

# Major Problems Confronting a Theater Commander in Combined Operations

General Jacob L. Devers, Commanding General, Army Ground Forces

*In this lead article for the October 1947 edition of Military Review, General Jacob L. Devers identifies the political, economic and military-doctrinal, logistic and human—difficulties of combined command from the World War II experience and offers insights for resolving them. Because his candid observations are as relevant today as they were then, Military Review regularly receives requests for reprints of this article.*

**T**HE PROBLEMS PRESENTED a theater commander in combined operations, that is, those which involve unified employment of one or more armed services of two or more allied forces, are, in the main, no different in character from those presented a theater commander in joint operations; that is, those conducted on land and/or sea which involve employment of or more of the armed services of the United States.

However, their scope and detail are an entirely different matter, and they tax his native ability, professional skill, and patience to an unbelievable degree. For this reason alone, a theater commander charged with conducting combined operations must be possessed of unquestioned ingenuity, professional skill, tact, good judgment, and patience.

In listing only the principal major problems that will confront a theater commander in combined operations, I would arrange them in this order:

(1) Characteristic lack of clarity and firmness of directives received from the next superior combined headquarters or authority.

(2) The conflicting political, economic, and military problems and objectives of each of the allied powers.

(3) The logistical capabilities, organization, doctrines, and characteristics of each of the armed forces under command.

(4) The armament, training, and tactical doctrines of each of the armed forces under command.

(5) Personal intervention and exercise of a direct, personal influence to assure coordination and success

in the initial phases of the mission assigned by the next higher combined authority.

Lastly, and in the final analysis probably the most important of all:

(6) Senior commander personalities of each of the armed services of the Allied powers under command, their capabilities, personal and professional habits, and their ambitions.

I will attempt to deal with each of these in order.

**(1) Characteristic lack of clarity and firmness of directives received from the next superior combined headquarters or authority.**

The first task of the theater commander upon receipt of a directive from the next higher commander or authority is, of course, to arrive at its correct, sound interpretation, in the light of the conditions under which the directive was issued, and in the light of the conditions existing in the theater at the time of its receipt. It must be remembered that the next higher command, which in the recent war was the Combined Chiefs of Staff, arrived at this directive after going through at least all the mental processes that the theater commander must now go through, and after taking into account matters of no personal concern to the theater. The theater commander must remember that this directive is the result of a prior complete analysis, at the Combined Chiefs of Staff level, of the peculiar problem which will confront both them and the theater commander in its execution.

Only in the exceptional case will a clear-cut, uncompromised directive be arrived at, at that level. Each member of the Combined Chiefs of Staff must,

of necessity, look first to the political, economic, and military problems and welfare of his own nation.

Thus, from the outset, we find that there will be conflicting views, not only as regards the basic strategy of the war, but also to its implementation, even in its broadest aspects. Hence, the directive received by the theater commander will invariably be extremely broad in all of its aspects, except as to its ultimate objective.

An example of this is the initial, but brief, conflict of views regarding basic strategy in World War II—whether the German or the Jap[anese] would be the first target. The ultimate decision, of course, was that Germany would be destroyed first. However, once this basic strategy was determined, there then arose an immediate conflict as to the direction to be taken and the front of the main theater for the overrunning of Germany.

The *timing* of the main blow was also an extremely difficult decision to arrive at. Original dates discussed ranged from spring of 1943 to summer of 1945. Equal difficulty was experienced by the Combined Chiefs of Staff in reaching a final decision as to the location and direction of the principal secondary attack against Germany. In August 1943, it was decided tentatively that the principal secondary attack would be launched against the south of France. By early November 1943, this tentative agreement was practically abrogated in favor of the Balkan area. The requirements of China, Burma, and the Pacific also added to the state of indecision, even raising the question of the possibility of any secondary attack.

But in late November 1943, it was again decided that the secondary attack would be against the south of France, and a final directive to this effect was issued to the Mediterranean theater commander.

