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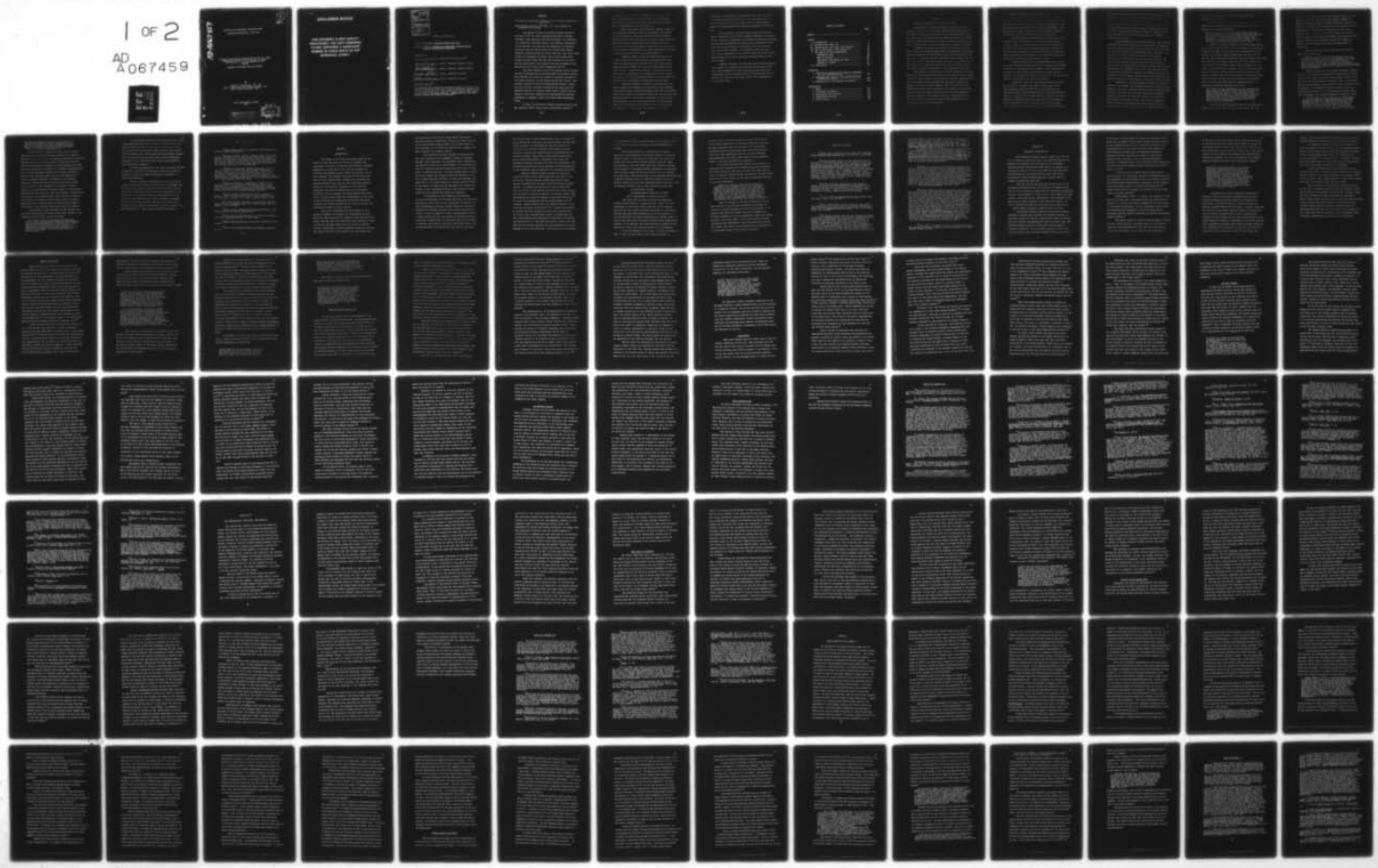

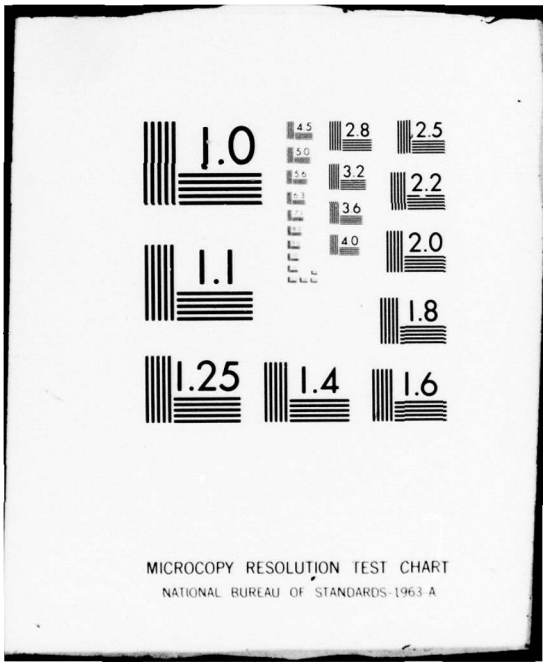
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ALLIANCE AT ARMAGEDDON: FRANCO-BRITISH MILITARY COOPERATION, 1914-1918

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

by

WILLIAM R. GRIFFITHS, MAJ, USA
B.S., United States Military Academy, 1961
M.A., Rice University, 1970

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas
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Name of Candidate: William Richard Griffiths

Title of Thesis: Alliance At Armageddon: Franco-British Military Cooperation, 1914-1918.

Approved by:

[signature], Research and Thesis Advisor

[signature], Member, Graduate Research Faculty

Don Martin Jr., Member, Graduate Research Faculty

Jerry B. Hunt, Member, Consulting Faculty

[signature], Member, Consulting Faculty

Date: 16 June 1971

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Abstract

"Alliance At Armageddon: Franco-British Military Cooperation, 1914-1918"

Major William Richard Griffiths, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College

The manner in which the Allied military forces of the First World War were coordinated has had an enormous influence upon subsequent alliance doctrines. The necessity for cooperative military efforts, the detailed coordination of all national resources and the interaction of military decisions with the entire fabric of society were lessons painfully learned during the first total war. Yet, while these lessons are generally accepted, their actual application during the First World War has been distorted by the self-serving participants and observers who were outraged at the destruction and misery which accompanied the war.

The exact methods by which the Entente Powers controlled and coordinated their military might are examined herein. From informal and imprecise methods of personal diplomacy to the formal structure of the Supreme Allied War Council, four distinct periods of positive relationships existed. During the first period, military cooperation was based upon the personal prestige of General Joseph Joffre. Joffre filled a vacuum in political leadership by influencing the military strategies of England, Russia and Italy along coincidental lines.

In 1916, the political leaders reasserted their power and relieved Joffre. They further instituted a system of

of unity of command on the Western Front by subordinating the British commander, Field-Marshal Haig to the French commander. This system soon failed and brought discredit upon the politicians who had devised it.

During the period which followed, little in the way of cooperative military effort was attempted. The Supreme Allied War Council, with its Board of Permanent Military Representatives, was instituted as a formal system to ensure positive military cooperation and political control in late 1917. However, the political limitations of the Council and the adamant opposition of the field commanders kept this organization from achieving its full potential.

Finally, after a series of military reverses, an overall commander of Allied forces--a Generalissimo--was named. The appointment of Marshal Foch over Field-Marshal Haig and General Pétain was made only eight months before final victory. Because this solution was in effect at the conclusion of hostilities, its importance has been greatly exaggerated and insufficient examination of the problems and solutions of the preceding arrangements has been made.

Using the historical method of investigation, this thesis attempts to reexamine the evolution of the military coordination systems employed throughout the war. The sources relied upon include the extensive literature on the Great War--personal accounts, the official histories, and the diverse interpretations of the intervening years. One source used which has been hitherto unavailable is the Private Papers and Diaries of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig. These

penetrating and revealing original documents have been held in privileged confidence for more than fifty years by the Field-Marshal's son. Their release allows a more balanced account and interpretation of military cooperation during the war.

The conclusions reached by this study are that the actual operation of the Entente military machinery was haphazard and extremely vulnerable to personal and political pressure. In fact, the personalites of Joffre, Haig, and Pétain influenced the actual conduct of operations much more than has been previously suspected. In conjunction with this fact, the growing importance of the British Armies in France during the concluding two years made Haig a primary factor in the final result.

Another conclusion is that the nascent Allied Supreme War Council was a potentially important system which could have been developed to direct the combined military power efficiently. However previous political blunders and the opposition of the field commanders doomed this experiment to a peripheral role.

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PREFACE

COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS, REAL AND IMAGINED

If history, particularly military history, is to be anything more than an interesting recount of the past, certain parallels or threads of continuity must be discerned for guidance in current and future affairs. These threads of continuity are often difficult to trace and when evidence is presented to show a relationship between two events it is subject to dispute.

Despite this, there does appear to have been a direct link between the command systems used to coordinate the combined military operations of the Allies in the First and Second World Wars. Several reasons for this parallelism are apparent. The wars were separated by less than twenty years and as a result many of the military and political leaders who played pivitol roles in the second war had participated in the decisions of the first.

The procedure of unifying the military efforts of diverse allies was accepted from the first war and employed with effectiveness by the leaders of the second. It may seem inconsequential if an historical purist insists that the right lessons were learned, but for the wrong reasons. Yet it is submitted that the miscalculation which succeeded so wonderfully in the Second World War has continued into the post war era. The doctrine that the best method of achieving military cooperation is to appoint a supreme commander persists today despite flaws in reasoning and failures in practice.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization

In March of 1948, five nations of war-torn Europe signed the Treaty of Brussels to provide for mutual security and economic assistance. This first step was followed by the organization of the Western Union Defense Organization with Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery as the permanent chairman of the Land, Naval and Air Commanders in Committee.[1]

The international tension which dominated the events of post-World War II Europe was caused by the aggressive foreign policy of the Soviet Union. The unusual condition of "Cold War" caused the western democracies to accept the extraordinary restraints upon their sovereignty and foreign policy required by the formation of a functioning defensive organization during nominally peaceful times.

Joined by Canada and the United States, the majority of western European states continued the concept of the Western Union and formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization on April 4, 1949.[2] NATO's provisions for common defense required an expansion and further definition of its predessor's military organization and command structure.

Under the threat of renewed hostilities and having the success of the past war fresh in their minds, it is understandable that the NATO allies fell back upon the command formulas which had been used in the Second World War. This was especially to be expected when General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower assumed command as the first Supreme Allied Commander of NATO. Eisenhower had been a primary factor in the success of the combined operations conducted

by the British and American forces against the Nazis. His calm acceptance of the confused command and staff arrangements within the Anglo-American alliance during the war, combined with his ability to assuage wounded egos prepared him for the post-war military command.[3] General Eisenhower was able to foster cooperation without being able to enforce it and his personality in this situation allowed the combined structure to function.

Yet peacetime and the defense-oriented NATO military establishment which Eisenhower now "commanded" was incomparably more complex and laden with problems. In the first place the increased number of participating allies multiplied the problems. It must be borne in mind that the combined operations of World War II were in actuality those of two fairly equal partners--United States and Great Britain, representing the British Commonwealth. Now there were fifteen sovereign powers enrolled in the cause. The military power of the United States far exceeded the combined forces of all her allies. Some members, such as Iceland and Luxembourg, had nothing whatsoever to contribute to concerted military action.

Furthermore, the sociological problems of disparate partners were brought into greater prominence. Differences in language, economies, cultural and educational standards added to those which were the result of each nation's separate military tradition. The political problems of joining the NATO partners were also immense. The ancient animosities between Frenchman and German and those between Turk and Greek were not easily smoothed over. The national objectives

of each member, however, included security from the massive Russian threat.

General Eisenhower forthrightly admitted the limitations of the coalition of the Second World War in a speech before the National War College:

> Whereas two partners can frequently find a solution to a very difficult argument among themselves, when you put in four or five with maybe one or two of Latin temperament, I don't know what would happen. But I do thank the Gods of War for this one thing, that we only had two [military partners] to work with.[4]

With this partial listing of the differences between the alliance formed at the Arcadia Conference in 1942 and the situation in 1950, it does seem that a reevaluation of the factors of combined command should have been made; yet it was not. The principles of combined staff and command structures were lifted, with changes added only to fit new political considerations or national status. These changes, it may be added, merely confused and further diluted the already weak command structure. The key point which the allies of NATO failed to realize was that the situation of the Second World War was unique. In fact, the final report of the General Board of the United States Forces, European Theater of Operations concluded precisely that point:

> It would have been impractical to have attempted the same degree of integration [of military command and staff functions] had the other ally been a non-English speaking nation.... Had the French army been in being and ready to participate in the invasion [of Normandy]...it is doubtful if SHAFE [Supreme Headquarters, Allied Forces, Europe] could have been as closely integrated.[5]

It must be the fundamental tenet of any military or political alliance that sovereign states enter into such

arrangements only in order to attain common objectives which they are convinced are unattainable singly. "Almost by definition alliances have a limited life-cycle, unless they become transformed into federations or some organic political relationship."[6] Especially in peacetime the individual attitudes of the partners on various issues will diverge and the original threat may also change. These factors which must be expected over a period of years will impair the cohesion of the alliance and force its modification or dissolution.

In his general study of international alliances, George Liska points out:

> Cohesion itself cannot be the supreme value for individual allies, as long as an alliance is a limited one and is served by a permanent organization.... It cannot always be such for the alliance as a whole, when too much unity would decrease the political efficacy of the association, notably with regard to countries other than the adversary....[7]

While in theory the NATO command structure indicates a fairly thoroughgoing translation of United States combined and joint operational doctrine, the practical effect of the treaty is extremely limited in practice. This is especially true in the perogatives and authority of the central military coordinator. In an interview prior to France's military withdrawal from NATO, U. S. Undersecretary of State George Ball interpreted the Supreme Commander's authority thusly:

> In NATO there is no integration of operational command in peacetime except with regard to certain air-defense units.... With this one exception, no French soldier can be given an order to make the slightest move by anyone but the French command. Even in case of war, troops would be placed under the operational command of SHAPE only if the "French

> Government deemed it necessary," under article V of the North Atlantic Treaty. Consequently, for the NATO command to be able to dispose of French forces, a national decision, made by the French Government, would be necessary. 8

With this frank appraisal of the actual military significance of the NATO military command, it is apparent that the member states are not nearly as commited to concerted military action as is often assumed.[9] Given the radically altered international situation of today compared with that at the time of NATO's founding, it is hardly surprising that the recovered European partners are no longer willing to subject their national armed forces to the authority of a supreme combined commander. In addition, the strategic stalemate between the Soviet Union and the United States and the later's moral obligation to provide a "nuclear umbrella" to Western Europe mitigate against a conventional military coalition with any real effectiveness. Despite these circumstances the western powers have seen fit to maintain the illusion of coequal military status while in reality, depending almost entirely upon the thermonuclear might of one member of the alliance--the United States of America.

