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**21 ARMY GROUP**

**HIGH COMMAND  
IN WAR**

This pamphlet must NOT fall into enemy hands. Officers in possession of a copy will be responsible for its safe custody.

**GERMANY.  
JUNE, 1945.**

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# Introduction

I HAVE issued three pamphlets to the forces under my command:—

- (a) The infantry division in battle.
- (b) The armoured division in battle.
- (c) Notes on the use of air power in support of land operations.

2. I consider that this fourth pamphlet is now necessary to complete the series, and it is entitled:—  
"High Command in War."

3. The first part of this pamphlet deals with the principles of war as I consider them to be.

These are:—

- (a) Air power.
- (b) Administration.
- (c) The initiative.
- (d) Morale.
- (e) Surprise.
- (f) Concentration.
- (g) Co-operation.
- (h) Simplicity.

I have written at some length on the first four as their great importance has come to the fore in this war.

The last four are old stagers and can speak for themselves.

# THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR

4. The second part of the pamphlet deals with "Command and Control". The section dealing with "The Chief of Staff" was written for me by Major-General de Guingand, who has been my Chief of Staff from Alamein to the Baltic.

5. I must emphasise that these pamphlets have no official significance. They represent my own views, and they are based on my own practical experience during a long period of hard fighting which began at Alamein in October, 1942, and finished on the shores of the Baltic in May, 1945.

6. I do not expect for a moment that all senior officers in the Army will agree with my views. But if these pamphlets prove to be of assistance only to one or two commanders in the stress and strain of modern battle, they will have been well worth the writing.

*B. L. Montgomery*

Field-Marshal,  
C-in-C,  
21 Army Group.

Germany.  
June, 1945.

1. A war is won by victories in battle. No victories will be gained unless commanders will sort out clearly in their own minds those essentials which are vital for success, and will ensure that those things form the framework on which all action is based.

2. There are certain points which are fundamental; they are important always, and to neglect any of them will probably lead to failure; they will apply, in a greater or lesser degree, to all commanders at all times.

3. I give below those points which, in my opinion, are fundamental and are vital for success. Close attention to these points has paid me a good dividend, and I commend them to all commanders. I consider that these points form the principles of modern war.

## Air Power

4. Experience in this war has proved beyond doubt that all modern military operations are in fact combined Army/Air operations. Any officer who aspires to hold high command in war must understand clearly certain principles regarding the use of air power.

5. The first and basic principle is that you must win the air battle before you embark on the land, or sea, battle. If this is not done, then operations on land will be conducted at a great disadvantage. Once the air battle is won, then air power is available to provide the ground forces with more direct forms of assistance.

6. The greatest asset of air power is its flexibility. Within the range limitations of their aircraft, the Air

Forces, whether Strategic or Tactical, are able without change of base to be switched quickly from one objective to another throughout the theatre of operations. Because of this, the whole weight of the available air power can be used in selected areas in turn; this concentrated use of the air striking force is a battle-winning factor of the first importance.

7. If the ability to attack in depth is to be fully exploited, it will happen that on occasions the local requests of Army formation commanders will be overridden by more important strategic requirements. The distribution of air resources will be constantly under review by the higher joint command.

8. It follows that control of the available air power must be centralised and command must be exercised through Air Force channels. Nothing could be more fatal to successful results than to dissipate the air resources into small packets placed under command of Army formation commanders with each packet working to its own plan. Once priorities have been allotted by the joint command to a particular sector where concentration of effort is required, it may be advantageous and at times will be essential to decentralise control of a proportion of the effort in order to bring about quick and immediate air attacks closely related in time and space to the action on the ground.

9. The commander of an army in the field must deal in the planning of air operations with one Air Force commander and one only. Under certain circumstances it may be necessary for the air commander to call for air resources beyond his immediate command in order to meet the Army's requirements. If that is so, additional Air Force representatives may be brought forward to give expert advice, but the one to one channel must not be traversed. This is a fundamental principle to which there should be no exceptions. The orders for air operations will be given by

the Air Force commander within the framework of the Army/Air plan approved by the military commander.

10. The conception of making an Army plan and then asking for air assistance to be provided may result in air power being overlooked during the important preliminary phases, or even in a misunderstanding of the plan as a whole. It is essential, therefore, that the staffs of both Services should work together from the outset on a joint basis in planning operations, with complete mutual understanding and confidence.

11. In order to ensure efficiency in planning air support operations, it is essential for the Army and Air Force commanders and their staffs to understand the requirements, the capacity and the limitations of each other's service.

To reach proper standards in these things, it is necessary for both Services to recognise their responsibilities in a practical manner and to introduce appropriate instruction at all levels and at all stages of training. In addition, as well as possessing a sound knowledge of the tactical characteristics of aircraft, the Army must understand thoroughly the following precepts:—

- (a) The Air Force cannot produce its maximum support without adequate airfields. It is the duty of the military commander to ensure that their early provision is catered for in his plans, and that adequate engineer and labour resources are allotted for this purpose.
- (b) Given adequate airfields, the efficiency of the air forces depends on good communications. Proper priority must be given to Air Force Signal requirements.
- (c) To plan for air operations successfully, the Air Force must receive adequate and timely information about the targets they are to attack, and the objects to be achieved.

(d) Fire support from the air is dependent on the weather. If air support is essential for success, operations must wait for good weather; if the time factor precludes the acceptance of delay in launching an operation, the overall plan must aim at providing adequate fire support from the ground, and must regard the air support as a possible bonus.

(e) The moral effect of air action is very great and is out of proportion to the material damage inflicted. In the reverse direction, the sight and sound of our own air forces operating against the enemy have an equally satisfactory effect on our own troops. A combination of the two has a profound influence on the most important single factor in war—morale.