It is such indecision and lack of clear-cut, firm direction from the next higher combined level that causes a theater commander in combined operations his first greatest concern, for, manifestly, no commander can plan or make decisions with any degree of assured firmness without comparable firmness and a clear-cut decision from the next higher level. History records that this has been too much to expect in the past, and, nations and human beings being what they are, the future can hold no prospect for improvement.

## **(2) The conflicting political, economic, and military problems and objectives of each of the allied powers.**

In determining his appropriate course of action under a directive received, the theater commander must bear in mind that he has under command professional soldiers and experienced commanders of

several nations other than his own, who owe their first allegiance to their own governments and to the views of their own national chiefs of staff. It is only natural that representatives of another nation will examine critically every directive received and decision taken by the theater commander, from the viewpoint of their own national aspirations—political, economic, and military. No two nations will have aspirations so similar as to develop no conflicts of views.

Allied forces in war will accept the common, broad objective without question, which is, of course, the destruction of the hostile power. When the question of ways and means and methods arises, however, national aspirations and characteristics come to the forefront. This is not only true of men at the highest political level, and of the pillars of the national economic structure, it is a natural trait of professional military men, because it has been ingrained in them from the very beginning. Hence, if it is too much to expect at the political level, and at a Combined Chiefs of Staff level, that the representatives of two or more nations will agree from the outset on more than the broadest aspects of the solution to a problem, it is likewise unreasonable to expect that the military representatives of nations who are serving under unified command in combined operations will subordinate promptly and freely their own views to those of a commander of another nationality, unless the commander, through professional skill, good judgment, tact, and patience, has convinced them that it is to their national interests individually and collectively.

Hence, the theater commander must first know the several national problems and aspirations in detail before he can hope to deal with his commanders. It must be thoroughly appreciated by him that no commander, regardless of the position he may occupy in the world of allied powers, will submerge his national pride and aspirations for what appears to be the benefit of another. Some compromises will be arrived at through diplomacy. The theater commander, in order to secure the whole-hearted cooperation of the armed forces of another nation, must take this into account.

The greatest example of this in the recent war was the long conflict between American and British views at all levels, political and military, over the Balkans as a principal or secondary route of approach to the heart of Germany. It apparently was the British conviction that her economic and political future was so closely bound to the Balkans by history and by their proximity to the British lifeline through the Mediterranean, that this was the only route wholly acceptable to the British Commonwealth of Nations.

On the other hand, the Americans, at political and military levels, would not agree to this route.

The British and the Americans were in complete accord that the ultimate objective was the destruction of the German war machine, but there was a great divergence of opinion on intermediate objectives and routes. It was our view that the overrunning of Silesia by the Russians and overrunning of the Saar and the Ruhr from the west were the proper intermediate objectives. These three objectives having fallen, the total collapse of Germany was then assured. The shortest approach to the Saar and Ruhr was through France. An approach from the Balkan area would be a long, tortuous route, which would only be negotiated at great expense in time, effort, and manpower.

Some may charge that British insistence upon the Balkans was based solely upon political and economic motives. Such a charge cannot be supported by sound-thinking military men. British adherence to this view, almost to the very end, was as sound in the light of British national policy and military strategy as was the American view regarding the direct approach to the Saar and the Ruhr. These two conflicts did not result from national prejudices, but from national concepts.

Had the early security of the Balkans been of such importance to the political and economic future and to the military security of the United States as to the British Commonwealth of Nations, there is little doubt that the Balkans would have been an early intermediate objective of our Joint Chiefs of Staff. For, after all, a true military, early objective of any operation is that which will contribute most rapidly and completely to the *ultimate* political, economic, and military security of the nation, and thus to national morale that may be fading.

Although I have no first-hand knowledge of the facts, it appears obvious that it was the view of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff that if the Saar, the Ruhr, and Silesia were overrun, the Balkans would be freed without the necessity of an expensive military campaign, and thus insure the future security, political, economic, and military, of the British Empire in the Mediterranean area. It also appears obvious that the British Chiefs of Staff must have agreed, finally to that view.