Paul Guinn, in his assessment of the military and political strategies of the First World War, alludes to the seeming enigma of such a course of action:

> ...the actual course of military operations can only be rendered meaningful through an understanding of...grand strategy/political objectives/.... /In addition/ strategic policy is the outcome of a variety of political and military pressures, is in fact closely related to the over-all fabric of national life. 10

If the tragic struggle of the First World War, which nearly destroyed the entire political structure of Western Europe, could not enforce effective military cooperation, it is doubtful if the current sense of danger will provide such an impetus. The western democracies now pursue independent foreign policies and their fear of the overwhelming military power of the Warsaw Pact nations has gradually, but irrevocably, receded.

In such circumstances it is, from the purely military standpoint, wasteful and deluding to maintain the form of military cooperation without concomitant surrender of sovereign perogative.

Before a complete investigation of the continuing thread of coalition warfare doctrine can be undertaken, the genesis of this system during the First World War must be understood. This paper will examine the development of the concept of international military cooperation during the Great War. The theories and machinery utilized to achieve combined goals will be dealt with. Once the period 1914 through 1918 is placed in perspective, further research into the propogation of these theories should be possible.

Notes for PREFACE

[1]NATO: Facts and Figures (Brussels: NATO Information Service, 1969), pp. 16-22.

[2]Belgium, Canada, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, United Kingdom and United States. In 1952 Greece and Turkey acceded to the Treaty and the Federal Republic of Germany in 1955. Today the Alliance has fifteen members, although France does not participate in the military aspects of the organization.

[3]Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade in Europe (New York: Praeger, 1948), pp. 29-30 and 158; Richard M. Leighton, "Allied Unity of Command in the Second World War: A Study in Regional Military Organization," Political Science Quarterly, LXVII (Sept., 1952), 401-02; T. W. Bauer, "Staff Organization in Allied Headquarters," (n.p.:Historical Division U. S. Army, Europe, 1955), pp. 13-14.

[4]Address by Dwight D. Eisenhower ("Problems of a Combined Command,") at National War College, July, 1948. Note that these sentiments were voiced during the interim period between General Eisenhower's appointments as Supreme Allied Commander of the European Theater and NATO.

[5]General Board, United States Forces, European Theater, "Study of the Organization of the European Theater of Operations," (Paris: U. S. Army, 16 April 1946), p. 37.

[6]Alastair Buchan, "Problems of an Alliance Policy," The Theory and Practice of War, ed. Michael Howard (New York: Praeger, 1965), p. 295.

[7]George Liska, Nations in Alliance (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), p.47.

[8]George Ball, "Interview on U. S. Views on Viet-Nam and NATO," Le Monde /Paris/, 31 March 1966.

[9]NATO: Facts and Figures, especially chapters two and sixteen.

[10]Paul Guinn, British Stategy and Politics, 1914-18, p. vii.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The impact of the First World War--called in its time the Great War--upon the history of mankind was cataclysmic in nature. It has been described as a curtain separating a former way of life from the present and certainly the changes wrought during the conflict justify this analogy.[1] The dominant societies of the earth were rent by forces which caused immense human suffering and grinding economic loss. The war also stimulated radical changes in the political framework of the world and accelerated the social equalization of the democratic revolution. The war spurred the technological sophistication of industry and marked the transmutation of the goals of the scientific and industrial revolutions from basic invention and consumer production to those of feeding the insatiable demands of modern warfare.

Due to the bitterness and fear aroused by this period of madness, the peoples who had greeted war with patriotic enthusiasm tried to forget it upon its conclusion. Before the last guns were silenced by the armistice, a wave of anti-war sentiment swept over all levels of western society. People made a nearly psychotic attempt to blot out the bloody memories of the conflict and thus assure that

such devastation would never happen again.[2] The Anglo-American community, especially, refused to accept this war as an historically relevant event. As a direct result of this attitude, it was forced to continue the struggle less than a quarter of a century later.[3]

The historical military lessons of the Great War have been clouded by the stupendous catalog of miscalculations, false premises, and irresolute action compiled by the military forces of all participants. It is difficult to look for universal truths in operations which were, on the whole, miserable failures. But these lessons must be sought after even amidst the rubble of Ypres and Gallipoli if we are to understand the evolution of total war and place the Great War in its proper historical setting. Recent critics of the method in which this war was waged have judged the leaders of the contending powers by the criteria of later years and have adopted the outrage of hindsight.

In searching for the lessons of the greatest military significance in the First World War, two stand out prominently. The first was the realization by military men that technological advances wrought during the nineteenth century were dominant factors on the field of battle and could no longer be ignored by their inward-looking caste.[4] A second lesson was that the control of political-military coalitions in modern war is a delicate task but one which, if ignored, can nullify successes in all other fields. The generation which followed the one decimated in the Great

War learned both of these lessons well, even if it drew the wrong conclusions from them. The Western Allies misinterpreted the dominance of mechanical devices and prepared for future war in a defensive posture. The defeated Germans correctly assessed the possibilities of using machines in a decisive strategy. They rebuilt their armed forces with a mobile offensive doctrine, implemented with tanks and mechanized infantry supported by close air bombardment. This initiative restored the war of movement and the superiority of the offensive over the defensive in the Second World War.

Western military leaders reviewed the period of repeated failure on the battlefield from the onset of the war until a unified supreme command was achieved under General Ferdinand Foch in March 1918.[5] From these post-war studies, the democracies derived the correct moral that unity of effort is the bedrock upon which all other projects must be based in coalition warfare. As a direct result, they established such unity of command in the Second World War.[6] But while the democracies drew the proper lesson in this instance, events indicate that the supreme direction of the Great War was never an effective tool. Victory was attained by tenuous military cooperation based upon personalities. The tactics and strategy which finally succeeded were the very same plodding and unimaginative ones which so revolted the sensibilities of the inter-war critics. Despite the fact that success quickly followed the establishment of a Supreme Command in the First World War, historically it is necessary

to reexamine the military relationships of the Entente Powers and clarify the personal influences which contributed to victory.

More than providing an interesting historical exercise, a clarification of the exact methods of achieving unity of effort during the First World War will serve as a direct link with current Western military doctrine. Today the nations of the free World base their military strategy upon a number of overlapping treaty commitments in peacetime which envision concerted military action upon the outbreak of hostilities.[7] The obvious need for an alliance philosophy and a general military policy in coalition warfare has yet to produce anything but the most ambiguous guides. The three aims of combining forces of two or more nations are given as:

1) Centralized control

2) Decentralized execution of orders

and 3) Development of common doctrine.[8]

The truth that the actual military arrangements between member states of a coalition must await the final conditions of the treaty which binds them is not denied. Additionally the numerous problems presented by sociological, military and political differences is readily admitted by current doctrine. Yet these hinderences are brushed aside to assure that there will be unified command within geographical regions. It is apparent that some functional grouping of the coalition's land, naval and air forces will be attempted.

It is the purpose of this paper to trace the development of this western fixation upon certain methods of

achieving unity of effort in combined operations directly to the Allied experiences of the First World War. Secondly, the paper proposes that the true nature of the military cooperation which existed during the First World War has never been fully understood and has, in turn, fostered misconceptions which exist today despite vastly different frames of military and political reference.

It is fully conceded that theory, in any field, is important only inasmuch as it improves practical execution. Yet theory should be constantly reviewed and based upon as clear a reading of human behavior as possible. As Peter Paret points out in his article on the much misunderstood thoughts of Carl von Clausewitz:

> Theory and practice [in warfare] should be cognizant of one another, but it is erroneous to expect them to coincide. Theory must take into account the infinite diversity of actual war and avoid the restrictive character that pertains to any synthesis. Its task is not to produce a guide for action, but to help educate judgement and to provide ideal standards with which to measure and evaluate the forms that war assumes in reality. 9

Only the methods of military cooperation will be examined here; the political advantage or necessity of forming a military alliance will not be considered. It is assumed that political factors may far overshadow the military expediency of such arrangements, especially during periods of uncertain peace. Yet if the forms of military cooperation are retained for other than military reasons, the leaders who control the institutions thus created must be constantly aware of this subtle difference.

Notes for CHAPTER I

[1]Barrie Pitt, "Writers and the Great War," Journal Royal United Service Institution, 109:246-248, August 1964.

[2]For an excellent social history dealing with the attitudes of the British people and the effects wrought by the misery of war see Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965); for a discussion of the sterile military atmosphere following the war see W. Frank Craven, "Why Military History," Harmon Memorial Lecture No. 1 (Colorado Springs, Colo: U.S. Air Force Academy, 1959) and Walter Millis, "Military History," Service Center for Teachers of History /Bibliographical Essay No. 39/ (Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1961), 12-13.

[3]The two principal exceptions to the general historical apathy were the extensive investigation of the causes of the war and the apologia of the military and political leaders, usually in biographical form, which attempted to justify their actions in the tragedy.

[4]J. F. C. Fuller, The Army in My Time (London: Rich and Cowan, 1935), pp. 164-168.

[5]For a particularly biased version of the impact of the appointment of General Foch to the Supreme Command see Peter Wright, At The Supreme War Council (New York: Putnam, 1921), pp. 145-148.

[6]The British showed that they had learned the lesson of military cooperation well even prior to General Dwight D. Eisenhower's appointment as Supreme Allied Commander in Europe in December 1943. From the first movement of the British Expeditionary Force to the Continent in early October 1939, its commander, Lord Gort, was subordinated to the French Commander-in-Chief, General Maurice Gamelin. A Supreme War Council was formed and continued to function until France was defeated. The fact that these actions could

not avert disaster did not deter the Allies of the Second World War from seeking inspiration and models of technique from the final command structure of the Great War. J. R. M. Butler, History of the Second World War, Vol. II, Grand Strategy, September 1939 - June 1941 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957), p. 459.

The Royal Institute of International Affairs commissioned Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice to prepare a study of the lessons learned during the First World War. This work was published early in the second war as Lessons of Allied Co-operation: Military, Naval and Air (London: Oxford University Press, 1942). This work not only stressed the need for cooperative efforts during coalition warfare but also in the peace which would follow.

[7]Examples of current treaty obligations amongst the western allies are the South East Asia Treaty, Baghdad Pact, and the Rio Treaty. However the most extensive treaty obligations are accepted by the fifteen member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Article 5 of this treaty provides that the members "agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all..." and obligates each member to react with armed force, if necessary, "in concert with the other Parties to the Treaty". NATO Information Service, NATO: Facts and Figures, Brussels, 1969.

[8]Specific tenets of military doctrine, especially at the highest level, are difficult to identify and even harder to relate to practical application. Perhaps the best source of current military doctrine is the instructional material used in national service schools. These principles came from the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Joint and Combined Forces /subject no. M2000/, (Ft. Leavenworth, Ks.: U.S. Army, 1963,1964 and 1970. Other sources of interest include: U.S. Armed Forces Staff College, Organization and Command Relationship /supplemental material/, (Norfolk, Va.: AFSC, 1965 and 1968; George Ball, "Interview on U.S. Views on Viet-Nam and NATO," Le Monde, Paris, 31 March 1966; T. W. Bauer, Staff Organization in Allied Headquarters (HQ, U.S. Army Europe, 1955). Hubertus zu Lowenstein and Volkmar von Zuhlsdorff, NATO and the Defense of the West (New York: Prager, 1962); and General Berton E. Spivy's address to the Armed Forces Staff College ("NATO's Historical Foundation and Continuing Mission"), 26 November 1968.

[9]Peter Paret, "Clausewitz and the Nineteenth Century," The Theory and Practice of War, ed. Michael Howard (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 29.

CHAPTER II

COALITION FOR TOTAL WAR

The nineteenth century ended on August 5th 1914. An era of relative tranquility which had begun with the fall of Napoleon was shattered by the clash of the continental European nations. The western world was to be shrouded by a destructive war for the next four years and the body which emerged from this consuming conflict would bear little resemblance to the frivolous and naive society which so eagerly accepted the Great War.

With the onset of war also came an end to an era of unilateral military action.[1] The scope and intensity of the war was soon to become so great that the principal belligerents required the sustenance of their allies. These bonds of mutual support, which had in fact contributed to the outbreak of the war, were to become familiar in the twentieth century. An era of military and political self-help was to give way to one of mutual security in peace as well as in war.

When Great Britain's leaders allowed her to become enmeshed in Continental political and military affairs, it was only a matter of time for this dramatic shift in foreign policy to require implementation.[2] When Sir Edward Grey, the British foreign secretary, effectively ended England's "splendid isolation" from continental quarrels, few of her leaders realized that a sizable military force, on the scale

of the huge conscript armies of France and Imperial Germany would ever be needed.[3] Most British military planners worked on the assumption--as did their Continental counterparts--that modern war in 1914 could last only a few months and that victory or defeat would be determined long before England's military effectiveness could be built up and applied.[4] Thus, trusting in her isolated geographical position, a preeminent navy, and a pitifully small expeditionary force of 160,000 regular troops, England went to war on August 5, 1914.[5]

If the premise of a short violent land conflict proved correct, no need really existed for detailed plans for the employment of the combined armies of the Entente Powers.[6] The British Expeditionary Force--a miniscule junior partner--would just attach itself to the left coat sleeve of the mighty French Army as a gesture of solidarity and the enemy would be quickly defeated.[7]

Field-Marshal John D. P. French, the commander of the BEF quickly fell into a subordinate position under General Joseph J. C. Joffre, the French commander of the Army Groups of the North and Northeast. He was instructed to ensure that his military plans conformed to those of Joffre and to cooperate with all requests presented by France's unflappable premier soldier.[8]

The orders issued to French by the Secretary of State for War, Lord Kitchener, in August 1914, set out specific objectives and limitations for the BEF.[9] The only reason given for the dispatch of the force was the violation of

of Belgian territory by German troops. "The special motive of the Force under [French's] control [was] to support and co-operate with the French Army against the common enemy." Due to the small size of his force, French was instructed to conserve it and exercise the greatest care in minimizing "losses and wastage". The order closed with the strongest possible emphasis that his was an independent command:

> Therefore, while every effort must be made to coincide most sympathetically with the plans and wishes of our Ally, the gravest considerations will devolve upon you as to participation in forward movements where large bodies of French troops are not engaged and where your Force may be unduly exposed to attack.... In this connection I wish you distinctly to understand that your command is an entirely independent one, and that you will in no case come in any sense under orders of any Allied General.

Unfortunately, France's presumed superiority in military science was quickly disproved when Plan XVII shattered against the German defenses at Morhange and Sarrebourg. The Kaiser's legions, swarming through the Belgian lowlands during that hot August, similarly disproved the ability of the French military leaders to foresee the correct military dispositions or even to estimate the strength of the opposing forces. Thus, disillusioned by the French generals' display of ineptitude, John French withdrew into a protective attitude which would, he hoped, ensure no more surprises like the Battles of Mons and Le Cateau.[10] A corollary to this decision was that it also doomed any

further effective cooperation between the principal Allied military headquarters until the Field-Marshal was replaced.

The opening campaigns of 1914 were conducted in a fluid atmosphere--in sharp contrast to the stagnent position warfare of 1915-1918. The tactical and strategic importance of the British Expeditionary Force far outweighed its relative strength.[11] It is true that F. M. French's tactics were uninspired and that victory came from the location of his force rather than its conduct of operations.

In the subsequent race by the opposing armies to outflank each other, French and Joffre worked almost independently. In fact, F. M. French moved his force rapidly north to Ypres intact, rather than piecemeal as Joffre had insisted, and fought the decisive first battle of Ypres.

