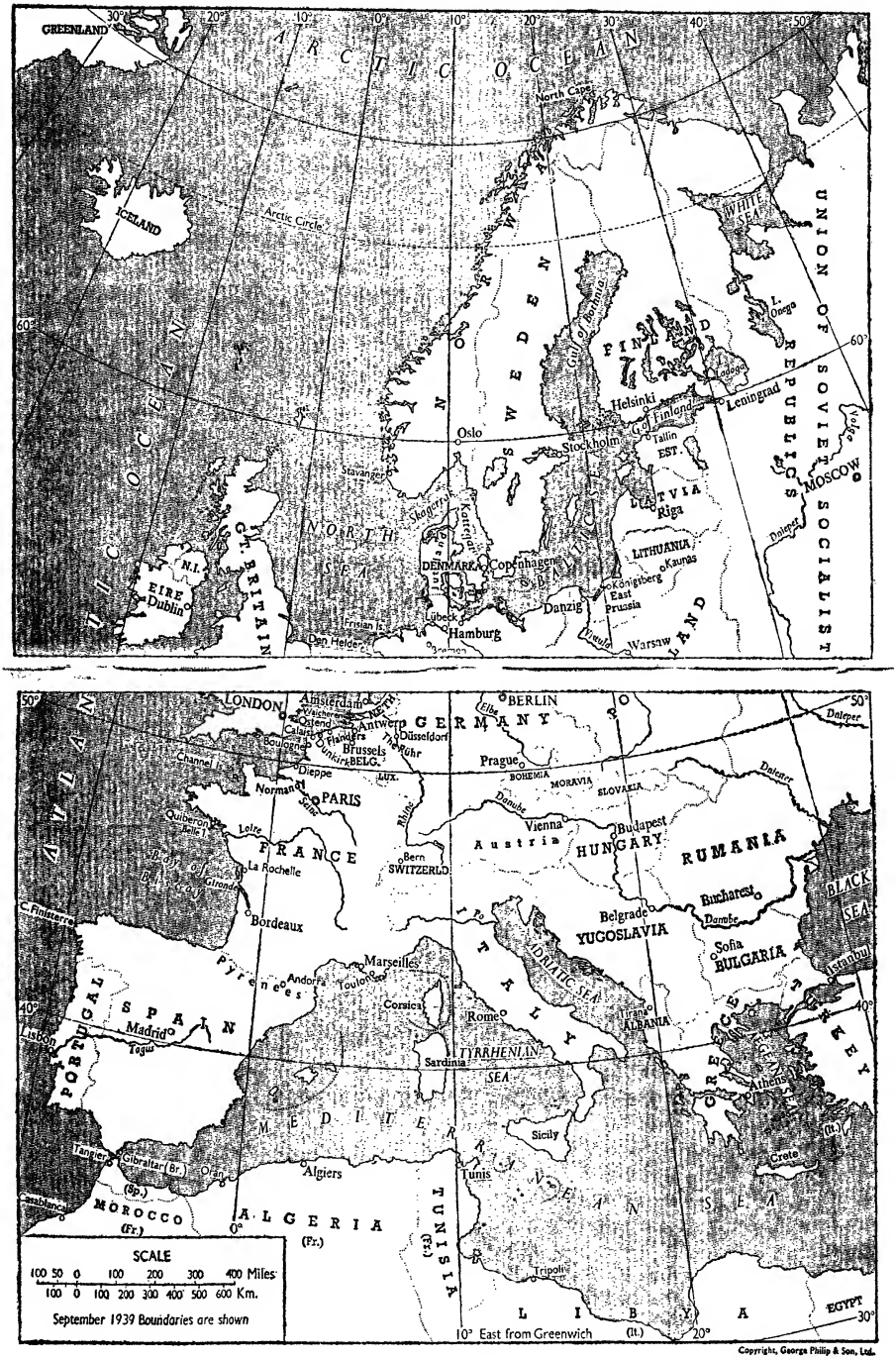
FOR the sake of clarity it may be as well to set down here the list of the main plans with which we were concerned, together with the code-names given to them. One lived at this time in an atmosphere of code-names. Conversation consisted largely of a list of code-names with suitable conjunctions. There were times when we sincerely hoped that we were confusing the enemy as effectively as we seemed to be confusing ourselves.

First, there was the plan for the operation to be carried out in 1943. The ultimate battle herein, if one can so call it, took shape as Operation STARKEY. The Army portion thereof was camouflaged as a manœuvre or exercise known by the not altogether inappropriate title of HARLEQUIN.

Then came the plan that we were to draw up for pursuit of the Germans should they for any reason withdraw from any part of occupied Europe or so weaken themselves that it would be worth while to have a crack at them before our concentration for the main blow was complete. This whole affair was known as operation RANKIN which was considered, as will be shown later, in three sets of circumstances or cases. These were known simply as CASE A, CASE B and CASE C of operation RANKIN.

Finally, there was the plan for the full-dress assault on the Continent timed for early 1944. To this was given the name of operation OVERLORD.

Looking back on it now, it seems easy to pick the winner out of this lot of names. The name OVERLORD was, I believe, personally approved by the Prime Minister, and the rest were just taken off the list of code-names maintained by the Chiefs of Staff Organisation for issue as required.



I propose to tell something now of operations in 1943, RANKIN and OVERLORD, in that order.

Our directive for the operation in 1943 told us, it will be remembered, that we were to plan a diversionary scheme extending over the whole Summer, with a view to pinning the enemy in the West and keeping alive his expectations of large scale cross-Channel operations in 1943. We were to include in our operation at least one amphibious feint with the object of bringing on an air battle employing the Metropolitan Royal Air Force and the United States Eighth Air Force.

It was obvious from the start that it would not be easy to present to the German Military Intelligence an impression of a threat so cogent that the German High Command would feel obliged to vary their plan of campaign in theatres where they were at the time actively engaged. They had already been forced on to the defensive both in the East and in the South, and they were already hard put to it to maintain their lines intact and to keep their Armies up to strength on the actual battle fronts. It would be necessary, therefore, to find a way of convincing the German Supreme Command that the danger threatening them from Great Britain was at least as great as that of which they had ever-present and most convincing knowledge, and this must be done moreover without actual conflict on the ground. Not an easy problem.

From our side too there were only too abundantly evident many points of difficulty. A standard had been set for us by the Dieppe raid of the previous Summer. This had involved an effort that had utilised a very high proportion of the resources available in the United Kingdom, and the enemy must have got from it a reasonably simple equation of cause and effect, so to speak. We should obviously have to produce or simulate preparations on a scale greatly exceeding those which had led up to the raid on Dieppe. The effect of this raid on the enemy had been, so far as we were able to make out, describable as local and temporary. There were, however, many invaluable by-products of this raid which stood us at COSSAC in very good stead but here, in 1943, we were primarily concerned with the wider strategic implications thereof.

But by 1943 the resources of almost every kind available in the United Kingdom were very much less than those which

had been present at the time of the Dieppe raid. Since then the North African invasion had taken place and had inevitably drained off supplies of all kinds, notably of men, of landing craft and of shipping. There was now only one American division remaining in North-west Europe, few British divisions capable of taking the field and hardly sufficient landing craft to compose one naval assault force and to mount a minimum of commandos.

The main facts of the situation were widely known, known on both sides. It could not therefore be a matter simply of publishing false reports even if such a course would, in fact, have been possible. One of the few major lines of policy to which we have tenaciously clung, and with the happiest of results, has been that our means for disseminating information to the world at large, to " the public," shall remain unpolluted, to the greatest tolerable extent. Though American and British information systems were to a certain degree centralised in the Office of War Information and the Ministry of Information, this centralisation was of course of quite a different character from that practised on the German side. Such control as was exercised over information media in the United States and in Great Britain, was, typically, exercised in the negative and not in the positive sense. Control rested in the main upon arrangements of the " gentleman's agreement " type upon which absolute reliance could not be placed, though in actuality breaches of trust were fortunately extremely rare.

From the start, it was evident that we must make what virtue we could of necessity and that while fulfilling the terms of our directive, we must be at pains to derive from our rehearsal operations such benefit as we could for our main purpose. It was clear that if we were entirely successful, not only could we hope to afford relief to our Eastern and Southern fronts by pinning down potential enemy reserves in Western Europe, but we might also pick up a nice bag of Luftwaffe and, what was most important, induce the enemy to show at any rate part of his hand. If we could thoroughly convince him that he was about to be assaulted from our north-western side, we should be able to study his reactions and get some indication of what we might expect to encounter when, as we intended, we actually struck him in 1944.

The least advantage on which we could count was still an important one, that we should be able to give to a large number of troops, installations and organisations on our side a reasonably realistic rehearsal in the course of which we would be able to overhaul the procedures that we should need to use for the great campaign. From the start we must be alert to extract from our operation every possible advantage to ourselves.

But all this is merely skirmishing round the fringes of the main problem. What was to be the main idea upon which we were to build our operation? We sat and glared at the map of North-west Europe thinking back over what had gone before, rejecting the impossible and the improbable and hoping that something would remain that might be of use. Sure enough inspiration of a sort eventually arrived. It started from speculation as to precisely why the enemy was maintaining such large forces in Western Europe. He had had experience of the comparative pinprick of Dieppe, and he must have had a pretty shrewd idea that before and since that episode our resources in the United Kingdom were hardly the stuff of which invasions are made. The enemy's reconnaissances over the British ports were still in early 1943 reasonably continuous, and those on the coastline of Southern England would give him all the clues he needed surely. One remembered how anxiously we had counted and recounted the stocks of what we called invasion barges in the waterways of Europe during the critical times of 1940 and 1941. One knew the necessity that existed for the enemy to maintain occupation forces in the countries he had overrun—Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France. But the dangers to be apprehended from internal resistance in these countries were surely not such as necessitated the maintenance of a dozen or so Panzer formations and much high-class infantry. We knew the importance to the enemy of the coastline of Norway and Western France in connection with his submarine and commerce-raiding campaigns. But even so it seemed to appear that he tended to over-insure. There must be some good reason for this. Looking at the ordinary map of North-west Europe it seemed to us that, had we been in the enemy's position, we might have felt prepared to recommend the taking of anyhow some modified risk. It should surely have been possible to thin out to a very large extent the actual coastal

defences except possibly along a strip from, say, Cherbourg to Jutland, to attend to internal security problems in occupied countries by the even more drastic holding of hostages, and to support the whole with a far smaller mobile reserve placed centrally, let us say, in North-east France. There was of necessity a special case to be made in regard to Northern Norway where there was direct contact with the Russian ground forces, but warfare in Finmark must be on such a small scale owing to the nature of the country and of the climate that the whole problem here could be disregarded when considering the main issue.

What seemed to be the answer to this conundrum lay in analysis of the short phrase used above : " Looking at the ordinary map." The German was not so foolish as to look at the same ordinary map as that at which we in COSSAC were looking, that is, the map that we have all looked at all our lives.

I have told earlier how it was laid down rather dramatically that the COSSAC Staff should accustom itself to use the map proper to its large ambitions, namely a map stretching from San Francisco to Berlin. London was searched, and it was found quite impossible to dig up such a map. After all there was no reason why the ordinary printer of maps should go to the trouble of producing a sheet portraying this particular section of the globe. I, personally, therefore had to make do with three sheets showing respectively, Europe, the Atlantic Ocean and North America, all three being on different projections. That set the mind working on the subject of map projections and produced the somewhat startling deduction that of all the Fifth Columnists who had ever worked against us, the greatest must surely be the late Mercator whose handiwork adorns probably every school atlas ever published for the entertainment of every British school child and probably most other school children as well. That set the minds of many of us running on what little we could recollect of the fascinating subject given such prominence in Nazi Germany and known as geopolitics. I had personally had the recent experience of seeing our Prime Minister at play with his globe and of voyaging with him in fancy round all the various theatres of war, regarding them from every aspect.

Having let our minds wander thus, we then turned back to our maps of North-western Europe, and of course found that they were as ill-adapted to our purpose as could well be imagined. One could go further and say that the information they gave us was altogether misleading. For the picture that is usually given in the published maps of the British Isles is the picture that would present itself to an observer standing at some point in Northern France, let us say at the top of an immensely exaggerated Eiffel Tower, looking towards the North Pole. In other words, to an observer standing in Paris looking at London. Whereas, we of course were standing in London looking at Paris. We had, in fact, got the whole thing upside down. Accordingly, we got for ourselves the best map of Europe obtainable, drawn to the most realistic projection. This was a mosaic made with the map sheets used by the Royal Air Force. We borrowed map experts from the same source and had them put up on the wall this mosaic map of Europe so aligned that we got the view that would have greeted the airman's eye from an aeroplane at great height above the midlands of England looking straight towards Paris. I must admit that it was with some difficulty that the airmen were persuaded to undertake this particular chore, but it was most gratifying to see their enthusiasm grow as they began to realise what was afoot.

If the map of Europe, on a realistic projection, is turned upside down it becomes astonishingly clear that whereas for most of our lives we have been brought up to believe that the British Isles are a mere excrescence off the north-west coast of Europe being cold-shouldered by the Continent into the Atlantic, the fact is that those same Islands lie in the concavity of the arc of a circle on whose circumference lie Finisterre on the one hand and the North Cape on the other. To sum it all up in military parlance, we found ourselves for purposes of our operation in that desirable attitude known as "on interior lines" with the German defences of North-west Europe nicely draped most of the way round us. This gave us the clue we were looking for.

It was evident that we were credited by the enemy with the ability to strike him with equal facility in any one of several places. It should therefore be possible to "educate" him up to the idea that our preparations for attack were aimed in a

direction quite different from the actuality. This, therefore, would be the theme of operation STARKEY, for which we must find an hypothetical objective such that all our activities in England, which must be made and could not all be hidden would appear or could be made to appear just part of that operation.

So as not to confuse, it is necessary to jump ahead a little at this point. It will be told later how the possible objectives for our real assault in 1944 could be whittled down to two only, that which we actually assaulted and the area of Boulogne-Calais spoken of roundly as the Pas de Calais. So the question was, could the preliminaries to the assault on Normandy in 1944 be made to look like those for an assault on the Pas de Calais in 1943? Luckily they could and, moreover, the Pas de Calais area in its own right was almost ideally suited to Operation STARKEY.

It having been stipulated that one of the features of the affair in 1943 was to be an attempt to induce a major air battle, we should naturally want to do so in conditions most favourable to ourselves. In land fighting one aims to induce the enemy to give battle to us on ground of our own choosing. Here it was a matter of air of our own choosing, and that would surely be the patch of atmosphere into which we could fly the maximum of our short-range fighters and keep them there for the longest possible period. The answer here was clearly the sky space radiating from the Kentish peninsula and covering the Pas de Calais.

And it does, of course, so happen that such Naval resources as we possess habitually centre themselves in South-east England, at Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chatham. Any Naval preparations for anything are bound to take place largely in these localities. This would unavoidably be the case in 1944. By means of Operation STARKEY it should be possible to create the impression that the Naval objective lay to South-east rather than to South.

The Army presented lesser problems. In England in 1943 it was not tied to any particular bases or lines of action. It could manœuvre freely at will. Its action could be made to conform to those of the other two services whose interests must clearly in this case predominate.

So much having been determined, it was necessary to farm out the work of detail to the greatest possible extent. COSSAC had many other just as large fish to fry, and there was again the fundamental difficulty of COSSAC not being yet an executive headquarters in any sense of the term. It was essential to bring into action forthwith those who wielded the necessary executive power, to put them into possession of the general concept and to leave the rest to the commanders. And since it was to the air portion of the operation we looked for the only actual contact with the enemy, it seemed clearly indicated that the command of it should be in the hands of the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Fighter Command, who should be assisted, as was requisite, by officers to be deputed for the purpose by the Navy and Army authorities, in other words by the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, and by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Home Forces.

This is not to say that COSSAC washed its hands of the affair from that point onward. Far from it. Not only was there the comparatively straightforward mechanical business of setting our sea, land and air forces in motion in the requisite manner, but there was the business of making deductions from the various manœuvres that would help us for 1944. Most vital was the study of the enemy's reactions to our gambit, for any slip here or there might well have an effect quite different from that which we aimed to convey.

It is difficult enough when troops are in contact with those of the enemy on the ground to build up a picture of what is passing in the opposing commander's mind. But in such circumstances it is at any rate possible to test theory to a certain extent by the indisputable means of the battlefield. In 1943 in North-west Europe our contact with the enemy was, to say the least, indirect. We had to rely upon reports received at second, third or much more remote hand. There was direct contact of a sort in the neutral capitals of Ankara, Lisbon, Dublin, Madrid and Stockholm, it is true, but the enemy was as aware as were we of the necessity of establishing "filters" at these points in the information channels. We could look for little from these.

Then there was the constant *va et vient* of individuals and small parties through the enemy lines, "resisters" coming from

and going to the occupied countries by sea and air, men and women of unbelievable courage but who, in the very nature of their business, could be little informed on the lines that we needed. There was the radio which knows no frontiers, defence lines nor terrestrial bounds of any kind. But here once more the dangers were universally realised. Monitoring would give little of what we needed.

And there were the newspapers. We read the enemy's, he read ours. I have touched upon the difference in the treatment of the press on the two sides of the lines. From the enemy press we could look for nothing. From our own press we got at least a series of shocks, not all of them stimulating.

The British and Americans pride themselves, and rightly, on their prized possession of freedom of speech which inevitably leads in turn to freedom of speculation, and it will be remembered that by 1943 speculation was particularly rife with regard to operations based on Great Britain against North-west Europe. " Our military correspondent " and " our special correspondent " were whooping each other up in all directions, and there were few newspapers, magazines or periodicals at this time that did not carry at least once a week a map of Europe superscribed with arrows indicating a bewildering variety of assaults, frontal, flanking and pincer that could be, or should be, delivered by forces that might be, should be, actually were concentrated here, there, or somewhere else. At least one of our famous weeklies published in the summer of 1943 a complete *exposé* of our plan for 1944. On the spur of the moment one was tempted to take cognisance of this mischance by some means or other. But wiser counsels prevailed, and the winning tip was treated on our side as it was on the other, as just one more effort on the part of its painstaking author to justify his stipend.

What we wanted was some means of assuring ourselves that all the great expenditure of effort and energy on the part of the forces engaged in Operation STARKEY was not being wasted and, further, that it was not doing the opposite of that which we had in mind.

How likely was it that the enemy would accept the theory of invasion of Europe through the Pas de Calais? He himself had made as if to come our way in 1940 by that route. Was this, or was it not, a good reason why we should decide on the

same route? The German is not highly imaginative. The British have a reputation for being even less so. Any nationality when faced with a water jump will naturally make for the narrowest part of it. The British had made a half-hearted attempt across the wider channel, to Dieppe, and had failed disastrously or so the enemy had deduced. As we know it now, the Pas de Calais must have loomed even larger than we then suspected in the German conscience by reason of all they planned for that neighbourhood as their secret-weapon-base. But even without that there seemed much plausibility in our possible choice of the Pas de Calais as the point of our assault. There were many on our side of the line who were loud in their advocacy of its advantages as such.

There seemed no solace to be got from anywhere, and we were forced to derive what cold comfort we could from the unsubstantiated reports of our Intelligence systems.

It is a nice problem, that of the degree of reliance to be placed upon Intelligence reports. But this is not the moment at which to expand upon this particular thesis. Intelligence staff officers have a system of grading their material as to its degree of reliability. A commander must do the same with his Intelligence staff. The general Intelligence summation of the effects on the enemy of Operation STARKEY was to the effect that while we need have no cause for apprehension about having compromised Operation OVERLORD for 1944, we had at the same time done nothing to convey any impression whatever to the enemy as regards our intentions to assault or not to assault the Pas de Calais. Safe enough, no doubt. The first contention we now know to have been right, but the second could not have been more wrong. Nevertheless, the error was in the right direction for us, in that in all our subsequent efforts to disguise the real point of assault we were in reality merely labouring what was to the enemy the obvious. In a more resilient mind such a course might have had reactions. But to the German mentality this reiteration must have been just what was needed, following as it did the Hitler-Goebbels technique.

Right from the start of planning for operation STARKEY we came up against the nightmare that was to haunt COSSAC to its dying day, and to be inherited in ever more sleep-destroying form by COSSAC'S lineal descendant, General Eisenhower's

Supreme Headquarters, that of the shortage of landing craft. There is no such thing as having enough landing craft for any amphibious operation. The alternatives available to any commander are either to have the minimum necessary to give him a reasonable prospect of avoiding disaster or to have less than that minimum. Or that is the way it invariably looks.

I don't believe it will ever be known exactly how many landing craft were available for use by the United States and British forces throughout the world at any given time during the late war. Maybe the official history will one day give us a figure, but by then there will be little chance of a reliable check and it won't matter anyway.

Here and now we got our first taste of the pretty problem of producing craft of all sorts, getting them to the scene of action (not all types are ocean-going), manning them with trained crews and keeping them running. In 1943, moreover, there was the added complication of big demands of craft for training purposes, training not only crews to man the craft but training soldiers to make proper use of them.

But the full fury of this "numbers racket," as it came afterwards to be called, did not develop until after the days of operation STARKEY. Now, we were helped out by our camouflage department with bogus vessels that they called "Bigbobs" and "Wetbobs." These were designed and the prototypes were built on the London Metropolitan Water Board reservoir near Shepperton. They were most convincing, even at a range only of a few yards, yet they consisted of a little scantling, sheet iron and canvas. Moored in tactically chosen southern waterways, draped here and there with "smalls" drying on the line, with a little smoke lazily drifting from their chimneys, they must have duped many besides those for whose misinformation they were intended.

Stocks of genuine craft were short enough when COSSAC first began to plan, but they grew even shorter as the weeks went by. Demands from the Mediterranean were insatiable, and here once more appeared the ultimate difficulty of being without a commander to argue the COSSAC case with full authority. Worse still, there swarmed into Norfolk House, where there was still just room to spare, another gang of plotters intent upon complicating everybody's life still further by preparing

and actually carrying out at very short notice yet another minor act of war. Possible strategic implications we were prepared to overlook, but they wanted landing craft and of course had to have them, and good ones at that to work far out in the Atlantic.

Life was hard and in July COSSAC was obliged to represent to the Chiefs of Staff that, things being what they were, it might be advisable to call off the amphibious feint ordered. We had to get what comfort we could from the somewhat specious but superficially logical argument that the greater the blow against Italy, the less of a feint would be necessary in the Channel to achieve the result sought.

There was plenty to do besides wrangle about landing craft. If we were to produce a realistic picture of a prospective invasion of the Pas de Calais there were many others to be enlisted in the party besides the fighting services. The Navy was busy preparing the amphibious feint ordered while of course carrying on its unceasing war round the coasts. The Army was preparing its exercise "HARLEQUIN" that would fit into the general picture, while providing the maximum of training value to the whole army organisation to take part. All the time there were the demands of overseas theatres to be met. The Air Forces were full out in getting ready for the hoped-for air battle. This involved not only operational organisation of aircraft from existing stations, but entailed considerable movement of ground organisations. There was the problem of persuading the Bomber Barons to play with us in spite of the overriding demands of their private war over the Reich, at this time just getting into its thunderous stride. And there was the complicated business in addition of forming the Allied Expeditionary Air Force that was to be ready for the campaign of 1944. Meanwhile, the Air Defence of Great Britain could in no way be neglected, in fact it had to be reshaped to take its part in what we hoped might come. But also there was the little matter of the civil population and its affairs to be considered. This was to be no peacetime manœuvre with the fighting services scrupulously ordered to sacrifice realism in favour of civil rights. By now every man, woman and child in England was in the fight, and it was a question not of how little we were to interfere with their normal avocations but rather of how much we need do so to give the effect desired.

If indeed we were to launch a blow from our coast between Southampton and Felixstowe then there would inevitably be some effect on the lives of the inhabitants of several counties.

First there was the possibility that our activities might attract the increased attentions of the Luftwaffe, specially in the neighbourhood of ports and embarkation points. Everything would have to be done to minimise the effect of an increased German scale of attack upon the local civilians. On the other hand, there was the necessity for seeing that the concentration in and passage of the troops through the immediate hinterland of the coast was not impeded by civilian activities that were not absolutely essential for the prosecution of the war. Further, there was need to see that the local civilian population was given the opportunity of doing everything in their power to assist the operation. It would be necessary of course to restrict civilian movement both in and into and out of certain areas, not only in order that military movement should not be impeded but also on grounds of security. As much detail connected with the operation as possible must of necessity be kept from as many people as possible who were not direcly concerned.

This all meant that the services connected with supply of transport, food, fuel, water, light and so forth to the civilian population had to be brought to a certain extent into the picture, and that police and traffic control authorities generally had to be enlisted to our aid. For the COSSAC Staff this implied contact with the various Ministries in charge of activities of the nature named. It was during contact with the Ministries that we found out a great many things that were to stand us in good stead later on. It was particularly impressed on us that we could not be too light-hearted in our demands for small shipping. Until now I, personally, had never fully realised the extent to which the population of England, specially the population of South-east England, depends for its daily requirements, specially of fuel, upon the coastwise shipping, the system of small ships and small harbours scattered along the coasts of Kent and Sussex. One indispensable feature of an operation of the type that we were contemplating would be of course the complete stoppage of coastal convoys for quite a period, not to mention the requisitioning of the small ships. And such a stoppage inevitably entailed an increase in the already

considerable difficulty of supply to South-eastern England of coal. True we were going to do our business in the summer, but it is during the summer that the fuel authorities reckon to build up stocks for the ensuing winter. We know so much more about all that now than I did in 1943.

It was evident that certain of the Ministries would have to be made aware of what was afoot so that they should know how to deal with demands and recommendations that they would be receiving from their local authorities. It was equally important of course that knowledge should not be widespread that what we now had in view for 1943 was merely a feint and not the real thing. To help us over this difficulty we were lucky to have constantly available for free consultation the wisest of all oracles. This was Sir Findlater Stewart, yet another of those typically democratic authorities whose precise position and functions at this time it would be almost impossible to describe in words and quite impossible to set down in the form of an organisational diagram.

When COSSAC had originally been put in official possession of Norfolk House we had been given authority to purge the building of whatever we found therein. Modern military bureaucratic organisation is apt to ramify in a manner that is difficult to control. When this ramification takes place in a city like London and, moreover, when the British penchant for improvisation is allowed full play, the luxurious growth of staffs and departments is apt to work its way into all kinds of nooks and crannies. Nobody quite knew exactly what was in Norfolk House or how it had got there. The only way of finding out was to go round the place with a flit-gun while keeping a close watch on doors and windows to see what flew out. One often wonders how many years it will be before the last tentacles of the war organisation are tracked down and eradicated. There must still be many individuals hidden away in holes and corners who continue to enjoy what have become lucrative sinecures. Such is the case sometimes even in war, open war. Maybe they do no harm, but it is an expensive way of lessening the burden of unemployment.

We started our disinfestation of Norfolk House in the cellars and worked our way upwards. Right up in the attic we found a little spider's web at the centre of which sat Sir Findlater

Stewart in whom we were quick to recognise an ally of immense value. Having for long been engaged on the work of co-ordinating all the activities involved in Home defence, he had at this time logically moved on to the equally big task of co-ordinating the whole matter of the arrival and installation of the American forces in Britain, Operation BOLERO. But over and above all this he possessed unrivalled knowledge of every intricacy of Whitehall. He was intimately acquainted apparently with every single individual in British Government employ and with the aid of an absurdly small staff able to adjust any matter needing co-ordination of any kind, however vast and complicated. Amongst the other activities that took place in Sir Findlater's attic were the periodical meetings of the principal administrative officers of the British fighting services. So all in all it was small wonder that we should immediately enlist Sir Findlater Stewart to our aid and that we should very quickly acquire the habit of taking to him all our troubles and difficulties such as this present one that he might spirit them away. Never once did he fail to do so.

So up the stairs to Sir Findlater Stewart we went with this problem of telling the Ministries everything and nothing at the same time about operation STARKEY. The simple solution offered was that he should assemble all the permanent under-secretaries of the Ministries concerned, and that I should talk to them. He made the daring suggestion that the permanent under-secretaries should be ordered point-blank not to tell their ministers what I told them. This, from an experienced senior Civil Servant, was pretty good. Where Sir Findlater did rather fail was in suggesting a suitable collective noun for an assemblage of permanent under-secretaries. " Pocket " seemed rather unpleasantly surgical, and most other terms seemed hardly fit for common use. So we compromised on " puddle," in spite of its implications, by no means deserved, of humidity. The " puddle " was duly formed but, as we had rather feared, the injunctions to keep it all from their ministers put them in an awkward position. Sure enough one minister got to hear of what was afoot and mentioned it to some of his colleagues. This was highly dangerous because it was quite possible that the ministers, hard pressed by their burden of other duties, might not have had time to appreciate the full significance of

information thus acquired at second or third hand. Once again Sir Findlater was equal to the occasion, and a meeting of ministers concerned was arranged in the Cabinet room at No. 10 Downing Street whereat they were good enough to listen to the whole story most patiently and to promise their help.

So we learnt a lot about how things really worked, what made it all tick, and we were able to achieve an admirable degree of realism. The screw was put even tighter on the wretched civilians while they were made the victims of a subtle campaign of suggestion. A.R.P. arrangements were overhauled in the South-east. Fire Services were strengthened, stocks of food and fuel were increased, and military reconaissances wandered through the countryside obviously making plans and taking measurements for the accommodation of vast bodies of troops in the area. Additional air defence troops began to filter down to the South-east, and every effort was made to speed up programmes of road widening, pipe laying, installing additional communications and so forth.

The troops had of course been told that their exercise HARLEQUIN was in fact an exercise. This seemed right enough. They had had so many exercises before of much the same character. But was this exercise quite the same as all the others? Did it not have just that little something the others hadn't had? It was repeated that this was an exercise. You can tell a man the truth, but you can't make him believe it.

Exercise STARKEY began to unroll in earnest early in August. After a week it was possible to perceive some slight enemy reaction in the form of increased reconnaissance and bombing along the South coast. But beyond this the enemy did not go. It might possibly be merely the deterioration in the weather, so we persisted in our efforts. We had aimed to reach a climax by the first week in September when our air operations were to be at their peak and when mine sweeping was actually to be undertaken in the narrows. But the weather was all against us. Bomber Command had done us well in view of their major activities. While they could divert no great body of their main force, they nevertheless made use for our purposes of operational training flights. A bomb is just as effective whatever the hand that releases it. We were disappointed that the Navy had not found it possible to reinforce the bom-

barding squadrons with one or two of their older capital ships. For this we had asked specially, remembering the air situation that had been created some time before when the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen* made their gallant and spectacular dash up Channel. What we wanted amongst other things was an air situation. But there was the fate of the *Repulse* and the *Prince of Wales* to be remembered, and a battleship, however old, carries precious freight in the form of its crew. The Navy judged the game, for in this case it was only a game, not worth the candle. At least this was how I translated the explosion that shattered the cloistral calm of the Chiefs of Staff Committee Room when I put forward the suggestion.

D-Day for operation STARKEY was the 8th September, 1943, and a lovely day it was. General Sir Bernard Paget, Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, kindly invited a small party of us to accompany him in "Rapier," his well-appointed special train, for a tour of the area affected by exercise HARLEQUIN. With American Generals Jacob Devers, Cliff Lee and Idwal Edwards of European Theatre Headquarters, we visited first the complex lay-out at the back of Southampton through which troops were processed to prepare them for embarkation. This business alone was of immense proportions and unbelievable intricacy. It is not nowadays, as it was for many centuries, a matter merely of marching the troops to a seaport town and just driving them from the local taverns up the gangway. Nowadays, the embarking troops come into the hands of the embarkation authorities many miles from the shore. They and their vehicles and all their possessions have to be sorted out and adjusted so that by the time they have filtered through to the craft they arrive in exact shiploads in accordance with the size and type of ship to carry them over the water. The size and type of ship is dependent upon the destination, the type of disembarkation facilities at the destination and the task that each particular little packet of troops or transport will have to perform immediately it is on dry land again. The infinite variety of circumstances that may arise to interfere with the smooth working of the process, when it is done on a scale of hundreds of thousands, can well be imagined. The whole business must therefore be not only meticulously accurate but infinitely variable as well. On this occasion we found that

although perfection had been reached in every little detail such as the provision of good meals, hot washing water and concert parties to distract the soldiers' minds during the inevitable tedious delays, there seemed insufficient flexibility in the whole organisation to allow for a major change of plan. For instance, it might be quite possible for the commander fighting his battle on the far shore to discover that what he wanted next out of the bag was an armoured division instead of, according to his preconceived desire on which the embarkation plan was built, an infantry division. Amendments for future use were made accordingly. It was of great value to have the American commanders present with us so that they might see the British idea of what was needed. They forthwith produced the American version which a few months later worked so successfully.

We travelled on nearer to the seat of war and on a brilliant morning stood on the Kentish beaches around Hythe and Folkestone. It was an inspiring sight to see everybody doing his stuff to perfection except, unfortunately, the German.

Out to sea we could see the Navy as usual delivering the goods. There were the minesweepers having swept channels right up practically to the muzzles of the German coast defence batteries which had displayed little interest beyond a few fortunately badly-laid rounds. Up Channel, in full view from both coasts came an impressive convoy of merchantmen that might well have been carrying the infantry of our invasion force instead of merely anti-aircraft armaments, as was actually the case in view of the possibility of hostile air attack. Down to the hards all along the coast marched streams of troops of which the main bodies turned about on arrival at the beach while their anti-anticraft armament embarked in the waiting landing craft and put to sea for a nice voyage in the "*Skylark*." The sky reverberated with the roar of great formations of American and British fighters racing for the battle that they failed to find. We were told that a German coast artillery subaltern on the far shore had been overheard calling his captain on the radio to ask if anybody knew what all this fuss was about. Were our faces red?

So that was that. It certainly looked as if we had played a complete air-shot. But there was one thing about exercise HARLEQUIN that those of us who saw it will never forget,

and that was the look in the eyes of those infantrymen when they were turned back from the hards and told that they could go home. Once one had seen the expression on those men's faces there could no longer be any vestige of doubt as to the spirit that animated the British Army in England. And that spirit was abroad, too, amongst the people of the country at large. Even after years of tedious waiting and frustration, after years of bombardment and defeat, there was no doubt whatever that when the time should come to lead them across the water to France they would jump to it and jump to it in a big way. And God help anybody that tried to stop them.

It was not quite over. There remained one valuable lesson to be learnt, that connected with the intricate business of the publicity to be given to operation STARKEY. If nothing were to be said it would immediately be concluded in interested quarters that we had actually attempted invasion and failed. Though such a statement would be untrue it would be all the same distinctly bad for business. The press reactions to the preparations for operation STARKEY had been just what we did not want. Before the *dénouement* of the affair, of course, we could not broadcast that it was merely to be an exercise. From lack of proper guidance many of the more enterprising press boys had drawn all kinds of deductions and had, in fact, gone far toward convincing the public that this was indeed it. So we had to do what we could to let everybody down as lightly as possible. In view of all the circumstances we had to content ourselves with a very lame communique to the effect that an enjoyable time had been had by all and many useful lessons had been learnt. Almost the most useful lesson was learnt by the public relations staff.

There was, however, one large body of people for whom our exercise was not just as simple and amusing as all that. This was the great underground army deployed behind and among the Germans that was awaiting with growing impatience our actual arrival amongst them so that they might rise up to help us. All the way through we had been forced to watch most carefully the reactions to our antics not only of the German enemy but of our French, Belgian and Dutch friends. Once again for obvious reasons it was quite impossible to tell them beforehand that what we were doing would not culminate in

that which they so keenly anticipated and desired—a real invasion. Equally, we could not lie to them. Though communication from us to them was mechanically excellent, everything had to be carried on in intricate codes and cyphers. In their own interests they could not be told too much. The tension was by now so great in the Maquis that the smallest of sparks would have sufficed to cause the most violent of explosions. And it is not necessary to expand upon the ghastly effect that would have attended a premature uprising.

All we could do was to drum into these sorely-tried people the absolutely vital necessity, come hell or high water, of waiting for the word from London. Whatever they saw, whatever they heard, whatever they felt there was only one word to be obeyed, and that word would only come from one place. In spite of all precautions, there were many on our side who spent many an anxious hour in early September of 1943 in fear of a grave mischance. Mercifully, this part of the affair went according to plan.

So for all our endeavours we had got precious little out of the enemy that we could carry back home with us. The surface impression made on them came to us in the form of a modified mention in despatches over the Berlin radio. This told us that concentrations of troops in south-east England had been noted and that "as far as the second Front in Western Europe is concerned, it is beyond doubt that the British have made preparations on a considerable scale." The enemy had not, as at one time we had hoped he might be persuaded to do, disclosed anything in his hand. But nevertheless, we might continue to hope that he had in secret made false deductions from that which he had been good enough to tell us that he had seen on our side. The centre of gravity of our effort had been well to the East of South, and the Navy's performance in operation STARKEY had been such as clearly to connect the Southampton neighbourhood with the Straits of Dover.

Very much on the credit side was the invaluable experience that had been gained by everyone on our side of the water, however remotely connected with the affair. All had had a foretaste of what was to come later on.

And in the light that has since the event been thrown upon the great triumphs of 1944 how lucky it was that, despite all

the jeremiads of the experts, we persisted in going through with operation STARKEY to its end that seemed so bitter at the time. For we now know, from the best possible source, of the enemy's utter conviction of our intention to strike him in 1944 by way of the Pas de Calais. So firmly did he believe this that, for a period of weeks after the Normandy landings had taken place, he clung to his theory that these were but a preliminary to the main blow that was to come upon him further North. To the extent that he held his reserves in hand in the Low Countries to meet this threat that he feared so much when their timely intervention in Normandy might well have saved the day for him. Much happened after the days of COSSAC to drive home in the enemy the point made by operation STARKEY, but there can be no doubt that all those who suffered inconvenience and worse in the summer of 1943 did so in the best of causes—ultimate victory.

V

THE PLAN FOR WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

THE second plan that we were ordered in our first directive to prepare—a plan for " a return to the Continent in the event of German disintegration at any time from now onwards with whatever forces may be available at the time "—we could at once see to be of a fundamentally different character from the other two plans to be made, those for the operation in 1943 and for the invasion of 1944. This basic difference was due to the fact that whereas in these operations the initiative would lie in our hands, the signal for undertaking operation " RANKIN " would come from the enemy. The operative words in the pertinent part of the directive were " in the event of German disintegration." We seemed therefore to be faced with a considerable number of variables in drawing up the equation of which one side would equal operation " RANKIN." This seemed to imply that the dominant nature of our plan must be elasticity and that all concerned must be constantly ready to spring into action largely " on an *ad hoc* basis," as the delightful phrase runs throughout so much of our official correspondence.

How often in rare moments of leisure has not one's mind dwelt upon a fascinating project for erecting, somewhere in Whitehall, a suitable shrine in commemoration of, and for the worship of, this great Deity, " AD HOC." I am sure that the feet of the effigy should be of clay while the torso should be hollow and of brass. One concept is that the general appearance should be piscine, but I am certain that the main effect should be of circles finishing up exactly where they start and containing nothing in the middle. The whole affair should be delicately balanced so as to sway in sympathy with the faintest breeze. Those of us who have done time in the institutions

down the street owe much to the beneficence of the good god, AD HOC.

But now we had to struggle to sift out from amongst a mass of imponderables some solid basis on which to build a plan that could be committed to paper for approval by our superiors and that could, on approval by them, be issued to the forces for their clear guidance and for action. It was difficult in the first place to know just how seriously the problem should be taken. It seemed to be one of those that could be dealt with quite superficially in a nice piece of circular writing. But, in face of this doubt, here were the orders to be obeyed. Nevertheless it was a tough job to convince even the COSSAC Staff that there might be something in all this.

It seemed that what was needed was something comparable to the scheme for mobilisation that is evolved in peace-time. In the United States and Great Britain at any rate such a scheme has always to be prepared on the definite assumption that the enemy, whoever he may be, will set the date for operation of the scheme. Our political systems are such that it is difficult at any given time to forecast with accuracy the strength and composition of forces that will be available even a short time ahead, and above all such a scheme must be drawn in such a way that, until it is put into operation, it has no adverse effect on the normal peace-time pursuits of the people. Most of these main premises seemed present in the case of operation "RANKIN." The enemy's disintegration would set the time; there must be nothing in our plan that would involve interference with either our own other two plans or any of the thousand and one activities in other directions taking place in Great Britain or the United States or in connection with their many overseas commitments at this time. We were, however, lucky in that we could calculate with tolerable accuracy the forces that were immediately available and were to become available during the next twelve months to put into effect any plan that we might evolve for operation "RANKIN."

The difficulty mentioned of getting the COSSAC Staff really interested was as nothing compared with that of rousing enthusiasm in outside authorities and the whole thing became a considerable nightmare. If nothing happened, that is to say if the enemy did not disintegrate or weaken in any way, well

and good. But if he did do anything of the sort it would mean the beginning of the end, and if the end were to catch us unawares there could only follow indescribable chaos hardly conducive to any sort of post-war settlement. One remembered 1918-19, and it seemed altogether too much to leave so great a task to the devotees of AD HOC without doing something to try to help them. If the worst, which in reality would be the best, were to happen there would be no lack of enthusiasm on the part of anyone, and it did not need much arithmetic to work out where responsibility for unpreparedness would in this event lie.