The contribution made by the Air Forces to the campaigns of this war has been very great. Technical developments in the air weapon continue apace and their possibilities are bounded only by the imagination; procedure and technique, however satisfactory, can always be improved. The future potential of the air weapon, therefore, is greater still. The full exploitation of this potential can best be guaranteed by *joint* study and research at all levels and by recognition of the fact that, from their experience and from the parts they have to play, both Services have something to contribute to future development and progress.

The Army and the Air Forces have fought in this war as a combined team, and much of our success is due to the joint approach and this team spirit. As in war, so in peace.

#### Administration

12. In modern warfare new factors have been introduced which make it vital that a commander should ensure that his administrative arrangements are equal to the strain imposed in carrying out his tactical

plan. The chief of these factors are the speed of advance of a mechanised army, the increased vulnerability of lines of communication to attack by air or armoured columns, and the vast organisation required for the maintenance of the force and for the repair of vehicles and equipment.

13. In formulating the administrative plan and in advising the commander of the possible scope of operations which can be supported by the administrative resources, there is usually a tendency towards over-insurance. The results of under-insurance inevitably become apparent to all, whereas the crime of over-insurance does not become apparent, and may, indeed, lead to a feeling of satisfaction that supplies of all sorts are plentiful and that the administrative arrangements are excellent. The reverse is, of course, the truth, as any form of over-insurance must inevitably cramp the commander in his operations and prevent him from making full use of his opportunities.

It is, therefore, of prime importance that a C-in-C in selecting a Chief Administrative Officer should choose the man who can nicely calculate his risks in the light of the probable course of events, and who moreover has sufficient detailed experience to know and to check the potential sources of over-insurance on the part of the Services or Staff. Among the many examples of such possible over-insurance are the calculating of MI turnaround at too low a figure, the under-estimating of the petrol mileage per gallon, and the ignoring of such hidden reserves as heavy tonnages of unbalanced rations. Although the calculation of ammunition requirements is a matter for the General Staff, the Chief Administrative Officer should have a good knowledge derived from his experience of previous campaigns which will enable him to offer advice on the scale necessary, and to point out the serious effects on transport and loss of time in the over-calculation of ammunition required for a particular task.

14. The appointment of a Chief Administrative Officer has now been accepted in all theatres. Under modern conditions the C-in-C, and the Chief of Staff, are fully occupied by operational considerations and cannot hope to have the same intimate grasp of details of the administrative plan. The C-in-C is therefore largely in the hands of his Chief Administrative Officer who must be capable of co-ordinating the interplay of the administrative branches and of presenting concisely and clearly the general administrative picture and the risks involved in alternative administrative plans. He must withhold nothing and give the fullest scope consistent with sound planning. The C-in-C, on the other hand, must place full confidence in his Chief Administrative Officer's advice and, once having agreed the plan, must keep within the limits laid down.

Occasions may sometimes arise when additional risks should be deliberately taken. On such occasions it will almost invariably be found that for a short period an extra effort can be made and the scope of the original administrative plan exceeded, but this will inevitably lead to some temporary administrative dislocation and will require a pause for reorganisation. The commander must realise this, and must not make the successful outcome of a special call the basis for overstraining continually the administrative machine. If this is done, serious dislocation will ensue and a tendency to over-insurance and lack of confidence will be encouraged.

15. The relations between the Chief Administrative Officer and the heads of administrative branches and services must be very close. When Main and Rear Headquarters are separated, the Chief Administrative Officer should be located at Main Headquarters where he will be in hourly touch with the Chief of Staff. He will then be enabled to advise his heads of branches and services not only of the actual situation, but also

of the unborn plans and of their possible implications. Early consideration of all possibilities by heads of branches and services is essential as administrative plans have to be laid a long time in advance. Shipping in particular, and the provision of adequate reinforcements, are matters which take time to arrange, and cannot be put into operation at the last hour. No situation should be allowed to arise to which some thought has not already been given.

16. It is a matter of considerable importance that higher formations in the field should carry out where possible the urgent demands of lower formations during operations, without argument or delay. It will be time enough to hold an inquest on the desirability of the demand when the operational situation has ceased. Complete confidence between the administrative staffs of higher and lower formations is essential. Heads of branches and services must never lose sight of this, and must do everything in their power to see that the spirit of co-operation is fostered. Personal visits of senior staff officers should be made frequently between formations.

17. The administrative functions of HQ, L of C, and of its dependent Area and Sub Area HQ, have a considerable bearing on the successful issue of the administrative plan. The commanders and staffs require careful selection.

The respective duties of the Army Group Staff and of the HQ, L of C, must be clearly understood: the former being responsible for policy and general administration of base installations, ports, IWT, railways, etc.; the latter for local administration only.

18. In addition to the maintenance of the ground forces, the Army has certain essential administrative responsibilities to the RAF, such as supply of common-user items and the allocation of the necessary transport

facilities to move RAF requirements from ports and depots to rail or road heads. Experience has shown that Army and RAF requirements can both be handled on the same L of C but, in order that this can be done with the maximum efficiency and economy, it is essential that Army and RAF staffs should work in close co-operation and that "Q" staff officers have a considerable knowledge of the administrative organisation of the RAF.

19. The responsibilities of the "A" Branch have increased in proportion to the complexities of a modern Army. Medical Services, Welfare and Personnel demand a continually higher standard. In the same way that "Q" provides services, and repairs and replaces equipment, material and stores of all kinds, so "A" carries out almost similar functions with regard to personnel. A good "A" staff officer must, in addition to the qualities of foresight, accuracy, and attention to detail, be the possessor of the human touch. He must have a thorough knowledge of the Army and be able to realise the effect of his orders on the eventual recipient. Bad staff work on the part of the "A" staff produces dissatisfaction among the men, and dissatisfaction leads to loss of morale.

20. The calculation of reinforcements over a period of many months ahead, together with a correct balance for every arm and trade, requires considerable foresight and experience. Their arrival in the theatre must be planned well in advance. Without an adequate reserve of manpower, divisions will waste away and the possibility of cannibalisation must be foreseen. A lesser number of divisions well up to strength in officers and other ranks may well be preferable to a larger number for which adequate reinforcements are not available.