These conflicts of view were just as present amongst military men of the combined armed forces in the Mediterranean as at the Combined Chiefs of Staff level; however, they did not adhere entirely to national lines. There were some on the British side who felt just as intensely as did the Americans that the main blow must come through western France, and the secondary blow through the south of France. On the other hand, there were some on the American

side who felt that the main blow must come through western France and that the secondary effort must come through the Balkans and northern Italy.

***The theater commander must bear in mind that he has under command professional soldiers and experienced commanders of several nations other than his own, who owe their first allegiance to their own governments and to the views of their own national chiefs of staff. It is only natural that representatives of another nation will examine critically every directive received and decision taken by the theater commander, from the viewpoint of their own national aspirations.***

The French, who were now allied with the British and the Americans, wanted none of the Balkan or the Italian approach. They were only willing to operate in Italy until the time and opportunity arrived for the invasion of southern France. It cannot be charged that any of these individuals were insincere. They were experienced professional men and were intensely loyal to their theater commander and to their own national government.

When these conflicts of opinion, however, extended to the senior commanders of the armed services of the Allied powers involved, the theater commander was confronted with the most delicate problem of reconciling all of them to his own views, in order that he might establish complete harmony in his official family for pursuit of the ultimate decision.

The theater commander may be conducting operations within the territory of a sovereign nation other than his own, in areas whose laws and customs are other than those of the nationality of the theater commander. This presents peculiar problems, especially if the government of the area in which operations are being conducted is one of the allied powers.

While the pursuit of the campaign must, of necessity, have paramount interest over the wishes of the friendly populace of another nation, their wishes, their customs, habits and characteristics must receive an especial consideration by the theater commander, in order that complete harmony may exist in rear areas. Under no circumstances can he give the impression that these factors are being subordinated by him to the demands of the military situation.

Actually, of course, this is what he must do, but the view of the friendly civilian populace must be

one which reflects an understanding that the conduct of the campaign in their territory first takes them into account. The Mediterranean theater commander spent a great amount of his time with French, North African, and Italian problems, while General Eisenhower was beset by hundreds of problems peculiar to France, Belgium, Holland, Luxembourg, and England. This, of course, comes within the field of diplomacy and public relations.

To assist him in the solution of the peculiar problems presented by directives received; by the military, political, and economic objectives of the various allied powers; and by the local populace of one or more of the allied powers, the theater commander invariably employs two agents, a purely military one and a political/economic one, each of which operates separately, but always in close collaboration with the other.

The military agency is most frequently referred to as a "Joint Planning Staff." Although this planning staff deals with combined operations, it is referred to as "Joint" Planning Staff because from their viewpoint all operations are joint. This staff should be composed of only one senior representative of each of the armed services of the principal powers involved, and a member from each principal combined staff section. When problems are presented which affect directly a lesser power, one representative of the armed services of this lesser power must also sit in on the deliberations of that body.

It is the duty of this staff to examine for and present to the theater commander, all the political, economic, and military implications of all directives and proposals received, and submit recommendations thereon, whether the proposal originates at a higher level, at the theater level, or at a lower level. During its deliberations, the Joint Planning Staff must utilize fully the other agency of the theater commander in an advisory capacity.

The second agency of the theater commander is the group of political and economic advisors made available to him by the various allied powers. The political advisors are, most frequently, career men of the diplomatic service. The economic advisors are also specialists in that field. This group the theater commander frequently refers to as his "Political-Economic Advisory Group," or committee. When any problem involves political and economic considerations, this committee acts as advisors to the theater commander. When the problem is purely military, but has political and economic implications, this group not only sits with and advises the Joint Planning Staff, it should prepare a separate report of its own on the

political and economic implications for the theater commander, and make appropriate recommendations to him.

