

ARMY TALKS



Two Nations—One Army



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ARMY TALKS

EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS

TWO NATIONS—ONE ARMY

WHEN I was asked to write about cooperation between United States and British forces in this war my mind first of all went back to the last. You may think that shows I am out of date, but I did learn a useful lesson then. In the spring of 1918, when I was a young staff officer, I was suddenly ordered down from Flanders to the Somme, to live with the left-hand French division and keep touch in a general way with the Australian division on its left.

Language Difference Made Trouble

The front was quiet. The great German offensive of March, which at one time had looked like capturing Amiens and splitting the Allies, had died down. I was told there would not be much work at first. "What you've got to do above all is to create a good atmosphere on both sides. See that they understand each other, which they often don't. See that each of them knows what the other is doing. If you can do that it will be a good start."

That really was all I had to do in the first instance, though of course it was a very different matter in August when our own great offensive started and there were dozens of

tactical details to be arranged. But it was worth doing and it did teach me a lot about the small difficulties that may arise through sheer misunderstanding between allies, different ways of looking at things, different ways of carrying out tasks, different military habits, and of course, in this particular case, different languages. And remember the average interpreter at our disposal had no military training to speak of. He might know the two languages, but he rarely knew the two military languages. His nickname was "interrupter."

I must confess that, though I liked my job and was very happy with the French, who were very good to me, it was not all easy work. The two nations were not greatly interested in each other's activities. When a battle was on you would find that the French division would have cable after cable linking it to the French division on its right, whereas you had to work night and day to get a single wire established to the British division on the other side. I did my best to fill the gap and

I hope I had some success.

No Joint Staff

There was never any attempt at closely combining the French and British Armies on the Western Front in the last

Capt. Cyril Falls, author of this issue of ARMY TALKS, served as an officer of the British Army during the last war and is now a military historian and critic on the staff of "The Times," of London. In addition to his articles in the paper, Capt. Falls is the author of several books on military matters and is a lecturer on military and allied subjects.

war. It was suggested at one time in 1918 that we should have a single commander-in-chief with a combined staff, but the idea was turned down because the methods were so different that it was thought time would be wasted. Those who said so were possibly right, but the experiment was never made, so we cannot say for certain.

Marshal Foch Named Supreme Commander

We did get something, but not until we had taken a fearful beating and run the risk of complete defeat from the first German offensive. We got Marshal Foch as Allied Commander-in-Chief. I will only say about him that I do not think we could have staved off defeat without him. I believe that the United States Commander-in-Chief, General Pershing, thought so too, though there were some conflicts between the two, as there are likely to be between two strong men. We had a Mission at the headquarters of Marshal Foch, headed by a lieutenant-general, Sir John Du Cane. This Mission did not, however, form part of the Marshal's staff but was simply his link with Haig and British General Headquarters.

Supreme War Council is Created

On top of that we had, as the United States had, in the last year of the war another piece of machinery, the Supreme War Council. This had its seat at Versailles, near Paris. The full Council met only occasionally, but the Military Representatives of France, Great Britain and the United States were permanent officials, and were always at work. It was a useful institution, but its actual initiative proved to be limited because the strategy of the campaigns on the Western Front was, in fact, worked out between Foch, Pétain, Haig,

Pershing and the King of the Belgians.

And then, of course, we had liaison officers right down the chain of French, British, American and Belgian forces, wherever they were, in contact, down to the humble person like myself at divisional headquarters. Below me there were usually only temporary liaison officers between brigades and battalions, appointed for each particular action.



That was, very shortly and roughly, the machinery of allied cooperation in land warfare in the last war. It might have been better, and it might have been worse. It certainly improved towards the end. The picture I have given here belongs to the end, to 1918, after Foch had taken over as Commander-in-Chief. Collaboration with allies in other theatres of campaign was worked mostly through conferences and visits.