Our directive was issued to us in April, 1943, yet so late as the end of July there was still no sort of coherent plan in existence to meet the eventuality described in the directive. This period saw the end in Africa, the successful invasion of Sicily, the collapse of Italy and the launching of heavy and successful counter-attacks by the Russians in the East. Every day, therefore, the likelihood of circumstances arising that would call for an operation of the nature of operation "RANKIN" became at least less and less unlikely. In July came the impulse required to induce some sort of crystallisation of all the talk, discussion and argument that had been going on at COSSAC. The Chiefs of Staff called for our plan, and by dint of a superhuman effort we were able to submit to them a plan of sorts by the 13th August. The plan submitted was an outline only due, partly, to the extreme difficulty mentioned of arousing enthusiasm and so of getting wholehearted co-operation from those who, not unlike ourselves, were already busily engaged on many other tasks. Once again here we suffered from the handicap of being without a commander. But there was also here the difficulty, as elsewhere, of getting full and proper direction from our superiors. If German disintegration were to be complete we should be left free to deploy our forces as and where we chose to do so on the Continent. Where should we choose to do so? In other words, how was the occupation of Germany to be organised as between United States, the Soviets and Britain? And exactly how were we to visualise the mechanics of liberation of France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway, not to mention Luxembourg and the Channel Islands? In early 1943 it was difficult to find anyone either in Great Britain or the United

States who had begun to think realistically on any of these subjects. There were many who were prepared at the drop of a hat to discourse at great length on a variety of principles bearing more or less indirectly on various parts of the problem, but the brief query, "So what?", was normally sufficient to bring about a swift change of subject. It was our difficult task to try to reduce an infinite mass of high-sounding theory to practice. Almost it seemed that we were required to make up the minds of the higher authorities for them, at least to submit some concrete suggestion that they might demolish. In this case we had to deduce the objective from the object, with that object not at all clearly defined. We were here faced, in fact, with the antithesis of the problem presented in operation "OVERLORD" where it seemed that we were asked to plan for the attainment of an objective without knowing the real object for which we were doing so. The saving grace, if there were any, seemed to be that the two projects were complementary.

Our plan, submitted to the Chiefs of Staff in August, dealt first with the analysis of the courses open to the enemy since, as I have pointed out, the initiative lay in this instance with him. It was the degree and extent of "German disintegration" that was going to dictate our course of action. Out of all the various possibilities we selected three that seemed to us adequately to cover the whole ground and to give a sufficient variety, and we planned accordingly for what we called operation "RANKIN" Cases A, B and C. "RANKIN" Case A visualised the situation in which the enemy, while maintaining his existing front from the Pyrenees to the North Cape unbroken, had been forced to thin out this line to such an extent that we could contemplate breaking into it with forces very much less than those deemed requisite to mount an invasion against determined and highly organised opposition. "RANKIN" Case B was designed to cope with a situation in which the enemy might be forced, owing to circumstances brought about elsewhere on his several fronts, to economise in north-west Europe by withdrawing voluntarily from certain portions of his line while maintaining the bulk of it intact. He might for instance decide to evacuate a portion of France or of Norway while standing firm along the Channel Coast and in the Low Countries. "RANKIN"

Case C dealt with the possibility of a complete collapse of Nazi power on the lines of the swift surrender of November, 1918.

"RANKIN" Case A we were able to dismiss in fairly short order. The resources available to us in the United Kingdom in the Summer of 1943 were inconsiderable and far below any scale that one could contemplate using for anything but a small raid on the Continent of short duration. What was contemplated here was not merely a raid but action that should provide a basis for the ultimate employment of the whole of the United States and British forces. What we must think of, in fact, was an operation "OVERLORD" in miniature, the establishment of a permanent lodgment area on the mainland of Europe as the embryo of a firm base from which to conduct the campaign of conquest. Our calculations showed us that in all probability we should not have at our disposal the forces required to do any such thing even on the smallest scale before, probably, the end of 1943. So there was little more to be said or written for the time being.

Our recommendation here therefore took the form of a post-dated cheque. From January, 1944, onward we reckoned that it should be possible to undertake an assault against weak opposition to secure a strictly limited objective for permanent occupation. From March, 1944, onward our situation would improve rapidly and we should then be in a position to contemplate the seizure of the Cotentin Peninsula, provided always that we should then command the resources to reduce Cherbourg within forty-eight hours. Diversionary operations would probably be desirable simultaneously in the Pas de Calais and in Southern France, which ought both by then to be within our capabilities. Shortly after this we should be all set for the full-dress "OVERLORD."

It may be thought that this was unduly pessimistic. From a basis of pure mathematics it would seem that, having allowed a year for the preparation of operation "OVERLORD," we should have three-quarters of it ready in nine months. But an affair of such superhuman proportions cannot be created by a process of simple progression. It is built up of a vast number of interlocking parts which have not only to be created but have to be fitted together and trained carefully to work with

each other. The premature diversion of even one small fraction might well destroy the balance of the whole.

Difficulties began rapidly to multiply when it came to a question of operation "RANKIN" Case B where we soon unearthed possible conflict as between policy and strategy. Had the enemy by any chance evacuated a portion of, say, Western France or Northern Norway there would have been little for us to gain strategically speaking by sending forces into those regions. Nevertheless, it seemed to us that from other points of view it would be absolutely incumbent on us to do this very thing. The coast of Northern Norway would undoubtedly have been of modified use to us. Secure possession of a certain portion of it would have eased the acute problem of the protection of our convoys running to and from the North Russian ports and would have considerably strengthened our grip on the U-Boat situation. But there would have been little of positive value for future development as a base for operations against the enemy's main forces or his home country.

It seemed possible to put forward much the same line of argument in relation to the west coast of France. Should the enemy evacuate here we should undoubtedly be sucked into the vacuum thus caused if only for the rescue of the inhabitants, but from the strategic point of view in so doing we should be incurring an added liability with little if any countervailing advantage. It might be possible to visualise gaining possession of some major port that could in time be made into a suitable base for armies introduced through it from Britain and from the United States. But this would be an expensive, long-term project. Any port that the Germans evacuated would hardly be left by them in a condition in which we should hope to find it. The work of restoration would require an immense apparatus which in turn would need elaborate defence against counter-attack by land and air. In reviewing this part of the problem we felt that no real profit would accrue to us unless and until we were given vacant possession of Cherbourg or any place to the East of it. That this should be the case seemed highly unlikely.

It seemed, however, worth while to consider the faint possibility of the enemy feeling obliged to undertake a more comprehensive withdrawal eastward from his westernmost limits.

One remembered the episode on the Western Front in the Winter of 1916-17 when this same German picked what was for us the worst possible moment and then skipped back to his Hindenburg Line leaving us heirs to a wilderness of devastation studded with booby traps over which we had painfully to creep through snow, ice and mud. The German memory might be equally good and he might well be contemplating doing it on us again in the same manner but on a much larger scale. We therefore worked on the supposition that he might look for some westward-facing defensive position other than his existing lines along the North, West and South coasts of France and the line of the Pyrenees. Painful experience gained in 1940 had taught us to revise somewhat drastically our pre-war ideas on defensive positions and their value and, search the map as we might, there appeared to be no unbroken line of defence that the enemy would consider holding until he went right back to his Siegfried system. All sources of information were tapped for signs of defensive preparations inland in France, but nothing could be found to suggest more than a faint trace of what we were looking for. It seemed improbable that the enemy would pull back to his own frontier until the end was very near. In any case the Hitlerian strategy did not countenance any such operation.

Our suggested plan for operation "RANKIN" Case B was, therefore, that there be detailed for action at short notice separate forces from the U.K. each of the strength of a Regimental Combat Team or Brigade Group to go to Bordeaux, Nantes and Brest. Two such forces would be needed to stand by in the Mediterranean Theatre to go to Marseilles and Toulon, should these places be evacuated by the Germans. The task of each force would be primarily to bring succour to the local French and then to reconnoitre forward. Subsequent objects would be to repair ports for the reception of United States' forces direct from the States. If the enemy's retirement were to be continued, Cherbourg would become a United States port and Le Havre the main base port for the British. Developments on the Mediterranean coast would have to await decision at the time.

As regards Norway we recommended that a Brigade Group be prepared—more than just a figure of speech for operations in that climate which need very special equipment provision—

for duty at short notice in Northern Norway and a division to go to Southern Norway should that be evacuated.

In each case adequate provision was needed for appropriate Naval and Air action to support the ground forces. Before the event it did not seem wise to commit ourselves too deeply to any particular line of action. We catered, in fact, for little more than the reconnaissance phase.

The fact was that, great though out potential resources were in many directions, they were far from unlimited. What exercised our minds was the possibility of entering upon some commitment to reopen and develop, say, the Gironde to such an extent that, if we were subsequently presented with, or gained possession of, a more conveniently situated port, say again Cherbourg or Le Havre, we should find ourselves without the eggs to fill the second basket, except after inordinate delay.

Right here lies material for yet another fascinating future study, that of the general Hitlerian strategy. It is worthy, in my estimation, of much more profound examination and research than that of which I am capable either here or elsewhere. Here and now it seems possible to claim for the late Adolf Hitler that he was the most successful commander produced by this last war. His successes, however, were scored by his enemies against his own side. Time and again did he force his generals to lay and keep their heads upon the block so that they might be decapitated by us in good, old, German fashion. Stalingrad, Normandy, the Ardennes do not belong to this story, but had more been miraculously known beforehand of the working of the master-mind we at COSSAC would have had to spend much less time and trouble than we did in producing even these brief and nebulous plans for operation "RANKIN" Cases A and B.

One cannot altogether refrain from certain mild speculation as to what might have been, what might have happened had the German done as we feared he might do ; had he for instance stood back from one or more of the Western French ports leaving them well and truly blocked, or had he evacuated the Channel Islands. It seems that this would have meant to him little other than moral loss. What would it have meant to us ?

My contention is that we should have been morally forced to have done something about it. But what should that something

have been, such that we did not merely open for ourselves a running sore? We are taught that one should create a military detachment only if the profit and loss account leaves no doubt as to who is up on the deal. Over the years the British have had plenty of experience of making small descents upon the coast of Europe on a non-profit-making basis. Expeditions to the Helder, to Walcheren, to Belle Isle, Quiberon and La Rochelle cross the mind. Had we been forced to embark upon one or more modernised versions of this type of exploit in 1943, the chances of success in 1944 would have been gravely jeopardised. The boys of the new brigade can, if they wish, do a bit of figuring on that one.

Then there was wanted the plan for operation "RANKIN" Case C, what to do in case the enemy packed up completely with little or no warning before the "OVERLORD" forces were fully drawn up ready to go across to Europe. As I have said, we had to do a powerful amount of crystal-gazing here to try to define for ourselves something of what the war was about. Other, more reputable, sources of information were not communicative on the point, not, that is, in terms that meant anything. And there was plenty else for them to be worried over. First things had to come first and that which might happen before the war ended obviously had more claim to attention than the end of the war. Or had it?

That the British authorities had begun to take cognisance of the problem was made evident during the summer of 1943 by the assembly of a Post Hostilities Planning (P.H.P.) Sub-committee, set up jointly by Chiefs of Staff and Foreign Office. But it naturally took time for this body to hit its stride, and for long such recommendations as they were able to make were nebulous.

So we tackled it from first principles. It was obvious that the Russians would enter Germany from the East and the United States and British armies from the West. Further, there was no disputing the fact, as we saw it, that the Americans would start from England on the right of the British, the whole party would wheel half left, and this would bring the Americans into south-west Germany, the British into north-west Germany. We started, therefore, by dividing the map of Germany into three which gave us an answer not so far off that which was

finally arrived at. There was at this time no question of a French Zone of Germany. The French Zone as it exists to-day was created much later by simple subtraction from the original American and British Zones, when eventually the French felt able to assume the burden in addition to their many others.

In passing, it may be of interest to comment upon the bland statement that the American Army would obviously leave England for Europe on the right of the British Army, that Cherbourg was always regarded as an American objective and Le Havre as British. Looking back, as I see it, this big strategic decision was in all probability originally made by some official in the quartering directorate of the British War Office presumably with North African possibilities in mind. I do not believe that at the time there can have been realised by anybody the full and ultimate implication of quartering the first American troops to arrive in Britain in Northern Ireland. From the fact that this was done flowed all the rest. From Northern Ireland, as American strength in the British Isles increased, the tendency was naturally to spread into the West of England, partly because western England is nearer to the United States and so offers the more convenient terminals for Trans-Atlantic convoys and partly because the British were busily engaged at the time in fighting a war in south-east England. The third consideration was that the American Command would want to keep itself and its resources as much concentrated as possible. As has already been said, American and British systems of supply and administration differ to an extent that makes it impossible to intermingle them. It would ease everybody's problem if the Americans were to run their system over one part of England while the British operated as far as possible separately. It was evident here again that the West rather than the East of England would lend itself the better to the American requirement. At COSSAC therefore we did not even trouble to raise the point although, as will be told later, it was raised for us before we were through.

With the blue pencil poised above the map of Germany prepared for trisection came the first check. How did one cut a country into three, anyway? Was the big idea to create three new countries or one new country administered in three provinces? Should we aim at three independent economic

units and, if so, was such an idea possible? It was obvious from the start that the Americans and British looked like getting the front end of the German cow. (We were not to know that the brute was to develop into something more like a bison with most of its weight on the forehand.) And what about Berlin? Were we to continue to regard the place as a capital or was there to be another such, more conveniently situated, or was there to be a capital at all? We soon found ourselves with these and other similarly tortuous and ponderous problems all round our necks nearly choking us. There was no answer to them that we could provide, which could give us a sure enough foundation on which to build anything. So the blue pencil lines were only faintly sketched in along existing provincial boundaries to give rough superficial equality to the three Zones, and we started again from another angle.

Whatever Zone boundaries might be decided on, it seemed that they would be, as indeed they were, not so far off from the guess we had made. Whatever the ultimate object of the whole affair there would clearly be certain tasks that would immediately fall to the lot of the armies. First would be that of seizing and holding securely key points in the German system of war economy so that there should be no question, this time, of the enemy dodging what was coming to him while the usual peace-wrangles went on. Then there would be the matter of disarming the German armed forces. These would be, under the conditions to be visualised, not all tidily concentrated back in the home country but scattered all over Europe. We must also consider the disarmament of Germany as a whole, preparation, at any rate, for the destruction of everything comprehended in the useful phrase "war potential." Then there was the question of maintaining some semblance of order in the country, and here at once arose the spectre of the displaced masses of whom the vast majority would, as soon as they were freed from coercion, tend to surge back to the places whence they came. There would be those who had been dragged into Germany trying to get out against the tide of Germans, men of the Services, colonists, administrators and whatnot trying to get back in again.

This seemed enough to be getting on with, so we made some estimate of what it might take in the way of troops to tackle

this for the two Western Zones. The Russian Zone would naturally be the affair of the Russians who were not included in our COSSAC party. Our general idea was to establish ourselves on the Rhine, Americans from the Swiss frontier to Düsseldorf, British thence northward from the Ruhr to Lübeck inclusive. We proposed eleven divisions for the Rhine valley, six divisions for the Ruhr and seven divisions for north-west Germany which included objectives we deemed to be vital in the great ports and the Jutland Peninsula. This gave a total of twenty-four divisions, which was well beyond our resources in the United Kingdom in 1943. We looked for help to the United States whence, in the event of German surrender, we might hope to get troops quickly if they could be accepted in a lower state of training and organisation than would be necessary for battle. An admittedly questionable expedient since occupation duties call for as high a standard in many respects as any other form of military duty. We hoped also that the burden might be shared by our forces in the Mediterranean Theatre.

But this was not all. There was still the matter of the countries to be liberated. Who was to liberate them and how to set about it? There were in London Governmental representatives at least of all the countries concerned. Many had with them in England contingents of their armed forces, but in no case did it seem that these nuclei would suffice to re-establish any sort of stability in newly-liberated territories while post-occupation chaos was being sorted out. United States and British troops would probably be needed to help, and it seemed fitting that this should be so. Our suggestion was that the United States authorities in broad terms "see to" the liberation of France Belgium and Luxembourg, while the British authorities do likewise in the cases of Holland, Denmark and Norway. There was no question but that the liberation of the Channel Islands, the only corner of British soil on which the Germans ever set foot, should be the affair of the British.

This gave rise to the whole question of the internationality of operation "RANKIN" Case C. Our first project suggested that occupation of Berlin or any other capital, were there to be one, should be in equal tripartite force, by a division each of United States, British and Russian troops. We then toyed

with the idea of locating British and United States troops, one division of each, in the Russian Zone of Germany, one British and one Russian division in the United States Zone, one United States and one Russian division in the British Zone. Desirable though this might seem in some ways in theory, we were early forced to reject the idea as administratively impracticable. There remained the question of the forces to aid in liberation of the other countries, and here combined United States and British action seemed essential.

To the Chiefs of Staff was put a tentative plan for operation "RANKIN" Case C on the lines indicated above, together with the plans for operation "RANKIN" Cases A and B, in August, 1943, the Chiefs being then in combined session at Quebec for what was known as conference "QUADRANT." Somewhat to the surprise of the COSSAC Staff these plans received a general blessing with the rider that the forces projected for operation "RANKIN" Case C were excessive. One is tempted to describe this as the instinctive reaction of any higher authority to any plan put forward by any lower authority. Specially is this so in the British services. Here, one need only note that the maximum forces demanded by our plan turned out to be far smaller than the forces found necessary in practice to cope with a much simpler and more constricted problem than we, in planning, had set ourselves.

We were told, in response to a request for guidance, that we should concentrate attention on polishing up the plan for operation "RANKIN" Case A, that for the minor assault against much reduced opposition.

To be brief and frank these decisions put us at COSSAC on somewhat of a spot. It was now up to us to proceed to Part Two of the programme, to put our plans into the form of actual directives to the troops that would have to carry them out should the enemy behave as forecast. Strive as we might we could still see no prospect of being able to do anything about "RANKIN" Case A until the end of the year so should we perhaps put the whole thing under the carpet for a month or two? We were busy enough in all conscience with plans for, and execution of, operation "OVERLORD" and the affair of this year, 1943. But in the work we had done on operation "RANKIN" Case C, that which covered all the business of

occupation and liberation, we had struck oil in no ordinary quantity. I have said elsewhere, that this plan, which presupposed the " unconditional surrender " of Germany, represented in actuality the culmination of operation " OVERLORD," the assault on Europe. It could be described as victory without an invasion. Almost all we had done, therefore, all the mental agony we had been through, in pursuit of operation " RANKIN " Case C had a direct and vital bearing on our main work. So, for ourselves, we decided that the carpet should cover plans for operations " RANKIN " Cases A and B while we kept working on Case C.

For in this bit of planning we had begun to get to grips with the problems of " Civil Affairs," the active service forerunner of Military Government and the Control Commissions, problems of refugees and Displaced Persons, of disarmament and of post-hostilities business generally. We had begun to become aware of the vast problem presented by the liberation of all our various Western European friends. All these things were bound to come to us one day, as certainly as we were sitting in Norfolk House, the only question being whether we were to buy them at the price of operation " OVERLORD " or get them for nothing as in operation " RANKIN " Case C. There was also always the possibility of a variation of these two alternatives, that there might be a knock-out in the first or an early round of operation " OVERLORD," that the German might go down for the count while we had only one foot in the ring. If this were to be so the event would necessitate, in our phraseology of the time, a quick change-over from Plan " OVERLORD " to Plan " RANKIN " C. Whichever way we looked at it, it was going to pay handsomely to continue the elaboration of our Plan for operation " RANKIN " Case C. We made it so.

Though absolute secrecy always was and had to be the watchword of COSSAC, things got to a point where it became obviously more than ludicrous that we should sit behind closed doors planning for the liberation of friendly countries without having any sort of communication with the properly accredited representatives of those countries with whom we rubbed shoulders daily in the streets outside. After all, it was for the benefit of these authorities and of the countries they represented that we were setting out on our mission of liberation. It was their

affair rather than ours. It seemed only common sense that we should have some contact with these people if only to find out what their ideas on the subject might be. And we wanted all kinds of information for all kinds of purposes concerning these same countries and where better could the information be got, for instance, about Belgium than from a Belgian Minister or a senior Belgian officer who was a native of the country and was now readily at hand itching to help in any way he could.

But there was abundant wisdom behind the original decision that we should not have direct contact with these good people. They were all of them in close contact by one means or another with their home countries and with their unfortunate friends suffering under the German occupation. Communications were quite reasonably good, and there was constant exchange of information. The tension in the occupied countries was growing daily, and the down-trodden populations were eagerly looking for a sign out of the West that should tell them of the time and the means of the coming of their salvation. Were we to tell too much of our plans to these London representatives it would be asking altogether too much of human nature to expect everyone of them to keep this information absolutely to himself. Many of them had left their nearest and dearest behind in enemy hands, and it would be manifestly unfair to set them a great problem of loyalty, to come on top of all their other troubles. But if we were to interpret our instructions on this point absolutely literally it seemed to us that we might well find ourselves cutting off our noses to spite our faces. Accordingly, we asked for some modification of the original orders, and we were permitted in August of 1943 to open negotiations with the military missions in London of the Belgian, Dutch, Norwegian, Polish and Czechoslovakian Governments, and to make special arrangements with General De Gaulle's Headquarters.

Before actually making the contacts we had rehearsed very carefully with the United States and British authorities the procedure that was to be followed, what we were to tell these officers and what we were to ask them to tell us. It was also necessary of course to arrive at some very clear understanding as to the precise depth into Europe to which it was intended that operations from the North-west should penetrate. Were we in fact to interest ourselves deeply in the affairs of Czecho-

slovakia and Poland and, if not, were we indeed to exclude the representatives of these countries from our conversations? There was a great comradeship in misfortune among all those who were taking temporary refuge in Great Britain, and we estimated that anything said to or any business transacted with the representatives of one nation would be quickly known to all the others. It was decided in principle therefore that we should initiate conversations with the representatives of all the countries here named.

But it was evident that we should have to arrive at some very clear understanding on the broadest lines as to the sphere in which each of the allied major expeditionary forces was to operate. In the widest sense Germany was the focal point of three converging blows, those being delivered from Russia, from the Mediterranean and from the British Isles. It would be nice if we could ensure that there was complete understanding from the start as to how much of the job was to be done by each of the three participants. Even then there seemed little hope of arriving at any sort of arrangement on these lines with the Russians, but what we should and could do was to arrive at an understanding with our own Mediterranean Theatre. Though the British had not hitherto felt the necessity of considering the problem too deeply, the Americans had been obliged to have it very much in mind from the days of the invasion of North Africa and there already existed the United States boundary as between their North African Theatre and their European Theatre of Operations—"NATOUSA" and "ETOUSA," as they were called in telegraphic language—and after negotiation it was agreed that COSSAC should adopt the American-drawn boundary. This excluded from our attention both Czechoslavakia and Poland.

The boundary question having been reasonably settled, there was next to be thought of the precise method by which contact was to be made with the Allied Military Missions. It was obvious that they would have to have access to at any rate part of our headquarters, but care would have to be taken that they were not free to wander throughout the premises. Were they to do so it was more than probable that quite unwittingly they would come into possession of information which would be to them a cause of at least profound embarrassment. It seemed necessary

to establish beforehand a specific point of contact at COSSAC Headquarters through which all business of this nature would be transacted and accordingly there was brought into being a special staff section which was christened the European Allied Contact Section, to head which we were lucky enough to obtain the services of the same Honourable Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, Jun., who had hitherto been serving as United States Ambassador to all those Governments with whose representatives we were now about to do business.

This little section carried throughout all that followed a tremendous load of responsibility and performed an invaluable task. Its duty was primarily to make introductions as between the COSSAC Staff and the representatives of all the other Allies, to see that each side got from the other as nearly as possible what it wanted, no more and no less, having in view all the complicated dictates of security. It had been decided that all should be told that at some time in the not far distant future Europe would be either invaded or re-occupied and, this being the case, we should naturally like to know as much as possible regarding the internal situation existing at the time in each country and regarding any indigenous plans that might be in existence or in prospect for post-war revival. It was a highly emotional business talking to these good people, magnificent soldiers and magnificent men all of them. Men who had in many cases plumbed the nethermost depths of hell, whereas we by comparison knew little by experience of the horrors of which we talked so glibly. It was inestimably to our advantage on the psychological as well as on the material side to have these contacts with realism.

With the Czechs and Poles we confined ourselves to assurances that in God's good time, when opportunity eventually offered, we would do our best to make the path straight so that they might return to their own countries. With the others, we were able as time went on to go more and more deeply into the problems of what were to us Civil Affairs.

By the end of October, 1943, by one means and another, we had been able to put our "RANKIN" C Plan into the form of orders, and accordingly our directives were issued to the First United States Army Group and to British 21st Army Group which had by then been born out of the command of

British Home Forces. Exception was however made with regard to Norway and to the Channel Islands. Norway would not lie in the path of any invasion of the Continent so that to ask any porton of the invading army to deflect so widely any part of its attention would constitute too much of a handicap. It was decided, therefore, that the re-occupation of Norway after German surrender should be undertaken as a special mission by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Scottish Command, who should for this purpose become subordinate to the Supreme Allied Commander when he should be appointed.

Similarly the re-occupation of the Channel Islands was allotted as a special task to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, British Southern Command. Special directives were accordingly issued to these two General Officers in November, 1943, and were in fact carried out by them in due course.

VI

THE MASTER PLAN

THE third plan that we were ordered to work out was for that which became known as operation " OVERLORD." Of our other two plans the fate has already been explained, how operations ran their full course in 1943 without immediate visible effect on the enemy but with great gain to ourselves, and how operation " RANKIN " never took place as such but provided us at COSSAC with a great amount of invaluable experience and information that was indispensable to our other activities. Since the main theme of operation " OVERLORD " as planned by COSSAC was played right through to the grand finale, it will be fitting to give full consideration to the circumstances of its inception by the COSSAC Staff at Norfolk House, St. James's Square, London, England, in early 1943.

First and foremost emphasis must again be laid upon the fact that the so-called COSSAC plan was not by any means entirely original work. The majority of ingredients had already by 1943 been painstakingly evolved as the result of immense labour on the part of a large number of people who had from time to time been charged with the duty of anticipating and preparing for that which in many quarters seemed so utterly logical and even inevitable, that one day the war would have to be carried into Germany from the West. Secondly, it must be borne in mind throughout that the Supreme Allied Commander on whose shoulders would rest full and ultimate responsibility for the whole affair was not appointed until December of 1943 and did not in fact take up the reins of office until the second half of January of 1944. In the intervening time between April of 1943 when the first directive was issued to the COSSAC Staff and January of 1944, there were appointed the Commanders who were to be subordinate to the Supreme Commander.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, the majority of these subordinate appointments were made, not only without consultation with the Supreme Commander, who had not been appointed, but even without exact knowledge as to who that Supreme Commander was to be. It was thus inevitable that the COSSAC plan should be varied to a greater or less degree as time went on and as the various command appointments were made. Though much of the ground work of the plan had perforce to be utterly rigid there must in all such enterprises arrive the moment when decision must and can only rest with the man who is to bear the responsibility for the effect that the plan is to achieve, whatever that may be. In matters military, this man is a commander.

Theoretically and logically, one would say that the very first step to be taken in both the planning and the inauguration of a major campaign would be to appoint the commander who is to carry it through, to give him his orders and then help him to carry out the underlying intentions of those who issue the orders. But the British, at any rate, are not notorious for their addiction to either theory or logic. In general, they prefer to rely, specially in war, on their genius for what they call " muddling through." They have always been lucky in war; why should their luck change ? And anyway, it is much cheaper financially to organise for peace and improvise for war if only for the fact that, even in the worst century, there seems to be more of peace than there is of war. In this particular instance, too, there was no very great clarity as to what really were the underlying intentions of all concerned. There was this talk of flexibility to which reference has already been made. There was no doubt whatever as to the main intentions both of the British and the Americans to win the war. In these intentions everyone was completely honest. But it seemed that at this time, in early 1943, there was very considerable doubt in many minds as to the precise method by which these intentions were to be realised. And this apparent conflict in intentions came to a point right at COSSAC Headquarters.

This whole topic of the pursuit of an intention or mission is one which it seems to me could be expanded with much profit. It is an odd thought, for instance, that Hitler followed his intentions absolutely honestly to the best of his ability, what though

these intentions were fundamentally completely dishonest. He wrote a book well beforehand, telling the world exactly what his intentions were, and it was not his fault that he didn't carry them all out to their bitter conclusion. Is not the world now suffering from the fact that only comparatively small fractions of its population have any intentions whatever that they are, according to their lights, honestly trying to carry out? We soldiers are brought up to believe that even the worst plan, honestly pursued, is better than no plan at all. To that simple belief we at COSSAC clung with both hands. To do so required at times pretty considerable feats of strength. As has been mentioned earlier in this story there were grounds for suspicion that neither Americans nor British were coming absolutely clean either with themselves or each other on questions of major strategy, that is to say, on how to win the war. In spite of their vociferations to the contrary some of the British were at this time far from convinced of the fighting value of the United States Army. An extreme view was expressed to me after two glasses of port by a very senior retired officer member of a service club (very senior members of service clubs could still in those days obtain two glasses of port after lunch), who volunteered the suggestion that, rather on the lines of arguments put forward by the British and French in 1918, the United States Army might benefit from a good stiffening of British officers. But even in informed quarters one could sense a certain lack of complete confidence. I have mentioned the fundamental divergencies of view between the air forces. These were undoubtedly complicated by the fact that the R.A.F. could not yet quite bring themselves to do business with "brown-jobs," those who wore the same coloured clothes as the Army, while the United States Army Air Corps was filled with all kinds of desires and ambitions by the sight of a separate air force in blue suits. The internal Naval conflict seemed to be of a different character but there was still a conflict. This, I think, arose mainly from the fact that the United States Navy could clearly envisage all kinds of fun and games in their own backyard, the Pacific. Why shouldn't they be left in peace to get on with this side of the war which anyhow obviously had a far greater immediate interest to the American people, and why couldn't the British Navy look after the war on its own side of the globe.

In certain American quarters there was the gravest possible doubt on this point of honesty of intention on the part of the British strategists. They had the most disquieting suspicions with regard to the Mediterranean campaign. The Americans were absolutely at one with the British as regards the vital necessity for re-opening the Mediterranean as a line of communication from Great Britain to the Far East, and from the United States to South Russia. The cost in shipping of the maintenance of our main supply line round South Africa must have been fabulous, and we still seemed far from having caught up with the shipping situation. In American eyes in order to free the Mediterranean for use by our convoys, it would be necessary only to fight a short way up the leg of Italy. There was certainly something to be said, along another line of argument, for getting possession of the Foggia airfield area for use by our heavy bombers, whence to intensify the bombing offensive against Germany. There was no point in penetrating further north for this purpose since it was estimated that the distance from Foggia to the Alps was only about sufficient to allow a fully laden bomber to gain sufficient height to cross the mountains in safety. But, thought they, the absolute furthest northward point to which it would be necessary for our ground forces to penetrate would be that of which possession was essential to guarantee to the air forces undisturbed use of the Foggia airfield. And yet the British kept nattering about Rome and about all kinds of wildcat adventures in the Balkans, to be based on Italy. All this about the "soft underbelly" was just so much talk. The British had already been successful once in leading the naïve Americans part way up the Mediterranean garden path, and this had involved them in all kinds of frightening and unforeseen problems in relation to the French. Once bit, twice shy.

But, on the other hand, there was a tremendous lot to be said for what one may term the British Mediterranean strategy. This is not the place in which to discuss at any length traditional British policies in South-eastern Europe. But it is important to grasp throughout that the divergence of view as between Americans and British on the subject of Mediterranean strategy has never been reconciled. It affected operation "OVERLORD," and vitally, not only in the general background but

when it came to the point later on of elaborating that portion of the "OVERLORD" plan which called for the invasion of Southern France from Italy. The fact may well be, I think, that in this last war the Americans were practically having their first full-scale experience of dealing in detail with the intricacies of European international relationships. Before this time the interests of the United States in Europe can only have been of a comparatively superficial nature. Now for the first time they were forced, much against the will of many of them, to concern themselves up to the hilt in all kinds of ways in matters that they could previously afford to ignore. And their position can not have been made any easier by the fact that a high proportion of the inhabitants of the United States retain intimate ties with the countries of their origin in Europe and are at pains, moreover, to maintain in the heart of the United States considerable nationalistic blocs that are still only in process of digestion into their new homeland.

These views are admittedly superficial, and those of one brought up within the narrow confines of the military calling. But they are conclusions arrived at as a result of somewhat abnormal experience, and seem to have answered well enough the many tests to which they have been put from the beginning of 1943 onwards. In any case there is no gainsaying the fact that when COSSAC first appeared in the arena there was marked suspicion of British *bona fides*, on the part of many of the Americans, and a marked petulance very often on the part of many of the British at the apparent American inability or refusal to understand the British way and purpose in these matters. For the British it must be said again, that they had by now been at war for several years, shooting war, that is. And further back than that there was always to be remembered the experience of 1917-18. In the First World War, not only had the British losses been catastrophic but Anglo-American harmony had not been achieved to any very great extent either during or immediately after hostilities. While the burden of loss had fallen comparatively lightly on the United States, yet, to many British minds the United States had pretty much scooped the pool. What guarantee was there that history in this regard was not going to repeat itself twenty-five years later? The prospect of launching an invasion out of England was little short of

appalling. There was no precedent in all history for any such thing on the scale that must of necessity be achieved here. If it was to be undertaken, every chance of failure that could be eliminated beforehand would have to be eliminated. But even so, it seemed that one could not altogether discount the chances of failure. One cannot command victory. British and American power combined might be truly awful, but does not history abound with instances of victory being snatched from the jaws of defeat by the greatly inferior force? And just suppose the thing did fail, who was it who would, as the soldiers say, carry the can back? The obvious and only answer to this one was the British, who might well find themselves back not only where they started in 1940 but even worse off.

It is not contended in any way that that which is here recorded represented any sort of reflection of national policy. Neither the Americans nor the British appear often to have national policies anyway and, on the occasions when they do, these are rarely vouchsafed to junior government employees. The impressions above recorded as gained by the COSSAC Staff were gained by frequent and various contacts with senior members of both nations. Contacts with the younger generations and lower grades and ratings gave quite a different picture. Summing it all up, and setting motives aside for the moment, it seemed to us at the start that whereas senior Americans were all in favour of what we were setting out to do, the senior British were inclined, shall we say, to be cautious. On the other hand junior Americans, especially those the vast majority of whom had had no previous contact with the British and their funny ways, were apt to have little time for anything with such a British flavour as unavoidably had the COSSAC Staff in its beginnings, while the junior British almost all were from the outset only too ready to do everything they possibly could to help. The overall balance seemed pretty even.

Into the depths of this corrosive and potentially explosive mixture was dropped the COSSAC set-up to act as we were not quite sure what. Was it to be as a form of chemical agent to induce a sea, land and air change so that there might be brought about unity of intent, unity of method and so unity of action, at any rate in one corner of the world-wide battlefield. Or was it perhaps to be as a scapegoat upon which could be heaped

responsibility for what seemed in the eyes of each to be the sins of the other. It appeared as though a staff without a commander would be admirably suited to either purpose. It was clear to us from the start that we were cast in the rôle of super-stooge. Responsibility for failure would be ours, but credit for success would go elsewhere. Life is like that, and in this particular case it seemed right in view of everything that the situation should be thus. If we could help to win the war, so much the better. Winning was what mattered, how and by whom it was done was a very secondary consideration. If on the other hand we failed there would be nothing with which to reproach ourselves provided we did our best. What were the orders?

When setting out on any enterprise, it is as well to ask oneself three questions. To whom is one responsible? For precisely what is one responsible? What are the means at one's disposal for discharging this responsibility? In the case of COSSAC Headquarters the answer to the first question was clear. We were responsible to the United States and British Combined Chiefs of Staff and through them of course equally to the two Governments of the United States and of the British Commonwealth. In spite of the fact that COSSAC was born and grew up in London and was moreover directed to communicate with the Combined Chiefs of Staff by way of the British Chiefs of Staff also in London, this basic dual responsibility remained. It would so remain until such time as there should be appointed a Supreme Allied Commander in whom, then, the responsibility now carried by COSSAC would be vested. It was clearly stated in the first instance that this Supreme Allied Commander would be a British officer.

As for that for which COSSAC was to be responsible, there was first the general injunction contained in the minutes of the Casablanca Conference that we were to impart "cohesion and impetus" to all the planning, past, present and future, for an Anglo-American invasion of North-western Europe. This was brought one stage nearer to practicality by our first directive issued to us in April which ordered in so many words that "you will . . . prepare plans for: . . . a full-scale assault against the Continent in 1944 as early as possible." This was clear enough as far as it went but, as explained elsewhere, we could

not find anywhere in this first directive any answer to the third of the above three queries. It was true that in the directive there had been recorded the intention on the part of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to " endeavour to assemble the strongest possible forces (subject to prior commitments in other theatres) in constant readiness to re-enter the Continent if German resistance is weakened to the required extent in 1943." But this didn't give us what we needed for purposes of planning operation " OVERLORD." We knew roughly where to go, and we knew roughly when to go, but there was no clear indication as to just what force was to do the going. It was of course possible to interpret the directive as meaning that we were to plan for the disposal of the whole of the United States and British armed forces. But this was absurd. Large proportions of these forces were already engaged all over the world with our various enemies and the commitment of further large bodies of them must already be at least in contemplation. World strategy was not our business, so we had to ask for some indication of the means of which we were to contemplate the use in North-west Europe. As has already been told earlier, it was in response to this request for further guidance that we were given a further directive. This not only gave us details of the forces of which we were to assume the availability at the pertinent time, for planning purposes, but it also narrowed down our object, which was now to be the establishment on the mainland of Europe of a " lodgment area " for the unmolested accommodation and concentration of further unspecified forces that were to take up the running, and fight the campaign to its ultimate conclusion.

True to form, no sooner had we been given the detailed information that we sought with regard to the strength of the forces to be manipulated in our plan than we let out a piercing yell of protestation that these would be nothing like sufficient for the task in hand. This amplifying directive was issued to us a month and more after we had begun work, to be precise on the 25th May, 1943. During the interval we had wasted no time in making ourselves acquainted with the rudiments of our problem, and we had already formed some idea as to what we thought would be a suitable minimum outfit for the opening assault. Almost all of us knew, long before we joined the COSSAC Staff, that the most critical of all the critical items

of supply of war materials was landing craft and shipping. When we came to run over the figures given to us in our supplementary directive not only did we at once appreciate that the totals of landing craft and ships on which we were to plan were small, but we were conscious of a horrid suspicion that, if and when it came to the point, it might well be found impossible actually to provide even these exiguous fleets. But in spite of our every representation at this time, no relief was forthcoming. On reflection this was quite rightly so. The figures we were given, as we could not but admit, represented a wisely conservative estimate of that which might reasonably be expected to be available in a year's time having in view all the circumstances of the case as it existed in May, 1943, and all the various qualifying circumstances that might arise in the next twelve months, to affect the craft and shipping situation throughout all theatres of war that were users of this class of supply. Immediately there appeared one major implication which was that, in the event, the whole thing would depend on the question of priority in the allotment of craft and shipping resources. Constituted as it at first was, without a commander, COSSAC would have no real means of influencing priority, competing in the open market with established commands already committed to major campaigns. There was no object, therefore, in making a fuss at this stage. We should first have to get right down to it and see just how far we could get with what had been given to us. In spite of our previous estimates we might well find that we weren't so far off being able to produce a solution that might appear sufficiently attractive to gain favour. Once favour was gained we could rest content that the thing would be snatched out of our hands and put into the hands of those who could wield all the priority and pressure in the world. So we set to work.

Time was short, and it was therefore of the utmost importance to organise the work of planning so that no time was wasted. The COSSAC Staff was still of small dimensions, and it was therefore equally important to distribute the load as evenly as possible among the available hands. We had had time in which to collect data of all kinds and there was a prodigious amount of this. But luckily it was easily seen from the start that there were not a great number of alternatives to be considered for the

making of the main effort. Already in fact these seemed to whittle themselves down to two only, direction Pas de Calais or direction western Normandy.

This whittling down of alternatives had not been arrived at just like that. Past projects had considered raids or assaults on almost every section of the coast between Brittany and Belgium. It had presumably been necessary to restrict attention to this arc on account of paucity of resources, and particularly on account of the short range of British fighter aircraft which would have been in the majority in any expeditionary air force hitherto visualised. But we were coming at the thing afresh from a new angle, endowed with vastly larger general resources than had been any of our less fortunate predecessors. We therefore thought fit to run over the whole thing again from scratch. Our front, so to speak, extended from Spain on the one hand to the Arctic Circle on the other. It might be worth while just to have a look at the whole line to see if there were not some possibility open to us that had been denied to others.

There was in the first place the memory of the last occasion on which Europe had found itself in a similar jam. Things then had perhaps been even worse when the main enemy had been straight over against us and had, moreover, had his left flank right down in Portugal. The major tactic then had been to nibble at his flank and roll up his left. Would there by any chance be any future in a second Peninsular War, 1944 pattern? After quick consideration of all the pros and cons we decided that there was nothing in this one. But it was odd to discover how poorly the Iberian Peninsula lends itself to the conduct of a modern campaign by first-class armies. In many respects the country must have remained unchanged since the days of the Duke of Wellington. Roads and railways are in very short supply, and they just don't seem to have "port capacities" without which a modern army cannot live. The Iberian Peninsula is, in this regard anyhow, possibly to be envied.

The enemy's other flank, up in Norway, was obviously even more unpromising, for our particular purpose. Past tentative projects had considered many operations against the enemy in Norway but all, I fancy, had been of a limited or temporary nature. It was just conceivable that Norway might be regarded as a "lodgment area," but to debouch therefrom southward

in battle array would be quite something. We had been to Norway, some of us, in 1940, so we wrote off Norway as a possible starter for 1944 though others, as will appear, did not.

There was then the Jutland Peninsula to be looked at which seemed to present a combination of almost every disadvantage. Then could we consider the Frisian coast? One remembered Erskine Childers and his "Riddle of the Sands," written so many years ago when once before there had been talk of cross-channel operations. Here again the geography that might have favoured an army of former times was all against us to-day. Our forefathers had proved the unsuitability of the Helder Peninsula and of Walcheren for our purposes, so there we were back again where we started. What about Dunkirk? The British and French had embarked at Dunkirk, leaving their gear behind, it was true. But we had learnt much since 1940. The experts told us why Dunkirk wouldn't do as a landing beach. They went on to tell us why no other beach would do either. So we had to get our heads up and cast a bit wider. It wasn't just the beaches we were looking for. The landing beaches were just one *x* in an algebraic expression that contained half the alphabet.