### **(3) The logistical capabilities, organization, doctrines, and characteristics of each of the armed forces under command.**

Having determined the appropriate course of action from a detailed analysis of the first two principal problems, the theater commander is now confronted with the task of deciding how and when he will commit his combined forces against his assigned objective. It has been said by many great leaders that they always took at least five looks to their rear for every look to their front. It may well be said that a combined theater commander may well take five looks to the logistics of each of the armed services of each of the allied powers under command for each look he takes to the front.

While in the main the difference in tactical concepts can always be adjusted between the various armed services locally, the opposite is true of administrative and logistical concepts. No two powers entered the last war with the same logistical and administrative doctrines. The personnel logistics of each of the armed services of the various allied powers present a different problem, over which the theater commander can exercise little or no control except in the case of those armed services belonging to his own nation.

The personnel of the various powers will be governed by different civil and military laws and customs. Their administrative processes and disciplinary procedures are peculiar to the characteristics of the nation concerned. The administration, therefore, of personnel problems, except the provision of replacements and overseas evacuation of casualties, cannot be subject to formalized combined procedures. The theater commander can exercise no authority over the procedures of nationals other than his own, except such as he is able to exercise through his own personality and through "gentlemen's agreements" with his senior subordinate commanders. The provision of replacements and evacuation of casualties, however, while they will be carried out according to national policies and military procedures, are subject to formalized combined procedures, for the reason that they involve the employment of combined resources. It is the adjustment of these resources to the demands of the situation and to the capabilities and requirements of the various allied commands that is of primary concern to the theater commander. Hence, broad policies governing these matters are agreed, prescribed, and administered at

the combined level in dealing with personnel. The details of these matters, however, and other general personnel administration, must remain the problem of the senior commander of the armed forces of the allied powers under command.

What has been said of personnel logistics is true to a greater degree of supply and maintenance logistics. While basic decisions regarding supply and maintenance logistics are certainly the province of the theater commander, detailed implementation of these basic decisions must remain a prescription of the senior commander of the armed forces of the allied power concerned.

The allocation of available supplies, regardless of source, is, of course, a prerogative of the theater commander. It would be fallacious to say that a theater commander could not take the supply and maintenance resources of the armed services of one nation under command and apply them to another where needed, according to the demands of the campaign.

Hence, basic decisions regarding amounts, kinds, times needed, and ultimate disposition of supply and maintenance resources are subject to combined procedures. It is the technical implementation of these decisions that presents a serious problem to the theater commander, because of the various methods employed by the various armed services.

No two will use the same procedures, for the reason that the initial basic training, and training during peacetime, have been best adapted to the national habits and customs, and to practices of the Zone of Interior establishments of the nation concerned. The local technical and administrative procedures of supply and maintenance logistics of each of the nations will be so closely related to procedures in the Zone of Interior establishments, and to civilian industrial capacity, that rearrangement in the theater of national procedures, in order to establish a common system among the armed forces of all nations is an impossibility. To attempt such a rearrangement would have far-reaching effects, all the way back to the Zone of Interior, which might prove disastrous.

The theater commander, therefore, must rely largely upon his senior commanders for correct local supply and maintenance procedures, and concern himself actively with those features of logistical support over which he can exercise a direct influence.

He is principally concerned with the capacity of each of the armed services of the allied powers involved to maintain itself in accordance with standards commensurate with its own combat requirements, and with the overall demands of the campaign.

He must not limit the operational capabilities of the armed services of any of the nations involved by the arbitrary diversion of its logistical support to the armed services of another nation, unless the tactical situation clearly demands this action.

For example, in the early fall of 1943, two French divisions were ready and available for employment in Italy. The theater commander had promised the senior French authority in North Africa that these two divisions would be committed to the battle at the

***The theater commander can exercise no authority over the procedures of nationals other than his own, except such as he is able to exercise through his own personality and through "gentlemen's agreements" with his senior subordinate commanders.***

earliest possible moment. During late September and early October, the French brought great pressure to bear upon the theater commander to transport these divisions and a French corps headquarters to Italy without further delay.

