Dwight David Eisenhower

THE CENTENNIAL

Introduction

For some time, military historians have been exploring the proposition that service in the Armed Forces of our Nation has been instrumental in preparing a notable number of Americans for positions of senior leadership in the government. Military service played a vital role, for example, in the development of such leaders as Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Harry Truman.

In our own times, perhaps no man better exemplifies this proposition than Dwight David Eisenhower, General of the Army and the thirty-fourth President of the United States. Today, the name Eisenhower is synonymous with dynamic leadership in a complex international environment. But in 1941, this remarkable soldier was nearing the end of an undistinguished military career that had afforded him few opportunities to demonstrate his leadership. Yet, within three years and under the intense pressure of a global war, he rose to become Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. The leadership skills that won the great land campaigns of the twentieth century did not come about overnight. They were the product of years of development—development that took place in the small peacetime Army of the 1920s and 30s. As we shape the force for the future, that example should serve as a source of inspiration for professionals throughout our ranks.

With this publication, the Army joins in the Nation's remembrance of the 100th anniversary of Dwight Eisenhower's birth. At the same time, this commemoration provides us with a special opportunity to reflect on how military service has prepared so many Americans to contribute so much to the Nation and to the world.

This booklet, prepared by the U.S. Army Center of Military History, will add to your understanding of a great American and help you appreciate the profound influence that a career of military service can have on the future of the Nation.

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16 March 1990

General of the Army Dwight David Eisenhower, Chief of Staff, United States Army. Portrait by Nicodemus Hufford, 1973.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Dwight D. Eisenhower was a master craftsman in the demanding art of leadership. For twenty years, first as a soldier and then as a statesman, he bore the daily responsibility for difficult decisions that had far-reaching consequences for the nation. An obscure Army officer in 1940, he was internationally known four years later as the Supreme Allied Commander who was leading the Allied armies, navies, and air forces in the crusade in Europe. But Eisenhower was more than just the coalition's chief soldier. He was also a statesman involved as deeply in arranging the political and diplomatic aspects of the alliance as the military. In the politico-military realm, he encountered the sorts of contentious international issues that could divide even friends and learned to mediate the conflicting demands of men and nations. In the process, he came personally to know the men who shaped the postwar world, leaders with whom he continued to deal as he became Army Chief of Staff in 1945, Commander in Chief of NATO forces in 1950, and President of the United States in 1953.

As the 1930s drew to a close, however, Eisenhower had no expectations of such lofty duties. In 1940, he finally attained the rank of colonel, the limit of his aspirations through the previous twenty-five years of service. During the 1920s and into the mid-1930s, there seemed little chance of another war and thus little chance for distinction. Nonetheless, like many of his generation of officers, Eisenhower diligently studied his profession, preparing himself for jobs he had no realistic expectation of ever holding. It was in those dusty years of peace that much of his schooling as a decision-maker took place.

Preparation for High Command

Dwight David, one of seven sons of David and Ida Eisenhower, was born 14 October 1890 in the little east Texas town of Denison. He grew up in Abilene, Kansas, where he absorbed the virtues of small town America that distinguished him the rest of his life—scrupulous honesty, self-reliance, determination, and hard work. Eisenhower, actively encouraged by his parents and brothers, saw education as a way to better himself and became as much of a scholar as he was an athlete. The balance between the two helped

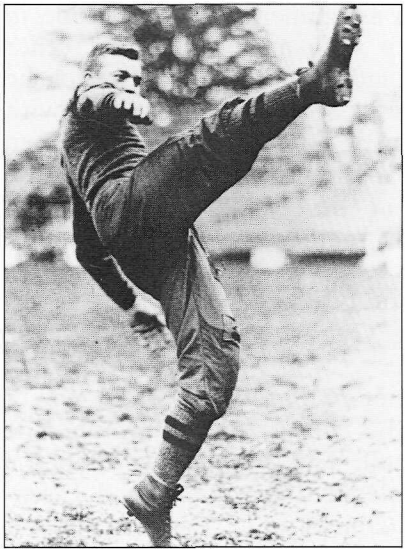
him obtain an appointment to the United States Military Academy in 1911.

The bedrock values of his upbringing, Eisenhower discovered, were also those of West Point's code of Duty, Honor, and Country. The oath of allegiance that he took when he became a cadet signified his acceptance of the civic responsibilities inherent in both codes and remained a cherished moment for the rest of his life. Eisenhower was a good, if not spectacular, cadet, scholar, and athlete, graduating in the upper third of his class in 1915. Of equal importance to the education he received was the friendship of such cadets as Omar Bradley, James A. Van Fleet, and Joseph T. McNarney, all members of the "class the stars fell on," and with men in classes immediately senior and junior to his.

Traits that became valuable years later first emerged at West Point. Eisenhower had the knack of saying the right thing to gain others' cooperation. His strong personality and overwhelming good nature inspired trust. Classmates regarded him as a natural leader who looked for ways to smooth over disputes and organize a group's efforts toward a common goal. As the new second lieutenant of infantry left West Point for his first assignment, it was clear that he was well suited to the world of team play and cooperative endeavor that characterized the Army.

After two years with the 19th Infantry at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Eisenhower's career accelerated as America began to mobilize for World War I. Regular officers in the rapidly expanding Army found themselves briskly promoted and given challenging commands. Already a Regular Army captain in 1917, Eisenhower was a temporary lieutenant colonel just over a year later. Some of his peers distinguished themselves in France, but Eisenhower never left the United States, a fact that bitterly disappointed him. Instead, he spent the war training troops that others would lead in battle. At the armistice, he was in command of Camp Colt, the Army's tank corps training center on the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg.

Peace brought demobilization to an Army that had grown to more than two million men. The service contracted to 850,000 in 1919 and then declined to average around 140,000 for the next decade and a half. The officer corps grew smaller as well, and the regulars necessarily returned to their permanent grades. Eisenhower reverted to the rank of captain in June 1920, but he was promoted to Regular Army major a few days later. He held that rank for the next sixteen years of peacetime duty in an Army that appeared to many to have no real function.