Once the Western Front had been stabilized by the end of 1914 the military coalition had been forged in battle but the spirit of cooperation was hindered. One great reason for this situation was that the Entente was composed of three members which could lay claim to being an equal partner--France, Russia, and Great Britain. Another factor which actually barred effective military cooperation was the pervading idea that time was on the side of the Allies and that individual national policies could be pursuded without ultimately endangering the purposes of the coalition.

Change of Command

When Douglas Haig acceded to the command of the British Armies in France and Flanders on December 19, 1915, his options for selecting a command policy were limited.[12] The position of his predecessor, the changing desires of his government, and the relative strengths of the allied armies contributed to Haig's lack of alternatives. The new British General Commanding-in-Chief was still expected to play a subordinate role and cooperate with the French, who had borne the brunt of the German onslaught. The British government, distracted with numerous other projects, saw fit to continue the tenuous command relationship which had existed between Field-Marshal French and General Joffre. This decision was made despite the fact that Kitchener's "New Armies" had swollen the British contribution to the western theater of operations from four divisions in 1914 to an organization of four armies composed of thirty-eight infantry and five cavalry divisions in January, 1916.[13]

Haig's instructions from the Secretary of State for War, Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener, managed to separate responsibility and authority--a cardinal error in any leadership situation.[14] Haig was ordered to cooperate with General Joffre's instructions and plans but he was not relieved of the responsibility for the safety of the British forces in the field. Despite this serious weakness, initial relations between the British General Headquarters (GHQ) and the French Grand Quartier Général (GQG) improved with Haig's

appointment. The close cooperation between the French and British commanders in the field, now necessary for an Allied victory, had seemingly been assured by Haig's promotion.[15]

Haig's orders from Kitchener dated December 28, 1915 maintained the aloof character of British military cooperation present in those of his predecessor. However, more specific instructions regarding strategic movements were presented which bound the BEF more surely to the French forces.

> ...the mission of the British Expeditionary Force...is to support and cooperate with the French and Belgian Armies against our common enemies.... but I wish you distinctly to understand that your command is an independent one, and that you will in no case come under the orders of any Allied General further than the necessary co-operation with our Allies above referred to.
>
> 4. If unforeseen circumstances should arise such as to compel our Expeditionary Force to retire, such a retirement should never be contemplated as an independent move to secure the defence of the ports facing the Straits of Dover, although their security is a matter of great importance.... The safety of the Channel will be decided by the overthrow of the German Armies rather than by some defensive positions with our backs to the sea. 16

These explicit instructions were adhered to by Field-Marshal Haig until they were amended on July 21, 1918 by the Secretary of State for War, Alfred Milner.[17] Haig was never relieved of the ultimate responsibility for the safety of all British Empire troops on the Western Front, although he was often denied the ultimate authority over the strategic employment of these troops.

Haig has been characterized by some detractors as being vehemently anti-French and wholly unresponsive to the cause of Allied unity.[18] However, in this regard it is apparent that his views are being classed as one with those of the Francophobe General William Robertson.[19] In light of the attitudes shown by Haig at his accession to the high command and his subsequent cooperation with French commanders, the fable of the British Field-Marshal's prejudice is shown to be wholly inaccurate or at least grossly exaggerated.[20]

In contrast to Field-Marshal French, Haig realized that the cornerstone of British military strategy was the Western Front and that the Empire's interests there were thus dependent upon cooperation with the French. In order to facilitate the requisite cooperation, Haig undertook the study of the French language and spent two hours each day for four months improving his ability to communicate in his ally's tounge.[21] Later in the war when asked by French President Poincaré how he and General Pétain were progressing together, Haig replied: "Nous ne parlons ensemble ni français ni anglais, nous parlons militaire, et nous nous entendons."[19] These are hardly the sentiments of an inarticulate Francophobe.

On December 21, 1915, Haig issued a memorandum to his Chief of Staff, Launcelot Kiggell, which outlined his policy toward Franco-British cooperation:

> In the past there has certainly existed on the part of the French a feeling that we were not always willing to take our fair share. No doubt that feeling has existed

> on our side also. There must be give and take. The present moment is opportune for creating a good impression and paving the way for smooth negotiations with the French, especially as important matters in regard to combined operations are pending. 22

Even Basil H. Liddell Hart, an outspoken critic of Haig and his policies, allows that:

> He [Douglas Haig] maintained this spirit of helpfulness when in supreme command, and none had a better grasp of the vital importance of cooperation between the Allies. If General Headquarters was sometimes as notorious for its criticism against the French as was the Grand Quartier General against the British, such tendencies were due not to Haig but to his subordinates. 23

Shifting Allied Power Base

By the time Douglas Haig assumed command of the British Armies in France and Flanders, the French Armies had suffered more than one million dead and missing.[24] The all volunteer "New Armies" of England had just begun to come onto the battlefield and it was evident that the British would soon be the dominant Allied force. Despite the narrowing gap between the relative army strengths, the French were still predominant in early 1916. The battles in the principal theater of operations were being fought on French soil and the primary national interest in the coalition had to be that of the Third Republic. In these circumstances, the British high command continued to surrender its initiative to their

ally and supported with growing fervor the insistence that a maximum effort be expended in the west.

Italy joined the Allied cause in April, 1915 under the secret provisions of the London Conference. Amidst the complex territorial "deals" provided as inducements for Italian cooperation was sandwiched the first proposal for joint military planning.[25] The resolution called for a "Military Convention" to be concluded between all Allied General Staffs in order to determine the appropriate plans against Austria-Hungary. The only other military consideration in the treaty was that the military leaders should prepare joint positions on questions "bearing upon an armistice in so far as these...come within the scope of the Army Command." With this limited mandate for cooperation, the French took the lead in combined military planning.[26] On July 7th, the first Inter-Allied Military Conference of the war was convened at General Joffre's headquarters at Chantilly.

After the first of many failures on the Isonzo Front by the Italians, the disaster at Sulva Bay by a combined Allied amphibious force, and the impending destruction of the Russian Army, the assembled military leaders of the Entente now realized the necessity for at least coordinating their independent activities in point of view of time. The first conference, however, did not produce any specific measures "except a general agreement that each national army should be active in its own way." A second conference was scheduled to discuss further specific actions.[27]

Prior to the convening of the second Inter-Allied

Military Conference,[28] General Joffre presented a detailed memorandum on Allied war policies.[29] In broad terms, the French proposal called upon the Allies to deliver "simultaneous attacks with their maximum forces on their respective fronts as soon as they [were] ready." In the meantime, the "Austro-German forces [were to] be worn down by vigorous action." In typically French manner, the Allies were asked in a vague phrase to "allot to the secondary theatres only the minimum forces required." However, minimum forces included all of the units then in Salonika, Albania, Roumania, and the Middle East. Again, in the fashion of the French, the naval and economic aspects of the war were virtually ignored. An excellent example of this limited view was that the naval blockade was acknowledged with only twenty-four words in the proposal.

The representatives of the Allied armies unanimously agreed to the principle that: "the decision of the war can only be obtained in the principal theatres,... (Russian front, Franco-British front, Italian front). The decision should be obtained by co-ordinated offensives on these fronts." While falling far short of a "Western" strategy, this endorsement did downgrade Salonika, Mesopotamia and Palestine as important fronts. The conferees also called for simultaneous "general action" to be launched as soon as possible (later this was specified as the end of March, 1916). This plan of action also countenanced the war of attrition: "The wearing down ('usure') of the enemy" was to be pursued intensively by the "Powers which still have abundant reserves of men."[30]

Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Murray, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, upon his return to England presented the first British military position paper to the Government. On December 16th, after revising his paper in some respects to conform with the decisions of the Inter-Allied Military Conference, he presented a wide-ranging examination of the available courses of action open to Great Britain, acting as a part of the Entente.[31] Murray carefully weighed the military options of landing troops on the Belgian coast, behind the Isonzo Front, and in Asia Minor. He realistically indicated the impossibility of any major new force being raised within the next six to eight months. Fully conceding Germany's inherent advantage of interior lines, the general concluded that "the General Staff recommend, unhesitatingly, a vigorous prosecution of the offensive on the existing East, West, and Italian fronts as the wisest course to pursue." Just as Haig and Robertson would do later in the war, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff dismissed "the idea of an easier way round" as apparently "based more on impatience than on a careful examination of evidence." Since British forces were not envisioned as participating in actions on the Russian or Italian fronts, this policy paper was essentially an exposition of the "Western Strategy" for the British.

Shortly after the submission of this policy recommendation, General Murray was replaced as CIGS by Sir William Robertson. At the same time, General Douglas Haig assumed the command of the British Armies in France and Flanders. Robertson agreed fully with the examination of the situation and the

conclusions drawn by his predecessor in the paper and immediately requested a decision from the Government. Consequently, on the 28th of December, the War Committee approved the following resolutions:

> 1. From the point of view of the British Empire, France and Flanders will remain the main threatre of operations.
> 2. Every effort is to be made for carrying out the offensive operations next spring in the main theatre of war in close co-operation with the Allies and in the greatest possible strength. The actual plan of attack is left to the discretion of the commanders in the field. 32

The Committee further relegated operations in the secondary theaters, except Salonika which was not mentioned, to a defensive posture. The British military and political leaders were in agreement upon the futility of maintaining the Allied expedition in Salonika and would have withdrawn from that theater immediately. French and Russian desires regarding the Salonikan front however, blocked such a move and the British maintained a substantial force there during the remainder of the war.

Papa Joffre

Thus, when Douglas Haig was called upon to lead the rapidly expanding British Army, many precedents had been set and rather firm courses of action had been agreed upon by the political and military leaders of the Entente. First, it had been agreed that the French military commander, General Joffre, was the de facto leader of Allied military

policy making.[33] The second point was that some degree of Allied military cooperation was vital if victory was to be achieved. This cooperation was based upon voluntary contributions however. Finally, the Allies had committed themselves to concentrating their forces in the principal theaters of war. As far as the British Empire was concerned, this meant sending all available forces to France and reverting to defensive operations on all other fronts.

Haig's plan for the coming spring operation was to make the main British effort on the Ypres-Messines sector. The plan called for an end-run amphibious landing on the Belgian coast in combination with a thrust on land against the relatively weak German defenses around the Ypres salient.[34] Joffre, however, planned a combined Anglo-French offensive on either side of the Somme River. Joffre requested the British to relieve the French Tenth Army in the line. This move would make the British front continuous from the Ypres area to the Somme River. Haig clung to the hope of implementing the northern operation but instructed his staff and the concerned army commanders to begin planning for both this and Joffre's Somme battle.[35]

After a period of discussion and realizing his subordinate position in the coalition, Haig acquiesced and agreed to conform to Joffre's plan. The relief of the French Tenth Army was also agreed to in principle, without fixing a date for the transfer. The British munitions shortage, particularly in an adequate supply of heavy artillery shells, was being remedied but would not allow a large scale attack

to begin before the summer. Accordingly, the Somme offensive was provisionally scheduled for the late summer.[36]

While the Allies planned, the German Army acted. General Falkenhayn, now the military leader of the Central Powers, initiated the great battle for Verdun. The unannounced objective of this operation was to bleed the French Army of its remaining strength and thus knock France out of the war. Six days after the intense battle of attrition began, it became obvious that the French were being pressed to the limits of their endurance. On that day, Field-Marshal Haig informed General Joffre that the British Army would commence the relief of the French Tenth Army immediately. The next day, Haig went to GQG to personally assure his beleagured ally of his complete support.[37]

On January 13th, the British War Cabinet had modified its commitment to a full scale spring offensive.[38] It added the qualification: "although it must not be assumed that such offensive operations are finally decided on" to their original agreement to participate in the spring offensive.

Joffre realized the situation was becoming critical as a result of the British Government's tampering with the original plan. He therefore called a third Inter-Allied Military Conference to be held on March 12th. In addition, he informed the French Premier, Aristide Briand, of the new difficulties and influenced him to convene an Allied political conference in Paris on March 27th. The latter conference was attended by the military leaders also and was the largest such gathering held in the war up until that time.

The previous military meeting had concluded that "the Coalition [should] undertake its combined offensives with the least possible delay. The exact date will be fixed by the Commanders-in-Chief."[39] This statement was communicated to the Allied Conference which accepted this and several other proposals without debate. The representatives then proceeded to consider the technical details of transportation, ammunition supply, and the labor available on the home front. These were the first definite steps taken toward joint action. The war was entering its second year and the time for optimistic rhetoric had passed; action was now needed.[40]

While the German mincing machine at Verdun was consuming French troops, there was a great public outcry in France over the apparent inactivity of the British troops. Although Haig was following Joffre's desires exactly, it was evident to the British Government that any hesitation on their part in agreeing to the Allied military plans might prove fatal to the cause of the Entente. Therefore, on April 7th, the British Government formally approved the commitment of British troops to the large Franco-British offensive.[41]

As French losses mounted and French units were rotated through the inferno of the Verdun battlefield, it became evident to both Joffre and Haig that the French contribution to the Somme offensive would have to be reduced. As a result, the French decided that "it is possible and it may even be unavoidable that the English Army will have to undertake alone the offensive which has been prepared."[42]

Following this, Haig, on May 29th, notified General Sir Henry Rawlinson that his Fourth Army might have to carry the main burden of the attack alone. That same day the new CIGS, General Robertson, informed the War Committee of the grave military situation and counseled against expecting a breakthrough of the German lines.[43]

The prolonged first Battle of the Somme commenced on July 1, 1916. It proceeded with extremely heavy losses being suffered without any compensating gains in terrain. The various component offensives continued until November, when bad weather halted active campaigning.[44] The Somme Battles had the immediate effect of diverting enough German attention and troop strength from Verdun to allow the French to check and eventually to throw back Falkenhayn's offensive. Before the end of 1916, General Nivelle conducted two brilliantly successful attacks which recovered nearly all German gains. The oppressive losses suffered by the Germans in the Somme Battles and in their own offensive at Verdun were not evident as the year ended. The losses suffered by the British and French were, however, only too evident.[45]

The enemy had been diverted and finally checked in his offensive operations but the prospect of victory in the west by overcoming the German Army appeared very distant, if not unattainable. To add to the apparent futility of the Allied military situation, Roumania had been overwhelmed by the Central Powers after joining the Allied cause and the Italian Army had been stopped in all actions on the Isonzo River. Despite a marked numerical superiority, the Allies had

been unable to move toward victory and had succeeded only in negating the enemy's action on the Western Front. The situation on the field of battle was quickly reflected in political and military changes in the Allied command structure.

"No More Sommes"

In what had now become the accepted method of coordinating military activity, Joffre had convened an Inter-Allied Military Conference at the GQG on November 15th and 16th. The purpose of the conference had been to review the the military situation and to prepare joint plans for the coming year. The military leaders unrealistically felt that the results of 1916's campaign had been successful. They sensed the great losses inflicted upon the German armies and prided themselves with having checked the Verdun offensive and causing Falkenhayn to be removed and replaced by the team of Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. With a completely different outlook from that of their civilian superiors, the military leaders called for a continuation of the slogging war of attrition.

