

FROM SALERNO TO ROME: GENERAL MARK W. CLARK AND
THE CHALLENGES OF COALITION WARFARE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

FROM SALERNO TO ROME: GENERAL MARK W. CLARK AND THE CHALLENGE OF COALITION WARFARE, by MAJ Glenn L. King, 92 pages.

On 9 September 1943 the United States Fifth Army landed at Salerno, commencing a lengthy and costly campaign that would transit the Italian Peninsula. Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark commanded this army. His many supporters, including Winston Churchill and General Dwight D. Eisenhower, considered him a brilliant staff officer and trainer. His detractors, including General George S. Patton, considered him overly ambitious and self-serving. Clark had been promoted ahead of many senior and experienced officers, some of whom were now his subordinate commanders within the Fifth Army. His army would come under the jurisdiction of the Fifteenth Army Group, a combined American-British Headquarters commanded by General Harold Alexander, an Englishman. Clark would command a number of foreign troops, including the British X Corps, the New Zealand Corps and the French Expeditionary Corps. Throughout this campaign, Clark would face the complexities of coalition command, tactical in nature but with strategic consequences. This thesis contends that the command arrangements within Fifteenth Army Group, together with biased perceptions, greatly influenced the decision making of General Clark, an accomplished staff officer yet inexperienced army commander.

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ACRONYMS

ACS	American Chiefs of Staff
AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters
BCS	British Chiefs of Staff
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
CCS	Combined Chiefs of Staff
GHO	General Headquarters
NZ	New Zealand
US	United States

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The genesis for operations within the Mediterranean theatre occurred at the Casablanca conference in January 1943. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill agreed that steps must be taken to remove Italy from the war, however no firm plans were developed to affect this aim. The Allied leaders met again in Washington in May 1943 and agreed to an invasion of Italy in order to knock Italy out of the war and tie down the maximum number of German forces. This invasion would occur after successful seizure of Sicily by a British and American Army Group. The task for planning the invasion of mainland Italy fell to the United States Fifth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark. General Clark was the youngest Lieutenant General in the American Army. Clark had gained a reputation as a very competent officer, but one who was overly ambitious and media savvy. Clark had very good relationships with people in positions of power that included Churchill and General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Other than a short period of command during the First World War, Clark had been the consummate staff officer. Clark's Fifth Army would come under the control of the Fifteenth Army Group, commanded by the British Officer General Harold Alexander. Alexander was highly regarded within the higher echelons of command, having gained vast experiences when commanding troops during the First World War and the inter-war period.

On 9 September 1943, Operation Avalanche commenced with the Fifth Army storming the beaches at Salerno. The American and British forces slowly made their way

inland under intense enemy fire. Operating astride the Sele River, both the United States VI Corps and British X Corps needed to rapidly secure their common boundaries. After the first day, General Clark was pleased with the progress that had been made. Little did he know that this would be the start of an eight month struggle for his army? Clark's forces were to advance north through difficult terrain and defeat a capable enemy force fighting from a series of defensive lines. Lacking resources that had been set aside for the invasion of France amplified these difficulties. The human dimension would be a key factor throughout. The capabilities of a number of subordinate commanders would be scrutinized, and varying nationalistic views on the conduct of the campaign would soon surface.

The focus of this thesis is to determine the impact that command arrangements and styles within the Fifteenth Army Group, together with perceptions of other nation's forces, had in influencing General Clark's decision making. The research will review the strategic and operational influences evident within the Mediterranean theater at the time. The careers of both Generals Clark and Alexander will be analyzed in order to identify both similarities and differences in the course of the respective careers. These experiences would be vital in shaping their respective command philosophies. Fifth Army's operations, from Operation Avalanche in September 1943 to the capture of Rome in June 1944, will provide the basis for which to analyze the actions of units and the respective commanders. Due to the length and complexity of this campaign, this thesis will focus on those key events that provide appropriate information for analysis.

CHAPTER 2

THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN

Allied Strategy for the Mediterranean

On 14 January 1943 the second stage of Operation Saturn, a Soviet counter offensive against stalled German forces on the Eastern Front was approaching its second day. United States - led Allied forces were making significant progress in the Pacific Campaign. On this same date, delegations led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, General's Charles De Gaulle and Henri Giraud (figure 1) commenced a strategic planning conference at the Anfar Hotel in Casablanca, Morocco. This conference, to become known as the Casablanca Conference, Codename Symbol, would commence detailed planning and preparations for the next series of operations to commence within the European and Pacific theatres, noting in particular that Churchill stated that “we have no (suitable) plan for 1943.”¹ Originally intended to be a tripartite conference, Russian leader Joseph Stalin had declined the invitation to attend.

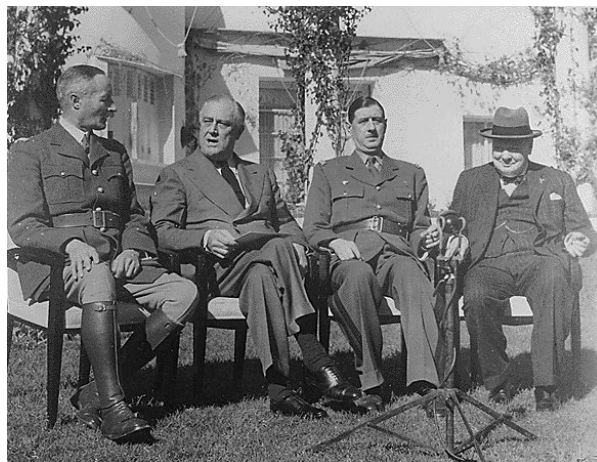


Figure 1. Giraud, Roosevelt, De Gaulle and Churchill at Casablanca.

Source: SYMBOL, the Casablanca Conference, by Simon Appleby; available from <http://www.casablancconference.com>; Internet; Accessed 14 January 2007.

From the onset the American and English parties confronted the numerous issues that needed to occur during 1943 and beyond; these included the Combined Bomber Offensive and the strategy within the Mediterranean theatre. Churchill was heavily in favor of taking the war to Italy and wanted to bring Turkey into the war. Roosevelt was concerned that operations in the Mediterranean would tie down resources needed for an Allied invasion, soon to be called Operation Overlord, to be launched from the British Isles against the European mainland. All agreed, however, that efforts had to be made to coerce Italy out of the war as well as get Adolf Hitler to divert forces from the Eastern Front, therefore making him fight on two fronts. On 18 January the participants agreed that while preparations would continue in England for an invasion of Europe, concurrent multiple operations would be launched from North Africa against areas within the Mediterranean theatre, to include Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily.² At this time no one committed to an invasion of Italy.

In the context of this thesis, two decisions were made concerning Allied forces in North Africa. First, General Harold Alexander, an Englishman, was to become General Dwight D. Eisenhower's deputy in Tunisia, commanding the Allied Ground Forces. Alexander, a respected British commander, would oversee the campaign in Tunisia. The second decision concerned the forces to be used for the invasion of Sicily. Two army groups would be involved, with General Bernard Montgomery commanding the British Eighth Army and Lieutenant General George S. Patton in command of the American Seventh Army. This left Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark and his American Fifth Army uncommitted to this operation, tasked with protecting the army groups' current flanks and

establishing a training programme for allied troops.³ These issues will be explored in further chapters.

President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met again in Washington DC for the Trident Conference over the period 12 through to the 27th May 1943. Attendees approached the conference with optimism following recent tactical successes in the Atlantic and Pacific theatres. Planning for Operation Husky had commenced and the Americans viewed this conference as an opportunity to emphasize the requirement for long- term planning versus short term planning, which had been the approach preferred by the British.⁴ Both Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to conduct an invasion of Europe in the spring of 1944. They continued, however, to differ on the interim matter of conducting a campaign on the Italian mainland. Roosevelt acknowledged the need to knock Italy out of the war and wondered whether a concentrated air campaign launched from Sicily would be just as effective as a land offensive. Churchill viewed the elimination of Italy after Operation Husky as being the “first objective” in either the European or Mediterranean theatres.⁵

The British Chiefs of Staff presented their preference for extending the gains made in North Africa with the conduct of decisive operations in Italy and the Mediterranean area by British and American Forces. They acknowledged the requirement to divert resources from the build-up in England in support of their proposed operations; however, they were confident that the removal of Italy would open up a flank through Corsica and Sardinia against southern France in 1944. More importantly the British remained adamant that the cross-channel invasion could only be conducted under favorable conditions, and these conditions would be created by the Russians. They

emphasized the need to draw German forces away from the Eastern Front to support the Russian offensive, and operations in the Mediterranean would achieve the desired outcome.⁶

The American Chiefs of Staff, led by General George C. Marshall, believed that the British were too optimistic in their estimates of the resources required for an invasion of Italy and the likely German reaction. Their preferred strategy focused on the build-up of forces in England in preparation for a cross-channel invasion when the opportunity arose. They remained confident that the Combined Bomber Offensive would best support this operation in 1944. They did support limited operations within the Mediterranean and Romania, to be conducted primarily by air forces. They argued that land operations in Italy would inevitably prolong the war against Germany and therefore Japan. In the end, it was acknowledged by both parties that the feasibility of an Italian campaign after Operation Husky hinged on the availability of resources, in particular landing craft.⁷ After further rigorous debate, the conference ended with decisions reached through compromise on the part of both parties. The size of the cross-channel invasion force was confirmed, with a date set for 1 May 1944.

Planning for operations in the Mediterranean with the intent of removing Italy from the war was approved. General Eisenhower was placed in charge of planning, with the final decision resting with the Combined Chiefs of Staff. General Eisenhower and his staff commenced developing plans on 3 June 1943 for two alternate amphibious operations – a landing on the Calabrian toe of Italy (Operation Buttress) and the Island of Sardinia (Operation Brimstone).⁸ The decision to launch either operation depended very much on the strength and location of German forces and the morale of the Italians after

Operation Husky.⁹ On 10 July 1943, the Allied forces commenced Operation Husky. Against all previous predictions, this operation proceeded well against an inept Italian Army supported by tenacious German forces. On 16 July 1943 the CCS approved General Eisenhower's concept for the invasion of Italy, however advised him to develop a plan for an amphibious assault close to the seaport of Naples. American planners were cautious about this proposed operation, noting the shift from a conservative to a far bolder strategy that would have far greater implications should it fail. The British planners on the other hand favored this concept, expanding the operation to include the seizure of Naples and then Rome, delivering a serious blow to the Axis powers.¹⁰ On 18 July 1943, Eisenhower recommended to the CCS "carrying the war to the mainland of Italy immediately Sicily has been captured."¹¹

An event was to soon unfold that would present an immediate opportunity to the Allies. King Vittorio Emanuele III of Italy and a number of his key generals staged a coup d'état on 25 July 1943, removing Benito Mussolini, the Fascist dictator from power and placing him under arrest. This was a favorable outcome for the Allies and would set the stage for surrender negotiations and an armistice. The CCS directed Eisenhower to plan Operation Avalanche, a landing on the Italian west coast to the north of the toe to be conducted at the earliest opportunity to hasten Italy's withdrawal from the war.¹² On 15 August 1943, an Italian general representing the new head of the Italian Government Marshal Pietro Badoglio, approached the British ambassador in Madrid offering a deal that would see Italy join the Allies in exchange for an armistice.¹³

The Italian Campaign

The Italian landscape, with its rugged mountain ranges that rise steeply from the sea on the west coast and its terrain that was unsuitable for large mechanized forces provided challenges for the Allied planners. This forbidding geography would restrict maneuver to formed roads and offer an advantage to the defenders. The allied planners chose Salerno, located to the south of Naples, for the conduct of Operation Avalanche. This 20 mile stretch of beach was deemed suitable for amphibious operations, with excellent sea approaches, numerous exits from the beach to the main coastal highway that would facilitate shore operations, and coastal defenses consisting of mainly fieldworks. There were disadvantages in choosing this location. The mountainous terrain that enclosed the Sele plain would limit the initial beachhead and offer German defenders excellent observation and fields of fire.¹⁴ German leader Adolf Hitler was aware of Italy's floundering resolve given that country's string of heavy defeats in North Africa and the eastern front. Hitler directed plans be developed for the defense of Italy in the event Italy withdrew from the war. *Generalfeldmarscall* Erwin Rommel was tasked with the defense of Italy. Operations on the Eastern Front limited the resources available to Rommel for this task; therefore he could not guarantee the occupation and defense of all of Italy.¹⁵ Hitler approved Rommel's plan that required a force to conduct delaying operations from the south through to a defensive line in the northern Apennines. *Generalfeldmarscall* Albert Kesselring, Commander in Chief South and the Tenth Army were given this responsibility. Once all German forces were centered on the Apennines, Rommel would then become overall commander. Kesselring, who had been in Italy since 1941, remained optimistic that Italy would remain in the war with Germany and felt that

the defense of Italy could best be achieved to the south, therefore not necessitating a tactical withdrawal.

Generalfeldmarscall Kesselring identified a series of successive lines across the peninsula suitable for conducting delaying actions (figure 2).¹⁶ The Gustav Line was the main defensive line, running along the Rapido and Garigliano Rivers and anchored at the town of Monte Cassino. Through Monte Cassino is the Via Caselina or Route 6, that runs north through to Rome. To gain time for preparations of the Gustav Line in particular, Kesselring needed the Tenth Army under command of *Generaloberst* Heinrich von Vietinghoff to impose maximum delay and casualties from first the Volturno Line and then the Barbara Line.¹⁷

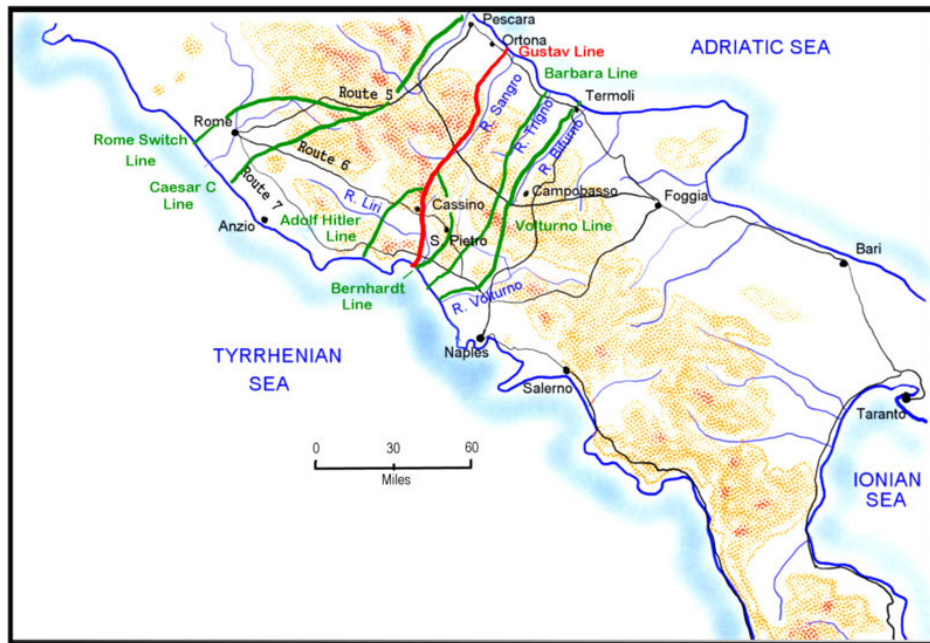


Figure 2. German Defensive Lines, 1943

Source. "Winter Line." Wikipedia, available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gustav_Line; Internet; accessed 20 January 2007.