Cadet Eisenhower, United States Military Academy Class of 1915. Classmates regarded him as a natural leader who looked for ways to smooth over disputes and organize a group's efforts toward a common goal.

Critics of the Army had a strong argument. After the defeat of Imperial Germany, there seemed to be no apparent enemy to justify the continued expenses of a standing army or to sustain any popular zeal for military preparedness. An enemy for an army is like sin for an evangelist, but only in the Pacific was there a credible threat, and American war planners agreed that a war against Japan would be a naval war, by and large. Thus the consequences of peace for the Army were reduced budgets and a smaller force, and for its officers, a succession of dreary postings to the little forts and camps that made up the interwar service.

Eisenhower's assignments in the postwar period were much like those of any other officer. He had limited time with troops and did not manage to get a battalion command until 1940. He spent years in miscellaneous administrative duties that included recruiting, periodic details as a football coach, and staff work. In 1927 and 1929 he served on the American Battle Monuments Commission and wrote a guide to American battlefields in France. In due course, he attended the Command and General Staff School and, because he graduated at the top of his class, later gained admittance to the prestigious Army War College and the Army Industrial College.

Eisenhower's peacetime service was unique in several respects, however. His World War I service training troops for the tank

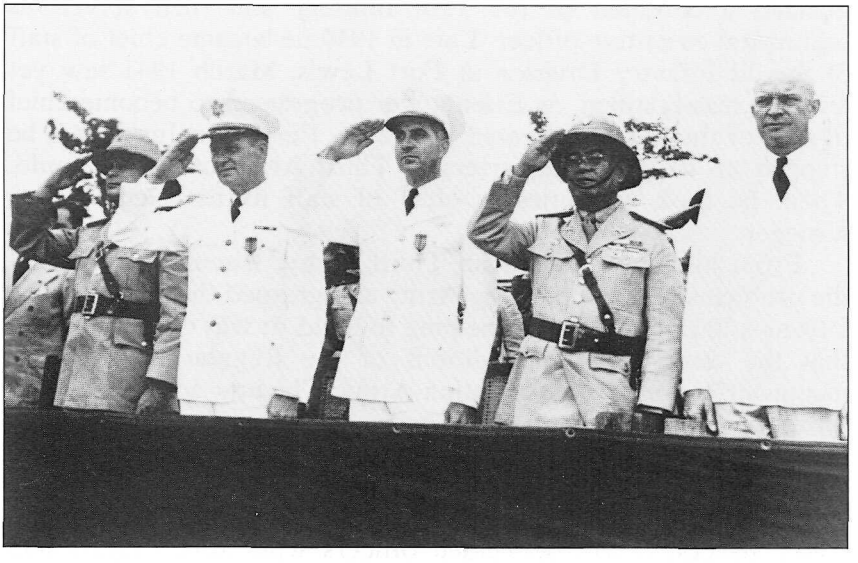
corps and a subsequent tank corps assignment at Fort Meade in 1920 gave him an early familiarity with armor that few other officers could match. More significantly, the brigade to which he was assigned was under the command of George S. Patton, with whom Eisenhower forged an enduring friendship. The two men began an intensive study program to prepare themselves for the day when they would be students at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, methodically working their way through the tactical problems the school had used in previous years. Because of his work with Patton, Eisenhower was a serious student of tactics when he met Brig. Gen. Fox Conner, one of the most important influences in his life.

Eisenhower accompanied Conner to Panama in 1922, where the general assumed command of the 20th Infantry Brigade. The young major became his chief of staff. The two men developed a unique relationship when Conner decided to superintend Eisenhower's military education. Under Conner's tutelage, Eisenhower perfected his administrative and tactical techniques by drafting formal orders for each day's operations in the brigade and by analyzing the tactical problems of fighting on the terrain in Panama. The general also directed an intensive reading program that introduced Eisenhower to Plato and Tacitus, influential thinkers such as Nietzsche, the various military writers of his day, and Clausewitz, whose *On War* he read three times.

In Socratic dialogues that accompanied Eisenhower's readings, Conner and his student discussed the nature of war. One important aspect of those discussions was Conner's insistence that the Treaty of Versailles made another war inevitable within thirty years, and that any future war would be waged by a coalition of which the United States would be a part. Because of his dialogues with Conner, Eisenhower was well aware of the defects in the allied military command structure of the First World War, and he began pondering the question of coalition warfare as early as 1924.

The eventual consequence of Eisenhower's attendance at the Army's senior military schools was a posting to the War Department in the early 1930s, the first of a series of high-level assignments that accustomed him to dealing with issues of Army-wide significance. In 1930 he became special assistant to General Douglas MacArthur, then Chief of Staff. During those Depression years the Chief of Staff faced an uphill struggle to justify the Army's budget to a Congress intent on slashing military appropriations, while trying to allocate scarce resources to a service with a great

Schooling in the varied tasks of a future Supreme Commander. Captain Eisenhower, at Camp Meade, Maryland, 1920; training troops for the tank corps gave him an early familiarity with armor that few other officers could match. Below, Eisenhower in the Philippines, 1935; for the next four years, his duties in helping to create the defenses of those islands were as much diplomatic as they were military.



many pressing needs. Through that period, Eisenhower drafted MacArthur's speeches, lobbied Congress, and helped to prepare Chief of Staff annual reports that have since been called models of their kind. Eisenhower's confidential work for MacArthur included careful studies of mobilization and the relationship of military power to the industrial capacity of the nation. Other papers considered mechanization, mobilization, and the development of air power in relation to ground battle.