Liaison Officer's Job Was Translating Jokes

So far as I was concerned there were some lighter moments, as when my French general used to take me in tow when he went to dine with the Australian division, and I had to translate the Australian general's stories and wisecracks into French for the Frenchman and the French general's jokes into English for the Australian. Somehow the jokes never sounded so good when translated, however hard I worked at them. There may have been a point in this. It might have occurred to me, though it did not, that some of the subtle points of military conversations and documents which I had to translate escaped in the

same way. But I shall say a bit more about language later on.

Now, to pass on from the last war to the present. We started off by realizing that, in the last, we had made mistakes through divided command before Foch came on to the scene, so we thought it best to start off in France with a single command. And, as ours was a very small army in those early days—only four divisions went out in the first British Expeditionary Force in 1939, and there were still only 10 when the Germans attacked next year—it obviously had to be a French commander-in-chief.

French General Gamelin Past His Prime in 1939

General Gamelin was very highly thought of in those days. (He had, by the way, been a young divisional general in my liaison days in 1918, and I had come across him, and admired him.) It was not realized that he was past his best and had not kept up with the times, or we might have been more nervous about entrusting to him all we had in the way of troops. He was Commander-in-Chief of all the French armed forces. Our B.E.F. came directly under his subordinate, General Georges, who commanded the French forces facing the Germans. He had been a very fine soldier too in the last war, but more of a staff officer than a fighting commander, which Gamelin certainly had been in his best days. And, though he may have been a few years younger than Gamelin, he was also past his prime. There was again nothing in the nature of a combined staff, just a Mission and liaison officers as before.

SUMMARY

Difficulties arose in France, during the last war, which hampered Allied operations. Finally Marshal Foch was named Commander-in-Chief—a

move intended among other things to strengthen confidence in the command. Liaison officers kept the allied armies in touch with one another. Early in this war a new method was tried but the perfect solution, the "combined staff," was not created.

Q. Does the present-day solution aid in giving men of both the British and American Armies a greater pride in service and a sense of personal participation?

Q. What was Gen. Eisenhower's solution, in North Africa, and did it result in a better understanding of our allies?

It worked fairly well, and I do not honestly think that any weaknesses there may have been in it really affected the result of the German offensive. Some of our people saw weak points in the French Army, but they thought many of the troops seemed pretty good. And indeed many of them were pretty good, though some were not. Anyhow, we were up against a far more strongly armed force, overwhelmingly superior in tanks and aircraft, a harder hitting force altogether.

Combined Staff Would Have Exchanged All Plans



We had no time to do anything about that, though if we had had a combined staff we should at all events have known more about the

French intentions and the disposition of their reserves. But, as I said before, that would not have stopped the German onslaught. If a tank has

a battle with a light armoured car, no planning is going to help the car much.

That phase passed, and for a year this country fought entirely alone. Its only ally for any length of time was the gallant little Greek nation; for Yugoslavia was overwhelmed in a very short campaign. There is nothing of special interest to be said about cooperation in that period. Indeed, one may say the same of the period after Russia had been attacked by Germany.

Two Nations Far Apart

The two nations and their campaigns were very far apart. The only place where they came into close touch was Persia, which was jointly occupied by their forces, and that never developed into an active war area. What we got from Russia was that she contained the greater part of the German land forces. Russia got less from us, until we began to send supplies, but from the point of view of the air, where our strength was fast growing, she did get a great deal even from the first. But in those days Russia never informed us of her intentions, certainly not in any detail. There was no possibility of any offensive action on her part before December, 1941; she was fighting for bare life.

U.S., Britain Already Had Close Cooperation in 1943

When the United States came into the war the atmosphere was entirely different. Here were two nations which, though one was a belligerent and the other was not, had for a long time been in close cooperation. We had already handed on a great deal of information to each other, and American information, through Berlin, Vichy, and other places where we had no footing, was exceptionally good. The United States knew our problems. She had been giving us valuable help.

Lend-Lease Followed Cash-Carry

"Cash and carry," you remember, came in some time before "Lend-lease," and we benefited from it. Though the military methods and machinery of the two countries differed in some ways, they spoke the same language, which made the possibility of linking together their fighting forces far easier. Yet I doubt if anyone realized at the start how close the link was to become. It was first forged in the MacArthur headquarters. It was made harder and closer still in that of General Eisenhower. It has since appeared in that of Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. And it is certainly going to be seen at its best in the machinery which will be set up for the larger-scale invasion of the European continent. On a higher scale still it has long been functioning in Washington.