On 16 August 1943, General Eisenhower decided on the concept for the invasion of Italy (figure 3). The Fifteenth Army Group, under command of General Harold Alexander, would conduct this campaign. General Bernard Montgomery's British Eighth Army would commence Operation Bayton, an assault from Sicily across the Strait of Messina between 1 and 4 September. General Mark Clark's American Fifth Army would launch Operation Avalanche into Salerno on 9 September.¹⁸

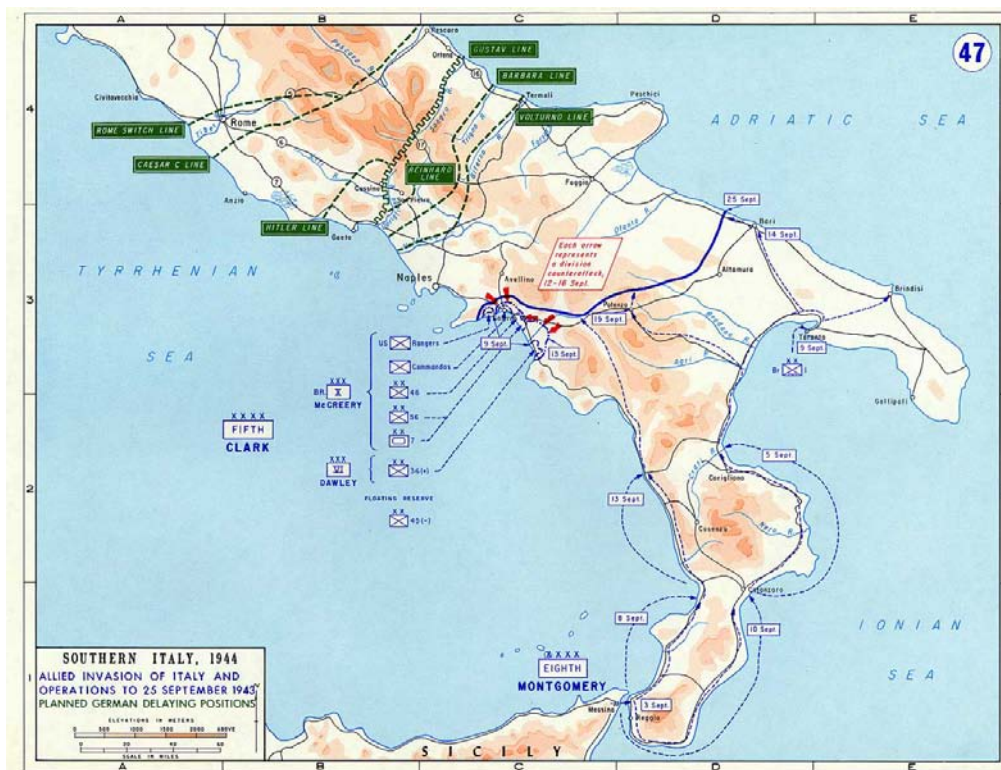


Figure 3. Plans for Allied Invasion of Italy.

Source. "World War II-Maps of the European Theater." United States Military Academy Department of History available from <http://www.dean.usma.edu/history/web03/atlas/>; Internet; accessed 19 January 2007.

On 17 August 1943 the Sicily Campaign ended. One significant failure from this campaign was the Allies' inability to contain German and Italian forces on the Sicilian

mainland. Despite having air and naval superiority, the Allies failed to stop 125,000 German and Italian troops, together with tanks and artillery pieces, from withdrawing across the Strait of Messina onto the Italian mainland where they would fight another day.¹⁹ President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill met in Quebec, Canada on 17 August 1943 for a conference codenamed Quadrant where they approved the concept for Operation Avalanche.

¹Carlo D'estes, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Henry Holt, 2002), 381.

²Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: The Conferences at Washington, 1941-1942, and Casablanca, 1943* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1941-1943), 628.

³Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark: The Last of the Great World War II Commanders* (New York: Congdon and Weed, 1984), 118.

⁴Maurice Matlof, *Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1959), 126.

⁵*Ibid.*, 127.

⁶*Ibid.*, 129.

⁷*Ibid.*, 132.

⁸Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969), 11.

⁹*Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 18.

¹¹ Alfred D. Chandler, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years, vol 2* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1970), 1262.

¹² Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 21.

¹³ Geoffrey Perret, *Eisenhower* (New York: Random House, 1999), 234.

¹⁴ Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 26.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁸ Chandler, 1335.

CHAPTER 3

THE COMMANDERS

The conduct of land operations during the Italian campaign would require close cooperation between American and British commanders at both the operational and tactical levels of war. This chapter reviews the careers of General's Mark W. Clark and Harold Alexander in the lead up to the invasion at Salerno with the intent of determining how their respective careers may have influenced their command styles and philosophies during this impending campaign.

General Mark W. Clark

Mark Wayne Clark (figure 4) was born on 1 May 1896 in Watertown, New York. His father, Charles Carr Clark, served in the United States Army as an Infantry officer and his mother, Rebecca Clarke (Nee Ezekials) was a housewife. As the only child, his mother ensured Clark was raised in a loving household with strong family values. While growing up, Mark admired his father's many qualities that included discipline, duty and honor, and he tried to replicate these in his own way. His father expected Mark to follow in his footsteps and join the military by attending the West Point Military Academy. Together with 185 other young men, Clark became a cadet at the Military Academy in June 1913. It was during his sophomore year that Clark became friends with Cadet Dwight D. Eisenhower, a cadet in his third year at the academy. This was the start of a long and enduring friendship.¹ During his time at the academy, Clark suffered from a series of health problems which were to become all too familiar during the initial stages of his military career. Due to the United States entry into the Great War on 6 April 1917,

Clark and 138 cadets graduated six weeks ahead of schedule. Graduating 110th in the class, Clark asked for and was commissioned into the Infantry. Shortly after graduation, Clark took a lengthy period of sick leave due to a stomach illness, costing him approximately six months of regimental time with his unit. However on return to his unit the 11th Infantry, he received command of a rifle company.



Figure 4. General Mark W. Clark.

Source: Answers.com, available from <http://www.answers.com/topic/mark-clark-jpg>; accessed 1 April 2007.

During this period of command Clark created a “most excellent unit” and his capacity for command was assessed as above average.² Clark was promoted to the temporary rank of captain in March 1918. Having received orders to deploy to France, the 11th Infantry arrived at the French port of Brest, on Clark’s 22nd birthday. During the conduct of a relief in place with a French unit on the front line, Clark assumed command of the Third Battalion of approximately 1,000 men due to the commanding officer becoming ill. During the conduct of the relief in place however, the Germans shelled the position resulting in one soldier killed and Clark being seriously injured. While recuperating from his wounds in an American field hospital, Clark hoped to get back to

his unit. This would not occur. Instead, Clark would be posted to a supply officer's job. Clark performed well in this job, impressing his commanding officer with his professionalism, dedication, and energy. His commanding officer recommended Clark for promotion to major; however no vacancy existed. At the conclusion of the war, Clark returned to the United States conscious of the facts that many of his peers had greater combat experience and had been promoted faster than himself. Clark suffered no regrets, acknowledging he had made an impression on his superior officers with his judicious work ethic and loyal dedication to the service. Clark wanted to consolidate his experience in the immediate years ahead.

Following a brief assignment at the Disciplinary Barracks at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, Clark temporarily commanded an infantry company at Fort Crook before being called to duty at Fort Dix, New Jersey. This assignment required Clark and a small cadre to travel the country and promote the Chautauqua program, a recruiting drive that promoted the educational and vocational qualities of Army training, in particular for the many immigrants who joined the service. Although he soon became dissatisfied with the rigors of the job, Clark developed public speaking skills and came to better understand the nature of public relations.³ Clark returned to a staff job in Washington, working for the Director of Sales within the War Department. Clark performed to a high standard, gaining the praise of his superior who noted that Clark through diligence and attention to duty performed in a position which in the commercial world would correspond to that of a highly paid executive with many years experience.⁴ During the next two and a half years, Clark continued to attract favorable notice and reporting. His health problems, however, continued to be of some concern, requiring numerous medical check ups.

After a year's courtship, Clark married Maurine (Renie) Doran on 17 May 1924. Easy going and light hearted, Renie complemented her more reserved and serious natured husband. After attending the Infantry School's Advanced Officers Course, the Clarks moved to San Francisco where Mark reported to the 30th Infantry at the Presidio. Clark shortly thereafter became the aide to Colonel Frank C. Bolles, the regimental and post commander. Bolles, a highly decorated officer from the Philippines campaign and the Western front, was abrasive and demanding, and determined to make general officer rank. Bolles saw in Clark a proficient officer whom could help him achieve this aim. Although heartened by the attention, Clark repeatedly requested to be returned to a command assignment. Bolles refused these requests. Throughout the next two years, Clark impressed Bolles and Major General John L. Hines, Commander of IX Corps area, with his performance, being noted as "an officer of the highest type in every respect."⁵

Clark again suffered health problems in 1928, leaving him unsure as to his future military service.⁶ In 1929 the War Department posted Clark to the National Guard where he served as both instructor and as advisor to the 38th Infantry Division. Concerned by his continuing health concerns, Clark pondered his future service. Despite being offered a couple of civilian job offers, Clark was determined to stay the course and be above all, "a good soldier like his father."⁷ His father passed away in March 1930.

Promoted to Major in January 1933, Clark then attended the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. Classmates included Walter Bedell Smith and Matthew B. Ridgeway. Clark attended the two year course, with much time devoted to corps and army level operations. Records suggest that this course concentrated on tactical and operational subjects, with little emphasis of strategic issues and joint or combined

operations.⁸ In order to meet potential expansion of the army should it mobilize, the school taught students those duties, both command and staff, for officer billets two to three grades above their present ranks.⁹ After graduation, Clark again worked for Major General Bolles, now Commander of 2nd Division. During this assignment, Bolles again praised Clark's efforts and openly rallied support for him from officers in prominent positions. At the age of forty and highly regarded, Clark attended the Army War College. Clark again performed well, with the commandant reporting Clark as being "a good team worker, thorough and methodical in his approach to work, and appreciates the views of others."¹⁰ Clark was assigned to 3rd Infantry Division at Fort Lewis.

Clark soon became the 3rd Division Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2 (Intelligence) and G-3 (Operations). Clark's main responsibility was preparing personnel and units for war. Both the division commander and chief of staff allowed him the freedom to plan and conduct training with very few limitations. Understanding the value in having someone capable of providing sound advice and guidance, Clark found a mentor in Brigadier George C. Marshall.¹¹ Clark often traveled to consult with Marshall, who was Commander of the 3rd Division's Fifth Brigade in Washington, Oregon. Although Marshall was soon posted to the War Department, Clark maintained contact and sent Marshall his plans for feedback.

Clark continued to impress while serving at Fort Lewis, being described by the artillery brigade commander as "one of the most brilliant all round officers he had met in forty years of commissioned service."¹² With the threat of war looming in Europe and the ongoing increase in United States military activities, Clark was tasked to focus on war preparations for the division. Clark's planned and conducted many tactical experiments,

impressing many observers, including Lieutenant Colonel Dwight D. Eisenhower, his old friend from the academy. Eisenhower soon joined Clark at Fort Lewis as the commanding officer of an infantry battalion.

On 1 September 1939 Germany invaded Poland, and Europe was at war. Marshall also became the US Army Chief of Staff. Clark continued to train his units, resulting in a joint exercise that included an amphibious operation and subsequent ground assault supported by air. This exercise gained widespread attention. Clark ran the exercise in the absence of his commander and rose to the occasion, further solidifying his accomplished reputation. Marshall above all was very impressed and recommended Clark as an instructor at the Army War College. Before long however, all courses at the Army War College were cancelled, and Clark, having recently been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, headed to his post at the newly established General Headquarters in Washington. Marshall served as commander of GHQ as well as Army Chief of Staff. Brigadier General Leslie J. McNair served as his Chief of Staff at GHQ, primarily responsible for supervising the plan to ready US forces for war. McNair was impressed with Clark, who was soon made one of his principal staff officers. In July 1941, McNair promoted Clark to Brigadier General. Clark was overwhelmed, having surpassed his father.¹³ Clark's star was shining bright, having attained general rank at the age of forty-four. This would also see Clark confronted by other army officers and peers somewhat jealous of his rapid advancement.

In 1941, GHQ conducted a range of division, corps, and army level maneuvers. These were deemed successful. Clark again played a pivotal role in organizing and coordinating these exercises, receiving plaudits for his work. In 1942, GHQ reorganized,

becoming three new commands. McNair became Commanding General of one of the commands, the Army Ground Forces, with Clark becoming his Chief of Staff on promotion to Major General on 17 April 1942. The British were soon eager to know of the US army's preparations for war. At the request of General Marshall, Clark arranged for a number of British high ranking officials, including Lord Louis Mountbatten, to visit mobilizing units and view a range of training activities.¹⁴ This visit was important in re-emphasizing the US commitment to the fight in Europe. Clark, together with Major General Eisenhower as head of the War Plans Division, left for England in the middle of 1942 to liaise with their English counterparts on staging US Army forces in England. During this trip, Clark and Eisenhower met with Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his key advisors, discussing options for an invasion of mainland Europe, as well as matters that included standardized training for troops from both armies.¹⁵ Clark also met General Bernard L. Montgomery, British Army Commander, for the first time, gaining a small insight into his forthright character.¹⁶ On returning home, both Clark and Eisenhower recommended to Marshall that a US headquarters be established in England to oversee the US build up of forces. Marshall selected Eisenhower to command the European Theater of Operations US Army, with Clark given subordinate command of II Corps.

As commander of II Corps, Clark also became both principal trainer of US ground forces and the planner for the intended invasion of the European continent.¹⁷ This required him to establish staff structures that incorporated both air and maritime personnel.¹⁸ Although the US forces were in no way prepared to participate in an immediate invasion of Europe, President Franklin Roosevelt supported the British

suggestion to conduct Operation Torch, the invasion of North Africa. Clark relinquished his command of II Corps, given the many extenuating requirements of this operation:

As most of the personnel involved in Torch would be from the United States Army, it seemed logical that the commander in chief should be an American Army officer, and the Allied leaders' choice was General Dwight D. Eisenhower. This established a pattern in which the Combined Chiefs of Staff allotted theater commands to officers of the numerically preponderant nationality and service. Given the peculiar political circumstances of Torch, the Combined Chiefs also chose an American as Deputy Commander in Chief of the Allied Expeditionary Force: Major General Mark W. Clark, a practice which was not sustained in subsequent Allied theater command arrangements.¹⁹

At the request of the British, Allied Force Headquarters was formed to oversee the operation. This headquarters would see both American and British officers working together within each of the staff branches, with a section chief being of one nationality having a deputy of the other.²⁰ Mark Clark and Eisenhower would be exposed to the many issues that came with coalition planning and combined headquarters; however both were driven to see it succeed. During this period, Clark would work along side Major General George S. Patton, Commander of the Western Task Force for Operation Torch. Patton, decorated cavalry officer, was also a friend of Eisenhower but had become wary of Clark's rise within the Army and his ongoing relationship with Eisenhower.²¹

Operation Torch required the support of the Vichy French forces operating in Morocco. Their reaction to the invasion was questionable, given their feelings towards the British after they attacked French forces during the earlier stages of the war in Mers El Kebir and Dakar, as well as the potential reaction by the Axis. It was therefore decided that secret meetings would be held in Algiers with high ranking military officials to establish cooperation from the Vichy French hierarchy and forces. After an initial meeting conducted by a member of the US State Department, it was agreed that military

officer with knowledge of the invasion should meet with French officials. Clark, together with four other staff officers deployed to Algeria by submarine on 22 October 1942. This series of meetings provided new information, and more importantly, gained the promise of French assistance. Clark's role throughout, his sound performance while planning Operation Torch and his intimate knowledge of the operational requirements convinced Eisenhower that Clark had earned the right to command an army.²² In the meantime, Eisenhower dispatched Clark as his representative to Algiers to meet with Vichy French officials to secure French cooperation throughout Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. Clark proved a formidable negotiator and diplomat throughout, and his efforts proved pivotal in securing this phase of Operation Torch.