> a) During the winter of 1916-1917 the offensive operations now in course will be continued....
> b) ...the Armies of the Coalition will be ready to undertake general offensives ...with all the means at their disposal....
> d) ...the general offensives, in the maximum strength that each Army can put in the field, will be launched on all fronts at the earliest moment at which they can be synchronized... 46

The growing desire for more political control of military operations caused the British Prime Minister David Lloyd George to insist upon a conference of allied statesmen without military interference. This conference was held simultaneously with Joffre's Chantilly conference. On November 16th, Generals Joffre, Haig, Robertson, and the Italian Chief of Staff, General Porro, joined the civilian meeting and presented their joint proposals. In the existing mood of the civil leaders, the conference received these proposals unenthusiastically. The politicians, feeling that their powers and constitutional responsibilities had been usurped, refused to endorse any specific military policy or plans for the coming year.

As the new year of 1917 opened, the alliance between France and Great Britain showed signs of weakness which could only add to the already confused state of military cooperation. The initial enthusiasm with which the peoples of the western democracies had supported the war had long since been drowned in a sea of trench mud and had been dulled by the incessant casualty rolls.

The inexact methods of democracy were shown to be inefficient in executing total war. As the British liaison officer at GQG noted: "The old coat of democracy, never intended for wear at Armageddon, was showing white at the seams." [47] Especially in England, which had not felt the burdensome losses which the French nation had endured, the government and the people moved into action lethargically,

despite their united spirit.[48] Lacking a sense of urgency, the English went about their tasks in a businesslike manner which the volitile French were incapable of understanding.

David Lloyd George, who succeeded Asquith in December, 1916, was pledged to the effective prosecution of the war. He had been a brilliant solicitor and had shown his pragmatic decisiveness in organizing efficient production policies in the Ministry of Munitions. He had a fertile mind which would search for new approaches to all problems the war presented. The son of an itinerant Welsh teacher, he was little concerned with the niceties of British social and military procedure. His common sense approach to all problems might have been useful had he not faced one great problem. Although he knew what he wanted--a quick, inexpensive victory--he was dependent upon a tenuous coaltion in Parliament for his continuation in office. The Unionists, led by Andrew Bonar Law, were wedded to the support of the military powers in office--Haig and Robertson-- and Lloyd George could not retain power without Unionist support. Throughout his tenure of office, the Prime Minister had to balance his political and military policies with exact precision. If he precipitated a public revolt among his high military advisors, his position would be forfiet. Yet his unschooled evaluation of the war and the way it was being fought, convinced him that his generals did not know how to win the war efficiently. Their only solution was to continue the bloody encounters of attrition. The Western Front was the answer for Haig and Robertson. Only there could the principal enemy force be defeated and this

was a rule of military science which they would not break. Who but an unknowledgeable "frock" would dispute such pristine logic?

Lloyd George was determined to allow "no more Sommes". His impatient mind fled from the thought of attrition. There must be other ways. "Blood and mud" were not exactly bright slogans for a wartime political leader to use in rallying a nation. He searched for a new strategic concept which would bypass the 400 mile trench wall through Europe. His leading soldiers came up with no new strategy and, until the final months of the war, sought to block the solutions he presented.

The lack of unity between Lloyd George and his military commanders is peripheral to this study. However the fact that the military and civil leaders of Great Britain failed to present a united front in the Allied councils goes far in explaining her lack of effect in those councils. This situation existed until the final stages of the war, when her military and naval forces were predominant in the alliance. In general, Britain's voice was weak and uncertain in comparison to the consolidated action of the French leaders. As a result, French desires often overruled those of the British when there was a disagreement.

The general plan of Allied military cooperation had been agreed upon at the Inter-Allied Military Conference at GQG on the 16th of November 1916. General Joffre, by force of his prestige and the valiant sacrifices of the French nation, was acknowledged as the principal war leader. Douglas

Haig and William Robertson acquiesced in Joffre's preeminent position and readily subordinated themselves to the plan for offensives on all fronts during the first half of February, 1917.[49] It had become an article of faith among all French and British military leaders that their front in France and Belgium was the main theater for Allied operations. With an eye on their respective political superiors, the generals had been assured that the men and material for this front would not be diverted to other areas. "These should, in our opinion, be the paramount premises on which every plan of operation for the Coalition should be based."[50]

Haig and Robertson had also accepted the responsibility for the main role in the coming campaign season. Joffre was wary of over-taxing the French Army. The flower of French military strength had been sacrificed on the Marne, the Yser and at Verdun. More than 1,200,000 French poilus were now dead or in enemy confinement. The continued focus of battle on the French Army would eventually burn it through and leave the British Armies without an effective ally. The British generals knew that the great sacrifices made by the French limited their future participation. They did not have to be told that the main burden of war now fell to their lot.

Joffre's specific plan for the Western Front was to broaden the frontage of the Somme battlegroud of the previous year. The French would attack between the rivers Oise and Somme while the British simultaneously assaulted between Baupume and Vimy. The eight mile gap between these two

salients was to be held defensively. This logical decision was made because the area here was comprised of some of the most devastated territory of the 1916 Somme battles.[51]

Joffre indicated to Haig that following the spring offensive of 1917, the main effort in the fighting would pass to the British Armies. Continuing with the planned northern operations, which had been shelved a year ago in deference to Joffre's instructions, Haig fixed upon the combined amphibious-land attack in Belgium. The British Admiralty had spurred the implementation of this particular plan because it would drive the enemy from Zeebrugge and Ostend, which were being used as bases for submarine attacks on British shipping in the English Channel.[52]

The enemy alliance was now led by the fabled combination of Hindenburg-Ludendorff. After the serious Austrian defeats in the Brusilov Offensive in June 1916, the Germans had been forced to close down Falkenhayn's costly operations at Verdun and had consolidated their power. This series of events assured the Central Powers of unity of effort. The Germans led the way and Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey followed without question. Hindenburg-Ludendorff scraped together the necessary German troops to stiffen the motley forces of their partners and had ended the year with the brilliant defeat of the unfortunate Roumanian state.

On the Western Front, the Germans began a stout system of defensive works in September, 1916 in case their forces were withdrawn on the Somme front. The Siegfried Stellung, called by the British the Hindenburg Line, stretched

behind the salients which were the objectives of Joffre's plan from Arras to St. Quentin.

Certainly the premise of those who believed in the "Western Strategy" is open to question and will be debated as long as the Great War is a subject of interest. Even the most ardent Westerner will grant the military value of the objectives sought in the Dardinelles and Gallipoli campaigns of 1915--the securing of communications with the great eastern ally and depriving the Central Powers access to the Mediterranean Sea. The Easterners looked at these campaigns as attempts to knock out the Turkish "prop" but this was not the real objective. When these poorly planned and dreadfully executed misadventures failed, there seems to have been little military reason for demanding that the Salonikan, Mesopotamian and Italian fronts receive resources which would have assured success in the French-Belgian theater. Even if sufficient force could have been gained to knock Bulgaria, Austria-Hungary, and Turkey out of the war, the German enemy would still have been a viable one. Yet if Germany were forced from the field, the minor partners would have been helpless.

In addition to this purely strategic analysis, there remained in 1917 the fact that French territory and almost all of Belgium remained under German control. The emotional and political consequences of ignoring the Western Front would have been disastrous for the alliance. The French could not view the conflict with the dispassionate eye of an historian or military analyst. Since the British had surrendered the

political and military initiative of the Entente to the Army of the Third Republic from the outset and could not unite their own political-military representation, they forfeited any hope of shifting the effective weight of the fighting to any other theater.

La Bataille d'Usure

Although tactics are not within the purview of this work, it is necessary at this point to emphasize that the Franco-British military leaders had resolved by the summer of 1917 to fight the coming battles of attrition. This technique has acquired an evil connotation in the intervening years as a wasteful and senseless tactic which cannot achieve decisive results. The unpalatable features of attrition were just as evident in General Grant's wearing down of the Army of Northern Virginia as in Haig's decision to wear down the German Armies in France and Flanders. No doubt, a mobile war is less costly, more productive of innovation and certainly more interesting. But when this mobile war is impossible, there can be no other solution but attrition. Faced with the situation in 1916-1918 on the Western Front Joffre and Haig had no other alternative.

The technology of the age had granted the overwhelming advantage to the defensive over the offensive form of warfare. The railroad lines which laced the tactical portions of the trench system together were defensive tools. Reserves could be shifted rapidly to blunt a threatened breakthrough but could never steam troops forward in an exploitation. The

machine gun and massed heavy artillery fire multiplied the power of each defensive soldier over the unprotected, advancing infantryman. Any local superiority obtained-- artillery barrages, gas clouds, tanks or massed areoplanes--would eventually be outrun or their potency reduced through technical limitations as the assault progressed. The momentum of any offensive was quickly spent and the gains made were immediately vulnerable to the inevitable counter-attack. The breakthrough was an illusory dream in 1917; it lived in the minds of cavalry generals until the cruel lessons of trench warfare were learned. Then the only answer was "the wearing-out fight;" the depletion of the enemy's reserves of manpower and material until he was too weak to resist. Only then was it possible to conduct the decisive stage of the battle-- the drive for victory.

Douglas Haig dreamed of a breakthrough in the battles of Neuve Chapelle, Loos, and the First Battle of the Somme in 1916. But, by mid-1917 he had learned his lessons through bloody failure and was prepared to limit his offensives to achieve small, but cumulatively decisive, gains. It was proven at Neuve Chappelle in 1915 and on the Somme in 1916 that any trench system could be breached at a relatively equal cost to both sides if the attacking force amassed an overwhelming superiority in artillery fire, advanced to the limit of its fire support, and no farther, reached their limited objectives in an organized formation and prepared for the inevitable counterstroke.

This was attrition, devoid of its inflammatory and dramatic descriptive phrases. It was the slow, cautious and inexorable defeat of a weaker enemy by a power which knew its advantage but was unable to exercise it in mobile tactics.

Lloyd George Moves

An Allied conference was held in Rome in January, 1917. The ostensible purpose of the meeting was to discuss the campaign in Macedonia. The new British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, accompanied by Alfred Lord Milner and their military advisors, met with the Premiers of France and Italy. After agreeing upon a course of action for the Macedonian Front, Lloyd George unveiled a new military plan which had not been shown to any military personnel.

The premise of this new plan was that since Austria-Hungary was much weaker than Germany, the Allies should press for a victory against her and force her to accept a separate peace. This proposal would, argued its author, be much less costly than continuing on the offensive on the Western Front. Lloyd George offered to lend 250 to 300 heavy artillery pieces to Italy as an inducement to accept the mission and he urged France to contribute according to her resources. The Italian Commander-in-Chief, General Luigi Cadorna, was just as surprised as his British counterparts and insisted upon time to consider the proposal. Neither the French nor the Italian political leaders were prepared to accept such plans without expert advice. Ironically, the only tangible results of Lloyd George's clumsy maneuver were to improve the railway

lines connecting Italy and France and to expose to the other Allies the amount of distrust and the lack of coordination which now existed in Great Britain's political-military relations.

During Lloyd George's return trip through France, he met and was strangely influenced by the new French Commander-in-Chief General Robert Nivelle.

Notes for Chapter Two

[1]For a detailed study of the cyclical nature of coalition warfare in history see: Quincy Wright, A Study of War, I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), 639.

[2]G. Aston, "The Entente Cordiale and the Military Conversations," Quarterly Review, CCLVIII (September, 1932), 363-83.

[3]The Continental mania for large standing armies, backed by a responsive reserve system, stemmed largely from the Franco-German military rivalry. The British, in their isolated military situation and with an historic distrust of standing armies did however modernize their system prior to the war. After the South African embroglio and the investigation of the Esher Committee the Haldane Reforms provided for a small professional regular army backed by a Territorial Reserve Army, which would serve as the basis for all new troop units. When the need for a large army came, Lord Kitchener decided to scrap this plan and called for increased volunteering and formed the "New Armies". Thus an excellent plan was wasted and the military effectiveness of Great Britain was crtically slowed in its appearence in Europe.

[4]A notable exception to this military myopia was Lieutenant-General Douglas Haig. He forsaw a long war, requiring Great Britain to field a mass army. Haig served under Lord Haldane at the War office during the period of reform and the planning for the British Expeditionary Force. The only public pronouncement against the possibility of a short war was a book published by a Polish Banker, Ivan S. Bloch, The Future of War... Is War Now Impossible? (New York: Doubleday and McClure, 1899). This detailed study, which concluded that a modern war in 1900 would be indecisive and prohibitively expensive, was generally ignored by soldiers bent on conducting a short offensive war. See Hanson W. Baldwin, World War I, an Outline History (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 2.

[5]Lieutenant Colonel William R. Robertson's Memorandum, March, 1902, quoted in Paul Guinn, British Strategy and Politics, 1914-1918 (London: Clarendon Press, 1965), 5.

[6]Derived from the Entente Cordiale of 1904 between Great Britain and France which created a spirit of mutual assistance culminating in the alliance for World War I. During the war all of the Allied powers were referred to by this term.

[7]France's attitude toward British involvement in a Continental land war was epitomized by the future Generalissmo of the Allied Armies, Ferdinand Foch, during a visit to England in 1898. When asked what support France expected from England in the event of war he replied: "Send one man, I will take care that he is killed and then I will know we shall have the English nation in arms." George C. Arthur, Not Worth Reading (London: Longmans, Green, 1938), 177; Guinn, British Strategy and Politics, 14.

[8]The British Governments repeatedly surrendered their initiative in military strategy to the French political leaders who, in turn, surrendered the initiative to their generals. France had granted England the right to predominance in naval coordination but the English never took advantage of this abrogation of authority. As England's military role in the war increased, her proportional influence in Allied councils should have become predominant.

[9]"Order to F. M. French," cited in James E. Edmonds, Official History of the War: Military Operations in France and Belgium, 79 vols., (London: Macmillan, 1922-1948), vol.I, 1914, 449-500. Hereafter cited as Edmonds, BOH, 1914.

[10]See letter, Field-Marshal John French to Lord Kitchener, August 31, 1914. Contained in George C. Arthur, Life of Lord Kitchener (New York: Macmillan, 1920), III, 8. This letter expresses French's complete distrust of the French high command and his intention to withdraw his forces from the line of battle.

[11]Contrary to general belief, the German Army was slightly outnumbered in the battles of the frontiers. 78 divisions against 85--74 French, 6 Belgian and by 26 August, 5 British. However, the German superiority on the right wing was enormous, for 54 German divisions opposed 23 French and the crack British divisions which saved Lanrezac's 5th Army from destruction and provided the final push that brought victory at the Marne. C. R. M. F. Crutwell, British Strategy in the Great War (London: Cambridge University Press, 1936), 26-27.

[12]For an extensive discussion of the attitudes and training which Haig possessed for his position of high command see: William R. Griffiths, "Coalition for Total War: Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and Entente Military Cooperation, 1916-1918," (unpublished Master's thesis, Rice University, 1970), especially pp. 9-42.

[13]Frederick Maurice, Lessons of Allied Co-operation: Military, Naval and Air (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 23; Edmonds, BOH, 1916, App. 6-27; Archibald Murray, "Paper by the General Staff on the Future Conduct of the War," December 16, 1915. This figure would increase to fifty-eight divisions by June, 1916. Ibid., I, 57.