What was wanted was a lodgment area into which we could blast ourselves against such opposition as we were likely to have to meet there, and from which our main bodies, having suitably concentrated themselves within it, could erupt to develop the campaign eastwards. If one analysed this definition it seemed to contain all the various desiderata. It was a question of weighing up and assessing the value of each constituent factor. The greater the opposition or the more difficult the beach conditions, then the heavier must be the air cover. This consideration drew us towards the Pas de Calais, where our air could give its maximum and where the shipping "turn-round" would be quickest. But the Germans could read the map, too, and their defensive preparations were nicely graded along the coast to accord with their estimate of the situation which inevitably agreed pretty much with ours. That being so, where could we find a deciding factor? In all probability this would turn out to be the matter of major ports to the requisite capacity without which it would be impossible to contemplate even prolonged occupation of a lodgment area by an army of some

25 to 30 divisions, let alone its reinforcement up to some 100 divisions to be maintained in action. Major ports are not plentiful on that section of the coast of north-west Europe to which other considerations confined our attention. Between Brest and Antwerp there exist only Cherbourg and Le Havre that are in the class for consideration as military base ports. Did we land on the Pas de Calais beaches, we should have to gain possession of either Le Havre or Antwerp before we could claim to have done that which was demanded of us. For the port capacity of the Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk group of minor ports, even after restoration which would take months probably, would be nothing like adequate to our purpose. If we went nap on Cherbourg, the objective of several previous projects, we should have trouble in debouching from the Cotentin Peninsula. And debouch therefrom we should have to, since the capacity of Cherbourg alone, even if intact and in thorough working order, would suffice to maintain only a fraction of our projected Advanced Guard, itself but a fraction of the whole expedition. If we made for Western Normandy we should find Le Havre unfortunately across the Seine from us and should have to turn back westward overland to Cherbourg. And so on.

It was here in the matter of Cherbourg that we ran once more into the obstacle presented by a misunderstood or partly misunderstood catch phrase. In all the planning that had gone on in relation to the re-entry into Europe, a point had naturally been reached when all had been found to depend upon "the early capture of a port." As I have said, past planning had been so handicapped that in any such cases as had been worked out in detail, "a port" would have sufficed to carry such traffic as was envisaged. Of necessity also thought had come to centre on Cherbourg as the port in question. We ourselves fell into the trap for a space and it took a week or two to grasp that what was necessary for us was not a port, but some ports. Cherbourg might well be the first of these to be acquired, but our expedition was to be of a magnitude undreamt of before. I fancy it is little exaggeration to say that the sheer size of OVERLORD was little appreciated by some of the British high-ups until very late in the day. Some, I believe, still do not appreciate how comparatively small a contribution to the whole, from the physical aspect, was the British portion. I must admit

that even I, who had thought and dreamt of nothing else for years by then, was astounded at the sense of vastness conveyed by the subsequent film of the operation, previewed in company with General Eisenhower at Frankfurt in July, 1945.

To resolve the tangle we decided to institute within the COSSAC Staff a formal comparison of the two main alternatives that appeared to exist as the outcome of all previous planning. It will be remembered that the Staff was not as yet fully integrated, so that it was fortunately situated to function simultaneously on two parallel lines. Accordingly, the United States Army members of the Army Operations Section were directed to produce an outline plan for a projected operation against Normandy and their British counterpart was ordered to do likewise for an operation against the Pas de Calais. The Naval and Air Staffs, both still weak on the United States side, were directed to participate equally in both projects. Since it was evident from the start that allotted resources in landing craft were not sufficient to admit of any subsidiary operation or diversion from the main effort, each planning group, United States and British, was told to assume that it might dispose of the whole COSSAC allotment. It was to be one answer or the other.

The development of the contest was closely watched by a small " gallery " consisting not only of the Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief of Staff, who had been careful to exclude themselves from this phase of the affair, but also of a few privileged observers from outside, Sir Bernard Paget, then commanding British Home Forces, General Jacob Devers, Commanding General of the Etousa, and, of course, the Chief of Combined Operations, Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. It was tough going and feeling ran high. We, the Deputy Chief of Staff and I, knew that the moment was approaching when we should have to make up our minds not only as to which of the two alternatives being worked out would prove to be the less uninviting, but, even worse, whether or not the thing was possible at all. We should, in fact, have to answer the supplementary question we had put to ourselves in the first instance, " If so, how, and if not, why not ? "

It was very difficult, it was almost impossible, to retain complete independence of thought. The approaching turning point

stimulated the forces of both progression and retrogression to redouble their ingenuity in the production of arguments, for one course and against the other, for risking everything in one great throw, or for condemning the thought of having anything to do with such a wildcat project. It gradually appeared that adverse criticism centred in the British Home Forces Headquarters, whither had gravitated several senior officers who had had great experience, greater than any of us, of the study of this that was now our problem at COSSAC. So far as we were able to figure it out, the general conclusion reached by all previous planners was that the whole affair represented an undue risk, all things considered, but that if it were ordered then the proper scene of action lay in the Pas de Calais. Were they right in contending that it was out of the question to attempt anything at all with the meagre resources that had been placed at our disposal? They should know. Or was it wrong to listen to such diehardism, as was contended by the Americans in particular? After all, these Americans knew at first hand of the immense power and resources that the United States could throw into the battle. We British had as yet no personal knowledge of this, and it was hard entirely to overcome the effects of a lifetime of niggling, cheeseparing, parsimony and making do such as had characterised the service of most of us during the past quarter of a century. We had been brought up to advocate the answer that was least costly. An answer that cost nothing but appeared good enough had always been a winner.

From this appalling quandary we were rescued by the Chief of Combined Operations, always a leader of progressive thought and somewhat of an *enfant terrible* to his more elderly *confrères*. He presented us with the opportunity to uproot the whole wrangle from the arena of London, where surroundings were inimical both materially and psychologically to open-minded consideration of any bold departure from established precedent, to an entirely fresh setting. One of the routine courses in Combined Operations held periodically at the Combined Operations Scottish Headquarters at Largs was unobtrusively altered in shape and content so as to include all the principal contestants in our COSSAC scheming, as well as the chief leaders of thought from outside our organisation. The congregation included men of all ranks of all services, both American and British.

The syllabus of the Course was so shaped as to cover all the main points of difference between the various schools of thought. The object of the Course was to give all concerned the opportunity to discuss openly with each other the whole subject of a cross-Channel operation, its feasibility in general and the practicability of all the many detailed points of execution. There were almost as many thoughts as there were men. But there was no more time for sulking each in his own tent and juggling with words and figures on paper. We must hear the conclusion of the whole matter argued out in comparative public. We were to discuss principles. And one principle we, of COSSAC, would take care to watch was that we were now charged with responsibility for the whole business. We did not profess to be experts in any particular line. Experts abounded, many of whom were convinced, each in his own mind, that he had in his little black bag the secret of the infallible system. The price of such an article was very often simply control or a large part of control of the whole operation. That belonged, all of it, by definition to our Supreme Commander-to-be whose interests COSSAC must jealously guard. We must fear all those bearing gifts of any nature.

It is very often the little things that matter, and every little thing was attended to as " part of the Mountbatten service." The showmanship could not have been excelled. Domestic arrangements were perfect. On guard was a Commando of such magnificent bearing as to disarm the most carping army critic. As there were suspected to be savage breasts among us the pipe band of the local Home Guard appeared at intervals to rend the atmosphere with the indigenous substitute for music. Even the weather was apparently cajoled into giving us perfect days and a perfect day on that Scottish coast is almost as perfect as a day can be. The only cloud in the atmosphere, favourable to our ambitions as we had gone all out to create it, was the appearance one evening in the offing of a great convoy outward bound from the Clyde carrying a Canadian Division to the war in Sicily, away from " OVERLORD." But even here the best was made of a bad job. General McNaughton, who was one of our number, was enabled to send a valedictory message to his men by the provision on the spur of the moment of a highly efficient little WREN signaller, complete with lamp,

right there on the roof of the hotel which was the main headquarters.

At the end of our first day of discussion and study the Chief of Combined Operations and I paced the lawns to compare our impressions. It looked hopeless from our point of view. For he and I were together from the start in our determination to see this thing through. It was, of course, my duty to obey my orders. He, as distinct from most of his associates, from the start had no doubts as to the possibility of success; and this quite apart from the fact that the Chief of Combined Operations could hardly fail to advocate that which, if it came off, would stand for years if not for ever as the apotheosis of all combined operators, that is of all future sailors, soldiers and airmen. But from watching "the opposition" carefully throughout that day it looked as if there was no hope. Should we give up, here and now? He had lots of other urgent affairs that needed his attention. We decided to give it one more day. And during that day what we hoped for began to happen. A member of the opposition was seen to smile. We redoubled our efforts, and by the end of the "course" there was not only unanimity, but enthusiasm. "OVERLORD," so far as COSSAC was concerned, was on.

But now came the point at which the whole business had to be rounded up in such a way that our convictions would be translated upwards to our superiors, the Chiefs of Staff.

Though naturally the Largs Course had dealt with matters of general principle and matters of method and organisation, this had been done on an hypothetical basis only. There remained with us the decision as between our two alternatives. To our way of thinking, by now the decision was easy. Western Normandy it must be. And there was no alternative if we were to keep our time-table and attack within the year.

I think it is fair to say that we had always been disposed to favour the Normandy landing if only for the fact that so much of the ground-work already done before our time had been done in connection with projects for a variety of landings to the southward, in the Cotentin-Dieppe region, rather than to the south-eastward. But there were other outstanding advantages. First, the shape of the coast. The weather records for years past were searched, and it was hard to find a case in

which summer had seen heavy weather from any point of the compass other than between south and west. The Norman beaches are completely sheltered from this quarter, whereas beaches further east are not. In the event, of course, we lost that part of the bet completely when that north-easterly gale blew up just after D-day in 1944. But our original bet was still a good one.

Weather on the beaches brings one to the question of length of sea crossing for the considerable army, for an advanced guard of some thirty divisions is a very considerable army, and the astronomical tonnage of all its transport and gear. Quite simply, the shorter the better. While afloat the army is incapable of helping itself and relies upon navy and air for its protection, a task of immense complication and difficulty under conditions such as existed in the English Channel in this war. So very few submarines or fast torpedo-boats or bomber aircraft can do such vast damage in such a short time to a slow-moving fleet of thin-skinned invasion craft. The shorter the voyage such fleets have to make, therefore, the better. Other things being equal, the Navy would hope for the Pas de Calais. But even for the Navy other things were not equal and the voyage to Normandy was never considered to be of prohibitive length.

Then there was the vital question of " beach exits," that is, ways of getting off the beaches into the country back of them. If the invasion battle takes place on the beach one is already defeated. One hopes and plans for battle, on the other hand, as far inland from the beach as may be. There must be as little delay as possible in getting the troops and their multifarious goods off the beach and inland. This is mainly a matter of choice of beach and, as in most other things, compromise is necessary. It may be that the best beach on which to land troops from the nautical point of view is at the foot of a cliff. The best beach from the soldier's aspect may be one approached through shoals and rocks. On balance here again, Normandy was the better.

In the matter of lodgment areas that should possess not only suitable ports to take ocean-going shipping, but also potentialities for defence by the advanced guard while the main body was concentrating, there was almost no argument. The Norman beaches gave access to North-western France wherein were

reasonably well-grouped, Cherbourg, Brest, Lorient and St. Nazaire, not to mention St. Malo and many lesser harbours and sheltered anchorages. We thought in terms of a lodgment area bounded to the east by the Seine, to the south by the Loire, which seemed to be well suited for development by both ground and air forces. A similar project based on a landing in the Pas de Calais was not easy to visualise. Having got ashore astride Boulogne and Calais, where did one go from there? Did one go east through Flanders to get Ostend and Antwerp, or west and get Dieppe and Le Havre? There didn't look to be much future in either of these prospects in the circumstances.

As has been told, the minor ports of the Pas de Calais have little military value nowadays. This would be true were they in full, peace-time working order. Much more would this be the case therefore on their hard-fought recapture from the Germans in 1944. In their then condition they would have constituted the very poorest of bases from which to develop a major land campaign. Nothing less would have been needed for the capture of either of the alternative groups of ports essential to the further prosecution of the main enterprise, either the Scheldt group or the Seine group. For in either case there would have been involved, in classical terms, a movement to a flank not across but actually along the enemy's front. As incidentals would have been involved the passage of a series of important obstacles. Between Calais and Antwerp at any rate we had once fought for four long years during which progress made by either side had been measurable in yards. To contemplate a land campaign based on Boulogne for the capture of the Seine ports seemed to make nonsense however it was approached.

The question of air operations was one which, of course, must be of utmost moment, and here it was found that the discrepancy in what the air could bring to the battle as between Pas de Calais and Normandy was nothing like so great as had appeared at first sight. The argument was naturally as regards fighters. To the bombers the range in either case was inconsiderable. Our mass of short-range fighters could, of course, develop their maximum power over the shortest range from airfield to scene of action. And so could the fighters of the Luftwaffe. It was a matter now of keeping the Luftwaffe off the necks of the sailors and soldiers. With our air at its maximum we had no

fear of the Luftwaffe, so the Pas de Calais was well enough from that point of view. At first it seemed that, if we shifted the scene of action west to Normandy and by so doing greatly increased the vital distance from airfield to battlefield, the effective thrust of our short-range fighter force would be diminished to an extent that would be at least serious. But when the experts produced their assessment it became evident that the Luftwaffe, thanks to the increasing necessity being forced upon it by our bomber offensive to deploy to defend the Fatherland, would be at an even greater disadvantage in operating over Normandy than would we. Which was good enough so long as the situation stayed unaltered for the next year or so.

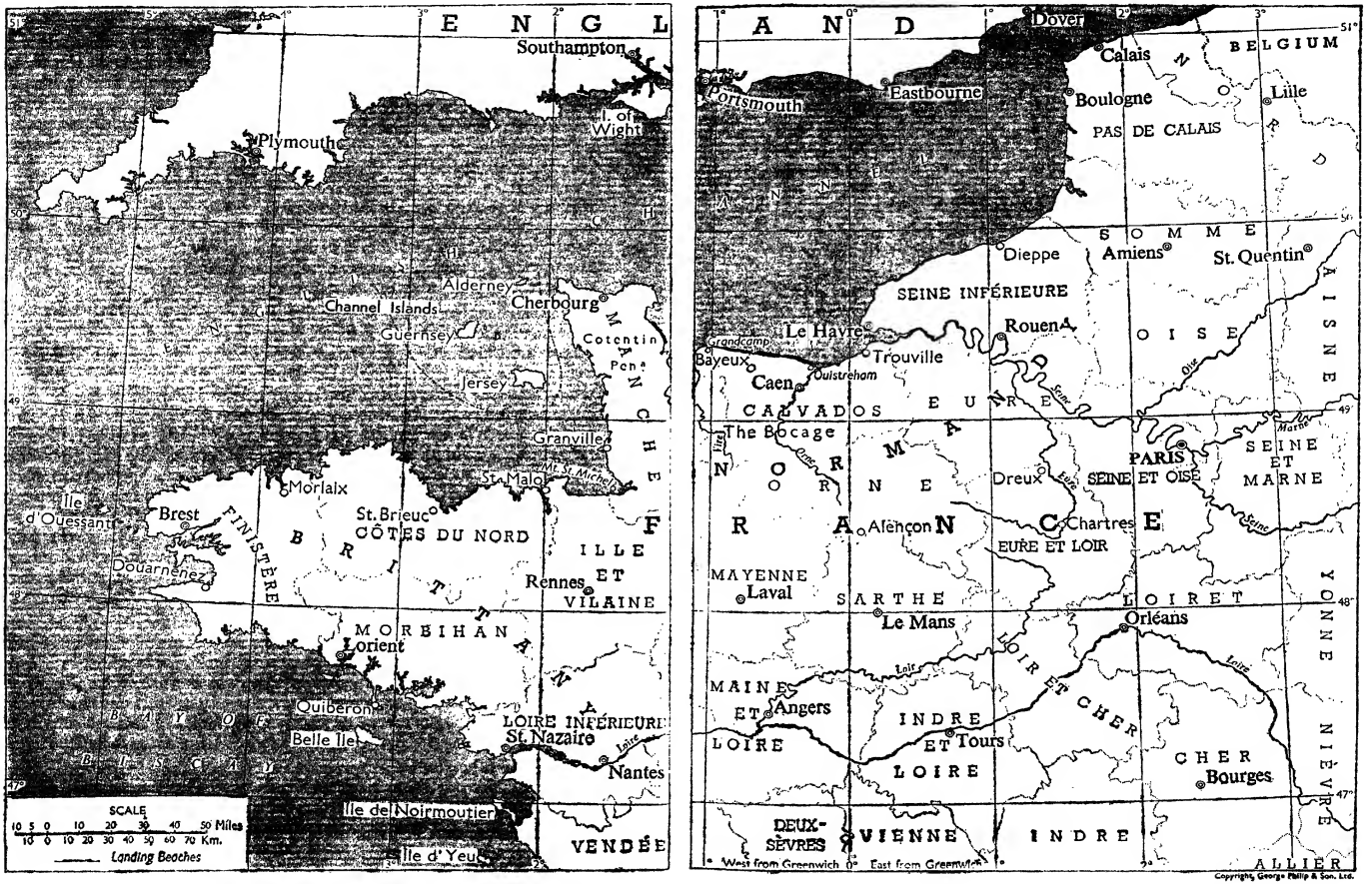
And that proviso applied equally to the enemy's fortifications and garrisons manning them along the coast. As things stood in June of 1943 there was no comparison between the low standard of preparedness for defence in Normandy and the masses of concrete still being poured in the Pas de Calais. We did not at this time appreciate what precisely was afoot regarding secret weapons. Once our attention was focussed on Normandy it was satisfactory from our point of view to see work going on in the Pas de Calais. Our hopes would be fulfilled so long as work stood still in Normandy.

It was not until well on in June that our decision was taken and time was short. The staff worked night and day at sorting and assembling the evidence on which this decision had been arrived at. It was not so much a question of gathering material as of sifting out from the available mass that which was immaterial or of secondary importance. A magnificent job of editing and presentation was done by all hands. Not one single pertinent fact that could be discovered was omitted, yet not an irrelevant word was included. A formidable tome resulted, but it dealt with a truly formidable subject. When all was said and done, and an incredible amount was both done and said, there was in our minds the absolute conviction that, from the material supplied, we had produced the best possible answer. But there remained, in spite of everything some tremendous "ifs."

All doubts, and there were many, stemmed from the meagre resources allotted to us of landing craft and shipping. Those who were uncannily expert in handling such matters juggled

around with what we were given to get the last ounce out of it. This involved both cutting down allowances of lift made to army units and doing all possible to speed up shipping turn-round, the time taken for a vessel to get back for its next load. Margins for misadventures and failures of all kinds were calculated and recalculated. But even so the strength of the assault, in terms of weapons and men on the ground, was pitifully small. It came out at three divisions landed simultaneously in the first wave, supported by an immediate "follow up" of two tank brigades (British brigades, American regiments) and one extra American Regimental Combat Team. There were also the Airborne troops, but though we had been allotted two divisions of these, there early began to appear grave doubts as to whether anything like the appropriate quota of transport aircraft would be forthcoming. With craft so short it seemed that there must be an awkward pause for a day or two after the assault until the next important reinforcement could be landed. Nevertheless, we calculated that within fourteen days of the assault we should have landed some eighteen divisions and should have in use in France some fourteen airfields from which thirty or more fighter squadrons would be able to operate. However, the big question was whether by that time we should have been able, with this force, not only to have held off all counter moves, but to have captured Cherbourg. Were we not, by the end of the first fortnight, within sight of getting Cherbourg working for us, things wouldn't look so good. One thing which was quite clear always was that there could be no question of capturing for ourselves a major port by direct frontal assault. The Germans knew as well as we did where lay the crux of an invasion operation. This meant that in any case one must cater for an invasion force to be supplied in all things across the open landing beaches for a period. In the summer of 1943 our technique for this purpose was of a certain crudity. The vast artificial harbours of 1944, "Mulberries," were still but a gleam in the eye of their progenitors. Hence our preoccupation with the reasonably early capture of Cherbourg.

Though, as has been said, possession of Cherbourg port alone would nothing like suffice for the full development of our project, the possession of it would at any rate give the sensation of having one foot on the ground. And there was always the thought that,



should things go wrong, there was infinitely greater chance of organising a comparatively secure lodgment for prolonged occupation based on Cherbourg than based on open beaches. In extremis, perhaps, one could envisage a comparatively graceful getaway from Cherbourg, as, indeed, had been the case in 1940.

Now one must turn to the map of North France, in particular of the departments of Manche and Calvados. The former includes the Cotentin Peninsula at the north tip of which lies Cherbourg. The latter contains Bayeux, Caen and the beaches we proposed to use. The two areas of interest, the landing beaches and the Cotentin, first and second objectives, so to speak, were unfortunately separated by an obstacle of some considerable military significance, the tract of marshy land through which the River Vire flows to the sea. There were possible landing beaches to the north of the Vire Estuary on the east side of the Cotentin, but these were only just possible, nothing like good enough for the main effort. If one did not use these, the line of advance to Cherbourg from our Bayeux beaches would probably involve a considerable detour to the south and west, to avoid the marsh obstacle at the mouth of the Vire, before one could strike north up the Cotentin.

We had only three assault divisions to dispose. The problem was to work out the best disposition of them so as to give us a secure foothold on our landing beaches, to admit of the arrival of a dozen more divisions, and at the same time give us the best possible chance of a quick capture of Cherbourg. It was out of the question to make the whole assault north of the Vire Estuary for three reasons. The beaches were nothing like adequate in extent to carry the load we wanted to put on them and then there was the very considerable risk that the whole expedition might find itself bottled up by the enemy in the Cotentin so that our last state might be, if not worse than our first, at best little better than if we had stayed at home. Thirdly, these particular beaches were backed by low-lying tracts of marsh which could be, and were, easily flooded at will to an unknown depth. Through these inundations to the firm ground beyond there were a few raised causeways only, which would beyond doubt quickly fail under anything heavier than the light agricultural traffic they were intended to carry. So what it came to was that while making our main effort on the Bayeux beaches

we wanted to make a subsidiary landing north of the Vire Estuary. This subsidiary landing would have to be an affair of some importance since owing to the existence of the Vire marshes there would be little or no possibility of reinforcing it in the early stages overland from the main landing. How was one to divide only three assault divisions as between main and subsidiary landings in this case?

Every reasonable permutation and combination was tried out but it just didn't make sense. The only possible practical answer was that we must have more landing craft so as to strengthen up the assault, more ships so as to quicken the follow-up, and we must tackle this business of prolonged supply across the beaches. All this meant more resources, and we were told we couldn't have more resources. So what?

The honest answer to the famous question, "If so, how?—and if not, why not?" looked very much like being "Not and why not." There was ample justification for an answer on those lines, with COSSAC in the rôle of scapegoat and so forth. But, on the other hand, the whole thing was so futuristic that many of the bases of argument, which had of necessity been taken as they existed in May, 1943, might well change radically by May, 1944. A situation might well arise before then such as we envisaged when drawing up the plans for Operation "RANKIN" Case A.

Anyway, was the operation we had here worked out such a wild gamble? Given luck, it might well come off. And one must always have luck to win. Such a lot was going to depend on the choice of Supreme Commander. It was said that he was to be British. So far as we could see there didn't seem a lot of generals about, either British or American, who were both lucky and prepared to take risks. However much this thing were worked out, there were going to be risks, enormous risks, if only on account of the famous or infamous Channel weather. We had been miraculously lucky at Dunkirk in 1940. Could we hope to be lucky again when it came to this point? But Dunkirk had been a matter of days; what was involved here was a matter of weeks or months. From the very outset we had asked ourselves where the superman was who was going to have the task of saying "go" to this lot.

The predominant feature of the conduct of the operation we

propounded was to be the early capture of Caen and a defensive line running westward therefrom through the Bocage or hedgerow country. While the enemy was battering his head against this we were, behind it, to build up our strength in troops, stores and installations at a pace exceeding that at which the enemy could stiffen his resistance. It is the " rate of build-up " that is decisive in matters of this sort. Then would come the swing to west and to north up to Cherbourg.

We had little anxiety, comparatively speaking, as regards the early stages, that is, the landings and the capture of Caen and our defensive " beach-head " in a matter of hours. The weight of supporting fire of all kinds available on the frontage involved seemed undeniable. But anxiety would not be stilled as regards the rate of build-up, for which we wanted more craft and more shipping. It was not easy to estimate the timing of the operation upon Cherbourg from the south, though here again the weight of support that would be available on comparatively narrow frontages would be stupendous. If there were delay in getting the port there must be no failure in the artificial port plan, and that was a sheer gamble. But it was all a gamble, anyway. War always is. This seemed less of a hazard than many others.

Did it really matter what we of COSSAC said? That depended primarily on the question of intention again, about which we were still uncertain. There were undoubtedly those who would not be heartbroken if the whole business were called off. There were other ways of winning the war, ways that might appear less costly, but would probably take longer. There was our dual responsibility to be thought of. Being in London, it might have been possible to get some insight into the thought at the back of British minds. But there was no means of making a similar assessment as regards United States thinking. Was there by any chance anything in the fact that while we had been given the responsibility we had been denied what seemed to be an adequate minimum of means for discharging it? Up came the original thought again. Were we really only taking part in a gigantic cover plan or hoax with the object of hoaxing, among others, ourselves?

But there was the question of time to be considered. As a result of our work it had become more and more obvious that

the work of preparation of the invasion, once any sort of plan was agreed upon, would only with the greatest difficulty be accomplished in time for the projected D-day in May, 1944. It was true that many of the preparations that had been and were being made, the development of " PLUTO," the submarine petrol-supply system, and of the embarkation organisation, to mention only two such, were well advanced. But there were countless others that were hardly projected. And, anyhow, the transport and assembly in England of over a million American soldiers could not be done in a day. Oddly there were authorities, otherwise remarkable for their prescience and clear sightedness, who remained throughout of the opinion that the whole affair from inception to launch could well have been accomplished in under six months. Our impression was, however, that there was not one moment to spare. Had we in our report used our deductions to reject the proposition entirely the least effect that could have been caused would have been delay. If " No " were the wrong answer, there would be involved at least some delay in re-staffing our organisation and revising the outlook. Any delay would involve postponement of D-day. So there was more at stake than just our necks.

In the last analysis this was only a plan that we were submitting, to be rejected or accepted. We might well be wrong either way. If one is to be wrong there is much greater satisfaction in being wrong positively rather than negatively, so to speak. So the ayes had it.

But in all the circumstances it could not possibly be that we should give a clear and unqualified affirmative report. As so frequently, a compromise was needed. This must take the form of a stipulation of certain qualifications. Accordingly our plan was forwarded to the British Chiefs of Staff in London on 15th July, 1943, under cover of a memorandum which read as follows :

" I have the honour now to report that, in my opinion, it is possible to undertake the operation described, on or about the target date named, with the sea, land and air forces specified, given a certain set of circumstances in existence at that time.

" These governing circumstances are partly within our direct control and partly without. Those within our control

relate first to the problem of beach maintenance, and secondly to the supply of shipping, naval landing craft and transport aircraft. Wherever we may attempt to land, and however many ports we capture, we cannot escape the fact that we shall be forced to maintain a high proportion of our forces over the beaches for the first two or three months while port facilities are being restored; and that, in view of the variability of the weather in the Channel, this will not be feasible unless we are able rapidly to improvise sheltered anchorages off the beaches. New methods of overcoming this problem are now being examined. There is no reason to suppose that these methods will be ineffective, but I feel it my duty to point out that this operation is not to be contemplated unless this problem of prolonged cross-beach maintenance and the provision of artificial anchorages shall have been solved.

"As regards the supply of shipping, naval landing craft and transport aircraft, increased resources in these would permit of the elaboration of alternative plans designed to meet more than one set of extraneous conditions, whereas the state of provision herein taken into account dictates the adoption of one course only, or none at all. In proportion as additional shipping, landing craft and transport aircraft can be made available, so the chances of success in the operation will be increased. It seems feasible to contemplate additions as a result either of stepped-up production, of strategical re-allotment, or, in the last resort, of postponement of the date of assault.

"I have come to the conclusion that, in view of the limitations in resources imposed by the Directives, we may be assured of a reasonable chance of success on the 1st May, 1944, only if we concentrate our efforts on an assault across the Norman beaches about Bayeux.

"As regards circumstances that we can control only indirectly, it is, in my opinion, necessary to stipulate that the state of affairs existing at the time, both on land in France and in the air above it, shall be such as to render the assault as little hazardous as may be, so far as it is humanly possible to calculate. The essential discrepancy in value between the enemy's troops, highly organised, armed and battle-trained, who await us in their much-vaunted impregnable defences,

and our troops, who must of necessity launch their assault at the end of a cross-Channel voyage with all its attendant risks, must be reduced to the narrowest possible margin. Though much can be done to this end by the means available and likely to become available to us in the United Kingdom to influence these factors, we are largely dependent upon events that will take place on other war fronts, principally on the Russian front, between now and the date of the assault.

" I therefore suggest to the Chiefs of Staff that it is necessary, if my plan be approved, to adopt the outlook that Operation 'OVERLORD' is even now in progress, and to take all possible steps to see that all agencies that can be brought to bear are, from now on, co-ordinated in their action as herein below described, so as to bring about the state of affairs that we would have exist on the chosen day of assault.

" Finally, I venture to draw attention to the danger of making direct comparisons between Operation 'HUSKY' and Operation 'OVERLORD.' No doubt the experience now being gained in the Mediterranean will prove invaluable when the detailed planning stage for 'OVERLORD' is reached, but viewed as a whole the two operations could hardly be more dissimilar. In 'HUSKY' the bases of an extended continental coastline were used for a converging assault against an island, whereas in 'OVERLORD' it is necessary to launch an assault from an island against an extended continental mainland coastline. Furthermore, while in the Mediterranean the tidal range is negligible and the weather reasonably reliable, in the English Channel the tidal range is considerable and the weather capricious."

VII

THE PLAN IS ADOPTED

THE documentation of our plan contained much besides a formidable assemblage of statistics in support of the general recommendation to go full ahead. While naturally the main part of the argument concerned itself with the assault and all the vastly intricate business thereof, we were at pains to remember that this, to us and so to our commander-to-be, was but a means to an end, not an end in itself. The assault would, in the event, be the affair primarily of the Advanced Guard Commander to whom would in due course pass the responsibility for detailed planning. Our main preoccupation had been to work the affair out only for the purpose of proving that the operation was a possibility, that the project was worth pursuing. So much done, details of the method to be actually adopted would be for others to work out and decide.

So having put up the best case we could that there should be an assault, we set about making some forecast as to what the subsequent course of events might turn out to be. A forecast of this nature must inevitably be to a large extent guess work. Once contact has been made with the enemy, the enemy, a sentient human creature, starts thinking and acting for himself and his action will be governed not so much by the facts of the case as by the deductions he may make from such of those facts as come to his knowledge. We set out to make as educated a guess at his possible reactions as we were able.

First there was the outside chance that the actual onset of the assault might set up widespread confusion, even panic, in the enemy's ranks. Even now, in 1943, the quality of the enemy's troops emplaced on the Norman coast was not notably high. By 1944 it would with luck be even lower. And there might be even more of the enemy than there were of our own

people who could not bring themselves to believe that such an assault would ever actually come off. The effect of the actuality on such a mental attitude might well be paralysing. Just in case this were so, we must bear in mind that what we were after were deep-water ports, Le Havre, Cherbourg and St. Nazaire being the three handiest to our landing-place. The Advanced Guard must be ready to jump any or all of these just supposing the enemy should be surprised to the point of impotence. But while hoping for the best, one must prepare for the worst, which would here be that the enemy should stand and fight.

The first object of the foremost troops on landing must be to capture and prepare to defend an area enclosed by the rough line from Grandcamp to Bayeux to Caen and so back to the sea about Ouistreham. Above and beyond everything it was evident from the first moment that the objective of supreme importance was the town of Caen with its command of communications. Here seemed one of those very rare occasions when one could with justification refer to the situation or position having a "key." With Caen, the key, firmly in our grasp the puzzle seemed to resolve itself with a tenable logic. We judged the importance of Caen to be such that the bulk of the available airborne troops, whatever that might turn out to be, should be allotted to assist in its capture. To commandos would fall the task of silencing flanking enemy batteries, as they had done so magnificently at Dieppe, that could bear on the landing beaches from eastward and they and small airborne units would be detailed to the capture of important defiles on the main routes leading into or out of the area defined.

The next step would be to make a thrust south-westward with the dual object of taking in ground for airfield construction and of getting elbow room for the wheel into the Cotentin Peninsula for the capture of Cherbourg. If we could get it, there was good ground for airfields south-eastward from Caen. At the end of a fortnight, with luck, we might find ourselves with over half the Advanced Guard ashore, in possession of Cherbourg and with forward elements perhaps on an arc Mont St. Michel-Alençon-Trouville. By then we should know, from the enemy's reaction up to date, whether to go eastward for Rouen and Le Havre or south-west for St. Nazaire. Every probability pointed

to the latter, since to go eastward involved crossing the Seine, either with or without a supporting amphibious attack on the Havre Peninsula. Of the difficulty of defending that Peninsula against attack from the east, we knew from the map and from past experience. It was practically certain, therefore, that we should go to St. Nazaire, cutting off the Brittany Peninsula which must then be cleared out, " de-enemised," as was the phrase used by certain of the more progressive students of the English language. This would give us access to Brest and the lesser Breton ports. We put the outer perimeter of the lodgment area along the Loire from Nantes to Tours and Orleans thence to Chartres, to Dreux, down the Eure to the Seine and so to the sea. The garrison of this lodgment would consist of the twenty-nine divisions of the Advanced Guard from England, plus such air forces as it was deemed advisable and necessary to base in this area, plus a vast mass of line of communication and base troops, whose task would be to prepare first for the reception of the further sixty or so divisions of the main body from overseas and then for the development of the campaign eastward by all forces united.

A fine concept. It was a pity that we probably had to turn west from our original landing-places when our final objective lay to the east. But what would you? Ports we must have, and to demand of the Advanced Guard to turn east in search of them was to ask it to fight the whole war by itself. It might, of course, be possible. But it might not.

This was all just a pipe-dream, one of those " chinagraph wars " on which we had spent so much of the springtime of our youth. When armies consist but of chalk-marks on talc spread over a small scale map it is wonderful to find how apparently philoprogenitive was the late N. Buonaparte. We British had discovered in 1940 how much more difficult things become when one side ceases to play this game by the rules.

When making a plan such as we were directed to make, it is indispensable that the game of " Phase Lines " be played up to a point. But the game must be understood by the players. War depends on supply and supply depends on provision, which in turn must be based on forecast. What the supply people must have beforehand is a forecast of what the fighting troops are liable to demand of them in goods and services and of the

rate at which demand will be made. On the forecast is based the timed programme of provision of material and manpower for the supply service. For such purposes " Phase Lines " must be drawn. If afterwards the campaign proceeds according to these lines, it is a matter of chance. So if the campaign proceeds on another time plan of its own there is not necessarily need for recrimination nor even for that type of verbal demonstration known so aptly as " bellyaching."

So much granted, what was the real guts of the business? The crux of the whole of the early stages of the affair the British Chiefs of Staff were quick to emphasise. As explained earlier on, we had kept the British Joint Planners with us all along, step by step, but there was one feature which had puzzled us all equally, that of the " Comparative Build-up." As an American general once put it, that commander wins who " gets thar fustest with the mostest men." We had to bear that in mind throughout our planned operation. It was peremptory that absolute surprise be achieved with the first onslaught. If it weren't, and if we were caught in the ships and craft off the far coast by a fully-prepared enemy, that would indubitably be that. The surprise assault of three divisions with all the overwhelming fire support from sea and air that we had at disposal would admit of no doubt as to who won the first round. But once the first round opened, secrecy would be gone and enemy reserves from near and far would be set moving towards the sound of the guns. From then on it would be a race as to who could get the mostest men there fustest. Now we could calculate with reasonable facility and accuracy how fast we were going to get our men ashore, but how to calculate how fast the German reserves could get into the battle was a pretty problem. Nevertheless, something must be done about it or our argument became all lopsided and unrealistic.

So starting with the basic assumption that at the moment of assault in 1944 the German reserve available to intervene in this battle would be composed and located as they actually were now, in 1943, it was to be calculated how they might be expected to act. This was no simple affair of a few measurements off a map and a straightforward time and distance calculation like a railway time-table. One began like that, but then the difficulty really started.

First there was the question of how far effective our cover-plans might be. In the event we were successful beyond our wildest hopes, but one could hardly reckon on being so while we were still in the calculation stage. The second complicated assessment was of the extent to which the movement of reserves would be hampered by action against them from the air. The airmen assured us that when they really got around to the job not one German reserve would reach the battlefield at all, ever. In their view there was no problem. Expert opinion among the ground forces, however, was equally emphatic that air action would make little or no difference to the movement of German reserves really determined, which in this case they would have to be, to get at the invaders, us, and hurl them back into the sea, in the time-honoured phrase. To deduce a balance between these two extremes and commit it to paper in comprehensible and convincing terms, looked difficult.

Just as intangible, if not more so, was the estimation of the effect on movement of reserves to be expected from the action of the French underground organisations. On D-day would arrive for them the day of glory, of that there was no doubt whatever. But just what the total result would be in terms of delayed movement of German reserves seemed once more just a matter of pure guesswork.

Summing it all up, the only way in which to arrive at anything that meant anything seemed to be to turn the whole thing round and to try to figure out the maximum German resistance against which we reckoned we should still be able to make headway to the extent and at the speed desired. From this angle we arrived at an answer as follows. We could make our plan work if on D-day there were not more than a total of twelve German full-strength mobile field divisions in reserve in France. Of these there must not be within striking distance of Caen more than three on D-day, more than five on D plus 2 Day or more than nine on D plus 8 Day. Beyond that point we reckoned we should be over the hump.

There was the answer for what it was worth. But a moment's critical examination shows that it wasn't worth much. Depending on how the various deterrents mentioned were to function, there might well be fifteen German mobile field divisions in France on D-day of which only half a dozen could ever arrive

near Caen. There might be a total of only ten such divisions available in the country, but five of these might be stationed within easy reach of our landing beaches. Yet if the whole subject were ignored in our balance sheet the thing would be all one-sided. The Chiefs of Staff were perfectly right to insist upon full treatment of the subject in our papers which we made as explicit as we were able. After all our discussion of this particular point in London and subsequently in Washington, it afforded us quite some amusement to be told later that this was one of the main passages in our plan to attract the personal attention of no less an authority than Generalissimo Stalin. The great man was apparently in an even more than ordinarily cynical mood when the plan was propounded to him. Up to the last minute and beyond, the Russians never believed we should honour our pledges and actually do this thing. Even now, I am sure, they have in general no conception of what was involved for us. Then, and probably now as well, there could be no possibility of anything but incredulous raising of the eyebrows, for fear that face might be lost. The great man is said merely to have put his finger on the figure of twelve divisions, quoted as being the maximum acceptable to us in German reserve in France on D-day. " What," he said, " if there are thirteen ? " I don't know what answer he was given, Another, rather more simple, problem for future students.

The British Chiefs of Staff commented also in detail upon another feature of the plan. One of their number, the C.I.G.S., it so happened, had actually visited and known the part of Normandy on which it was intended to land. He knew, therefore, what " Bocage " meant at first hand. The strip of country lying all along the back of our landing beaches is known as the Bocage and constitutes by reason of its peculiar character a tactical feature of major importance. It consists of a series of minor undulations, well wooded and divided up into small enclosures, each one separated from the next by an earth bank some feet in height and some feet in thickness. In most cases these banks were topped by considerable quickset hedges and trees and garnished on at least one side by a considerable ditch.

Stoutly defended, in fact, each such little field would be a fortress needing systematic reduction by means of a deliberate operation which must be undertaken in conditions that markedly

favoured the defence. We had studied and re-studied all sources of information on the point and had argued that, over and above all its manifest disadvantages, the existence of the Bocage country in this particular relationship to the beaches could be entered on both sides of the balance sheet. In our favour was the possibility that the enemy would regard it as unlikely that we should deliberately commit ourselves to the passage of such an obstacle immediately on landing. Also we had in mind the defensive-offensive nature of the operation in prospect. Prominent among the tasks of the assault force was to protect the disembarkation of those following them up. This imposed the obligation to be prepared to hold a defensive position that would keep an enemy counter-attack from approaching the beaches. What better defensive position than the Bocage country, later to be so well known to the Americans as the hedgerow country, if we could get through it first? It seemed to us that the side which could first occupy the Bocage with sufficient strength fully to exploit its defensive capabilities would score most decided advantage. In view of their more detailed personal knowledge of the ground, the Chiefs of Staff accepted our thesis with reservations. In the light of after events it is interesting to speculate what turn might have been given to the affair had the emphasis laid on this point in our original plan been maintained by our successors.

This, the first acid test of our work, at the hands of the British Chiefs, was good for all of us. When one has lived by day and by night, slept, woken, eaten, drunk with one idea, breathed it in and talked it out for a period of months, there is a danger that one may lose judgment and balance and no longer be able to retain a proper sense of perspective. Having to make our case before this august court, being able to watch the play of fresh minds upon the whole project, was a new and invigorating experience. To the Chiefs themselves, I believe, their daily meetings were just so many more meetings. It was said of at least one of them that he regarded them as his rest periods. But to those summoned before them it was very much otherwise. One might simulate boredom, even exasperation, in time-honoured British fashion. Our American staff might sound off about wasting breath on a bunch of old so-and-so's, as is their way of giving vent to the same emotions. But when you got

right down to it here was the outfit that had directed British strategy through the last four incredible years, and they were still on the job. So were the British. There must be something to it.

One by one the points on which the British Chiefs of Staff required more information were amplified, and those on which their criticism centred were discussed and ironed out. One gathered that a state of affairs was eventually reached at which they felt themselves prepared to take the next step. They were not demonstratively enthusiastic. The British seldom are, unless something is very wrong.

