

4. On 17th November, 1943, I issued a Directive to the Air Marshal Commanding, Royal Air Force Second Tactical Air Force and to the Commanding General, United States Ninth Air Force, in which I informed them of my appointment as Air Commander-in-Chief and of the respective dates on which their units came under my operational control. I further directed that these forces should proceed, without delay, to prepare for operations in support of two British and two American Field Armies in an assault on the Continent. I also issued a Directive to the Air Marshal Commanding, Air Defence of Great Britain, setting out the functions and organisation of the Air Defence of Great Britain, following on its conversion from Royal Air Force Fighter Command.

5. On 6th December, 1943, I issued a further Directive to the forces under my command, outlining the "Overlord" plan and defining the control that I would exercise as Air Commander-in-Chief. A table showing these forces and the chain of command is at Appendix "A" (not reproduced).

Operation "Pointblank"

6. During the preliminary period of preparation for the assault, in late 1943 and early 1944, the medium and light bomber forces of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force continued to lend support to Operation "Pointblank." This was the name given to the combined bomber plan of the strategical bombing forces which had as its aims, first, the reduction of the fighter forces of the G.A.F., second, the general reduction in the war potential of Germany, and third, the weakening of the will of the German people to continue the struggle. The co-ordination of these operations was effected through a Combined Operational Planning Committee, which was a joint British/American Fighter and Bomber Committee responsible for planning daylight operations when the United States Army Air Force heavy bombers took part. During this preliminary period, the operations by Allied Expeditionary Air Force medium and light bombers in conjunction with, and in support of United States Eighth Air Force were given precedence over any other daylight operations. A second Committee, known as the II Group Planning Committee, co-ordinated operations of the medium and light bombers of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force other than those in the support role mentioned above. The activities of the fighter forces of the Allied Expeditionary Air Force as escort to, and in support of, bombing operations were also co-ordinated through these Committees.

Ninth Air Force Released from "Pointblank" Commitments

7. On 10th March, 1944, I forwarded a Directive to Commanding General, United States Ninth Air Force, advising him that you, as the Supreme Allied Commander, had decided that the time had come for the operations of the Ninth Air Force to be directed towards the preparation for Operation "Overlord" and that it would, therefore, operate exclusively under the Allied Expeditionary Air Force and be released from the commitment to assist the United States Eighth Air Force in "Pointblank" operations. As an exception to this ruling, such fighters of the United States Ninth Fighter Command as

were suitable and available continued to operate as escort to the United States Eighth Air Force when required.

8. At this time also, I advised the forces under my command that the most important assistance the Allied Expeditionary Air Force could give the Army during the preparatory phase would be by attacking the enemy's rail communications, with the object of so disorganising his railway system that he would find it difficult to supply his divisions in Northern France when the fighting started and still more difficult to bring reinforcements into the lodgment area. Selected rail centres were, therefore, put in the first priority for attack.

Role of Strategic Air Forces

9. Until March, 1944, strategic air forces comprising the United States Eighth Air Force and Royal Air Force Bomber Command, continued to be employed on Operation "Pointblank" under the direction of the British Chief of Air Staff acting as a representative of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. In March, 1944, as the completion of the preparatory tasks for Operation "Overlord" became more urgent, the Combined Chiefs of Staff directed that "Overlord" should have priority over "Pointblank" and that the direction of strategic air forces should pass from the British Chief of Air Staff to yourself as the Supreme Allied Commander, on 14th April, 1944.

10. You instructed your deputy, Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur W. Tedder, G.C.B., to exercise for you general supervision of all air forces, particularly in the co-ordination of the efforts of heavy bomber forces to be employed on operations "Pointblank" and "Overlord". I was responsible to you for all air operations in connection with the latter plan and I accordingly passed to Air Chief Marshal Tedder my requirements for heavy bomber effort both in the preparatory and assault phases. During May, 1944, the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander decided that all air operations could be more easily planned and laid on at a single headquarters, and the Air Operations Planning Staff of Supreme Headquarters was moved to my Headquarters. The Deputy Supreme Allied Commander and the Commanders of the strategical and tactical air forces then regularly attended my daily conferences at Stanmore, thus enabling all operation orders covering all air forces occupied with "Overlord" tasks, to be co-ordinated and given rapidly to the forces to be employed.

Formation of Advanced A.E.A.F.

11. In order to achieve the most economical and effective employment of the air forces at my disposal for the assault and its subsequent development, I considered it essential that the air operations in immediate and direct support of the land battle should be specially co-ordinated and directed. I, therefore, decided to establish a small operational organisation to be known as Advanced Allied Expeditionary Air Force. Under my general direction, the Commander Advanced A.E.A.F. was given the task of directing and co-ordinating the planning for and operations of such forces of the United States Ninth Air Force and Royal Air Force Second Tactical Air Force as were allotted to him from time to time.