U.S., Britain Have Reached Economic, War Cooperation

We have to bear in mind that this linking of United States and British forces in all the main theatres of the war has been going on parallel with

the linking together of the different fighting forces of the two countries, especially those of the land and of the air. It is also true to say that the national linking—sea, land, and air—



has made the international linking an easier matter. The situation we have now reached is that we have at the very head of all the armed forces in the theater of war a single chief. He stands right away from, right above, the tactics of the campaign. He may not even enter into the strategic detail. His special task is to coordinate the

activities of all the main forces, whatever their fighting element, water, earth, or air. His part and that of his staff is in a special degree concerned with logistics, administration, supply, whatever you like to call the organization side of the campaign, which has enormously increased in its importance in modern war and is indeed the very basis of all operations. It is probable that the greatest contribution made by Allied Headquarters in the Mediterranean theater has been on the administrative side.



Combined Staff in Africa

I believe General Eisenhower let it be known from the very start that he would not have anybody on his staff who was not ready to play his part in making it a genuine and complete combined staff or was not mentally capable of doing so. And now, if you go to the headquarters and want information on some particular point, you will be told: "Oh, yes, that is Major Jones. I'll take you round to him," and until you get into the office and see Major Jones at his desk you do not have the slightest notion whether he is going to be an American or an Englishman. Whichever he proves to be, he will know all about the matter with which you are concerned.

Axis "Cooperation" Is Based On Subjection of Satellites

This is something entirely new. The Germans, of course, also get their cooperation all right, but that is because they treat their partners and "satellites" as complete subordinates. This, on

the other hand, is a combined staff of equals, and that has never been achieved before. In the same way, the air forces are used as they are available for their jobs, with little or no regard to nationality. At sea the picture is not quite so novel because combined fleets have constantly operated together with success. On land, allied armies have often fought side by side, but now we get an army like the Fifth in Italy, which is one single army operating under an American commander, but made up of both American and British troops.

Having One Language Helps Us

I have mentioned the subject of language before, but I must come back to the subject to point out how invaluable it is to have a common language. This is so obvious that many people think its importance is exaggerated and tell British and Americans not to count too much upon it. They point out that language may conceal differences of outlook and may actually bring on difficulties instead of avoiding them. This is true enough, especially in social matters, but in military affairs language shared in common is an immense help. One has only to think of the conferences between the American and British General Staffs, the day-to-day work of the Chiefs of Staff in Washington, the working of Allied Headquarters in the Mediterranean, the quick telephone conversations in the field in Italy, to realize what a boon it is. No subtlety is missed; no time is wasted; no "interrupter" is there to make slips or hold up conversation or bring in a spirit of formality.

SUMMARY

Lack of a combined staff had little to do with Allied defeats on the Continent, early in this war.

Joint staff operations were started by Gen. MacArthur, perfected by Gen. Eisenhower and now function in London, Washington and at the front. Officers and units of the two Armies are now practically interchangeable. An American commands the Fifth Army, made up of both British and American troops.