21. In previous wars the system adopted for maintenance of an Army was that its requirements were delivered daily by pack train, or similar means, to a

railhead or other forward delivery point. Reserves were held at the base or advanced base and only small balancing reserves were held in the forward areas. This method was possible since the requirements of the forces operating were fairly constant and the ammunition supply was the only item which needed constant revision. It was thus possible for the contents of the pack trains to be regulated by routine demands placed through service channels.

Today the requirements of forces in a theatre of operations vary considerably with the circumstances of their employment. In particular, the requirements of petrol, ammunition, engineer and ordnance stores vary enormously according to the operations either in progress or envisaged. Further, the switching of a formation from one Army or Corps to another at short notice has become usual.

As a result two major changes have become necessary: firstly, the necessity for holding stocks of all major items well forward; and secondly, the importance of close control and co-ordination by the staff, as opposed to the services, of the maintenance arrangements.

The necessity for these changes has been apparent in all theatres in spite of very different conditions. Over a long L of C supplying fast-moving armies it has been found impossible to communicate orders for the daily pack train either with accuracy or in sufficient time. Moreover, reliance cannot be placed upon the punctual arrival of convoys. It has become necessary to introduce means whereby the Staff could control all the administrative installations upon which its formation was dependent. In order to overcome these difficulties the Field Maintenance Centre was evolved.

22. The Field Maintenance Centre is a place where reserves are held, under the control of Corps, to compensate for interruptions in the chain of supply and to give the necessary margin to overcome the inevitable

inaccuracy of a demand placed some time in advance. The FMC is also the focus of the administrative activities of the formations: the shopping centre of the Corps. It may be that one or more divisions are maintained from each FMC, but in all cases the FMC is essentially a Corps installation.

23. A further link in the chain is the Army Road-head. This is in fact an advanced depot area under control of an Army, designed to give it the necessary administrative flexibility and to overcome the difficulty of the supply of FMCs direct from Base or Advanced Base Depots.

24. The scale of reserves held both at the Army Roadhead and at FMCs is largely controlled by the tactical situation. It is essential to remember that in fluid warfare neither of these installations are secure, and the Chief Administrative Officer must keep himself continually in touch with the C-in-C so that the risks of these stocks falling into enemy hands can be determined and their holdings varied according to the situation. The capture of stores by the enemy may present him with the only means by which he can make an effective counter-stroke. As a general guide, it may be stated that these forward reserves should be held to a minimum.

25. When operating in civilised countries the maintenance problems of modern armies are, to a large and increasing extent, bound up with the maintenance of the civilians living in the operational areas and on the L of C. Unless these civilians are maintained in a reasonable state of health and are given adequate food and the bare necessities of life, they quickly become an operational hindrance which may curtail the radius of action of formations or even armies. Added to this, large numbers of civilians, apart from those enlisted into military units, are required as labour for works services on the L of C.

26. In order to administer the civil population, the supplies, manufacture, and movement of certain essential factors for civilian use must continue. All these three factors conflict directly with the maintenance of military forces. Priorities have to be decided constantly between the military and civil requirements. These priorities can be decided only by the Chief Administrative Officer in consultation with the Chief of Staff.

27. The importance of Movement Control by air, road, rail, sea, and IWT to Armies in the field cannot be overstressed. Without a highly efficient organisation, operations will be seriously handicapped. This is even more the case where, as will be usual in modern warfare, there is destruction in a greater or less degree of national transport facilities.

The responsibility of Q (Mov and Tn) is: firstly, to control the even flow of shipping, and of railway, IWT, air and to some degree, road transport; and secondly, to repair, maintain and operate ports, railways, railway bridges and IWT installations. This may in fact amount to the complete rehabilitation, control and operation of the transportation services of one or more countries.

The Movements Staff are required to give advice at all levels to the General Staff on operational matters, to the "A" Staff on questions of personnel movement and to the "Q" Staff on maintenance. It is only by a free interchange of ideas with other staff branches that the Movements Staff can hope to achieve maximum efficiency.

28. At GHQ, or Army Group, level in the field the immense importance of these duties warrant the establishment of Q (Mov and Tn) as a separate Branch of the Staff, operating in the same way as the "A" and "Q" Branches, directly under the Chief Administrative Officer. At the same time, the highest degree of



co-operation is necessary between "Q" and Q(Mov and In), and it is essential that the heads of these branches work in the closest collaboration.

### The Initiative

29. It is necessary to gain quickly, and to keep, the initiative. Only in this way will the enemy be made to dance to your tune, and to react to your thrusts.

30. When making a plan it should be remembered that most opponents are at their best if they are allowed to dictate the battle; they are not so good if they are forced to react to your movements and thrusts.

Therefore the plan must be based on the following four principles:—

- (a) Surprise is essential. Strategic surprise may often be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain; but tactical surprise is always possible and must always be given a foremost place in the planning.
- (b) The enemy must be forced to dance to your tune all the time. This means that the commander must foresee his battle: he must decide in his own mind, and before the battle starts, how he wants the operations to be developed: he must then use the military effort at his disposal to force the battle to swing the way he wants.
- (c) As the battle develops the enemy will try to throw you off your balance by counter-thrusts: this must never be allowed. Throughout the battle area the whole force must be so well balanced and poised, and the general layout of dispositions must be so good, that there will never be any need to have to react to enemy thrusts.
- (d) The initiative, once gained, must never be lost; only in this way will the enemy be made to dance to your tune and to react to your thrusts.

If you lose the initiative against a good enemy you will very soon be made to react to his thrusts; once this happens you may well lose the battle. It is very easy in large-scale operations to lose the initiative, and great energy and drive are required to prevent this from happening. A commander must understand very clearly that without the initiative he cannot win.