MacArthur recognized his subordinate's talents and considered him the best staff officer in the Army, remarking that his principal strength was an ability to look at problems from the point of view of the high command. When MacArthur went to the Philippines as military adviser to the government of that commonwealth in 1935, he took Eisenhower along as his assistant. For the next four years, his duties in helping to create the defenses of those islands were as much diplomatic as they were military, inasmuch as they involved frequent coordination with the American High Commissioner and with the government of the Philippines.

Eisenhower returned to the United States at the end of 1939. The next two, fast-paced years were crucial ones in which the experience of filling a series of key administrative and coordinative posts in an operational Army rounded out his professional education. During his first year back in the country, he briefly commanded a battalion of the 15th Infantry and then served as regimental executive officer. Late in 1940 he became chief of staff of the 3d Infantry Division at Fort Lewis. March 1941 saw yet another reassignment, as Eisenhower progressed to become chief of staff of the newly activated IX Corps. Finally, in June 1941, he stepped up to the headquarters of Third Army at San Antonio. There he took up duties as chief of staff to Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger.

From his vantage point in Third Army, Eisenhower studied the problems of the expanding Army and grasped the nature of the citizen-soldier force he was helping to build. It was obvious to him that the discipline and traditions of the Regular Army were inappropriate for the mobilization Army. The new soldiers needed thorough training, but they also had to understand the reasons for the tasks they were required to do. He likewise observed the problems as officers with little practical experience began to grapple with command of combat units. Success in higher command, he concluded, demanded officers who were orderly and logical without being slow and methodical, and who struck an appropriate balance between charisma and empty flashiness.

The culmination of his prewar training came in the Louisiana maneuvers of 1941, the largest and most realistic held in the United States to that point. Third Army decisively defeated Lt. Gen. Ben Lear's opposing Second Army in wide-ranging war games that got national publicity, and in which Eisenhower was credited with devising Third Army's plan of battle.

Marshall's Protege

Five days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought an American declaration of war on the Axis Powers, Col. Walter Bedell Smith telephoned Third Army's chief of staff. Smith, Secretary of the General Staff in the War Department, told Eisenhower that General George C. Marshall wanted him in Washington immediately. Marshall knew Eisenhower by reputation as a man who would assume responsibility, but he put that reputation to a test immediately. When Eisenhower reported for duty, Marshall posed a problem to which he already knew the answer. He asked for a recommendation on how the entire Pacific strategy should be handled. Eisenhower returned to the Chief of Staff's office a few hours later and briefed a strategic concept with which Marshall agreed. The Chief of Staff ended the interview with clear instructions. "Eisenhower," he said, "the Department is filled with able men who analyze their problems well but feel compelled always to bring them to me for final solution. I must have assistants who will solve their own problems and tell me later what they have done."

That conversation set the tone of the relationship between the two men. Eisenhower approached his job by trying to put himself into Marshall's place and resolve a problem the way his chief would do it, had he the time. The results were good, and Marshall soon gave Eisenhower increasingly demanding problems that tested his abilities to the fullest. His assignment in War Plans Division, where he was the responsible staff officer for arranging support for the Philippines and Far East in general, turned out to have problems with no reasonable solution. The ultimately fruitless attempt to help the Army's defenders of the Philippines, stranded by the calamity that had befallen the Pacific Fleet, dominated Eisenhower's attention for months. While struggling with that task he also began to deal with other and broader issues. At the end of December 1941, for example, he accompanied Marshall to the Arcadia Conference at which the United States

and Great Britain confirmed their "Germany first" strategy and created the Combined Chiefs of Staff to direct the war. Winston Churchill, who met Eisenhower at the conference, was impressed by his trenchant assessment of the European situation.

Shortly thereafter, Eisenhower became chief of the War Plans Division (subsequently Operations Division), the office widely regarded as the brains of the Army, and threw himself into drafting basic strategy for the war against the Axis. In late February 1942, Marshall asked for a memorandum to outline for the President and the Combined Chiefs the general strategy the Allies should pursue. In response, Eisenhower drafted a document that was in effect a precis of the next three years of the war. He observed that there were many desirable objectives the alliance might pursue, but warned that the resources did not exist to tackle every problem. Instead, he wrote, it was crucial to concentrate exclusively on those operations that were *necessary* to defeat the Axis. In his view, such a resolutely disciplined strategic conception offered the only hope of victory.

In a tightly focused summary, he sketched the actions necessary to prevent defeat while the Allies armed and organized themselves to take the offensive. Holding rigidly to the distinction between the necessary and the desirable, Eisenhower delineated a plan that included security for the North American arsenal, maintenance of Great Britain, and lend-lease to keep the Soviet Union in the war. His analysis excluded Pacific operations, so important to Americans for emotional reasons, as being of secondary importance.

Turning to the question of which offensive operation would contribute most directly to Axis defeat, he reasoned that Germany was the most dangerous enemy and the only one that all three members of the coalition could attack simultaneously. He accordingly reaffirmed the alliance's earliest strategic conception of dealing with Europe first and advocated a culminating attack on Germany through northern France, using Great Britain as a base. He adduced many advantages for this plan. The United States was already supplying Great Britain's needs, and to conduct the build-up there for the attack involved the minimum additional demands for shipping and escort vessels. A United Kingdom base was closest to the Continent, had plentiful airfields, and was the only logical place from which to employ the bulk of British Empire forces. Concentration of forces there also presented a threat that would oblige Germany to station large numbers of troops in

France, thus immediately relieving some of the pressure on the Soviet Union.

Nothing in Eisenhower's paper was new, but the logic of its presentation refocused War Department attention on Germany. In practical terms, his work described the tasks the United States and Great Britain had to accomplish and amounted to a directive to the future commander of the Allied forces. The cumulative effect of Eisenhower's staff work in the War Department and his dealings with the British convinced General Marshall that this was the man to take command of American forces in the European Theater. On 25 June 1942, he designated Eisenhower Commanding General, European Theater, with headquarters in London.