The theater commander must have been sorely tempted to accede to the French request, not only for the sake of French national honor and to give a strong boost to French morale and pride, but also to meet his commitment without further discussion. Also, from a purely selfish point of view, it would have been a wholly acceptable solution; for with two French divisions in the battle, we could have conserved British and American lives and energy.

On the other hand, General Montgomery and General Clark were sorely in need of more of their own supporting troops and were sorely in need of firmly established supply bases behind their battle front. Had the French insistence been acceded to at this time, sea transportation, which was then critically short and which was sorely needed for the movement of supplies and reinforcement troops to Generals Montgomery and Clark, would have had to be diverted to the movement of the French divisions.

These transportation resources belonged to the British and the Americans, and despite the fact that they would have welcomed this French corps in the battle line with open arms, they would have resented bitterly a decision to move these two French divisions to the Italian mainland, at the expense of their commands during such a critical period.

Also, the French were armed and equipped by the United States, from whose resources they drew

their supplies and maintenance at this time in the Mediterranean Theater. With respect to several critical items, there were hardly sufficient [quantities] to maintain General Clark's army in a proper state of battle efficiency, despite the fact that the critical supplies were being moved to him from the United States, North Africa, and Sicily as rapidly as possible by sea and air.

The theater commander and his senior commander in Italy fully appreciated that if the French were committed to the battle now, not only would it mean the diversion of shipping space which should properly support the British and American armies in Italy, it would also mean the diversion of critical items of supply from General Clark, at a time when he sorely needed more than could possibly be made available to him.

Thus, in reaching this decision to withhold the French from the battle until late fall and early winter, the theater commander subordinated his desire to commit the French as early as possible, and thus meet his commitment to the French high command, to the cardinal principle of refraining from diverting support from the resources of one nation to the armed services of another, unless availability makes such action wholly feasible or the tactical situation clearly demands it.

It is a special function of the Joint Planning Staff, which contains representation from the senior logistics officer on the staff of the theater commander, to keep the theater commander advised on such matters. In such cases as this one, political advice should also be furnished the theater commander by the Political Economic Advisory Committee, for it may be found that purely political considerations may require the violation of a cardinal military principle.

#### **(4) The armament, training, and tactical doctrines of each of the armed forces under command.**

The organization, armament, training, and tactical doctrines of the armed forces of the several allied powers will present several special problems not ordinarily found in a joint theater, which are closely related to the subject of logistics. Due to the presence of the armed forces of several nations, the organization and armament of each will have personnel, supply and maintenance implications which have been mentioned, and other implications which must be given special consideration. This is especially true if the organization and equipment of the various services differ to any marked degree.

For example, similar weapons of even slightly different caliber found in the armed forces of the various nations will positively preclude the diversion of ammunition from the supply channel of one to that of another.

This may prove especially embarrassing in a crisis. The theater commander must be constantly apprised of such situations, in order that appropriate balances may be maintained in the theater level of supply. It is obvious that a theater level of supply for such items cannot be determined on an overall basis, but must be determined on a national basis.

This affects, of course, the theater commander's ability to employ freely the forces of a particular nation in an operation, and may compel him to commit forces which he had hoped to reserve for another task, in order to insure that his overall level of ammunition and other supply for a particular battle or campaign remains sufficient to meet demands. This, of course, affects directly every decision on the organization of his combat forces for a battle or campaign.

The training of all forces turned over to a theater commander is, in theory, that required for the performance of their normal task. In actual practice, however, this is not the case, because of the basic doctrines of the armed service of the nation concerned. The theater commander may then be confronted with the problem of withholding troops of a particular nation from the battle, because of their training doctrines and training levels, until they have been brought up to a standard necessary to meet his own personal requirements, and the requirements of the special type of combat in which engaged.

Tactical doctrines of an allied force, if not taken into account prior to decision, will present some awkward if not dangerous situations, particularly in the opening phase of a battle, on a new or stabilized front, and during those phases of battle wherein the front has become fluid and exploitation is being conducted. Differences in tactical concepts will be relatively unimportant during intermediate phases. It is during the periods of initial collision and of exploitation that the theater commander will be confronted with possible danger.

