

strength should be sufficient to reach the Santerno river and, possibly, secure bridgeheads across it. An offensive with this object in view was to be launched on 21st November, as already provided for, and it was estimated that it would hardly have reached its objective before the first week in December.* This determined the timing for Fifth Army. By 5th December it would have completed its programme for the relief, rest and training of the four American infantry divisions in II Corps; 13 Corps had only been able to rotate their forces so that only a limited offensive effort could be called for from them. American artillery ammunition was sufficient for not more than about fifteen days' full-scale offensive operations. In view of that fact and the other considerations which made it inevitable that this should be the last major offensive before the spring of 1945 it was essential that every chance should be calculated to ensure its success and I directed that the actual timing of the offensive, which would be some date after 7th December, must be dependent on the weather and, if necessary, it must be postponed until the weather was propitious.

The outline plan was as follows. Eighth Army was to develop its present operations so as to reach the line of the Santerno, and, if possible, secure bridgeheads across it, as early as enemy resistance and the weather permitted. Fifth Army was to prepare to carry out an offensive with all available resources up Route 65 and to co-operate with Eighth Army by an attack from the Monte Grande position against Castel San Pietro, on Route 9 south-east of Bologna. The plan and proposed timings were agreed at an Army Commanders' conference in Florence on 26th November. Orders for the operation were issued on 28th November. The second paragraph showed the reasons for the offensive as I have already described them; my intention was "To afford the greatest possible support to the Allied winter offensive on the Western and Eastern fronts by bringing the enemy to battle, thereby compelling him to employ in Italy manpower and resources which might otherwise be available for use on the other fronts."

Before these plans could be carried into operation I was appointed, on 12th December, Supreme Allied Commander in the Mediterranean Theatre. General Mark Clark took over from me the tactical direction of the two Armies with a small operational staff under the name, revived for the purpose, of Fifteenth Army Group. Headquarters, Allied Armies in Italy, was disbanded; part came with me to Allied Force Headquarters and part, in particular the operations and intelligence staff, went to General Clark's headquarters. I should like to express here my appreciation of the work of my staff throughout the campaign. This narrative will have made it clear that our successes were never won by force of numbers, never by a simple marshalling of overwhelming resources, but always by stratagems, secret concentrations and surprise moves. It is the task of the Commander-in-Chief to think out the broad lines of such a strategy but it is for his

staff to evolve the detailed orders and arrangements which will carry his conception into effect. In this my staff, headed by General Harding and his American deputy, General Lemnitzer,* thoroughly fulfilled all demands made on them and ensured the smooth working of a complicated and intricate machine. This achievement was the more remarkable as the staff was composed in almost equal proportions of representatives of two different nationalities. This is an extraordinary fact to which, in my opinion, too little attention has been paid. It might have been expected, on a "realistic" view of human nature, that a mixed headquarters of this nature commanding a mixed group of Armies would tend to split in its approach to day to day operational problems on national lines, a British staff officer favouring, even if only subconsciously, the Eighth Army and an American staff officer, similarly, the Fifth Army. Nothing of this kind occurred. All branches and all individuals worked as parts of one integrated machine, loyal to the common cause and, I take justified pride in claiming, to their Commander-in-Chief.

My administrative staff was headed by General Robertson whose experience in this vitally important branch of the military art reached back to the early days of Abyssinia and the Western Desert. I have referred from time to time in the earlier parts of my Despatch to various particular difficulties which faced us in the supply of our troops in Italy and if I have not referred to these problems since then it is because so firm a foundation had been laid down that subsequent problems were solved almost automatically by the existing organisation. The proverb calls that land happy which has no history and certainly an administrative machine can be known to be working at its best when nothing is heard of it either for good or evil. It must not be imagined that the basic and permanent difficulties of the Italian scene were abolished; the blocked and mined ports, the demolished roads and bridges, the railway lines torn up by special machines, all these remained and presented a yet more difficult appearance as the Germans grew more experienced at the work of destruction. The merit of the administrative staff is that they took them in their stride and the proof is that, instead of recounting a series of achievements, it is only necessary to record that operations were never hamstrung and operational plans never radically altered because of any administrative considerations.

For the faultless working of the operational and administrative machinery the achievements already recorded will provide sufficient evidence. The successes of military intelligence have appeared less frequently and from their very nature they are much more difficult to record; there is also the difficulty that that nature is very widely misunderstood by a public whose mind, especially in wartime, is occupied by stories true or false of spies and secret agents. In actual fact espionage can never play anything but the most minor rôle in military intelligence and certainly in Italy it produced no information of any importance. Military Intelligence is a more prosaic affair, dependent on an efficient machine for the collection and evaluation of every sort of item

* General McCreery considered that by 7 December he would probably only be on the Senio; a fresh break in the weather was the main factor which helped to prove him right.

* Major-General Lyman L. Lemnitzer, United States Army.