This absence of enthusiasm at first puzzled many of our United States staff officers. They had heard tell of the British habit of understatement, some of them had met up with it. They met it on the COSSAC Staff. But still, I think, many of them found it hard to cope with continually and in all things. By the time our affair had been gotten to this critical point of submitting our report to the British Chiefs of Staff there was a certain tension in the air. Not everything had gone quite smoothly. In many things there were the minorities who had had to be overruled. Their loyalty was immense, but unavoidably tensions existed. And here was the highest British military authority, if not turning sour on the whole deal, at any rate seemingly being a bit old-fashioned about it. COSSAC was an international outfit where it was possible for the American viewpoint on the business to be adequately stressed. But even here most of the ranking officers were British. Few of these had personal knowledge of the States, its resources, its armed forces. The British Chiefs of Staff was a purely British outfit. It was true that the Commanding General of ETOUSA sat in with them, but this was not a regular drill. Was it certain that he was being fully consulted and kept posted in all that went on, at this high British level, that affected or might affect the United States of America? I have mentioned elsewhere the feeling that seemed to exist in London in early 1943 as between United States and British official circles. Tension seemed to increase on the top levels as our work proceeded. Within COSSAC itself the reverse process was taking place. By the time mid-July came there was among us a remarkable degree of unity of outlook and purpose, although our United States representation was still regrettably

small in number. The fact was, I think, that both components of COSSAC had begun to feel somewhat orphaned as a result of the business of the past weeks. There must have been many occasions when it was temptingly easy for a harassed functionary coping with some crisis of his own, yet being mercilessly importuned by one of our people, to dispose of the COSSAC demand, hypothetical, anyway, with the curt suggestion, "Why don't you get what you seem to want from your Yank friends?" or, "Say, I'm busy. Go get it from your British buddies." To some extent we of COSSAC were comrades in adversity.

Then there was the point that, in spite of the recorded decision of the Combined Chiefs of Staff to the contrary, rumour that our eventual Supreme Commander was to be an American officer persisted and grew louder. It got to the point eventually of newspaper speculation. General George C. Marshall, then Chief of Staff of the United States Army, was emerging as most probable to receive the appointment. If this were to be so, in fact, then it was even more necessary for United States interests to receive every attention in London. Could the highest United States authorities in that city assure themselves that this would be the case? This was a difficult question to answer, for some of them at least. General Devers, then Commanding General, ETOUSA, and a close friend, found it all the harder to make up his mind since he felt he could not be sure even of the attitude back home in relation to our COSSAC affairs. The attention of Washington seemed centred on the Mediterranean theatre or the Pacific and General Devers, as one always does in a situation such as this, felt himself pretty lonely, out on the end of his three thousand mile-long limb.

The crux of the matter was, just what was the next step. We knew that the reason why we had been ordered to submit our COSSAC plan to the British Chiefs of Staff in July was that there was another combined conference in prospect. It was proposed that, among other business, the Conference should examine and pass orders upon the plan of invasion we had concocted. By the end of July we had, as has been told, reached a state of agreement, reasonably satisfactory according to British standards, with the British Chiefs of Staff who were our statutory link with the Combined Chiefs of Staff, our masters. The British Chiefs of Staff had had ample opportunity of which good

use had been made to familiarise themselves with our project in all its weak as well as its strong particulars. In discussion naturally the weak points had bulked largest. There was no need to discuss such good points as there were. Shortly, presumably they would set sail for a rendezvous with the United States Chiefs of Staff to indulge in one of their periodical jam sessions. With things as they were it looked as though, when it came to a matter of operation "OVERLORD," while the British Chiefs of Staff had it pretty much by heart the United States Chief of Staff would come at it cold unless, as presumably was to be the case, the United States Chiefs of Staff were given coaching beforehand. We were warned that a small British team from COSSAC would accompany the British delegation to the Combined Conference to assist the British Chiefs of Staff. We asked that we might be permitted to perform a similar service for the United States Chiefs of Staff. Permission to do so was denied by the British Chiefs of Staff.

Here was a bit of a facer. What did "A" do next, "A" being British? From the organisational point of view the British Chiefs of Staff were, as ever, quite right. It was to be assumed that the Combined Chiefs of Staff were in fact combined and that it would be amply sufficient for one-half of the combination to propound a proposition, even if that proposition depended for its effectiveness upon the provision of a high proportion of the total resources of the other half. So said the British. The Americans in London said otherwise with eloquence, emphasis and precision, and they said it to us at COSSAC. This was quite right because, as explained, the British Chiefs of Staff had correctly followed procedure and their case was watertight. What was the fuss about, anyway? Really it all came out of a hunch, or rather an accumulation of hunches, that the British might, possibly not by design but quite possibly for lack of proper appreciation of American power, sell the Yanks down the Mediterranean again. So once more what did "A" do, "A" being British?

One course advocated in the heat of discussion was that COSSAC should appeal direct to the United States Chiefs of Staff or even to the combined Chiefs of Staff against the decision of the British Chiefs of Staff. Two minutes' quiet reflection disposed of that one. The sobering effect of the vision conjured up of the probable

result of such an appeal brought about a rapid loss of heat when the quite simple solution to the whole affair quickly dawned. There were many important matters connected with our proposals that should by rights have received closer consideration by, and formal approval of, the authorities in Washington had there been more time. Decisions on these had been given in London, but, as has been mentioned, contact between the United States military authorites in London and in Washington was not at this time as close and continuous as one could have wished. Such matters as the United States Troop Basis, all the mass of detail on the supply side and questions connected with Civil Affairs did not lend themselves to treatment over the trans-Atlantic telephone. These things would have to be discussed in the States some time. Why not now? The only slight qualm was caused by the necessity for sending out of the country complete sets of the Top Secret "OVERLORD" papers, now presumably to be regarded as the property of the British Chiefs of Staff, for the briefing of the United States Chiefs of Staff. They were sent, but it must be admitted that there was much crossing of fingers, touching of wood and muttering of incantations as the COSSAC mission was seen off by the Ghost Train from Euston Station, London, on the evening of the 28th July bound for the Pentagon via Prestwick. Our party consisted of Major-General Ray Barker, Deputy COSSAC, Captain Gordon Hutchings, United States Navy, chief of the COSSAC United States Navy Staff, Colonel Frank M. ("Duke") Albrecht, whose middle name should have been "Logistic," and Lieut.-Colonel Charles R. Kutz, already an operations staff officer of outstanding excellence who lived to serve unfalteringly through half the alphabet, COSSAC, SHAEF, then USFET, with surely much more to follow. One and all performed their task with brilliance, Ray Barker sending us in London, by mail, by cable and by telephone, a thrilling, blow by blow, commentary on the dramatic doings in North America that followed.

But before this or any other deputation could set out in the world for this or any other purpose it was essential to arm them at all points. They had, of course, been right through the mill and knew every argument that had led up to the evolution of our plan and all of its detailed contents. They could give

chapter and verse for every word or figure that was therein written, but this was nothing like enough.

It will be remembered that in the memorandum of transmittal that had taken our work to the British Chiefs of Staff, quoted at the end of the previous chapter, we had, in effect, demanded additional resources of ships, landing craft and transport aircraft. There would, we hoped, come a moment when someone would say, "All right, what exactly is it that you want and what precisely do you want it for?" We must be ready with our answer.

So forthwith we set ourselves to work out how we should suggest to our chiefs that additional resources, if and when made available, should be used. Naturally what we produced came out in the nature of a sliding scale. In simple terms our plan of attack was capable of expansion in a variety of directions. Endowed with more resources we could widen the front of attack to either flank or to both flanks, or we could "thicken-up," that is, increase the rate of build-up of the troops on the beach. There were other alternatives. It might so be that, with more lift by sea and air, we might contemplate the staging of a secondary or diversionary assault elsewhere than in Normandy. We might become rich enough to organise a real floating reserve of some kind, a formation, assault-loaded in vessels, that might be thrown in, here or there, to reinforce success, at the commander's will.

It seemed desirable at least to try to arrange all these various alternatives in some order of priority. Mention has already been made of our anxiety regarding the rate of build up. This must be the first charge on any accretion of resources. Then there was the anxiety concerning the speed of capture of Cherbourg. If possible, we should like to land, as has been explained, astride the Vire estuary but this must, we considered, be done in such a manner as not to detract in any way from the power of our effort towards Caen, early possession of which we deemed vital to the whole plan. This, in turn, led to consideration of a widening of the front eastward expressly in order to speed up the operation against Caen. Thereafter, we determined, and only after these requirements had been fulfilled, should we consider going in for comparative luxuries such as diversionary attacks elsewhere. Opinions differed as regards

the advisability, even the possibility, of creating a genuine floating reserve. In any ordinary land operation, the smaller the forces at disposal, the more vitally essential it is to create and maintain a reserve in hand to be used as, where and when the developing situation will indicate. But this operation was neither ordinary nor by land, and theory seemed to break down.

So we summed it up in July, 1943, that elaboration of our basic plan should our recommendations as to increase of resources be accepted, should take the form of increase of planned rate of build up of the assault, then expansion of the front of assault first to West and then to East.

A few days later, on the 3rd August, we said good-bye to the British detachment of COSSAC who were to accompany the British delegation to Conference " QUADRANT " at Quebec. This party went by sea in the *Queen Mary*, suitably polished up and lubricated for this voyage, and while on passage the Prime Minister, lying in his bunk smoking the celebrated cigars, was briefed by Brigadier Kenneth McLean of COSSAC from maps propped up on the wash-basin and other convenient pieces of cabin equipment.

This detachment of COSSACs consisted of Captain Bob Mansergh, Royal Navy, Brigadier McLean and Air Commodore Victor Groom, Royal Air Force—as competent a gang as one could wish for. Bob Mansergh had joined the COSSAC staff only a few days before being warned for this trip, just long enough for him to discover that it would probably take him some weeks to find out what it was all about. His reception of the news that he only had hours instead of weeks in which to brief himself ready to brief others was a masterpiece of controlled emotion. He stayed by the ship for many a day until the untimely death of his great little chief, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay. Air Commodore Victor Groom, the airman, like Kenneth McLean, was an old friend of former days in India. His contribution to operation " OVERLORD " on the air side can never be adequately recorded or recompensed. But that is the way with " Backroom Boys," no new thing even in the days when Pericles delivered his famous oration to the ancient Athenians. There will always be some " who have no memorial," and these will be the vast majority.

So the two teams took the field at Quebec on level terms

after all. The Prime Minister had been indoctrinated on the voyage over. The President was put wise at Washington and at Hyde Park, his country residence. The British Chiefs of Staff had had their preview in London, the United States Chiefs of Staff in Washington. We anticipated a good game, and from all accounts there was one. Our plans were examined from every conceivable aspect and subjected to the minutest scrutiny. Small wonder when so much was at stake. Here was a proposition that, if successful, would provide the shortest cut to that goal so earnestly desired, the end of the war with Germany. We had been told so long before that we had reached the end of the beginning, then the beginning of the end. Here was the end of the end in sight. If all went well. If it did not go well, God help us all. This campaign would absorb the bulk of the resources of the United States and of the British Empire. If they did not suffice, the future hardly bore thinking about.

It was a solemn prospect. The tide had begun to turn, true enough, but it was still merely lapping the foot of the dykes that protected the Fatherland. All was far from lost for Germany. Things weren't going too successfully for her in the East, but if she could concentrate her attention on that front, the situation might well yet be turned. A rot had set in in Italy, but did that amount to much? Italy must have been for some time, if not from the start, a doubtful asset to Hitler. There were the Alps as a good stop line. If some economical way could be found of neutralising the West while Russia was dealt with, all might yet be well. What was to be feared from the West? There was a lot of propaganda about a "Second Front," but the actuality would involve the performance of a feat which, with the balance clear in their favour, had been too much for Napoleon and even that other great soldier, "our Führer," so much as to attempt. The British had little kick left in them; they might be lulled into a false sense of security; they were weary and, anyhow, disposed of weak forces. The Americans might have numbers, but they obviously lacked the military skill to use them. The natural divergence of sympathy between these two Allies and between them and the Russians might well be exploited to render any combined blow of capital importance at least unlikely. Somewhat thus must the outlook have been from the enemy's side. Operation "OVERLORD,"

if it could be made to succeed, would wreck very nicely the whole of this theoretical structure. It was decided by our leaders to accept the risks and to strike. Accordingly, COSSAC was instructed to proceed with planning and preparation on the lines laid down by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. These lines were those of our plan, varied by certain expressions of opinion. The Combined Chiefs of Staff gave it as their view that the planned rates of " build-up " and of advance were optimistic. As has been set forth herein, they possibly were, being unavoidably based very largely on educated guesswork. We should have to redouble our efforts to get at some reliable basis for thought and calculation here. Then the Prime Minister, *more suo*, thought more diversionary attacks desirable; he advocated " violence and simultaneity." Grand words, but to put them into practice required more ships, more craft. An affair, however, that came within this definition was that of an invasion of Southern France simultaneous with " OVERLORD." As far as one could tell so far ahead, this should be possible by May, 1944. The Combined Chiefs of Staff directed accordingly to General Eisenhower, then Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean Theatre. The Prime Minister also advocated the addition of at least 25 per cent. to the strength of the initial assault. COSSAC led the rooting for this, but once more the answer came out in ships' bottoms. Here was double emphasis on the matter of the supply of craft and shipping which we knew from the start to be one of the two critical features. As regards the other key point, that of prolonged cross-beach maintenance, the Combined Chiefs of Staff examined every detail of the proposed solution. Major-General Sir Harold Wernher was summoned to Quebec to give reports on the progress of planning and construction, of which he was in charge. The General had come to COSSAC for this purpose from Combined Operations Headquarters where he had had great experience of that which was needed here, co-ordination of military needs with civil resources of all kinds. Though the whole " Mulberry " project was still very much in the blue print stage, the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed that it already showed sufficient promise to justify proceeding with the plan that would, in the event, depend upon it to so considerable an extent.

To round off its work Conference " QUADRANT " recorded the decision that from this time onward operation " OVERLORD " would be recognised as the chief task facing the United States and Great Britain for 1944. This seemed to crown our work though it was far from being the end. It was, in fact, the beginning of a new and even more intense phase of life for COSSAC.

In a word our plan had, as we hoped it might, found general favour. It thus became the basis for future expansion and development on the lines indicated in the various comments recorded above. But the sting came in the tail of the Conference " QUADRANT " proceedings. This was August, 1943, and May, 1944, was still a long way off. In the interval almost anything might happen. This " anything " might be in our favour, to meet which eventuality we were at work on operation " RANKIN." So messages were sent calling for our plans, and it was these messages that cut short the arguments as told in a previous chapter. Our plan for operation " RANKIN " was committed to paper in the space of some six days and nights and this, too, received general approval in principle.

But there was the case to be considered in which events between now and May, 1944, might put us in a much worse position than now. It seemed almost impossible that the secret should be kept scrupulously intact. Such a small leakage would be enough to ruin everything. If the enemy knew that we were going all out for one landing and one landing only he had merely to concentrate but a portion of his reserve strength, say at Caen or thereabouts, and we should be in a pretty quandary. This would be no matter of a diversion or a subsidiary operation. What would be needed would be a major alternative. It was the Prime Minister who caused to be inserted a " minute " right at the end of the " QUADRANT " proceedings such that COSSAC was ordered to revive as this major alternative an old plan for operation " JUPITER," which involved a full-scale assault upon Norway instead of upon France. This would give the flexibility so much desired.

Any doubts as to how COSSAC was to keep itself employed during the long winter evenings were thus satisfactorily set at rest. It was now up to us to sit down once more, study the

" QUADRANT " papers and again sort out what were the first things to come first.

Sticking out a mile as the very first thing was the change in the status of the COSSAC staff. We were not only to continue to elaborate the plan, but we were charged with actually making preparations to carry the plan into effect. This implied command responsibility. It looked all right on paper and in theory but, in practice, some formula had to be found for endowing the Chief and Deputy Chief of Staff with adequate authority over seniors, should necessity for its use arise. Ray Barker was by now a recently promoted Major-General and I a Temporary Lieutenant-General having emerged from the Acting stage, the year's probation as one might say, only in May, 1943. More than one reference has been made in this work to the problems of relative seniority with which was coupled the problem of the absent Supreme Commander. These were not so much personal problems as those of the prestige of our COSSAC organisation. So far, we had done not too badly on the " old boy " basis which, in London specially, gets one a long way down the course. My own path was infinitely smoothed by Bobbie, my invaluable Aide. Had it not been for his fortunate ability to enlist the ready sympathy and help of the bearers of a bewildering variety of nick-names, who turned out on acquaintance to be all sorts and conditions of men and women from Cabinet ministers to barmaids, I, as a comparative country cousin, should have been indeed lost in London. Ray Barker, as has been told, had been planning in London since early 1942 and in the course of so doing had amassed a wide circle of British acquaintance, as well as, of course, knowing and being known by most of his compatriots. One way and another we either knew—or could quickly get to know—anyone in a position to help the cause.

But this was now a different affair altogether. Hitherto our work on " OVERLORD " and " RANKIN " had been, in the last analysis but hypothetical. If you like, it was just more of this planning stuff. If planners became a nuisance it was usually pretty safe to promise them what they were after because ten to one nothing would ever be heard of it or them again. Then our operations in 1943 were only a leg-pull, if it came to that. We got plenty of sympathy over them and plenty of help so

long as their demands did not clash with other engagements. We took good care that such clashes should not occur. But when we suggested such outrageous things as the deliberate exposure of valuable ships we were, quite in accordance with accepted practice, soon put in our places. One hoped and trusted that there would arise no occasion for COSSAC to have to throw its weight about. With luck, and the abundance of good will and enthusiasm in most quarters, the necessity should never arise. But it might and we must be prepared for the eventuality. We had now become in fact that which we had always in our heart of hearts determined to be—the Supreme Allied Commander's headquarters. As such, we must wield anyhow some part of the authority that was to be the Commander's. There must be no more question of laughing it off or of convening a small, *ad-hoc* sub-committee, which so often comes to the same thing.

From the American aspect there was no problem. To them the Chief of Staff speaks as of right with the voice of the Commander even if there is no Commander. But the British custom is otherwise. The line of demarcation is straitly drawn as between commanders and staff officers. The means by which a staff officer was to be given authority over a commander senior to him in rank and age was not to be found recorded in the British Book. A precedent must be created. Only those who have had to strive to do this thing can realise just what it entails. Very soon we were at the tenth page of qualifying conditions and almost back where we started. For the onus of " putting up proposals " had been wisely shifted to us. Eventually we had to cry *capivi* and ask for the indulgence of our superiors. There was no exact solution. What we were essentially trying to do was, as we saw it, to make an impossible situation reasonably possible for practical purposes. So much granted, the best course seemed to be to cut the cackle, get the minimum of words on to the smallest possible bit of paper and hope for the best. This economical suggestion was approved, and what was actually done was that a short amendment was made to my original directive. This read : " Pending the appointment of the Supreme Commander or his Deputy, you will be responsible for carrying out the above planning duties of the Supreme Commander and for taking the necessary executive

action to implement those plans approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff." Thus fortified we could go to Town. And did.

First we reviewed the prospects of availability of resources. In the matter of troops and their equipment and of air strength, things looked good. The United States was getting things rolling in fine style. The figures were so big as to be hard to grasp, and no lying. The estimate at this time, in August, 1943, was that imports into the United Kingdom from the United States, in men, would total not far short of a million by the end of the year and one million and two hundred and fifty thousand by March, 1944. That was one worry disposed of. But the craft and shipping situation seemed to be getting worse instead of better. It seemed almost that it would have been possible to make an immense saving in clerical labour in Government offices by having actually printed on all stationery, as well as the usual letter heads, the opening gambit " Owing to the acute shortage of shipping of all kinds . . ." This had become the unvarying alibi to cover refusal of demands for everything from a new pencil to an additional staff officer. The outlook was one of unrelieved gloom until suddenly a ray, brighter than sunlight, broke through and banished despondency. I was sent for in circumstances of complicated anonymity to meet, in a place where such things were really known, one who could really give the low-down. " All this talk of shipping shortage " he said, " don't you believe a word of it. It is the bunk," or words to that effect. " For the last several months our losses have been small and getting smaller while our shipbuilding has at last got into its stride. If you like figures, let me tell you that since last January our shipping resources have been increasing, on balance, by about a million tons a month. By early 1944 we shall have so much of the darned stuff that we shall be hard put to it to find use for it all. That is the situation right now, only don't say I said so." So that, if true, went far to dispose of another big worry. He should know, and there were probably intricate and obscure reasons of state why such good news could not be used for the public uplift.

To balance this improvement in our shipping situation, the landing craft prospect moved from bad to the next lower category. It was calculated that in May, 1944, our actual receipts of

landing craft fit and ready for action would fall far short even of the small total of the paper credits we had received from the Chiefs of Staff. The calculated deficiency in two key categories would amount, we estimated, to 7 large infantry landing craft (L.C.I.'s) and no less than 164 tank landing craft (L.C.T.'s). These are highly specialised craft for which no substitute can be found by even British improvisation. This deficiency would mean a loss of some 1,500 men and 1,500 tanks and other vehicles in the early stages of the assault. And it was worse than that. A new crisis had appeared in providing British crews for British landing craft. In June we had calculated a requirement for as many as 9,000 additional men for this service. There were no men who were not already allocated well in advance to one vital service or another. We explored the possibility of using American crews in British craft to land British troops, but the complications of training and administration that would thus be caused seemed as disadvantageous as, if not in effect worse than, the shortage of craft. This crisis was eventually overcome by the reorganisation of the British Marine Division into a number of additional Marine Commandos and into Landing Craft Crews. From the point of view of operation "OVERLORD" no happier solution could have been found. There could be no finer Landing Craft Crews in the world but, as usual, the gain had to be paid for by the loss from the forward battle of a British division of the very first class.

Then there was the matter of the assault divisions for operation "OVERLORD." As things were originally set up, the British Army for this campaign would be that which, over the past four years and more, had been formed, organised and trained at home, first for defensive purposes then for participation in this very act of war that we were now contemplating. It is not for me to pass upon the results achieved, in which I had tried to play my part as Brigadier and as Division and Corps Commander. I do not believe that the system of training ultimately evolved could have been improved. In the years of phoney peace from 1918 to 1939, followed by the months of phoney war, we had largely deluded ourselves with the Jorrocks theory that the best trainin' is huntin'. Training for real war had usually stopped just where it began to get difficult and

interesting. But we had had our fright, and learnt our lesson in 1940. Lessons had been learnt continuously since on all our battle fronts from both triumph and disaster and the organisation for ensuring that those lessons were well and truly learnt was now highly efficient. We had got to the stage of submitting Private Snodgrass to a pretty gruelling course of so-called "Battle Inoculation." He was marched insensible, deprived of rest or sleep, starved, frozen, soaked and shot over before he was pronounced fit to adventure into the comparative luxury of the battlefield. But strive as we may after realism in training, we can never quite simulate that moment of shock when the first bullet arrives that is aimed to kill rather than to miss. Accidents there were in training and there were fatalities. But it makes all the difference whether the firer of the fatal shot is liable to be tried by Court Martial or to be given seven days' extra leave as a reward for good shooting. The Army in England contained a proportion of individuals experienced in war—those recovered from wounds or those reposted from foreign service after long years abroad. But in the ordinary course it would contain few units that had fought as units in recent battles. Even such as had fought only in the *débacle* of 1940 would, by 1944, in all probability contain few, if any, individuals who had fought in that affair. The Americans were in like case.

We followed up our covering memorandum, quoted at the end of the last chapter, with a detailed discussion of the whole matter recommending that steps be taken to bring to England, before D-day, a reasonable nucleus of battle tried formations and units so that not only might the assault contain a proportion of veterans, but that all down the line, in supporting and supply units and among Air Force ground crews, there should be a leaven of those who had "been there and had some." Our proposals reached Quebec in time for consideration by Conference "QUADRANT," which agreed that, starting in November, there should be brought to England from the Mediterranean to take part in operation "OVERLORD" four United States divisions and three British divisions. Another problem disposed of, that is so far as the operational and training branches of the Staff were concerned. But combined with the possible movement of a French division in like fashion it gave another separate little headache to the Movement staffs.

This problem was, of course, one for the Armies and Air Force ground personnel. There was no lack of battle experience in Navies and Air Force air crews.

And so one comes to what was probably the most important feature for us of the outcome of Conference " QUADRANT." As has been shown, the main bases of our plan were that the enemy should remain as far as possible undisturbed and unalarmed so that his dispositions in May, 1944, might resemble as closely as possible those in August, 1943, on which we had founded our calculations.

To a certain extent this would depend on the passage of events on other fronts, but that nothing should occur in northwest Europe to alert the enemy from now on had become our responsibility. The battle was now, in fact, in progress, and it was up to the representatives of the Supreme Commander-to-be to take control of it.

There were, indeed, many battles going on, based on Britain at this time. Over and above all others was operation " POINTBLANK," the all-out bombing of Germany by United States and British bomber forces. This operation enjoyed even higher priority at this time than did we. Though this operation was, in truth, our preliminary bombardment, its effect on the early stages of our campaign could be described as indirect. We asked, therefore, merely to be kept informed of the progress of the bombing. Not only might information of use to us be deduced from bombing and combat reports, but it might so be that the strategic pattern of the bombing might tend to " educate " the enemy along certain lines of which we might take advantage later.

Much the same was the relationship we envisaged as regards the Home Fleet. As has been said, there can never be any question of decentralising in any way the control of this force. We nevertheless felt we should like information as to its doings since these would form a part of our general picture.

But on a much smaller scale there were going on little battles by sea, land and air all round us. There was perpetual movement of coastal convoys of ships, both ours and those of the enemy, which formed the core, so to speak, of an intense warfare, with its multitude of minor operations of reconnaissance, attack and defence. We were vitally interested in all this. There

was continuous short-range air fighting, reconnaissance, offensive sweeps and small strikes and all the business of air defence of Great Britain. This was very near our particular back yard. And on land there was the continuous warfare of agents and saboteurs as well as minor exploits by the troops of Combined Operations Command.

It is true that a lot of this went on at our behest. Our need for intensive reconnaissance was great. Now that we had our immediate objective in view, it must be examined under the microscope instead of the magnifying glass. Having no reconnaissance agencies of our own, we used outside agencies, on the Pinkerton principle, to get us the dope for which we submitted demands to them. These agencies fitted our demands in with others, which was most business-like and praiseworthily economical, but the whole picture, to us, was most highly unsatisfactory and even highly dangerous. For when one is in an attitude of defence one is perpetually seeking to divine an opponent's intentions, and a good guide to these can on occasion be given by studying his plan of reconnaissance. If elaborate care were not taken it might well be possible for unco-ordinated reconnaissance agencies acting on our behalf to indicate to the Germans over a period of time that our interest in the Normandy neighbourhood was increasing, whereas our interest in other parts of the front was falling off. As has been said, if he got so much as an inkling of what was afoot we should be beat before we started. We therefore represented immediately after Conference " QUADRANT " to the British Chiefs of Staff that it was essential for COSSAC to be given control of as much as possible of the multitude of activities to which reference has here been made, and after much discussion with all those concerned the requisite authority was given. Practically in so many words we were given authority to control and co-ordinate, within the sphere of our operation, all raids and reconnaissance other than purely naval and air reconnaissance not connected in any way with our operation. Further than this, the British Admiralty and Air Ministry were directed to co-ordinate with us any reconnaissance that they contemplated in connection with these operations other than ours. As will be noticed, this was all in pretty cautious terms. We were on dangerous ground and amongst the tall timber, between the Scylla of my Lords of the

Admiralty and the Charybdis of the Bomber Barons, so Agag had to be imitated (if a thing is worth doing at all, it is worth doing properly, even when it comes to mixing metaphors.) This word co-ordinate in particular was one that we learnt both to admire and to dread. It is much used in the American services. It has a fine military ring. It can mean everything or it can mean nothing. So we had to go one stage further to get down to business.

A big point of principle was here involved, for we found ourselves for the first time concerned directly in operations, and in operations, moreover, of a highly specialised kind. Hitherto we had been thinking of operations in terms of the sweep of vast armies. Our units had been of the size of divisions of many thousands of men. Here it was a matter of single small craft and little groups of two, three or half a dozen expert individuals, and we had no proper means of dealing simultaneously with the two extremes of the scale. We therefore asked the Chief of Combined Operations for help, which was, as ever, gladly and enthusiastically given. Virtually he put at our disposal the planning and intelligence sections of his own headquarters, than which nothing better could be imagined. Then for this business of co-ordination there was regrettably no alternative but to set up a committee. This committee consisted of representatives from COSSAC's three service branches, the Navy, Army and Air, with the Army operations section presiding. Also represented were the Commanding General, 9th United States Air Force, the A.O.C British Tactical Air Force, the Commanders-in-Chief of the United States and British Army Groups, the G.O.C.-in-C., Scottish Command and the Chief of Combined Operations. This lot literally covered the waterfront, but it was an unwieldy body of which the principal virtue was that it was possible by means of it to prevent activities inimical to our design. It also achieved much of that which we desired.

More than one intricate problem came to light and was solved in the course of this business of reconnaissance. On account of the necessity I have mentioned not to draw attention to any particular stretch of coast, specially not to that upon which we had designs, it was found essential to lay down a ratio as between reconnaissances in the so-to-speak target area and reconnaissances elsewhere. For every reconnaissance sent to Western Normandy

it was ruled that three should be sent somewhere, anywhere, else. But even the application of this simple rule produced its problems. In order that a reconnaissance should, as it were, count for purposes of this rule we should have to be certain as to whether the enemy had or had not realised that a reconnaissance had in fact taken place either at the time or subsequently by traces left behind on the beach. There was a certain grim humour in arranging for odd bits of equipment, sometimes American, sometimes British, to be unobtrusively planted where they were bound to be picked up by the enemy. One had to figure out the deductions that he would make. In fact a double-entry score sheet had to be kept to show on one side what we had actually done, what we had found out and what we wanted still to find out, and on the other side our assessment of what the enemy had certainly found out about our doings, what he might have found out and what deductions he was likely to have made from the information we had thus given him.

Probably the most critical piece of reconnaissance arose out of a typical COSSAC crisis of the sort that occurred almost daily. Long after we had decided on the landing beaches and when everything was beginning to get nicely set, some well-wisher, no doubt with the best possible intentions, thought we might like to know that these beaches were not really sandy beaches at all, but consisted mainly of peat with a thin covering of sand on top. He was a scientist who knew about these things and claimed to have detailed local knowledge. If he were right we were facing a major disaster since our plan catered for a great many thousand vehicles, most of them heavy, being put across what we had taken to be firm sand. Before giving way to panic, of course, we had to do what we could to check this information and Combined Operations Headquarters organised a series of feats of quite unbelievable daring. Small parties of their young men, expert in the business, were sent across at night in their special craft and spent many hours wandering about the foreshore with earth augers and similar tackle and brought back samples of the sub-soil. It was not that we had not known that there was peat in this region, but our previous information had led us to believe that the peat existed only in areas that did not matter to us. Mercifully, the Combined Operations reconnaissances proved this to be the case. But

when our pulses returned to normal we were thankful to the informative scientist for having made us check the point.

There were others besides the information gathering agencies whose activities it was essential that we control at least to such extent as they did not harm the wider, longer range prospect. These were the British Special Operations authorities and the Special Operations section of the United States Office of Strategic Services, both of whom were now getting really busy to make life for the Germans in occupied territory as hazardous and burdensome as possible. We had no desire to curb their activities—very much the contrary—but we had to be certain that by no possible mischance could the outcome of a small special operation be such as to give the enemy any clue as to anything else. To this end COSSAC was given power of general direction over all Special Operations projects.

As well as becoming responsible for these external matters, we naturally had to assume responsibility for the companion activities of security within our own countries. With this, again, was combined the whole task of cover and the business of arranging how much or how little of the truth was to be revealed to whom and of how the enemy was to be given all the wrong ideas.

Hitherto the security problem that had faced us, as it faced every individual and organisation to a greater or lesser extent, had been largely limited to our own personnel and premises and their immediate surroundings. Now it became a matter of all Britain and all the United States. As regards the United States, the problem was comparatively simple. It was a long way from the scene of action, it was a big country with few centralised resources in the way of information and news-distributing agencies. There was no possible way of limiting rumour and speculation even if such a course had seemed desirable. But, on the other hand, the very existence of the continuous clamour of rumour and counter-rumour from a thousand sources was in itself a safeguard. To make a coherent deduction on a matter of future fact from the United States Press and Radio must be quite a job. From the COSSAC aspect at this time all we needed to do was to ask the established United States Security Services to be on the *qui vive* and, if they thought necessary, to feed in a few more rumours here and there to keep up the hubbub.

It was different in Britain. Not only are the news and rumour-distributing agencies highly centralised in this confined space, but we had to prepare, mount and launch what must be an absolutely secret undertaking from right among a dense civil population, all of whom were by now keen amateur military critics. The centralisation of agencies, of course, could be made to work both ways and the years of war had made the people in general highly security conscious. Nevertheless, the security problem that lay before Britain was not only a vast one, but one that was more than we could tackle. In the end it was to prove too much even for the British Government to tackle without the help of the Supreme Commander.

For to deal as adequately with the security problem in Britain as the critical situation demanded involved drastic curtailments of that liberty of the subject which is, for purposes of political argument, a privilege so highly prized by the freedom loving citizens of the enlightened electorate. And so forth. Over the war years, indignity and inconvenience had been heaped up on the devoted backs of this same electorate, almost to breaking point, and then we felt constrained to advocate, as the possible last straw, the imposition of yet further stringencies. Summing it all up, we considered it essential that the utmost should be done to eliminate every chance of leakage of the whole truth concerning our plans. As I have tried to explain, it was unavoidable that much of the truth should leak out, but our aim must be to see that such leakages would lead to wrong deductions, specially as to exact place, exact time, and exact strength of our assault. The one place or area where we felt it would be unavoidable that this information must be known to at any rate some people was the sea coast and immediate hinterland whence the assault forces would be launched to the attack. The minimum to ask for, therefore, seemed to be as rigid security control as it was possible to impose on those in such areas as were not under military discipline and so really controllable. The obvious solution that first proposed itself was to evacuate these areas of all their civilian inhabitants, but this simply was not to be thought of. Not only would it be impossible to accommodate the additional masses of evacuees thus created elsewhere, but we should be cutting off our noses to spite our faces. The troops would all have to pass through these areas, many of them

would have to be permanently stationed there before, during and after D-day. If the troops themselves had to perform all the services normally done for them by civilians we should be presenting ourselves with a fantastic " overhead " just at the time when manpower was at its most precious.

Failing evacuation, there was the possibility of cordoning off the affected areas for the rigid control of ingress thereto and egress therefrom. The mechanical operation of such a scheme would present insuperable difficulties, among them again the question of the manpower needed for policing. To cut the cost it would be necessary to restrict the areas to be affected to a minimum, and this alone might well blow the gaff on the queston of locality, the place of attack. As a last resort the absolute minimum essential seemed to be to issue orders to the general public forbidding them to move about that part of the country, in a broad sweep, that should include, as well as some others, the areas in which military interest centred. This may seem a poor alternative in view of the vital needs of the particular moment, but in actuality it was highly effective. Movement about the country for a civilian was, in any case, a matter of extreme difficulty, inconvenience and discomfort. The British had given up travelling for pleasure some time since. Anyone who set out to do so was therefore suspect from the start. Though the police forces in the affected areas had, like all such, been reduced to a minimum, their effectiveness was undiminished. By now they had a pretty exact check on their local populations, aided as they were by all the various systems of tally afforded by National Registration, rationing and so forth. As regards mechanical means of communication, it was here that the centralisation of Postal, Telegraphic, Telephonic and Radio Services would be of maximum benefit. And overall was the admirable Home Guard organisation which had shown its readiness and competence in a thousand ways to turn its hand to anything. Totting it all up and not forgetting the Civil Defence Services, NFS, ARP, Coast Watchers, WVS, Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and the rest, so long as mass movement was forbidden by competent orders that were readily enforcible, there wasn't much liberty left to the balance of the population to get itself into mischief, however much it might want to. So we recommended that there should be imposed a ban on movement for a

specified period of months to affect a strip of England ten miles in depth from the coast from Lands End to the Wash and also from Dunbar to Arbroath in Scotland, excluding in this case Edinburgh and its immediate environs. This seemed the minimum necessary for purposes of both Security and Deception.

This feature of the affair differed sharply from the majority of others in that what was here called for was unilateral action. Action was called for by the British Government to restrict their own people. The British Chiefs of Staff, after careful examination once more of all that was at stake, supported COSSAC's requirements, and there ensued prolonged discussion and argument in Government circles. This continued all through the following winter, and finality was not reached until after General Eisenhower had taken up the appointment of Supreme Allied Commander. The situation, as he found it, was that in spite of the strongest advocacy by British military chiefs, the War Cabinet continued to doubt the necessity for the steps recommended. They agreed, however, to defer to the personal recommendations of General Eisenhower in the matter who, in making them, made possibly the earliest of his great decisions.

VIII

MISSION TO AMERICA

MUCH was to happen, though, before General Eisenhower's arrival to take the full burden upon himself. It was indeed long after August, 1943, that even rumour supported markedly his candidature for the post. Throughout the summer months there was continual hardening of unofficial opinion that the Supreme Commander would be General George C. Marshall, United States Army.

As the communiqués say, reports concerning General Marshall were neither confirmed nor denied. We tried to deduce an answer from first principles. It looked as though there would be three big Anglo-American commands—in the Pacific, the Mediterranean and in North-west Europe. General MacArthur could have no competitor in the Pacific as we then saw things. General Eisenhower was in command in the Mediterranean. It thus seemed clear that the third command must be in British hands. Even when later the command in South-east Asia was created and filled by Lord Louis Mountbatten, it still left the odds on British command for North-west Europe to bring things level at two each for British and Americans. But then there was another theory to be taken into account. As the summer wore on an idea sprang up and gained some support that all operations against Germany by the Western allies should come under one unified command. There seemed much to be said in favour of this if one looked at a map of sufficiently small scale. From the air point of view specially, there was already a certain unity. Shuttle bombing could, and did, already take place ; air formations flying through from Britain to Africa bombing in Germany, Austria or Italy on the way out and on the way back. As the ring round Germany closed problems of adjustment as between the air efforts from North and South would become

more and more intricate, and it seemed that we should perhaps look ahead and combine the two efforts closely before "OVERLORD" was launched. The best way of doing this seemed to be to combine the command of both air efforts. Later in the campaign similar problems might well arise on the ground which could possibly best be solved in the same way. As against this theory there was the undeniable fact that command was already unified in effect through the Combined Chiefs of Staff organisation. In the British view this was amply sufficient, but not all the Americans were sold on the Committee principle. The thought of a super-duper-Headquarters to direct the activities of two or more Supreme Headquarters was a little dizzying. Personnel would be hard to come by. Where would such an outfit be located and whence would it derive authority? Irrespective of the merits or demerits of the idea, as an idea, it seemed that there might be stupendous difficulty to be faced on the practical side of putting it into effect, should it be adopted. In this and similar directions, however, the British had much to learn from the Americans. Mention has been made of the diametrically opposite British and American lines of approach to any given problem. Particularly was this so in the matter of the mobility of commanders and of communications, both very pertinent questions here. There seemed to be few United States General officers who did not propriet at least one airplane each for their personal uses. Whereas by the Royal Air Force a British General was inclined to be regarded as "military freight" and treated as not very high-grade cargo, a treatment that cannot in every case be fully justified, surely. In the matter of communications and kindred activities too, the British approach is still rather to regard Rowland Hill and his penny post as the normal and to look askance at this new-fangled electric telegraphy. The American Army on the contrary, with their staff message control system as well as their almost bewilderingly efficient means of mechanical transmission habitually calculate delays in seconds rather than months. Which does have its disadvantages, for there are times when second thoughts are desirable, though the retort here will surely be that the thinking machine should be pepped up rather than that the transmitter should be slowed down.

It was this persistent uncertainty as to the identity of our

future commander that made it all but impossible to formulate a command set-up on the highest levels. I have written above of the conflict there must always be, specially when dealing with Americans and British, as between the demands of organisation and the vagaries of what is nowadays so much spoken of as personality. Individual higher commanders as often as not have their idiosyncrasies as to methods of command as well as in other matters. It is often difficult for those who have held independent high command to take kindly once more to a subordinate rôle. Higher commanders are just as prone as are other men to experience jealousies, likes and dislikes, but in their case such little human failings are apt to become unduly prominent in the fierce limelight that beats upon them when they emerge from the shadows of peace-time banishment to become the cynosure of a nation's eyes. For COSSAC it was infinitely difficult; bereft of guidance from those whose responsibility it would be, in fact was, to make any sort of forecast of the composition of the topmost pyramid of command for operation "OVERLORD." We could go so far along lines of simple organisation, but before any great distance was covered we inevitably ran into a question of personality or of international relationships that finished up with an unanswerable query. Though relationships between British and Americans at this time might be described generally as being in a state of change from unsettled to fair it was quite out of the question to expect that a state of affairs would ever be reached in which there could be anything of the nature of complete interchangeability of personnel and resources of every kind. Anyway, the variations of method of supply and administration forbade it. The naturally dominant force in such matters would always be centrifugal. There were to be considered all kinds of questions, of past history and future relationships as well as those of the expediency of the moment and of our particular operations. Geography came into it too. It would surely have to be a British Admiral to command in Nelson's home waters. Then on the far bank there were matters to be considered of relationships with the French and our other allies.

There was a precedent to be studied, but this didn't seem to help much. There was now in operation the command set-up in the Mediterranean where the ultimate amalgamation of

the commands of Generals Alexander and Eisenhower had given us a picture something of the type of that which we aspired to create. But the more we studied it the more it seemed to be a rough sketch rather than a finished masterpiece. Definition became obscured just where we should have liked clarity, right at the top. Was it that General Eisenhower appeared to have left the detail of operations to General Alexander, and himself to have concentrated more on the political problem, as a matter of necessity or a matter of choice? It might have been either. If it had been a matter of choice, whose was the choice? All these things may be made plain one day, but in the summer of 1943 there was no plainness.

For our part we had got early as far as envisaging two Groups of Armies. There might be more later, but the furthest point to which it seemed worth while going was that at which there would be two, one United States and one British. At first there was created in England the embryo of a First United States Army Group (FUSAG) which would control First United States Army (FUSA), and further United States Armies to be brought into being. Confusion between FUSAG and FUSA was of course intense (and in part no doubt deliberate for cover purposes) because of this similarity of abbreviated name, and remained so until the Twelfth Army Group was christened as such. On the British side there was created 21st Army Group, of Second British and First Canadian Armies. There would come a moment when these two Army Groups would be in the field side by side. Overall there would be a Supreme Headquarters topped off with, according to written evidence, a British Supreme Commander, or, according to powerful rumour, an American Supreme Commander. But it seemed impossible to fill in the gap between the supreme head and the Army Group commands without knowing which it was to be.