### Morale

31. Morale is the most important single factor in war. A high morale is based on discipline, self-respect, and confidence of the soldier in his commanders and in his weapons. Without a high morale, no success can be achieved—however good may be the strategic or tactical plan, or anything else.

32. A high morale is a pearl of very great price. And the surest way to obtain it is by success in battle. All operations staged must have a good and reasonable chance of success; the scope of such operations must be limited accordingly; there must be no failures.

33. A higher commander cannot often speak to his troops personally. He can, and should, speak to officers collectively whenever suitable opportunities exist.

Though he cannot often speak personally to his troops, he can keep in touch and get his personality across by means of personal messages. Before any big operation, and at other times such as Christmas, a personal and inspiring message from the C-in-C will be of great value; such messages must be drafted very carefully; they must be exactly right; they must not be too frequent but should be kept for very special occasions.

34. New and untried troops must be introduced to battle carefully and gradually, with no failures in the initial ventures.

A start should be made with small raids, then big-scale raids, leading up gradually to unit and brigade operations. Great and lasting harm can be done to morale by launching new units into operations for which they are not ready or trained, and which are therefore likely to end in failure.

When new units and formations are introduced to battle there must be no failures.

#### Surprise

35. Strategic surprise may often be difficult to obtain. But tactical surprise is always possible, and must always be given a foremost place in the planning.

#### Concentration

36. A sure way to victory is to concentrate great force at the selected place at the right time, and to smash the enemy.

Dispersion of effort, and of resources, is fatal to success.

#### Co-operation

37. Successful battle operations depend on the intimate co-operation of all arms; no one arm, alone and unaided, can do any good in battle.

#### Simplicity

38. The first requirement of a simple plan is that each component part of the force should have its own task to carry out, and its operations should not be dependent on the success of other formations or units. Once complications creep in, then troubles arise.

## COMMAND AND CONTROL

### The Commander

39. One of the first responsibilities of a C-in-C in the field is to create what I would call "atmosphere", and in that atmosphere his staff, his subordinate commanders and his troops will live, and work, and fight. His armies must know what he wants; they must know the basic fundamentals of his policy and must be given firm guidance and a clear "lead". Inspiration and guidance must come from above and must permeate throughout the force.

Once this is done there is never any difficulty, since all concerned will go ahead on the lines laid down; the whole force will thus acquire balance and cohesion, and the results on the day of battle will be very apparent.

40. Generally speaking, it may be said that there are two things to be done:—

First —To create the fighting machine, and to forge the weapon to his liking.

Second—To create the HQ organisation, or set-up, that will enable the weapon to be wielded properly and to develop its full power rapidly.

41. Subordinate commanders must be chosen carefully; in war it is "the man" that matters.

Commanders in all grades must have qualities of leadership; they must have initiative; and they must have the "drive" to get things done; they must have that character and ability which will inspire confidence in their subordinates.

Above all, they must have that moral courage, that resolution, and that determination which will enable them to stand firm when the issue hangs in the balance.

Probably one of the greatest assets a commander can have is the ability to radiate confidence in the plan and operations, when inwardly he is not too sure about the outcome.

A C-in-C must, therefore, be a good judge of men, and be able to have the right man in the right place at the right time.

42. A C-in-C must watch carefully his own morale. The battle is in effect a contest between two wills, his own and that of the enemy commander. If his heart begins to fail him when the issue hangs in the balance, then the enemy commander will probably win.

43. It is absolutely vital that a C-in-C should keep himself from becoming immersed in details.

He must spend a great deal of time in quiet thought and reflection, in thinking out the major problems, in thinking how he will defeat his enemy.

If he gets involved in details he cannot do this; he will lose sight of the essentials that really matter; he will be led off on side issues that will have little influence on the battle; and he will fail to be that solid rock on which his staff must stand.

44. No officer whose daily life is spent in considering details, or who has not time for quiet thought and reflection, can make a sound plan of battle on a high level or conduct large-scale operations efficiently. It is for this reason that the plan must always be made by the commander and NOT by his staff.

45. The wise commander will see very few papers or letters; he will refuse to sit up late at night conducting the business of his army; he will be well advised to withdraw to his tent or caravan after dinner at night and have time for quiet thought and reflection. It is vital that he should keep mentally fresh.

46. On the operational side the C-in-C has got to strive to read the mind of his opponent, to anticipate enemy reactions to his own moves, and to take quick steps to prevent any enemy interference with his own plans; he must aim to be always "one move" ahead of his opponent. He has got to be a very clear thinker, and able to sort out the essentials from the mass of factors that bear on every problem.

He has got to inspire confidence in his soldiers on the battle front, and in the general public in the home country.

He must keep his finger on the spiritual pulse of his armies.

Obviously, therefore, he must decentralise. He must lay down "the form" very clearly; he must then trust his subordinates, and his staff, and must leave them alone to get on with their own jobs.

He himself must devote his attention to the larger issues; he must NOT "belly-ache" about details.

### Organisation for Command and Control

47. A higher commander in the field must organise his headquarters in three echelons:—

- (a) Tactical Headquarters
- (b) Main Headquarters
- (c) Rear Headquarters.

These are usually known as Tac, Main, and Rear. Together they form one team.

48. Tac HQ is the headquarters from which the commander exercises personal command and control of the battle. It must be small and highly efficient, completely mobile on its own transport, and self-contained as regards defence; it consists chiefly of signals, cipher, liaison staff, defence troops, with a very small operations staff for keeping in touch with the battle situation.

Tac HQ of 21 Army Group consists of 50 officers, 600 other ranks, of which about half are defence troops, and 200 vehicles.

Tac HQ of an Army Group must be located well forward in the battle area, near the tactical headquarters of armies; there must be telephone communication between Tac and Main, either by line, or by secure Ultra High Frequency wireless (UHF), e.g. No. 10 Set.

The only orders issued from Tac HQ are those given verbally to Army Commanders by the C-in-C; these are never confirmed in writing.

