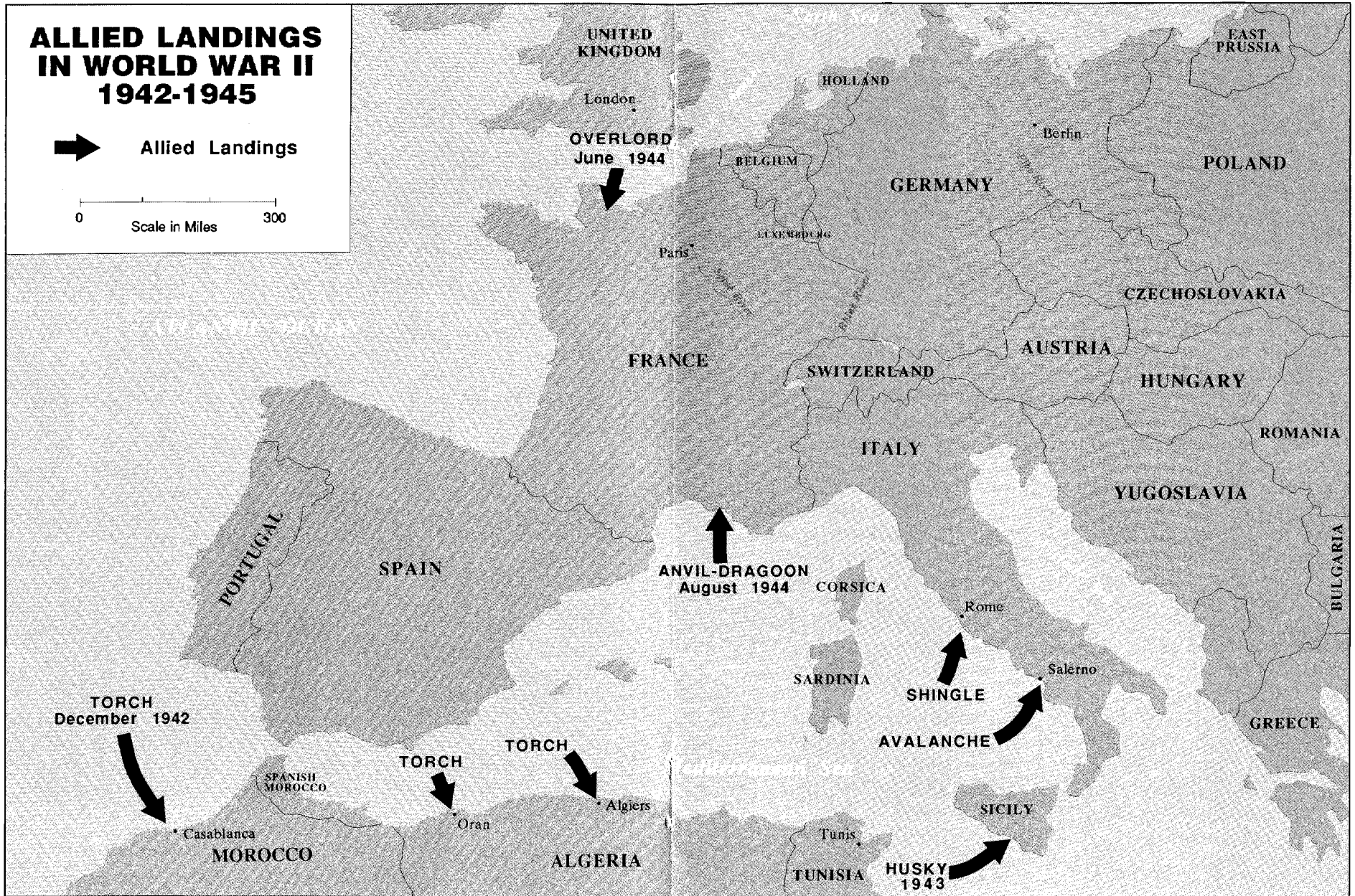


ALLIED LANDINGS IN WORLD WAR II 1942-1945

➔ Allied Landings

0 Scale in Miles 300



supervision of tactical commanders from different armies that had different operational habits. TORCH also taught Eisenhower, to his surprise and chagrin, that politics and diplomacy demanded more of his time than actual military command. As Allied commander, he was not only a military leader but also the representative of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and their respective governments when such political issues as the handling of the Vichy regime had to be resolved. His emergence as a diplomat thus began in North Africa. Eisenhower's first exercise of Allied command revealed that it held many frustrations, but he treated each problem or setback as a lesson. As time went on, he became more skillful, gradually mastering a job that was really without precedent in the history of warfare.

At the end of 1943, after Eisenhower had conducted successful landings in Sicily and Italy and negotiated an Italian surrender, the Combined Chiefs of Staff named him Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force for the invasion of Europe. At the Teheran Conference in November, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin had agreed upon the opening of a second front in northwest Europe, thus validating what had been the essence of American strategy since the beginning of the war. Operation OVERLORD, in this sense, was the culmination of all of America's mobilization and training efforts; all other campaigns had merely prepared the way. Americans believed that Germany could only be defeated by military operations on the Continent itself, and had made an attack across the English Channel the heart of strategic planning since the days before Pearl Harbor. In the eyes of American planners, OVERLORD was to be the decisive act of the war. If it succeeded, then eventual victory was not in question. Thus it was by far the most important campaign the Allies would wage, a fact of which Eisenhower was well aware when he took over from General Sir Frederick Morgan, whose staff had made the preliminary studies for the invasion.

Any residual concerns Eisenhower might have harbored about the emphasis the alliance would place on the invasion were eliminated by the Combined Chiefs of Staff directive for OVERLORD, which spelled out its participants and objectives:

You will enter the continent of Europe and, in conjunction with the other Allied Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her Armed Forces.