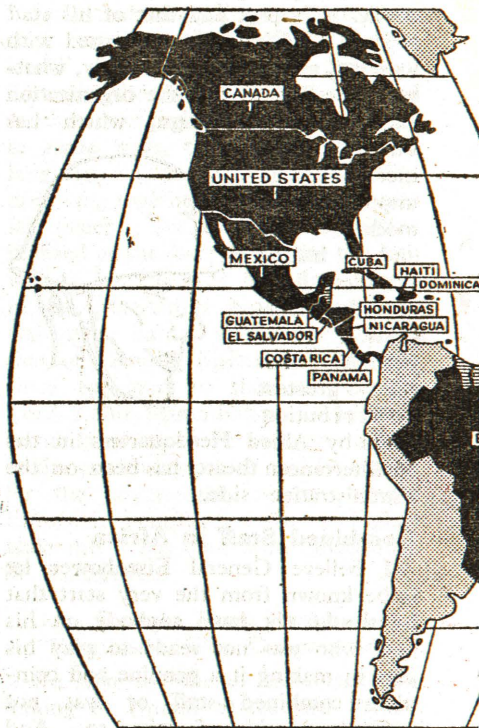
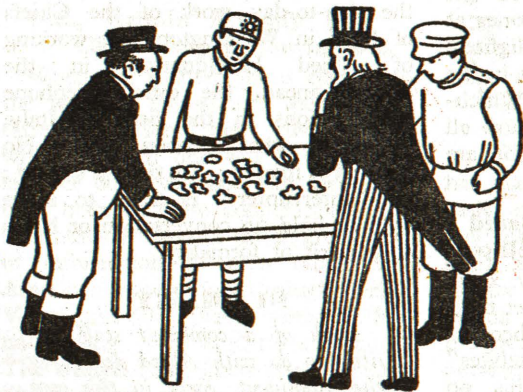
Q. What is one of the things Gen. Eisenhower insisted upon in his combined staff?

A. In the past, have Allied Armies ever achieved the degree of cooperation now existing between American and British forces?

And now the great experiment has been made and has proved a success. The lessons have been learnt. We are going forward another step, taking on a more important and more vital task. The new invasion headquarters is being set up under General Eisenhower, charged with the duty of bringing the war to a victorious conclusion with the final defeat of Germany. There can be no doubt that we have been working on the right lines.

Cooperation Reaches Down To Minor Battle Tactics

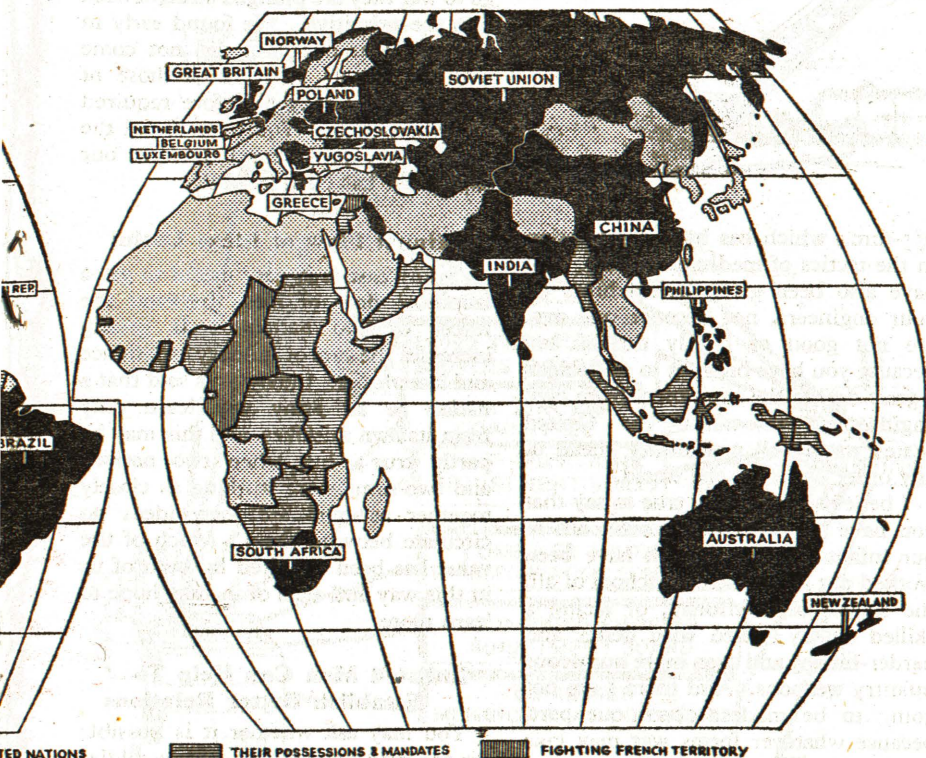
Anglo-American cooperation and integration, however, do not stop short with the higher command or with