The selection was an act of faith. Over the years Eisenhower had worked for a series of excellent men whose recommendations carried considerable weight. Pershing, Conner, MacArthur, and Krueger, among others, believed he would be a good commander, but the fact was that Eisenhower, the commander, was unproven in 1941. He had never served in combat, had small experience with troops, and little background in directing the efforts of large units of men and equipment. On the other hand, he had a solid reputation as a superb staff officer whose extended duty in senior headquarters had given him the ability to abstract the essentials of a problem. Most important, however, was that Eisenhower had earned George Marshall's trust, and that Marshall saw in him a man who had the vision to execute the strategy the Allies had agreed upon.

Supreme Commander

Eisenhower's close professional relationship with the Chief of Staff continued after he moved to London. The new theater commander continued to look at problems as he believed Marshall would see them, and he solved them in accordance with his understanding of the Chief of Staff's policies. That was fortunate, because the grand alliance against the Axis was in large part Marshall's conception; the Supreme Allied Command in Europe was the direct result of his drive and determination; and the essential Allied strategy was the product of his imagination. Where policy was concerned, Marshall's was the guiding hand. Eisenhower was perfectly attuned to his chief's ideas, and was the ideal officer to translate Marshall's grand strategy into practice.

Eisenhower, however, was more than just Marshall's agent. The Supreme Allied Command in Europe would never have worked without Eisenhower, for he virtually invented the concept of Allied unity of command and persuaded the British to accept it in lieu of the committee system to which they were accustomed. His personal qualities played a large part in gaining acceptance of a much more centralized and powerful Allied command than had existed in World War I. Men instinctively trusted him, and his measured approach to command reinforced a conviction that he was an honest broker whose central purpose was the defeat of the enemy, rather than the pursuit of any national agenda. Eisenhower, in short, was the essential man in the coalition against Hitler.

The job of Supreme Commander lay in the future when he arrived in England. At first, he was only the commander of American troops in the European Theater, and had the immediate task of assembling the means with which to pursue the war. Few combat-ready American soldiers were in the United Kingdom at the time, and there was a shortage of ships, landing craft, weapons, ammunition, air power, and solid intelligence about the enemy. Eisenhower devoted himself to energizing his staff, building a solid relationship with the British ally, and managing Operation BOLERO, as the buildup of resources for the ultimate invasion of Europe was dubbed. In November of 1942, incident to the decision to land British and American troops in North Africa (Operation TORCH), the Combined Chiefs of Staff appointed Eisenhower Commander in Chief, Allied Forces, for that invasion.

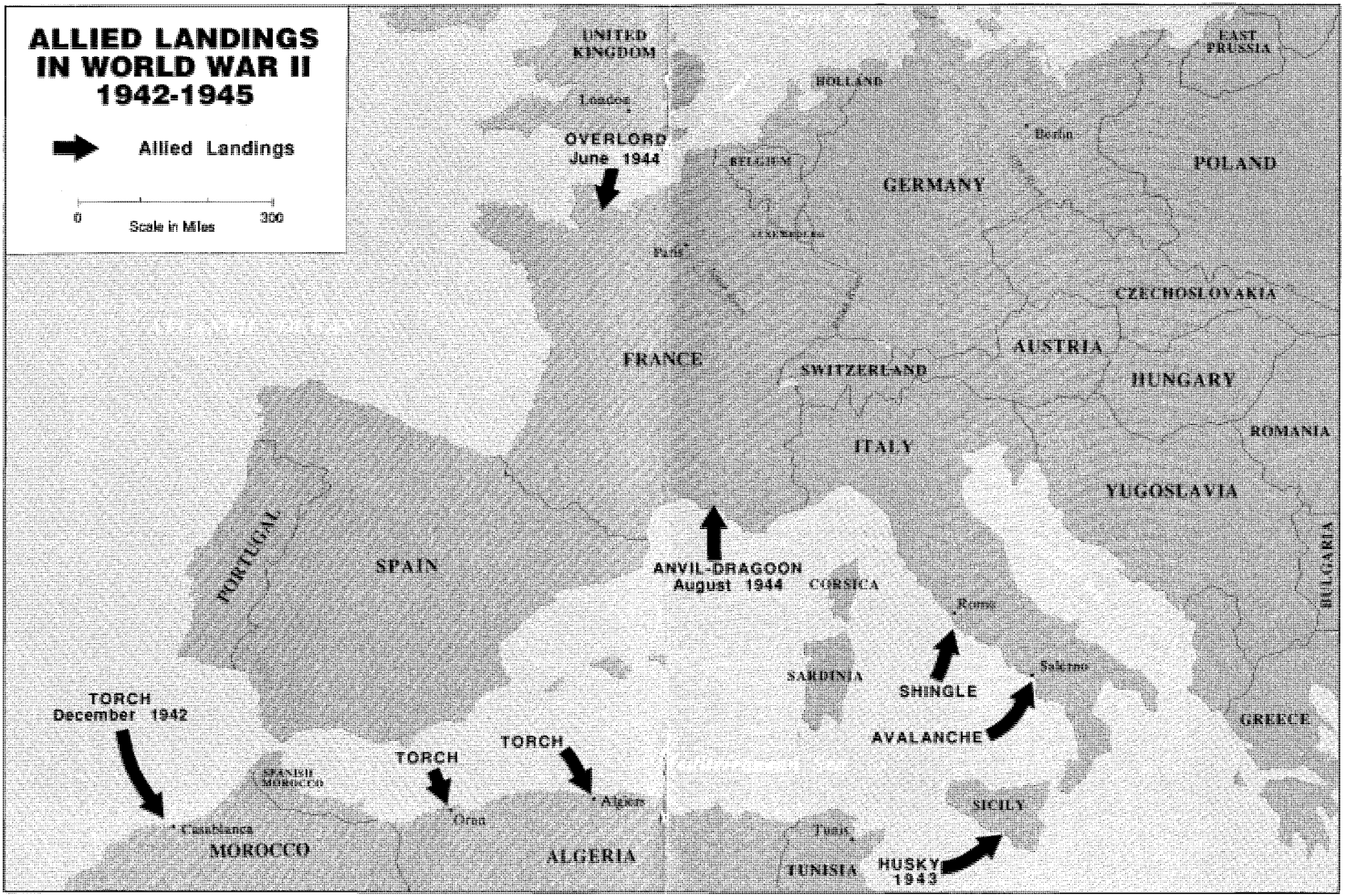
Both Marshall and Eisenhower had resisted the decision for TORCH because it was a diversion of resources from the invasion of Europe, an operation they insisted was far more important. Nonetheless, a confluence of political and military considerations on both sides of the Atlantic argued in favor of TORCH, and their combined weight overwhelmed War Department objections. American military plans had never envisioned an invasion of Europe before 1943, except in the most exceptional circumstances, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt had concluded that he simply could not wait that long for American soldiers to begin fighting the nation's chief enemy. He accordingly directed Marshall to find some way to come to grips with the Germans in 1942. At the same time, American commanders in the Pacific were casting covetous eyes on the men and equipment BOLERO was concentrating in Europe. Unless Eisenhower made some use of that military power soon, Marshall knew, MacArthur and the Navy would submit