The proposed invasion was manifestly to be the determining Allied

campaign of the war. Its object was to destroy the Wehrmacht, and only secondarily to attain specific geographical objectives. The essence of success was therefore to seek decisive battle with the German forces on the Continent. Eisenhower's staff selected the Ruhr, the industrial heart of Germany, as the objective of an attack that would undoubtedly serve to bring the main body of the German Army to battle.

The general plan of the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), was to land on the Normandy coast and build up resources for a breakout into the interior of France. Thereafter, the Allies would pursue the Germans with two army groups on a broad front, emphasizing the left to capture necessary ports and threaten the Ruhr. The right army group was to link up with forces attacking northward from a separate invasion on the beaches of southern France. The two army groups would defeat all German forces west of the Rhine, establish forward logistical bases for the final battle, and seek bridgeheads across the river. The final attack was to be a double envelopment of the Ruhr, followed by an exploitation into Germany with the direction to be determined according to the circumstances at that time.

To execute the plan, the first essential was proper organization. The virtue of the Combined Chiefs of Staff was that, as the only organization that gave orders to Eisenhower, it was the nearest thing possible to having only one government to which to answer. The corollary within his own headquarters was to build a structure of command and staff that emphasized Allied unity and the harmonious cooperation of the several national armed forces that would fight the battle. Eisenhower therefore drew men he knew from his previous staffs and blended British and American officers into an organization that reflected his own outlook. The primary objective of the SHAEF staff, he said, was to "utilize the resources of two great nations . . . with the decisiveness of a single authority." This would obviously not be easy, as the example of World War I proved, and Eisenhower continuously returned to the subject of cooperation. His personality, his sense of optimism and determination, permeated the staff, creating the technical and emotional atmosphere necessary for the Allied command to work properly. Even so, an enormous responsibility lay with the Allied commander in chief to make the system function.