Before definite phases in the operations the C-in-C will normally issue a written directive to Army Commanders, giving the full scope of his intention and his plan to achieve it.

49. I consider that a C-in-C, or Army Commander, should command always from his Tac HQ; he should live there permanently; even if it should happen that Tac and Main are close together. This will enable him to keep clear of details, and give him some security from visitors; only in this way will he have time for quiet thought and reflection.

50. Main HQ is the central core of the whole headquarter organisation. The C-in-C gives verbal orders from Tac HQ; the staff work consequent on those orders is done at Main and Rear.

In a large force of a million men, or more, the volume of this staff work is immense. It follows that Main HQ is a large HQ, and cannot be moved rapidly.

51. Rear HQ is the administrative echelon of the headquarter organisation. There are located the "Q" and "A" branches, and the services and departments. The Chief Administrative Officer must live at Main HQ, with the Chief of Staff.

## The Human Factor

52. In war it is the man that counts, and not only the machine.

A good tank is useless unless the team inside it is well trained, and the men in that team have stout hearts and enthusiasm for the fight; so it is in all other cases. With good men, anything is possible.

53. A commander has at his disposal certain human material; what he can do with that material will depend entirely on himself. He must gain the complete trust and confidence of his men. There is no book of rules which will help him in this matter; each commander will adopt his own methods, and ones best suited to his own make-up. Success in battle will produce quick results; all soldiers will follow a successful general.

54. Probably one of the most important requirements in a commander is that he must be a good judge of men. He must be able to choose as his subordinates men of ability and character who will inspire confidence in others.

55. It is necessary to remember that all divisions are different; some are good at one type of battle, others are good at another type of battle; the art lies in knowing what each division is best at, and having the right divisions in the right place at the right time.

It is the same with commanders in their several ranks; one is best at this, another at that; you require the right commander in the right place at the right time.

## Method of Exercising Command

56. A commander must train his subordinate commanders, and his staff, to work and act on verbal

orders and instructions. There is far too much paper in circulation in the Army as a whole; no commander can have time to read all this paper and also do his job properly.

Much of the paper in circulation is not read; much of it is not worth reading.

57. Operational command in the field must be direct and personal, by means of visits to subordinate HQ, where orders are given verbally. It is quite unnecessary to confirm these orders in writing; commanders who cannot be trusted to act on clear and concise verbal orders are useless. With the modern use of light inter-communication aircraft, command by this system is quite feasible: even when the operations cover a large area.

58. A commander must know in what way to give verbal orders to his subordinates. No two commanders are the same; each will require different treatment; some will react differently from others; all this must be known.

Eventually a mutual confidence will grow up between the commander and his subordinates; once this has been achieved there will never be any more difficulties or misunderstandings.

59. An essential feature in the method of direct and personal command is the system of liaison officers.

A C-in-C in the field requires a team of highly-trained liaison officers; these officers tour the battle area and visit subordinate HQ down to divisions and sometimes lower, and they bring back to the C-in-C each night an accurate and vivid picture of what is going on.

This is skilled work of great importance and first-class officers are required for it. They must be young, active, fearless, very tough and hard, and mentally alert; they must have an attractive personality which

will make them welcomed by commanders of all grades; they must have that character which will enable them to obtain their information without creating suspicion at any level.

Obviously they must have a good military knowledge; they must also have a high sense of duty which will put the efficient performance of the task before everything else.

The final essential is that they must, together with the C-in-C or commander who employs them, be a team; they are the eyes and ears of their commander, going everywhere and seeing everything; they must know exactly what their commander wants to know and what he does *not* want to know, and be able to give him that information clearly and quickly, omitting all irrelevant detail.

Only the very best type of young officer is suitable for this work and the team, once formed, must be changed as seldom as possible.

This system enables the C-in-C to be in the closest touch with the operational and battle situation; he can thus adjust his dispositions to the battle as it develops, and can take quick advantage of some favourable situation, or can take steps to prevent enemy interference with his own plans: should such interference seem likely to mature.

The liaison officers take their orders personally from the C-in-C, and give their reports verbally direct to him; this "hot information" should be given without delay, and the C-in-C must see the team every night at Tac HQ when they get back from their missions.

60. The practice of higher commanders issuing detailed training instructions, and forwarding a large number of copies for circulation down to a low level, is greatly to be deprecated. It breaks the chain of command, cramps initiative, and is unsound in every way.

(c) The relationship between the Army Group HQ and Supreme Headquarters and the War Office is harmonious, and is based on mutual confidence.

(d) He ensures that the Armies recognise that the Army Group HQ exists to serve them.

63. There must be complete mutual confidence and trust between the C-in-C and his Chief of Staff. In their discussions no subject should be banned, and the Chief of Staff must at all times be open and frank. Unpleasant facts must never be hidden from the Chief—although there are the right and wrong times to present them.

The Chief of Staff must be able to adjust himself to his commander's habits, his likes and his dislikes. He should watch out for even little things that irritate his commander.

The C-in-C shoulders great responsibility and is the man who matters in the eyes of the fighting troops. The Chief of Staff therefore must be careful to do nothing which will detract from his Chief's position. Experience suggests that the following are useful tips:

(a) Avoid all publicity, and never give press interviews or conferences which appear in the name of the Chief of Staff, e.g. use "a staff officer from \_\_\_\_\_HQ".

(b) As far as possible, do not accompany the C-in-C on his visits to troops. In any case, to do the job properly, there isn't the time. Attendance at conferences is, of course, a very different matter.

(c) Don't make a habit of appearing at ceremonials with the C-in-C. The honour is meant for him alone.

If the higher commander wishes to give some instructions regarding training to his subordinate generals, he should do so verbally. If this is not possible, the instructions may have to be written; in this case only one copy is required by the subordinate commander, and he will take whatever action he considers suitable, and will take it in his own way.