A small point was that in accordance with the nationality of the Supreme Commander his staff of Supreme Headquarters, and so the staff at COSSAC, must be organised on American or British lines. There would either be a formidable British array of initials on the office doors of Deputies, Assistants and Deputy Assistants or there would be the clean-cut American G. 1, 2, 3 and 4. The difference would of course go much deeper to affect the whole method of staff procedure which

originally varied very widely as between the staffs of the two nationalities. But the big question was that lying between the two systems of command. Were we to prepare for the American unified command system whereby one man is paramount or for the British Committee system whereby the three heads of the three services are co-equal? The COSSAC directives issued by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, half of whom were British, had spoken of a Supreme Commander and a Chief of Staff, which had a distinctly American flavour about it, whereas these two individuals were designated as British officers. Could this by any chance mean that the British were about to adopt American methods? These and all similar cogitations remained just cogitations.

Whatever happened or didn't happen on the top level there was the lesser question of the command set-up for the assault, the command of our strategic advanced guard, with the fate of which we were, for the time being, just as intimately connected. The assault was to be by a basic force of three divisions of soldiers, a suitable composition for a Corps Command. But by the time there had been grafted on all the many and various adjuncts to the main army assault, the Naval and Air elements together with the hundred and one other formations, units, organisations and interests that were already clamouring for seats in the first cross-channel steamer, it would be quite impossible to compete with them through the comparatively small resources of a Corps Headquarters. So we tried to build the picture round an Army Headquarters. In brief this wouldn't fit either, and then we found that a new approach altogether was required. Instead of starting, as it were, from our end, a beginning was made from the situation that would exist when our two Army Groups, United States and British, should have taken the field and, working backwards from that it was found that, quite apart from any question of sentiment, national pride or anything of that sort, it would be essential for troops of both Army Groups to advance neck and neck from the start. Otherwise we should find ourselves with a predominantly British or predominantly American development on the far shore and should find ourselves committed, broadly speaking, to advancing with one Army Group behind the other; a basically unsound disposition. Here was a fixed point at last. The assault must

be mixed American and British. Presumably, other considerations alone would have demanded that this should be so. But the fact is clear that the mixed assault was a military necessity. Then there was always the probability of an increase in craft that would enable a heavier assault to be delivered. The Prime Minister had advocated a 25 per cent. increase. A miracle might happen and this might come about, which was an added reason for broadening the base of the effort. To give the command directly to the Headquarters of one Army Group or the other would allow for almost any eventuality of change that could be reasonably foreseen. The worst that could happen was that the first assault should remain at a strength of three divisions. These could, if desired, be the leading divisions of three Armies abreast, American, British and Canadian. Or equally any other permutation could quickly be put into effect at the Commander's wish. Still we must know who were to be the Commanders. It seemed as though the honour must go to the British for very many reasons. But when it came to personalities there were doubts. The assault must be mixed so the Commander must be one in whom utter reliance could be placed by all components of the assaulting force.

It was in this connection that COSSAC attempted to put to the test the authority granted to it by the Directive issued after Conference "QUADRANT" conferring certain modified command responsibilities. Not only was there this question of command to be decided, but there was a growing feeling in all of us that something would be needed in the way of psychological stimulus to the people of Britain who, having suffered so much, were about to suffer so much more. For we seemed to detect, in this lovely summer of 1943, more than a little tendency toward complacency. Compared with what had been, things were going well for our side, possibly well enough. There was good news coming from the Pacific where General MacArthur was beginning to climb up the map again. India seemed safe from the Japanese. Rommel had been chased out of Africa. A pity he had been able to get himself and so much else out but, never mind, it was good enough to have made a spectacular bag of prisoners. The Russians were still in the war and coming along well, too. There were few bombs dropping in England now. On the other hand Germany was at last getting a proper foretaste of what was coming to her in this line. Surely the

British had earned a bit of sunbathing. The Americans and Russians could really have no grouse if we just sat back for a bit and watched them fight the next round. Good thing to have a bit of a quiet think as to what they, and possibly the British as well, should do next. It wasn't as bad as that, of course, but there were overworked moments when we at COSSAC felt it might have been.

But to suggest a positive cure, or rather prophylactic, was not so easy. Secrecy being all important there had to be some way of alerting the British without alarming the Germans. It was not so much the armed forces that could do with a tonic but rather the mass of the civilian population who had fought every bit as hard in their various ways and had got nothing for their pains except to be messed about. It was for them, the civilians, that the war was being fought and it was, as it always is, from them that the armed forces derive such virtue as those forces may possess. The means of administering the dose must therefore be the public information services, Press and Radio, and the obvious practitioner to prescribe was Doctor Churchill. If he could give some modified version of his historic shots in the arm that had lifted the already anæsthetised patient clean off the operating table into the arena again in 1940, one could wish for nothing better. We suggested that the Prime Minister might be moved to talk confidentially to British newspaper editors and then possibly speak over the radio to the people to ask them, without disclosing details, for one great final heave. The time for this was judged to be later, but we also suggested another line of approach which was that consideration should be given to the early appointment to the British Army in England of some colourful personality who might impart the dynamism, that we judged to be in short supply, through the army to the people. We realised that in so doing we were putting some strain upon the wording of our Directive since the whole matter might well be deemed to be outside the competence of the Supreme Commander for whom we purported to act, even had he been corporeally present. Our representations were made jointly of course on British and American account.

Somewhat unavoidably there has been about this narrative so far an undeniably British flavour. This has followed quite naturally from the fact that the main plays were made in

London, England. This, too, is not an official history but a semi-personal account of one small episode that served to link together the major movements of that part of World War II which began on 7th December, 1941, at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii, and ended at Rheims, France, on 7th May, 1945. Of necessity, too, it is largely individual in nature since the COSSAC organisation lost its identity as such long since, in January, 1944. Though many of us were lucky enough to carry on with General Eisenhower and to serve him to the end on his combined staff, the greater allegiance swallowed up the lesser. But while COSSAC was COSSAC, the responsibility was mine and much of that which happened, happened to me individually, and I am British.

It was a very small party of us that went over in the autumn of 1943 to take part in further discussions with the United States and Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington, D.C. Many thousands of Britons made the journey in the war, some on many occasions. But all of these others, I suppose, represented some ancient and reputable institution. Many of them knew they were "playing for England." It was difficult to work out in our minds of what exactly we were travelling in aid.

When General Ray Barker returned from the United States whither he went from Quebec after Conference "QUADRANT," he brought with him an invitation from General Marshall for me to visit him in Washington. There seemed a possibility at the time that, while he would be Supreme Commander, I might be his Chief of Staff. Such an arrangement would be sufficiently remarkable, we being of different nationality, but if it should prove possible here would be integration indeed. The relationship between commander and Chief of Staff must be of a special character based upon complete understanding, rarely enough fully attained when the combine is of one race. If, indeed, I were to serve General Marshall in this capacity then the sooner we met the better. And, further, the sooner I met up with the United States Chiefs of Staff and as many as possible of the other United States war-making agencies, the better. Hitherto, I had met only certain individuals representative of these agencies in the course of their tours of the United States war fronts throughout the world. As recorded elsewhere, there had come Mr. Henry L. Stimson, Secretary of War, in July, who had done us all a power of good. We

had been able to tell Mr. Donald Nelson of the War Production Board something about our needs in Landing Craft and other commodities. We had not quite known what to say to Mr. Elmer Davis of the Office of War Information when he had suggested that May, 1944, might be a bit late for the party and that we should shoot the works much earlier. Maybe it would have made a better story but probably not of the type that would have made good reading for our side. Mr. Eric Biddle of the Budget Bureau had impressed us with facts and figures. I had had the privilege of meeting the famous five Senators on their world-shaking tour. I had dined with Colonel Knox, then Secretary of the United States Navy. We had been visited by General Arnold, Commanding General of the United States Army Air Corps, by General Styer, Deputy Chief of Supply, General Handy, Chief of the Operations Division, War Department General Staff, as well as a host of others. But these contacts, though admirable from our point of view in giving us "atmosphere," were not all entirely satisfying to us from the business point of view. They were mostly fleeting and, of necessity in London, often more social than official in character. We had close and continuous contact, it is true, with the United States authorities located more permanently in London, Ambassador John G. Winant, Admiral Stark, Commander of the United States Fleet in British Waters and semi-officially United States representative for French affairs, and General Devers, Commanding General in the European Theatre. Relations could not have been more cordial. But the fact remained that if COSSAC was, as seemed clearly indicated, to regard itself and be regarded as in some measure an agency of the United States Government, some closer acquaintance with, closer identification with, the main body of that Government appeared at least desirable. Accordingly, I asked of the British Chiefs of Staff permission to accept General Marshall's invitation, which was granted. I was also permitted to take with me British Major-General N. C. D. Brownjohn of the COSSAC Staff who had worked from the beginning as Principal Administrative Officer in general charge of all supply and administrative plans and preparations. Though there was no question of full integration of the supply staffs, it was evident that, so long as their forces were building up in England, the Americans would

be obliged to co-ordinate their requirements closely with those of the British who were, so to speak, the landlords. At COSSAC Headquarters, therefore, the British Supply and Administrative Staff was regarded as *primus inter pares* during the planning and preparation stages. So it was logical that General B. J. should be of the party on this occasion since there were a multitude of affairs on his side of the house that could be adjusted only in the United States. With Bobbie, my Aide, the party was complete.

We set out from Addison Road Station, whose seclusion kept the secret of so many war-time comings and goings, on 6th October, 1943, in General Devers' luxurious private train. We were escorted by General John C. H. Lee, Chief of the United States Services of Supply in England, who came north to Prestwick to see us off. Airborne by C.54 Skymaster on the evening of 7th October, we chased the sunset all through the interminable trans-Atlantic autumn night, which gave us that which had for so long been so hard to come by—time for reflection.

Sleep was not easy, for to keep below the ice we had to take most of the bumps. Here was one of those periods, somehow stolen from life, that air travel gives us, and which henceforward will probably be the only opportunities for busy men to check up on themselves and their business. Just what were we at?

In spite of the fact that we were ourselves British, we still found it hard to interpret the true intentions of our senior compatriots. Though, looking back over the past months, there was no doubt that we had effected something, there persisted the feeling that, on the British side, concessions to our demands were made sometimes grudgingly. For instance, British permission for this present journey had been given with a certain *froideur*, in contrast with American enthusiasm for the proposition. When, permission granted, we asked could we take any special greetings to Washington, there was no response, which seemed odd, though possibly just British. Typically British, too, was the desire occasionally discernable at meeting or conference or even in conversation to slide off into discussion of any and every strategic alternative save that which had been agreed upon officially. Though there were obvious and immense difficulties on the British side in putting any plan of the nature we had concocted into effect, it was not always easy to convince oneself that objections raised were quite, quite genuine.

It had been amusing to be solemnly warned of the pitfalls that lay ahead of us in the States where we should doubtless be subjected to the "glad-handing" business at which these Yanks are so adept. "Watch 'em, old boy," was universal advice. This was the first occasion on which any of the three of us had adventured westward. Hitherto, our only real contact with the natives of those parts had been in Europe and Africa in the course of this war.

What we had seen in London had given us, for our part, sneaking hopes for the best so far, at any rate, as hospitality was concerned. It had been amusing to watch the unemotional and close-fisted British throw open their doors to the American invaders, putting the best available of everything at their disposal. At a price, of course, in most cases, but there were many instances of genuine generosity. How often had we not left our usually sordid little bed-sitting-rooms, the best that a mere Britisher could afford for himself, to be guests of the American tenants of the most exclusive apartments in our capital. We figured that, with luck, the picture might reverse itself on the other side of the water. It would indeed be a matter of luck, for we had had experience of life abroad on "local allowances." As guardian of the tax-payer's money, I had taken part in the selection of officers for foreign appointments by virtue of their private incomes.

The point at issue here was whether or not we were travelling on a British venture. As explained, there were many indications to the contrary. Then what? It didn't seem likely that we were embarked on American business either. In spite of big words and big figures, there were still mighty few United States soldiers in Britain. The sneaking thought cropped up again: were we of COSSAC just another leg-pull? Was all this really another plan of deception? For purposes of cover operations in 1943 we had caused an American Corps Commander and small staff to fly the Atlantic twice to give colour to a simulated threat to North-west Europe. Was the same stunt by any chance being played off on us?

In such a situation it is good to count one's blessings. We had made a plan which had been okayed by the highest possible mundane authorities who had, further, ordered us to carry it out. True, they hadn't been too generous with the means for doing so, but that, to them, was a matter of comparative detail. We had gone about as far as our limited means and limited

authority permitted. What was now needed was more means and more authority. The place to get them was right here in the States. Our object must be to get the United States Army rolling eastward and to insist upon having the body of a Supreme Commander or a competent deputy. Failing all else I must be given authority of some kind that would work the oracle. But I wanted a commander and I proposed to assume from the start that this was to be General Marshall. It seemed useless asking anybody who it was to be. By making this assumption we should at least put on to others the burden of proof that this was the wrong solution. And setting aside all speculation we were now for it, whatever it was to be.

As the journey proceeded, indications quickly accumulated that our trip was, to outward appearance at any rate, pretty big medicine. At Presquile, Maine, where we first touched down in the States, there were provided to convey us from plane to breakfast, a distance all of about four hundred feet, two large limousines, one bearing three stars and one bearing two, presumably for me and for General Brownjohn respectively. Then on arrival at La Guardia airfield, New York, we found drawn up to greet us not only a guard of honour, but also a platoon of General Officers to make us welcome. And at Washington airport we were honoured to be greeted by another great deputation headed by none other than General Joseph T. McNarney, then deputy to General Marshall. With breathtaking speed and efficiency we found ourselves wafted into what seemed like paradise itself, the visiting General Officers' quarters at Fort Myer. The warmth of our welcome was affecting. This, we supposed, was what we had been warned about. But could one detect anything about it that was not utterly genuine? No, sir. We were among friends, clear from Generals down to the grand old coloured cavalry sergeant who had been told off, with a bunch of coloured troopers as strikers, to see that we were comfortable. They may not have made much of a fist at "shinin' up these goldurned limey buttons," but they were grand boys, and there wasn't much that the sergeant didn't know about soldiering. Parts of the business are the same in any language.

Our quarters, we later found out, had been specially redecorated for us under the immediate supervision of Mrs. Marshall, and temptation abounded to relax for a moment to try to readjust

frame and intelligence to new scales. Even while wallowing in the delights of American plumbing, I was summoned to wait upon General Marshall who was expecting me in his office in the Pentagon building. So here was the big moment without delay.

Of what does this soldiering business really consist? Is the secret of it skill at arms, technical skill in the handling and combination of forces, the acquisition of knowledge of principles and formulæ, the study of precedent? Napoleon, the greatest of all, told us that the moral, as he called it, outweighs the material aspect of the military matter by three to one. Since his day the material side of war has complicated itself beyond computation which has had the effect of lengthening the odds almost out of sight. More than ever is it, and always will it be, that war is a matter of conflict between human minds, human beings. And the leaders are not necessarily the technicians, but those skilled in the handling of the technicians and their emanations, to make use of them in influencing the thought and mind of the adversary. It all comes out in this thing called personality. The bigger the complications, the bigger the men needed to control them. While what we call civilisation busies itself with the negative process of "levelling down," the more insistent becomes the demand for greatness. "This is the age of the common man," as was told me in confidence on a subsequent occasion by one of the greatest of living Americans, "and the only thing wrong with the common man is that he is so bloody common."

But here, on the 8th October, 1943, I found myself in the presence of greatness, as I was to do in the course of several contacts in the United States of America. I was put delightfully at ease, and then, when I least expected it, knocked clean out by the General saying, still with the sweetest of smiles, "I have heard the most unsatisfactory reports about you." So here it came. The whole thing was, as we had suspected, a nonsense, and I had been used as a red-herring, or whatever the American equivalent was. Anyway, I was intending to be over on the other side for five days only, and they might as well be five days of relaxation before we set off back, returned far from empty. One gets understandably keyed up in situations of this sort, and these and many similar thoughts flashed through the mind in what was really only a momentary pause after which the General

went on : " I hear you have taken no rest whatever for a long time and that won't do. While you are over here I intend to see that you take leave, and the longer the better." The orchestra played again, the sun shone and the flowers bloomed once more. The birds would be singing again somewhere, though they don't seem to sing much in Washington, D.C. And my interview continued.

General Marhsall was good enough to be entirely frank and forthcoming. To my dismay, he told me that all was far from clear as to his personal prospects. Should he take command in Europe there was an apparently insoluble problem of his succession as Chief of Staff in the States. Not only was this problem one of adjustment of personalities in the United States armed forces, but there was that of relationships " on the hill." The United States set-up differs widely from that in London, where the armed forces and their chiefs are to some extent insulated from the seasonal and seismic fluctuations of politics. The United States Chief of Staff stands, by constitution, right up against the elected representatives of the people and his popular responsibilities are far more direct than those of his British counterpart, if he indeed can be said to have one. So to change a United States Chief of Staff just at the moment when the war was to reach its climax would be a matter for very deep consideration, one at any rate in which the personal predilections of the individual would weigh not too heavily. Presumably also, of course, it might appear that the Chief of Staff were stepping down in accepting command in one theatre instead of exerting control over all. And who, in this case, would guard him who had himself been the guardian ? The thought here seemed to be that should, as appeared possible, the command of several theatres of operations be combined in one central organ, there would be nothing derogatory in acceptance by a United States Chief of Staff of overall supreme power. Since the plan was never adopted there did not arise occasion for working out the apparently tricky relationship that would have had to exist between such a " Supremissimo " and the highest echelons of war direction in the more or less united nations.

It was enthralling to hear an uninhibited view from this shrewdest of observers on our leading British personalities and to be taken back in history over the course of the dealings between the two nations and their armies. Viewed thus, from this place,

it was possible with crystal clarity to perceive the true inwardness of certain events way back in 1917 and 1918. To see that there was more than appeared at first sight in the attitude then adopted by the United States Commander, General John J. Pershing, when he stood out for independent United States command and resisted all the blandishments of the no doubt somewhat patronising British and French experts who promised earlier victory could they use the United States divisions as transfusions of new blood into their war-tried but almost exhausted veteran French and British formations. There were, it appeared, signs that the former arguments might again produce themselves and they must be even more emphatically rejected in 1943. Each week throughout the war General Marshall visited his old Chief, resident at the Walter Reid Hospital, possibly to remind himself, had reminder been needed, of battles long ago, battles other than those on the tented field.

As General Marshall put it, more than flatteringly, had either Sir Douglas Haig or General Foch been given the opportunity that now was mine, of visiting the United States and getting some idea of its vast size and potentialities, how different it all might have been.

Already, from what little we had seen of this immensity that is the United States, it appeared absurd that there should arise any question such as that of the last war. Our original concept was right, that our main body lay here in America in the full sense of that term, our main reservoir of men, material, energy, spirit and everything else.

Summing up my first talk with General Marshall, it seemed that whereas I had gained a rich experience, the cause I represented stood roughly where it had stood before. As we of COSSAC had thought, if the British intentions could be relied upon, then the United States Army, which included the United States air, would be right in it with both arms swinging.

The question of Supreme Command was as far off as ever, though General Marshall was good enough to agree that, for all practical purposes, we should act together during my visit as though he and I were eventually to collaborate. One thing alone seemed certain, that my idea of getting back to Europe in five days was ridiculous. Well, so be it. There seemed to be plenty cooking, both literally and figuratively, round Washington, D.C.

Starting right next morning and on every morning thereafter, I was summoned to attend General Marshall's morning staff conference. At this daily session, General Handy, Chief of O.P.D., gave a short report from all the world's war fronts which was supplemented by General Arnold from the air aspect and by General George Strong, Chief of the War Department G-2, or Intelligence Branch. From time to time others attended to give specialist summaries of the activities of which they were chiefs. I don't know if such a privilege was ever accorded to another foreigner. I cannot imagine anything of the sort in London. It was an oddly schizophrenic position in which to find oneself. When, at an early meeting, one of the speakers made reference, in full eloquence, to the " bloody British," there was an awkward moment's pause. But it was only for a moment, until I had time to ask if I might be treated as a " bloody Yank," whereafter we all made use of the vernacular with equal fluency. It was odd to receive British reports, as it were, sideways instead of from above, and I must admit that there were moments when an observer thus placed seemed fully justified in the use of the traditional epithet.

Though my little party of two and I were, so to speak, " living American " as guests of the United States General Staff—which appeared to entail a standard of living slightly higher than that portrayed by Hollywood as befitting a multi-millionaire, or so it seemed to us after our years of austerity—we had early to establish relationship with our compatriots of the Joint Staff Mission living in much reduced circumstances in the town. Their lot was not a happy one, nor can it have been easy to represent adequately the senior partner while forced to exist like the poor relation. But that is how it is, and all ranks of the Mission did their utmost not only to fulfil their own tasks, but to help us. As Sir John Dill commented at our first meeting over there, " The sooner we get to know as much of these Americans as they know of us the better it will be for all concerned and many more besides." Very truly remarkable was the tie that existed between the Field Marshal and the United States Chief of Staff. One is tempted to describe it as un-English on the part of the former. But the Americans of all ranks, grades and ratings were not just wise-cracking when they referred so frequently and so enthusiastically to " our General Marshall and our Field-Marshal " all in one breath.

I had served at the War Office with the Field Marshal, but Admiral Sir Percy Noble and Air Marshal Sir William Welsh were new friends. General Gordon Macready, No. 2 to the Field Marshal, was an old and tried comrade. One and all gave us a great welcome, as did the boys. I needed from them all the support I could get on this vital question of command, command of the whole operation and command of the Advanced Guard assault. The greater, of course, would include the less and it was upon this point that it was obvious that I should have to concentrate. From the point of view of COSSAC it was so simple. No commander, no battle. But in higher quarters in Washington, as in those in London, so soon as one bore down on this point it broke off short and came back at us as a vague query as to whether we were quite certain a battle was wanted, anyway.

In outline, having drawn blanks from both General Marshall and the Field Marshal, the best procedure seemed then to be to get to work as one might say at both ends, to get the pick and shovel boys really working on our plan as already approved while importuning the high-ups as and when opportunity offered or could be made. Even working from a careful record it is hard to reproduce in a form that is at all coherent a step by-step story of what now took place. But the main episodes were those involving our meetings (here, thank goodness, I had the powerful support of General Brownjohn), with United States planners, British planners, Combined planners and all other planners, and with that imposing body the Combined Chiefs of Staff themselves. Of individual contacts there were countless numbers, but all led up to the unforgettable hour I was privileged to spend alone with the President in the White House.

Our first meeting with the United States planners was a testing affair. Meeting the British planners in London had been a matey, not to say intimate, causerie. In a small chamber far beneath the surface of the ground one had been confronted by three charming individuals whose air of insouciance deceived no one and who quietly but effectively exposed the amateurish nature of one's most brilliant ideas whereafter much better alternatives were suggested over a glass of something in the next door dungeon. But here in Washington, D.C., it was much otherwise. We seemed to be confronted by a mass convention of War Department officials, each one of whom knew his stuff,

and ours, by heart and had searching inquiry to make. At our first trial General B. J. and I were accompanied in the dock by two potent allies, Generals Carl Spaatz and " Beadle " Smith, back on a deputation of some kind from the Mediterranean. With their skilled and eloquent assistance backed with red-hot practical experience, we were able to make not too bad a defence for three hours non-stop and get to first base.

The onward journey to second was even tougher. The same variation existed, as in the case of the planners, between procedures followed by the British Chiefs of Staff in London and the Combined Chiefs of Staff in Washington. In the former instance business was conducted in cloistral calm with a minimum of personnel, whereas the Combined Chiefs of Staff in session amounted to a formidable gathering. It was already 22nd October, with nothing decided, and I determined to try to arrive somewhere by some means. So this time I asked straight out to be given the full powers of the Supreme Allied Commander pending the eventual appointment. The reaction was interesting in the extreme and showed that here, once more, we were in face of an impasse. As I expected, from the British side there was nothing doing. Simply, to them, a staff officer cannot give orders. Whereas the United States spokesman, this time Admiral Ernest King, made it clear that, armed with the authority I already possessed as COSSAC, he in my place would have no hesitation in going right to Town. Setting aside for the moment any difference of personal ability—I doubt very much, for instance, whether I, clothed with all the authority in the world, could have lifted the main units of the United States Navy from the sea-bed of Pearl Harbour and beaten the Japs with it in a matter of almost weeks—here was a basic divergence in principle. So far as we could gather between us, nothing was settled about anything at this meeting, so General B. J. and I mingled our sobs and ideas far into the night and thought up other lines of approach.

There seemed little prospect of the British abandoning their traditional attitude and agreeing that I be given powers above those of my station in life. From the start there had been doubt as to why I had been appointed in preference to others manifestly more experienced in the particular line that COSSAC was designed to pursue.

But alternatively it was possible to envisage a new line of action. Whoever was ultimately to assume the post of Supreme Allied Commander, and whenever he was to do so, a moment would arrive when he would have to be formally charged with the duties of his mission by the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In other words, the Combined Chiefs of Staff would have to issue to him a Directive, a powerful and magic document that would point up the whole affair and impart the impulse that would set the whole campaign in motion. We had had much experience in drafting Directives of one sort or another, culminating in that which I had myself received. So we determined to set to work on the Directive that would end all Directives so far as the war in North-west Europe was concerned. In fact we produced the very document that was eventually issued, with little variation from the original, to General Eisenhower in due course. It was published by him as the preamble to his masterly Report or Despatch on the Campaign.

Naturally enough our first draft, drawn up at dead of night, in the quiet of our Fort Myer quarters, went through all the various processes to which such an instrument must be subjected before its final emergence, but it did not give us, General B. J. and myself, the relief we had looked for by crystallising the fluidity that had beset the matter of the appointment itself. All remained obstinately in solution.

There was a companion piece to the "Directive" line of approach that seemed to offer possibly even better chances of result. There would be required in the event a Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, or so it seemed to us. Though the principle of having deputies in the highest appointments was essentially an American custom, it was already evident that the British had almost officially adopted the idea at any rate in combined Anglo-United States organisations. Thus General Alexander was officially General Eisenhower's deputy in the Mediterranean Theatre, General Stilwell was Admiral Mountbatten's deputy in South East Asia Command and General Barker was mine. Logically, therefore, if our Supreme Allied Commander for North-west Europe was, as appeared, to be American, he would be furnished with a British deputy. The evolution of the deputy might lead to the appointment of the head man himself, or at least to some unmistakable indication of the final choice. So we went to work on that one.

This was obviously a matter for the highest levels only, so I took it straight to Mr. Stimson, Secretary of War, to General Marshall and to the Field-Marshal. Once again the waters were deep and one found oneself obliged to deal in very big figures. General Marshall kept manfully to his promise to play the part of Supreme Allied Commander (Designate), but even so he could not envisage a possibility of being allowed to pick an individual Briton. It was a matter, therefore, of drawing up a "short list." His every inclination was, understandably, to plump for Sir John Dill, his greatest and most admired British friend. But there were doubts on the score of Sir John's age and health, more particularly the latter. (One did not stress the age factor in discussion with Mr. Stimson or General Marshall with both as fit as fiddles). It was necessary eventually to get the two of them, the General and the Field-Marshal, together over this, to the great embarrassment of both, and there emerged three names, Sir John Dill, Sir Charles Portal (then C.A.S.) and Sir Alan Brooke (then C.I.G.S.). So much so painfully done, the question immediately arose as to who was to do what next. There could be no question of using the "usual channels." It was a matter, as I have said, for the highest levels.

I was most fortunately able to take the matter directly to the highest possible United States authority, the President, who had been good enough to say he wished to see me on recovery from a slight cold.

I know nothing of United States politics. I have the privilege of acquaintance with some thousands of United States citizens of all walks of life, and have therefore been able to discuss United States politics with some thousands of shades of opinion, for every conversation with a United States citizen gets around to United States politics at some time or other. But still I don't get it, since apparently one's acquaintance must run into five or six figures before one is liable to get the same explanation twice. So we leave politics out of this.

Never before had I been, and seldom in future can I possibly be, lucky enough to encounter so immediately and powerfully attractive a person as Franklin D. Roosevelt. Maybe there are those who profess to have seen in him the very opposite. I guess they never met him, most of them. Anyway, they can never have spent such an hour, as I was privileged to do, alone

with him in his study discussing the shape of things to come, a shape that his hands could very largely mould.

Just to start things off right, before my escort, Mr. Harry Hopkins, had left us to it, the President put me on-the spot by saying, grinning broadly, "You realise, General, that I have risen from my bed of sickness on purpose to see you, so what you have to say had better be important." I took this at its face value and answered, "Mr. President, I don't want to overtax you in your delicate health and will be brief. All I need of you is your Army, your General Marshall and your Ambassador Biddle."

"The United States Army," said he, "you can have to-morrow if you can tell me what you want it for and the reasons are good. I doubt very much if General Marshall can be spared, and my Ambassador Biddle you certainly can't have. I need him."

So we went to work. Before I had got far with an outline of the COSSAC plan, to my amazement I found myself listening to an argument in favour of invading Europe from the south-east rather than from the north-west. This wouldn't do, so I had to chip in and challenge the President on certain of his broad geographical assumptions. Luckily he didn't seem to know much more of the detail than I did, but I suggested to him a source from which he must have recently derived his material. This naturally led to chat on the subject of his dealings with the Prime Minister. "The things that man has called me," said he, "you wouldn't believe. But don't you think he has it all his own way. No, sir. You know perhaps the clearest indication of the strength of our alliance is that we can call each other every name we can lay our tongues to and yet remain good friends. Once we start being polite to each other it won't be anything like the same thing."

So on with the COSSAC plan that he had heard already, of course, at an earlier stage. But he was most interested to hear some account of the adventures of my little mission in the States up to date. Then came another crack when we got around to discussing General Marshall's possible assignment as Supreme Allied Commander. Having recapitulated all the difficulties attendant on a change of Chief of Staff in the United States, "And you know I rely entirely on my constitutional technical

advisers, particularly in military matters, which, I gather, is not the case in some other countries. Is it ? "

So we went on to the case of Mr. Ambassador Biddle. I wanted him badly for what was coming to COSSAC in the matter of contact with all our European allies. Tony Biddle was already working with them all as the representative of the President. What was wanted was that he should make a small change of allegiance to that of the Supreme Allied Commander or, temporarily, to me. But the President wanted him, too. He regaled me with anecdotes which, though possibly apocryphal, were highly amusing of his painful embarrassment in the presence of European royalty. To spare him further pain of this nature, he told me, he looked entirely to Tony Biddle.

My hour was running down and I didn't seem to be getting any place much. But it was highly presumptuous, I suppose, to expect even as much as I had got. It seemed hardly likely that one should be able to bounce the President of the United States into giving what he didn't want to give and probably couldn't give by constitution. But odd things do happen sometimes, especially in war. So I went at it all again. The plan seemed O.K., so one could tick the United States Army off the list. Then I put to the President the request that I might draft for him a cable to the Prime Minister on the subject of the British Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, just in case. This request was granted just as Mr. Harry Hopkins arrived to see me to the door of the White House and escort me safely past the forbidding-looking guards, who surveyed one with cold and fish-like eye from behind every corner.

Franklin Roosevelt made no pretension to being even an amateur soldier. I am no politician, and still less a statesman. But the President had that gift, not given to many, of laying himself alongside all sorts and conditions of men, this human touch of which we speak. I left, feeling all the better for having met him and, moreover, with a sensation that all would yet be well.

Next morning I sent down to Admiral Leahy, the President's Chief of Staff, the draft cable that the President had promised me to consider. I took care to have my note vetted beforehand by an officer of the War Department General Staff whom I knew to be bilingual in American and British. There must be no misunderstanding here. He only altered one word which

was a satisfying indication of how my linguistic studies were progressing.

In the end we got Tony Biddle. There was a great day at Norfolk House when, instead of bowing over the hand of Mr. Ambassador Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, junior, I had marched into my presence one Lieut.-Colonel Tony J. Biddle of the Army of the United States. A great day indeed, one might say, for the history of Europe.

So out of the possible three for which I had asked the President we got two. Not a bad score at any game in any language. Did it really amount to anything? Probably not, and I don't suppose one will ever know for certain.

There were other matters which amounted to quite something and which, being of a more tangible nature, had to be fought and grappled with day and night. It has to be remembered that as well as the uncertainty in the minds of General B. J. and myself as to what or whom we represented, there was the awkwardness that we had to be prepared to speak, and often act, on behalf not only of our own service, but on that as well of the sea and air services.

It was at this time that the United States Army Air Force in the South-west Pacific was beginning to amaze the world with displays of ingenuity and versatility such that the unaided imagination would have been hard put to it to visualise them. But every operation was recorded by photograph, and here were the photographs in Washington showing all the details of the brilliant exploits of General Kenny's outfit in New Guinea and thereabouts against the Japanese. The air forces at General Kenny's disposal were small, infinitesimal compared with the " airmada " that was to be concentrated against the Germans in Europe. It was known, we could study the whole affair in pictures, that a complete Australian division had been carried by air over the Owen Stanley Mountains, had been concentrated in the near presence of the enemy and maintained in action against them with no rearward communication except by air. Now, why couldn't the same thing be done on an exaggerated scale in Europe? Our plan certainly allowed for an airborne operation, but as a subsidiary to the main seaborne blow. But we were having all kinds of difficulty, and would continue to have them over this seaborne attack with all its unavoidable

attendant hazards. Why not switch the whole thing round so as to make the main effort by airborne and air-landed troops with the subsidiary operation by sea? Would it not be possible to select beforehand a suitable inland area into which could be implanted by air, at a blow, one, two or three complete airborne and air-landed divisions which could sit astride the enemy's communications and harass them in all directions what time a seaborne expedition opened up our line overland? Was there anything in this, or was there?

From the moment of my arrival I was subjected to an intense course of indoctrination into the whole topic of so-called air power and its uses and misuses. General Arnold himself was most kind and patient in producing statistics, facts, figures, photographs to illustrate his main contention wherein he was supported by General Marshall. But I felt right out of my depth when it got down to details of resources available in Britain for the staging and support of an operation such as was here projected. Moreover, it was manifest that there was more in this than just the mechanical side. I had not met the Japanese but from all accounts operating against them in their Pacific outposts from Australian bases must be something of an entirely different character from undertaking anything of the same nature from Britain in the close presence of the Luftwaffe. I asked General Marshall whether, in this quandary, we had not better seek sounder British advice, and he agreed that we should summon to Washington the provisionally designated commander of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force, Air-Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory. Accordingly the Air-Marshal made a shocking crossing by unconverted Liberator and spent a week with us in Washington and rapidly touring some of the major United States Air Force installations. He had not visited the States before either and returned, as who could not, mightily impressed with the dimensions of what he had seen. But as to the major premise he was dubious. His position was not easy. As I have said earlier, his provisional appointment as air commander designate had not found favour with the United States air authorities, and here he found himself obliged, at the first onset, to counsel caution. But the Air Marshal's transparent honesty of purpose was evident to all. The major realignment of our plan was not made. Could it have been?

On the naval side, here in Washington, D.C., one found oneself at the focal point of the conflict of opinion as between what one may call the Atlantic and the Pacific theories. It must have been indeed hard for a United States sailor to think otherwise than in terms of sea warfare against the traditional enemy, Japan. It was not merely a matter of thought. The two naval warfares differed in many fundamental respects. In the Pacific one had to prepare for a war of great fleets and long voyages by sea-borne expeditions in Jap-infested seas and archipelagoes. On the Atlantic side there was no reputable enemy still at sea. It was a matter of policing the convoy routes against air and underwater attack and of providing the naval component for short-voyage operations by the armies. Shipbuilding resources were enormous, but they were far from unlimited. When it came to a question of which types of materials were to be given priority for which theatre there were tough decisions to be taken. There were the men to take them, and it was my duty to do all possible to influence their decisions as far as possible in favour of the war against Germany.

I suppose every nation on earth has to compete to a greater or less degree with inter-service rivalries among its defence services. In countries that enjoy democracy this is understandable, even to be expected, since the modern perversion of democracy is a welter of argument and rivalry—healthy, one hopes. But even under totalitarian governments the same thing flourishes. We knew much about the inter-service squabbles among the German services and the rivalry between the Japanese Army and Navy was notorious. It is odd to find oneself in a position of having to operate between the millstones of inter-service politics of a nation other than one's own. It was lucky that I was neither an American soldier nor a British sailor, perhaps ! As it was, I was given sympathetic hearing of my pleas for vastly increased construction of small craft, of landing craft, of tugs and such-like. Every help was promised, but—that fatal word—first things must come first and the first thing here was to overcome finally the handicap of the bad start at Pearl Harbour and then to lay the keels for the eventual great naval counter-offensive against Japan. This involved, of course, preparations for complementary operations for the pushing forward of bases across thousands of miles of ocean. Then would

come the time to switch over. Meanwhile, what were the British doing about it? Were they really doing all possible? There were nasty stories going round about artificial restrictions of output in British shipyards applied in the interest of post-war wage scales and similar complications. Summing up this side of the work, prospects looked black indeed. I had tried every way of getting more resources from those who seemed to us in Britain in a position to give them. On the spot it didn't look like that, in spite of the optimistic gestures by Mr. Nelson earlier in the year. So it looked as though we should have to try one of our other alternatives for getting the increased numbers of craft that we must have, this is to say strategic re-allotment among theatres of operations other than the Pacific or, in the last resort, postponement of D-day.

In fact when the time came for us to end our mission, which had lengthened itself from the originally proposed five days to no less than six weeks, it was hard to find solid ground for real optimism. To the uncertainty in our minds as to British intentions in our matter, had been added doubts on American account. We had had opportunity to get behind the scenes and beyond the headline statements we had heard over in London. We had met those who made this great machine tick, and there seemed little doubt that even the great United States might one day—and one day quite soon, moreover—reach the limit of at any rate some of its resources. Of all, to us, incredible things there was already in sight a crisis of United States manpower, for instance. Comparing results with our original ambitions, the balance in terms of cold, hard fact was depressing. Even more disquieting than the material difficulties were the doubts that one seemed to sense at the back of the mind of my prospective chief. It seemed to me, as the result of all our many contacts, that General Marshall himself was far from convinced that OVERLORD was a practical proposition, having in view all the circumstances of the situation as he, almost alone of all men, knew them.

But there was another side to it all. Though we had been obliged to spend the majority of our time in Washington, the centre of all military activity, we had been given the chance of seeing something more of the country and its people. We travelled vast distances but even so covered but a small portion of this huge territory.

I have told how General Marshall, at our first meeting, had spoken of my taking leave. A couple of days later I was bidden to lunch *à trois* with him and Mrs. Marshall when his plan was carried a stage further. Again he stressed the importance of seeing as much of the country as I could while I was over here. I had only to give it a name and he would have me transported to any place I desired. There were vast factories and foundries and dockyards and training establishments, where one could go to get some idea of the scale and scope of the United States war effort. I could fly over the country at large and get some impression of its dimensions. Anything I liked. There must surely be some part of the United States of America that I wanted to see more than another : what was it ?

I think it was Mark Twain who originally coined the somewhat cynical but eminently practical precept of which I have already quoted the military adaptation. This was a big moment, such a moment as arrives to the normal individual only in dreams. I was in doubt as to whether I should ask for what I thought I ought to ask for or just for what I wanted. " When in doubt," said Mark Twain, " tell the truth." So out it came. The place I had always wanted to see since, many years ago, I first began to study soldiering was of course the Shenandoah Valley, scene of the great campaigns of that great soldier, Stonewall Jackson. My host and hostess looked at me incredulous and Mrs. Marshall, still I think a trifle uncertain, said : " If you had thought it out for a hundred years you couldn't have given a more tactful answer. We love the place. It is where we live."

In due time General Brownjohn and I were honoured with an invitation to visit the Marshall home at Leesburg, Virginia, but a short ride from Washington. We arrived in time to help the General solve one of those type problems that in their way are often even more baffling than those on the international plane. The General had just acquired from Mr. Edward Stettinius, among other qualifications the noted stock-breeder of Culpeper, Virginia, a small flock of turkeys. The birds had seemingly arrived ahead of schedule, before adequate accommodation had been prepared for them at Leesburg. The problem was to erect a suitable temporary corral with hurdles, tarpaulin and other materials at hand on the estate. The magnitude of the job will not be so readily grasped by an English reader

who has not seen a real American turkey, and these were Stettinius turkeys, on the hoof. Each bird is roughly the size and weight of a Shetland pony and far less amenable. When we arrived, the General—who had intended this week-end to fix the autumn pruning of his fruit trees—was just descending from the branches of one of them for the tenth time to round up the dingbusted or dodgasted birds once more. Our help adjusted matters and, in recompense, we were glad to have the General repeat the ever-appropriate remark attributed to a former Governor of North Carolina in conversation with his opposite number to the southward.

Always anxious to increase our knowledge, General Brownjohn and I asked if it would be possible to introduce us to that fabulous beverage, the mint-julep, of which we had heard so much. It would indeed, and with rapt attention we watched the full ritual of concoction performed by the Chief of Staff himself. I thought I followed the whole process quite clearly, but after the first repetition, was not so sure. Unfortunately, we never got to the final demonstration that was to clarify, once and for all, the whole mystery, because the bottle was empty and Mrs. Marshall was summoning us to partake of the delicious meal she had prepared for us. This included that famous dish, pumpkin pie, renowned in American song and story. For my part, the actual tasting of it constituted one of the very few points of anti-climax in our United States visit. But how charming an interlude was this glimpse of home life amid the world's turmoils. And I mean home.

Sure enough, as regards our visit to the Shenandoah, the General more than kept his word. He himself organised it all and sent with us as cicerone, General John McAuley Palmer, Military Historian in the Library of Congress. He was not to know that General Brownjohn, my companion, retained a most detailed recollection in his photographic memory of the whole course of Jackson's valley campaigns, and General Palmer at times found himself joining the audience as we travelled from Charlottesville, Virginia, over the Skyline Drive on the top of the Blue Ridge Mountains between Rockfish and Swift Run Gaps. Thence down across the Massanuttons to Luray. Next day down the valley through Newmarket to Harpers Ferry then to the Antietam and Hagerstown. History was in every

foot of the way, but we were hard put to it at times to see through the façade of modern development to the old lay-out as Stonewall had known and used it. We had quite a hunt for Front Royal, a name indelibly imprinted on the memory.