The preparations and decision for OVERLORD put both the commander and his staff to the test. Although everyone was committed to the concept of Allied unity of command, Eisenhower had a more advanced conception of it than most and insisted on

controlling everything that had any bearing on the battle he believed would decide the outcome of the war. This determination led him to a series of confrontations, both outside of SHAEF and within his own command.

A typical case was the controversy over distribution of landing craft among the several competing theaters, which set Eisenhower at odds with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff. He succeeded in squeezing out a sufficient number of those critical vessels to conduct OVERLORD, although he could not get enough to mount the planned simultaneous landing in the south of France (ANVIL, later renamed DRAGOON). At the political level, he stood firm on the necessity of ANVIL, although Prime Minister Churchill strongly believed it to be unnecessary and wanted to use ANVIL resources in the Mediterranean. Eisenhower, with Marshall's support, prevailed in preventing the allocation of scarce men and equipment for operations elsewhere in a theater both deemed secondary.

There were similar debates within SHAEF itself. An essential part of the operational plan was restricting the flow of German

The Supreme Command in London, February 1944. (*Seated from left*) Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Eisenhower, General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery; (*standing from left*) Maj. Gen. Omar N. Bradley, Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh-Mallory, and Lt. Gen. Water Bedell Smith.



reinforcements to the coast after the invasion began. The Transportation Plan, executed by the U.S. 8th Air Force and Royal Air Force Bomber Command, was to accomplish this through a systematic and extended pre-invasion bombardment of rail centers and bridges. The strategic air force chiefs preferred to continue existing bombing programs over Germany and strenuously resisted subordination to SHAEF, even for a limited period. Eisenhower persistently argued for the plan and eventually offered sufficient compromises to gain its acceptance. Another case involved the airborne drops to seal off the coast from the interior, which Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley thought vital to his troops' success on Utah and Omaha beaches. Shortly before the attack, Air Chief Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory argued that poor landing zones and German resistance would result in the "futile slaughter" of two fine airborne divisions. Eisenhower stoutly insisted that the landings could not proceed otherwise and overrode his air commander's objections.

In the end, Eisenhower proved to be correct on all of these issues, and his determination to prevail in the debates reinforced his authority as Supreme Commander. Achieving a consensus was more important to him than merely winning an argument, however, because success depended upon enthusiastic execution of the plans SHAEF approved. Eisenhower consistently won over men with different ideas by assuring that their points of view had a full airing and fair consideration. He was rarely abrupt and never arbitrary and applied the particular genius of his own personality to persuade other men to accept a common strategy. Eisenhower's reputation for honesty and openness had much to do with his success in developing and implementing a truly Allied plan of campaign, rather than parallel national plans.

The importance of OVERLORD justified the Supreme Commander's insistence on absolute unity of effort, but the final decision to launch the invasion was still fraught with consequence. Eisenhower's decision came down simply to go or not to go on one of the dates his staff had selected as optimum, yet the apparent simplicity of that decision veiled its difficulty. Eisenhower had to set the complex plan into motion at the correct time and without hesitation. The proper conditions of tide and moon occurred only twice in June, and postponement past June effectively meant that the attack would have to be put off until 1945, because several months of good campaigning weather were essential for the subsequent operations on the Continent.

The Germans, conscious that the Allies were accumulating manpower and materiel in the United Kingdom, anticipated an attack somewhere on the French coast. Surprise, and therefore success, was possible only in terms of the time and place of the landings; delay would increase the chances that the enemy might penetrate Allied intentions. Beyond the obvious consequences of failure was Eisenhower's knowledge that Allied resources were sufficient for only one try. After due deliberation, he determined on 5 June to go ahead with the landings the next day. In effect his decision reflected all of the education and experience of his many years as a soldier.