AS OF SEPT. 1942

strategy. They go down to tactics on the battlefield. This link was first forged in North Africa. It has been strengthened by exercises carried out by British and American troops together, one of which I was privileged to see last year. It has been still further strengthened by the operations of the Fifth Army in Italy, where the troops of the two nations have constantly worked hand in hand. I do not believe that the tactical ideas of the two nations were very different to begin with. We are both of us inclined to the practical, the

THE UNITED NATIONS



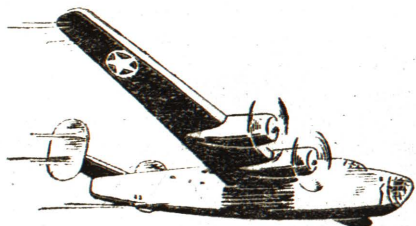
experimental, and both of us distrustful of rigid set principles. We both of us prefer to work by the light of experience and common sense rather than closely follow an established doctrine.

This method may have its weakness, and there is more than would at first sight appear to be said for the other side. The great German commander-in-chief in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, Field-Marshal von Moltke, used to say that he did not want his commanders and staff officers to be geniuses but he did want to be able to assume how each of them would act in any particular case, and he did want to feel that if two of them were changed

round the second would act as the first would. I trust we are getting something of this outlook in Anglo-American relations too, but it is also a useful thing that we should start with something of the same national outlook on war, and that I believe is the case. It will be very important in the great and trying operations which lie ahead of us.

British Admire U.S. Artillery

There has been a great deal that we have been able to teach each other, though each of us still has much to learn from the other. Our people have been greatly struck by some of your artillery methods and especially, I think, by your handling of your



155-mm., which has been a revelation in the tactics of medium artillery. We have also been given useful hints by your engineers, not because our own are not good or highly trained but because you have brought to campaigns a great deal of the equipment from civil engineering, in which the United States was in all probability ahead of any other nation in the world.

I believe it is equally true to say that you have got something useful out of our infantry tactics, which have been worked out in the hardest school of all, the school of inferiority, of facing a skilled enemy armed with better and harder-hitting and even more numerous infantry weapons. And there I am not going to be modest about our part, because whatever forms war may take infantry tactics remain its basis.

We Failed to Understand Battle Condition Needs

Again, United States soldiers have told me frankly that they had not fully realized the extent to which deliberate toughening and hardening of troops for modern war is necessary until they came over here and studied our methods. You are in some ways ahead of us in material civilization, in comfort of living and comfort of travel, but we come second to you among the great nations of the world. And there are dangerous aspects of material civilization when it comes to war. It may make men quick-minded and intelligent, but it takes them away from close contact

with the primitive earth, and when they go to war they are plunged straight back into the primitive. We found early in this war that our men did not come into the depots as hard as those of 1914 and that they therefore required more hardening. You have found the same thing, and there I am told our experience has been helpful.