persuasive arguments to transfer it to their commands. Reflecting longstanding British concern for the Mediterranean, Prime Minister Churchill strongly supported a North African campaign as one component of a peripheral strategy to tighten the ring around Germany. Bowing to the inevitable, Marshall at last selected TORCH as the best of a poor lot of options. It was up to Eisenhower to carry the plan through.

Eisenhower later said that the command decisions relating to TORCH were among the most worrisome that he had to make in the entire war. The unprecedented scope and complexity of the operation depended upon amphibious landings, which were inherently risky and with which his forces had little worthwhile experience. Added to this concern was a nagging uncertainty as to how the Vichy French would react when the United States launched an invasion of the territory of a neutral nation without a declaration of war. Moreover, TORCH was America's first campaign in the crucial European Theater, and it was Eisenhower's debut in the ticklish business of commanding Allied officers who were not only senior in rank, but also more experienced. At the time of TORCH, Lieutenant General Eisenhower's permanent grade was still lieutenant colonel.

Mediterranean operations inevitably delayed the final invasion of Europe, but it turned out that TORCH had important benefits outside the realm of strategy. Battle was the only sure measure of equipment, some of which proved inadequate, and of training and leadership. North Africa accordingly became the laboratory in which he tested both men and concepts in Allied cooperation. At the tactical level, American soldiers absorbed the lessons of their first battles, and American commanders adjusted their training to acknowledge the defects war had revealed. Allied commanders learned something of the difficulties of fighting alongside each other, and the entire Allied force gained invaluable experience in planning and conducting amphibious landings. Eisenhower discovered that handling coalition warfare involving the three armed services of two nations in a campaign launched on hostile soil by amphibious landings, where logistical and administrative support did not previously exist, was even more complex than he had imagined.

TORCH and the subsequent Mediterranean operations were a period in which Eisenhower matured and gained self-confidence as a commander. Simultaneously, his Anglo-American staff settled down and became proficient in combined staff planning and


ALLIED LANDINGS
IN WORLD WAR II
1942-1945
Allied Landings
0
Scale in Miles
300
UNITED KINGDOM
London
OVERLORD
June 1944
HOLLAND
Berlin
EAST PRUSSIA
POLAND
BELGIUM
GERMANY
Paris
CZECHOSLOVAKIA
AUSTRIA
FRANCE
SWITZERLAND
HUNGARY
ROMANIA
ITALY
YUGOSLAVIA
PORTUGAL
SPAIN
ANVIL-DRAGOON
August 1944
CORSICA
Rome
BULGARIA
SARDINIA
SHINGLE
Salerno
AVALANCHE
GREECE
TORCH
December 1942
TORCH
TORCH
SPANISH MOROCCO
Algiers
Oran
Casablanca
SICILY
Tunis
MOROCCO
ALGERIA
TUNISIA
HUSKY
1943

supervision of tactical commanders from different armies that had different operational habits. TORCH also taught Eisenhower, to his surprise and chagrin, that politics and diplomacy demanded more of his time than actual military command. As Allied commander, he was not only a military leader but also the representative of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and their respective governments when such political issues as the handling of the Vichy regime had to be resolved. His emergence as a diplomat thus began in North Africa. Eisenhower's first exercise of Allied command revealed that it held many frustrations, but he treated each problem or setback as a lesson. As time went on, he became more skillful, gradually mastering a job that was really without precedent in the history of warfare.

At the end of 1943, after Eisenhower had conducted successful landings in Sicily and Italy and negotiated an Italian surrender, the Combined Chiefs of Staff named him Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force for the invasion of Europe. At the Teheran Conference in November, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin had agreed upon the opening of a second front in northwest Europe, thus validating what had been the essence of American strategy since the beginning of the war. Operation OVERLORD, in this sense, was the culmination of all of America's mobilization and training efforts; all other campaigns had merely prepared the way. Americans believed that Germany could only be defeated by military operations on the Continent itself, and had made an attack across the English Channel the heart of strategic planning since the days before Pearl Harbor. In the eyes of American planners, OVERLORD was to be the decisive act of the war. If it succeeded, then eventual victory was not in question. Thus it was by far the most important campaign the Allies would wage, a fact of which Eisenhower was well aware when he took over from General Sir Frederick Morgan, whose staff had made the preliminary studies for the invasion.

Any residual concerns Eisenhower might have harbored about the emphasis the alliance would place on the invasion were eliminated by the Combined Chiefs of Staff directive for OVERLORD, which spelled out its participants and objectives:

> You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with the other Allied Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her Armed Forces.