On 11 November 1942 Clark was promoted to Lieutenant General, making him the youngest lieutenant general in the Army.²³ His status as an American hero was also gaining prominence in the United States after reports of his submarine voyage and subsequent mission became public news. This attention did not sit well with Patton who was not amused with the accolades afforded to Clark.²⁴ Meanwhile Clark was concerned with the innumerable issues that arise when conducting coalition operations. Within the AFHQ, Clark perceived the British method of staff planning as being too slow, given their preference for lengthy and convoluted analysis. To him this process lacked efficiency and speed. Clark also objected to the allocation of certain US forces under the command of Lieutenant General Kenneth Anderson, the British Commander in charge of the Tunis Theatre. Clark believed that their effectiveness lay in operating as a homogenous US fighting force within their own area of operations. Following talks between Clark and Anderson, and with Eisenhower's concurrence, it was agreed that US

units would eventually be transferred from Andersons command to a new US command and sector.

On 2 December 1942 the US War Department appointed Clark commander of the newly established US Fifth Army, created to prepare for contingencies within the theatres rear area and for the future invasion of Europe.²⁵

General Mark Clark had risen rapidly through the ranks to be given command of an army that would participate in the first campaign directed against Axis forces on the European continent. From the start of his military career he looked to his father as both a source of pride and the standard with which he would be required to measure himself. His father Charles had enjoyed a successful yet unspectacular military career, serving in action during the Spanish-American War and in the Philippines. He had however, missed out on the chance to further his career when he did not deploy to Europe with American forces during the First World War. His career halted having attained the rank of Colonel. His son was determined to succeed where his father had not. The renowned American historian Martin Blumenson writes:

As he looked back on his wartime experiences, he was disappointed to have received neither promotion nor decoration. His friend O'Daniel, to whom he had turned over his company, had been wounded too, had earned the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry, and was now a captain. Others had gained swift advancement.²⁶

Having been wounded in France, Clark pondered the missed opportunity to lead soldiers in battle. Having recovered from his wounds, Clark would seek every opportunity to command. It would not be until June 1942, some twenty-two years after having command of a company, that Clark would receive command of a unit once again, this time as a commander of II Corps. On receiving command of the Fifth Army in

January 1943, Clark had spent twenty-six years as an army officer, of which his time in command, both at company, battalion (albeit for two to three days) and corps level, totalled less than eighteen months. Although he lacked experience in this capacity, Clark was perceived by his supporters to be a professional and judicious officer who possessed a keen sense of humour. His detractors viewed him as openly ambitious and self serving, using the press wherever possible to promote his own exploits.²⁷ His close friend Eisenhower and mentor Marshall both privately warned him against the dangers of overwhelming ambition. Clark appeared to acknowledge, saying “Clark admitted he had perhaps been overly ambitious, and would knuckle down and do the job assigned to him like the soldier he is.”²⁸ Regardless of these views, it cannot be denied that Clark had carved himself an impressive reputation as one of the United States Army’s best trainers and organizers, responsible for the planning and coordination of the many divisional and corps level exercises conducted in the early stages of the war. As a staff officer he was in high demand. Since his assignment with 3rd Infantry Division, Clark had impressed the likes of General George C. Marshall, General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Winston L. S Churchill. Eisenhower in particular would remain a close ally and friend to Clark throughout the ensuing war. As an operational and tactical level commander during the Italian Campaign, Clark would lead a truly diverse coalition force, with men from Britain, New Zealand, France, Poland and India serving with the US Fifth Army as it advanced through the Italian Peninsula for the prize city of Rome.²⁹ Clark would soon be exposed to the complexities of multinational warfare, a significant challenge for a commander about to exercise his first command while at war.

General Harold Alexander

Harold Alexander (figure 5) was born in London, 1891, as the third son of the Earl of Caledon. Growing up in Northern Ireland, Alexander enjoyed painting and was a gifted athlete. Alexander attended Harrow before leaving for the military school at Sandhurst. His grades were consistent yet unspectacular, and from the start he knew that he wanted to serve and do so in the Irish Guards.³⁰ In August 1914, Lieutenant Alexander departed with his regiment, now part of the British Expeditionary Force, for France following the declaration of war against Germany. Alexander, like many of his colleagues, fretted that the war would end before their arrival at the front line. They would not be disappointed, with Alexander and his battalion involved at the Battle of Mons and latter the First Battle of Ypres. Alexander received a wound to the hand and thigh during this later battle, being evacuated to a hospital in Britain. This attrition style of warfare resulting in large loss of life had an impact on Alexander, and he was to observe many failures in leadership during the ensuing battles.³¹



Figure 5. General Sir Harold Alexander.

Source: Wikipedia.com, available from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harold_Alexander, 1st Earl Alexander of Tunis. Accessed 28 April 2007.

After his wounds had healed, Alexander returned to the front in the autumn of 1915. Remaining with the Irish Guards, Alexander would command at every level from Company to Brigade over the next four years.³² Alexander, together with many other British Officers, came to value the importance of a unit that possessed pride in itself, together with its ability to master its given trade. Rudyard Kipling, the famous British author and poet, and whose son John served with the Irish Guards writes of the Second Battalion, when Alexander was its second in command:

By this time they had discovered themselves to be a happy battalion which they remained throughout. None can say precisely how any body of men arrives at this state. Discipline, effort, doctrine and unlimited care and expense on the part of the officers do not necessarily secure it....It may be that the personal attributes of two or three leading spirits in the beginning set a note to which other young men, of courageous mind respond.³³

Alexander is credited with being one of the leading spirits, where he attempted to strike the balance between attaining professional standards and acknowledging the humanity of war.¹ During the Battle of Loos in which his battalion's objective was Chalk Pit Wood, Alexander's actions carved his reputation as a fine officer; trusted by his men, reliable under fire, courageous and tactically astute. Within a month, Alexander gained temporary command of a battalion.³⁴ He would receive permanent command on March 1917, and lead his battalion at the Third Battle of Ypres. During the winter of 1917-1918, Alexander gained command of a brigade. During this period the British forces faced significant manpower shortages, and therefore required to reorganize units and reduce unit manning levels while increasing their dependence on artillery, armor and engineer support.³⁵ Alexander proved a popular commander throughout the war, learning how to get the best out of his British soldiers. Kipling writes:

It is undeniable that Colonel Alexander had the gift of handling men on the lines to which they most readily responded; as many tales in this connection testify. At the worst crisis he was both inventive and cordial. Moreover, when the blame for some incident of battle or fatigue was his, he confessed and took it upon his own shoulders in the presence of all. Consequently, his subordinates loved him, even when he fell upon them blisteringly for their shortcomings; and his men were all his own.³⁶

In 1919, Alexander deployed as part of a British mission to Latvia where he would take command of the *Landesweh*, a territorial force recruited from the Baltic region, and side with White Russians in their fight against the Bolshevick Red Army. Facing many challenges when dealing with other nations forces during this war, Alexander would soon win over the loyalty and support of those within his command by applying sound tactical judgment, charm of manner and consummate professionalism. From the onset, Alexander trained his forces and conducted limited actions before being called on to commence an offensive to start on 3 January 1920. During this series of actions, Alexander chose not to interfere with those tactics employed by his subordinate commanders. At briefings Alexander would insist on a thorough presentation before asking questions and then offer an opinion. Alexander made it clear when he disapproved of a plan, more so by his silence than by ordering a change.³⁷ Alexander and the *Landesweh* were ultimately successful in driving the Russians back to their borders, resulting in the independence of Latvia. He returned to his beloved Irish Guards when reaching England.

Alexander and his battalion deployed to Constantinople in 1922 to commence something akin to peace keeping operations during the Chanak Crisis. On 15 May 1922, at the age of 31, Alexander was promoted to substantive lieutenant colonel. Following a deployment free of any major incidents and with the political situation stabilized,

Alexander and his unit redeployed to England on 5 September 1922. Alexander attended Staff College in 1926, with Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Bernard Montgomery one of his instructors. Alexander performed well, and would impress the commandant, General Sir Robert Gordon Finlayson, who wrote:

I was soon struck by his natural gift for leadership and his uncanny instinct for obtaining quickly and without apparent effort a solution to the many military problems given him to solve. The reason was that he is gifted with a mass of common sense, knows exactly how soldiers react to war, and is entirely practical in everything. He simply cannot be rattled.³⁸

After the Staff College, Alexander became Colonel of the Irish Guards. After the Staff College, Alexander became Colonel of the Irish Guards Regimental District before he attended the Imperial Defense College, a school that focused on strategic issues, while learning how to integrate military, political and economic policies. Alexander attended this institution well ahead of many of his peers and without having served in a staff appointment. Alexander next appointment was as a staff officer within the Directorate of Military Training. In 1931 he married Lady Margaret Bingham, the younger daughter of the Earl of Lucan.³⁹ Alexander was next given command of the Nowshera Brigade in India. During his tenure, Alexander would lead his brigade during two frontier campaigns. He would also work beside Brigadier General C. J. E Auchinleck, an experienced campaigner within the Indian Theatre. Again Alexander performed with distinction, showing an uncanny ability to mould different corps, services and nationalities into a highly effective force while attaining the loyalty and devotion from his indigenous troops. Having bid farewell to India in January 1938, Alexander, now a major general and the youngest in the British Army, assumed command of the 1st Infantry

Division, I Corps. With this unit he implemented the same impeccable standards as he had required of his previous units.

With the outbreak of War with the Axis Powers in 1939, Alexander and his division departed for France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. With the fall of Poland, the French and British Forces would soon be reeling in the face of the attacking German fists, with General Fedor Von Boch's Army Group B striking into Holland and Belgium, and General Gerd von Rundstedt's Army Group A piercing through the Ardennes. The BEF soon found itself fighting a series of delaying battles, with Alexander's division withdrawing 150 miles from Dyle to the coastal city of Dunkirk.

Arriving at Dunkirk, the BEF established a defensive zone in preparation for the withdrawal of its three corps to Britain. Alexander replaced Lieutenant General Michael Barker as commander of I Corps after Major General Montgomery, himself recently appointed commander of the I Corps, had suggested to Lord Gort, Commander and Chief of the BEF, that Barker was unfit for command.⁴⁰ I Corps, as the rear guard, would withdraw last if required. With this the case, Alexander was required to coordinate the defense and likely withdrawal with a number of French Commanders, in particular Admiral Jean-Marie Abrial, the Naval Commander and Chief and General Falgade, the French Garrison Commander. Gort informed Abrial that Alexander would be placed under his command; however, he informed Alexander that as commander of British Forces Alexander could in fact challenge any order from Abrial should that order place British forces at risk.⁴¹ Against insurmountable odds, Alexander decided that the last of the British Forces would relinquish its defensive posture and withdrawal on the 2nd and 3rd of June 1940. This decision stunned the French Commanders, and Abrial in particular

objected to this decision, believing that the defense would be successful should it be maintained. Having informed the War Office of his decision, Alexander and the I Corps, together with French forces, evacuated their positions and sailed for England. On 4 June 1940, 40,000 French soldiers left behind surrendered to the Germans. Alexander's actions in saving the last of the British forces but earning the scorn of many Frenchmen propelled Alexander into the public eye and gained notice from his Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. One week after arriving back in England, Alexander was appointed Commander I Corps and promoted to lieutenant general.

Assembling his corps in the north of England, Alexander set about establishing the defense of Lincolnshire and the East Riding of Yorkshire for a possible amphibious invasion by the Germans. Routine duties soon followed before General Brooke, now Commander in Chief of Home Forces, selected him as Commander in Chief of Southern Command. In this position Alexander would oversee the establishment of the Battle Schools, developed to prepare the British soldiers for the rigors and stresses of war. Alexander would soon wear two hats when he also picked up command of a training force tasked with planning and executing expeditionary type missions. In 1941, Alexander's corps provided the defensive forces in an anti-invasion exercise named Bumper. The exercise was deemed a success and highlighted the confidence of the Army at the time, however General Brooke, the exercise director was critical of Alexander's handling of his armored units. Many officers felt this assessment as unfair and wondered why Alexander did not counter the claim. Alexander replied:

There is sound reason for this acceptance of criticism in the conduct of exercises. The director will have designed his maneuvers to bring out certain lessons, lessons of great value to all those taking part, and it would be a poor act of one

individual, in defense of his own dignity, to destroy the value of the main lesson. That is why I have never expressed any resentment at being unfairly criticized during Bumper.⁴²

In February 1942, Japanese forces captured the small British colony of Singapore. With Burma under attack and with concerns over the ability of Lieutenant General Thomas Hutton, the British commander in location, Brooke took no hesitation in sending Alexander to Burma to assume command of the mixed British-Burmese force. Shortly after arriving in Rangoon on 5 March, Alexander met with General Joseph W. Stilwell, the American General designated deputy commander of all Chinese forces under the command of General Chiang Kai-shek. Stilwell and Alexander immediately sized each other up, with the former observing Alexander to be “brusque and standoffish.”⁴³ Many British historians would later judge Stilwell as mercurial, rude and uncompromising. Alexander though was less pointed, and thought of Stilwell as someone who possessed “great courage and fight.”⁴⁴ Following a meeting between Alexander and Kai-shek, it was agreed that Alexander would command all Imperial and Chinese forces. However good his intentions and capability, Alexander could not save the situation in Burma. With the fall of the key coastal city of Rangoon in early April, Alexander’s forces commenced delaying actions to the north of the advancing Japanese forces. Understanding that their ability to hold northern Burma had become untenable, Alexander ordered a general withdrawal to the north towards India on 25 April 1942.

With the arriving monsoons on 12 May, the Japanese halted their advance and the Allied forces were able to make their escape. Having fought through the most atrocious conditions for three months, the withdrawing forces covered a distance of approximately one thousand miles. Alexander’s role was complex and difficult, made so by the span of

nationalities involved and the terrible conditions that faced his forces throughout. Despite this loss, Winston Churchill maintained his confidence in Alexander's ability and it would not be long before he would call on Alexander to again save the British fighting reputation from possible demise.

After a series of stinging defeats in North Africa, Churchill was desperate for the situation to improve. He turned to Alexander, making him Commander and Chief of Middle East Command, replacing General Sir Claude Auchinleck who was sent to India. General Montgomery assumed command of Eighth Army. Alexander's mission was to "take or destroy at the earliest opportunity the German-Italian Army commanded by Field Marshal Rommel together with all its supplies and establishments in Egypt and Libya."⁴⁵ Assuming command on 15 August 1942, both Alexander and Montgomery arrived in Theatre and were overwhelmed with the sense of defeat that prevailed within the troops, in particular amongst the many officers who assumed that they would withdraw the next time Rommel attacked. Confidence in the commanders and discipline were desperately lacking. Alexander visited his units and issued stern instructions that the British forces would not retreat and would stay and fight. In concert with Montgomery, Alexander developed a new sense of purpose and confidence amongst the soldiers towards their newly arrived commanders. This was timely because the Eighth Army soon faced the advancing Panzerkorps at the defensive line of Bare Ridge and Alam Elfa over the period from 31 August to 1 September 1942. This battle proved a major success for the Allied Forces, effectively using ground and correct use of tanks, together with massed artillery and integrated air support, to first disrupt, then defeat Rommel's advancing forces. The

Allies did not resume the offensive against the withdrawing German forces, instead consolidating their positions and using the time for much needed training.