Continual Flow of Ideas Useful

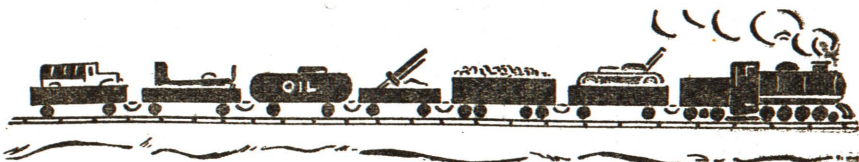
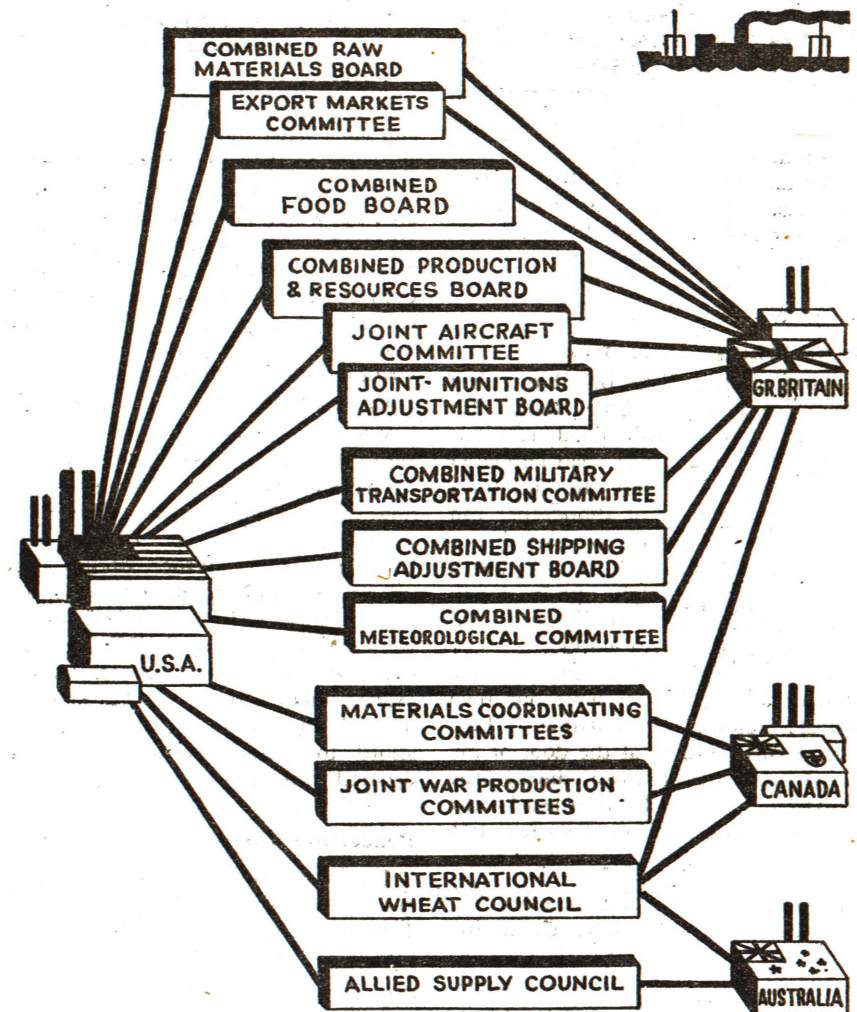
In any case it is very useful to get a continual flow of ideas between the forces of two nations. It greatly increases the sum of military experience and knowledge. I know it is said that a nation or an army will learn only from its own mistakes, and this may be partly true; but when two nations and two armies are working as closely together as ours are, new ideas do circulate between them. Much of the value has been acquired by both of us in this way and each of us may hope to learn more.

Enlisted Men Can Help To Establish Better Relations

You may ask whether it is possible for the man we call the private soldier and you call the enlisted man to help in this great work. There can be no doubt of it, if he keeps his eyes and ears open. And it is very important that he should, not only in military, but also in social life. For, do not forget, there are plenty of dangers in this allied cooperation. A high ranking officer told me the other day that he found in the Middle East that whenever a British Eighth Army man's wife had been unfaithful to him and his home had been broken up by another man, he generally assumed that this man must be an American soldier. If he were asked if he had definite proof he would answer: "Well, if it isn't an American it's a Canadian, because both get a lot more pay than we do."

PRODUCTION FOR A COMMON CAUSE

How the factories of Great Britain, the Dominions and the United States keep one army of two countries supplied.



My friend said that nine times out of ten he was in fact wrong and that the man who had broken up his home was a worker in a munition factory, a man who got a great deal more pay than the American or the Canadian soldier. But the very fact that the Eighth Army man at once jumped to this conclusion is proof of the dangers and the friction that may arise when forces of one nation are quartered in the country of another. If Britain had had a large army quartered in the territory of the United States, these same dangers of bad feeling would have been created.

Little Things Hurt Too

That is one of the big things, but there are plenty of little things also which interfere with good relations and harmony. The bad-tempered American soldier and the dishonest English taxi-driver or shopkeeper can contribute just a grain of sand to put in the works, not much in itself, but if you collect enough grains you eventually get a can-full, and that does no good to any works.