The proposed invasion was manifestly to be the determining Allied

campaign of the war. Its object was to destroy the Wehrmacht, and only secondarily to attain specific geographical objectives. The essence of success was therefore to seek decisive battle with the German forces on the Continent. Eisenhower's staff selected the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany, as the objective of an attack that would undoubtedly serve to bring the main body of the German Army to battle.

The general plan of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), was to land on the Normandy coast and build up resources for a breakout into the interior of France. Thereafter, the Allies would pursue the Germans with two army groups on a broad front, emphasizing the left to capture necessary ports and threaten the Ruhr. The right army group was to link up with forces attacking northward from a separate invasion on the beaches of southern France. The two army groups would defeat all German forces west of the Rhine, establish forward logistical bases for the final battle, and seek bridgeheads across the river. The final attack was to be a double envelopment of the Ruhr, followed by an exploitation into Germany with the direction to be determined according to the circumstances at that time.

To execute the plan, the first essential was proper organization. The virtue of the Combined Chiefs of Staff was that, as the only organization that gave orders to Eisenhower, it was the nearest thing possible to having only one government to which to answer. The corollary within his own headquarters was to build a structure of command and staff that emphasized Allied unity and the harmonious cooperation of the several national armed forces that would fight the battle. Eisenhower therefore drew men he knew from his previous staffs and blended British and American officers into an organization that reflected his own outlook. The primary objective of the SHAEF staff, he said, was to "utilize the resources of two great nations . . . with the decisiveness of a single authority." This would obviously not be easy, as the example of World War I proved, and Eisenhower continuously returned to the subject of cooperation. His personality, his sense of optimism and determination, permeated the staff, creating the technical and emotional atmosphere necessary for the Allied command to work properly. Even so, an enormous responsibility lay with the Allied commander in chief to make the system function.

The preparations and decision for OVERLORD put both the commander and his staff to the test. Although everyone was committed to the concept of Allied unity of command, Eisenhower had a more advanced conception of it than most and insisted on

controlling everything that had any bearing on the battle he believed would decide the outcome of the war. This determination led him to a series of confrontations, both outside of SHAEF and within his own command.

A typical case was the controversy over distribution of landing craft among the several competing theaters, which set Eisenhower at odds with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff. He succeeded in squeezing out a sufficient number of those critical vessels to conduct OVERLORD, although he could not get enough to mount the planned simultaneous landing in the south of France (ANVIL, later renamed DRAGOON). At the political level, he stood firm on the necessity of ANVIL, although Prime Minister Churchill strongly believed it to be unnecessary and wanted to use ANVIL resources in the Mediterranean. Eisenhower, with Marshall's support, prevailed in preventing the allocation of scarce men and equipment for operations elsewhere in a theater both deemed secondary.

There were similar debates within SHAEF itself. An essential part of the operational plan was restricting the flow of German

The Supreme Command in London, February 1944. (*Seated from left*) Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Eisenhower, General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery; (*standing from left*) Maj. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, and Lt. Gen. Water Bedell Smith.

reinforcements to the coast after the invasion began. The Transportation Plan, executed by the U.S. 8th Air Force and Royal Air Force Bomber Command, was to accomplish this through a systematic and extended pre-invasion bombardment of rail centers and bridges. The strategic air force chiefs preferred to continue existing bombing programs over Germany and strenuously resisted subordination to SHAEF, even for a limited period. Eisenhower persistently argued for the plan and eventually offered sufficient compromises to gain its acceptance. Another case involved the airborne drops to seal off the coast from the interior, which Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley thought vital to his troops' success on Utah and Omaha beaches. Shortly before the attack, Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory argued that poor landing zones and German resistance would result in the "futile slaughter" of two fine airborne divisions. Eisenhower stoutly insisted that the landings could not proceed otherwise and overrode his air commander's objections.

In the end, Eisenhower proved to be correct on all of these issues, and his determination to prevail in the debates reinforced his authority as Supreme Commander. Achieving a consensus was more important to him than merely winning an argument, however, because success depended upon enthusiastic execution of the plans SHAEF approved. Eisenhower consistently won over men with different ideas by assuring that their points of view had a full airing and fair consideration. He was rarely abrupt and never arbitrary and applied the particular genius of his own personality to persuade other men to accept a common strategy. Eisenhower's reputation for honesty and openness had much to do with his success in developing and implementing a truly Allied plan of campaign, rather than parallel national plans.

The importance of OVERLORD justified the Supreme Commander's insistence on absolute unity of effort, but the final decision to launch the invasion was still fraught with consequence. Eisenhower's decision came down simply to go or not to go on one of the dates his staff had selected as optimum, yet the apparent simplicity of that decision veiled its difficulty. Eisenhower had to set the complex plan into motion at the correct time and without hesitation. The proper conditions of tide and moon occurred only twice in June, and postponement past June effectively meant that the attack would have to be put off until 1945, because several months of good campaigning weather were essential for the subsequent operations on the Continent.

The Germans, conscious that the Allies were accumulating manpower and materiel in the United Kingdom, anticipated an attack somewhere on the French coast. Surprise, and therefore success, was possible only in terms of the time and place of the landings; delay would increase the chances that the enemy might penetrate Allied intentions. Beyond the obvious consequences of failure was Eisenhower's knowledge that Allied resources were sufficient for only one try. After due deliberation, he determined on 5 June to go ahead with the landings the next day. In effect his decision reflected all of the education and experience of his many years as a soldier.