The Battle of Alamein commenced on the night of 23 October with the Eighth Army artillery of almost one thousand guns opening up along the German front. The Allied forces then attacked and would continue to grind away for the next seven days. On 29 October, Alexander and his deputy commander Major General Dick McCreery visited the Eighth Army operational headquarters to confirm the concept for Operation Supercharge, the final thrust through the German defences. There was disagreement on the axis for this thrust, with Montgomery favoring a northern approach while McCreery, an armored officer, suggesting a southern approach. Alexander did not want to interfere in what he believed to be Montgomery's plan; however he believed that the plan offered by McCreery was the better option. Alexander ordered McCreery to get together with Major General Freddie De Guingand, Montgomery's Chief of Staff and seek to persuade Montgomery to shift his thinking. In the end, the axis of assault changed to the south, resulting in Allied victory, although at a cost. Both the Australian and New Zealand Divisions had suffered significant casualties that were disproportionately high compared to the rest of the Eighth Army.⁴⁶ Alexander's ability to manage the egocentric Montgomery as well as deal with constant pressure by Churchill, together with achieving success for the Allied forces, proved that Alexander was ready for the heights of supreme command and dealing with the political and military problems that are intrinsic within it.⁴⁷

The invasion of French North Africa, codenamed Torch, by American and British forces occurred on 8 November 1942. After first encountering light French resistance, the

Allied forces secured their objectives. Following the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, Alexander was appointed commander of the new Eighteenth Army Group, to include all Allied Land Forces within North Africa. Alexander's span of command included the First Army in Tunisia and the Eighth Army advancing from Tripoli. Due to take command on 20 February, Alexander arrived in Algeria on the 18th and wasted no time in visiting the front line units. Alexander found the First Army in a state of confusion and mess, attributed to the many improvised command arrangements and ad hoc organizations, describing what he saw as "even more critical than I had expected and a visit to the Kasserine area showed that, in the inevitable confusion of the retreat, American, French and British troops had been inextricably mingled, there was no coordinated plan of defense and definite uncertainty as to command."⁴⁸

Alexander brought his command ceremony forward to the 19th and then immediately set about bringing some order to this chaos. His operational directive issued on 18 March reorganized the American, French and British forces under their respective commands and sectors, and enforced the proven formula of fighting as complete divisions as opposed to smaller sized combat teams, as used successfully in the Battle of El Alamein.⁴⁹ Alexander's army would fight dogged and feisty German forces, and with the capture of Bizerta by General George S. Patton's II Corps and Tunis by the First Army on 7 May, the German defenses collapsed, with the official surrender occurring on 12 May. This had been Alexander's greatest victory, one that was his alone and need not be shared as he had previously. He had again proven to be a consummate leader of men.

With no let up after the successful North African Campaign, Churchill tasked Alexander with the invasion of Sicily, codenamed Husky. Now Commander in Chief of

the Fifteenth Army Group, Alexander's command included Patton's Seventh Army and Montgomery's Eighth Army. Alexander set about confirming the plan, one which had been first developed when he was involved with the fight in Tunisia. This would prove to be a difficult task, all the while pressed by Montgomery and Air Marshall Arthur Tedder, the Air Forces commander, to consider their respective objectives as priorities.⁵⁰

Montgomery ended up getting his way, and the final plan was drawn against some objections. Patton, to his credit, accepted Alexander's plan although it had reduced the Americans role to one in support of Montgomery's, and Alexander notes:

I wish to place on record here that General George Patton at once fell in with my new plan, the military advantages of which were as clear to him as me: and neither he nor anyone in Seventh Army raised any form of objection. It is an impressive example of the spirit of complete loyalty and inter-Allied cooperation which inspired all operations with which I was associated in the Mediterranean theatre.⁵¹

Operation Husky did not put an end to British-American tensions. With the Eighth Army's advance halted by reinforced elements of a German Parachute Division, Montgomery ordered one of his corps commanders to use Route 124, a road that belonged within the American's boundary, in order to affect a bypass. He then subsequently requested a boundary change from Alexander, and this was approved on 13 July. Patton although frustrated, obeyed the order. Patton visited Alexander at his headquarters in Tunis on 17 July, and pushed for his army to strike north for Palermo. Alexander agreed, and Patton's Seventh Army took Palermo in five days before turning eastward and converging on Messina together with Montgomery's Eighth Army. Both Armies now faced a desperate line of German defenses. The German commander, *Generalfeldmarscall* Albert Kesselring had been authorized by Hitler to evacuate their positions in Sicily when he considered it necessary to do so.⁵² The Allies failed to

effectively interdict the Germans withdrawal, with the last German troops leaving on 17 August. Patton's forces arrived in Messina a couple of hours before Montgomery's. Again the Allies had met with success. Alexander had been required to endure a campaign made more difficult by what he saw was the need to manage the demands and expectations of his American and British commanders. It would not be the last time he faced these challenges, as the invasion of Italy was soon to take place.

General Harold Alexander, like General Mark Clark, had enjoyed a meteoric rise within the British Army. His reputation, however, had been established on the battlefields of the Western Front, the Baltic, India, Burma, North Africa, and Sicily. His previous experiences and performances when dealing with multinational forces made him the logical choice for command of the Fifteenth Army Group. His a natural charm, professional bearing, and confident approach endeared him to politicians, superior officers and subordinates. Extremely humble, Alexander chose not to seek personal glory; instead he ensured that credit and praise was heaped on others before himself. Alexander's temperament was calm more than brilliant and his methods persuasive more than forceful.⁵³ Alexander's command style was very un-authoritarian, seeking to guide his subordinates through regular dialogue without having to give them direct orders. Alexander and Clark shared many similarities in their careers to date. They both had experience within incongruent fields, with one a proficient staff officer and the other a proven battlefield commander. They both also shared the confidence of their respective national commanders. The ensuing campaign in Italy would soon highlight how different these two men tended to operate.

¹Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders* (New York: Congdon and Weed, 1984), 16.

²*Ibid.*, 17.

³*Ibid.*, 20.

⁴*Ibid.*, 27.

⁵*Ibid.*, 27.

⁶*Ibid.*, 31.

⁷*Ibid.*, 31.

⁸*Ibid.*, 33.

⁹The Command and General Staff School, Second Year Class Schedule for 1933-1934.

¹⁰Timothy K. Nenninger, "Leavenworth and its Critics. The US Army Command and General Staff School 1920-1940." *The Journal of Military History*, Vol 58, No 2, (1994), 203.

¹¹Blumenson, 37.

¹²*Ibid.*, 40.

¹³*Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁵Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper, 1950), 9.

¹⁶Blumenson, 57.

¹⁷Clark, 19.

¹⁸Clark, 62.

¹⁹Mark W Clark, 35.

²⁰Dr. Ian Horwood, *Interservice Rivalry and Airpower in the Vietnam War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Leavenworth Press), 5.

²¹Blumenson, 67.

²²Carlo D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 379.

²³Alfred D. Chandler, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years*, vol. 2 (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins Press, 1970), 690.

²⁴Blumenson, 107.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 111.

²⁶Clark, 137.

²⁷Geoffrey Perret, *Eisenhower* (New York, USA: Random House, 1999), 207.

²⁸Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 272.

²⁹George Forty, *Fifth Army at War* (Great Britain: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1980), 7.

³⁰W. G. F. Jackson, *Alexander of Tunis* (Great Britain: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971), 9.

³¹*Ibid.*, 27.

³²Rupert Clark, *With Alex at War* (Great Britain: Pen & Sword Books, 2000), XII.

³³Jackson, 30.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 30.

³⁵*Ibid.*, 38.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 49.

³⁷*Ibid.*, 52.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 64.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 71.

⁴⁰Clark, XIII.

⁴¹Jackson, 104.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 106.

⁴³Ibid., 113.

⁴⁴Ibid., 123.

⁴⁵Field Marshal Alexander, *The Alexander Memoirs, 1940-45* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960), 95.

⁴⁶Ibid., 10.

⁴⁷Clark, 76.

⁴⁸Jackson, 165

⁴⁹Clark, 83.

⁵⁰Jackson, 175.

⁵¹Ibid., 213.

⁵²Alexander, 108.

⁵³Jackson, 224.

CHAPTER 4

THE FIFTH ARMY'S ADVANCE TO ROME

The Italian Campaign of 1943-1945 has been well documented and recounted many times; therefore it is not the intent of this chapter to recollect all of Fifth Army's march towards Rome. This chapter will examine three significant events and the associated decisions made by General Clark and key Allied commanders. These events are Operation Avalanche, the landings at Salerno; Operation Shingle, the landings at Anzio; and the bombing of the Benedictine Abbey at Cassino. These events will set many of the conditions that led to the seizure of Rome.

The United States Fifth Army

The US Fifth Army was activated on 5 January 1943. Establishing his headquarters in Oudjda, French Morocco, General Clark set about selecting his staff, choosing officers, including a number of personal friends, from both AFHQ and from the United States. The Field Service Regulations, 1942, defines an American army as:

The largest self contained unit. It consists of a headquarters, certain organic army troops, a variable number of army corps, and a variable number of divisions, of which some or all may be assigned from time to time to army corps. It is not desirable that a fixed organization be prescribed for an army. The number and kinds of army corps and divisions such as armored, infantry, cavalry, and motorized, and additional combat troops and service elements from the war department reserve or other sources, will be determined primarily by the mission, the terrain of operations, and the probable hostile forces. The army is the fundamental unit of strategic maneuver. It is the unit which the theatre commander or commander of the field forces uses as the basis of planning and executing strategic and tactical operations.¹

The Fifth Army was initially composed of Major General George Patton's Western Task Force and Major General Lloyd Fredendall's Center Task Force with the

1st Armored Corps located in French Morocco; the II Army Corps in Algeria; and the XII Air Support Command.² Its initial missions as directed by AFHQ entailed the following:

Prepare a well organized, well equipped, and mobile striking force with at least one infantry division and one armored division fully trained in amphibious operations. It was to ensure, in cooperation with French force, the integrity of all territory of French Morocco and of Algeria west of a north –south line through Orleansville, to act with French civil and military authorities in the preservation of law and order, and to assist in organizing, equipping and training French forces. Finally, Fifth Army was to prepare plans and execute special operations under directives issued by the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Force.³

The Fifth Army commenced training, utilizing a number of established training centres throughout the region. Their training focused on regimental-sized formations, covering leadership through to engineering tasks, as well as training with the French forces and US Navy and Army Air Forces. The Fifth Army also provided reinforcements to the Tunisian front. Clark was very active, visiting the many training areas in his light plane. Although outwardly friendly and cordial to his commander, General Patton remained privately unimpressed with Clark, stating “I met him and had a guard of honor . . . took him on an inspection of all local troops and installations. He was not in the least interested. His whole mind was on Clark.”⁴

Over the period 17-19 February 1943, the German Panzer Army, Africa, under the command of *Generalfeldmarscall* Erwin Rommel, launched an offensive in central Tunisia. Driving the French forces and Lloyd Fredendall’s II US Corps towards the Kasserine Pass, the Germans won a tremendous tactical victory over the Allied forces on 19 February 1943, General Alexander arrived to take command of the 18th Army Group, consisting of all Allied ground forces in Tunisia. Alexander was appalled by the situation at hand, and was overly critical of both American and British leadership. His first impressions of American soldiers were less than sanguine, and it is likely to have left him

with an indelible feeling as to the capabilities of the American soldier, bordering on distrust and indifference. Some observations he made included:

My main concern is the poor fighting value of the Americans. They simply do not know their job as soldiers and this is the case from highest to lowest....Perhaps the weakest link of all is the junior leader, who just does not lead, with the result that their men don't really fight.⁵

After the disaster at Kasserine Pass, Patton replaced Fredendall as commander of II Corps before handing it over to Major General Omar Bradley. General McNair came to Tunisia, concerned with the disapproving reports of the Americans forces performance.

After observing the fighting, and recovering after being wounded, he reportedly conveyed to Clark the following observations:

The British have gypped us out of everything. Alexander, Anderson and Montgomery are running the show; Eisenhower was nothing but a figurehead. It was bad practice to have American troops under British command. The Fifth Army was being wasted and should be in England to prepare the cross-channel invasion. The planning for Sicily was absurd, for Alexander and Montgomery were both fighting in Tunisia and could give no attention to the invasion of Sicily. If successful, the campaign in Sicily would bring no great reward, for there was little point in attacking islands; better to go for the Continent.⁶

These comments present feelings of frustration and resentment, aimed at the Mediterranean Strategy as a whole and the perceived notion that the Americans were being pushed sideways by the preponderance of British Commanders. Coming from one of his mentors, this rhetoric may have made a lasting impression on Clark, possibly fuelling the already developing perception by Clark of British autocracy within the region. In April, Clark visited Bradley, General Bernard Montgomery and his British Eighth Army. Clark made a number of observations, believing that "they showed a cocky confidence in their own abilities" and "that this was a high spirited army that disregarded many of the battle rules on which Americans placed a good deal of emphasis, but nobody

could doubt that it was an effective fighting force.”⁷ Clark, generally satisfied with the state of the US forces, identified discipline as one area that required improvement. After a string of Allied victories, the war in Tunisia ended in May 1943. Afterwards, Alexander assumed command of the Fifteenth Army Group. The Trident Conference in Washington conducted over the period 12 through to the 27th May 1943, confirmed the Mediterranean strategy, with planning to commence for Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. This operation would be conducted by the US Seventh Army under Patton and the British Eighth Army under Montgomery. Clark and the Fifth Army were to plan for a possible, yet unlikely invasion of Sardinia.

The Allies invaded Sicily on 10 July 1943. Clark monitored the progress of this operation and was privately critical of the lack of reporting of American forces and their actions by the British Broadcasting Corporation. On 20 July, 1943, the plans to invade Sardinia were scrapped and Clark was charged with developing plans for an invasion onto the Italian mainland by American forces. On 16 August 1943, Eisenhower confirmed that the Fifth Army would land at Salerno, to be codenamed Operation Avalanche. Montgomery’s Eighth Army would assault across the straits of Messina towards the toe of Italy, to be codenamed Operation Bayton. The Sicilian Campaign ended on 17 August, 1943. Although a tactical success, Operation Husky highlighted the intense national rivalries that had developed between the American and British commanders, in particular Patton and Montgomery. Alexander would find himself entrenched in the middle, being required to mediate the two commanders. It also identified some operational weaknesses, in particular the lack of cohesion between the services.

General Eisenhower remained in command of all American and British joint forces. Of Swiss Bavarian decent, General Eisenhower had graduated from West Point in 1915. His career as a staff officer was not extraordinary, although assignments included the office of the Assistant Secretary of War as an assistant to the then Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur. He graduated first in his class at the Army Staff College and served sixteen years as a major. In Tunisia Eisenhower actively promoted Allied unity of command and purpose, thinking himself as “not an American but an ally” and sure that “every subordinate throughout the hierarchy of command will execute the orders he receives without even pausing to consider whether that order emanated from a British or American source.”⁸

General Alexander’s Fifteenth Army Group, a combined American-British headquarters organized along the British staff system, maintained operational command of all land forces for the invasion of Italy. Vice Admiral H. Kent Hewitt, US Navy, as designated commander of the Naval Task forces, would retain command of all joint and combined forces, handing command over to Clark once a beachhead had been achieved.⁹ Major General Edwin J. House and the US XII Air Support Command were charged with planning and directing air cover over the assault, with protection of convoys en route to Salerno provided by a separate organisation, the Coastal Air Command. This was not an ideal arrangement for Clark who advocated the requirement of having air assets centralized and readily available to the ground forces.

The Fifth Army’s initial task-organization for Operation Avalanche included the American VI Corps, comprising of the 34th and 36th Infantry Divisions, the 1st Armored Division and the 82nd Airborne Division; and the British X Corps, comprising of the 46th

and 56th Infantry Divisions, 7th Armored Division and the 1st Airborne Division.¹⁰

Major General Ernest J. Dawley commanded the VI Corps. A veteran of the First World War and ten years older than Clark, Dawley shared an acquaintance with Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair, one of Clark's closest mentors. Although Clark was satisfied with Dawley's abilities, General Eisenhower viewed him with less optimism.¹¹

Lieutenant General Sir Richard L. McCreery, a late replacement for the recently injured General Sir Brian Horrocks, commanded the British X Corps. McCreery had served as Alexander's deputy commander at El Alamein.

