

of information, a machine which extends from the front line troops right up to the Army Group staff in which hundreds of individuals all play a vital part. But if its methods of working are humdrum its achievements have been dramatic. For me in Italy the result was that the "fog of war" was dispersed and the enemy's strength and dispositions were always clear and obvious. It will be apparent how useful this knowledge was in enabling me to economize forces and achieve important results with the minimum effort and avoiding casualties and losses.

My relations with the Naval and Air Forces grew closer and more intimate as the campaign progressed. Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, whose name had been associated with the hardest and most glorious days of naval warfare in the Mediterranean, was succeeded on 23rd October, 1943, by Admiral Sir John Cunningham.* The latter's period of command, in the absence of any enemy fleet to contest our supremacy on the open sea, was devoted almost exclusively to the support and assistance of land operations. In this task I always received from him the fullest and most understanding co-operation. If I should single out any one incident it would be to recall the Anzio operation where the Allied Navies uncomplainingly accepted a burden both greater in degree and of longer duration than had been expected and maintained a force which by May had grown to over seven divisions through a harbour no bigger than a fishing port and under continuous fire.† I must mention also the rôle of the Allied Air Forces in support of the Army. Air Marshal Coningham,‡ to whom I owe so much and to whom I have referred in my Despatch on the Conquest of Sicily, returned to the United Kingdom as part of the OVERLORD team and was succeeded, as Commander of the Tactical Air Force, by General Cannon§ of the United States Army Air Force. General Cannon showed from the start a thorough acquaintance with the problems of co-operation between ground and air. Our headquarters were always together and relations between us were so close and constant that I could be certain that the operations of our respective forces would blend into a perfect three-dimensional whole. I cannot speak too highly of General Cannon's gifts as a leader or of the encouragement which his assistance and support always gave me. The measure of his achievement can be seen in the complete immunity we enjoyed from enemy air attacks, the close and effective support enjoyed by the ground forces, and the long lines of destroyed enemy vehicles, the smashed bridges and useless railways found by my Armies wherever they advanced into enemy territory.

General Clark was the obvious choice to succeed me at Army Group Headquarters; he was the senior of my two Army Commanders and General McCreery, now commanding Eighth Army, had previously served under him when he commanded 10 Corps. This is a good opportunity to record my gratitude and appreciation of General Clark's achievements in Italy

* Now Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Cunningham, G.C.B., M.V.O.

† Besides providing gun support, the Allied Navies, up to the breakout from the beachhead on 23rd May, landed no less than 478,407 tons of ammunition and supplies, in the face of air attack.

‡ The late Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham.

§ Lieutenant-General John K. Cannon, United States Army Air Force.

since the landing in the Gulf of Salerno in September, 1943. Although his operational experience up to that time had been slight I had the greatest confidence in his capacity and as the campaign developed was glad to see that judgment fully confirmed. He was quick to learn the difficult art of warfare in a mountainous region, keen to profit by every experience of his own or of other commanders and resourceful in the conduct of complex battle situations both in good and evil days. To all the mental resources of a trained soldier he united great gifts of leadership. Just as he had had under his command both American and British troops, and other nationalities also, to whom he stood in a mutual and reciprocal relationship of confidence and loyalty so I found him a most loyal subordinate, unquestioning in obedience and eager to give the utmost co-operation to the common design. It is strange for me to think, and gratifying to recollect with hopes for the future of co-operation between our two nations, that just as I had myself taken orders from an American commander so I could give orders to an American subordinate, involving the lives of thousands of American soldiers, in the certainty that they would be implicitly executed. It was something new in the history of war and the fact that custom soon made it matter of course should not be allowed to obscure its value.

It proved impossible to launch the offensive in December. The requisite precondition on which I insisted, an adequate spell of good weather, was never fulfilled. Had we undertaken an offensive in the weather that prevailed it would almost certainly have fallen short of success and the resulting expenditure of ammunition would have meant the postponement of the offensive of next spring. Eighth Army took advantage of some fitful spells of clear weather to improve its positions; Ravenna fell on 4th December and Faenza on the 16th and by 6th January our line was on the river Senio and touching the southern shore of the Valli di Comacchio. Here the advance was halted and both sides settled down to an uneasy lull. It is surprising to note that, up to this time, the Germans had shown clearly their intention to maintain their strength in Italy. Two infantry divisions were hastily despatched in November to meet a crisis in Hungary but were immediately replaced; one of the new formations was a division from Norway which had travelled all the way through western Germany at the time when Rundstedt's Ardennes offensive was raging without being drawn into it. At the end of the year, therefore, Kesselring still had twenty-seven* German divisions, four Italian divisions and a Cossack cavalry division. Though we had failed to break through the Apennines we had succeeded in our mission. The Germans found themselves obliged by the very measure of their success in the winter fighting to await our attack in the following spring on an extended and uneconomical line and I was able to accomplish what I had feared impossible the previous autumn, the effective destruction of the enemy armies south of the Po.

The Final Victory.

The full story of the battles which brought us complete victory in the spring of 1945 is

* 20 Luftwaffe Field Division had by then been absorbed into 26 Panzer Division.