

There are a number of limitations in the use of airborne troops, chief of which is the uncertainty of weather. But I believe this factor will become less important in the future, as scientific methods are developed to facilitate the use of aircraft under adverse weather conditions.

The Medical Organisation.

No account of this campaign would be complete without some mention of the truly remarkable success of the medical organisation. But it must be remembered that there were two factors which contributed greatly to the results achieved; probably no group of doctors has ever worked on better material, and secondly, they were caring for the men of a winning army. The men of 21 Army Group were fully immunised and fully trained; their morale was at its highest; they were well-clothed and well-fed; they were fighting in a climate to which the average British soldier is accustomed; hygiene, both personal and unit, was exceptionally good; welfare services were well organised. The exhilarating effect of success also played its part in reducing the rates of sickness.

Commanders in the field must realise that the medical state of an army is not dependent on the doctors alone. Their efforts are immeasurably facilitated when morale is at its highest, and of all the factors which ensure a high state of morale, there is none more important than success.

The sickness amongst troops was almost halved as compared with the last war. It is striking that, as we swept through Germany, liberating prison camps such as Belsen and Sandbostel where thousands of persons were dying of typhus, only twenty-five British troops contracted this disease. None died of it. This was due to preventive inoculations and to the adequate supply and use of a powder called D.D.T.

Air transport has been of great importance in the evacuation of casualties. By this means over a hundred thousand wounded men were evacuated to base hospitals from front line units. In the sphere of transfusion, great quantities of blood and blood plasma were used. A co-ordinated service of air transport and refrigerator trucks ensured that fresh blood was always at hand for surgeons working directly behind the lines—even during the rapid advance into Belgium.

Another interesting fact is that, in the last war, two out of every three men wounded in the belly, died. Field Surgical Units, operating close behind the lines, greatly reduced this danger. In the Normandy campaign two out of every three men wounded in the belly recovered.

The healing of war wounds has been revolutionised by the use of penicillin. Many men,

who in the last war would have been permanent invalids, were fit and ready to go back to the line within a month of being wounded.

To sum up, the doctors were prepared to lay 15 to 1 that once a man got into their hands, whatever his injury, they would save his life and restore him to health. It is a fine thing that these odds were achieved with a handsome margin.

Conclusion.

I must emphasise that my despatch has been primarily concerned with 21 Army Group; but it is well to remember that any complete history of the campaign in North-West Europe would tell more of the tremendous efforts of the United States and of the fighting on the more Southerly sectors remote from the 21 Army Group zone.

I would also say that the scope of my despatch has permitted only the briefest reference to our great Russian ally.

Events have amply shown that a splendid spirit of co-operation was established between the British and American services, and that under General Eisenhower a strong, loyal team was quickly brought into being, while the various components of the great invasion force were welded into a fine fighting machine.

It has been brought home to me, not only in this campaign but throughout the war, that the soldier on the battle front, and the worker on the home front are closely linked members of the same team—neither can achieve any success without the other; both have to stand firm under fire and both have to see that their job is carried out in spite of all the enemy can do.

I do not propose in this despatch to record the names of those who have deserved my personal and official gratitude for their services in the campaign. To name any might seem to imply some lack of appreciation of others; where all did so well it seems invidious to mention names.

I record my deep appreciation and gratitude to all who served with me in this historic campaign: from the highest commander to the most junior private soldier.

In conclusion I wish to pay tribute to the splendid fighting spirit, heroism and endurance of the ordinary soldier. And if I were asked what is the greatest single factor which contributed to his success, I would say morale. I call morale the greatest single factor in war. A high morale is based on discipline, self-respect and confidence of the soldier in his commanders, in his weapons and in himself. Without high morale, no success can be achieved, however good may be the strategic or tactical plan, or anything else. High morale is a pearl of very great price. And the surest way to obtain it is by success in battle.

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