I may be wrong, but I guess we learnt more about the United States by treading this hallowed ground and by a later visit to Gettysburg than by inspecting any number of iron works.

And on this and other occasions too we found opportunity to visit those three key points in American history—Monticello, Mount Vernon and Arlington, homes of Jefferson, Washington and Lee, three great men of two great eras. How utterly English these three homes are, so beautifully preserved in all their original lay-out and furnishing. From them I was able to deduce the theory which seems not untenable, distasteful though it may be to many, that these United States are inhabited largely by a race of Englishmen who have developed freely for centuries unhampered not only by the confined space of their homeland but by the cramping effects of many of our island traditions.

Not only did we learn by seeing the country. We met the people. No need to dilate upon the wizardry of the princely hospitality with which we were everywhere greeted, but it were churlish to make no mention of it. And in the course of it we met all and sundry. It took a short while to grasp that our British uniform meant little or nothing to the average American. In 1943 even the uniform of their own forces was comparatively new to the bulk of the people. But it was odd and interesting to collect opinion as to our identity. Bobbie, my Aide, wore the three stars of a British captain, and it was normally he who was considered to be our leader, his uniform being as often as not diagnosed as that of a Chilean Lieutenant-General. The more sophisticated were apt to categorise General Brownjohn and myself as French. On one occasion at least I supported quite a lengthy conversation in the vernacular which I took to be my companion's mother tongue until we found that one was American and the other British. Amusing also was an episode when we thought we were asked if we were Italian. " Good God, no," said the enquirer ; " I asked if you were Canadian, not Italian. I was a German myself, and that's bad enough."

It did one good to hear all these good people, once we had made our nationality known, give us their views on the war and

its significance to them. They all had views, and sound ones too. Specially does one remember a Washington taxi driver who did me out of a badly-needed hour's sleep while he halted his cab in the middle of the Lincoln Memorial Bridge to explain just why, were he in Winston Churchill's place, he would have nothing whatever to do with a cross-Channel operation. Far too risky a proceeding in his view. That man had no idea who or what I was, but the whole subject was obviously very much on his mind and worrying him.

Of more direct concern to us, we were able to get glimpses of amphibious training at Carabelle on the Gulf of Mexico, of the huge infantry training establishment at Fort Benning, Georgia, of the great airborne set up at Camp Mackall, North Carolina and of the guns at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. We were taken to Miami, Florida where, while basking in and near that wonderful sea, we heard the marching songs of the airmen in training. The place was half empty with only 40,000 of them there at the moment instead of the 80,000 that the requisitioned hotels would accommodate.

The last visit, made actually on our homeward way during a short halt, was to that gigantic complex known as N.Y.P.E. or New York Port of Embarkation, through which passed the majority of the men and equipment destined for Europe. Almost one felt like apologising for the best we could do on the other side. Just everything was here in profusion on an unlimited scale. A liberty ship was fully loaded, it seemed, almost before our eyes. There was provision for dealing with everything even remotely connected with our warfare, from giant locomotive handling, to disinfestation of German prisoners. But once more it was the enthusiasm of the men in command that did one good. To them quite rightly, the war was organised right from N.Y.P.E. and if anything by any mischance went wrong, it wouldn't be here in New York that the error was made.

So one way and another we flew back into our European night, if not with a signed contract, at least with a wonderful feeling of uplift. We had been able to gather in something of the war spirit that somehow, by some work of genius, had been distilled among this great nation. And though we had seen but a fraction of the whole, we had at least some inkling of the colossal force that was being generated to our aid. Nothing could stand against it.

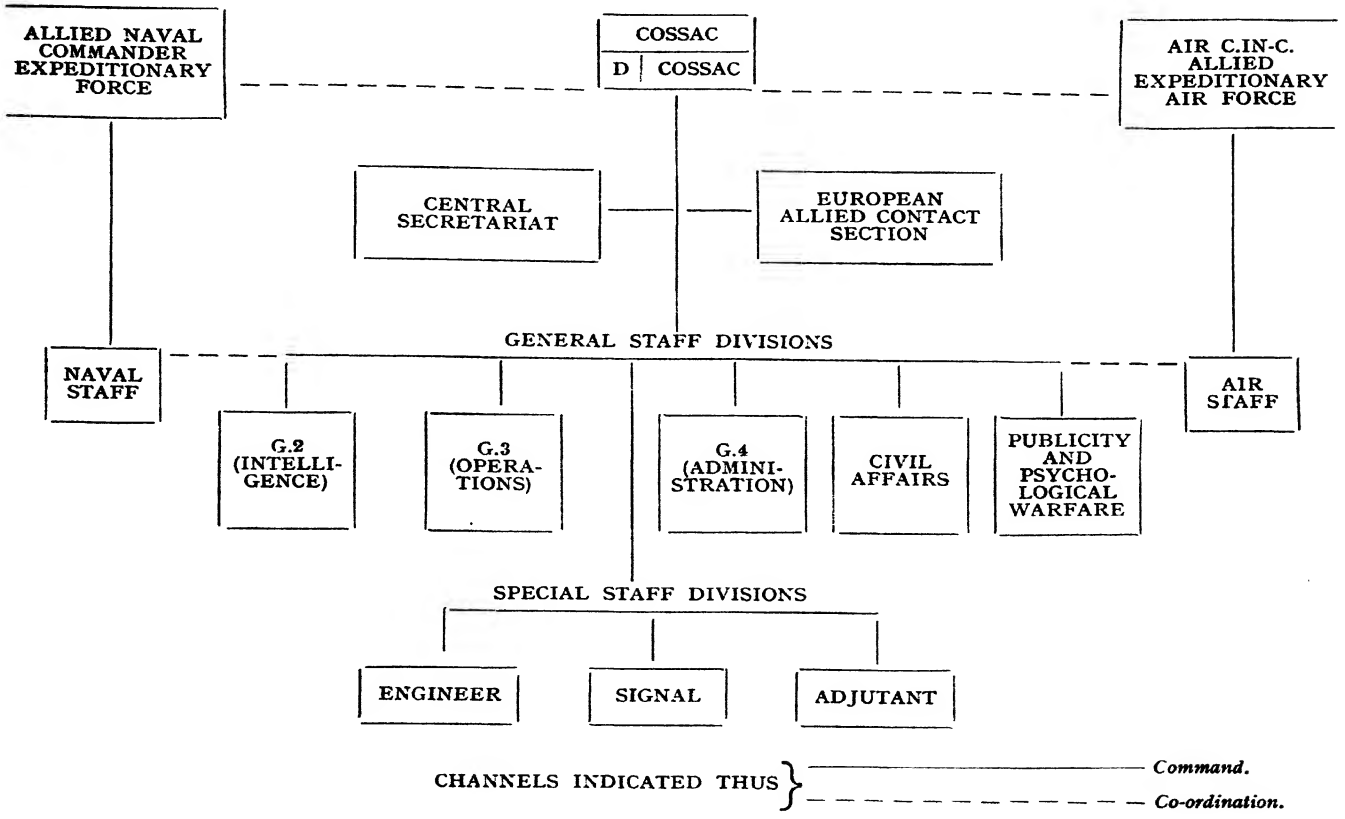
IX

THE PLANNING STAFF BECOMES AN OPERATIONAL STAFF

THOUGH we had kept in close touch with London by means of exchange of letters and cables and by telephone, we reached home to find that General Barker had accomplished more than seemed humanly possible in the time of our absence. When we set out our intention had been to be away for a week or ten days at the outside. In so short a period no great change in events was foreseen. But our absence had prolonged itself to no less than six weeks. Though in many ways our voyage had been to wonderland, a glimpse of daylight at the depth of the long, dark European night, there had been throughout at the back of it, hard to suppress, the nightmare of the quickly flying days and moments. At this time six weeks of working days was a long, a very long time. However little we had wasted of it, General Barker had wasted less. There are Deputies and Deputies, but we had always taken his appointment at its literal value. It made no difference which of us functioned. By the time we set out for the States not only was "integration" complete as between the two of us but the whole COSSAC set-up was beautifully geared together and was running smoothly. Between 6th October and 15th November its output was considerable.

The most notable change that had been made was probably that in relation to the whole character of the staff organisation. General Barker's recommendations for the reorganisation had been approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in October, and by November all remaining traces of national sub-division had been eliminated. By 15th November COSSAC had been transformed completely into an American type staff, and, moreover, into an operational staff, the real nucleus of SHAEF.

ORGANISATIONAL DIAGRAM II.



In many respects this amounted to simplification, as the diagram here shows, but on the other hand it brought emphasis to a new and bigger set of problems.

In small things as also in great, there was much change to be seen. It will be remembered that we had decided, for better or worse, to make the assumption that General Marshall was to be our Chief. Accordingly change had been made in my own suite of offices at Norfolk House which had been redecorated and refurnished to fit them for use by a senior United States officer. Even was there, stowed away in a cupboard, the customary impressive stand of colours. As regards personal accommodations for the General, it had been tentatively arranged that he and his personal staff would return by way of London from the Teheran Conference, " SEXTANT," to which he had just set out, so that they would be able to pick for themselves.

While we were in the States Ambassador Winant had cabled to General Marshall offering to place at his disposal for headquarters half the premises of the Embassy in Grosvenor Square, some indication of the degree of certainty with which General Marshall's eventual appointment was regarded. The General had referred the question to me and, on my advice, was inclined to reject it. Though there might be ostensible advantages to the idea in that the Embassy would undoubtedly be more adept at caring for the welfare and convenience of its own nationals, it seemed that it would be quite wrong to emphasise thus the American angle. In view of the atmosphere in London it would be highly desirable to stress internationality. Accordingly, offices were prepared in Norfolk House.

Before taking a run round the organisational diagram mention must be made of one highly important activity not shown at all therein that played a part, of which the influence can hardly be exaggerated, in all our doings. Since early days I had been troubled by the difficulty of obtaining political guidance for which the need was felt from the outset of our business. For, if all were to go according to plan, our eventual Supreme Headquarters would be the point at which strategy and international policy, if any, must be tied together. There could hardly be any such thing here as a purely military consideration. Any and every decision by the Supreme Commander must and could only be taken after consideration of the possible and probable

political repercussions thereof. And the same stipulation applied increasingly as time went on to our various planning activities. Once our plan was approved it became indispensable that COSSAC should have continually at hand a means of obtaining up to the minute political advice and guidance. In London there were available to us the British Foreign Office and the United States Embassy but, with the best will in the world, and good will there was in abundance, it was not sufficient for us merely to have the right of *entrée* to these establishments as and when we desired it. Such an arrangement would certainly not be suitable on his appointment either to the Supreme Commander himself or to the Foreign Secretary or to the Ambassador, with whom direct he would undoubtedly expect to do business. It seemed to us necessary for the boot, so to speak, to be on the other leg and for the State Department and the Foreign Office to be represented at our headquarters by officers of such standing that they could tender " high-level " political advice and assistance at the shortest of notice.

For we had before us the example of the Darlan affair in North Africa, to take one comparatively simple instance. Then, as our invasion forces disembarked, Admiral Darlan had presented himself to General Eisenhower contending that, in spite of his ostensibly black record of trafficking with the enemy, he was in fact an ally. Those on the spot decided in his favour, whereupon awkward controversy sprang up that was only abated when a young Frenchman took the law into his own hands and assassinated the Admiral. It was possible to envisage a repetition of this awkward piece of history when we came to set foot in Metropolitan France. Just suppose that we were to be greeted on arrival in Normandy by the notorious Pierre Laval himself with arms wide to embrace us. The question would immediately pose itself were we to kiss him on both cheeks or only one, or alternatively, to shoot him in the stomach. The answer, whatever it should be, would have to be deduced mainly politically and that on the spot. But, setting aside this hypothetical over-simplification, it can easily be imagined that the whole range of relations as between ourselves and our multifarious allies bristled with political conundra.

Difficult as it was to fabricate a military plan without an object, difficulty must for the same reason have attained

bewildering proportions in the political sphere. It was doubly unfortunate that the very first political fence that faced us was the French water-jump. Though we had had with us since 1940 General de Gaulle and his Free French, and though we had lived through the North African campaign which had perforce widened our contacts with the French in many directions, there appeared still to be no semblance in 1943 of what might be termed an Anglo-American policy in relation to France. For practical purposes, that is. When the political history of this period comes to be published no doubt it will be proved that we pursued our relentless aim under the inspiration of the highest motives. But at the time it did not seem like that.

Accordingly we were fortunate once more to have deputed to us Ambassador William Phillips by the United States Secretary of State and Mr. Charles Peake by the British Foreign Office, who not only gave us the sense of political security that enabled us to proceed freed from one of our greatest anxieties, but added immeasurably to the general effectiveness of our whole organisation. It was an inspiration to all of us to see how these senior and distinguished diplomats quickly reoriented themselves to work in this unaccustomed milieu amongst the " brutal and licentious soldiery." By early Autumn, COSSAC's little " Political Advisers " Section was firmly established.

By now also the so-called Central Secretariat had deduced for itself an unique *modus operandi*. Those who have had experience in the handling of documents, can appreciate how much was at stake at COSSAC in this regard. Not only was there the ever present and vital question of secrecy and its guardianship, but there was from the start the difficulty of having to handle papers produced not only by ourselves but by all the various departments of state, in the beginning of two countries and, later, of several. There is an infinity of methods of dealing with written material, and pretty nearly all were met with at one time or another. There are wide variations in staff procedure, there are difficulties of language and national custom in such matters. It is no small thing to have to decide just who should see and read what and who should not. Again, the event produced the man in Major Martin McLaren, sometime of the British Civil Service and now of the Foot Guards, under whose able guidance there was evolved a system that incorporated

the best features of both American and British practice and produced not only a highly efficient service but a complete microfilm record of everything that was done for the benefit of those who come after.

It was to head up the European Allied Contact Section that I had importuned the President for the services of Ambassador Biddle. When eventually he joined us he was quickly able to exceed our fondest hopes. With the smallest of staffs he contrived a means of canalising and controlling satisfactorily our contacts with our many allies and by the exercise of his unfailing good humour to maintain harmony in an atmosphere inevitably surcharged with emotion.

So to the main staff divisions which omit, it will be noticed, G-1, the United States equivalent of the British Adjutant-General's Branch. Though the United States Army has its Adjutant-General's Branch, this has no exact equivalent in the British Army. We judged the time not yet ripe for the foundation of this G-1 division of which the main duties would be, and eventually were, to deal with personnel problems. Until our commander took command such problems must be dealt with by the two national authorities, each for its own nationals. At COSSAC we aimed to do little more than deal with what one may call bulk personnel problems, those of an organisational nature, and these we allotted, on the British pattern, to the Staff Duties section of G-3, the Operations Division.

Of the G-2 or Intelligence Division I have already written. Still, in the autumn of 1943 there was inordinate difficulty in obtaining adequate United States help in this field. But this was of less difficulty than it might have been so long as it remained a matter of tapping in on the many and complicated existing Intelligence networks rather than creating new agencies. Our British staff were adept in this, having at their finger-tips the meaning and full implication of all the hundred and one sets of initials beneath and behind which the purveyors of information deceived the enemy and at times themselves and each other. We were lucky in our first Chief of Intelligence, Major-General P. G. Whitefoord of the British Army, whose many years of experience in the field of Intelligence enabled him to lay down the sound lines on which the organisation developed as the months went by. We had to wait until the

year's end for the arrival of significant American reinforcement in the huge person of General Thomas Betts, for whose help I had pleaded in Washington. Under General Barker's direction had been broken down many of the barriers that always exist between the services in Intelligence matters. Under the ægis of the Operations Staff, and with the unstinted help of the Geographical Section of the General Staff at the War Office, the foundations had been laid of the highly effective organisation that produced the right maps at the right place at the right time. Put thus simply, this one problem of the supply of maps appears small. But it involved an infinity of organisation, thought and effort on the part of Brigadier A. B. Clough of the British Army, and his small staff. I doubt if any army has ever gone to war before so perfectly equipped with maps. My own experience is small, but the campaign of 1944-45 was the only one for which I have set out with a proper outfit of the right maps on an intelligible scale and of impeccable accuracy. Quite apart from the mechanical aspect of the matter, there was here the most important one of security. Had the enemy had any inkling of our mapping plan and policy he would have been able at once to deduce the broad pattern of our strategy. Yet maps had to be printed, and in huge quantities, and put in the hands of those who needed them neither a moment too soon nor a moment too late. There could be no question this time, as there had been in 1940, of chancing one's arm with a luckily looted Michelin guide.

Also in G-3, the Operations Division, we were handicapped until late in the day by lack of American help. From the start until autumn this division had for this reason to remain virtually unintegrated. It was headed by Major-General Charles West of the British Army, assisted on the British side by Brigadier Kenneth McLean, already mentioned, and who ultimately became our chief planner when we separated out planning activities from those dealing with current and immediately prospective operations. On the United States side at first had come Colonel J. T. Harris, succeeded in June by General William Chambers from Iceland, who left us again in late October for Australia. In September there joined Major-General Harold R. Bull, United States Army, who eventually took charge and later gave distinguished service as Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3,

to General Eisenhower and Chief of Staff to General McNarney in the United States zone of occupation in Germany after the surrender.

It was distressing but unavoidable that there should be this delay in setting up the key division of the whole staff. In truth, we were faced in miniature with the same problem that was persisting on higher levels. Until we got our commander it was difficult to organise the rest of the team. Until we got our Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3 (Operations) it was not really possible to distribute the duties of the lower echelons of the division as between nationalities and individuals. Delay was due to the fact that General Bull was not available for posting until the autumn. He had been personally selected for the appointment by General Marshall, who, at that time, was seemingly destined for Supreme Command. Once General Bull arrived, G-3 Division took immediate shape.

The little box on the diagram labelled " G-4 (Administration)," of course, conveys nothing at all of the immensity of the activities thereby implied. Not only was involved the comparatively straightforward but gigantic business of supply and transport of every conceivable expendable commodity, but also all that is covered by the term " Movement." The Movement Staff is apt to be one of those sub-divisions of which nothing is known or heard until battles go wrong. At COSSAC and later at SHAEF the movement staff was probably more expert than any such staff ever was before, thanks to the work of its great chief, Major-General " Dome " Napier, of the British Royal Engineers. Principally as the outcome of his immense and successful efforts that contributed so greatly to victory in the west, General Napier died soon after hostilities ended. As comparative sidelines were questions of supply of petrol, operation " PLUTO " being one small fraction of this, and of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the rail and road systems of North-west Europe. Though not all of this was originated at COSSAC, it was sufficiently arduous to have to keep track of all that was proceeding on the separate American and British accounts, to link the two systems together where necessary and to see that both kept level so that both should start abreast on the day.

From the start the British side of G-4 was headed by Major-

General N. C. D. Brownjohn, whose quiet competence laid firmly the great combined foundations from which all was launched. On the United States side once more there were changes. First came Colonel F. L. Rash, then Colonel Albrecht, and finally General Robert Crawford. Here, too, our action for the most part consisted of the harnessing of a multiplicity of activities into one co-ordinated channel, rather than in original output.

By early November, General Barker had thus set up the more orthodox organs of the Army Staff on United States lines. By then also the situation had clarified itself to some extent on the naval and air sides. In spite of the fact that there was uncertainty as to the identity of the Supreme Commander, there had been nominated the Commanders-in-Chief of the Naval and Air Expeditionary Forces for our operation " OVERLORD," Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay and Air Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, both of the British services. With these appointments made, the Naval and Air Staff organisations fell at once into position. Hitherto there had been uncertainty on all hands consequent upon the division of allegiance previously mentioned. The Naval and Air Force officers that had done such great work with us had all the time been forced to play each two parts, as members of the COSSAC Staff and as members of the staff of a functioning commander ; in the case of the Navy of the staff of the British Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth Command, or of the United States 12th Fleet, in the case of the Air Force of the staff of A.O.C.-in-C., British Fighter Command or of the United States 8th Air Force. Now all such became simply the staffs of A.N.C.X.F. (Allied Naval Commander-in-Chief, Expeditionary Force) or A.E.A.F. (Allied Expeditionary Air Force). This helped matters immeasurably on the staff level, but it created a new problem. The question posed itself : to whom did these two subordinate commanders owe allegiance pending the Supreme appointment ?

Over in Washington controversy had raged on this and related points. First there had been the question as to whether, to parallel these Naval and Air Command appointments, there was or was not to be an appointment to command the " Ground Forces " which would leave the Supreme Commander in a state of marked aloofness free to give his main attention to

politico-military questions while his three subordinates fought the sea, land and air battles. It appeared to us that this concept originated on the British side, inspired no doubt by the course of evolution in the Mediterranean. It seemed to have no support whatever on the United States side. The question naturally impinged upon that of the appointment of the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander. In this, above all things, one had to be guided by General Marshall in his rôle of heir presumptive. He was naturally unable to be didactic on the point, but he left no doubt as to his ideas on the subject and the ideas of his countrymen in general. So the concept of the Ground Forces Command died at birth. But there remained the problem of the two subordinate commanders and how to indoctrinate and incorporate them into our headless expedition. The solution adopted was hardly orthodox, albeit sufficiently effective. This was to draw up directives for me to issue to them, my seniors. To give these directives the necessary authoritative ring they were approved in draft by the Combined Chief of Staff, a procedure that may appear objectionable to the purist. But our situation was abnormal, and in such case unorthodox remedy must be sought. I was mighty glad to have this done for me since, though the Naval document was admirably terse and direct, the evolution of that for the Air Commander evoked powerful reactions. A formula had to be found that gave no offence to any one of the many interests warring in the air while at the same time imparting the necessary impetus to the operations of the A.E.A.F. and its commander. A compromise was in the event found, but the solution to the air command and control problem, in so far as a solution was ever found, came with the stroke of genius that gave Deputy Supreme Command to a British airman, Sir Arthur Tedder.

In November, 1943, here we were with two subordinate commanders each with his directive, and on my return to issue these documents new procedures had to be thought out. Up till now Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory had kindly agreed to attend our staff conferences where his help had been invaluable. Now it was no longer fitting that he and the Admiral should do so. We therefore formed an " Inner Cabinet," as it were, whereat they were good enough to accept me as representative of the Supreme Commander-to-be. But at once appeared the awkward-

ness that we were all three British. From the point of view of practical effect this could be categorised no higher than an awkwardness, but there was more, much more, to it than that. So General Barker was incorporated in our small number whereby not only was possible criticism by uninformed critics, we hoped, abated, but much was added to the constructiveness of our deliberations. For at this moment we were in face of a periodical uprush of Anglo-American feeling such as occurred quite regularly before a combined Conference. At these Conferences naturally were discussed points of controversy, and it was only to be expected that in drawing up the agenda and briefs for discussion there was a tendency to stress the unilateral, national angle. Compromise was almost invariably finally achieved, but both before and afterwards there was no lack of the " sounding off " of the nature to which the President had referred in his conversation with me. Just before I had left Washington I had seen the United States Chiefs of Staff take off for Conference " SEXTANT " at Cairo and Teheran. They had left muttering imprecations about the adjectival British and their perfidy, particularly in relation to their Mediterranean ambitions. I had reached London in time to see the British Chiefs of Staff before they set off equally pugnacious and determined to put the Americans straight once and for all over this strategy business. In the end it all came out all right, of course, but just before the meeting was no time to take chances at COSSAC.

To revert once more to the diagram of staff organisation, in accordance with which General Barker had remodelled COSSAC, the Special Staff Sections need little discussion. That marked Adjutant was the American version of the Adjutant-General's office, COSSAC now being organised on United States lines. Engineers and signallers were thus placed, also on the United States model, since obviously their services were in universal demand. We needed Engineer Intelligence, there was a vast engineer operation to be launched and the supply branches all needed engineering help of one kind or another. Similarly communication is a problem that must be solved for all services at all levels, and here we had a communication problem of a magnitude and intricacy never met before. It were as though the communications of more than half the world were to be bunched into a coil in South England, to be flung across the

Channel and then to be fanned out over all Europe. Since the base of the whole expedition was in Britain, and since everything depended upon the proper collection and adjustment of resources in that country, the Chiefs of both these Special Staffs were British, Major-General H. B. W. Hughes the engineer and Major-General C. H. H. Vulliamy the signaller.

There remain to be discussed the two General Staff Divisions shown in our diagram as " Civil Affairs " and " Publicity and Psychological Warfare." This may best be done in the reverse order, since the latter division failed to survive, the basic conception that brought it into being proving faulty when we really got down to business.

I don't believe any one of us had had experience of any value when it came to the question either of Publicity or of Propaganda, that is Psychological Warfare, at the high levels at which we aimed to function. So we had recourse to precedent, and found that the two subjects had been dealt with jointly down at A.F.H.Q. for the Mediterranean Theatre. To the uninstructed mind, of course, there is a marked resemblance between the two activities, for publicity consists fundamentally of " telling our side " and propaganda of " telling the enemy." There are, however, difficulties such as the conflict of the reflex action of " telling the enemy," and of the effect on the enemy of doing too much in the way of " telling our side." Ostensibly, therefore, it should be an advantage to have the two weapons in the hands of one man. But we failed in the beginning, I think, to appreciate that as regards the P. and P.W. side of operation " OVERLORD " we had a veritable bear by the tail. To operate a comparatively small affair out of Algiers was one thing ; to conduct a decisive counter-offensive out of London was quite another.

It was strangely difficult to get these activities started. As regards the Press, they live notoriously on the news of to-day and to-morrow, occasionally on that of yesterday and the day before. The possible news of next year is a matter not for the daily press so much as the more ponderous periodicals and Old Moore and his imitators. So we had to make do with what we could get from a source of supply already overtaxed to prepare as best we could, for what we knew from the start would be the greatest story ever when the time came for it to break. In the

event, looking back on it now, things could hardly have gone better, due partly to the painstaking work put in by the minute COSSAC Publicity Section of the P. and P.W. Division, but, as must be the case always so long as we westerners hold our present beliefs, mainly to the pressmen themselves who, with few and minor exceptions, were able to subdue their natural instincts to the military advantage. But how necessary it is for the soldiers of the future to be trained in this aspect of affairs, the proper treatment and handling of the representatives of the Press. The younger generation must see to it that such steps are taken as in future will free them, when their turn comes, from the gnawing anxieties to which a modern or future commander must be prey. So long as this freedom of the Press, so called, is with us, the pressmen must be allowed to write what they think. The problem is to ensure somehow that they do in fact think the problem right through at the right time and at the right speed. And from the military side there can be no question that the subject needs deep study. It is one of those many that cannot be disposed of by hiring a man of straw to do the worrying. A commander must be his own Public Relations Officer. If a prototype be needed one could do no better than to study the conduct in these matters of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, sometime Supreme Allied Commander in North-west Europe. Soon after his arrival the affairs of Publicity were quite rightly singled out for treatment on their own.

Even more intangible and difficult seemed the problem of Psychological Warfare, that is of Propaganda, both to our own side and to the enemy. Both United States and Britain had by now their national propaganda organisations, but these were understandably jealous of their painstakingly built-up systems. In any case, the tempo at which these worked was not such as to suit our campaign. We must have our own set-up. Once more the experience of others gave us precedent on the small scale of so-called "front-line propaganda," but did not help much on the higher levels. This front-line stuff consists of playing upon the minds of the enemy's leading troops by means of skilfully and rapidly-produced pamphlets, fired from artillery or dropped from the air, or by loud-speaker. Such weapons can be highly effective, and instances abounded in this last war

of their fruitful use. But even here there are sceptics, by the most notable of whom there used to be retailed with gusto the only instance to which he personally was prepared to swear of a fully successful pamphlet operation. This was on an occasion in Southern France at the time of the invasion there. One bundle of pamphlets dropped for the edification of the German garrison of Marseilles failed to open and distribute itself in mid-air due to a mechanical mischance. It therefore reached sea-level as a solid projectile, penetrating the bottom of a small boat which thereupon sank.

What is so difficult, on our side and by our methods, is seemingly to prove beyond doubt that our efforts are effective. In time past there has always been argument as to the respective efficacy of the various appliances of war. It is impossible enough to argue the case of the aeroplane against that of the tank, for instance. But when it comes to a matter of words and phrases, and their effect upon the minds of men, who can argue with conviction ?

Yet we have been shown, beyond any manner of doubt, what can in certain circumstances be done with the psychological weapon. The late Dr. Goebbels and his henchmen, notably in the British case the former Lord Haw-Haw, have set a record that will take some beating. Without their supporting campaign of propaganda the Panzer Armies could never have achieved their comparatively bloodless victory in the west. Before the end we, on our side, had been able to do not so badly. Possibly the full story can never be written of all that went on both " on the white " and " on the black." Many will remember the exploits of the infamous " Radio Calais " that raised such dismayed protests from both sides. This was but one small corner of our effort.

Here is yet another subject for intense study by those who are to be our future leaders both in war and peace. For men's minds lie open continually to the written and spoken word. In wartime it must be that the enemy is properly psychologically conditioned for the physical blows that are to threaten or fall upon him. In peacetime a leader must at least always be aware of the psychological reaction that will be set up, consciously or unconsciously, by his words or actions.

At COSSAC we were able to do little more than lay the

foundations of all the great doings that came after. As has been told, our diversionary operations gave us much valuable experience, value mainly negative, in the Publicity field. In the field of Psychological Warfare probably the main contribution was the determination that this too must be dealt with as an activity on its own. So in January of 1944 there took post two men who came to be probably the most sorely tried of all our number—United States General Robert McClure as Chief of Psychological Warfare and United States General Thomas Jefferson Davis as Chief of Public Relations. It is, I think, fair to say that their trials, and they were excruciating, must be mainly attributed to lack of experience on the part of the General Staff with and through which they had to work. In future, surely, staff training must be as meticulous in these matters as in those traditional to the work of the staff of any fighting service.

Of all the many and varied facets of COSSAC's great task, the most vexatious and the least satisfactory was undoubtedly all that complex activity known collectively as Civil Affairs. Not only did the actual collection, organisation and training of the Civil Affairs Division of the staff, later known as G-5, present continual difficulty but the evolution of policies and procedures on which that staff was to function was a perpetual nightmare. As Major Sullivan of the Royal Artillery put it so deftly in his paper titled Operation " OVERBOARD," there were plenty of affairs, but the difficulty was to keep them civil. Which is little to be wondered at when one considers how indifferently the normal course of military training is designed to equip the soldier to tackle all the great problems of government here involved. And, paradox of paradoxes, it needed little perspicacity to see that the ultimate object of all our operations, in so far as we had one, was to set up or re-establish some form of government in all the territories we were to liberate or capture from the enemy. We had been given no political object for our campaign so we had to assume one, or rather several. It was just not possible to proceed without one for, sooner or later, and we naturally hoped sooner, would arise the situation where we should have overrun large areas of Europe with the crucial battle still in progress in the heart of the Continent. These overrun areas would contain a hotch-potch of inhabitants of

many categories, races and states of salvation over whom some form of control must be exercised by someone and over whom moreover the Supreme Allied Commander must have some species of domination. I think my original definition of the duties of the Supreme Allied Commander's Civil Affairs Staff still holds good. This I had arrived at as a result of theoretical exercises conducted in my First Corps District in 1942, in the light of experiences in 1940. When asked in 1943 to address the Civil Affairs School at Wimbledon on the topic of Civil Affairs from the point of view of the Commander to come, I estimated that he would demand of his Civil Affairs Staff a threefold duty. First, they must assure that military operations are not hampered by mobs of refugees either by hazard or by the enemy's design. One will for ever remember those ghastly columns of miserable refugees met in France in 1940. Secondly, the Civil Affairs Staff must ensure that the Commander need have no anxiety as to events behind his battle line, no need to look over his shoulder. And thirdly, it was specially important in our campaign that, so soon as might be, any liberated or captured resources of military value be placed at the disposal of the armies, resources in labour, materials, industry, transportation, power or what not. In its simplest form this appears to be the basic concept of Civil Affairs and their conduct in the path, and in the trail, of the advancing armies. But the matter was complicated well beyond this in the case of operation "OVERLORD" in that in all probability, as actually happened, vast areas would find themselves suddenly freed of enemy occupation by the indirect effects of our battles, South-western France for instance. Again, there must surely be some sharp distinction between liberation and conquest. To free our friends would be one thing, to conquer, subdue and dominate the enemy's territory quite another.

As in all things precedent was sought but, as in most things, none was found that precisely fitted our situation. For in the main such experience as had been hitherto gained had been gained in the sparsely inhabited territories of Africa, where the political and economic situation bore little or no resemblance to that pertaining in Europe. The conduct of affairs envisaged for Italy gave us something of a pattern for Germany when the time should come, but even here the atmosphere of co-belligerency

tended to introduce an element that could never conceivably play any part in our calculations.

Starting from a basis of complete ignorance and confronted with this agglomeration of confusing evidence it is little wonder that COSSAC set off entirely on the wrong foot as regards its Civil Affairs planning. Round a small central section to study the question generally, were formed "country sections," one each to study the problems of France, Belgium, Holland and Norway on the broad assumption that for each of these countries would be needed something of the nature of the AMGOT organisation for Italy. This set-up was soon abandoned, but not all the work done was wasted since much basic data was unearthed and recorded for future use. For it soon became clear that the culmination of this line of thought would be to set our Supreme Commander up as the Emperor of North-west Europe or some such panjandramatic equivalent. This would be simultaneously undesirable, unpractical and unnecessary. We were in the fight for so-called democratic principles. The government of one country is a matter of sufficient complication let alone that of a group of countries and that, moreover, as a sideline to a great sea, land and air campaign. We were out to minimise our Commander's responsibilities in every way. This superman would have quite sufficient load on his shoulders without any gratuitous additions. In the four countries involved it was clearly a matter of liberation. We did not for a moment aim merely to replace German domination by our own.

It was thus a matter of finding ways and means of getting in touch with some indigenous authority of each of these countries and establishing therewith some form of communication that, while allowing us to acquire the information we needed, would ensure the adequate safeguarding of our secrets. To this end we had set up our Political and European Allied Contact Sections of the COSSAC Staff. Political guidance was the first essential. We had resident on our side of the line His Majesty The King of Norway, Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands, the pre-war Belgian Government and General Charles de Gaulle's French Committee of National Liberation. It seemed obvious that our object must be to reinstate the rulers of Norway and Holland but the simple soldier felt in doubt regarding the two latter authorities since what must be estimated was the impact

of these two *émigrés* governmental authorities upon the bulk of their home populations when liberated.

Sufficient here to say that the adroit handling of affairs by the two staff sections mentioned, gave us just what we needed and, moreover, it must for ever redound to the magnificent credit of all the national authorities concerned that there was no slightest breach of security.

No mention is here made, it will be noticed, of Denmark. Though naturally our aim included the liberation of that country, no plan that we contemplated could possibly bring us to Denmark other than indirectly by way either of Norway or of the Low Countries. There would thus be time after the flag had fallen, or at any rate nearer D-Day than now, we thought, to do all needed to aid Denmark which country, in spite of all its sufferings, was able gallantly to retain some very considerable measure of intrinsic stability.

The problem of Germany and its treatment was another affair entirely. No question here but that we must be prepared for the institution of a Military Government of some kind from the word go. Fortunately for COSSAC, of course, there were in this problem a very large number of interested parties already at work on all the various stages of development that must ensue in that country whether or not it was eventually found possible to enunciate the precise purpose for which we were setting out to go to Germany. There must obviously be some organisation of some sort for administering such rule as it might ultimately be decided to impose on that country.

I have mentioned in the discussion of operation " RANKIN " the difficulty as regards the main division of a conquered Germany as between Americans, British and Russians. With the object of resolving this and similar tripartite problems there had been set up in London a tripartite body known as the European Advisory Commission. This admirably small body, consisting of The Hon. John G. Winant representing the United States of America, M. Gusef representing the U.S.S.R. and Sir William Strang representing the British Commonwealth, each with a small staff of military and other advisers, set out to formulate, as a first charge, terms of surrender that should be applied to Germany. Such terms when formulated must of necessity provide the solution to many, if not all, of our

"RANKIN" and immediate post-"OVERLORD" problems. The story of this E.A.C. does not belong here. From our point of view at COSSAC it were as though this small *salon ensemble* in London in 1943 first enunciated the simple theme that has since been repeated to a variety of cosmopolitan audiences with ever more enigmatic variations, culminating so far in the gala performances by what one may perhaps allude to as the New York Disharmonic.

Then, in Washington, as part of the Combined Chiefs of Staff organisation had been set up a body known as the Combined Civil Affairs Committee in the quite ordinary course of development. If territory was to be liberated or conquered by combined forces then, obviously, the reinstatement of the life of those territories must similarly be undertaken by Combined means. But the British had been at this liberation and conquest business already for some years, and they had set up for themselves an organisation to see to this thing. To them it seemed a possibly unnecessary complication to duplicate the British effort in this respect over in the United States of America. Simply it appeared to them that there were two alternatives—one could either reinforce the British set-up to give it combined status or one could regard the British set-up, as it stood, as the British contribution towards the combined effect desired with an equivalent United States outfit in Washington.

Again, here one is writing of things outside the responsibility of COSSAC though they were of an importance vital to COSSAC's whole project. All of us therefore were vitally concerned, and our dismay grew no less as the summer months wore on and what seemed to us mainly academic discussion raged back and forth across the Atlantic. We were able, though, to appreciate that behind the academic façade were powerful influences, much other than military, that were beginning to gather themselves when it came to the matter of rehabilitation of the economic life of liberated countries which were the homes of vast commerce and industry.

In spite of COSSAC's best efforts on both sides of the water it was late in the day before an uneasy compromise was reached that gave us a body styled the Combined Civil Affairs Committee (Liaison) with which to deal in London. COSSAC had persisted in supporting the refusal of the United States authorities

in London to commit themselves to absorption in the British set-up. But these same United States authorities took long to appreciate that Civil Affairs in Europe was the task for COSSAC, not for them. The main part of the burden of these evolutions and adjustments fell upon General Barker in London since in Washington the issue appeared clearer cut. A factor also was the weakness in certain respects of the COSSAC mission to Washington. I have lively recollection of at least one conversation with Mr. John McCloy, then Assistant Secretary for War, on the subject, I believe, of currency adjustments as between ourselves and the liberated countries, of which I understood not one single word.

Apart from the high level negotiations on policy and international dealings there was the more comprehensible but no less urgent question of the provision, organisation and training of the Civil Affairs Staff that would be needed to put these policies, when formulated, into effect. Here, once more, COSSAC found itself obliged to pioneer in uncharted regions. This whole matter of Civil Affairs so called, was one to which neither United States nor British Army had addressed itself in the course of peace-time preparation for war. No great problems of the nature here anticipated in 1943 had been met with in living memory, and little helpful evidence seemed to exist in recorded history. So the Anglo-Saxons had to take to their favourite course of improvisation. First things had to be put first.

The first thing to be done was evidently to find some individual to take high charge on behalf of the Supreme Allied Commander of the whole affair. But what like of an individual did one seek? Did we need a sailor, soldier or airman with some sort of experience, ability or background in civil administration, or did we need a civil administrator with military leanings or who would be capable of adjusting himself to life in a predominantly service atmosphere? On general grounds it seemed that the British were more likely to be able to produce an individual of the requisite type, having in view their wide and long experience in what one may term the politico-military field. But here, as elsewhere, it was the individual that mattered.

How do these things happen? I chanced to mention my quandary to Bobbie the Aide, and he did the rest. Some days

after I had spoken to him, he told me that if I cared to accompany him, as I had been known to do on occasion, to the Cavalry Club for pre-prandial refreshment, I should meet there a friend of his, lately returned from the East and anxious to find employment in Europe. This turned out to be Sir Roger Lumley, fresh from his distinguished Governorship of Bombay. I took this as a portent and suggested to him that he apply to the proper quarter for the employment I have indicated. In due course he became our first Chief of Civil Affairs at COSSAC and, under his able guidance, there took shape the embryo of the great network that eventually served General Eisenhower in his campaign.

For the rest, it was not so easy. For here we were new bidders in the manpower market when the resources in this commodity were at their lowest ebb both in the United States and in Britain. To make things worse we were here bidding on behalf of a new activity of which nothing was really known, so that there was no reliable means of formulating specifications of what we needed. Nature took its course, and we were obliged to embark upon an elaborate process of trial and error, the errors being, I fear, ours at COSSAC and the trials those of the aspirants to Civil Affairs employment who nevertheless bore nobly what must have been a most irksome period.

The organisation and training of the personnel so hardly come by was no less difficult. There were those whose experience with AMGOT in the Mediterranean led them to believe that the proper way in which to organise would be to make the Civil Affairs hierarchy fully independent of the hierarchy of command, though it should head up of course with the Supreme Allied Commander. Though it was difficult at times to speak against the voice of experience we at COSSAC felt unable to go with this concept. There must be one undivided responsibility all down the chain, we felt, and this must be discharged through one channel. It was late in the day, not in fact until early 1944 that the COSSAC thesis was finally adopted.

Of the course of training evolved and put into effect at the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, at Wimbledon on the outskirts of London, England, at Shrivenham in Wiltshire and at Eastbourne by the sea in Sussex, much will probably one day be told. By guess and by God we got there. But had D-Day

come upon us earlier, had operation "RANKIN" been called for, we should have been hard put to it. Though doubtless in either of these events, as in so many others, our native wit would have pulled us through.

There was, to my mind, something radically wrong in all this. That so late in the day as 1943 we at COSSAC should have been forced to break new ground to the extent that was necessary, argues unmistakably that our normal preparation and training in peace-time, both in the United States of America and in the British Commonwealth, is gravely deficient. The culmination of almost any campaign we are either of us likely ever to have to conduct must surely consist of the reinstitution or institution of some form of public administration. For a period, at any rate, the conduct of such administration must be the responsibility of military commanders. It seems thus unavoidable that military officers must be trained to this end. There is so much more in war than fighting battles. A somewhat sweeping statement that seems to contain the element of truth is that, given a good kick off, almost anyone can win a battle. The crucial test lies beyond the fight itself.