[14]L. A. Pennington, et al., The Psychology of Military Leadership (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1943), 115-16; Chris Argyris, Executive Leadership (New York: Harper and Row, 1953), 87-89.

[15]Aside from dissatisfaction with Field-Marshal French's attitude, the French leaders welcomed Haig as a competent military commander. Following the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in 1915, General Joffre sent a translation of Haig's orders to all French staffs as an example of how field instructions should be imparted to subordinates. General Huguet, Britain and the War (London: Cassell, 1928), 158 and 179.

[16]Orders, Kitchener to Haig, December 28, 1915, The Diaries and Papers of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, National Library of Scotland, H. 128; Edmonds, BOH, 1916, vol. I, App. 40-41.

[17]See supra, pp. 108-09.

[18]Victor Bonham-Carter, The Strategy of Victory, 1914-1918 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1963), 170-71; David Lloyd George, Memoirs, 6 vols. (London: Little Brown, 1933-1937), III, 401-402; V, 208; A relatively impartial observer, Neville Lytton, the chief of the press representatives at GHQ, stated: "I must say that the Chief /Douglas Haig/ was always full of respect for my admiration of the French, though his staff scowled. This anti-French atmosphere was fostered and kept active by the attitude of the Prime Minister /David Lloyd George/ who admired French military genius at the expense of our own soldiers...." Neville Lytton, The Press and the General Staff (London: Collins, 1920), 138-39.

[19]General William R. Robertson was appointed Chief of the Imperial General Staff replacing Lieutenant-General Sir Archibald Murray in early 1915. He served in this capacity until political pressures caused him to resign in October, 1918. During his period in office he loyally supported F. M. Haig's policies.

[20]John Charteris, Field-Marshal Haig (New York: Scribners, 1929), 10 and 154.

[21]John Terraine, Ordeal of Victory (New York: Lippincott, 1963), 97.

[21a]Philip Guedalla, The Two Marshals (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943), 277-78.

[22]Terraine, Ordeal of Victory, 181-82.

[23]B. H. Liddell Hart, Reputations: Ten Years After (Boston: Little, Brown, 1928), 114.

[24]Les Armées Française dans la Grande Guerre (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1922-25), III, 588-602. The total killed and missing as of December 31, 1915 was 1,001,271.

[25]"Resolutions of the London Conference of April 26, 1915," published in Isvestia, February 28, 1917, quoted in Ottokar Czernin, In the World War (London, 1919), 275-79.

[26]Shortly thereafter, a bilateral Franco-British agreement was consumated as a result of Joffre's appeal to his government on July 30, 1915. The command formula agreed upon in this instance provided: "During the period in which the operations of the British army take place in French territory...the initiative in combined actions of the French and British forces devolves on the French Commander-in-Chief." The only restriction placed on Joffre's position was that: "The Commander-in-Chief of the British forces will of course fully retain the choice of means of execution." Lord Kitchener agreed to these conditions for the British Government but he insisted upon keeping the details of the agreement from the Dardanelles Committee(which shortly became known as the War Cabinet). Although this was an excellent command structure for coordinating activity, it never really took effect. It was indeed unfortunate that these terms were never made public, for they might have served as a precedent for further cooperative endeavor. Edmonds, BOH, 1915, II, 123-26; Maurice, Lessons, 16-19.

[27]Edmonds, BOH, 1915, II, 87-89. In the interim between the two Chantilly Conferences, General Joffre was elevated from C-in-C of the Armies of the Northeast to C-in-C of the French Armies. This move was obviously taken to strengthen Joffre's position in the second Inter-Allied Conference.

[28]The conference was held on December 6-8, 1915. Great Britain was represented by Field-Marshal French, Lieutenant-General Archibald Murray (CIGS), Lieutenant-General Henry H. Wilson(chief liaison officer to the French Army), and Lieutenant-General William Robertson (CofS, BEF). Thus, by coincidence, all three men who would serve the British Empire as the Chief of the Imperial General Staff during the Great War participated in this first declaration of Allied military policy. France, Russia, Italy and Serbia were the other participants.

[29]"The Plan of Action Proposed by France to the Coalition," December 6, 1915, translation in Edmonds, BOH, 1916, App, I, 1-5.

[30]Edmonds, BOH, 1916, I, 6-9.

[31]A. J. Murray, "Paper By the General Staff On the Future Conduct of the War," December 16, 1915 (revised December 17th), Edmonds, BOH, 1916, App. I, 6-27.

[32]Edmonds, BOH, 1916, I, 10.

[33]Joffre actually took the initiative in promoting strategic cooperation. Such initiative should have come from the Entente's political leaders. Both Joffre and Haig were left without political guidance and a permanent international organization to supervise the execution of joint decisions. Maurice, Lessons, 5-6.

[34]The German defenses around Ypres were less formidable than those astride the Somme River, where the British eventually attacked. See S. W. Raskil, "The U-Boat Campaign of 1917 and Third Ypres," Journal of the United Service Institution CIV, (November, 1959), 440-42.

[35]Instructions, Haig to General Herbert Plumer, January 14, 1916, Robert Blake (ed.), The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 125; Edmonds, BOH, 1916, I, 21.

[36]Although Haig acquiesed on the overall principle of conducting a joint campaign on the Somme, he did stand up to Joffre on several important side issues. He insisted upon "the main French and British attackd /being/ 'jointives' that is side by side" for maximum effect. Furthermore, he firmly declined to initiate spoiling attacks to draw enemy reserves in April for the July main attack. The new commander complemented himself for achieving "quite a victory" and realized

that he "had to be firm without being rude in order to gain /his/ points" with the venerable Joffre. Diary entry, February 14, 1916, Blake (ed.), Private Papers, 129.

[37]This scene was quite similar to the one in which General John J. Pershing gave his assurance of full support to General Foch following the reverses of the spring of 1918. In this first instance, however, the promise was effectively fulfilled. Duff Cooper, Haig (London: Farber and Farber, 1935), I, 305-06; Diary entry, February 25, 1916, Blake (ed.), Private Papers, 132-33.

[38]See infra, 19; Edmonds, BOH, 1916, I, 12; Field-Marshal William Robertson, Soldiers and Statesmen (New York: Scribner, 1926), I, 257.

[39]"Extracts from Proceedings of Conference Held at Paris on 27th March, 1916," Edmonds, BOH, 1916, App. I, 34.

[40]This frank discussion among the Allied representatives concerning technical cooperation highlighted the complex character the war had assumed. The offers of mutual assistance made at this conference indicate a deep awareness amongst all Allies of their interdependence in technical matters. France actually proposed to manufacture and supply Italy and Russia with heavy artillery if they, in turn, would only provide her with laborers. Ibid., 35-39.

[41]Maurice Hankey, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918, II (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), 494-95.

[42]Memorandum, French Government (information copy to Douglas Haig), Edmonds, BOH, 1916, I, 44.

[43]Maurice, Lessons, 27.

[44]For details of the First Battle of the Somme see: Anthony H. Farrar-Hockley, The Somme (Philadelphia: Dufour, 1964).

[45]There has been a great deal of controversy surrounding the relative losses in personnel during the Somme Battles of 1916 and at Verdun. For both sides of the dispute see: Edmonds, BOH, 1916, I, 496-97; II, xiv-xvi; also M. J. Williams, "Thirty Per Cent: A Study in Casualty Statistics," Journal Royal United Services Institute, CIX (February, 1964), 51-55.

[46]Resolution of Military Conference, November 16, 1916, Edmonds, BOH, 1916, II, 532.

[47]Edward L. Spears, Prelude to Victory (London: Cape, 1939), 19.

[48]The British public accepted many voluntary restraints upon their activities at the beginning of the war. The government established restrictive measures in a slow and evolutionary manner. The pressures to maintain "business as usual" gave way only slowly and France viewed this as a betrayal of her great sacrifice. See: Arthur Marwick, The Deluge: British Society and the First World War (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965), 39-44 and 130-48.

[49]"At one of his first high-level conferences with the French, Haig was said by an eye-witness to have been treated exactly as if he were an Army Group Commander and to have been cross-examined by French politicians about his dispositions and reserves." General Wilson, a leading Francophile, viewed this as being too compliant. Basil Collier, Brasshat: A Biography of Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961), 229-30.

[50]Spears, Prelude, 23; Resolution of Military Conference, November 16, 1916, Edmonds, BOH, 1916, II, 532: Robertson, Soldiers and Statesmen, II, 192.

[51]For details of the proposed plans of the military leaders see: Edmonds, BOH, 1917, I, passim.

[52]It might be well to point out that these plans for the northern operations did not originate with Haig. On January 8, 1915, the British War Committee vetoed Sir John French's proposal for a British advance on Zeebrugge. The reason for this action was not dissatisfaction with the idea but a lack of adequate forces. F. M. French was "thereby not prevented from co-operating--to the utmost extent compatable with /his/ present resources--with any offensive movement contemplated by General Joffre." Guinn, British Strategy and Politics, 50.

CHAPTER III

THE BREAKTHROUGH: ONCE MORE, WITH FEELING!

The unremitting casualty rolls from the Somme and Verdun battlefields added to the growing war-weariness in France. The British nation, experiencing its first massive losses, endured the sorrow but questioned the effectiveness of the political and military leadership which allowed such Pyrrhic victories. Premier Aristide Briand elevated Joffre to the rank of Marshal of France and effectively relieved him of any authority in military matters. At the same time, General Ferdinand Foch, Joffre's chief executive, was removed from his command. In England, the military structure, although discredited, survived intact. Mr. Asquith's coalition government resigned however, and was replaced by that of Mr. David Lloyd George. With these adjustments, a new phase of Allied military cooperation began.

The new leader of the French Armies was General Robert Nivelle, a recent hero of the Verdun Battle. He was a charming and forceful speaker; conversing in English fluently and without accent. Perhaps because Lloyd George was unused to such clear military discussions, he responded to Nivelle's leadership and plans without reservation.[1]

Nivelle's proposal was to mass the French Army for one final breakthrough of the German line. Basically, he

planned to apply the methods which had proven tactically successful at Verdun on a grand strategic scale. He foresaw a decisive battle on the Western Front which would destroy the enemy's main army and achieve the illusive breakthrough which other military leaders had failed to achieve. He planned to pin down the major portion of the enemy line with British assistance and then shatter the front on the Chemins-des-Dames ridge with a mass attack, reminicent of the plans and doctrine of August, 1914. The attack, as he envisioned it, would go through within twenty-four hours. He promised that if the attack did not succeed within forty-eight hours, it would be halted. This plan was a drastic change from that agreed upon in November by the military leaders. It required an extension of the British line by more than twenty miles. It also placed the principal burden of battle squarely back upon the French Army.

Field-Marshal Haig offered to begin his relief of the French line on February 1st and indicated that after the first increment of eight miles, the rate of relief would depend upon the rate at which he received reinforcements. In addition, Haig asked Nivelle to agree that, if his breakthrough failed, the French would relieve some of the British line to allow the northern operations to continue in the summer.[2] Affronted by the imagined lethargy of British support for his program and even more insulted by the suggestion that

it might fail, Nivelle appealed to his government to press the British for more complete conformity to his desires.

At a Franco-British conference in December, Lloyd George emphasized his support of the Nivelle plan but told Haig that no British reinforcements from Salonika could be expected. Before the next conference was held on Nivelle's plan, the British Prime Minister met with the author and was converted to its complete support. Lloyd George welcomed the vision of a decisive end to the war, especially if it imposed no heavy requirements upon his nation. His desire to win "on the cheap" blinded him to the fact that the plan was merely a rerun of policies which had failed miserably in the past two years.

At the second London conference on the proposed plan, Lloyd George agreed to send Haig two divisions from the home island defense force, in addition to four others. With this reinforcement, it was agreed that the British could relieve the full twenty miles of trenches requested by Nivelle by April 1st. The strength of the British Army would now be increased to sixty-two divisions in France.[3] With this expansion, however, another serious problem presented itself.

The growth of the British forces in northern France had placed a heavy strain upon the rail network which supplied their needs. Haig, in line with his policy of utilizing civilian expertise whenever advantageous, had appointed Eric Geddes as the Director-General of Transportation for his armies. Geddes implemented an extensive program of coordinating

facilities in the British sector. The technical details of the logistical network were being dealt with and additional rolling stock was being sent from England. However, for the immediate needs of the expanding British front, much dependence was placed upon French facilities. On January 24th Haig explained to Nivelle that his current capacity of 150,000 tons of supplies per week would have to be increased to 250,000 tons for effective implementation of the spring offensive plans. The French viewed these requirements as merely excuses for postponing the attack.[4] Nivelle proposed to aid the British supply system and improve the northern transportation network so that it could carry 200,000 tons each week. Haig agreed to compromise on this supply plan. At a later conference between the two commanders, the French general extended his assurance of assistance to the promise that the offensive would not begin until all British requirements had been met. This completely satisfied Haig and there appeared to be no further technical problems in the way of the planned offensive.

There was, however, one military exception which the British commander made to Nivelle's plan. He insisted that Vimy Ridge be included as an objective in the British portion of the operation. He knew that the Allies could not operate successfully east of Arras without first securing this dominant terrain feature to his left rear. The French refused to believe that the British could secure Vimy Ridge because General Foch had attempted this twice and had been repulsed.

Despite the skeptical French attitude, Sir Douglas Haig continued his demands and finally received permission to modify his plans. With all evident problems disposed of, there now appeared no further reason for high level discussion but, surprisingly, a full scale Franco-British conference was scheduled by Lloyd George to be held at Calais on February 26th. The reasons given for holding this meeting were to conduct additional talks on the British supply facilities and the continuing problems of the Allied forces on the Macedonian Front.

"The Apple of Discord"

The Calais Conference met on February 26, 1917 and its results were to color the political and military coordination of Franco-British affairs for the remainder of the war. The British Prime Minister, from the outset, allowed his revulsion with the policies of his own commanders to so warp his appreciation of the military situation, that he seriously compromised what little unity of effort there had been up until that time. An even more critical result of David Lloyd George's decisions at this conference was that he bound the main Allied Armies to a foolhardy military plan which would nearly lose the war within three months.[5]

The purported reason for the conference--the transportation problems behind the British lines--was quickly brushed aside and the technical matters referred to a committee of experts. Lloyd George then turned to his real

reason for calling the conference. He asked Nivelle and Haig to speak frankly of any disagreements they had over the coming operations. Haig naively spoke of the disagreement over including Vimy Ridge in the British objectives. Lloyd George then indicated that he was not interested in technical military points but was concerned that the highest level military cooperation on the Western Front was ineffective. This admission gave the French the opening they had been awaiting. Lloyd George asked General Nivelle to place in writing a guide to the military command structure which he felt should be instituted on the Western Front. At last, the conflict between the British political and military hierarchies was exposed; the French could now formally gain ascendency in the alliance.