Once the machinery of OVERLORD had been set in motion, there was nothing more the Supreme Commander could do to affect the results. He placed the issue in the hands of the few thousand brave men at Gold, Sword, Juno, Omaha, and Utah beaches. OVERLORD, the largest amphibious assault ever undertaken in the history of warfare, began with British and American airborne landings in the hours before dawn. The accumulated experience and knowledge gleaned from the earlier landings in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy, incorporated by solid staff work into a comprehensive plan, succeeded in lodging a beachead on the continent of Europe by the late afternoon. As of the end of June, the Allies had put nearly one million men and over 585,000 tons of supplies over the beaches. On 15 August, Operation DRAGOON, the complementary landings in the south of France, set another army ashore. By the end of August, the two million Allied troops in France had broken out of their landing sites, liberated Paris, established supplementary supply ports at Toulon and Marseilles, and were racing toward Germany. Threatened by converging pincers from north and south, the German occupiers retreated from France to their frontier fortifications. Through D-Day, Eisenhower's most marked characteristics were his unfailing optimism about the success of the invasion and his determination to overcome all obstacles that stood in its way. As the subsequent campaigns developed across northern Europe, he demonstrated an exceptional mental flexibility that enabled him to exploit German weaknesses. Since the days of his tutorials with Fox Conner, he had despised rigid adherence to preconceived plans as unimaginative, closed-minded, and potentially dangerous. Thus, while Eisenhower hewed closely to the broad outlines of the strategic plan he had enunciated before D-Day, he had no objection to deviations at the tactical level. From August of 1944 through the end of the

The Supreme Commander talks with men of Company E, 502d Parachute Infantry Regiment, at the 101st Airborne Division's camp at Greenham Common, England, 5 June 1944. Eisenhower had the highest regard for America's citizen-soldier; the soldiers recognized and returned the trust.

war, he made a series of important decisions that exploited circumstances.

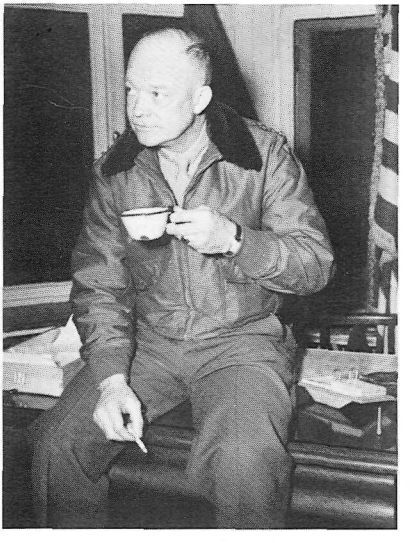
The first of these was his decision after the breakout at St. Lo to cross the Seine River on the run, instead of pausing there to gather strength for a deliberate crossing. German resistance had suddenly crumbled and the Wehrmacht was in full retreat to the east. Eisenhower saw the situation as a great opportunity to drive the Germans into their homeland before the end of the year. Perhaps, he thought, recalling the German collapse of 1918, pursuit might force an early capitulation. In consequence, he abandoned major attacks to secure the Breton ports and turned his armies to the east. As it turned out, Germany did not collapse, and the army groups outran the ability of their logistical systems to supply them. But when that happened, the Allied forces stood on the German frontier, far ahead of their predicted advance.

Eisenhower's decision to fight on a "broad front," part of the original plan, repeatedly came under question during the attack across France. There naturally were political imperatives that made it essential for the Supreme Commander to use both army groups to fight the Germans. Destruction of the German armies

D-Day Assault, 6 June 1944. Eisenhower placed the issue in the hands of the few thousand brave men at Gold, Sword, Juno, Omaha, and Utah beaches.

west of the Rhine was also an important objective that he could accomplish only by maintaining a steady advance with all of his forces. In the process, the Allies would close on the Rhine River, a defensible terrain feature that would allow great economy of force in case of a German counterattack. Furthermore, a broad-front attack used all of the Allies' military power against the Germans, rather than just a portion. Finally, a broad attack offered more chances of finding, and exploiting, enemy weaknesses. Eisenhower, concentrating on the objective of destroying the German armed forces rather than on the occupation of terrain, firmly resisted both military and political arguments against the broad-front attack.

He was as resolute in adversity as in success. When the Germans launched their counterattack through the forest of the Ardennes in December 1944, Eisenhower recognized it as a major attack well before intelligence reached the same conclusion. He moved quickly and calmly to cope with the situation, adjusting command arrangements to suit the geographical conditions under which his armies had to fight. Most significantly, he treated the developing Battle of the Bulge as an opportunity to destroy



The Supreme Allied Commander at 8th Infantry Division headquarters in Belgium, November 1944. The Allied forces stood on the German frontier, far ahead of their predicted advance.

German reserves, turning an enemy attack to the Allies' advantage.

Following the reduction of the Bulge, General Bradley presented him with the unanticipated capture of the Ludendorff railway bridge across the Rhine River at the town of Remagen. Eisenhower decided that, although it was somewhat south of his planned Rhine crossing, Remagen would serve as the point from which the final attacks could be made. He therefore diverted supplies and forces to exploit the Remagen crossing and made it the point of departure for the decisive double encirclement of the Ruhr valley that captured more than 325,000 prisoners and ended organized enemy resistance.

The enemy High Command collapsed after Hitler's suicide on 30 April 1945. Within a few days all remaining enemy forces surrendered, and the Third Reich officially ended on 7 May when Eisenhower received the unconditional surrender from General Alfred Jodl at the SHAEF headquarters in Rheims.

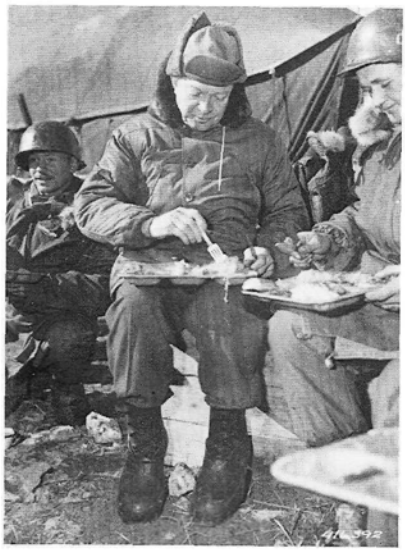
Postwar Leader

With Europe in the early stages of reconstruction, Eisenhower returned to the United States in November 1945 to replace his mentor as Chief of Staff of the United States Army. Whereas

George C. Marshall had overseen the building of the largest Army in the nation's history, Eisenhower presided over the postwar demobilization of that Army. In an echo of his duties in the 1930s, he found himself testifying before Congress to oppose cuts in the military appropriation that would hinder the maintenance of an adequate force to defend American interests in the postwar world. With the passage of the National Security Act of 1947, Eisenhower became the Army's first Chief of Staff to participate in the newly created unified Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 1948 he retired from the Army to become president of Columbia University.