Planning for Operation Avalanche was completed by mid-August 1943, with the Fifth Army being designated the main effort. The Fifth Army's mission was to "seize the port of Naples and to secure the nearby airfields with a view to preparing a firm base for further offensive operations."¹² This plan required simultaneous assaults, with the British X Corps and the American VI Corps assaulting onto the beaches south of Salerno.

Assaulting from the north, the X Corps mission was the capture of Naples, with seizure of immediate objectives such as the port of Salerno and Ponte Sele on Highway 19. Three Ranger battalions were to land to their north at Maiori, their mission the seizure of key terrain between Salerno and Naples. Two Commando Battalions were to land at Vietri then move to seize Salerno. The majority of X Corps would land on three beaches south of the Picentino River; the 56th Division assaulting on the right flank; and the 46th Division taking over the center.

The American VI Corps was to operate on the right of X Corps, its mission to establish a beachhead south of the Sele River. Regimental combat teams of the 36th Division (reinforced) were to launch simultaneous assaults on the Paestum beaches

before advancing inland to seize the high ground that dominated the southern portion of the Salerno plain. A gap of 10 miles lay between the 56th Division of X Corps and the VI Corps beaches. This gap would be closed as the two corps moved inland, linking up at Ponte Sele.¹³ Two regimental combat teams provided by the 45th Division and the 82nd Airborne Division constituted a floating reserve. Follow on forces included the remainder of the 45th Division and the 82d Airborne Division, the 34th Division, the 7th Armored Division, 13th Field Artillery Brigade and support troops.

The Fifth Army would invade Italy with the equivalent of four divisions, doubling its strength with follow-up troops, all totalling 100,000 British and 69,000 American troops.¹⁴ It was imperative that the British and American corps immediately establish their beachheads before the Germans could react. D-Day would be on 9 September 1943, with H-Hour set for 0330 hours. At 0430 hours on 3 September, the British Eighth Army commenced Operation Bayton, meeting light Italian resistance. Their advance, however, lost momentum and slowed to a crawl due to the number of obstacles that lay in their way and the lack of useable bridges, with most being destroyed by the retreating German forces.

Operation Avalanche

On 8 September 1943 as the Allied convoy steamed for Salerno, General Eisenhower announced the Italian surrender. The reaction by troops on the ships turned to one of joy, with many now speculating as to the opposition expected at Salerno.¹⁵ At 0310 hours on 9 September, the United States Rangers assaulted their beach as the first units for the amphibious assault onto the Salerno beachhead. Twenty minutes later, the first elements of the US 36th Infantry Division came ashore at 0330 hours. As the

remainder of the assault forces landed, with many some distance from their designated drop off points, they came under intense enemy fire. The American and British forces consolidated before making their way inland towards their objectives. The US VI Corps faced a number of counterattacks throughout the first day, many of which included armor. American light infantry, effective in the use of both terrain and anti-armored weapons, repelled the German attempts to drive them back into the sea. The British X Corps landed without difficulty, but faced heavy enemy opposition as they moved inland. With naval gun fire support, the British were able to disrupt the German counterattacks and then penetrate their defences, with British lead elements having moved inland an average of 3000 yards by nightfall.¹⁶ At the end of D Day, all units except one infantry regiment had reached their initial objectives; however, both VI and X Corps had failed to secure their common boundaries on the Sele River. Day one of the invasion had transpired with very few problems, and the situation looked favourable for the Allies.

Generalfeldmarscall Kesselring, preoccupied with the Italian surrender, directed General Vietinghoff and his Tenth Army to contain the beachhead, while awaiting the arrival of the LXXVI Panzer Corps that was moving from southern Italy. Clark came ashore on 10 September. After meeting with McCreery and Major General Fred Walker, Clark reduced the X Corps zone and extended the VI Corps area of responsibility north. By this time, General Dawley had established his headquarters ashore. Clark appeared satisfied with their situations, and relayed an optimistic message to Eisenhower regarding their progress.¹⁷ On 11 September elements of the 142nd Infantry secured the vital Altavilla Hills, a dominating feature that would assist the 45th Division's drive east towards Ponte Sele. On the night of the eleventh German forces infiltrated the 142nd

Infantry stretched defensive positions and launched an attack on the morning of the twelfth, driving the Americans off the feature. This exposed the Sele corridor to a German counterattack that could split the seam between both X and VI Corps. Having been stuck on the *USS Ancon* for much of the day, Clark moved his own headquarters ashore late afternoon on 12 September. Clark assessed that the German threat lay to the centre of his two corps, and was capable of turning the inner flanks of either or both of them. At this time Clark started to question Dawley's ability: Dawley had failed to identify the threats posed to his northern flank, and therefore had not allocated troops to protect it. Clark writes:

In the center of the beach head heavy fighting swung back and forth around the tobacco factory, and elements of the 45th Division which had been pushed back from the Ponte Sele were in danger of being isolated. It was becoming obvious the General Dawley had not been fully aware of the strength of the enemy on his left flank and had not taken steps or been able to take steps to protect himself from counterattack in that sector after the failure of our thrusts towards Ponte Sele and Battipaglia. Furthermore, as the counterattacks developed, it was disclosed that all the troops had been committed in a cordon defense, leaving none in reserve to meet an enemy breakthrough. We were getting into a very tight place.¹⁸

Clark discussed his concerns with Dawley, resulting in a re-orientation of forces towards the threatened area. Sometime during the morning of the 13th, Vietinghoff, now aware of the gap between the two allied corps, assumed that the Allies were planning to evacuate the beachhead. He ordered an immediate counterattack, and shortly after midday, *LXXVI Panzer Corps* attacked,¹⁹ hitting VI Corps and the thin defensive line along the Sele River. German forces penetrated the American lines, overrunning a number of positions. The situation was worsening, and Clark directed his staff to begin planning for an evacuation of the beach head. Code named Sealion and Seatrains, the staff planned for either corps to be evacuated by ship and moved to reinforce the other

corps. The German forces, with Vietinghoff sensing impending victory, pressed on with their attacks. Effectively employing combined arms, in particular tanks and tank destroyers, the American resistance held, causing the German attacks to falter on the evening of the 13th. By this time, Clark had lost faith in Dawley, and therefore involved himself in the movements of VI Corps units along their defensive perimeter.²⁰

On 14 September, the Germans again attacked the Allied front. Employing effective naval gun fire and heavy bombers, the Allies interdicted the German units moving towards the beachhead. Clark toured the front, quietly encouraging the troops all the while impressing them with his confidence and poise under fire. For a number of heroic actions he would be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross. Meanwhile, Allied reinforcements arrived, including the British 7th Armoured Division and the remainder of the 45th Infantry Division. Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division landed south of Salerno, further strengthening the defence. A relieved Clark felt optimistic, and was satisfied with the contributions that had been made by Americans and British alike.²¹ On 15 September, Alexander visited the Fifth Army. He appeared pleased with the performance at the beachhead, including that of Clark. While visiting Dawley's headquarters, it was obvious to both Clark and Alexander that the commander of VI Corps was under immense strain. Both agreed that a change in command was required, although Alexander had to prompt Clark, suggesting "I do not want to interfere with your business, but I have had some ten years experience in this game of sizing up commanders. I can tell you definitely that you have a broken reed on your hands and I suggest you replace him immediately."²² After discussing first hand with General Eisenhower, Clark relieved Dawley of command on 20 September, replacing him with

Major General John P. Lucas. This had not been an easy decision for Clark, who was now becoming exposed to the requirements for making those tough decisions that were expected of an American army commander.²³

Having regrouped, the Germans commenced a final effort against the beach head on the 15th. Again their efforts were neutralized by determined resistance and effective fire support, again provided by the navy and air force. During this time, the lead elements of the Eighth Army were sixty miles from the Salerno beach head. Clark received a message from Montgomery, asking if Clark could “push out reconnaissance long the Agropoli road to meet my people” and noting that “you may be having not too good a time and I do hope that all is well with you.”²⁴ Although the situation at Salerno remained tenuous, Clark could not acknowledge the possibility of needing support from Montgomery. Conscious of Eisenhower’s order to maintain good relations between the Americans and the British, Clark replied, saying “it will be a pleasure seeing you again at an early date. Situation here well in hand.”²⁵ This letter from Montgomery only added to the dismay felt by Clark regarding the slow advance of the Eighth Army after its landing at Calabria. Clark, aware of the light German resistance facing the Eighth Army, had countered on them to render assistance. On both the tenth and twelfth of September, Alexander had urged Montgomery to hasten his advance. Montgomery responded in that they would be in a position to threaten the enemy forces at the beach head on 17 September.

Having failed to dislodge the Allied landings, Kesselring ordered the German forces to commence withdrawing north to conduct delaying actions. The Fifth Army secured the Salerno plain and commenced reconstituting their battle weary units. By 20

September, the Fifth and Eighth Armies had made contact, with the Eighth Army taking up positions to the right flank of Clark's forces. On 21 September, Alexander confirmed that Clark's army was to seize Naples, cross the Voltuno River and advance north along the western axis. The Eighth Army would advance along the eastern axis. On 22 September, Clark received the Fifteenth Army Group censorship guidance instructions. This cable required that all units:

. . . play up the Eighth Army progress henceforth. Second, the Fifth Army is pushing the enemy back on the right flank. Americans may be mentioned. There should be no suggestion that the enemy has made good his escape.²⁶

Understandably, Clark was irritated by this direction to downplay the efforts of his army, while amplifying those of his British counterparts. These compounding incidents did nothing to strengthen his relationship with either Alexander or Montgomery, further adding to Clark's perception that the British commanders would deny the Fifth Army any positive exposure at the expense of their British counterparts. This no doubt strengthened his resolve in ensuring that American troops received their due accolades, and Naples was a means for achieving this.²⁷

Salerno had been costly for both sides and turned out to be a near run thing for the Allies. Clark survived his baptism of fire, and Dawley lost his command. Clark had also made mistakes. For example he failed to fully appreciate the nature of the terrain in which his forces were assaulting, and the advantage it would provide the defenders. His own words amplify this oversight:

And, even in the battle we did not fully realize how great was the advantage of the Germans in holding all the high hills surrounding our beachhead, from which they were continually looking down our throats. Not until a month later, when I had an opportunity to fly low over the German positions at Salerno, did I wholly realize how well the enemy had been able to observe our movements and thus shift his strength and artillery to oppose our thrusts.²⁸

Clark did, however, show immense physical courage and sound leadership as he moved forward amongst his many units. Following this operation, Eisenhower would report to his superiors that while Clark lacked General Omar Bradley's ability to win the confidence of those around him or Patton's quality of refusing to give in, Clark was good and could carry weight.²⁹ General Alexander had also been impressed with Clark's handling of a difficult situation.³⁰

Fifth Army advances north

The Fifth Army marched into Naples on 1 October 1943. On this day, Eighth Army took the Foggia and the nearby airfields. Naples had suffered immense damage, inflicted by both the German and Allied forces. The Fifth Army did not pause after the capture of Naples, continuing to drive north towards its next objectives in the vicinity of Seesa Aurunca and Venafro, the high ground that dominated the Garigliano and Rapido Valleys to the north. This required firstly crossing the defended river line at Volturno.³¹

The terrain ahead of the Fifth Army restricted offensive maneuver. With narrow roads, steep hills and mountainous terrain, this ground favored the defender. Again, forces from the German Tenth Army, in particular the *XIV Panzer Corps*, would oppose Fifth Army's advance. Their mission was to inflict maximum delay at the Volturna River, a line that provided excellent terrain for defense, with a river that was in places up to one hundred yards wide and six feet deep. Having achieved the necessary delay, they would then withdraw north.³² The Fifth Army, with its left flank astride the Italian west coast and its right flank against the Matese Mountains, advanced north in coordination but independently of the Eighth Army to its east. On 3 October, it began to rain heavily, swelling the rivers and turning the approach routes into mud, slowing the advance. The X

Corps advanced on the western flank, reaching the river on 5 and 6 October. To their right, the VI Corps reached the river on 6 October. Clark's initial plan required X Corps to cross the river as soon as it had secured the home bank. Due to delays caused by weather and dogged enemy resistance, a new plan was formulated that required both X and VI Corps to cross in a coordinated assault on the night of the 12-13 October.

McCreery treated the plan with pessimism, noting that his troops would be required to cross flat ground in front of German forces defending from strong mountain defences. He believed VI Corps should attack a day before and outflank the Germans defense, taking the focus away from the X Corps zone of assault. When visiting McCreery, Clark suggested they go for a walk out onto the fields away from the staff, in order that they speak frankly with each other. Clark reports that McCreery said:

I want to make it plain as commander responsible for British troops, and with my experience against Rommel in Egypt, that this is the most difficult job I have faced. You know how I feel about a simultaneous attack. I was opposed to it. We accept your order of course, and we will go all out, but I have to say that I am embarrassed when an American gives British troops orders that we don't like.³³

This is the first case so far where a British subordinate challenge's Clark's plan. McCreery refers to his experience in Egypt, a subtle attempt aimed at possibly highlighting Clark's relative inexperience. The reference to not liking Clark's orders clearly indicates that McCreery disagreed with the tactics to be used. It is however, difficult to determine what McCreery meant when he said he was embarrassed, given that he could have alluded to either Clark's competence or the views that may have permeated throughout a number of the British subordinate commanders. Clark listened to his subordinate before informing him that the plan would not change. In ending, Clark showed great tact yet firm resolve when he told McCreery:

In the end it seems much better to have everybody attack at once to prevent concentration of forces against our crossing. That is my decision and it can't be changed now. All units have their orders, and they will carry them out, and I know you will. I am glad you have been frank about it and I know you realize the difficult position I am in when I give you orders that you don't like.³⁴

At this time Clark would again be frustrated with the censorship guidance from the Fifteenth Army Groups public relations office stressing the need to highlight British achievements.³⁵ This again could only add to the already blossoming perception that the British would conspire to undermine the American reputation and efforts within this theatre.

From midnight corps and divisional artillery opened fire along the front of the German defenses. Having initially softened the enemy positions with high explosive, smoke shells were added to assist in screening the assaulting forces. Along its entire front, the X Corps met heavy resistance. The 56th Division, tasked with creating a demonstration on the eastern boundary quickly became overwhelmed by the enemy weight of fire. Although some elements made it to the far bank, effective fire from the German strong points forced their withdrawal. The 45th Division, supported by naval gun fire, managed to cross the river and secure part of the far bank, defeating at least one counter attack. At daylight, seventeen tanks were ferried across to provide intimate support; however their effectiveness was degraded by boggy ground and landmines. Having inflicted severe casualties on the assaulting Allies, in particular those of X Corps, the Germans commenced their withdrawal from the entire front line on the evening of 13 October. This withdrawal required the *XIV Panzer Corps* to move into the mountainous terrain between the Volturno River and the valleys of the Garigliano and Rapido

Rivers.³⁶ By 14 October, the Fifth Army had a majority of its forces across the Volturno River.