Once the machinery of OVERLORD had been set in motion, there was nothing more the Supreme Commander could do to affect the results. He placed the issue in the hands of the few thousand brave men at Gold, Sword, Juno, Omaha, and Utah beaches. OVERLORD, the largest amphibious assault ever undertaken in the history of warfare, began with British and American airborne landings in the hours before dawn. The accumulated experience and knowledge gleaned from the earlier landings in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy, incorporated by solid staff work into a comprehensive plan, succeeded in lodging a beachhead on the continent of Europe by the late afternoon. As of the end of June, the Allies had put nearly one million men and over 585,000 tons of supplies over the beaches. On 15 August, Operation DRAGOON, the complementary landings in the south of France, set another army ashore. By the end of August, the two million Allied troops in France had broken out of their landing sites, liberated Paris, established supplementary supply ports at Toulon and Marseilles, and were racing toward Germany. Threatened by converging pincers from north and south, the German occupiers retreated from France to their frontier fortifications. Through D-Day, Eisenhower's most marked characteristics were his unflinching optimism about the success of the invasion and his determination to overcome all obstacles that stood in its way. As the subsequent campaigns developed across northern Europe, he demonstrated an exceptional mental flexibility that enabled him to exploit German weaknesses. Since the days of his tutorials with Fox Conner, he had despised rigid adherence to preconceived plans as unimaginative, closed-minded, and potentially dangerous. Thus, while Eisenhower hewed closely to the broad outlines of the strategic plan he had enunciated before D-Day, he had no objection to deviations at the tactical level. From August of 1944 through the end of the



The Supreme Commander talks with men of Company E, 502d Parachute Infantry Regiment, at the 101st Airborne Division's camp at Greenham Common, England, 5 June 1944. Eisenhower had the highest regard for America's citizen-soldier; the soldiers recognized and returned the trust.

war, he made a series of important decisions that exploited circumstances.

The first of these was his decision after the breakout at St. Lo to cross the Seine River on the run, instead of pausing there to gather strength for a deliberate crossing. German resistance had suddenly crumbled and the Wehrmacht was in full retreat to the east. Eisenhower saw the situation as a great opportunity to drive the Germans into their homeland before the end of the year. Perhaps, he thought, recalling the German collapse of 1918, pursuit might force an early capitulation. In consequence, he abandoned major attacks to secure the Breton ports and turned his armies to the east. As it turned out, Germany did not collapse, and the army groups outran the ability of their logistical systems to supply them. But when that happened, the Allied forces stood on the German frontier, far ahead of their predicted advance.

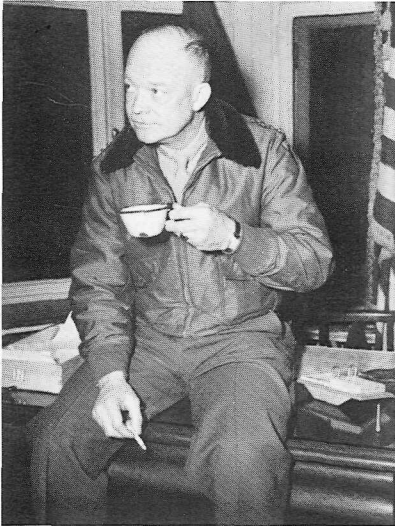
Eisenhower's decision to fight on a "broad front," part of the original plan, repeatedly came under question during the attack across France. There naturally were political imperatives that made it essential for the Supreme Commander to use both army groups to fight the Germans. Destruction of the German armies



D-Day Assault, 6 June 1944. Eisenhower placed the issue in the hands of the few thousand brave men at Gold, Sword, Juno, Omaha, and Utah beaches.

west of the Rhine was also an important objective that he could accomplish only by maintaining a steady advance with all of his forces. In the process, the Allies would close on the Rhine River, a defensible terrain feature that would allow great economy of force in case of a German counterattack. Furthermore, a broad-front attack used all of the Allies' military power against the Germans, rather than just a portion. Finally, a broad attack offered more chances of finding, and exploiting, enemy weaknesses. Eisenhower, concentrating on the objective of destroying the German armed forces rather than on the occupation of terrain, firmly resisted both military and political arguments against the broad-front attack.