In December 1950, at the request of the European allies, President Harry Truman recalled Eisenhower to become the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, where he directed the buildup of military forces for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In dealing with the creation of a common defense against the threat of Communist aggression, Eisenhower and his allied staff worked within the constraints of a Europe that was recovering from the ravages of World War II and still stood on the edge of economic collapse. His most enduring contribution was developing a sense of partnership and self-confidence among the NATO member nations. Europeans found that they could trust a man who conspicuously shared their desire for peace. Eisenhower believed that his NATO command was unique. It was the first time, as he later commented, that a multinational army was created "to preserve the peace and not to wage war."

In 1952 he accepted the Republican Party's nomination for president and defeated Democrat Adlai E. Stevenson in the November elections. The quality of leadership that distinguished Eisenhower the soldier also served him well in the presidency. The diverse challenges of more than thirty years of service in the Army and as an international leader amplified his natural gift for command. He had the considerable advantage that many of the leaders of the postwar world were old friends whom he had come to know well during the war, and with whom he already had a sound working relationship. Eisenhower's military experience also proved invaluable in determining his style of presidential leadership. Based on techniques that had served him well in SHAEF and NATO, he used a chief of staff to keep track of the day-to-day operations, freeing him to maintain an overview of all of the administration's business. The new President's major concern was the continued quest for international peace that had been his focus in his years with NATO. A truce was finally signed to end the



President-elect Eisenhower with 15th Infantry Regiment troops, Korea, December 1952. The new President's major concern was the continued quest for international peace.

Korean War in July 1953, honoring one of Eisenhower's campaign pledges. In December he proposed the Atoms for Peace program, whereby nations would pool their atomic information for peaceful purposes, an initiative that led to the creation of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1957. It was also during his first administration that the United States and Canada drew closer together in the joint project to build the St. Lawrence Seaway. Trying to reduce tensions with the Soviet Union, in 1955 he proposed the Open Skies plan that would allow the United States and the USSR aerial inspection of each other's military bases.

In 1957 a series of Near Eastern crises led to the Eisenhower Doctrine, which promised American aid to any Middle East nation that asked for help against Communist attack. The following year, the President sent troops to Beirut to aid the Lebanese government. In a similar action, he sent naval forces to support Nationalist China in a crisis with Communist China over the little islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Overall, however, relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated during Eisenhower's administration. The U–2 incident in May 1960 caused the breakup of a summit conference in Paris with Premier Nikita Khrushchev and a general hardening of relations between the two nations.

In domestic affairs, President Eisenhower managed a balanced budget and cut military spending through the New Look program

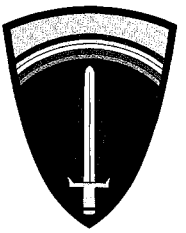
that resulted in smaller forces and reliance on strategic deterrence for defense. Several weeks after taking office, he created a new cabinet office, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. To promote the development of the postwar economy, he successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1956. This project launched the biggest peacetime construction program in the nation's history. In 1957 he used federal troops to enforce school desegregation in Little Rock after Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas refused to comply with the 1954 Supreme Court decision that ordered integration. In 1958, following the launch of Explorer I, the first American satellite, Eisenhower signed into law a bill that created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In his second term Alaska and Hawaii became states. After turning the presidency over to John F. Kennedy in January 1961, Eisenhower retired to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

The central fact about Dwight David Eisenhower is that he accepted the responsibility for making pivotal decisions at critical points in the history of his nation and the western alliance. The most dramatic of those decisions, and the ones for which he had consciously prepared himself throughout a long military career, produced the Allied victory in Europe in 1945. Less spectacularly, but just as resolutely, Eisenhower dedicated himself to the cause of peace and sought the national good as he conceived it during eight years in the White House. He won the trust and confidence of the common man, both in the United States and abroad, and personified the goodwill and altruism of American policy in his era. As soldier and as statesman, duty came first. Perhaps the best characterization of the man comes from his own words in a speech he delivered in June 1945, to acknowledge being awarded the Freedom of the City of London. "Humility," he said, "must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends."

Further Readings

There are many excellent books about Eisenhower, both as wartime commander and as President. For the years as Supreme Commander, see his own recollections, *Crusade in Europe* (1948). The President's memoirs have been published in two volumes: *Mandate For Change: 1953–1956* (1963), and *Waging Peace, 1956–1961: The White House Years* (1965). His *At Ease—Stories I Tell Friends* (1988), reveals something of the inner man. Stephen Ambrose, editor of Eisenhower's personal papers, has written the definitive biography in *Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President Elect, 1890–1952* (1983); and *Eisenhower: The President* (1984). A recent addition is David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War: 1943–1945* (1987). The memoirs of the Supreme Allied Commander's principal subordinates enhance Eisenhower's own account of the victory in Europe. Of particular value are Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (1951); and Walter Bedell Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944–1945* (1956). Russell F. Weigley provides not only a discussion of personalities, but also of strategic and operational considerations in *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany, 1944–1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). The official history series United States Army in World War II provides detailed accounts of each campaign of the war in Europe. Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (1954), which surveys the coalition command and its campaigns from 1943 through 1945, is particularly useful.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year of 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940–41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.