So long as we have military men, we will have differences in doctrine. For example, the doctrine of one nation's army, or the view of the local leader of that nation's army, will be that the attack must be opened with a long, heavy, artillery and air bombardment; that of another will be that the preparation fires should be brief, violent, and only be placed on selected portions of the front; while that of another will be that there should be no preparation fires whatsoever, and that all such fires should open concurrently with the infantry or armored attack.

It may be claimed this lies within the field of conduct of battle, which is outside the province of the

theater commander. This is true. Decisions regarding preparatory fires are usually made at army group and army levels. It must be remembered, however, that the theater commander is charged with the objective, direction, and general location of the main attack and principal secondary efforts. In selecting these and in the allocation of forces, he must have taken into full account the fact that he may have to assign to the same mission the forces of two nations who may hold irreconcilable, conflicting views on this important matter.

The theater commander *must* take into account in the organization of his forces for an operation or campaign, *the conduct of the initial onslaught*, when the forces are composed of two or more nations. For example, American and British views regarding the initial action of assault waves after they strike the beach in an amphibious operation are opposed to each other, yet it cannot be said that either view is wrong.

It is possible, however, that should one British division and one American division execute an assault landing *in immediate proximity to each other*, the methods employed by one under conditions favorable to the enemy could seriously hamper the operations of the other, if not, in fact, contribute to its destruction. This latter thought is a personal view. This situation is pointed out, however, as one that must be taken into full account by a theater commander in organizing his forces for an amphibious assault, and if it is found necessary to accept this risk, all steps possible must be taken by him beforehand to lessen the dangers.

The theater commander must understand fully the methods employed by his various armed services during an exploitation phase of operations. Even in the armed forces of one nationality you find the four categories of training and leadership; one that exploits according to normally-accepted, orthodox standards; one that exploits with a dash and elan described as recklessness; and one that exceeds it.

Within the armed forces of various nations, we find these same characteristics present in varying degrees; the forces of the one will be classified as cautious, the forces of another classified as orthodox, and the forces of a third classified as reckless. Obviously, the theater commander must exert his personal influence during crises of battle to secure greater speed on the one hand, and to insure his security and tactical integrity on the other.

**(5) Personal intervention and exercise of a direct, personal influence to assure coordination and success in the initial phases of the mission assigned by the next higher combined authority.**

Another problem of utmost importance which confronts a theater commander in combined operations is that of insuring personally complete coordination in an operation which involves the combined employment of several armed services of the various nations against a single objective, and wherein early success initially is essential to the mission. An example of this is the combined operation undertaken by Field Marshal Lord Henry Maitland Wilson along the Riviera east of Toulon.

The theater plan for this operation was broken down into its component parts, the ground, air, naval and logistical phases. The development of these plans into a detailed, integrated, coordinated, unified whole for the assault was left to the principal task force commander until the task was almost completed. This operation involved the combined employment of strong elements of the British Navy, the American Navy, and the French Navy; strong elements of the American Air Forces, the Royal Air Force, and the French Air Force; and three United States divisions, a combined British and United States airborne division, and two and one-half divisions of French troops composed of approximately five nationalities in the assault and support landings.

The initial task of this force was to secure a beachhead on a front of approximately thirty miles on the French coast. Obviously, conflicts of tactical and technical doctrines will appear in their most dangerous and obvious forms in this type of operation. The final decision as to the exact places of landing; as to the exact target and hour of the airborne assault; as to the exact hour of the beach assault; and as to the exact timing and location of the air and naval bombardments, assumed an importance of the greatest magnitude.

The complete coordination of all possible conflicting ideas was imperative. Absolute coordination of naval air fires with each other and with the airborne assault and with the beach assault had to be assured. The theater commander fully appreciated this, and at the appropriate time assumed complete personal charge of final, detailed arrangements for all these matters.