Higher commanders should never want to issue detailed instructions on training; they should concentrate on ensuring that a clear doctrine of war exists. The best training instruction is one which indicates how the battle will be fought; subordinate commanders will then adjust their training accordingly.

### The Chief of Staff

(Written by my own Chief of Staff)

61. These notes apply in particular to a Chief of Staff of an Army Group, but are in many respects equally applicable to Chiefs of Staff at lower levels.

The various comments and suggestions are based upon a considerable period of practical experience in the field, and, it should be added, under one particular C-in-C. It is realised that commanders' methods of exercising command differ widely.

62. A Chief of Staff cannot be said to have accomplished his task successfully unless:—

(a) He takes all detail and sufficient other work off his C-in-C's shoulders, and thus allows his Chief to devote the maximum time to exercise personal command, and for undisturbed reflection and thought.

(b) He ensures that the various echelons of the Army Group HQ work as an efficient team, and that a good *esprit de corps* is developed.

(g) Watch for over-strain amongst officers and clerks.

(h) Know when to take time off.

65. If members of other Services and/or Allies are attached to the Headquarters, they should be treated in exactly the same way as your own staff; subject in the case of some Allies to certain security restrictions. The point is that they should be made to feel members of the team.

When dealing with parallel RAF and Allied Headquarters, be tactful but frank. Put your own cards on the table and avoid any suggestion that you wish to play theirs for them.

66. The following are suggested as the more important points to be remembered by the Chief of Staff:—

- (a) Ensure that all executive action (this is usually consequent on verbal orders already given by the C-in-C) is taken by Main and Rear Headquarters. See para 50.
- (b) The Chief of Staff and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) should be in constant contact, live in the same mess, and be firm friends.
- (c) Interfere as little as possible with Rear Headquarters. If something is unsatisfactory at Rear Headquarters, have it put right through the CAO.
- (d) Decentralise and don't harass Branches, etc., when you have given them a job.
- (e) Do as much business as possible verbally. Encourage this right down through all levels.

To sum up, the Chief of Staff should keep in the back-ground, and get on with his work.

When the C-in-C is commanding from his Tac HQ, the Chief of Staff should hold frequent telephone conversations with him. He should also pay frequent visits to Tac HQ. It is important that the Chief of Staff should collect as many subjects as possible that can be dealt with at one time—either on the phone or by personal discussion—and so avoid interrupting the C-in-C too frequently.

It is most undesirable that the C-in-C and the Chief of Staff should write "papers" to each other. Endless time is saved if all business is transacted orally. To achieve this desirable end, it is of course essential that the C-in-C has the capacity for assimilating rapidly the subjects discussed, and is therefore able to give decisions without spending long periods studying the problem committed to paper.

64. In a large community like an Army Group, it is impossible for a Chief of Staff to know more than a fraction of the officers working under him. He should, however, see frequently the Heads of Branches and Advisers, and keep them fully in the picture.

The following points are considered important:—

- (a) Be accessible.
- (b) Let Heads of Branches, Advisers, etc., feel that you will always hear *all* the relevant arguments before making a decision.
- (c) Don't dilly-dally over making decisions, otherwise work is held up all round.
- (d) Encourage ideas.
- (e) Keep calm, and *never be pompous*.
- (f) Give credit where it is due, and when possible let the C-in-C know the originator of any particular "bright idea."

(f) A Chief of Staff cannot go into all details; he must trust the officers working under him. If they fail, then a change is necessary.

(g) The following are the officers with whom the Chief of Staff has almost daily contact:—

- \* CAO
- MGRA
- CE
- CSO
- MGRAC
- Dr G Mil Govn
- \* BGS (Ops)
- \* BGS (I)
- \* BGS (SD)
- \* BGS (Plans)
- GR (Deception)
- \* Q (Plans)
- \* Brig P & PW
- Dep Mil Sec

\* means very frequently.

67. A large amount of planning goes on at Main and Rear HQ; a separate planning branch, with a "G" and "Q" element, is essential.

The planning is broadly of the following kinds:—

(a) Working out the details of the outline plans of the C-in-C for future operations.

(b) Detailed investigation of possible courses of action that are contemplated by the C-in-C or by Supreme HQ.

(c) Investigations as may be ordered by the Chief of Staff.

Upon the Chief of Staff rests the responsibility of anticipating as far as possible the requirements of the C-in-C; he must make sure that all the information the C-in-C is likely to require is available in time, should he want it.

When the examination of a certain project is complete, it is best, in order to save the C-in-C's time, to stage a presentation at Tac HQ with the appropriate officers and maps.

68. Conferences are the easiest and quickest way of keeping the headquarters machine running smoothly.

They save issuing a lot of paper, keep everyone in the picture, and give officers a chance of obtaining decisions upon matters affecting other branches. A conference must be clear, crisp, and decisive.

(a) *Daily Conference*

A daily conference early in the morning is essential. It is better to have too many than too few attending. The latest operations and enemy situation are given out. The Chief of Staff then raises matters of general interest, arranges for meetings, obtains information and gives decisions to those requiring them. A vast amount of paper work is saved by such conferences.

(b) *Conferences after visits and tours*

It is also a good plan to hold a meeting with Heads of Branches, etc., immediately after returning from visits to the C-in-C, Army Commanders, etc. Again, it is better to err on the large side, and so make certain that all who might require the information are in fact present.

The following is a suggested list of those who should attend:—

- All those mentioned in para 66(g) above
- NLO
- BGS (Ops) Air
- DAG or representative
- D of SvY.

(c) *Daily conference with RAF*

This conference is a great help and ensures smooth working between the two Services. Many difficulties are thrashed out at these meetings, and operational and enemy information is exchanged. On the Army side, it is suggested that the following should attend:—



Chief of Staff  
 CAO  
 BGS (Ops)  
 BGS (I)  
 BGS (Ops) Air  
 BGS (Plans)  
 Col G(R).

In addition to the above, the Chief of Staff holds many conferences of a small nature throughout the day. There are also conferences required with full representation from Armies, in order to launch preparations for some big project, i.e. a coming offensive.