Lloyd George had informed the French government and GQG, through the French liaison officer at the War Office, that he was willing to allow the British forces in France to be placed under General Nivelle's command. He expressed complete confidenece in Nivelle's plan and the feeling that Nivelle had to command all Allied troops in the coming operations for success. He stated that these sentiments could not be expressed publically because Field-Marshal Haig's reputation among the British people and in his army was too great. However, he intimated that secret orders to the British Commander-in-Chief, making him subordinate to Nivelle, would be possible.[6] Accordingly, the French had prepared a detailed command formula and now presented it when the conference reconvened.[7]

This command formula exploited all of the weaknesses that Lloyd George had exposed. The memorandum called for ensuring "unity of command on the Western Front from the 1st of March 1917" by granting the French General-in-Chief "authority over the British forces operating on this front, in all that concerns the conduct of operations and especially: the planning and execution of offensive and defensive action; the dispositions of the forces... the boundaries between... formations... [and] the allotment of material." The British commander would carry out "the directives and instructions of the French Commander-in-Chief" and otherwise would only handle "questions of personnel and general discipline in the British Armies." The French commander would control the British forces through a chief of staff at GHQ who would directly control the British General Staff and Quartermaster General, bypassing the British commander. The ultimate humiliation was that this arrangement was to be permanent, even if Nivelle was replaced, and could only be modified by a new joint Franco-British directive.

The British military were shocked by this proposal. They had not been told of the pre-conference maneuvering or even informed of the general topics of discussion. In fact, they had purposely been kept unaware of Lloyd George's plans. Such a situation left Haig and General Robertson bitter toward their Prime Minister and distrustful of the ally with whom they had always loyally cooperated.

General William Robertson vowed that he would resign his position as Chief of the Imperial General Staff rather than allow the British Armies to be placed in such a subordinate role. Sir Douglas Haig, while smarting under this blow of ingratitude, publicly held that the higher command system was a political and not a military concern and was, therefore, not within the realm of his responsibility. The French proposal was even too drastic and specific for Lloyd George. As a result, a second command proposal was drafted which approved the 1917 war plans of General Nivelle, gave the French Commander-in-Chief "general direction" of the campaign but gave the British commander the option of appealing to his government if his forces were endangered. This hastily prepared compromise was approved, but its imprecise nature soon became a source of friction.

The day after the conclusion of the Calais Conference, Haig received from Nivelle a peremptory order for all instructions issued by GHQ to the army commanders to be sent to the French headquarters first. This obvious attempt to meddle in the internal operations of the British command may have been caused by Nivelle's desire to embarass Haig and force him to resign or it may have resulted from the French officer's imperfect understanding of the final limitations of the Calais agreement. In any event, Sir Douglas protested to his government that he was being treated unfairly and that the relationship with Nivelle should be further defined. At this point, the relationship between the French and British High Commands

became spiteful and sank to the lowest point in the war.[8]

The result of Haig's protest was a second conference, held in London on March 13th, to define more precisely the command relationships between the two generals. The resulting agreement reaffirmed the British commander as a coequal and instructed "the French Commander-in-Chief /to/ only communicate with the Authorities of the British Army through the British Commander-in-Chief." It further specified that "all British troops stationed in France /would/ remain in all circumstances under the orders of their own chiefs and of the British Commander-in-Chief." The final agreement did, however, authorize the "French Commander-in-Chief /to receive/ from the British Commander-in-Chief information as to his operation orders as well as all information respecting their execution."[9]

When asked to approve this agreement, Sir Douglas Haig refused to give a blanket endorsement:

> I agree with the above on the understanding that while I am fully determined to carry out the Calais Agreement in spirit and letter, the British Army and its Commander-in-Chief will be regarded by General Nivelle as Allies and not as subordinates, except during the particular operations which he explained at the Calais Conference.
>
> Further, While I also accept the Agreement respecting the functions of the British Mission at French Headquarters, it should be understood that these functions may be subject to modifications as experience shows to be necessary. 10

This endorsement is interesting for several reasons. Firstly, Haig's principal objection to any modification in the command arrangement which had existed between General Joffre and himself was apparently more one of form than reality. He insisted

that he be recognized as an ally and not as a subordinate, when he had, in practice, readily subordinated himself and his forces to the wishes of the former French commander. Another key to Haig's attitude is seen in his pragmatic approach to the liaison system between GHQ and GQG. Haig wanted to ensure that he retained control of his General Staff sections and the Quartermaster General's activities. But the most obvious exception which Haig took to the previous negotiations was that he viewed any direct subordination of British forces to French command as a temporary expedient and that he agreed to conform to General Nivelle's wishes only for the forthcoming spring offensive.

This exchange of proposals and counterproposals did nothing but exacerbate the latent distrust between the French and British High Commands. In fact, the command structure soon became unimportant in comparison to the disastrous course of events on the battlefield. In any event, the British headquarters did conform to Nivelle's plan, with the inclusion of Vimy Ridge as an objective, and loyally carried out all instructions of the French Commander-in-Chief.[11]

The End of the French Army

Throughout the period of recrimination and confusion over Franco-British military coordination, the enemy had been preparing to nullify the effectiveness of Nivelle's planned offensive. The German fortifications behind the Noyen salient,

a part of the Hindenburg Line, had long been suspected by British intelligence of portending a voluntary withdrawal. During the very Calais Conference, which had committed the Allies to Nivelle's attack, Douglas Haig had received reports from his Fifth Army that enemy contact had been lost in some areas and that the Germans had begun a general withdrawal. These reports served to confirm Haig's lack of confidence in the Nivelle plan. This move by the enemy had been one of the reasons for the inclusion of Vimy Ridge in the British portion of the operations. The German withdrawal shortened their line, greatly increased their defensive power and freed units for possible offensive action.

After the London meetings, the German withdrawal was moving rapidly. The two planned holding attacks were seriously affected by the withdrawal, but the main attack in the south was not. Nivelle, after promising an end to the war in one offensive, was now trapped by his own publicity campaign. He refused to modify his plans to conform to the changed conditions and maintained an air of optimism. However, the firm support he had enjoyed, especially from his own government, was rapidly being eroded. The Briand Government fell on March 17, 1917 and the new ministry, headed by M. Alexandre Ribot, had as its War Minister Paul Painlevé, a skeptic about the soundness of Nivelle's plans. Painlevé inquired among the Army Group commanders about the plan and found that the subordinates who would have to carry out the orders also had serious misgivings about them.

To add to Nivelle's problems, it became apparent that there would be no cooperative efforts from the other theaters of war to divert the enemy's reserves. The tottering Russian Army would make no offensive efforts until the end of June and a weak Allied offensive in Macedonia had ended after only twelve days on March 23rd. The British had sent the Italian Army ten batteries of six-inch howitzers in hopes of spurring an offensive on that front.[12] However, General Cadorna, fearing an Austro-German attack after the fall of Roumania and the Russian Revolution, did not begin his offensive until after Nivelle's had failed. There appeared to be no chance of the simultaneous cooperation which had been in effect under Joffre's suzerainty. To climax the chain of bad omens for the success of the spring offensive, the Germans captured a set of operational plans for the main attack on April 4th. General Nivelle, faced with these mounting obstacles, persisted with his plans without any substantial changes.

On April 9th, General Rawlinson's Fourth British Army began the much publicized campaign. The assault on Vimy Ridge was a complete success and the British attack, designed merely as a holding action, gained from two to five miles along a twenty-five mile front. The Arras offensive, with no real strategic objective, was maintained after these initial gains only to prevent the enemy from massing reserves against the French in the south.

Nivelle's grand assault commenced on the following day. Instead of the expected breakthrough, the thirty division attack penetrated only to the second defensive positions in a few areas. Following this meager advance, the offensive was checked all along the line. The poor showing of the French Army, after Nivelle's vaunted promises, caused a disastrous let down in morale. The French nation had nurtured unrealistic hopes that the operation would end the war; when it did not, the reaction was understandably sharp.[13]

The discredited Ribot Government replaced Nivelle with the circumspect General Henri Pétain. Pétain favored a military course of "limited liability" and would await the arrival of the great American Army without further debilitating activity. The French Army turned inward to heal its mutiny-riddled spirit and passed the initiative for the remainder of the year to the British. Without an active ally, Douglas Haig moved without external restraint upon his command until the following November.

After Pétain assumed actual command, the wave of indiscipline in the French Army and numerous acts of mutiny convinced him that the French could no longer continue offensive action.[14] It is apparent that Pétain informed Field-Marshal Haig of his military problems almost immediately. Haig also received detailed information on the dire condition of his ally from his liaison personnel and French and British political leaders.[15]

The Third Ypres Campaign was undertaken for numerous and complex reasons. In addition to diverting the German Army's attention from the perilous condition of the French nation, perhaps the second most compelling reason was the Royal Navy's unbearable problem of countering the full scale German submarine campaign. The unrestricted "U-boat" campaign earlier in the year was causing irreplaceable merchant shipping losses and it was believed that the submarine pens at Ostend and Zeebrugge, Belgium were the home bases of these raiding vessels. Admiral Jellicoe, suffering under the strain of three years in command of the British blockade of the continent, added his plea for the Army to relieve the mounting pressure. The First Sea Lord disclosed to Field-Marshal Haig and the War Cabinet that unless the menace of the underwater boats was neutralized by seizure of their home ports, Great Britain would be unable to continue the war into 1918.[16]

Another consideration which affected Haig's decision to carry on with the planned offensive was that the American military power which had recently been added to the coalition would take six months to a year before it could be effecitvely applied on the Western Front. A third factor was that the British Government, led by Lloyd George, was pressing its illusory dream of victory on the Italian Front or in the Middle East. This possibility always threatened to draw British strength to the subsidiary theaters. Since Haig was unalterably opposed to this view, he feared that if he did not utilize his battle-ready forces they would eventually be siphoned off. A

final factor in Haig's decision to proceed with the northern operations may have been Great Britain's commitment to restore Belgium as a soverign and neutral state. The Third Ypres Campaign was the only offensive action attempted by the Allies aimed at freeing Belgium. When it is remembered that England's only announced goal, upon entering the war, was the restoration of Belgium it is not surprising that it was the British who pressed the campaign.

Thus, the British Army commenced the Third Ypres Campaign on July 31, 1917. It was preceeded with the brilliant limited assault on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge to straighten out the lines on the 7th of June. Following this, the main effort of the land operations to seize the Paschendaele Ridge would commence. After the successful completion of this phase, an amphibious raid, behind the enemy trench line would be conducted to secure Ostend. If this were successful, the entire German northern flank could be turned and the salient cutting into the heart of France would be untenable for the enemy. However, due to the lateness of the season it was expected that heavy rains would force a closure of active military campaigning before all phases could be completed.

Unfortunately the weather broke earlier than expected and the second phase of the campaign began in the wettest August recorded in thirty years. The German forces rotated defensive units into the Flanders area and further impeded the British advance. Finally it was decided to limit the scope of the operation and to merely press on to the conclusion of phase two.

The seizure of the Paschedaele Ridge was an arduous task; costly in men and materiel to both attacker and defender. It did not achieve the announced objectives but did divert the attention of the German Army from the faltering French line and achieved continued depletion of the German strength. Erich Ludendorff, the actual German commander, commented: "...the costly August battles imposed a great strain on the Western /German/ troops. I myself was placed in an awkward predicament. The state of affairs in the West appeared to prevent the execution of our plans elsewhere, our wastage had been...high.[17]

Paschendaele was not secured until November, 1917 at a cost of more than 200,000 casualties. The grinding experiences at the front, the mud and the inconclusive nature of daily operations led to another great wave of war weariness in the British Government. The British public was not aware of the real character of the fighting until after the war.

During this period there was virtually no inter-Allied cooperation or coordination. The French Army, under General Pétain, continued its moral and physical rearmament in virtual secrecy. The Italians were concerned with their static front on the Isonzo River. The Russians were being effectively eliminated from the war by German victories and internal revolution. The prospective American Armies were being raised and trained but would not be fielded for at least six months. The only active front was that of the British in Flanders.

Although this activity kept the Germans from seizing the initiative in a more vulnerable theater, there was little reason to attempt coordination until the French and Americans were capable of effective action.

The results of cooperative Allied efforts under General Joffre during the first two years of the war had proven frustrating and had greatly weakened the Entente's military position. The politicians had retrieved their rightful control over the conduct of the war and instituted their kind of unified command--subordination of the British Army to French generals. In a very short time this solution had failed miserably. This failure effectively suspended military cooperation until defeat confronted the alliance.

Notes for CHAPTER III

[1]It is of historical significance that Mr. Lloyd George was advised by two military men, Haig and Robertson, who were inarticulate in personal conversation. Not until General Henry Wilson replaced Robertson as CIGS in 1918 did Lloyd George have a military advisor who could match the politicians' art of persuasion. See: Robert Blake, ed., The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), p. 28.

[2]John H. Davidson, Haig: Master of the Field (London: Peter Nevill, 1953), pp. 26-27.

[3]In addition, the British forces included: three Cavalry Divisions, 5 Australian Infantry Divisions, four Canadian Infantry Divisions and one New Zealand Infantry Division. John Terraine, Ordeal of Victory (New York: Lippincott, 1963), p. xvii.

[4]This incident illuminates another simple but basic problem in combined military operations. The very difference between the French and British standards of living caused the British soldier to expect more food, ammunition and other classes of supply than his French counterpart. Thus, when the British made logistical plans they were on a different scale than those of the French. The French did not understand this difference and actually felt that the British were inflating their requirements as an excuse for not participating in the operation.

[5]While much has been written on the subject of General Nivelle's offensive on the Chemins-des-Dames the entire operation awaits definitive interpretation. The account by Brigadier-General E. L. Spears, Prelude to Victory (London: Cape, 1939) is interesting and most informative. The author, a British liaison officer at GQG, discounts Nivelle on several superficial grounds, however.

[6]Telegram, Commandant Bertier de Sauvigny to General Nivelle, February 19, 1917, Frederick B. Maurice, Lessons of Allied Cooperation: Naval, Military and Air, 1914-1918 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 81.

[7]Translation of French memorandum, February 26, 1917. Edmonds, BOH, 1917, App, I, pp. 62-63.

committee of experts. Lloyd George [illegible]

[8]Another possible explanation of Nivelle's ungentlemanly behavior stems from the attitude of his principal assistant, the consumptive Colonel D'Alenson. As Nivelle's chef de cabinet he sought "by a series of dictatorial instructions... /to/ produce a crisis and Haig's resignation. In this object D'Alenson failed, and even the temporary harm he did to Allied relations was minimized by Haig's own balance of mind, for if strong to complain he was not strong to retaliate; and it is one of the highest tributes to him that although sorely tried he never let his sense of injury obscure his sense of the need for cooperation between the Allies." Basil H. Liddell Hart, Reputations: Ten Years After (New York: Little, Brown, 1928), p. 129.

[9]"Relations Between the French and British Commanders-in Chief," May 13, 1917, Edmonds, BOH, 1917, App, I, p. 66.

[10]Ibid., p. 68.

[11]F. M. Haig, in a letter to General Nivelle on March 18, 1917, sought to dampen the growing animostiy between the French and British military headquarters. He felt "confident that 'unity of effort' /would/ be assured if /the two commanders/ were allowed to settle their own affairs together" without civilian interference. Letter, Haig to Nivelle Diaries and Papers of Sir Douglas Haig, National Library of Scotland, H. 176.

[12]In addition, a liaison team was sent to Italy to coordinate plans for British reinforcement of the Italian Army in the event of an Austrian victory on the Isonzo. "O. B. 2019, 8th April 1917," Diaries and Papers, H. 176.