During the next month, the Fifth Army would drive north through coastal plains, river valleys and scattered hilly masses. To the northeast lay the Matese Mountains; the northwestern area was a broken mountain divide, marked by many high peaks and the steep hills above Venafro. Beyond this divide lay the Gagliano and Rapido Valleys, dominated by the hills overshadowing Cassino, and then the Liri Valley.³⁷ The *XIV Panzer Corps* would again oppose the Fifth Army. Their defensive concepts would be based on three lines of defense. The first line, named the Barbara Line, would only afford slight delay given the hastily constructed positions. The Bernhard line, more robust in its preparation, afforded greater delay. The strongest of the three, the Gustav Line, was based on the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers and the strongpoint at Monte Cassino. It is at this line that the Germans would offer their most aggressive and determined resistance. It is described as:

Along the Garigliano River and its tributary, the Rapido, to Cassino and then up and over some of the highest features in the southern Apennines until it reached the River Sangro on the Adriatic coast. The main defensive positions were not on the river banks but were well back on the reverse slopes of the hills overlooking the river valleys. The river banks were held by light covering forces, helped by minefields and artillery fire from batteries positioned securely behind hills.³⁸

On 8 November 1943, the Fifteenth Army Group issued Operations Instruction No 31, directing the Fifth Army to drive up the Liri-Sacco Valley to Frosinone. When this directed, Fifth Army would launch an amphibious operation south of Rome, to be planned for immediately. The Eighth Army was to drive up the Adriatic coast to Chienti and then wheel west towards Rome.³⁹

The Fifth Army advance continued, albeit labored due to a combination of poor weather, lowering morale, poor trafficability and German resistance and ingenuity, making the best use of mines, demolitions and rearguard actions. The Fifth Army required much needed rest, having suffered many casualties since the landings at Salerno. On 15 November 1943, Clark halted the army's advance, allowing for the much needed re-allocation of forces and supplies. This operational pause would prove timely as a heavy rainstorm broke, beginning what would be a long period of miserable and wet weather. The 1st Armored Division, recently arrived through Naples replaced the 7th Armored Division, which together with the 82nd Airborne Division departed for the United Kingdom in preparation for the invasion of France. On 18 November, the US II Corps Headquarters, commanded by Major General Geoffrey T. Keyes arrived and with the 3rd and 36th Division took up a position between X and VI Corps. By Early December, another foreign force joined the ever growing Fifth Army, these being the first elements of the French Expeditionary Corps, the 2nd French Moroccan Infantry Division. This division was attached to the VI Corps, its commander immediately impressing General Lucas as a "most capable officer and in every way highly loyal and cooperative."⁴⁰

During the last two weeks of November, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt met at a conference in Cairo. To Churchill the Italian campaign had proved a disappointment in that it failed to meet many of the Allied strategic objectives he had hoped for. He announced that the seizure of Rome should be the main objective in Italy. He added that Operation Overlord should not rule out every activity in the Mediterranean Theatre, and believed that the transfer of landing craft

needed for Overlord, from the Mediterranean theatre, should be delayed until 15 December 1943. These landing craft could then be used for the amphibious operation designed to capture Rome.⁴¹ Shortly thereafter, the Allied leaders met with Joseph Stalin, who favored Operation Overlord and a secondary invasion to the south of France at the expense of further offensive operations in Italy if resources such as landing craft were lacking. After strong objections from Churchill, the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed that General Eisenhower retain sixty eight landing craft in the Mediterranean until 15 January 1944.⁴²

The attacks on the winter line began in December 1943. The next six weeks of fighting proved difficult, against strong enemy positions in the most difficult terrain. On 8 December, Clark flew to Palermo and received his Distinguished Service Cross from the American President. After the ceremony, Roosevelt informed Clark that he would command the invasion of southern France, Operation Anvil, as discussed earlier by the heads of state in Cairo. On 14 December, Clark received a cable (formerly classified Secret) from Eisenhower, saying:

From the Theater Commander (General Eisenhower) to General Clark for eyes only: I have just learned that your recent visit to Sicily was made without giving General Alexander prior notification. I thoroughly understand that this occurred merely through oversight and was not intended as a discourtesy to General Alexander but I hope you will take prompt action to assure him that this was the case. These little points of courtesy must be observed with far greater care in an Allied command than in a purely nationalistic one, a point of which I know you are fully aware.⁴³

How Eisenhower came to know of this is uncertain, however it again highlights the emphasis he placed on improving what he perceived to be lack of communications and respect between British and American officers, in particular Clark and his relationship with Alexander. It is unsure whether Clark did this on purpose, however this

reprimand by Eisenhower certainly leads one to believe that Clark had been less than open with his immediate superior even though it is likely that Alexander would have known of this event given that Roosevelt was in attendance.

Clark and Eisenhower met again on 18 December 1943 and discussed both Operations Anvil, the amphibious landing in Southern France and Shingle, the amphibious assault in the vicinity of Rome. Both agreed that the slow progress up the Italian peninsula could not guarantee support to Shingle should it be launched in January. Clark wired Alexander, recommending that this operation be delayed and additional landing craft be made available.⁴⁴ Alexander agreed and the operation was immediately postponed. Eisenhower confirmed with Clark that the latter had been identified to plan for and command Operation Anvil, although he would remain with Fifth Army until Rome had been captured. Eisenhower also confirmed his own move to England in early January as Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Force. On 8 January 1944, General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson would assume command of the Italian theater. His deputy commander would be Lieutenant General Jacob L. Devers, who would also command all American forces in the region.⁴⁵ General Montgomery would follow Eisenhower to England, to be replaced by Lieutenant General Sir Oliver W.H Reese.

Following a meeting in Tunis, Alexander informed Clark that Operation Shingle, to be conducted at Anzio, would commence at the end of January. He added that both British and American forces should take part. Having recently been replaced on the line by the French Expeditionary Corps, this operation would therefore fall to General John Lucas and VI Corps.

Operation Shingle

On 2 January 1944, General Alexander issued Operations Instruction No 32 for Operation Shingle, the amphibious assault south of Rome. The purpose of this operation was to cut the enemy lines of communications and threaten the rear of *XIV Panzer Corps*.⁴⁶ VI Corps, with the American 3rd Division and the British 1st Division, together with three ranger battalions and two infantry battalions, would conduct this operation. On 12 January, Fifth Army Field Order No 5 ordered VI Corps to seize and secure the beachhead in the vicinity of Anzio and then advance to Colli Laziali (the Alban Hills). The final summary by the Fifth Army G-2 on 16 January gives their assessment that German forces had suffered from heavy attrition:

Within the last few days there has been increasing indications that enemy strength on the Fifth Army front is ebbing, due to casualties, exhaustion, and possible lowering of morale. One of the causes of this condition, no doubt, has been the recent continuous attacks. From this it can be deduced that he has no fresh reserves and very tired ones. His entire strength will probably be needed to defend his organized defensive positions. In view of the weakening of enemy strength on the front as indicated above it would appear doubtful if the enemy can hold the organized defensive line through Cassino against a coordinated army attack. Since this attack is to be launched before Shingle, it is considered likely that this additional threat will cause him to withdraw from his defensive position once he has appreciated the magnitude of the operation.⁴⁷

Fifth Army's Operations Instruction No 13, dated 10 January 1944 articulated Clark's plan to break through the Winter Line. The French Expeditionary Corps would open the attack on 12 January. II Corps would secure Mount Trocchio on 15 January. On 17 January, X Corps was to force the Garigliano River and attack north towards San Ambrogio. II Corps would then assault across the Rapido River on 20 January before breaking out to the west and northeast of Sant' Angelo.⁴⁸ Having achieved the earlier objectives, X Corps successfully crossed the lower Garigliano River on 17 January 1944.

The outer defences of the Gustav Line had now been breached, with British forces securing high ground to the west and north of the river.⁴⁹ By 19 January, they had secured a bridgehead two miles deep, however, at a cost of 4152 casualties. So serious was this threat that the Germans reinforced this front with twenty battalions, including the *Hermon Goering Panzer Division*. The following attacks against San Ambrogio failed.

Clark writes:

The failure of the attack by the British 46th Division towards San Ambrogio, just south of the junction of the Liri and Gari Rivers, had aroused serious concern. This failure, which I felt was largely due to lack of strong leadership at the divisional level, caused the British to swing back sharply several miles below San Ambrogio and thus greatly complicated the task of the adjacent II Corps, under General Keyes, which was to cross against very strong enemy positions along the Rapido north of the junction of the Liri and Gari. Nevertheless, it was imperative that the southern front of the Fifth Army should make its attack in order to facilitate the the Anzio landing.⁵⁰

These failed attacks played heavily on Major General Fred L Walker, commander of 36th Division, II Corps, whom was responsible for assaulting the Rapido on 20 January, 1944. Walker wrote in his diary before the attack “the commander of 46th Division came to apologize for failure of his division to cross the river last night. His failure makes it tough on my men who now have none of the advantages that his crossing could have provided.”⁵¹ On 20 and 21 January, the 36th Division of II Corps attacks across the Rapido were repulsed, resulting in very heavy casualties. Hampered by lack of preparation time (in both conducting rehearsals and clearing the approaches of obstacles and mines) and a swiftly flowing river, the attack quickly ground to a halt. A couple of regiments were able to cross the river, however tanks could not cross to support them and they soon became isolated. The attacks ceased on 22 January 1944. Historians have been very critical of Clark’s decision to continue the attacks across the Rapido. Clark’s plan

required a beachhead be achieved by the 36th Division at Saint Angelo, the most heavily defended area, due to its access to the Via Casilina that runs through the Liri Valley and onto Rome. The coastal route opposite X Corps was a narrow corridor, and could therefore be blocked.⁵² Clark justifies his plan in saying:

In Alexander's formal instructions, for instance, the Fifth Army was directed to make as strong a thrust as possible towards Cassino and Frosinone shortly prior to the Anzio assault landing to draw in enemy forces, and then to create a breach in his front through which every opportunity would be taken to link up rapidly with the seaborne operation. There was no question in my mind that we were going to spill blood, either to break through the Gustav Line or to flank it at Anzio; and there was no question in my mind it was better for us to spill it where our main force was well established and on the offensive than on the hazardous and unorganized beach head at the time when a powerful counter attack there might drive us into the sea and wreck our whole plan of campaign. Thus on the day I recorded that I expected heavy losses on the Rapido-Garigliano front, it was our deliberate strategy to draw the Germans there in order to safeguard our landing at Anzio.⁵³

At 0200 hours on 22 January 1944, the first waves of VI Corps swarmed ashore at Anzio, virtually unopposed. On the southern flank of the beachhead the 3rd Division quickly seized its initial objectives while British units achieved equal success in the center and north. Simultaneously, Rangers occupied Anzio port, and the 509th Parachute Infantry Battalion thrust east seizing Nettuno. All VI Corp's objectives were taken by noon. Allied units continued to push inland over the next few days, extending the beach head by seven miles. By 0001 hours on 23 January, VI Corps had approximately ninety percent of its personnel and equipment ashore.⁵⁴ Upon receiving word of the landings, *Generalfeldmarschall* Kesselring dispatched the *4th Parachute* and *Hermann Goering Divisions* south from the Rome area to block the roads leading north from the Alban Hills. Later in the day, *Ober kommando der Wehrmacht* ordered an additional three divisions from the Balkans, France and Germany to reinforce the Italian theatre.

Kesselring also instructed General Vietinghoff to transfer all the troops he could spare from the Gustav Lines. Kesselring believed that an immediate attack by the Allies would overrun the Alban Hills, sweeping away the weak opposition. To Kesselring's surprise, the Allies did little more than increase the size of the beach head.⁵⁵

At this point, it is worth reviewing the mission as General Lucas most probably understood it. General Alexander's operation order directed VI Corps to land some sixty miles behind the German lines, cut off the main German supply lines, capture the Alban Hills and throw the enemy into a rout.⁵⁶ This gives very clear guidance in that the capture of Alban Hills was of tactical importance to the operational mission. However Clark's Fifth Army Field Order No 5 differed significantly, ambiguous at best, in that he instructed VI Corps to first seize and then secure the beach head in the vicinity of Anzio, and then when the situation allows, advance to the Alban Hills. It is not difficult to understand why Clark changed the tasks. He states:

That British intelligence was sometimes overly optimistic to hearten the troops and because it was shaped to fit the decision already made at Tunis by Churchill. Our own estimate was more conservative and suggested that the enemy would concentrate all the force possible to defeat the landing, and prevent us from reaching the Alban Hills.⁵⁷

What is not clear is why Alexander did not reiterate the original tasks, but instead suddenly agreed to the new tasks that had been given. General Lucas was expected by Clark to make an assessment and then act accordingly. General Donald W. Brann, Clark's G-3, confirmed with Lucas the new tasks, however, Lucas remained in a defensive mindset tactically, unsure as to what was tactically achievable. By 24 January the opposing German defenses had been reinforced and the likelihood of an Allied breakout

had dissipated. Kesselring directed *Generaloberst* Eberhard von Mackensen, the army commander responsible for Anzio, to launch a counter attack as quickly as possible.⁵⁸

With US VI Corps tied down at Anzio, it was imperative that the remainder of the Fifth Army achieve a breakthrough of the Gustav Line and then advance north. On 24 January 1944, the II Corps together with troops from the French Expeditionary Corps launched an assault across the Rapido valley. Both units made good progress across inhospitable terrain and against German defensive positions that were well prepared and sited. By early February, US units had secured key features close to the Monte Cassino Abbey, a Benedictine monastery that dominated the approaches into Monte Cassino. However German forces were able to retain all of the key approaches and ridges to the monastery. After a series of unsuccessful assaults onto the Monastery Hill and into the Cassino Township, the US II Corps, exhausted and having suffered many casualties, was replaced by the recently arrived New Zealand Corp

The Bombing of Monte Cassino

The NZ Corps, commanded by Lieutenant General Bernard Freyberg, replaced II Corps. In January 1944, General Alexander had constituted an Army Group reserve in support of the thrust north towards the Liri Valley. This consisted of the NZ 2nd Division and 4th Indian Division, drawn from the Eighth Army, and became designated the NZ Corps, with an additional British Division expected sometime in February. General Bernard Freyberg was born in London but grew up in Wellington, New Zealand. A veteran of the Gallipoli campaign during the First World War, Freyberg won the Distinguished Service Order for swimming to shore alone and lighting flares for the amphibious assaults. He would later received Britain's highest award for valor, the

Victoria Cross, in France. Having been promoted to Brigadier-General at the age of 27 and then attaining command of a division in 1918, he was a respected commander. In 1939 he was appointed commander of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force by the New Zealand Government.