69. There is a danger of being too secure in a large Headquarters. Unless information gets to *all* those who require it, difficulties will arise. In practice it has been found that it is best to spread information widely and accept certain risks.

70. Besides visiting Tac HQ, the Chief of Staff should also visit Armies as often as possible. There is a danger however in visiting Corps, for this is *not the job of the Chief of Staff of an Army Group*. If he does so, friction may be caused, for it leads to questions being raised outside the proper staff channels. Experience at Army and Army Group HQ supports this view. The Chief of Staff should keep in constant personal touch with Supreme Headquarters and the War Office when practicable.

71. It is a good thing for the Chief of Staff (see para 63(a) above) to give periodical talks to the press correspondents. He can help them to avoid misleading the public by giving them the broad picture and background. Such talks and contacts help to disperse any possible friction.

Experience has shown that the war correspondents with 21 Army Group value and do not betray confidences.

72. Organisation, layout and moves of an Army Group Headquarters:—

(a) Organisation

(i) The Headquarters of an Army Group is normally organised into three divisions—Tactical, Main and Rear. See para 47.

(ii) In the case of Main and Rear, it is convenient to sub-divide the staff into a series of groups, each group having a commander and second-in-command appointed. This makes possible the decentralisation of much of the detail concerned in moving and organising the Headquarters. For example, a possible division of Main HQ is:—

A Group—Chief of Staff's Group  
 B " —Operations Group  
 C " —Intelligence Group  
 D " —Staff Duties and General Staff Advisers Group  
 E " —Administration Group  
 F " —Camp Commandant's Group.

(b) Moving an Army Group HQ

(i) After the Chief of Staff has approved proposals for a move, the following precede the main body:—

Pre-reconnaissance party—of minimum strength to select the site and make a rough allocation to Groups.

Reconnaissance party—of Group Commanders to lay out their Groups.

Advance party—of Branch representatives and Camp working parties to set up offices and construct rest areas.

Signals parties—move to the new site as required.

- (ii) The main body moves in two echelons. The first echelon consists of sufficient personnel to take over control, and moves to arrive approximately 24 hours before the time fixed for the change of command. The second echelon, consisting of the balance of the headquarters, less a rear party, moves as soon as possible after command has passed.

(c) *Messing arrangements*

It has been found preferable to establish sufficient messes within the Headquarters to enable the average number of officers in any given mess to be between 25 and 35. In order to bring together officers of various branches, messes should be organised on a rank basis rather than on a branch or group basis; all Brigadiers and full Colonels, for example, should live together in the same messes.

It is necessary to establish a special Visitors' Mess, which can provide food and accommodation for visitors.

(d) *General*

For a very large Headquarters, like an Army Group, the following rules apply:—

- (i) Move as little as possible. To prepare a new Headquarters site takes anything from three to four weeks.
- (ii) Don't split Main Headquarters.
- (iii) Try and keep Main and Rear Headquarters as near as possible to each other.
- (iv) More efficient output and less fatigue are incurred if the offices are in buildings.
- (v) Good communications and good air transport are essential. A considerable distance from Tac Headquarters can be accepted provided these conditions are fulfilled.

## The Stage Management of Battle

73. To be successful in battle the fighting machine must be so set in motion that it can develop its maximum power rapidly, and the troops must then be launched into battle properly.

It follows that what may be called "the stage management of the battle" must be first-class.

74. It is stated in para 44 that the plan of battle must be made by the commander and NOT by his staff. I consider that this statement admits of no argument.

75. Having made a sound and simple plan, the following points are then highly important:—

(a) The essentials of the plan must be known right down through the chain of command, and finally down to the rank and file. Every single soldier must know, before he goes into battle, how the little battle he is fighting fits into the larger picture, and how the success of his fighting will influence the battle as a whole. A careful system is necessary to ensure that secrecy is not compromised; commanders in their several grades, and finally the rank and file, must be brought into the picture at the right moments and not so late that they cannot do their jobs properly.

(b) All commanders must have complete confidence in the plan.

(c) The troops must be brought to a state of wild enthusiasm. They must enter the fight with the light of battle in their eyes, and definitely wanting to kill the enemy. In achieving this end it is the spoken word that counts, from the commander to his troops; the spoken word is far more effective than any written matter.

76. In his plan of battle the C-in-C must give careful thought to the correct grouping of his divisions, his armour, his artillery, and other resources.

He cannot decide on this grouping until the problem has emerged and he has decided how he will solve it; he must then so group his divisions, his armour, and his artillery, that Corps—who have to fight the tactical battle—are suitably composed for their respective tasks. As the battle proceeds he may frequently re-group.

77. Skill in grouping, and in quick re-grouping to meet the changing tactical situation, plays a large part in successful battle operations.

It is a great art, and requires much study before proficiency is attained.

78. A Corps HQ must be able to handle armoured divisions, or infantry divisions, or any combination of the two types.

79. The surest way to victory is to develop the full fighting power of divisions on Corps plans, the whole being directed in accordance with the Army plan.

No good results will be obtained by splitting up divisions; such action affects morale adversely.

Nor can a division conduct effective offensive operations against even moderate opposition in good delaying country if strung out on a wide front, since it cannot then develop its full fighting power.

80. Having made his plans, there will be much detailed work to be done before the operation is launched. This detailed work is the province of the staff.

The higher commander himself should stand right back and have time to think; his attention should be directed to ensuring that the basic foundations and

corner stones of the plan are not broken down by the mass of detail that will occupy the attention of the staff.

He must keep in close touch with his subordinate commanders during this period, and discuss their problems with them and answer their questions; all this will be done verbally and nothing need be written.

81. Before the battle begins an army commander should assemble all commanders down to the lieutenant-colonel level, and should explain to them the problem, his intention, his plan, and generally how he proposes to fight the battle and how he is going to make it go the way he wants.