[13]Thomas D. Shumate Jr. "The Allied Supreme War Council, 1917-1918," (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1952), pp. 12-13. General Wilson, the chief British liaison officer, wrote to Haig on June 28, 1917: "The French Army is in a state of indiscipline not due to losses but disappointment." he urged continued British offensive pressure in the north to provide the French with time to rebuild. Blake, ed., Private Papers, p. 242.

[14]The French Army mutinies of 1917 are a most sensitive topic with French historians, as they were with the French High Command. Little evidence remains of the actual acts of indiscipline or of the measures taken to counteract them. Correspondingly, little historical research has been undertaken on the subject. The best available sources are: Bently B. Gilbert and Paul P. Bernard, "French Army Mutinies of 1917," Historian,

XXII,(November, 1959), 24-41; G. A. M., "The Bent Sword," Blackwood's Magazine, CCLV, (January, 1944), 1-8; and Richard M. Watt, Dare Call It Treason (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963).

[15]Pétain met with Haig on May 18, 1917, three days after he replaced Nivelle. Haig's Operations Officer quotes Pétain as discussing in an outspoken manner the "unrest" within the French Army. Pétain was shown the plans of the British Ypres offensive and agreed that it was essential to the Allied cause that the British attack to distract the attention of the Germans from the French. This information is essential to understanding the Third Ypres Campaign because critics of allied cooperation deny that Haig knew of Pétain's difficulties. See: Davidson, Master of the Field, pp. 15-17; Diary Entry, Diaries and Papers, H.176, July 16, 1917; and Paul Painlevé, Comme J'ai Nommeé Foch (Paris: F. Alcon, 1923), p. 143.

[16]Diary entry June 20, 1917. Blake, ed., Private Papers, 240-41. Jellicoe's desperate comments were accepted by the audience as a vital but not overriding consideration. In fact, the answer to the U-Boat threat came in convoying merchant vessels rather than destruction of their home ports. See also: Davidson, Master of the Field, p. 13.

[17]General Erich Ludendorff, My War Memories, 1914-1918 (2d ed.; London: Hutchinson, 1919), II, pp. 90-92.

CHAPTER IV

WAR BY COMMITTEE OR THE SUPREME W. C.

The realization by the Western political leaders that the prosecution of the war was ineffective and wasteful led them to develop various schemes to achieve unity of military direction. These schemes reflected the national outlook of each leader and were subject to limitations imposed by the mandates held from their peoples. The French wished to have a thorough-going joint military command structure controlled by a French Generalissimo. The newly-joined American nation also emphasized the need for unified military control and was willing to submit its forces to the overall command of a foreign general. The Italian nation was a minor contributor to the military effort on the Western Front and their principal interest lay in obtaining technical and material assistance from France and Great Britain. Italy would accept the principle of a French Generalissimo on the Franco-British front so long as their voice dominated the actions in the Italian theater. The miniscule Belgian Army, under its constitutional Commander-in-Chief King Albert, could not formally accept foreign control. However, its actions were integrated under effective French control by the appointment of a French general officer as the Chief of Staff of the Belgian Army. The British Empire, represented by the government of Great Britain, could not accept the control of a French Generalissimo until disaster faced the alliance. The principal reasons for the British intransigence in this matter were the public sentiment in favor of

maintaining a separate force under a British leader and the fact that France no longer contributed the major share of the military power of the Alliance but would insist upon the right of naming the Generalissimo.[1]

As has been outlined previously, the inability of the major allies to subordinate their selfish national interests to a common goal had restricted the scope of any plans for unity of command in military planning and execution from the outset of the war. As is characteristic in democratic societies, it took a traumatic shock of near-defeat to change this pattern of limited cooperation. The rout of General Luigi Cadorna's armies on the Isonzo Front on October 24, 1917, during the Battle of Caporetto, provided the impetus for the beginning moves in a series of command experiments which would culminate in the selection of an over-all commander for the Allied armies.[2]

At a meeting between David Lloyd George, Paul Panlevé, and Vittorio Orlando at the Italian resort of Rapallo on November 7th, the Allies agreed to establish a Supreme War Council.[3] The purpose of this council was to provide political and military coordination for the Allied military effort and specifically to avert any future fiascos such as Caporetto, which had cost a quarter of a million prisoners and required the rapid redeployment of eleven French and British divisions to the Italian theater.[4]

Each nation was to be represented on the council either by its premier or his deputy and one other civilian representative. A leading military officer from each army was to act as the government's technical advisor on a board of Permanent Military Representatives which would provide the War Council with appropriate plans and recommendations for their approval. As a compromise gesture to M. Panlevé's acceptance of

the British plan to limit the powers of the Council, the political leaders directed that the Board of Permanent Military Advisors would meet at least once each month in the Paris suburb of Versailles.[5]

The French proposed that the Permanent Military Representatives should be the Chiefs of Staff or the Commanders-in-Chief of the participating nations. This requirement was unacceptable to Lloyd George since his ultimate desire was to bypass his leading military officers and direct the war effort himself through a uniformed spokesman. Another defect in the French proposal was that the use of officers already committed to national goals would require dual allegiance--to their own armies and to the board. It was therefore decided that the military representatives would be disassociated from national assignments.[6]

General Ferdinand Foch, General Henry Wilson, General Luigi Cadorna and General Tasker Bliss were appointed as the initial Permanent Military Representatives.[7] From this selection, it is obvious that only Great Britain abided by the agreement to separate national and coalition loyalties. Foch had resigned as the French Chief of Staff to assume his new post, Bliss was the former American Chief of Staff, and Luigi Cadorna had recently been replaced as the Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Armies. Henry Wilson, in contrast, had been unemployed since his relief from duties as the British liaison officer to the Grand Quartier General. He had been elevated to the rank of full General for his new assignment and his military outlook was closer to that of the Prime Minister than to those of the leaders of the British Army.[8]

In fact, Great Britain's Prime Minister hobbled the effectiveness of the Supreme War Council by nominating Wilson to sit as the British emissary. Wilson was distrusted by Field-Marshal Haig and General

Robertson.[9] Neither Haig nor Robertson agreed with the idea of the council or the military proclivities of Lloyd George. The fiery Welshman reciprocated the feelings of the military leaders and felt that their concepts of warfare were barren and could never produce a victorious conclusion to the war. The atmosphere of distrust which surrounded British military planning and direction could only spawn misunderstanding in the War Council and among the military leaders of the principal forces on the Western Front. Unfortunately, Lloyd George never felt secure enough to risk the morally correct but politically inexpedient course of replacing Field-Marshal Haig.[10]

Wilson and the disgraced Field-Marshal Sir John French had been consulted by the Prime Minister earlier, on the 11th and 20th of October, in an attempt to determine the proper course for British Empire military strategy.[11] In an interesting and strongly biased report, the two former supporters of the "Western Strategy" and central figures in past disputes with the French High Command determined that a supreme council for the direction of joint military operations was now required.[12] This unprecedented procedure for obtaining military advice and its result gained Lloyd George's warm acceptance. The ad hoc military advisors had merely told the Prime Minister what he wished to hear and their questionable prestige was added to his campaign to nullify the influence of Haig and Robertson. This was the Prime Minister's goal in consulting French and Wilson and in proposing a Supreme War Council, although it must be noted that in his mind these objectives were a vital first step toward winning the war.[13]

It soon became apparent that the Supreme Allied War Council would be an ornamental structure erected as a sign of prompt political

serious misgivings about what

reaction to the fruitless military strategy of the preceeding years. As a political sop to the public, it was an effective tool for the war leaders of the Entente powers.[14] It also presented a semblence of military efficiency to the newly associated power--the United States of America. American President Wilson and his advisors were keenly aware of the need for concerted direction of the coalition war effort, although they were equally determined not to become entangled in the political and diplomatic intrigues of Europe. Thus, the newest member of the coalition was the most insistent upon a strong Board of Military Representatives while their interest in the political coordination of the Supreme War Council was negligible.[15] Events would prove that the reverse emphasis was built into the structure of the council. The Military Representatives could provide a limited amount of technical advice but this was useless without the executive power to implement their plans.

An even more debilitating feature of the Supreme War Council's procedure was the requirement for unanimity upon all Military plans and reports were submitted by the Board of Military Representatives to the War Council members in the form of Joint Military Notes. "No joint note was submitted to the Council for consideration unless it had been unanimously accepted by the military representatives."[16] General Tasker Bliss in describing this unfortunate system to the American Secretary of War Newton Baker related:

> Every military plan made here is necessarily a compromise. If one of the [Military Representatives] knows that his Government will not approve he refuses to give his assent...each of us surrenders such of his objections as are not radical in order to reach agreement...Otherwise any action here would be impossible.[17]

Even when the military presented a united front to the Council members, a second barrier existed--projects could not be implemented until each of the nations of the Entente had given its assent. Closed negotiating sessions between political representatives assured agreement on an issue before it was allowed to be discussed in open session. Thus, the open meetings merely formalized previously decided courses of action and were devoid of meaningful debate.[18]

If these obstacles of compromise were successfully surmounted, the program was then implemented by coordination between the Allied governments through their own General Staffs or Commanders-in-Chief. With such a complex process for adopting a course of action it is no wonder that Douglas Haig was unworried about the Supreme War Council's effect upon his command. His realistic contempt for the political machinations of the Council is evident from his diary entry on the day he was first informed of the decision to create the body.

> Sunday, November 4, [1917]... I told him [Lloyd George] that the proposal [for an Inter-Allied Supreme War Council and Staff] had been considered for three years and each time had been rejected as unworkable. I gave several reasons why I thought it could not work, and that it would add to our difficulties having such a body. The P. M. then said that the two Governments had decided to form it; so I said, there is no need saying any more then!... L. G. is feeling that his position as P. M. is shaky and means to try and vindicate his conduct of the war in the eyes of the public and try and put the people against the soldiers... I should think [he is] most unreliable.[19]

At the second meeting of the Supreme War Council, the newly installed Premier of France, Georges Clemenceau, moved that the first business of the Council should be to examine and prepare plans for the military operations to be undertaken in 1918. M. Clemenceau asked that

the Military Representatives be instructed to examine the possible courses of action and answer these questions:

First, it should be assumed that Russia would not be in a position to give the Allies any effective support. How many effective enemy divisions would be freed by this situation?

Secondly, now that the Italian Front had been stabilized and the Franco-British Front weakened, should an offensive in Italy be considered?

Third, what strength could the American forces provide during 1918? The answer to this question depended largely on shipping available through diverting it from supply missions.

Finally, since the war had become one of exhaustion, should the Allies consider the destruction of Germany's allies prior to the final assault upon the principal enemy? This course was the "Easterner's" strategy of knocking the props out from under Germany.[20]

These very same questions had been dealt with by the Commanders-in-Chief and the Chiefs of Staff at their July 25th meeting in Paris. In view of the expected increase in German forces opposing the Franco-British line in France due to the collapse of the Russian Front, the military leaders recommended that the secondary theaters be held defensively and that all available strength be transferred to the Western Front. The generals also recommended the "unification of action on the Western Front by the help of a permanent Inter-Allied military organization which should study and make preparations for the rapid movement of troops from one theater to another."[21]

General Wilson took the lead in organizing the work of the Military Representatives. His competent staff organization, while

separated from the Imperial General Staff, was a model upon which the other nations fashioned their own organizations.[22] Wilson also became the leader of the representatives in preparing their joint notes. Twelve notes were prepared between the second and third meeting of the Supreme War Council.[23]

Note number one, in response to M. Clemenceau's queries, recommended the adoption of a defensive policy from the North Sea to the Adriatic. This conclusion was reached following reasoning which was quite similar to that used by the national army commanders in their July meeting. This note specifically called for, in addition, the systematic defense and gradual retirement from the Macedonian Front. The entire defensive policy was considered a necessary preparation for a strong coordinated offensive in 1918 in any theater where it was considered an opportune strategy. This offensive would have to await more detailed information on the political situation in Russia and the military requirements of the Italian front.

Notes two through eleven dealt with technical military matters such as army reorganization, logistical problems, effectiveness of aircraft and tanks and the extension of the British Army's front in northern France by approximately sixty miles.[24] In note number twelve a general survey of the military sphere of the war was presented. The "Western" philosophy of strategy was expounded and the security of the Franco-British front was stressed as vital to the hope of eventual victory. The estimate of enemy offensive power which might be thrown against this front was given as up to ninty-six divisions. To face such a large enemy attack the entire Western Front had to be considered as extending south to the Adriatic Sea. In addition, the required

reinforcement of the front by at least two American divisions each month would be necessary to assure the repulse of any enemy initiative. The Military Representatives called for attention to be paid to all phases of defensive tactics, including increased weapon density and the ability to rapidly transfer reinforcements from one sector of the expanded front to another. The technical advisors to the political leaders of the Allied powers could foresee no change of obtaining a final or even decisive victory on the Western Front in 1918. They planned on achieving victory only after the arrival of a massive American Army and an offensive move begun in the summer of 1919 or even 1920. Thus, the Military Representatives looked forward to a continuance of a war of attrition in the west.[25]

The Military Representatives saw no opportunity for a decisive victory in Mesopotamia either. However, they felt that the elimination of Turkey from the war would have far-reaching effects upon the entire military situation. If this collapse could be achieved immediately, the Allies might be able to retrieve their losses in Southern Russia and Roumania. Thus, the final call for the offensive in the Middle East conflicted with the general theme of the note which stressed the assumption of a completely defensive posture. The only concession to the overall plan of defensive strategy was that the Turkish offensive could not be contemplated unless the current troop strength on the Western Front was maintained.

When the Supreme War Council met for its third session on January 30, 1918, its first order of business was consideration of Joint Note number twelve. The coordinated defensive posture of the Western Front, to include the Italian theater was accepted. In addition,

the principle of a counter-offensive to be delivered when circumstances warranted such action was also agreed upon. However, the condition that British and French troop strength be maintained at current levels for the security of the Western Front was a point of intense disagreement.

General Pétain and Field-Marshal Haig stated and, when pressed for proof, illustrated with statistics, that the proposed dearth of replacements would require the breaking up of thirty British and twenty-five French divisions in 1918.[26] This revelation immediately forced M. Clememceau to side with the generals in demanding the ancillary campaign in Turkey be cancelled. The military's proposal was in line with the stated conditions of Joint Note twelve that the effective combat strength of the British and French armies be maintained before any side actions be undertaken.

Lloyd George, the man responsible for withholding troops from the British Armies in France, refused to accept the postponement of his Turkish plans.[27] He pointed out that the German Army had held its front successfully with a defensive inferiority of four to seven. During this period, Serbia and Roumania had been destroyed and Russia nearly knocked out of the war when the German generals realized that decisive results could not be achieved on the Western Front. The British Prime Minister had no faith in his military leaders' ability to push the Germans back to the Rhine River and felt his only alternative was to defend in the west and force one of Germany's allies from the war. M. Clememceau was understandably much more concerned and sensitive to the Entente's defensive capabilities in the west and insisted that the security and strength of the Allied positions here overrode all other considerations. The basic point of contention between the French and

British ministers was how effective the current force levels would be without reinforcement and adequate replacement of wastage. Lloyd George maintained that the declining troop strength would be adequate while Clemenceau agreed with the military commanders and the Permanent Military Representatives who insisted that strength be maintained in the west before operations in any other theater could be planned.