On 30 January 1944, Alexander sent for Freyberg, informing him of the necessity to move the NZ Corps to the front line in support of the Americans. Freyberg asked Alexander if he refused this order would another division carry out the operations. He was informed “yes.”⁵⁹ At a meeting in Caserta, Clark discussed options for the use of this corps with Alexander and Freyberg. Freyberg’s preferred option, favored by Alexander, was to keep the NZ Corps under direct command of Alexander as an exploitation force. From the onset, Clark was displeased with Freyberg’s propositions, writing:

Freyberg has been directed by Alexander to prepare recommendations for employment of his reinforced New Zealanders on the Fifth Army front. I had not been consulted about such recommendations. I got a definite impression that 15th Army Group and Freyberg were going to tell me what to do. I objected as diplomatically as possible, pointing out that their plans for using the New Zealanders and Indian troops in the Cassino-Monte Cairo mountain sector would not fit in well.⁶⁰

Clark pushed Alexander for command of the NZ Corps. Alexander acquiesced, and the NZ Corps came under command of the Fifth Army at 10 am on 3 February 1944. On 4 February 1944, Freyberg and his staff attended a conference with the Fifth Army staff officers. Freyberg and General George Keyes, Commander of II Corps, clashed over how Freyberg intended to move his unit forward to the front line. Clark informed Freyberg to synchronize his unit’s actions with the remainder of the Fifth Army before turning it over to his staff. Clark would later write to Keyes, stating:

These are Dominion troops who are very jealous of their prerogatives. The British have found them difficult to handle. They have always been given special considerations which we could not give to our own troops.⁶¹

On 11 February 1944, General Al Gruenther, Clark's Chief of Staff informed Freyberg that the torch was now his and that he would resume offensive operations from II Corps. Freyberg's Corps commenced a series of failed frontal attacks. It was then assessed by Freyberg and in particular Major General F Tucker, commander of the 4th Indian Division that the monastery was being used by the Germans for directing fires onto the allied positions. On 12 February Freyberg submitted a formal submission to Fifth Army requesting that it be bombed based on military necessity. General Clark, who was visiting Anzio at the time, had made his views well known to Gruenther, who was in contact with him by radio telephone. Gruenther represented Clark's views to both Freyberg and Lieutenant-General A. F. Harding, Alexander's Chief of Staff, stating his opposition to the bombing of the monastery. Clark was in a difficult position, given Alexander's desire that Freyberg be treated with diplomacy and tact.⁶² That evening, Harding informed Gruenther that Alexander has decided the abbey should be bombed if Freyberg considered it a military necessity. Gruenther replies:

General Clark does not think that the building should be bombed. If the commander of the New Zealand Corps were an American commander, he would give specific orders that it should not be bombed. However, in view of the situation, which is a delicate one, General Clark hesitates to give him such an order without referring the matter to General Alexander. General Clark is still of the opinion that no military necessity exists for the destruction of the monastery.⁶³

Due to the much sensitivity associated with the monastery's bombing, and his perceived inability to order Freyberg that it will not be bombed, Clark, in a dilemma, felt he was compelled to pass this decision to Alexander. On 15 February 1944, the air bombardment began, conducted by a total of 255 Allied bombers, destroying the

monestary. The area was then shelled by artillery after the aerial bombing had concluded. The ground assault did not occur in coordination with this bombardment and the opportunity to seize the hill was lost, with civilians and friendly troops killed in the fallout. No tactical advantage was achieved as the NZ Corps failed to take the hill, with significant political fallout due to the monasteries destruction. Clark, understandably, was incensed.⁶⁴

Both the Allied fronts at the Gustav Line and Anzio had drawn to a halt. The Fifth Army continued to strengthen its forces before the Germans attempted to penetrate the Allied defenses during the first days of March. The Fifth Army had been engaged with the resolute German forces now for five months, and time was running short if Clark and his Fifth Army were to get to Rome before the invasion of France commenced. On 22 February 1944, General Lucas was relieved of command of VI Corps as result of Alexander's doubts and Clark's concerns over his ability to continue commanding his units. Churchill had also been unimpressed with the lack of impetus and perceived indecisiveness shown by this American commander, and no doubt his words of frustration and inferred displeasure assisted Clark in having to make this difficult decision. Major General Lucian Truscott immediately assumed command.

The Capture of Rome

At the end of February, General Clark was informed by General Wilson that he would not plan and lead Operation Anvil, therefore retaining command of the Fifth Army. Feeling relieved, he could now sorely focus on the challenges facing his army on two separate fronts. General Alexander looked to a new offensive to break the German ring of defences that stood in the way of securing Rome. This operation, named Diadem,

required General Leese's Eighth to take Cassino and cross the Rapido River before penetrating the Gustav Line and then breaking out into the Liri Valley astride Highway 6. The Fifth Army would attack through the mountain ranges on the left flank. In coordination with these two attacks, General Truscott's forces would break out of the Anzio Beach head and cut off the German forces south of Rome in the vicinity of Valmontone by linking up with the Eighth Army, therefore entrapping the withdrawing German Tenth Army (figure 3).⁶⁵

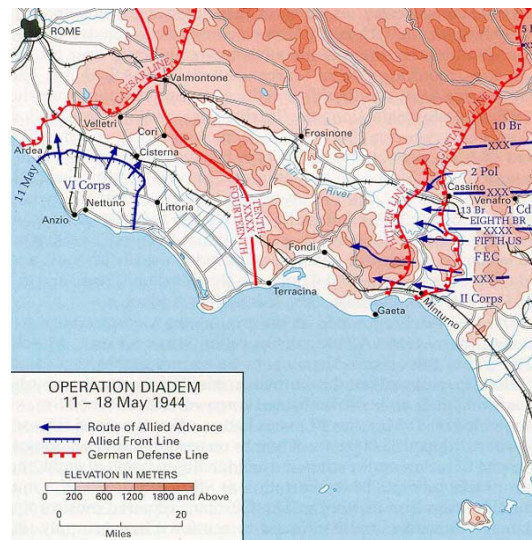


Figure 6. Plans for Operation Diadem.

Source. The Map Archive available from <http://www.maparchive.org>; Internet; accessed 15 April 2007.

Alexander had visited Truscott when his subordinate informed him that he had developed four different plans for VI Corps breakout from Anzio, and would use the most effective plan at the appropriate time and place. Alexander responded in kind, saying, “The only one direction in which the attack should be launched, and that was from

Cisterna to cut Highway 6 in the vicinity of Valmontone in the rear of the German forces.”⁶⁶ Clark thought this plan had inherent risks, as Truscott’s corps would be required to skirt around the German held Alban Hills, therefore exposing his flanks while leaving that key terrain in the enemy’s hands, blocking the route to Rome. Clark was again dismayed, concerned that Alexander had spoken directly with one of his subordinates whilst giving him guidance contrary to Clark’s, which was to develop alternate plans. Clark confronted Alexander and requested that Alexander only issue orders through him. Clark directed Truscott that the attack onto Valmontone was to be given priority however he was to be prepared to go elsewhere if and when directed.⁶⁷ Operation Diadem commenced on 11 May 1944.

After nearly a week of intense fighting, *Generalfeldmarscall* Albert Kesselring ordered that German forces withdrawal on 17 May 1944, from the Gustav Line to the Hitler line. Alexander now went about trying to orchestrate the destruction of the withdrawing German forces, deciding that the Fifth and Eighth Army’s attacks would commence on 22 May, with Truscott’s forces breaking out on the 23rd. The breakout on 23 May was well executed by the men of VI Corps and ruptured the defences of the German Fourteenth Army, allowing VI Corps to head in land to commence interdicting the Tenth Army’s withdrawal. On 25 May Major General Keye’s II Corps and Truscott’s VI Corps linked up at Anzio, allowing Clark to now focus on his prize. That afternoon, after arriving back at his command post, Truscott received the order to leave a division blocking Highway 6 and to mount the assault towards the northwest as soon as he could. Dumfounded but unable to speak personally with his commander, Truscott commenced preparations. Truscott states that “Such was the order that turned the main effort of the

beachhead forces from the Valmontone Gap and prevented the destruction of the German Tenth Army.”⁶⁸

Clark’s revised plan would see five divisions of VI Corps head towards Rome, with II Corps, numbering just over two divisions, attempting to cut off Highway 6. He had little hope of the latter’s success given the number of roads other than Highway 6 available to the withdrawing German forces. On 1 June the II Corps arrived at their objectives well after the Germans had withdrawn out of the area, therefore Clark directed both corps to head for Rome. On 3 June 1944 Kesselring ordered the German withdrawal from Rome. Clark entered his prize jewel on the morning of 5 June, ready to receive the accolades heaped on him and his Fifth Army. The glory was bitter sweet for Clark, although he had only one day under the spotlight before Operation Overlord reduced the war in Italy and Fifth Army’s future endeavours to that of a lesser significance.⁶⁹

¹War Department, *Field Service Regulations Larger Units, June 29, 1942*.

²Mark W Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York: Harper, 1950), 145.

³Chester G Starr, ed, *From Salerno to the Alps: A History of the Fifth Army, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), 3.

⁴Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders* (New York: Congdon and Weed, 1984), 117.

⁵Rick Atkinson, *An Army at Dawn: The War in North Africa, 1942-1943* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002), 377.

⁶Blumenson, 119.

⁷Clark, 167.

⁸Atkinson, 467.

⁹Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969), 36.

- ¹⁰Starr, 7.
- ¹¹Clark, 175
- ¹²Starr, 11.
- ¹³Ibid.,12.
- ¹⁴Ibid.,11.
- ¹⁵Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 55.
- ¹⁶Starr, 20.
- ¹⁷Clark, 195.
- ¹⁸Ibid., 198.
- ¹⁹Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 113.
- ²⁰Ibid., 138.
- ²¹Clark, 207.
- ²²Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders*, 139.
- ²³Dominick Graham and S. Bidwell, *Tug of War: The Battle for Italy 1943-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 99.
- ²⁴Clark, 208.
- ²⁵Ibid., 208.
- ²⁶Ibid., 210.
- ²⁷Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark: The Last of the Great World War II Commanders*, 144.
- ²⁸Clark, 194.
- ²⁹Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders* 142
- ³⁰Rupert Clark, *With Alex at War* (Great Britain: Pen & Sword Books, 2000), 122.

³¹Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 190.

³²Starr, 40.

³³Clark, 223.

³⁴*Ibid.*, 224.

³⁵Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders*, 149.

³⁶Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 206.

³⁷Starr, 47.

³⁸William G. F. Jackson, *The Battle for Italy* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1967), 130-131.

³⁹Wilmington, Del, *Fifth Army History 1943-1945* (USA: Scholarly Resources, 1980), 9.

⁴⁰Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 255.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 247.

⁴²*Ibid.*

⁴³Alfred D. Chandler, *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: The War Years, vol 2* (Baltimore, USA: John Hopkins Press, 1970), 1595.

⁴⁴Clark, 251.

⁴⁵Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 295.

⁴⁶Lt General Henry M. Wilson, *Report by the Supreme Allied Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the Italian Campaign: 8 January to 10 May 1944. Fifth Army History, 1943-1945* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1946), 369.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 986.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 989.

⁴⁹Clark, 267.

- ⁵⁰Ibid., 269.
- ⁵¹Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 328.
- ⁵²Graham and Bidwell, 145.
- ⁵³Clark, 271.
- ⁵⁴Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 359.
- ⁵⁵Ibid., 363.
- ⁵⁶Fred Sheehan, *Anzio- Epic of Bravery* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964), 24.
- ⁵⁷Clark, 286.
- ⁵⁸Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 364.
- ⁵⁹NC Phillips, *Official History of New Zealand in the Second World War 1939-45: Italy Vol I* (Nashville: Battery Press, 1957), 342.
- ⁶⁰Clark, 298.
- ⁶¹Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino*, 402.
- ⁶²Clark, 316.
- ⁶³Ibid., 317.
- ⁶⁴Graham and Bidwell, 183.
- ⁶⁵Rupert Clark, *With Alex at War* (Great Britain: Pen & Sword Books, 2000), 143.
- ⁶⁶Lucian Truscott, Jr, *Command Missions* (New York: Library of Congress, 1954), 369.
- ⁶⁷Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders*, 201.
- ⁶⁸.Truscott, 375
- ⁶⁹Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders*, 217.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

It would all be tidier, less of a theoretical problem, if the contingent promised ten, twenty, or thirty thousand men--were placed entirely at the ally's disposal and he were free to use it as he wished. It would then in effect be a hired force. But that is far from what really happens. The auxiliary force usually operates under its own commander; he is dependent only on his government.¹

von Clausewitz, *On War*

On arriving in Rome General Mark W. Clark had commanded Fifth Army in the Italian campaign for slightly less than eight months. This campaign had proven to be long and very difficult campaign. The geography, extreme in its landscape, had afforded the German defenders a marked advantage. The German Tenth Army had proven to be a tenacious and well led opponent. The Fifth Army was a true polyglot force, with contributing nations adding different languages, equipment, caveats and sensitivities to the mixture. Before taking command of Fifth Army, Clark lacked command experience. Having missed out on this opportunity during the First World War, Clark would throughout his career rigorously request command positions at every available opportunity. This single-mindedness and with consistently strong performances in a number of high profile training jobs allowed him to develop strong working relationships with a number of key personnel within the army leadership, in particular Generals Leslie McNair and George C. Marshall. Clark's relationship with Dwight D. Eisenhower, having first started at the Military Academy, would also prove to be crucial. It is without doubt that once his star started to rapidly rise and key leaders took favorable notice of Clark, it brought its fair share of detractors, many who perceived him to be too ambitious

and smug. His own personal perceptions, many of them negative, would start to develop as he began to operate with foreign forces. This chapter will analyze how the command arrangements within Fifteenth Army Group, together with Clark's perceptions of the British commanders and units influenced the decision making of the Fifth Army Commander.

Command Arrangements

Command is the authority that a commander in the military service lawfully exercises over subordinated by virtue of rank or assignment. ²

War Department, *Field Service regulations, Operations, May 22, 1941*

During the research for this thesis it soon became clear that there existed no definite doctrine or field service manuals in the lead up to and during the conduct of operations within the Italian theatre that provided a guide to commanders for the conduct of coalition operations. A diagram illustrating the Allied chain of command at the commencement of the Italian campaign is at Appendix A. Depending on the commander at the time, the staffs would be organized on the British or American staff systems, utilizing combined staff groups and functions. At the strategic level, the CCS, comprising the ACS and the BCS, provided military advice and planning capabilities to their respective heads of government. They would also set strategic and operational objectives, and provide approval to plans formulated by AFHQ. The members of the staffs, in particular General Marshall, would also provide close supervision to General Eisenhower. Although AFHQ was organized in accordance with American staff principles, Eisenhower adopted the British preferred method of practicing command by

committee, in that he would consult with his subordinate service commanders before executing his decisions.³

Alexander's Fifteenth Army Group headquarters consisted of a small and mobile element organized along British staff practices. This headquarters was responsible for the planning and the overall coordination of both the Fifth and Eighth Armies and operated as a combined staff. Originally this headquarters was both an operational and an administrative headquarters on the British side, but only an operational headquarters on the U.S. side. This headquarters would only command the land forces during the campaign, with command of air forces remaining under the Allied Air Force Command. As noted in his memoirs, Clark thought this an unsatisfactory arrangement for the conduct of Operation Avalanche. He noted that Alexander's headquarters in Sicily was too far away to influence the actions at Salerno. He also states that Alexander had no control over naval and air forces, these answerable to Eisenhower's headquarters in North Africa. Clark implies that far greater unity of command would have been achieved had one commander been given complete authority over all services during various phases of the ensuing battles.⁴ A clear lack in service coordination resulted in Clark's reserves being dropped ashore at the wrong place.⁵

Having gained vast experience in operating with foreign forces, Alexander understood the need to best manage American and British commanders, together with their inherent personalities and traits. Alexander's philosophy for command was to provide inspiration to the troops through their respective national commanders. He did not seek personal publicity and ensured that his subordinates received their due praise. Alexander's persona remained calm and confident during most times of crisis, evoking a

marvelous command presence.⁶ Alexander displayed a very personable and sympathetic style of command, attempting to provide options to his subordinates as opposed to issuing them a direct order. Through regular dialogue Alexander attempted to subtly shape his subordinate commanders through his questioning of the facts and then offering his advice. One can understand why Alexander would choose to use this command style, given the makeup of his multinational force. His approach was tailored to what he thought would be best when managing the disparate personalities within his command. It is naïve to think that personality differences among military leaders will not interfere in the execution of their missions, and is further complicated when dealing with parochial nationalistic attitudes. When Lucas secured his beach head, taking up a defensive position, Churchill became frustrated and it is certain attributed the lack of offensive impetus to Alexander's style of command, writing to him and saying:

My comment is that senior commanders should not urge but order...American commanders expect to receive positive orders, which they will immediately obey. Do not hesitate therefore to give orders just as you would to your own men. The Americans are very good to work with, and quite prepared to take the rough with the smooth.⁷

Alexander would at times communicate directly with corps and divisional commanders within the Fifth Army. This would mostly occur with his British and Commonwealth commanders, and often without the knowledge of Clark. It is likely that Alexander would have conferred with General Freyberg over the latter's request to bomb the Monestary at Cassino, given the weighting of support for this corps commanders request over that of his army commander. On one key occasion Alexander communicated directly with an American commander when he gave orders to General Truscott for the

breakout of Anzio. Harold Macmillan, the British political advisor to Eisenhower during the Tunisian campaign writes:

I was particularly impressed with Alexander's methods. We stopped at the headquarters of Omar Bradley....He showed us upon the map how the battle was progressing, and there were certain dispositions and movements of troops of which I could see General Alexander did not altogether approve. By a brilliant piece of diplomacy, he suggested to his subordinate commander some moves which he might well make. He did not issue an order. He sold the American general the idea, and made him think that he had thought of it all himself. This system, which he invariably pursued, made Alexander particularly fit to command an Allied Army. Later when he found himself in the Italian campaign controlling the troops of many countries, he developed this method into a remarkable technique.⁸

Clark on the other hand preferred the American approach of decisive command. Having consulted his staff officers individually for their recommendations, the American commander would then make a decision and turn it into an order.⁹ Clark's view was that when the commander gave an order it was to be followed. When General McCreery questioned Clark's plan at the Volturno River, it appears that the subordinate was evoking his right to question the plan given the British system at the time which permitted staffs deliberation. Clark could have given his subordinate a dress down, however he was also very aware of the need to tread carefully when dealing with his British subordinates, and he dealt with this situation in a commanding yet tactful manner.