Although the operation was under a task force commander, the theater commander refused to saddle his task force commander with a responsibility which he felt was his own, the establishment of complete harmony and agreement between so vast a number of dissimilar armed services and principal commanders, for so vital a task. This the theater commander accomplished in a most magnificent manner and to the satisfaction of the task force commander and all the principal subordinates, through the tactful and patient application

of his own knowledge, professional skill and ingenuity in executive planning conferences which extended over a period of about two weeks. The importance of the personal assumption by the theater commander of his vital responsibilities in operations of this character cannot be overly emphasized.

**(6) Senior commander personalities of each of the armed services of the Allied powers under command, their capabilities, personal and professional habits, and their ambitions.**

The last of the major problems confronting the theater commander in combined operations is not peculiar to these types of operations, nor is it the last one to be considered. It is, in fact, a most common one and is his first concern. As is the case in any military command, this problem is the complete analysis and understanding of the characteristics, capabilities, personalities, ambitions, and personal and professional habits of his various senior commanders.

A complete understanding of this problem is the very essence of successful leadership. Not only must the commander know these peculiarities of his principal subordinates, he must thoroughly understand the methods of approach which will secure from them their unstinted loyalty and cooperation in every endeavor. Each of the major problems previously discussed can only be solved in the light of the solution to this last problem.

When a theater commander has under command only his own nationals, problems presented by recalcitrant and temperamental subordinates are very simple of solution. He can, if he so elects, exercise his prerogatives of command unreservedly. On the other hand, the first task of a theater commander in combined operations must be to establish complete harmony with and between the various personalities of the senior commanders of the services of the various nations under command.

Only in extreme cases can he resort to the expedient of seeking a replacement for a difficult commander of another nationality. Hence, he must devote a major portion of his time to this problem from the outset. The theater commander will frequently be compelled to accept less desirable solutions to tactical and logistical

problems in order to secure that complete harmony which is so essential among commanders in the successful pursuit of a campaign.

It is not proposed that in following such a policy that a theater commander should compromise his own integrity or his own professional knowledge and skill. It is simply a question of determining which is the most important to insure successful conclusion of the battle, minor compromises in order to establish an essential harmony, or the adoption of a totally uncompromising attitude, thereby risking the establishment of ill will amongst the armed services and between the nations who must fight his battle.

The most important feature of this subject is complete understanding on the part of the theater commander of how to secure from his subordinates what is desired. He must know beforehand the general feeling of his principal subordinates regarding a possible proposal. This extends not only to the theater commander in his relations with his next principal subordinates, but down into lower levels.

One well-known commander invariably used a very unique method, although he was not a theater commander. If the commander had a principal subordinate whose feelings regarding an operation were not known to him beforehand, or if he suspected they would conflict with his own, he invariably followed the practice of conveying to his subordinate personally or through one of his staff officers the possibility that such an operation might come up for consideration.

During the discussion, this commander or his staff officer would develop the subject and lead the principal subordinate into the channel of thought desired, and in a manner so subtle that the subordinate would usually be in the senior commander's office within forty-eight hours suggesting the desired action as his own idea.

In this paper, I have attempted to outline only in broad relief some of the major problems which confront a theater commander in combined operations. There are many others which warrant discussion, each of such importance that it would be possible to write a separate study on it, as well as on the six major problems treated here. **MR**

*General Jacob Loucks Devers (1887-1979) was born on 8 September 1887 in York, Pennsylvania, and graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1909. An artillery officer, he commanded the US Army European Theater of Operations from May to December 1943 before assuming command of the North African Theater of Operations, US Army. He also served as deputy supreme Allied commander in the Mediterranean from January to October 1944. He then took command of the Sixth Army Group and in June 1945 was appointed chief of Army Ground Forces. He retired from that position in September 1949. From 1951 to 1952, Devers was the chief military adviser to the UN mission to resolve the India-Pakistan border dispute in Kashmir. He worked for Fairchild Engine and Aircraft Corporation from 1951 to 1959 and died in Washington, D.C., on 15 October 1979.*