He was as resolute in adversity as in success. When the Germans launched their counterattack through the forest of the Ardennes in December 1944, Eisenhower recognized it as a major attack well before intelligence reached the same conclusion. He moved quickly and calmly to cope with the situation, adjusting command arrangements to suit the geographical conditions under which his armies had to fight. Most significantly, he treated the developing Battle of the Bulge as an opportunity to destroy



The Supreme Allied Commander at 8th Infantry Division headquarters in Belgium, November 1944. The Allied forces stood on the German frontier, far ahead of their predicted advance.

German reserves, turning an enemy attack to the Allies' advantage.

Following the reduction of the Bulge, General Bradley presented him with the unanticipated capture of the Ludendorff railway bridge across the Rhine River at the town of Remagen. Eisenhower decided that, although it was somewhat south of his planned Rhine crossing, Remagen would serve as the point from which the final attacks could be made. He therefore diverted supplies and forces to exploit the Remagen crossing and made it the point of departure for the decisive double encirclement of the Ruhr valley that captured more than 325,000 prisoners and ended organized enemy resistance.

The enemy High Command collapsed after Hitler's suicide on 30 April 1945. Within a few days all remaining enemy forces surrendered, and the Third Reich officially ended on 7 May when Eisenhower received the unconditional surrender from General Alfred Jodl at the SHAEF headquarters in Rheims.

Postwar Leader

With Europe in the early stages of reconstruction, Eisenhower returned to the United States in November 1945 to replace his mentor as Chief of Staff of the United States Army. Whereas

George C. Marshall had overseen the building of the largest Army in the nation's history, Eisenhower presided over the postwar demobilization of that Army. In an echo of his duties in the 1930s, he found himself testifying before Congress to oppose cuts in the military appropriation that would hinder the maintenance of an adequate force to defend American interests in the postwar world. With the passage of the National Security Act of 1947, Eisenhower became the Army's first Chief of Staff to participate in the newly created unified Joint Chiefs of Staff. In 1948 he retired from the Army to become president of Columbia University.

In December 1950, at the request of the European allies, President Harry Truman recalled Eisenhower to become the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, where he directed the buildup of military forces for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In dealing with the creation of a common defense against the threat of Communist aggression, Eisenhower and his allied staff worked within the constraints of a Europe that was recovering from the ravages of World War II and still stood on the edge of economic collapse. His most enduring contribution was developing a sense of partnership and self-confidence among the NATO member nations. Europeans found that they could trust a man who conspicuously shared their desire for peace. Eisenhower believed that his NATO command was unique. It was the first time, as he later commented, that a multinational army was created "to preserve the peace and not to wage war."

In 1952 he accepted the Republican Party's nomination for president and defeated Democrat Adlai E. Stevenson in the November elections. The quality of leadership that distinguished Eisenhower the soldier also served him well in the presidency. The diverse challenges of more than thirty years of service in the Army and as an international leader amplified his natural gift for command. He had the considerable advantage that many of the leaders of the postwar world were old friends whom he had come to know well during the war, and with whom he already had a sound working relationship. Eisenhower's military experience also proved invaluable in determining his style of presidential leadership. Based on techniques that had served him well in SHAEF and NATO, he used a chief of staff to keep track of the day-to-day operations, freeing him to maintain an overview of all of the administration's business. The new President's major concern was the continued quest for international peace that had been his focus in his years with NATO. A truce was finally signed to end the



President-elect Eisenhower with 15th Infantry Regiment troops, Korea, December 1952. The new President's major concern was the continued quest for international peace.

Korean War in July 1953, honoring one of Eisenhower's campaign pledges. In December he proposed the Atoms for Peace program, whereby nations would pool their atomic information for peaceful purposes, an initiative that led to the creation of the International Atomic Energy Agency in 1957. It was also during his first administration that the United States and Canada drew closer together in the joint project to build the St. Lawrence Seaway. Trying to reduce tensions with the Soviet Union, in 1955 he proposed the Open Skies plan that would allow the United States and the USSR aerial inspection of each other's military bases.