Even if there were no international difficulties, we should have our own private jealousies in wartime. Last year I was standing at the door of my hotel in a small town during the blackout, when I overheard the following conversation between two British soldiers:—

Soldiers Will be Soldiers No Matter What Their Uniform

"Let's go and have a drink in the Cross Keys." "Not the Cross Keys. Every time you go there you have to fight the —shires." "But you're not afraid of the —shires." "Who said I was afraid of them? But I'm not feeling so good tonight. I tell you what, we'll go round to the Lamb and Lark first. I'll feel better after that, and then we'll go to the Cross

Keys, and if any of those —s in the —shires even looks sideways at me I'll sock him good and proper."

Rivalries Sometimes Become Dangerous

There was no great harm in that, and I could not help laughing at it, and yet I have known these regimental rivalries to become a perfect pest. If they are bad, international rivalries are far worse, because they become reflected to some extent in the general relations between the two armies and even the two peoples. Tolerance and effort to understand the other fellow's point of view are pretty considerable virtues, useful in time of peace and even more so in time of war.

We have made mistakes and have suffered setbacks in trying to do what we have set out to do. On the whole, however, I think we are between us making a good job of it. I think there has been a big advance lately. But we do not want to let up on either side because there is so much stiff work to be done and it is essential that the inter-allied machine which tackles them should work smoothly. The job ahead is so big that we cannot afford to waste any of the energy devoted to it in needless friction.

Peacetime Cooperation Promised

I am by trade a military historian and critic, not a social investigator, so I hesitate to allow myself to be led into discussion about the effects of what we are now doing upon the two nations when peace comes again. But I may be allowed to say I think they ought to be good. Some people on both sides will doubtless separate with no memories except for the faults and weakness they saw or thought they saw on the other side. I do not believe, however, that this will be the general

impression. I hope it will not because, if we have work to do together in time of war, we shall also have it in time of peace.

SUMMARY

Both the British and American Armies have been learning from each other. Both have the same basic knowledge of the causes and progress of the war. American artillery methods surprised the British—we

have adopted their infantry tactics and training doctrines. In both Armies an effort is made to create an interest in current events and their relation to the war and to the establishment of the peace.

Q. What are some of the differences and similarities in the British and American methods of waging war?

Q. Can enlisted men help in furthering a better understanding between the two Armies? How?

University Courses Open to Enlisted Men

THE attention of discussion leaders is called to the program of university courses, arranged by British educational institutions and the Education Division, Special Service HQ SOS, ETOUSA, APO 887. U.S. Army.

These courses are open to both officers and enlisted men and, with the exception of the courses at Oxford University, are attended by the men concerned on furlough time. Oxford courses are arranged as temporary duty for qualified men whose applications to attend are approved by the Commanding General, SOS.

Letters of application, in the style of a military letter, should be addressed directly to the Chief of Special Service, HQ SOS, ETOUSA, APO 887. They should specify the course selected, the university at which it is offered and the previous education of the applicant.

A first endorsement, by the officer qualified to grant leaves or furloughs in the applicant's organization, should be included. This endorsement will certify that the applicant is eligible for leave or furlough and will be granted the required time if he is accepted.

No vacancies will exist for the courses at Oxford University until March, or later. Application for the Oxford courses will be made in a military style letter, addressed to the Commanding General, SOS, APO 871, U.S. Army, and will be forwarded through channels.

Accepted applicants for attendance at either the Oxford or other courses will be notified by letter.

The list of arranged courses, together with the dates on which they will be held and the institutions at which they are offered, follows:

21-25 Feb. 1944—University of Manchester—Economics.

21-26 Feb. 1944—Agricultural Course in Devonshire, England.

21-26 Feb. 1944—University of Aberdeen—Scottish Culture.

20-25 Mar. 1944—University of Aberdeen—Scottish Culture.

1-6 Apr. 1944—University of Bristol—English Government—History and Practice.

14-17 Apr. 1944—University of Bristol—Broadcasting and Radio.

3-8 Apr. 1944—University College, Exeter—English Literature and Drama.

10-14 Jul. 1944—University of Bristol—History and Description of British Architecture.

Every Week, Mon. thru Sat.—Oxford University—General Survey Course.