This practice is well worth while. If every unit commander in the army knows what is wanted, then all will fight intelligently and with cohesion.

Furthermore, unit commanders will pass on the relevant information to the regimental officers and men, and the whole army goes into battle knowing what is wanted and how it is to be achieved.

The resulting effect will be terrific, and nothing will be able to stand against it.

And when the troops see that the battle has gone exactly as they were told it would go, the increase in morale and the confidence in the higher command will be immense—and this is a pearl of very great price.

82. Once the battle has started, everything that passes between the higher commander and his subordinate generals should be verbal. If this is not always possible, because there is no telephone or because distances are too great for a personal visit, then written messages may be necessary. But as the commander has trained his subordinates to work on his verbal orders, and mutual confidence in dealing in this way has been established, all such messages should be drafted by the commander himself so as to ensure that they will convey to the recipient exactly what he wishes.

The wise commander will keep a secure hold over the basic operational aspect of the battle, and will not let it be taken away from him by his staff (see para 44).

83. The exact method that a commander will adopt in order to set about his enemy will depend on varying circumstances. During months of hard fighting I have found that no two problems are ever the same. A commander must keep an open mind, consider the conditions of the problem very carefully, and decide on a method suitable to the occasion.

During pauses while the land battle is being built up, the Air Forces must be very active; they should interfere with enemy movement, destroy communications, disrupt his supply organisation, and generally carry on the battle while the Army is preparing to deliver its main blow.

84. In mobile operations where it is necessary to strike hard and deep and to penetrate quickly into the enemy country, divisions should operate on narrow fronts on main axes of advance. If the enemy is widely dispersed in his endeavours to stem the advance, he will not be able to hold these "divisional thrusts".

The time may come when the enemy will recover his balance and will stabilise the battle on some rear position. When this happens two or more thrusts should be inclined towards each other, so as to converge on the vital or key locality in the enemy position; you then fight a Corps battle for that key locality, the fire of the artillery of the Corps being concentrated and handled by the C.C.R.A.

In close country, objectives for divisional thrusts should be the main centres of road communication. It will generally be found that the possession of these main centres will enable you to put a stranglehold on enemy movement, and thus dominate the operations.

85. Finally, I would say that the whole essence of modern tactical methods in battle lies in the following factors:—

Surprise  
Concentration of effort  
Co-operation of all arms  
Control  
Simplicity  
Speed of action

Great energy and determination are essential in order to maintain the tempo of the operations at a high level; the commander who lacks these qualities, and who lacks the "drive" to get things done, will never achieve successful results.

### Airborne Operations

86. The timely use of airborne forces may often play a decisive part in land operations. The hazards and complications are, however, considerable and there are certain basic factors to be taken into consideration before deciding whether an airborne operation is justified. These factors are outlined below.

87. Could the objective be gained in sufficient time by normal ground forces?

Would the air effort involved be more usefully employed elsewhere? This applies particularly to transport aircraft: often so essential to sustain a rapid advance.

88. Large airborne operations require a great deal of time to plan; there is often a danger that events may overtake the project. Experience has shown that airborne forces are normally best used in the more deliberate type of operations e.g.

- (a) seaborne assaults
- (b) an assault over a major obstacle.

89. Re-supply must be assured. This may be:—

- (a) by air; weather is often an uncertain factor.
- (b) by normal supply columns; the "drop" should be near enough to allow an early link-up, otherwise the whole operation may become an embarrassing commitment.

As a large dropping zone (D.Z.) is needed for re-supply by air, a considerable part of the force landed will be employed in a purely defensive role holding this area.

90. If the weather conditions are uncertain the commander must decide how long he is prepared to wait for suitable weather if conditions on "D" day are unfavourable.

91. The commander must ensure that the forces dropped have adequate artillery support.

### Overseas Campaigns

92. Any overseas campaign will involve the closest co-operation between the navy, the army, and the air forces.

The navy has got to take the army across the seas, and it requires good beaches for landing; the army when on shore cannot be maintained indefinitely over open beaches, but requires a good port very early; the air forces require good airfields.

But the overall plan of battle must not be built up solely on the need to acquire quickly good beaches, good ports, and good airfields.

The matter involves the whole question of the conduct of offensive operations in an enemy country with the object of destroying the enemy's armed forces and occupying his territory; the army has got to carry out this task, and no other service can do it.

Therefore, the first need is to decide how you want the operations on land to be developed so that the object can be successfully attained in the simplest and quickest way.

It is then for the navy to say whether the army can be put on shore in such a way that the land battle can be developed in the required manner; it is for the RAF to say whether this will suit the air plan. And so the plan is built up; some compromise may be necessary, but eventually an agreed plan will emerge. The beaches, ports, and airfields then become objectives in the general plan of battle.

93. The early appointment of the commanders who will carry out the operation is essential. They should be appointed before the planning begins.

### Risks in Battle

94. It will be exceptional to win a battle without taking certain risks. It requires a nice judgment to decide what risks are legitimate and justifiable, and what risks are definitely not so.

A commander who is not prepared to take a chance, and who tries to play for safety on all occasions, will never reap the full fruits of victory.

### Final Advice

95. My final advice to any officer who may be called on to exercise high command in war is as follows:—

- (a) Have a good Chief of Staff.
- (b) Go for simplicity in everything.
- (c) Cut out all paper and train your subordinates to work on verbal instructions and orders.

- (d) Keep a firm grip on the basic fundamentals—the things that really matter.
- (e) Avoid being involved in details, leave them to your staff.
- (f) Study the factor of morale; it is the big thing in war and without a high morale you can achieve nothing.
- (g) When the issue hangs in the balance radiate confidence in the plan and in the operations, even if inwardly you feel not too certain of the outcome.
- (h) Never worry.
- (i) Never belly-ache.
- (j) Keep fit and fresh, physically and mentally. You will never win battles if you become mentally tired, or get run down in health.

B. L. M.