In 1957 a series of Near Eastern crises led to the Eisenhower Doctrine, which promised American aid to any Middle East nation that asked for help against Communist attack. The following year, the President sent troops to Beirut to aid the Lebanese government. In a similar action, he sent naval forces to support Nationalist China in a crisis with Communist China over the little islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Overall, however, relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated during Eisenhower's administration. The U-2 incident in May 1960 caused the breakup of a summit conference in Paris with Premier Nikita Khrushchev and a general hardening of relations between the two nations.

In domestic affairs, President Eisenhower managed a balanced budget and cut military spending through the New Look program

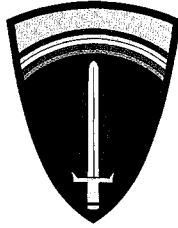
that resulted in smaller forces and reliance on strategic deterrence for defense. Several weeks after taking office, he created a new cabinet office, the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. To promote the development of the postwar economy, he successfully lobbied Congress to pass the Federal Aid Highway Act in 1956. This project launched the biggest peacetime construction program in the nation's history. In 1957 he used federal troops to enforce school desegregation in Little Rock after Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas refused to comply with the 1954 Supreme Court decision that ordered integration. In 1958, following the launch of Explorer I, the first American satellite, Eisenhower signed into law a bill that created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA). In his second term Alaska and Hawaii became states. After turning the presidency over to John F. Kennedy in January 1961, Eisenhower retired to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

The central fact about Dwight David Eisenhower is that he accepted the responsibility for making pivotal decisions at critical points in the history of his nation and the western alliance. The most dramatic of those decisions, and the ones for which he had consciously prepared himself throughout a long military career, produced the Allied victory in Europe in 1945. Less spectacularly, but just as resolutely, Eisenhower dedicated himself to the cause of peace and sought the national good as he conceived it during eight years in the White House. He won the trust and confidence of the common man, both in the United States and abroad, and personified the goodwill and altruism of American policy in his era. As soldier and as statesman, duty came first. Perhaps the best characterization of the man comes from his own words in a speech he delivered in June 1945, to acknowledge being awarded the Freedom of the City of London. "Humility," he said, "must always be the portion of any man who receives acclaim earned in the blood of his followers and the sacrifices of his friends."

Further Readings

There are many excellent books about Eisenhower, both as war-time commander and as President. For the years as Supreme Commander, see his own recollections, *Crusade in Europe* (1948). The President's memoirs have been published in two volumes: *Mandate For Change: 1953-1956* (1963), and *Waging Peace, 1956-1961: The White House Years* (1965). His *At Ease—Stories I Tell Friends* (1988), reveals something of the inner man. Stephen Ambrose, editor of Eisenhower's personal papers, has written the definitive biography in *Eisenhower: Soldier, General of the Army, President Elect, 1890-1952* (1983); and *Eisenhower: The President* (1984). A recent addition is David Eisenhower, *Eisenhower at War: 1943-1945* (1987). The memoirs of the Supreme Allied Commander's principal subordinates enhance Eisenhower's own account of the victory in Europe. Of particular value are Omar N. Bradley, *A Soldier's Story* (1951); and Walter Bedell Smith, *Eisenhower's Six Great Decisions: Europe, 1944-1945* (1956). Russell F. Weigley provides not only a discussion of personalities, but also of strategic and operational considerations in *Eisenhower's Lieutenants: The Campaigns of France and Germany, 1944-1945* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981). The official history series United States Army in World War II provides detailed accounts of each campaign of the war in Europe. Forrest C. Pogue, *The Supreme Command* (1954), which surveys the coalition command and its campaigns from 1943 through 1945, is particularly useful.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year of 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.