Preparation

AS long as there have been wars there have been allied operations and the difficulties that attend them. If history could cut a wedge and show a cross-section similar problems would be found through the centuries, problems whose garb would change with the times but whose cause would be inherent in human nature. Except under immediate pressure or danger, many men find a strange, obstinate pleasure in defying cooperative action and running as nearly as possible an independent organization. We find it here in England evidenced by Poles, Czechs, Dutch, English and American soldiers. They prefer to stay with their own kind, to talk with men from their own outfits, to drink at their own corner of the bar. Under conditions of hardship or combat the barrier is lowered and mutual respect has a better chance.

THE author of this issue of ARMY TALKS is thinking primarily in terms of military operations, that is the tactics and strategy of warfare when conducted by two or more armies at the same time. He is not unmindful, however, of all the social problems in the situation. He points out the comparatively simple arrangements made during the last war to achieve allied unity up to the time when Marshal Foch became Commander-in-Chief, and some of the amusing difficulties that sometimes resulted.

IT can be a matter of satisfaction that lessons were learned during the last war which cleared the way at once to a more efficient machinery for handling a close allied cooperation in this war. The matter of unified command has been well controlled, and in the recent announcement of General Eisenhower's appointment, together with the officers who will form his staff, we can see unity of command in its latest and most significant aspects. It is of the greatest importance and good fortune that the value of the unified command has never been underrated by either Great Britain or the United States since our entrance into the war. More than that, we are fortunate to have men of the calibre of MacArthur, Eisenhower, Alexander, Montgomery and Mountbatten, who will leave no stone unturned to carry it out.

UNIFIED command carries all the way from Lend-Lease in the upper reaches through logistics, administration and supply to combined tactics on the battlefield. It is greatly aided in our own participation by the fact that England and the United States speak the same basic tongue. Whether human nature will ever grow up sufficiently to drop its individual brands of provincialism remains to be seen, but until that time comes we will always have the trouble-makers who are using, however unknowingly, the best weapons of psychological warfare against their own side. We can be sure under our Commander-in-Chief that the large problems of allied operations will be thoroughly taken care of.



QUESTIONS

FOR THE DISCUSSION

WHEN the topic now presented was first discussed by the editors, it was at once apparent that it could not be as competently handled by an American as it could by the representative of a nation which had been longer in the war than the United States, and one who consequently had greater knowledge of the subject. An Englishman seemed very appropriate since England had been in the war from the beginning both with allies and without.

In preparing for the discussion the leader might well make the period an hour of "allied operation"—without difficulties. After giving the initial talk he could have present an English soldier, a Canadian soldier, a Dutch or Polish or Czech soldier, preferably men who had been in active combat and who could each briefly give their views on allied operations, and then later join in the open discussion. It is suggested that a map of Italy, indicating the present campaign, might help in showing how the allied operation there is being conducted. Possibly an officer on the post, or a neighbouring post, took part in the North African campaign and could give some interesting side-lights, in which case a map of North Africa would prove advantageous. The following questions are listed and can be referred to:

- Q. **What is an allied operation?** Name two in the present war. Name at least one in the last war.
- Q. **What are some of the difficulties of allied operations?** What is usually the most serious difficulty? Have the United Nations suffered from it in this war?
- Q. **How can the difficulties of allied operations be overcome?** (p. 6.)
- Q. **What can the individual soldier do to overcome any of the difficulties of allied operations?** Nothing? A little? A great deal?
- Q. **How have the Germans secured cooperation from their "allies"?** (p. 7.)
- Q. **What difference in allied operations can such a consideration as language make?** (p. 7.)
- Q. **In what ways have we been able to further cooperation with the British?** (p. 6.) In what way have the British been able to help us?
- Q. **In what way can the study of Allied Operations give you an increased sense of confidence in the Command?** Does such a study further pride in service, or show the opportunity for personal participation? Can it give a knowledge of the causes and progress of the war, or a better understanding of our allies? How is it related to current events and the establishment of the peace?

The Topic for next week's issue of ARMY TALKS is **Jobs After the War**. For additional copies of other issues inquire of the Station Special Service Officer.