But here and now there was little time for reflections on this scale. For us almost the first indication that we were getting somewhere came in the form of a great file of papers showing our first demands for Civil Affairs supplies for the relief of the countries we were to liberate. Having had the honour to serve for sixteen years as a Captain of Royal Artillery whose duty is mainly the supply of his battery with any and every commodity, the details of the equipment of the British Army are not unknown to me. But here was a document such as no Quartermaster can even have dreamt of. Our Civil Affairs Staff had assessed the minimum needs of our friends to tide them over the first few weeks of freedom. It was not simply a matter of food though this bulked largely. Our modern economy is more complex than that. All needed food, clothing and footwear, materials for processing food, materials for fitting, making and mending in cloth and leather. Finnmark needed fish-hooks, Norway needed electrical spares for power systems and fish oil refineries. Holland needed pumping gear for the dykes. Belgium needed unheard of chemicals, France needed mine gear. All needed railway material, fuel, oil

and a hundred things besides, raw materials, half wroughts, machinery.

It was a liberal education, just to read that file, in the economy of Western Europe and in the real devastation the enemy had wrought there already. It was ghastly to think how much more suffering might be the outcome of what we planned before we should reach the end.

The furtherance of all these and kindred affairs had prospered in the hands of General Barker during our absence in Washington, as had also the tricky business of obtaining for the expeditionary forces adequate facilities for training themselves for what lay ahead of them. This training must necessarily be of an elaborate character and of a magnitude hitherto unheard of in Britain. And the training must take place in Britain for many and evident reasons. One factor alone, time, precluded any alternative. It was a question, moreover, of training not only each component of each service to an often entirely new technique, but there was involved the fitting together of all three. The soldiers must train with their sailors and both must learn to work with their airmen. Many besides the actual combat elements must be drilled in their rôles. The rapid loading and unloading of vessels and craft of all types must be brought to a minimum of time. The construction of an airfield, once an affair of years or months, must be brought down to a question of days and then hours. Demolition squads must accustom themselves to removing obstructions of all kinds in any conceivable conditions. And everything, it had to be remembered, must be carried across the Channel in the right order and in proper condition to function on the far side. Which implied that every individual had to master not only his own business, but the business of everybody around him. The whole expedition must be given space and opportunity to practise itself. Time, all knew, could not be gained. The stop-watch was already ticking.

No need here to expand upon the perennial difficulty in finding training areas for the armed forces of Britain. Now it was a question of finding space for a considerable number of United States forces as well. We hoped that the obvious urgency of the question would help to overcome the resistance to the granting of facilities such as we sought, resistance that is instinctive in the British administration as a result of the tradition

of centuries. Since this was so we went somewhat into this matter of tradition. As has been said earlier, the peculiar situation and composition of the COSSAC Staff gave us right of access to higher authority through any one of several channels. We could pick a line of approach through British Admiralty or War Office or Air Ministry to the British Chiefs of Staff or indeed through one of several Civil Ministries as we thought fit. The same variety of approach was available to us, if necessary, on the United States side, though here there was not so much at stake. In the matter of training areas in Britain it was perhaps lucky for us that the Royal Navy and the United States Navy were as vitally concerned as anyone for the training of their Naval Assault Forces. On examination it was found that the requirements of the navies were such as to cover the needs of the other two services as well. Taking advantage, therefore, of the privileged position traditionally accorded in all matters to the Royal Navy, COSSAC determined to handle the question of training areas through the Admiralty. Success was thus achieved and at a cost, it can, I think, be claimed, that was in all things phenomenally low. It was distressing to see such beauty spots as, for instance, Start Bay and its picturesque hinterland, condemned to become a battle practice ground. But there was solace in the thought of what might have been had things gone against us, as well they might have done, in the earlier years. And I dare say that the honourable scars will heal completely in a very short time. Maybe even the day may come when the English will glory in sacrifice openly as well as in private. One never knows. Times change.

X

THE IMPULSE IS GIVEN AND THE PATTERN IS SET

WHILE COSSAC was thus experiencing within itself the pre-natal stirrings of SHAEF, the war was in progress outside, at times not so far outside. From August, 1943, onward began the gradual process of assumption of control by COSSAC, a process that culminated in full assumption of command by General Eisenhower in January, 1944. At first, naturally, the process was highly tentative and such control as was exercised was remote and indirect. It has been told how COSSAC conceived and directed the whole complex of Diversionary operations in 1943, how we assumed a measure of direction over the operations of reconnaissance, raiding and sabotage. Our operations and their subsidiary activities came to an end in September and October, but the rest remained to be dealt with even more attentively. Those concerned with the Naval and air wars that were going on night and day, day after day, soon fell into step and we were able to feel that we had our fingers satisfactorily on all the several pulses. It was fascinating to mark the ever-increasing throb of their beat. As each moon waned the tonnage of arms and supplies delivered to our friends in all the various resistance forces behind the German lines grew steadily. More and more personnel to help them went in, with unbelievable gallantry, either to be dropped by parachute or landed on the many secret air strips that somehow miraculously functioned undetected by the enemy all round them. Explosions, fires and accidents that must have been both exasperating and ominous to the enemy kept occurring here, there and everywhere on the other side. We watched the increasing pulverisation of the Reich and its effects on the enemy's economy and on the defensive dispositions of his anti-aircraft defences of all kinds. Gradually there emerged a shape in the war of small boats in

which the enemy were slowly but surely forced outwards from the narrows of the Channel. There was the problem of continuity in the campaign of diversion. For though our diversionary operation might end, there was always the necessity to do everything possible to induce him to make faulty disposition of his dwindling reserves, to strive if possible to have him at a disadvantage. Damned unsporting, of course, but that is the way it is in real war. The story of Fontenoy reads well in the copybook. There are times when it pays to dilate upon and encourage the allegedly traditional Anglo-Saxon sporting spirit and all that. But the fact remains that, if you can sneak up on the enemy from behind and catch him unawares, preferably asleep, the knife goes in with far less fuss and bother and his reactions are apt to be, if any, comparatively innocuous.

So the great shadow-boxing match had to go on without a break. One bogus impression in the enemy's mind had to be succeeded by another equally bogus. There had to be an unbroken plausibility about it all and ever-present must be the ultimate aim which was so to arrange that the eventual actual blow would come to the enemy where he least expected it, when he least expected it and with a force altogether outside his calculations.

The impression that our diversionary operations were designed to make was that we were aiming to attack in 1943, first in September, by means of a subsidiary attack towards Brittany, from the United States of America and Western England and Wales, with a main thrust on the Dover-Calais Axis. Then, in October and November, we made as though to strike at Norway, with a descent on Stavanger, from which we should fan out to right and left with a main blow to Oslo.

Apart from all these somewhat ethereal manœuvres there was much material stuff to be dealt with. I have told how, at the end of Conference " QUADRANT " at Quebec in August, the Prime Minister had added a rider to the effect that we should consider the possibility, in certain circumstances, of switching the whole of operation " OVERLORD " into Norway. Before leaving for my trip to the United States I had been able to submit to the British Chiefs of Staff a reasoned critique of this proposal. It seemed to us that it would be quite impossible for us at COSSAC, constituted as we were, to plan simultaneously

both operation "OVERLORD" and operation "JUPITER," the all-out invasion of Norway. We considered that the difference in character between the two exploits was so extreme that to plan operation "JUPITER" would call for the undivided attention of an entirely new staff in addition to COSSAC. For though the resources in troops and aircraft to carry out operation "JUPITER" would be those allotted now to operation "OVERLORD," it would be a matter of putting the whole affair on a ship basis rather than a landing-craft basis. Troops could not voyage in landing craft for the passage to Norway as they could for the short trip over to France. The whole problem of the range of fighter aircraft came up once more. Though air opposition would be, inevitably owing to the nature of the country in which it was based, on a minor scale, our strike based on the United Kingdom would be equally minor. A fleet of aircraft-carriers immediately appeared desirable, and here one ran full tilt into the requirements of the great amphibious war in the Pacific. Again an expedition to Norway could not be launched from our launching system in Southern England, of which the development was already far advanced. This would entail, therefore, the elaboration almost from scratch of an entirely fresh lay-out presumably in Scotland, which would consume time, labour and materials already hypothecated to the main project. But the proposition was at present for planning only, so our recommendation took the form of a requirement for large additional staffs, not only at COSSAC, but virtually to duplicate lower staffs at Army Group and Army levels. I left General Barker to bear the brunt of any repercussions, but, to our relief, no more was ever heard of it.

Not the least disturbing consideration was that, had it been decided to press on with the planning of operation "JUPITER," it would inevitably have become an almost exclusively British affair, as it would be impossible to produce, in the time available, another American component for another Combined Staff. Our chief disquiet came from the evident fact that if justice were to be done to a plan for operation "JUPITER," less than justice would be available to operation "OVERLORD." As time wore on it became plainer and plainer that shortages of both time and material would dictate for North-west Europe the short, simple solution, "Operation 'OVERLORD' or else . . ."

There was the matter also of some sort of diversion in connection with "OVERLORD," as distinct from an alternative thereto, that had been discussed at Quebec. Yet another of the results of Conference "QUADRANT" had taken the form of a directive to General Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander at AFHQ, Algiers, of the Mediterranean Theatre, to plan an exploit, to be named operation "ANVIL," against Southern France. We believed, moreover, at this time that a promise had already been made to the Russians that our blow in the West, when it came, would be delivered from two directions simultaneously. From very early days we, at COSSAC, had viewed the proposal with only mild enthusiasm. This was not because we disagreed with the general strategic concept behind the idea, but simply because, from the start, we formed the habit of begrudging the allotment elsewhere of any and every resource that might, we thought, have come our way. Particularly was this so in the matter of landing craft. The diversion of each single craft from the main "OVERLORD" assault caused us positive pain.

I have mentioned earlier the concept that was at large for the unification of the war against Germany. As also our proposal to accumulate a sufficiency of landing craft for operation "OVERLORD" by means of what I have called strategic reallotment which, in simple practical terms, would amount to taking craft from General Eisenhower to be given to us. In face of so many imponderables we asked for and were granted permission to deal direct with General Eisenhower in the matter as well as indirectly through the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In October, 1943, missions were exchanged between AFHQ and COSSAC.

It was probably a wishful thought on our part that had given us the impression that the underlying idea of operation "ANVIL" was something in the nature of a threat rather than of an actual invasion of Southern France in force. We were thinking in terms of a demonstration to which substance might be given by the proper deployment of only enough real landing craft to lift at most one division of troops. There would, of course, be lavish use of dummies and all such exhibits that did not affect the main issue. But General Eisenhower, thoroughly legitimately, put a different interpretation on his orders, his situation when reading them being very different from ours. He was

engaged in battle with the enemy, was situated in Algiers looking at France from the southward. His plan, submitted in November, legislated for an actual assault of the order of two to three divisions to establish a firm lodgement ashore with an ultimate build-up to a total of ten divisions, to include French forces. The plan then legislated for a northward thrust towards Vichy, linking up with the large and effective formations of Maquisards that had been organised in this part of France. Here was a very much larger bid for landing craft from the exiguous total stock than we had ever imagined. And, moreover, we understood that General Eisenhower had communicated at any rate something of his general intentions for operation " ANVIL " to the French, which was necessary in view of the fact that they were to make the largest contribution in troops. There was thus no possibility of going back to our COSSAC concept, to make little more than a feint, even if, as we were inclined to suggest, the French were to be compensated in some measure for what would be a cruel disappointment by including them early in our " OVERLORD " build-up in Northern or Western France.

Nevertheless, we were convinced that to mount operation " ANVIL " adequately on a three-assault division basis would leave a residue of craft for operation" OVERLORD " that would be well below the safety limit. We should then be in the position of lacking strength in the north while the southern effort could in no way be considered as more than a comparatively minor affair, a diversion. Here was a crisis in our affairs indeed. Help came powerfully from General Montgomery on his arrival to assume command of 21st Army Group, who agreed that to stage a full-out operation " ANVIL " simultaneously with a full-out operation " OVERLORD " would be gravely to prejudice the success of both. The ultimate solution was arrived at only after the transformation of COSSAC into SHAEF when General Eisenhower, translated by then from Algiers to London, put forward the only feasible compromise that the two operations be " staggered " so that material first used for operation " OVERLORD " could be sent round Spain for use in the later operation " ANVIL." Here, to me, is an interesting instance of my theory that, in spite of all, even the keenest of intelligences is apt at times to be influenced by physical location. When commanding in the Mediterranean, General Eisenhower had been able to

appreciate the value to operation "OVERLORD" of some project of the nature of operation "ANVIL." Strong in this knowledge, he was able when he came to England adroitly to adjust the priorities as between the two thrusts and to prevail against the theories of his successor in the Mediterranean Command that, all things considered, the project for operation "ANVIL" had better be abandoned.

But to put it thus is to over-simplify altogether the strategic problem that faced us at the time. Here is yet another subject for intense and deliberate study by historians and students of strategy when there shall have been time and opportunity to assemble and master all pertinent facts. If my presentation of the situation above is an over-simplification, another theory prevalent in many quarters is equally misleading. This theory purports to demonstrate in effect that whereas the Americans favoured an "OVERLORD" strategy, the British advocated a Mediterranean strategy, the two being mutually exclusive. I have written elsewhere of certain American views as to the campaign in Italy. The arguments advanced by the British in relation to operation "ANVIL" were taken by some Americans as being a continuation of the same line of thought.

But one cannot give judgment piecemeal in this manner. It is necessary to view the whole world-wide picture to have each brush stroke fall into its proper place and proportion. To do this would be well beyond the scope of this present work and would be to trespass into fields in which my personal experience affords little guidance. Viewed from one of the cheaper seats, well back from and to one side of the stage, the action of the play seems to leave one with a series of questions, all of which, I think, interlock.

First, could we have undertaken operation "OVERLORD" in 1943? A possible answer seems to be "Yes, if we had not invaded Africa in 1942." This in turn gives rise to a query as to what relationships would have been like all round and what courses would have been open to the enemy had we held our hand in 1942 in order to accumulate strength for a blow in 1943.

Then, again, what were the respective merits of a Mediterranean strategy, including a powerful drive north-eastwards out of Italy across the plains of Hungary to cut off the Balkans and join up

with Russian forces in, say, Bessarabia, and the strategic course that was actually adopted? Could both have been pursued simultaneously? If not, and if there had been a decision to give priority to the Mediterranean campaign what would have been the development in north-west Europe? There is, I think, profit in pondering these various alternatives, and, further, in careful analysis of all the circumstances. But before any such examination is even begun one must, I think, acknowledge a powerful general conviction that those who directed the overall strategy on our side made precious few mistakes.

One potent consideration in any discussion of the strategy of the times began to obtrude itself to us at COSSAC during the summer of 1943. This was the matter of Hitler's so-called "secret weapons," of which so much had been heard for so long by so many. Up till now there had been no really adequate reason to take the subject too seriously. It had been possible to regard it much as a propaganda ruse by the enemy for which we, free and independent thinkers, would take care not to fall. Among ourselves we awarded the title of "Hitler's Secret Weapon" to at least one Government official whose bureaucratic zeal apparently forbade him to look on less than two sides of any given question, even in war, and, indeed, to anyone and anything that seemed to hamper us in our endeavours. It was not that we distrusted our Intelligence system, but one must always remember that a good Intelligence officer is paid to be pessimistic. His task is to impersonate the enemy, to put forward the enemy's point of view. But, even making all due allowance, by the summer of 1943 it had become unmistakably evident that some at least of the enemy's threats were far from empty. They might even produce something that might affect our operation "OVERLORD." This was definitely serious. So we had to arrive at some assessment of what might be coming to us and what, if any, variation in plan must be made in compensation therefor. Not the least complicated of our problems. The question we had to ask ourselves was this: In the succeeding months until D-day will the enemy's secret weapons have developed to such an extent as to defeat all our possible countermeasures and will they then be able to exert such an influence in Southern England as to render our plans and preparations ineffective? There were only two possible answers, yes or no.

And if the answer were positive, action of drastic and far-reaching nature would have to be taken at once. For if our Southern England bases were liable to neutralisation by the enemy, then they must be moved elsewhere, and that wouldn't be done in a day. We now had hardly six months to go before D-day, and if this was the way the enemy felt about it, all the more necessity to keep our date with him. It was not a pretty thought that we might have to re-align the whole affair and base it not on Bristol, Southampton and London, but on Glasgow, Liverpool and Hull, or something of the sort. And if we didn't watch it the two retrograde movements up east and west coasts might well bump into each other, back to back round the north of Scotland.

But this had to be considered in deadly earnest in every detail. First, there was needed some specific forecast of the precise effect that we might expect, if the worst came to the worst, expressed in comprehensible terms. What we needed was something in the nature of a predicted diagram of "fall of shot" and some estimate of the rate of fire that we might have to receive. These particulars were miraculously forthcoming, and upon them we based a recommendation to the British Chiefs of Staff that the proper course was to stand our ground and take what was coming to us. As events turned out, of course, there can be no questioning this recommendation or the decision taken by our chiefs to accept it. But in the light of after knowledge one can now say that herein, once more, what is called luck was on our side.

The estimates of probable effect given to us were arrived at by an amazingly skilful process of reasoning based on what little positive evidence was then available. This gave a tolerably true picture of what afterwards became known as V.1 and V.2. Before Bomber Harris imprinted his trade-mark on the German Experimental Station at Peenemunde, the whole business had been brought to an advanced stage of completion. Unidentified works of construction seen and photographed there began to be duplicated and multiplied along the Pas de Calais coast and in the Cotentin Peninsula behind Cherbourg. As a result of practice firings from Peenemunde, various odd pieces of metal had arrived on neutral Swedish soil. The odd word drifted across the lines from here and there. Just as it is possible

for a skilled archæologist to reconstruct the history of an entire civilisation by examining a fraction of bone, a shard of earthenware or a depression in the ground, so it was equally possible for an expert in ordnance to curdle our blood on the basis of the comparative wealth of information here available. Yet once more did the whole affair of operation " OVERLORD " go into the melting-pot. If we answered our query affirmatively, if we concluded that Bristol, Southampton and London would, in fact, become untenable, the consequences would affect not only the operation, but a vast civil population and the Government of the country and Commonwealth itself. All would have to be re-deployed, an operation which in itself might well eclipse operation " OVERLORD " in size and complication.

If, on the other hand, as every inclination suggested, we decided to stand fast and take it, and if it turned out to be, as was easily possible, ten times worse than what was after all only an educated guess, the outcome would be worse than any mere re-deployment.

We now know how it was, but I sometimes wonder what might have happened had our airmen not done quite such an effective job of counter-battering, had our ground anti-aircraft defences not been kept up to such a high pitch of efficiency, and, most intriguing of all, had we known at the time what we only found out later when our troops overran the north of France. Here is another nice sum on which those who come after may meditate. There can be little doubt that had the whole armoury of Hitler's secret weapons come into full play against us we should have been obliged, shall we say, to vary our strategy. Had we known more about what might have been coming to us we might well have indulged in second thoughts. What would these have been? And arising out of this question, just how big a bushel is it advisable to use in certain circumstances for hiding a given light? The difficulty in answering these and similar questions is that one cannot express this factor of luck in either words or figures.

Hardly had we delivered ourselves so painfully of the recommendation that we stay put and take what was to come to us than we were assailed by yet another crisis, of its sort equally momentous. This arose out of our plan for operation " RANKIN " Case C, designed to meet the situation should the enemy collapse totally or surrender before the time of our

assault. The development of this plan, it may be remembered, involved an estimation by COSSAC of the ultimate partition of conquered Germany into zones. Our general proposal had been to divide Germany into three parts, that to the east to be the province of the Russians with British in the north-west and Americans in the south-west. Our plan had received general approval in August, 1943, and by December of that year was already in a fair way towards elaboration. Then there arrived from an American source, said to be the President himself, the ostensibly simple suggestion that we examine the proposition for transposing the United States and British zones so that, while the projected Russian zone remain unaltered, the Americans take the north-west zone and the British the south-west. The manner and form in which the suggestion reached us seemed to justify a suspicion that we were having our legs pulled, but verification of the authenticity of the proposition was quickly forthcoming, and that, moreover, in terms which implied that we might well be ordered shortly to make it so.

By now fortunately, the working organisation of COSSAC was so nicely adjusted and so keenly tempered that it was able to withstand any shock of the nature of that which thus assailed it. By now, in December, 1943, we were less than five months short of our D-Day, then still fixed at early May, and things to come had already taken considerable shape. Already in certain respects were we committed. Though there was still ample latitude for internal adjustments, as was peremptory until the Commander arrived and took command, the foundations were well and truly laid and that literally in concrete.

None the less, the proposal was fed into the COSSAC system for examination and discussion, by now functioning with almost mechanical precision. Proposals and suggestions worthy of thorough test, of which this was an outstanding example, were stripped down and put simultaneously into the hands of all branches and sections in any way involved. Opinions and recommendations, with supporting facts and figures, then filtered steadily upwards through channels, there being inter-service and inter-staff-division discussion at any level where this was found desirable or necessary, until the Principal Staff Officers of all three services passed upon the final co-ordinated and agreed expression of COSSAC opinion. If there was an instance

of disagreement that was not resolved before the final step was reached, I never heard of it. Which fact alone serves to illustrate the degree to which, by the end of 1943, all had come to a complete community of outlook and intention.

What prompted the suggestion is, I believe, unknown to this day. It can, I think, only have been a sudden uprush of reluctance on the part of someone highly placed in the United States to face a repetition of the complications of North Africa. I do not believe it was so much a desire to reshape the end as to reshape the course to that end, to avoid the necessity for the liberation of France to be undertaken principally by the United States. This liberation of France was bound to be a touchy business fraught with all kinds of complications for very many reasons.

However it may have been, there was for us the problem of examining the possibility and feasibility of making the change proposed. In simple terms it seemed as though three alternatives presented themselves. The change-over could be engineered at one of three periods. First there was the possibility of changing over American and British Armies as they lay in England, before the assault, so that the British should attack on the right of the Americans. Little need to elaborate upon the difficulties of execution here which would probably lead, if to no worse, to a postponement of D-Day. Did the underlying reason justify this?

Secondly, it might be possible to switch over in the course of operations so that while starting on the right the Americans should finish up, say by the time we got to the Rhine, on the left. Comment on this project by the supply and movement staff was both pithy and pointed.

Thirdly, came the only really feasible proposal which was that the operation should be allowed to unroll itself as now set up, whereafter the change over should be made at comparative leisure after the German defeat. From the military point of view, this was the only really practical solution, but even so, from the point of view of Civil Affairs specially, it was open to grave objection. Moreover, it side-stepped what appeared to us to be the real inwardness of the matter, alteration in the set-up for the liberation of France.

Nevertheless, we recommended accordingly and, as in other

matters, that ended the affair. No more was ever heard, by us at any rate, of this particular proposition.

As time wore on and as the organisation of the armies to assault took shape the demand grew naturally more insistent for the issue of definite orders for the inception of the campaign. We had reached a point, in fact, whereat further discussion of principles and methods was pointless and without profit. The general shape of future events was as widely known as seemed advisable. What was now needed was the Operation Order that would knit up all the various odd ends that were indeterminate without it and tell each individual what he was to do in terms of some precision. And we were still without a Supreme Commander. There was doubt as to the command of British 21 Army Group. A change here was forecast. The formation of United States First Army Group (subsequently 12th Army Group) was still in the blue print stage. In fact, General Omar Bradley was doubling the parts of Commander of both United States First Army Group and United States First Army, with General Leven Allen, Chief of Staff of F.U.S.A.G., and General William Kean of F.U.S.A. We had our Commanders-in-Chief of Naval and Air Expeditionary Forces, both British. What was now needed was to transfer the impulse from COSSAC to the next rung of the ladder, whatever that should be.

Trying for the moment to set aside personalities, the next most important consideration seemed to be that of nationality. As explained earlier we knew that our Advanced Guard must be mixed, American and British. We knew also that the conduct of the Advanced Guard operation must be in the hands of one Army Group Commander. Since only 21 Army Group existed as a functioning entity here was the clinching argument that supported our general thesis that the affair to be launched from Britain must be under British command. But simply to hand the responsibility over to an Army Group Commander could not be the right answer in existing circumstances, whatever principles might say. For our training manual principles could not be applied blindly here. As we British had found out for ourselves during our years of home defence, the manuals do not cater anywhere precisely for a situation in which one's foremost defences, lines of communication and base tend to coincide in space. Here in 1943 we were contemplating launching

a devastating counter-offensive from all among our Base Depôts. When the signal to advance was eventually given, the Admiral would be well in the van, the leading platoons would start almost from the General's backyard and the Air Marshal would be nearer the target than almost all his airfields. This was a lay-out not to be found in any of the diagrams. From many points of view, of course, it had great advantage, but, for purposes of the problem of higher command that we were trying to solve, it presented two abnormal but very practical difficulties. It was of incalculable benefit that the Supreme Commander should be within easy visiting distance of every one of his men on the eve of battle. There may be those who in this high-speed mechanical age are prone to decry the value of the personal touch. Second thought should tell them that this very speed enhances rather than diminishes the effect of the human factor. On the other hand this matey lay-out would increase the normal, natural inclination of the higher commander to tread on the heels of his subordinates and usurp their functions. If this were so there would come inevitably a slurring of responsibility and, with operation " OVERLORD " and all its complicated interlocking, above all other operations, there must be crystal clarity as regards responsibility. As against this it was not conceivable that the Supreme Commander would or could completely isolate and insulate himself from all that was going on right close to him all round. In fact, a very nice balance must be struck on behalf of our Chief to come as between splendid isolation and undue interference.

On the 29th November, 1943, COSSAC issued its Directive to the two Army Groups and to the Naval and Air Commanders-in-Chief. As this Directive was greeted with a reasonably uniform degree of dissatisfaction all round, we reckoned we had done not too bad a job. In this Directive it was decreed that the Supreme Allied Commander would retain full responsibility for the co-ordination of all planning on lower levels, and would eventually control the execution of the operation as a whole. Next, the Commander-in-Chief, 21 Army Group would be jointly responsible together with the Naval and Air Commanders-in-Chief for the detailed planning of the operation and, when so ordered, for its execution up to a point at which the Supreme Allied Commander would see fit to allocate an area of

responsibility to the Commanding General, First United States Army Group. This allocation of responsibility to Commanding General, First United States Army Group, would take place when, in the opinion of the Supreme Allied Commander, a sufficiency of United States troops had been landed on the Continent. It was confirmed that, in principle, United States troops would operate throughout on the right of British troops. It was further stipulated that, under direction of Commander-in-Chief 21 Army Group the initial assault would be carried out by a composite army consisting of approximately two British or Canadian Corps and two United States Corps under the unified control of the Commanding General, First United States Army. The Commanding General, First United States Army would then remain in immediate charge of land operations until such time as, in the opinion of Commander-in-Chief, 21 Army Group, number and composition of the forces ashore in France warranted the introduction into the line of battle of another Army Headquarters which would be British or Canadian. Not so much to safeguard national pride and prejudice, but rather in an attempt to minimise administrative confusion, we stipulated that, except in emergency to be judged by the man on the spot, and then only for the shortest possible period, a British or United States formation lower than a Corps would not be placed under orders of a commander of another nationality

That, we reckoned at COSSAC, was about the best that could be done for the moment in the absence of two key men, the Supreme Commander himself and the Commander-in-Chief, 21 Army Group. At any rate, it gave all others concerned and present something to bite on. Immediately, it brought into prominence the grave difficulties that faced in particular the Naval and Air Commanders-in-Chief, specially the former. For, while the process of planning and execution on the Army side was broken down by easy stages from COSSAC to Army Group to Army to Corps to Divisions, the Naval hierarchy was less elaborate in that the Commander-in-Chief dealt direct, without intermediary, with his so-called Naval Assault Forces each of which corresponded to an Army Assault Division. Since the affair was amphibious by nature, who and where were the sailors who must of necessity plan together with the commanders of armies and corps? Here was yet another of those problems

which, impossible in theory, were solved in practice. With the Air Forces there was the same problem though to a lesser degree since the air organisation lay, as it were, half way between that of Navy and Army. In the event, this aspect of the problem became even more complicated than was envisaged at the time when the COSSAC Directive was issued since, with the increase of resources that enabled the whole scale of the operation to be increased, came corresponding elaboration of the whole set-up while this basic difficulty of dissimilarity in organisation as between the services remained.

Here is much food for thought and ground for investigation in later days. Operation " OVERLORD " was successfully carried out in spite of everything, it is true, but it may not always be that there will be such perfect and intimate collaboration as was here attained and which served to bridge over any and every gap in the organisational structure of control and direction.

The eventual organisation adopted does not belong to this story. As we had hoped and forecast, the belated arrival of those who were able to wield the necessary priority quickly made possible the expansions we had advocated. With the change in command of 21 Army Group there was a short-lived recrudescence of the concept to create a Ground Forces command to parallel the command of sea and air forces but when, last of all, the Supreme Allied Commander came also all matters quickly adjusted themselves into final form.

A matter that always has important influence upon the effective exercise of command and control is that of the location of the place from which command is exercised in relation to those to be commanded. In an undertaking so comprehensive as operation " OVERLORD " this aspect of affairs presented a problem infinitely more complicated than that of the location of Headquarters of, say, a fleet, an army or a group of aircraft which is already an affair of sufficient complication. For at the Headquarters of operation " OVERLORD," that is first at COSSAC then at SHAEF, would come together a formidable multiplicity of lines of contact not only to Navy, Army and Air formations, but to both United States and British Governments and their agencies, to representatives of all the various allied countries. Since the expedition was to be launched from Britain and since so great

a proportion of the civil population of Britain would be intimately affected, either actively or passively, by the fortunes of the fight, contact with many British authorities must be close and constant. Not only was it a matter of trying to realise as close physical contact as possible between all the many interested parties but there was the gigantic problem of providing adequate mechanical means of intercommunication. Not only was house-room needed but room on the roads, room on the wires and room on the ether. In this particular instance too, there was the question of physical protection from bombardment for any part of the organisation to be located in the target area of London. And, as in most other things, there was thought to be given to the personal predilections of and the method of work favoured by the Supreme Allied Commander whoever he might eventually be. But again, we could not afford to wait too long to decide on the lay-out since the installation of telecommunications takes time, even when the experts of the highly tried but highly efficient British General Post Office undertake the work. Already by August, 1943, it had become evident that the walls of Norfolk House were developing an outward bulge. Immediate relief was afforded by housing the first overflow of staff at 80, Pall Mall nearby. It of course helped when, on occasion, complete organisations were added to us already set up in their own premises. By the time it ended, COSSAC was a figure of some significance in the London real estate business.

But when it came to bomb-proof protection for even a portion of the staff, it was quite another thing. Fortress London was a formidable affair, housing below ground, as it did, most of the essential organs of British Government and war making. Subterranean Whitehall had taken years to construct, and while reasonable allowances had been made for eventualities foreseen in the beginning, it was not to be expected that room could be found underground at this late hour for any considerable proportion of the huge future SHAEF. This being so, we had to look further afield. Where to look? It was not as though choice was free. As has been told, the development of operation "OVERLORD" had from the first taken place from below upwards. The original mandate given to COSSAC was to group and co-ordinate existing activities and organisations rather

than to create anew from the beginning. This inverted process of growth continued until, by the autumn of 1943, there were present and functioning all subordinate commanders. These were actively engaged about their business to perform which they had naturally installed themselves to a degree of permanency such that to consider their movement and that of their paraphernalia of command was out of the question. Then the Naval Command was exercised from Portsmouth and the Air Command from Stanmore in Middlesex, some dozen miles North-west of London. It seemed of necessity a question of locating the Supreme Commander at one of these places or the other or at some not too inconvenient spot in between. The eye fell immediately on Aldershot. Here it seemed that house-room could be made available. It seemed that the bombardment danger at such range could be ignored while distances to London, to Portsmouth, to Stanmore, by cub plane or by fast car or even train, were not prohibitive.

There seemed, however, much to be said for the Air Commander-in-Chief's contention that he must be in much closer contact with the Supreme Allied Commander than this arrangement would allow. As he rightly argued, things happen quickly in the air. A matter of seconds or at most of minutes may nowadays decide the fate of campaigns or even of whole countries. The communications that radiated from Stanmore were of an elaboration undreamt of before 1939. Away from them the Air Commander-in-Chief was powerless. He must remain at his Central Operations Room, air equivalent of the quarter-deck, from which was conducted by day and night the country-wide and unceasing subterranean " tiddlywinks " tournament in all the Operations Rooms of Britain that was the nerve system first of the defence and then of the counter-offensive.

Development of a situation at sea, on the other hand, is a much slower process when time and distance are measured by the hour and the nautical mile. And there is always to be considered the good sailor's reluctance to function above High Water Mark. If the Navy can be persuaded to disembark they have hitherto preferred to stay on the beach or, at most, on some height of land from which the sea is visible without recourse to the telescope.

Accordingly, Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory very strongly

advocated that the Supreme Allied Commander's main headquarters be installed hard by Stanmore in the group of very suitable buildings at Bushey Heath. Note the name.

To the precise details of what immediately followed I cannot bear personal witness since I was obliged to spend Christmas, 1943, and the following week in hospital. The fact that this particular hospital is normally devoted to the care of those afflicted with mental illness had no direct bearing on the situation. It was simply that to this place had been evacuated from London the in-patients' department of the Military Hospital at Millbank, which had been damaged by the enemy's bombardment. Meanwhile, General Bedell Smith had arrived from Algiers in the part of forerunner to General Eisenhower. He had an immense amount of work to get through in a limited time. Somewhere down the line had been put forward the suggestion that a very suitable location for General Eisenhower's Headquarters could be provided, with little alteration work, by the United States Army Air Corps who, in the course of reshaping their set-up for the battle were about to evacuate most of the big installation near Kingston-on-Thames only ten miles or so west of London at a place called Bushey Park. Get that name too.

I had heard of Bushey Park before, but never of Bushey Heath. Few of our British staff, I dare say, immediately appreciated the difference, and no American had probably heard of either. By the time we got around to appreciating the situation a force of some battalions of United States Engineers had descended on Bushey Park and dirt, trucks, bulldozers, bricks, mortar, huts, camouflage netting, and so forth, were flying in all directions. In the twinkling of an eye the fact was accomplished. When the full significance of the matter had been put to Beadle, he summed it up in lucid but somewhat unmilitary terms : " My God," said he, " I've married the wrong woman ! " He had. So Bushey Park it had to be, instead of Bushey Heath. We could not afford the time, labour and material that a change would have involved.

This *contretemps* seems worthy of record. Success was achieved in spite of all the awkwardness of the layout of the command system. Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory has left us the record of his sensations in the matter. But when the time comes for the

discussion of events in order to deduce principles therefrom for future use, I believe much care will be necessary in weighing the available evidence on this particular point. Had General Eisenhower's main headquarters been set up at Bushey Heath instead of at Bushey Park, the difficulties of Supreme Command of the air forces and so those of the Air Commander-in-Chief would have been so much the less. There would have remained the difficulty for the Air Commander-in-Chief of working closely with the Commander-in-Chief, 21 Army Group, whose headquarters was at St. Paul's School, Hammersmith, in West London. This duty was laid upon him, it will be remembered in the first instance, in the COSSAC Directive and was later confirmed by General Eisenhower. And in examining the command set-up for operation "OVERLORD," it must not be forgotten that the question was one of a United States commander commanding a combined United States and British expedition composed of all arms and services of both nations and to be launched from the very heart of Britain.

XI

OF SOME OF THE TOOLS WITH WHICH THE JOB WAS FINISHED

IT is on purpose that little more than passing mention has hitherto been made of any of all the many and varied material and mechanical devices invented expressly for—and made use of in—operation "OVERLORD." The thought here is that that which matters is not so much the tool itself produced to overcome some specific difficulty, as the spirit of determination to overcome that causes the tool to be made to finish the job.

Herein lies another basic difference as between British and Americans or Canadians. The comparatively easy-going British are more naturally inclined, if indeed a mechanical contrivance of some kind is unavoidably necessary, to make do with the machine that served their fathers and grandfathers so well, the fact that it is now required to serve a purpose quite different from that for which it was designed being but a minor consideration.

Whereas the natural tendency on the American or Canadian part, when confronted with almost any problem, appears to be to look first for a possible mechanical solution. But as was shown in this last war, the British genius for invention, after all but another name for improvisation, when shocked into action is second to none. All these things will be argued out in years to come, no doubt. I am no engineer. But one would guess that, so far as inventiveness showed itself since 1939, honours were easy as between the two sides of the Atlantic. Due probably to the inefficiency of the Nazi organisation and not least to their suicidal anti-Semitic policies, the much-publicised German inventive genius was far less fruitful than had been feared. Their major destructive achievements were

mercifully aborted by our last attacks. Had they been given time to develop it would have been a very different tale. Had they been given a few more months to produce an atomic bomb and a jet-propelled supersonic fighter, had they been able to bring into action their massed rocket batteries, we might have found ourselves, at least temporarily, at a material disadvantage. But they were forcibly deprived of the time they needed.

When we submitted our proposed plan in July, 1943, we had been obliged to stipulate that the operation was not to be contemplated unless we could evolve some reliable system of supplying our armies across open beaches for a period long enough to admit of our capture and repair of major ports. The relevant period could not be accurately calculated but it could be taken as one of weeks. It could not be more than a very few months at most since it was asking altogether too much that cross-beach maintenance of large armies should be made possible in the English Channel from September onward. If by that time we did not hold a sufficiency of major ports in thorough working order, our prospect would be poor. It was the fulfilling of this stipulation that produced the gigantic and spectacularly successful achievement that went under the code name of "MULBERRY." Even so, the project paid little more than half the anticipated dividend owing to the act of God that destroyed the second "synthetic harbour." The one that survived, thanks presumably to the cumulative factors of safety (in this case there was some justification, surely, for the cynic's alternative term, factors of ignorance), was able to handle more than its calculated share of the load.

It is my belief that credit for the entire concept belongs to the then senior Royal Naval representative at COSSAC of the Commander-in-Chief, Portsmouth, Commodore John Hughes-Hallett, Royal Navy. It all began at one of our Principal Staff Officers' meetings in Norfolk House on a hot day of early summer when there seemed any number of better things to be doing than sitting indoors discussing interminably ways and means of solving this immense puzzle. There had come revolt from the supply and movement people who could find no way of compensating for the proposed delay in capturing Cherbourg. Without at least one port in the first few days, they said, the thing was just not on. All blandishments were rejected and

they were told that the problem must be solved without a port and that was that. When it seemed as though horns were inextricably locked, the Commodore gave vent to a famous *bon mot* of the type for which he was celebrated, and the meeting broke up in laughter at his pontifical pronouncement, pencil being briskly rubbed between palms, "Well, all I can say is, if we can't capture a port we must take one with us."

We slept on that and next morning asked the Commodore if he had merely meant to be funny. On thinking it all over during the night there had come an inkling that there might be something in this apparently preposterous idea. The Commodore admitted that, though his original crack had arrived spontaneously mainly in jest, he, too, had been wondering if there weren't a true word in it somewhere. He had been working for some time at Combined Operations Headquarters and knew all that was being done there in the experimental line. Many projects were being worked on that showed much promise towards what we were after. Immediately after the episode of Dunkirk in 1940 it is told that the Prime Minister himself instituted investigation into the possibility of producing a form of pier that would connect ship to shore in tidal Channel waters. He foresaw even then that something of the sort would be needed one day. By 1943 this idea had borne remarkable fruit and there existed already the quite improbable four-footed pierhead that could climb up and down its own legs and could be connected to the shore by an articulated pontoon pier that would carry traffic equally well afloat or aground. Projects were also on hand for the creation of sheltered water in eastern seas, for future use in the war against Japan. In Asiatic waters, of course, there would not be our bugbear, the Channel tides, but one idea leads to another. And ideas were in urgent demand to solve the problem of the creation of an area of sheltered water in, of all places in the world, the English Channel. This was the crux of the whole matter, the creation of sheltered water. So much done, the supply of, so to speak, interior fittings in the way of piers, jetties, quays and so on would be comparatively straightforward. This latter part of the job was in fact already done. In the ordinary course of events the problem does not arise. One selects an area of water already sheltered by nature and one builds on it all the various contrivances desirable for

the discharge of ships' cargoes and for their onward transmission inland. Here and now we had to find a way of "bucking" nature, of creating shelter where shelter was not and that "come hell or high water" in the peculiarly apt American phrase. The English Channel is noted for its ability to produce both these phenomena.

As in so many instances, here again we found the problem to be under active study in a variety of quarters. Most ingenious possibly was a project, said to be of Russian origin, for forming a breakwater of air bubbles released from pipes on the sea-bed. I believe that this gives a complete theoretical answer to the problem, though in practice it needs prohibitive power for air compression on the requisite scale.

Equally the simplest possible expedient, the sinking of block ships, seemed likely to fall short of practical needs. It is seemingly a matter of great complexity deliberately to sink a ship in a given position on the sea-bed. And a great fleet would have had to be sacrified to give us what we needed. Did the ships need to be sunk to act as breakwaters? If not, could ground tackle be found that would withstand all assaults of wind and water? Alternatively, would it be possible to evolve some type of floating object that, while affording an adequacy of resistance to the elements, would be easier to moor securely?

As is now a matter of history, the final method adopted was to construct huge reinforced concrete "caissons" so designed as to have a reasonable towing performance afloat and to be rapidly sinkable at precise stations. These "caissons" were in fact specially built blockships, each resembling, as much as anything, the traditional aspect of Noah's Ark. The main walls of the harbour thus formed were protected by moored floating breakwaters composed of specially-designed vessels of another type, known as "bombardons" and by sunken blockships which latter themselves provided minor sheltered waters for anchorages. In the event the bombardons largely failed in spite of all the ingenuity used in their design.

But, as may well be imagined, the bridging of the gap that lay here between conception and execution demanded feats of imagination and organisation little, if any, less than those called for by any other single aspect of the whole operation. It was evident from the start that some special individual with very

special qualifications would be required to oversee operation "MULBERRY."