The removals of both Generals Dawley and Lucas provide examples of how Alexander chose to influence General Clark in order to effect a decision. On both occasions Clark hesitated when faced with what he saw as very difficult decisions, in particular the relief of Lucas, and had to be prompted by Alexander who acknowledged that these were American affairs and did not warrant his direct intervention. In the case of Lucas, Alexander had been under pressure from London to make significant tactical gains

from the moment Operation Shingle had commenced. A frustrated message from Churchill to Alexander summed up the former's mood, stating "I expected to see a wild cat roaring into the mountains and what do I find? A whale wallowing on the beaches."¹⁰ Believing that Clark was taking too much time in relieving Lucas, Alexander insinuated to his Fifth Army commander that someone had to be made an example of for not exploiting the perceived opportunity at Anzio, remarking to Clark that "The position is serious. We may be pushed back into the sea. That would be bad for both of us and we would certainly be removed from command."¹¹ Clark, politically savvy and realizing that his own command was at risk, reacted immediately and relieved his subordinate commander.

The necessity for bombing the Monastery at Monte Cassino is the topic of much debate amongst historians. While it is not within the scope of this thesis to question the merits of this action, the command arrangements within the Fifth Army need to be examined to determine the reason Clark referred the final decision to Alexander, one which should have been his to make. When Alexander transferred the newly created NZ Corps under General Freyberg from the Eighth Army to the Fifth Army, Clark informed the opinion that the British treated the New Zealanders carefully because they were responsible only to their home government and therefore needed to be dealt with using tact and diplomacy.¹² Freyberg had insisted that his powers be clearly articulated by the Government of NZ and this was done through what became known as Freyberg's charter and included the following caveat: Freyberg must be the sole judge to make decisions as to the employment of his forces in the case of a grave emergency or in special circumstances and to communicate such decisions directly to the Government of New

Zealand.¹³ Freyberg was also mindful of his role as the commander of a national army and he therefore regarded it as his duty to conserve New Zealand's scarce manpower. During the battles of Cassino, Freyberg, ever conscious of the effect high casualties would have on the NZ population, set limits to the maximum number of casualties he would be willing to accept.¹⁴

When Freyberg made the request for the monastery to be bombed, he made it quite clear as to his demands, and was probably prepared to go around Clark's authority if it required. General Clark opposed the destruction of the monastery as he did not believe that the monastery itself was occupied by German forces. He believed that if the Germans were not in the monastery, they certainly would occupy the ruins.¹⁵ In a final phone conversation with Alexander on 13 February 1944, Clark summed up his concerns, many of which Alexander acknowledged. However, Alexander responded that if Freyberg wanted the monastery bombed then it should be bombed. The decision had been settled on; however, two questions must be asked: Why did Alexander side with Freyberg and could Clark could have denied Freyberg's request? In his memoirs, Alexander states that the bombing occurred due to military necessity and for moralistic reasons.¹⁶

Alexander also held Freyberg in high regard and this perception could have clouded his ability to question the tactical necessity and subsequent effects. Alexander must also have been very aware of the outcome when referring to a national caveat by a subordinate commander based on his personal experience during the evacuation at Dunkirk. Clark had every authority to cancel the bombing based on the lack of credible evidence on German occupation of the monastery, regardless of his subordinates standing with Alexander or the caveats laid out within the Freyberg charter. As mentioned in Chapter four,

Eisenhower states that nationalities should not get in the way of executing orders. Clark would have, however, envisioned the likely political repercussions had he chosen to continue to argue his point, and therefore felt compelled to comply with Alexander's direction. Whether Freyberg would have used the charter to get his way if his request had been denied by Alexander is open to conjecture, however it cannot be denied that this national document and its associated caveats was significant in the decisions made by both Alexander and Clark.

Perceptions

General Freyberg was cognizant of his need to conserve the fighting strength of his NZ forces. General Alexander was also conscious of the sanctity of men's lives, writing, "We are reluctant to sacrifice our troops on a gamble, partly because we have so few to fight with, partly because we lack ruthlessness in this matter. If we are to lose valuable lives we must be sure that the sacrifice is worthwhile."¹⁷ This statement by Alexander therefore adds some credence to General Clark's early belief that the British forces within his command often lacked the determination and aggressive fighting spirit that he expected from his American troops. He believed that General McCreery's X Corps made too slow a progress at Salerno and during the advance to Naples. He was not impressed by McCreery's reluctance to commit his corps to an assault river crossing of the Volturno River until after American forces had outflanked them first.¹⁸ British Military historians Dominick Graham and Shelford Bidwell write that Clark may have attributed this solely to their need to conserve manpower and the many recollections of human waste during the First World War. They continue to state that the real reason for

why the British spared their forces was in the difference of replacement systems. They write:

In the British system the unit was treated as an organism to be preserved. It was a complex of human relationships, a team, like the Montreal Expos or Manchester United, liable to be completely disrupted by heavy casualties unless properly trained and acclimatized reserves were available. When fire teams were destroyed or replacements outnumbered original team members, their efficiency and that of the whole unit in the line was reduced. The American system, described as brutal by more than one American, had replacements arrive in units as complete strangers. Furthermore, it did not train them to perform all the skills that would be required of them in battle when they were casualties to key men. It certainly produced large numbers of uniformly trained men, but they were drafted into units like spare parts of an automobile. The system was industrial in conception, not organic as was the British.¹⁹

Clark had been made aware of the shortages in manpower, having been briefed on 16 November, 1943, by General Sir Ronald Adam, Adjutant General of the British Army.²⁰ Clark would claim the British forces heavy reliance on artillery bombardments in concert with slow and methodical rates of advance was in part aimed to mitigate this. The NZ Division as a national army practiced a similar replacement system to that of their British counterparts and their commander, General Freyberg could dictate the combat role of his forces and thereby limit his casualties. Nevertheless, they would still fight with determination and suffer many casualties together with other forces in the NZ Corps at the Battle of Cassino.²¹ General Alexander perceived Clark to be too tough on his divisions, a notion that Clark opposed.²²

The Italian campaign was a British initiative with Churchill its biggest advocate. It was in the Mediterranean that Churchill believed a major blow could be dealt against the Axis forces by attracting critical German resources from the Eastern Front and setting the conditions for a favorable invasion of France. When General Eisenhower left his position as Commander Allied Forces, Mediterranean to oversee Operation Overlord,

General Clark lost one of his closest confidantes and supporters and felt somewhat alone in what he perceived to be a British hegemony within the Italian Theatre. The arrival of American General Jacob L. Devers as the deputy commander to General Wilson at AFHQ did not provide Clark any solace. As illustrated in Chapter four, Clark felt that the British, in particular Alexander, were not giving the American forces enough credit in the press while all the while focusing on the efforts of Eighth Army. A number of events occurred during Clark's tenure as army commander where his perception of individuals, units and events were either created or reinforced, and these caused many frustrations and contributed to his ultimate dissension.

Conclusion

When General Clark ordered Major General Truscott to change his point of attack and send VI Corps towards Rome, his calculated act of defiance had been played for all to see, intent on seizing the city before anyone else could deny him his glory. Clark did not arrive at this decision in the latter stages of this campaign; in fact the seeds had been sown during the very early stages of the conflict. A number of events occurred during Clark's tenure as army commander where his perception of individuals, units and events were either created or reinforced, and these caused many frustrations and contributed to his ultimate dissension. Alexander's command style did not permit him to maintain a tight hold over Clark, and it is doubtful whether Clark would have reacted favorably to a more authoritative Alexander. Clark's firm belief that Alexander was going to deny him and his American troops their opportunity for glory convinced Clark that he must make the direct drive for Rome. The diplomatic style of command favored by Alexander allowed Clark to make alternative plans, while knowing there would possibly be an

opportunity to order a change in plan that was contrary to his superior commander's orders. In the end Alexander did not heed Churchill's words and chose to maintain the command philosophy that earned him the reputation as one of Britain's and the Allies foremost military commander. General Clark solidified his reputation as being a determined and calculating officer. As a coalition commander, it is assessed that Clark performed remarkably well given his relative inexperience in commanding foreign troops and the constant hardships, both physical and psychological in nature, that he and the soldiers of the Fifth Army had faced. Alexander's and Clark's relationship was cordial and direct. They shared different experiences during their careers within different national institutions before the commencement of the Italian Campaign,. They were able to work with each other and achieve victory when it mattered, albeit with different command styles and philosophies.

This historical analogy highlights the difficulties in establishing effective command arrangements within a coalition environment. Coalition warfare requires that nations combine their resources under an effective command structure while mitigating their national interests in order to best achieve unity of effort. In order to achieve an effective coalescence, effective leadership needs to be inherent throughout. This thesis highlights the difficulties of command when operating in the area that includes both political and military influences. During the Italian Campaign, both President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill involved themselves in the conduct of military operations, some of them operational in nature. The political powers can also influence the participation of their national forces by placing certain stipulations on their employment, as was used by the New Zealand forces. Today, caveats are prevalent between

contributing nation's fighting the war on terror in Afghanistan. The limitations that restrict the employment of some countries troops to non combat operations within low threat areas are the centre of ongoing debates. There will continue to be challenges when operating within these multinational environments. These can be mitigated by ensuring that robust and effective command structures are in place utilizing a common doctrine, and that the commanders at all levels either have experience in the conduct of these operations or are appropriately trained and coursed for the inevitable challenges.

¹ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 603.

² FM 100-5, *Field Service Regulations: Operations May 22, 1941* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1941),23.

³ Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations, vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1969),9.

⁴ Mark W Clark, *Calculated Risk* (New York. Harper, 1950), 185.

⁵ Ibid., 186.

⁶ Martin Blumenson, *Mark Clark, the Last of the Great World War II Commanders* (New York: Congdon and Weed, 1984), 138.

⁷ W.G.F Jackson, *Alexander of Tunis* (Great Britain: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1971), 273.

⁸ Ibid., 204.

⁹ Clark, 65.

¹⁰ Field Marshal Alexander, *The Alexander Memoirs 1940-45* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company,inc, 1960), 130.

¹¹ Ibid., 126.

¹² Clark, 298.

¹³ Laurie Barber and John Tonkin-Covell, *Freyberg: Churchill's Salamander* (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 281.

¹⁴Ian McGibbon, *Freyberg Bernard Cyril, 1889-1963* (Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, updated 31 Jul 03), available from <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>; Internet; accessed 16 April 2007.

¹⁵Clark, 318.

¹⁶Alexander, 121.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 263.

¹⁹Dominick Graham, and S. Bidwell, *Tug of War: The Battle for Italy 1943-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 136.

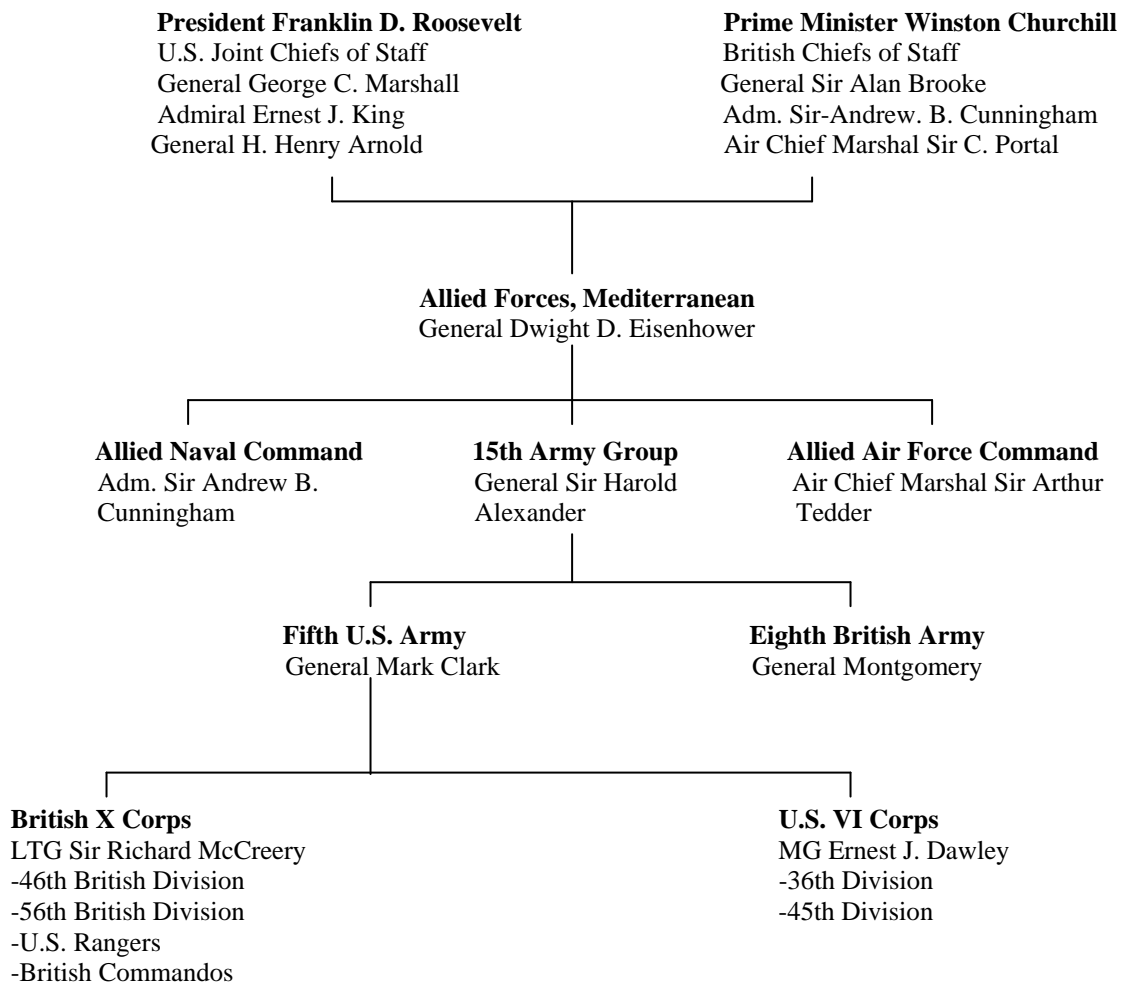
²⁰Clark, 263.

²¹Jackson, 279.

²²Graham, and Bidwell. 136.

APPENDIX A

ALLIED CHAIN OF COMMAND



This Chart shows the command structure of major Allied ground forces for the invasion of Italy. Chart created by author from information obtained from the following sources: Martin Blumenson, *The Mediterranean Theater of Operations. Vol. 3, Salerno to Cassino* and Chester G. Starr, *From Salerno to the Alps: A History of the Fifth Army, 1943-1945*.

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