By August COSSAC had acquired from Combined Operations Headquarters the services of Sir Harold Wernher to co-ordinate the whole project. He was able to present to Conference "QUADRANT" in that month, at Quebec, the outline plan together with estimates of materials and labour needed for the work and suggestions as to how it should be executed. As can well be imagined, there then came into being a whole new rash of these tough spots known only too familiarly as bottlenecks. Among other needs, all urgent, were those in stupendous quantities for steel, for concrete, for timber for shuttering, for labour, for dock space in which to build, for tugs to tow the whole affair across the Channel, for skilled crews to navigate these monstrosities across in tow and then plant them in alien shallows with an accuracy of inches. Above everything, perhaps, what were most needed were absolute secrecy and complete success. There were long periods when it seemed quite impossible that anything should ever come of it. Half England seemed to be working on it and a lot of Ireland as well. Yet I wonder how many of those many thousands knew what they were really at. There had to be a story, of course, in case of need and the quite plausible yarn invented was that these were all fittings for use inside the French ports when we should have captured them, completely demolished, from the enemy. But the workmen were not to be deceived by anything so simple as that. I was taken one day over the Surrey and East India Docks, where these "PHŒNIX" units, as the concrete caissons were called, were being built, some in the docks themselves and others in basins dug for them on dry land out of which they could be floated when the Thames had been let in to flood them. I asked a foreman if he knew what all this was about. Of course he did. He had been called on to this job from constructing concrete grain elevators somewhere in the north. These things they were now rushing up were obviously floating grain elevators to be filled when the time came with wheat and towed over to feed starving Europe. Too easy. All the chaps knew it. But it was all right, they weren't talking.

The whole story of "MULBERRY" is a study in itself, well worthy of separate treatment. For, as we found when we got

down to it, not even this was an entirely new thing. Men appeared who, in India, in the United States and elsewhere had spent their lives dealing with problems of this sort on the banks of great seasonal rivers, where riparian installations must be moved perpetually as the water's edge advances and recedes with summer floods and winter ebbs. So from the work of 1943 and 1944 may well emerge much that will be of future usefulness. But to us at COSSAC the whole affair was yet another contest in priorities. There was not a man, not an ounce of material, not a foot of space that had not already been allocated long in advance to something or other more or less in connection with the war effort. Everything for "MULBERRY" was something from someone or somewhere else. As the whole project when completed would sit astride the magic line of demarkation, high-water mark at ordinary spring tides, very clear allotment was needed as to who was to do what, sailors or soldiers. The way it worked out was that the Admiralty was given responsibility for any floating ship breakwaters that might prove necessary, for blockships or any vessels to be sunk for purposes of forming breakwaters, for towing the concrete "PHŒNIX" units across the Channel. The War Office was made responsible for the design of the concrete units and for the erection of all piers and pontoons within the artificial harbours. All shared the cost in men, materials and space. The Ministry of Labour gave up many expert tradesmen, both British and imported South Irish, and power equipment. The British Army released men from the Colours temporarily and the United States Army subscribed engineer units. The Navies forewent frigate and aircraft-carrier production. Both the United States War Shipping Administration and the British Ministry of War Transport gave up merchant tonnage by the thousand to be deliberately sunk as blockships.

By January, 1944, it was possible for Sir Harold Wernher to assure us that, somehow or other, the whole affair was likely to succeed.

And in June of 1944 set sail from England a million tons of reinforced concrete and a vast fleet of blockships, pier-heads, pontoon roadways and a variety of objects that one would not normally consider remarkable for their buoyancy. As one old clubman was heard to remark in London, "Like rolling the

Athenæum on to its side and towing the damn thing across the Channel." In a matter of days all these floating freaks were sunk into position to turn into Mulberry "A," a complete harbour for United States use and Mulberry "B" for the British. Flanking them were "Gooseberries," which were small harbours of refuge for minor landing craft to use pending the completion of the Mulberries and later to act as overflow anchorages. These Gooseberries were formed simply by sinking rows of blockships suitably placed to form breakwaters, and it was the sight of the easternmost of these from his observation posts on the Havre peninsular that caused such keen delight to the enemy. He claimed them as victims of his "devastating counter measures" and sure sign of the annihilation of our invasion. But the full flowering of Mulberries and Gooseberries and the harvesting of their fruit belongs to another story. COSSAC's business was the planting of their seeds and the nurturing of their early growth. The "problem of prolonged cross-beach maintenance and the provision of artificial anchorages" was thus solved on this particular occasion.

Then there was operation "PLUTO," by which name was dignified the project for keeping the invasion armies supplied with liquid fuels by pipe-lines that should be laid under the waters of the Channel. Liquid fuels are nowadays indeed the life-blood of all fighting forces. Vital targets in this last war were Germany's synthetic oil plants and our fleets of thin-skinned tankers on the seas. We lost a lot of tankers. One can never have enough of them. They might well have proved to be the Achilles' heel of operation "OVERLORD." Few better targets could be imagined than that to be presented by a tanker at anchor off an open beach engaged in the lengthy process of pumping its cargo ashore. So every way and means must be sought to minimise the danger.

A lot was known about pipe-lines for peace uses before the war. For years they have carried the world's increasing oil supplies over great distances in every Continent. In war, too, they are no new thing. So long ago as in 1917 and 1918, that the Scriptures might be fulfilled, the waters of the Nile were delivered by pipe-line into the Jordan valley. Already by 1941 was England being covered by a pipe system for distribution of fuels to the enormous airfield layout that was coming into

being. By 1942 experiments were well on their way with a view to developing a submarine system. In early 1943 " PLUTO " was having its trial runs across the Severn estuary between Swansea and Ilfracombe. As a result of experience it was found that absolute reliance could not be placed on this method of submarine pipe. It was apparently difficult to get a type of material that, while being free from leakage was at the same time sufficiently easy to handle, lay and maintain. As a standby, therefore, was adopted a system of contrete tanker barges to be towed over the Channel and cast ashore as a static reserve of petrol on the beaches. It was another great anxiety, this question of liquid fuel supply. Luckily, perhaps, as it turned out, we were over-insured. Though " PLUTO " was well and truly laid from the Isle of Wight to Cherbourg, the system did not live up to expectations, but its shortcomings were of little material disadvantage since it was, indeed, possible to make use, earlier than had been anticipated, of tankers and of the French oil installations in the port that were miraculously little damaged. Over the short gap, later on, from Dungeness to the Pas de Calais " PLUTO " made no mistakes, and it eventually became possible to charge the pipe in Liverpool for delivery on the Rhine. In my opinion, as a layman in these matters, I do not believe that " PLUTO " paid a worthwhile dividend over the long carry to Cherbourg so far as operation " OVERLORD " was concerned, though undoubtedly much experience was gained that will in the future be of profit.

These two, " MULBERRY " and " PLUTO," tickled the imagination to such an extent as possibly to divert attention from other minor and possibly more pedestrian feats of skilful invention without the aid of which things might well have gone otherwise than they did. Most of these were fathered elsewhere than at COSSAC, but it was our task at COSSAC to ensure that any and every expedient was used that could be of help ultimately in that awful moment when Private Snodgrass of the British infantry and his cousin, three thousand miles removed, Pfc. Snodgrass of the United States infantry, would find themselves paddling on the sands of Normandy.

Others must tell of the invention and construction of the great fleets of thousands of landing craft of many dozens of types. The evolution of each and every one was a romance in itself.

For months, for years, how many brains were not over-taxed to invent new types that would ease some particular little problem, that could be made from available materials with available labour in available shipyards or even in sheds and garages miles inland. All England became a vast shipyard as in days gone by. How often did one encounter in the narrow street of some English country village a multi-wheeled truck laden with some maritime monstrosity on its way to find its natural element. Fish out of water, indeed. Why some of them floated at all it was hard for a landsman to understand. And how the navies imparted their lore to the crews of things that must have handled like soup-plates is equally a mystery. But it was done. They collided, they broached to on the beaches, they melted their bearings, but they got there and delivered the goods, impelled by the inflexible will to victory.

There were vessels that travelled on the forest of powered davits of the infantry " combat-loader " ships that, when lowered, scurried backwards and forwards to put the men of the assault ashore. There were those of many sizes which dropped their bows straight on to the sand so that their loads of tanks, guns, trucks could run off dryshod. Some that carried tanks one way could, in a few moments be converted into hospital ships to bring back loads of wounded. Some there were that at a given moment almost disappeared in sheets of flame and clouds of smoke as they discharged bouquets of rockets on the enemy's defences. Some tiny boats carried guns almost as big as themselves which could thus be taken right inshore to deal with the defences at point-blank range. There were special types of craft to carry the assaulting infantry right up to the beach, a company at a time, without need to tranship. There were craft fitted with railway lines to carry locomotives and rolling stock. There was a place for everything. And how often did not the mind toy wistfully with the old ideas for Channel tunnels.

It was not only a question of quantity but of quality as well, that is, of keeping those craft we had got in repair. Once more a matter of priorities in the already over-taxed shipyards of Britain. And this constituted another point of friction as between American and British. From one cause and another there were a lot of damaged craft lying round England and Scotland. There was a frightful glut in British shipyards. But there was

also to be thought of the post-war situation in those shipyards. There might be another boom in ship-building such as came before the slump last time and labour must be kept sweet against the day. This implied rigid observance of Trade Union restrictions on hours and wages and, moreover, the interests of shipowners must be safeguarded. If under duress of war wage rates were raised or hours shortened it might be that such changes would carry over into peace. One must be practical in one's patriotism as well as in other directions. By paying higher wages I believe we might have got more landing craft built and repaired quicker. But—we won. We never got the landing craft we thought we needed, but we must have had a sufficiency. The nightmare of shortage remained until well beyond D-day.

Then there was the half-world of vehicles that would swim and ships that would run on wheels. The United States forces were well ahead with these latter, which were of vital significance for the Pacific war from the start. From the marshes of Florida they had long ago learnt much in this line. As ever, it was the simple solution that was found when two good lads of the General Motors Corporation had the bright thought to take a standard American two-and-a-half-ton truck and wrap a boat round it. Thus was born the DUKW, so-called, the truck that was truly amphibious, one indeed of the real war-winning appliances that came to our hands. My first ride in a DUKW was a great thrill as, with Lord Louis Mountbatten himself at the wheel, we negotiated a couple of bunkers on a western Scottish golf course and charged out to sea. Here was the partial disposal of yet another problem, that of transhipment at that most vulnerable and inconvenient of points, the water's edge.

It was the crossing of the water's edge that demanded almost the greatest concentration of thought and ingenuity, first to ease the passage of the assaulting troops themselves, then to widen this greatest of all bottlenecks in the supply lines to be laid behind them. As we learnt so painfully in the first World War from 1916 onwards, the overcoming of modern defensive fire power, even when it is emplaced behind comparatively light field entrenchments requires a stupendous weight of fire support if the attacking infantry are not to suffer crippling loss. Even to subdue the weapons of those days, our guns had to stand hub-cap to hub-cap row on row, and our tanks had to advance in battalions. Still,

the advance was often paltry and the price in blood exorbitant. And now here we were about to assault Hitler's fortress Europe with all its elaboration of steel and concrete works, launching friend Snodgrass not from the comparative security of his own trench-lines, but from on board a heterogeneous assemblage of small boats. (He himself undoubtedly used more forceful adjectives.) He needed greater support for this first assault than ever before given, and that obviously at the precise moment when it was most difficult to give. Technicians must tell of the multiplicity of devices perfected for the meticulous placing of the thousands of tons of bombs dropped in support of the assault, of shells from the guns of the supporting fleets. There were these landing craft equipped as gunboats and as rocket-launching platforms. There were landing craft from which the land artillery could fire while still afloat, and at last was found that for which every army in the world had been searching for years—the floating tank.

It was in the matter of the landing of vehicles on open beaches that a member of the COSSAC Staff was able to set yet another of our major anxieties at rest. For the rate at which vehicles must be landed to complete troop units that would have waded ashore was such that there could be no question of waiting for refinements such as "MULBERRY." The plan envisaged, for instance, the landing of over 20,000 vehicles on D-day and the day after. Now part of the trick of designing a landing craft is to ensure that the slope of its keel shall bear such relation to the natural slope of the beach on which it is to be used that it shall be able to discharge its load as nearly as possible dry-shod ; and thereafter that it shall have a reasonable chance of hauling offshore under its own power to clear the way for others and to go back for another cargo. Naturally enough, man does not have the last word in this, so that, to be on the safe side, every single vehicle that is to be discharged otherwise than on to a quay must be "waterproofed," that is, so protected that it will suffer the minimum of harm from immersion in sea water to a depth of some feet. For the landing craft might well ground on some unevenness while there was still several feet of water under its bows. In which case down would go the unloading ramp to rest on the bottom and down the ramp would go the vehicles. No time to mess about, as the sergeant would say, or

words to that effect. Every single vehicle thus landed in Normandy in the summer of 1944 was "waterproofed" in such manner that, for instance, a jeep could be driven along the sea-bed with nothing protruding above the surface but the driver's head and a few inches of air intake pipe.

The problem of waterproofing vehicles was not made easier by the fact that the British Army, having been caught as usual, unprepared on the outbreak of war, had never been able to catch up with itself in the matter, among others, of standardisation of motor equipment. By 1943 it possessed well over a hundred different types of vehicle and engine, each one of which presented a different problem when it came to waterproofing. The United States armies, on the other hand, having had better luck in the beginning, had been able to restrict their types for purposes of waterproofing to under a dozen. Since the job must of necessity be done in every unit by mainly non-technical personnel, it was clear that the process must be simple. While certain of the fittings needed were obvious, such as the extension tubes for air intake pipes, to lead them up above possible water level, when it came to a matter of protecting more vital, electrical portions something of a plastic nature seemed indicated, something that while providing insulation and resistance to heat would yet be easy to mould by hand.

Experiment, coupled with a study of availabilities, gave the answer as a compound of heavy grease with asbestos, but to get the proper mix that would stay put baffled all comers until Colonel Norman Lack, United States Army, of COSSAC's small scientific and experimental section, brought his brain to bear. He discovered that the trouble lay in the minute fraction of moisture normally held by asbestos. This removed by baking, and we had the answer. A little thing, maybe, but how much depended on it. Once it was a horseshoe nail that lost a kingdom. Here it was a drop of moisture in a shred of asbestos that was holding up victory.

Just as viciously as on the sea, by land and in the air, was the war fought out in the ether. The enemy had his radar as had we, and he was as fairly and squarely defeated in this contest as in all the others. Just how it was done must be told by those expert in the bewildering technicalities, those who thought out, organised and operated the counter-measures to foil the enemy's

protective screen of invisible oscillations. Partly it was done by brute force, by commando raid or by aircraft rocket or bomb against radar installations. But more subtly it was arranged, first, that the enemy should receive over his system news that was incorrect in detail and, later, that he should receive evidence that was hardly founded on fact at all. It was satisfying to hear the Deutchlandsender broadcast alerting North-west Germany against a bombing raid that was actually delivered in the south, and *vice versa*. Then came floating boxes of tricks, one squadron of them skilfully commanded by Commander Douglas Fairbanks, junior, United States Navy, of Hollywood, California, each equipped with a small electrical apparatus to create on the enemy's radar screens the reaction that would be caused by a formidable fleet advancing to invade.

By the movie industry, too, we were shown how a suitably amplified sound track of martial noises wafted down wind to a jittery listening post in the dark could carry conviction of the imminent onslaught of all arms in overwhelming strength.

By night, too, would appear in open country what must have seemed to enemy bomb-aimers an active airfield in full operation. Could they have got back in daylight to check the results of their withering attacks they would have seen nothing but the craters of some harmless " agricultural bombing " from which half a dozen airmen would be coiling up the flex that had worked the dummy flare-path and set fire to small heaps of waste. So much more German effort wasted.

We had our difficulties, but as 1943 merged into 1944 our German enemy must have been having his anxieties also.

I have mentioned above the DUKW as a war winner. There were others in the same class beyond doubt. In spite of a subsequent post-war inclination to blacken its name, we should have been in a poor way without the C.47 " Dakota " aircraft. All over the world did this work-horse of the skies prove itself. For us in operation " OVERLORD " it could have done no more in the way of aerial haulage of freights of every description, in the battle itself and on the line of communication. As with landing craft, so with transport aircraft. One can never have enough. It was not until the Supreme Allied Commander himself took command that the requirements for North-west Europe in this respect received their dues.

The jeep also must qualify in the war-winning material class. Fitted with a propeller and breasting the chop of the Channel, or dropped from the sky on the sharp end of a parachute seemed all the same to a jeep. On land, unfortunately, it acquired a sinister reputation as a lethal weapon, second only to the British motor-cycle. But in fairness must be stated that this was not always and entirely the fault of the jeep.

But not even a somewhat amateurish attempt like this to apportion credit for material ingenuity should fail to mention one Bailey, now Sir Donald Bailey, and his bridge which must surely rank as one of the outstanding engineering achievements of the age. For a road or railway without bridges is no means of communication at all. Remove all bridges and culverts in North-west Europe as the enemy, ably seconded by our air forces, tried to do, and it will be found that what seemed to be a rolling, unaccidented plain becomes at once an archipelago of distressingly small islands. To get anywhere with our plan, or with any other plan for that matter, demanded bridges of every sort, shape, size and description, and then bridges.

Though much has been heard over many years of the ding-dong contest between designers of guns and those of armour, there has been little general appreciation of the parallel struggle that has been waged this last thirty years between the designers of tanks and those of bridges. It is long since the weight of tanks overtopped the critical loading of the majority of ordinary highway bridges and culverts. Even by 1918 it was becoming difficult to route across Europe convoys of the heavier military vehicles. It was fortunate that in 1940 the bridge designers gained the lead and gave us the Bailey equipment, a product so ingenious that it seems not only to have solved all bridging problems for as far into the future as it is possible to foresee, but many other problems as well. For this equipment, being based on the unit construction principle like a small boy's Meccano miniature engineering outfit, can be so varied in its application as to carry all loads up to those of a double-track railway across a river such as the Rhine. It can be erected silently at night in the forefront of the battle to carry the dawn tank advance over the widest of obstacles. Yet its constituent parts can be carried in any load-carrying truck. The heaviest of them can be lifted, each by no more than six men. And it

would take a misguided genius to put it all together wrongly. It is invaluable, as we found, for use as temporary quayside fittings in sea ports and is easily adaptable for the construction of many types of gantry for a variety of purposes, both afloat and ashore. Our problems at COSSAC were infinitely simplified by our ability to rely on the Bailey bridge equipment. The answer to so many of them was simply to order some more Bailey bridge.

And so on and so on. There were all the many variations of the tank—tanks that were armoured bull-dozers, tanks that set off or ploughed up the minefields, tanks that carried the sappers and their tons of explosives safely to the obstacles they were to blast away, tanks that emitted flame or rockets or colossal bombs. There were tanks that swam and tanks that went by air. But technicalities are for the technicians. The COSSAC task, as I have said, was to review all these and kindred matters and from this wealth of ingenuity to see that nothing was discarded that might contribute to the great climax, the arrival of Private and Pfc. Snodgrass unscathed at their common objective.

And here once more were we held back by the absence until the eleventh hour of our commander. There was still to be made the simple but great decision as between the assault by daylight and assault in darkness. Upon the choice of alternative depended so much in the way, among other things, of technique and material. By now our thinkers had produced all kinds of novel lighting effects that would make the modern night attack something quite different. Flood lighting developed in peacetime had taught us a lot, and apparatus for battlefield use had been developed that would produce a chiaroscuro such that our troops covered by darkness most profound would advance onto a blindingly illuminated enemy. We had mastered the art of "nocto-vision," of how to see clearly in the dark without being ourselves visible.

There were many more and much wider considerations here. Though darkness might shield us from much of the enemy's counterblast, the enemy had doubtless progressed, as had we, in knowledge of how to overcome the night. In darkness, in spite of all our mechanical aids, the effectiveness of our covering bombardments by bomb and shell was bound to be diminished.

The thought of deploying at night a fleet of thousands of small vessels in the restricted sea areas that we should have been able in the short time available to clear of mines was a solemn one. Finding and clearing obstacles and booby traps in the dark is a chancy business even for highly-trained and fearless experts. Daylight would of itself dispose of or diminish most of these difficulties, but would, on the other hand, lighten many of the enemy's troubles, too. When both sides could see to shoot it would become pretty much of a straightforward shooting match. Did we not possess such power that our blow, delivered as we trusted against a surprised enemy, would be decisive even when we were in the disadvantageous position of being afloat while he was ashore? Were not the profits we hoped to gain by the use of darkness more than offset by the loss of power we should thereby incur? It seemed a devilish close-run thing.

To settle this and all other similar matters came at last our long-awaited commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

XII

TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

WITH General Eisenhower came his Chief of Staff, General Walter Bedell Smith, the two together forming one of those great partnerships that will be added to the roll of fame in the world's military history. The combination had proved its strength and effectiveness in the only test that can give unmistakable proof—the test of warfare. It was an inestimable privilege to be co-opted into the firm. There arrived a few days beforehand General Montgomery, charged with the mission of taking command of 21 Army Group and of the whole assault, our strategic advanced guard operation, in his phraseology the greatest "Forward Body" ever. How, with his ability to command resources denied to COSSAC, the Supreme Commander was able to "render the assault as little hazardous as may be, so far as it is humanly possible to calculate" is known to all the world. So shrewd and paralysing were the initial blows that, as is not often the case, the opportunity came, was recognised and seized by the inspired leadership to vary our calculated procedure, to miss out altogether what had been planned as the first major object, the organisation of the Seine-Loire Lodgment Area in which we were to pause before striking east. The Anglo-Saxon genius for improvisation, coupled with the traditional use wherever possible of the three hundred per cent. factor of safety, brought victory once more.

If there is a summing-up to be made, I think it must be that whereas anyone can make a plan it takes something quite out of the ordinary to carry it out. The more scientific warfare becomes the more scientific must be its planning and preparation, but in the event victory belongs not to those who forge the weapon, but to him who is gifted with the artistry to wield it.

After the first world war we were all very tired, and in our lassitude we gave way to the very human desire for relaxation.

It is easier to let the mind wander back among things done, when to speculate upon and calculate the unknown ahead needs so much effort. So the avowed intention of many of us was to get back, to get everything back, to where we had left off in 1914. Least of all, we said, let us worry about any more war. We were told that we had just fought and won the war that should end war, that in any case there could be no possibility of major conflict for ten years. As time went on those ten years travelled with us, and those whose business it might be one day to defend the rights of their fellows to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, had to keep their spirits up as best they could with the prospect before them of, anyhow, ten years of no progress. Then, when common sense revived, belated attempts were made to recapture faded memories of battles already long ago, to deduce what exactly we had gained in knowledge from our prodigious expenditures from 1914 to 1918. Britain was fortunate in possessing a small band of gifted survivors whose impressions had been so indelibly imprinted that much was rescued though much was lost. And it was few other countries that had not gone the same way, but that had seen from the turning point of 1918 that the race is to the swift, not to the tired.

Now here we are back again at the place where we came in in 1918. For the sake of those that come after it is to be hoped that this time we may be able to bring ourselves to deduce for their benefit anything of possible profit that the evil times just past may have given us. It is in an effort to be of help that this work has been written. This is not history in the accepted sense. History will come later, for it is a matter of painstaking record that takes much time. Only during the currency of this war was our British military history of the first great war completed, a little late to be of any value, other than as a record of a past so dead that already since the period of which it treats, human existence has completed another full cycle. The headstone must go back to the monumental mason for reinscription before it was ever erected on the tomb. And what is history, anyway? "All bunk," said a prominent American citizen. A good jest maybe, but was he so wrong at that? If history must be written a generation at least in arrear, its source material can be but that which is recorded in writing and survives. It is not always possible to make written record in the heat of

action while history is actually in the making. And when it comes to the matter of survival there is less chance for the field message that is apt to contain so much of the spirit of its author than for the more stilted report of one removed from the immediate scene of action. Which is a quaint thought if one considers how often a published report departs from the facts of a case of which one has intimate personal knowledge. Yet that report presumably becomes the raw material of history. As time goes on it seems probable that divergence between fact and reported fact will increase. For with increasingly efficient communications, increasing so-called freedom in so many directions, if only for the sake of peace and quiet the writers of reports on matters of any significance will be increasingly tempted not only to suppress the truth, but even on occasion to suggest the false. If Pontius Pilate were to ask his celebrated question to-day, "What is truth?" the short answer that might suggest itself could well be, "That which few men can afford to tell."

All of which moralising leads to the point that in my view it is one's duty to set down, while they are still fresh in the memory, one's impressions of events that have come to have more than ordinary significance. Specially should this be so if, as was I, one has been fortunate enough to have been brought into contact with great men in whose hands has lain vital responsibility. Such impressions may be of little value when the total sum comes to be added up, but, on the other hand, they may give life to one of the small joints of the often fleshless skeleton of what we call history. In truth, if it is a matter of future usefulness it is not at all the lifeless bones of the thing that matter, but the flesh and blood of it. For it is in the nature of things warlike that the great commander's decision which changes the course of history is seldom based upon the full facts of the situation as painstakingly unearthed years later. He acts upon what he believes to be the situation at the moment of decision. And it is not only the impression made in his mind by matters military that counts. He is a man, the great commander, and is subject like other men to all the strains and stresses of the mind that afflict lesser men. "Read and re-read the lives of the great captains," said Napoleon, greatest perhaps of all. It is from their lives probably more than from their campaigns that their successors may learn. So every little

counts, every minor testimony may have its effect upon the solution of the great equation that, solved, may lead the student to the discovery of this thing that causes things to happen.

So what are the impressions which one bears as a result of the unprecedented happenings of this period from March of 1943 until January of 1944? For it was on the 17th January, 1944, that General Eisenhower took command and COSSAC became SHAEF. During all that time hardly a day had gone past on which I had not met and spoken with someone from outside my own immediate entourage. This of itself may not be an uncommon occurrence, but few British soldiers can have been so fortunate as to acquire thus so wide an acquaintance among all walks of life of many nationalities. The sharing of a vital secret with a small inner circle and of a variety of secrets of great gravity with ever widening outer circles added undoubted piquancy to it all.

Would that one could voice the conclusion of the whole matter. That must be for others to do who were even more advantageously placed and who are better equipped for the task. But how did we of COSSAC see things?

These apparent doubts on the higher levels, were they more apparent than real? They were. To the uninitiated it always seems as though it must be easier and easier to make decisions as one goes higher and higher up the chain of command. There is apt to be impatience in the ranks when the clear-cut order from above is delayed or absent. They have coined the telling phrase, "The higher the level, the more circular the motion." It certainly looks like that at times. But it is deceptively easy to arrive at rapid and seemingly obvious decisions when no question of responsibility arises. It is one thing to be in opposition, but quite another to govern. Small wonder that those responsible in the case of operation "OVERLORD" hesitated at times. More is it to be wondered at that they ever brought themselves to face it. For failure would have brought disaster of the most crushing dimension. It is told that even the great British lion-heart lost many an hour's sleep from his small allowance, tortured by thoughts of the Channel clogged with British and American corpses. For to the British the weight of the decision must have been the more burdensome. Such a short time before they had spent weary days, weeks and months perfecting plans to do unto the German as he now might well

be planning to do unto us. The British had had only a matter of months in which to prepare to receive invaders. Our enemy now had been sitting over against us for years. The study of history didn't bring much comfort. Julius Cæsar and William of Normandy had done the job in the reverse direction. Napoleon had funked it, so had Hitler. Also in the reverse direction. There was no real precedent, even of failure, going what was now our way. The thought that we were to go back to the place whence Norman William had started was more poetic than practical. As we had warned our chiefs, it was useless to attach too much faith to ostensible parallels elsewhere in the world. Sicily was one thing, Normandy quite another.

That was about the way it must have looked to those responsible. Yet they gave the word.

It has been contended that the decision to proceed was in reality made not so much by the commanders eventually appointed as by the plan itself, that is by the planners. There is belief that this robot, the Plan, had acquired such impetus of its own by the time the Supreme Commander took command that neither he nor any other authority could have prevented its evolution to fulfilment. This was not and could never be so. It is true that all was far advanced by January, 1944, and that, from that time onward, the implications of an order to halt became almost hourly more serious and far-reaching. By January, 1944, one may truthfully say that odds were manifestly on some great enterprise taking place in and from Britain in that year. No longer could be hidden the great and ever-growing concentration of force in the British Isles, and this could portend but one happening. It could only be a matter of time, as, indeed, we were beginning to tell the enemy. It was undoubtedly the easier way, as it so often is, to allow matters to take their ordained course, to let the plan unroll itself, but to imply that our leaders were merely content to follow the line of least resistance is in my view absurd. Had they been men of this quality it is unlikely that we should have found ourselves in the favourable position in which we did find ourselves at the start of 1944. Had there been any question of leaders being led then, when the day eventually came, and when almost every circumstance existed that would have justified a decision by a lesser man to hold back even at this late hour, the answer would have been " No " in place of the historic " Yes."

Where, then, came the turning point in all this? Surely it was in August, 1943, when, at Quebec, not only was the COSSAC plan approved in general, but the COSSAC staff was ordered to put it into effect. From that moment there came about that desirable state of affairs wherein planning and execution are vested in one and the same authority. Which gives rise to certain observations upon the subject of planners in general, this new category of persons in our fighting services that has come so prominently into being during the latest war. It may be that our experience at COSSAC was such as to provide assistance for the future in determining how best to distribute staff duties and to perform certain functions in relation therewith.

As I see it, the wholesale introduction of planning staffs in United States and British fighting services has come about by reason of the marked tendency of recent years towards centralisation of control. This centralisation has been made possible by the perfection and elaboration of communications. At the same time it must be admitted that our careful pursuit of the negative principles of what we call democracy has tended to bring into positions of authority not so much those best fitted to hold these positions as those who are not demonstrably unfitted to do so. It may not nowadays in fact pay the individual to accept responsibility, for preferment is apt to go to him who has "caused least trouble." The result achieved is that there has been for long an increasing tendency for the commander to be over-burdened with matters of detail upon which his superiors are perpetually anxious to be informed lest they be "caught out" by those to whom, in turn, they are responsible. In consequence, the commander is able to devote less and less of his time to anything outside the day-to-day routine duties of his post. He has been forced, therefore, to provide himself with a staff charged with the mission of doing his long-range thinking for him. What has in the past been regarded as the orthodox staff is hard put to it to keep pace with the problems of the moment, specially when they have to minister to troops largely untrained, as they must be in large citizen armies.

The wastefulness of such armies is proverbial. It cannot be otherwise when the national policy is one of deliberately organising for peace and improvising, when necessary, for war. Possibly the greatest waste of all is in what one may term "planning energy." At a conservative estimate, during the last war, for

every plan drawn up by planners and adopted by their chiefs for action, something of the order of twenty plans must have been scrapped. The drawing up of a plan, even for a minor operation, is a matter of much earnest labour on the part of a large number of officers who must preferably be of more than average ability. The cure for this state of affairs, the prevention of this waste of man hours, of effort, is not simple. Both cure and prevention are surely desirable. They seem to lie in the direction, first, of putting into actual practice that which we preach concerning this decentralisation of authority and, secondly, in increasing the capacity of the individual. The latter suggestion appears itself to call for considerable long-term planning.

There must for ever be discussion of the general pattern of the strategy of the early phases of the campaign. As has been shown, the resources in critical supplies for the opening assaults were strictly limited from start to finish. Landing craft and transport aircraft were never plentiful. Whereas COSSAC's resources were, so to speak, in cents and pence, those with which the deed was done were in dollars and shillings. It never became a matter of pounds sterling, nor of a balance in hand in any currency. Whereas we at COSSAC had planned to bet, all out, on Caen and to attempt the Cotentin Peninsula as a second bound, there was still, in the event, the problem of allotting expenditure between the swings of Caen and the roundabouts of Cotentin. Who shall say that the swings should have had it? Had it been so there might never have come the opportunity, so brilliantly seized, for the great left wheel to the Seine. But, as has been said, it is one thing to plan, another to execute. A plan can be meticulously followed up to the point of first contact. Thereafter the god of battles takes the matter into both hands, one side of the scale goes up, the other down. Deserving of the keenest study is the whole miraculous feat of organisation that gave effect to the variations in detail of the general project that were effected between the time of General Eisenhower's arrival and the day of assault. It seemed to many as though the vital month's postponement of D-day from May to June was granted in haste with little consideration of all the attendant implications thereof. But it seems doubtful if research will justify this criticism. Pretty well every combination of possible events had been foreseen during the long years

of study beforehand and the probable cost was known. True, it was galling to have to sit inactive through the brilliant May days and then to have to battle through that travesty of a summer. But all relevant things must be considered in their proper relationship one with another.

At COSSAC we were not told—we did not need to know—the true and full inwardness of the circumstances that determined the identity of our Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower. It has been told how, at the ANFA Conference near Casablanca in January, 1943, it was at any rate tacitly agreed on the top levels that command of "OVERLORD" should be placed in British hands. That this was so is clearly proved by the appointment of a British officer to be Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander (designate), to be, in other words, COSSAC. So far as we were concerned, it did not get to the point of names, *though, naturally, speculation was inevitable as to whom we* should eventually serve. It seemed to us that little argument was possible. To command this supreme operation out of England it would take none but the topmost British soldier. But were he appointed what would be his relationship with the British Chiefs of Staff, with the British Government? How would the United States view the prospect of delegating command of their armies to a British commander so placed? As has been told, we tried to adjust the downward devolution of command in such manner as to allow for national prejudices, but nothing, of course, could vary the inescapable final responsibility of the Supreme Commander himself.

Whence, when and how the reports of change first reached us I cannot say. By the time of Conference "QUADRANT" at Quebec in August, 1943, we, at COSSAC, were firmly of the impression that command was to be in American hands. I have told of my own trip to the United States of America in October, 1943, based principally on this assumption.

When it comes to personalities there can be, to my mind, no argument. First the British Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Sir Alan Brooke, then the United States Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, were in turn "tipped" for the supreme appointment, the former in a restricted circle, the latter more widely, as is so often unavoidable in the United States. I have told something of the difficulties that would at this time have

attended a change of Chief of Staff in the United States. I have the evidence of the President himself on the point. Precisely the same arguments can be adduced with regard to a change of C.I.G.S. In my view it is unnecessary to search further for a reason, if reason is sought, why neither of the leaders named could be appointed to the supreme command of operation "OVERLORD." Since in the event the lot fell so fortunately, what possible profit can be derived from discussion of what might have occurred had it fallen otherwise?

But if it is a matter of impression, I am left with one, clearer perhaps than any other, which is that with command in the hands of a British leader the whole affair might have gone very much otherwise. I go so far even to say that it might well not have gone at all. The question of relationships between soldiers and statesmen is one which must be solved in every country, each evolving for itself the solution best suited to its peculiar constitution, characteristics, ambitions, policies and so forth. Variations are extreme. On the one hand the General Staff may dictate the national policies; in another the Government may deny to its General Staff the right to take what are, from the military point of view, a bare minimum of essential precautions, on the grounds that to do so would be, in the opinion of the Government, neither politically expedient nor in the public interest. Between these two extremes are to be found an infinity of variations on the common theme. There was marked contrast, for instance, as between the American and the British practice in this regard. I have quoted the President of the United States on the point. How many times did not high-ranking United States officers express to us British their amazement at what always seemed to them the lack of confidence reposed in their British *confrères* by the British governmental authorities. With them, they said—and we saw continual proof of their contention—the soldier received nothing but support from his home authorities unless and until, of course, for any reason he forfeited their confidence. For better or for worse, things are otherwise with the older-established firm. I have earlier quoted the testimony of a bygone generation. To the philosophic mind there is nothing new in our position. The British soldier is born and bred to the tradition that perpetuates annually the memory of the dark days when England is alleged

to have groaned beneath the booted heels of the Great Protector and his major-generals. One progresses, it is to be hoped, in the right direction. Our successors have their long-awaited Ministry of Defence. They have also the record of the great international trial at Nuremberg. May they and all their fellow-workers in other lands deduce the answer that will lead to peace on earth. One can do no better, I think, on leaving the scene of action, than recommend to those who come after the aptest of prayers, attributed to the American Admiral Hart: "Give us strength to accept with serenity the things that cannot be changed. Give us courage to change the things that can and should be changed. And give us wisdom to distinguish one from the other." On looking back at the preparations for operation "OVERLORD," I do not believe that, as things then stood, British command would have been a practical possibility. Though it does not fall within the scope of the present cursory work to do so, one may perhaps take a glance ahead at the operation itself as it took place. Though the burden of the first onrush was mainly upon the British, services and civilians both, the load shifted more and more on to American shoulders. When the end came, with the dwindling British armies guarding the left flank of the whole great blow, claim could hardly then have been made for British supreme command.

There was more to it, however, than a choice of personalities or of nationalities. There was the choice also of systems of command. Whereas the American system of unified command puts ultimate and inescapable responsibility in the hands of one commander, the British, as in all things, carry their committee system right to the top. There are, in a combined affair of the three British fighting services, three commanders, one for each. This is no place in which to develop a discussion as between the merits and demerits of the two systems. In any case it would doubtless emerge that the system of command is in each case but the product of the interplay of a variety of national characteristics. But there can be few of us British who have had the advantage of seeing at close quarters the operation of the system of unified command, who have not appreciated its effectiveness in action, its clear-cut speed and efficiency. Provided always that there is the man fitted by experience, training and temperament for supreme command. For the future this

is a large question that must be decided now if those with the requisite temperament and experience are to receive adequate training before the day. But this work purports to deal with the past. Could operation " OVERLORD " have been launched, controlled and led by a command committee of the British type? It would be interesting to study the arguments that could be put forward to support an affirmative answer to that question.

Lastly, there is this all-powerful matter of what is so much written and talked of as " Anglo-American Co-operation." It is dignified into an international problem of unexampled complexity needing constant discussion, attention and argumentation. Ways and means are sought on the one hand of stimulating, on the other of retarding it. It is regarded as a delicate hothouse growth that must be carefully tended lest it wither away. Or it is a noxious weed that needs extirpation, for, of course, its existence contaminates many a cherished plot.

At COSSAC we soon deduced for ourselves the simple answer to all these and similar complications, which is that no such problem in reality exists at all. We came to know each other pretty well, and the thought of any significant cleavage between the two nations is to any one of us, I believe, ludicrous. It is not as though we were specially handpicked for the Anglo-American job with meticulous care and with that particular aspect of the case in view. Which leads to the possible conclusion that, in the ordinary course of events, it is this so-called Anglo-American co-operation that is the normal and the opposite the abnormal. Though the course of recent events during which the Americans and the British met in a big way can hardly be described as normal, the simple fact remains that they have just met in quantity for the first time in history. Skimming off all the dross poured on the affair by sob-sisters, sensation-mongers and interested parties generally, there are now back in the States some millions of ordinary citizens of whom the vast majority will say, with emphasis, when taxed, that " these goddam limeys are a bunch of so-and-so's—except, of course, there was a guy I met one time didn't seem so bad." And that goes for the British, too. They will thank their stars that the Yank invasion is over. It was worse than anything they could ever have imagined. " There were, of course, some splendid fellows amongst them. One I remember in particular——" and so on.

It must be remembered that this intermingling of Yanks and British took place under conditions such that neither saw the others at their best. Something happens to a man when he joins an army or navy and goes for service overseas, away from home. The British people saw the United States forces on active service. They from their side saw the British later on in their war in their battle-scarred homes. The Yanks found out, many for the first time, that life can go on, and vigorous life at that, without refrigerators, without central heating, without automobiles and with not much to eat or drink. Maybe they found something beyond the material side of life and found, moreover, that they possessed that same something when they came to stop and think about it. They found that " the British can take it " all right, in more senses than one, but I believe they found also that the British have something spiritual to give in return for the candy and chewing-gum that was so generously distributed. And it was not only the British that the Yanks met for the first time in this last war. The Stars and Stripes were carried to every quarter of the globe. The Americans have begun to assume something of the burden that the British have borne for so long, and maybe they have begun to see the points of many things that to most of them have been hidden up to now.

It is my humble belief that anyone who bases any sort of calculation on even the remote possibility of fundamental Anglo-American non-co-operation is going to get his sum so far wrong as to hurt himself.

Who is it that decides whether nation shall fall out with nation ? It is said that policy in such matters is dictated by some nebulous higher authority, political, financial or suchlike. Who was it, one wonders, who decreed the adoption in the United States of a policy of isolation and who in Britain was it that acquiesced in such an attitude on the part of Americans in relation to the British. So long as the contacts between the two peoples were few and confined mainly to business and those special classes of both nations describable as tourists, there can have been little difficulty in the putting across by interested parties of any desired propaganda line. Now it will be a different affair. Would that some means could be found, as Field-Marshal Sir John Dill so earnestly wished, of giving to the British as good a knowledge of the Americans as the Americans have now acquired of the British. Then, indeed, might dawn on the world that bright day so

eloquently written of by the American author, and maybe prophet, of half a century ago, Homer Lee, "The day of the Saxon."

As I have written earlier, in spite of this basic community of outlook, Americans and British have often different methods of arriving at the same end. Though throughout at COSSAC we all, I think, felt ourselves constantly assailed by doubts as to the honesty of intent on the part of first British, then Americans, then both, to honour to the full their given word and to combine to put everything they had into operation "OVERLORD," this impression came from above. Whereas from the ranks below we became more and more conscious as time went on that there was rising a surge that would and could not be denied. I have written of the look in the eyes of those British infantrymen as we turned them back from the beaches at the end of our feint operations in September of 1943. Laughing and joking, they may have been in their inimitable and time-honoured fashion, voicing their unsolicited but pungent testimonials to generals, staffs and suchlike, but they knew what the score was all right. There was the early emanation of that something which, on D-day, when it came, inspired every single man of all services of both nations. Not one of them but was confident of success. Leadership played its great part, but even leadership was not all. There was something abroad among the ranks long before the chosen leaders came along. We at COSSAC got it right enough. Eventually everyone got it, and it spoke through the lips of General Eisenhower when at dead of a June night he said, "Go," and it went. I do not believe that this was just a man-made decision, the culmination of the processes of human logic. It was meant that we should go.

So closes this brief survey of the gleanings of one mind so placed as to be able to mark the passage of at any rate some of the teeth of the great harrow of war. This record has been made in the hope that it may contribute something, however small, to the aid of those who take up the tale that we hope will tell of peace rather than of war. This may well be highly over-ambitious. At least I hope it may constitute some slight memorial to every one, man and woman, of that band of cheerful and devoted comrades with and for whom it was such joy to labour through the great days of COSSAC.

March, 1947.

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