In a private meeting during the evening recess, Mr. Lloyd George and M. Clemenceau compromised their differences and the shrewd Celt's maneuvering achieved a tactical success. The joint resolution which was issued the next morning allowed the British to continue with their planned Turkish offensive plans. This resolution accepted "...Joint Note No. 12 of the Military Representatives on the Plan of Campaign for 1918," the British Government agreed to using "in the most effective fashion the forces already at its disposal in the Eastern theatre" and assured their allies that they had "no intention of diverting forces from the Western Front" to the other theaters.[28] Of course the British were free to send all their trained replacements to the Turkish theater and send "scraps" to the British Armies serving under Haig. Since there had never been a proposal to divert troops from France to the east, the compromise resolution was a complete victory for Lloyd George but one which would cause his armies to suffer grievously within the coming months.

Defense Compared with Offense

With the acceptance of the obvious military disadvantages the Allies would face in the spring of 1918, the entire complexion of the problems of military cooperation had changed. With the rapid transferral

of German strength to the Western Front the Allies would, for the first time since August, 1914, be faced with a superior enemy.

Coordination of disparate military units, like that of chance acquaintances, is relatively simple and characterized by unselfishness in good times. Although maximum efficiency, unity of purpose, and timely scheduling are not always achieved by voluntary cooperation under easy circumstances, they do have a patina of effectiveness. In difficult periods, when defeat and destruction are imminent to one or each of the cooperating members, this system fails completely and shows that national self-interest and preservation are, after all, the primary motivating factors in coalition warfare.

During periods of defensive operations, coalition members are loath to transfer reserves to a neighbor's threatened sector for fear of weakening their own capabilities for survival. A military commander, by the very nature of his calling, must prepare for the worst possible situations. In periods of joint military operations this worst possible situation is the unleashing of all of the common enemy's destructive force on the front of one partner. All the instincts of the military commander and his staff lead to a pessimistic evaluation of the enemy's capabilities and options. The moral advantage inherent in an offensive posture is therefore multiplied when opposing a defense prepared by a coalition of sovereign states.

For these rather basic reasons, a joint defensive operation demands firmer control and stricter obedience by the leaders of the national military components than do joint offensive maneuvers. The fact that system "D" had sufficed in 1914[29] and the French Army's

overwhelming contribution to the Allied cause in the early stages of the war served to dull the impact of this lesson upon western military leaders.

The Permanent Military Representatives, from their detached vantage point, could discern the need for more precise commitments for military assistance and control. The members were also influenced by the extraordinary example of the small German General Reserve of six divisions. This reserve had successfully influenced the outcome of events in the Roumanian, Russian and Italian theaters.[30] The lesson drawn from the successes of this unit was that the Allies also needed a General Reserve in their organization to counter the expected German thrusts in the spring. The Board of Military Representatives proposed the formation of a thirty division reserve composed of ten British, thirteen French and seven Italian divisions. The control of this force was to be vested in a Military Executive War Board (EWB) which was, interestingly enough, the Permanent Military Representatives with a new name and expanded powers. The Executive War Board would decide where the General Reserve was to be stationed, to which area of the front it would be committed and when to withdraw the forces. During the actual employment of the Reserve in combat it would be under the control of the national Commander-in-Chief.[31]

At the third plenary session of the Supreme War Council, the national political leaders instructed the Permanent Military Representatives to investigate the usefulness of forming an Inter-Allied General Reserve to counter the growing enemy strength on the Western Front. In Joint Notes number fourteen and fifteen, the Military Representatives outlined the details of their General Reserve plan. These notes were approved by the War Council in January, 1918. A Military Executive Board

was established to direct the Reserve and General Ferdinand Foch was called upon to assume the presidency of the board.

A formal request for divisions to form the General Reserve was issued by the Board to all national army commanders. Italy agreed to provide six divisions with the proviso that the French and British divisions then in Italy would not be withdrawn. Field-Marshal Haig and General Pétain replied to the request negatively and worked in concert to destroy the General Reserve plan. Both Haig and Petain looked upon this idea as one which would deprive them of ultimate control in their areas of responsibility in addition to weakening the entire Allied defensive posture.[32]

The reasons behind this deliberate move to circumvent the express desires of their nations' political leaders by two leading field commanders are diverse and difficult to define fully. Obviously, there must have been some professional jealousy pervading the entire episode. Pétain, the cautious, pessimistic saviour of the French Armies following the mutinies of 1917, wished to retain his dominance over the resurgent Foch. Haig realized that his armies were now the dominant Allied military force and would remain so until the eventual arrival of the fledgling American Armies. Thus, both national military leaders were reluctant to surrender control over sizable portions of their armies to the Executive War Board or to General Foch's command.

Technical military considerations were also a factor in their reluctance to supply troops to the Reserve. A heterogeneous military force would be difficult to maintain and transport. The lack of uniform equipment, training and organization of the Allied forces made exact substitution impossible and might prove more inefficient than the retention

of the Reserve at the national level.[33] The technique of attack in one sector of the line to relieve enemy pressure from another, had also proved an effective countermeasure in operations such as the Verdun-Somme Battles and was put forth as a suitable substitute.

Haig's best reason, however, for refusing to provide the British share of the Reserve was his acute shortage of troops. He was negotiating with Pétain to extend his portion of the front; the British divisions in Italy under General Herbert Plumer were unavailable to him and the great losses of the Third Ypres Campaign had not been replaced by the Government. These factors made it clearly impossible for Haig to detach any more divisions and still maintain a margin of safety in his defensive posture.

Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig officially received the request of the Executive War Board for British divisions to be placed in the General Reserve in EWB note number 1, dated February 27, 1918. Three days later he replied:

> ...that I foresee a wider employment, etc., of Allied Reserves than that foreshadowed in the Joint Note... this force could not be earmarked or located in any particular areas prior to the delivery of the German offensive or the development of the enemy's intentions,... I have arranged as a preliminary measure with the Commander-in-Chief of the French Armies for all preparations to be made for the rapid despatch of a force from six to eight British divisions with a proportionate amount of artillery and subsidiary services to his assistance.
>
> General Petain has made similar arrangements for relief or intervention of French troops in the British front... To meet this attack I have already disposed of all the troops at present under my command,... I therefore regret that I am unable to comply with the suggestion conveyed in the Joint Note.[34]

Haig took this strong position out of deep conviction that it was militarily correct and, at least at that date, politically acceptable to the French leaders. His diary entry three days before he received

the request for reserve troops indicates that Georges Clemenceau had personally intimated his backing of Petain in his rivalry with Foch. He thus gave his blessing to the principle of cooperation rather than control by a Generalissimo.[35] On the day that Haig sent his reply to the Joint Note, he was apprised by a liaison officer that M. Poincaré, the President of the Republic, had flatly disallowed General Foch the authority to control an inter-allied reserve and that, in effect, the Executive War Board was now powerless.[36] In more precise military fashion, Haig further outlined his opposition to the plan in a secret dispatch:

> It is essential, however, that unity and homogeneity should be preserved in the formation of a reserve, and that such a reserve should be appointed and handled by a responsible commander.
> To weaken Armies in order to place a general reserve wanting in homogeneity in the hands of a Committee composed of members of different nationalities is a complete misunderstanding of the role of a reserve in a great modern battle... which is a prolonged struggle lasting for weeks and perhaps for months... which in its preliminary stages is simply a '<u>bataille d'usure</u>'--a wearing down of the enemy's forces.[37]

He pointed out that the reserves of the lower units are the first to be drawn into battle followed by those of the supreme commander. But the reserves were no longer used only to influence the battle and meet unforeseen events but also to secure a rotation of exhausted divisions from the line. Thus the reserves must be at the disposal of the responsible commander who alone is in charge of the operation and has sufficient knowledge of the local situation. Haig did not, however, completely rule out the possible utility of a supreme unity of effort:

> In the case of a divergency of opinion between the Commanders-in-Chief such authority may be necessary, but to vest in a Committee the power to handle troops, even if such were available, which is not now the case, would be to create in fact, a Generalissimo

> in the form of a Committee. History affords numerous examples of the failures of such forms of authority.[38]

Haig and Petain deliberately by-passed the authority of the Executive War Board and prepared bilateral plans to control the defense of the Western Front. Without consulting their respective political superiors, the Field-Marshal and the General also struck a bargin to compromise on the extension of the British line only as far south as Barisis. This small rail center was just south of the River Oise and constituted an extension of only twenty-five miles of additional frontage rather than the sixty miles demanded by the French Government and approved by the Permanent Military Representatives in their Joint Note number ten.

The planned cooperative response to any German offensive was based upon the promise of each national military leader to assist the other and was not really subject to specific provisions concerning the number of divisions or the conditions for implementation. Regardless of the eventual effect of these preparations, the close cooperation between Petain and Haig had ended any hope of forming the Inter-Allied General Reserve under the control of the Executive War Board.

When Italy discovered that the British and French quotas for the General Reserve would not be filled, she withdrew her offer to provide troops. On March 14th, the Allied ministers meeting at Versailles were informed of the current impasse in the situation and accepted the explanations rendered by the military commanders.[39] The Executive War Board had, in effect, superceded the Permanent Military Representatives and now that the General Reserve could not be formed its raison d'etre was gone. In this complex and intrigue-laden series of events, the

desires of the political leaders of the Entente had been thwarted by their field commanders.

Georges Clemenceau should have realized the strength of Haig's opposition to the appointment of a command superior to his own on the Western Front. During a meeting between the two in January, 1918, at the British General Headquarters, Clemenceau described Sir Douglas' violent reaction to such a proposal.

> There was a long way to go. We had had too many wars with the British for them readily to fall in with the idea of placing their soldiers under the command of a Frenchman. The day I first broached the subject to General [sic] Sir Douglas Haig, as I was breakfasting at his headquarters, the soldier jumped up like a jack-in-the-box, and, with both hands shot up to heaven, exclaimed: 'Monsieur Clemenceau, I have only one chief, and I can have no other. My King.'[40]

Although one may suspect a touch of Gallic exaggeration in this description since it is the most emotional reaction Haig has ever been accused of, the same fervent opposition to the Supreme Command ruled his military judgement. As long as Haig opposed the idea of a Generalissimo it seems that it could never be employed.

The vaunted unity of military effort, desired in some degree by all of the allies, could not be achieved until final disaster faced the coalition. The military commanders had out-maneuvered the politicians and used their influence to retain their vested interest in military strategy. Until Douglas Haig could be convinced that his personal interests and those of his armies required a unified command, the goal was unattainable.[41]

Notes for CHAPTER IV

[1] Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, Lessons of Allied Co-operation: Military, Naval and Air (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), 80 and 173-74. Maurice feels that the politicians misread the public's opinion on this matter. He cites the subordination of British forces in the Mediterranean and at Salonika without public protest as evidence of British acceptance of foreign control.

[2] The disaster on the Italian Front followed by less than a month the death gasp of the Russian Army at Riga. Thus, two severe setbacks must be considered the immediate causes of the Allied action. Unity of command on the Western Front had been the topic of serious discussion at least since the Rome conference in January, 1917 when Lloyd George and Panleve exchanged views on the matter.

[3] The United States of America, which had declared war on Germany on April 6, 1917, was not a charter member of the Council. Shortly after the Rapallo Agreement the U. S. Military Representative, former Army Chief of Staff, Brevet General Tasker H. Bliss, was appointed to represent his government on the military advisory board. However, in line with President Woodrow Wilson's desire to remain aloof from the political entanglements of the Entente, Colonel Edward M. House acted only as an official observer at the second and eighth meetings of the Supreme Allied War Council. President Wilson attempted to influence the Council to deemphasize the political aspects of the Council and transform it into an instrument of joint military direction. These goals were in direct conflict with those of Prime Minister David Lloyd George, the primary force behind the original plan. Thus, the Allied and Associated Powers were forced to compromise their desires and this, in turn, contributed to the uncertain and weak role the Council was to play. cf. David F. Trask, The United States in the Supreme War Council (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 20-37.

[4] For descriptions of the Allied reaction to the collapse of the Italian Army in the Battle of Caporetto see: C. R. M. F. Crutwell, A History of the Great War, 1914 - 18 (London: Clarendon Press, 1936), 456-66; Winston S. Churchill, The World Crisis, 1916-1918 (London: Butterworth, 1927), II, 52-55; B. H. Liddell Hart, The Real War, 1914-1918 (Boston: Little, Brown, 1930), 357-63.

[5] "Decisions of a Conference of Representatives of the British, French and Italian Governments Assembled at RAPALLO on November 7, 1917", The Diaries and Papers of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, H. 134.

[6] Paul Panlevé's government fell on a vote of minor importance in the Chamber of Deputies. However, his inability to establish the rule of a French Generalissimo had a decided weakening effect on his power. Georges Clemenceau, an aging but vibrant supporter of the war effort, succeeded Panleve. It was Clemenceau who acceded to Lloyd George's desires on the appointment of a lesser military official to the Board of Military Representatives. The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, ed., Charles Seymour, 4 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1926-28), III, 262-63.

[7] General Maxime Weygand, Foch's senior staff officer, became the French Military Representative when Lloyd George refused to endorse the eventual evolution of the War Council into a Supreme Command. General Sir Henry Rawlinson replaced General Wilson when he was installed as the Chief of the Imperial General Staff on February 16, 1918. Rawlinson was chosen upon the recommendation of Douglas Haig. Haig was given this privilege because of his acceptance of Lloyd George's action in replacing General Robertson. Rawlinson was in complete accord with Haig's policies and priorities and his appointment marked the end of any chance for the Board of Military Representatives to become an effective tool for coordinating military policies. When the Fifth British Army was reconstituted Major-General Sackville-West, a loyal subordinate of General Wilson, replaced Rawlinson and the British representative was finally an officer responsive to the desires of the General Staff.

[8] Lloyd George, Memoirs, IV, 504-10 and 540-45. Maurice, Lessons, 106; Maurice P. A. Hankey, The Supreme Command, 1914-1918, 2 vols. (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), II, 711-719.

[9] Terraine, Ordeal of Victory, 80; Blake ed., Private Papers, 79.

[10] Hankey, The Supreme Command, II, 616 and 823-29; Liddell Hart, Reputations: Ten Years After, 128-29.

[11] James E. Edmonds, Official History of the War, Military Operations, France and Belgium, 1917, 3 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1948), II, ix; David Lloyd George, War Memoirs, 6 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1934), IV, 531-45. During the period of Lloyd George's consultations, F. M. French was the commander of the Home Forces in the United Kingdom. Lieutenant-General Wilson was unemployed after being relieved of his duties as chief liaison officer to GOG as persona non grata at General Petain's request.

[12] C. E. Callwell, ed., Field-Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, His Life and Diaries, 2 vols. (London: Cassell, 1927), II, 10-20; Lloyd George, ibid., IV, 532-45; John H. Davidson, Haig, Master of the Field (London: Peter Nevill, 1953), 74-76.

[13] Although Lloyd George tried to find a precedent for bypassing his normal military advisors by citing the War Cabinet meeting of August 5, 1914; his attempt fails. The consultation of Lord Roberts and

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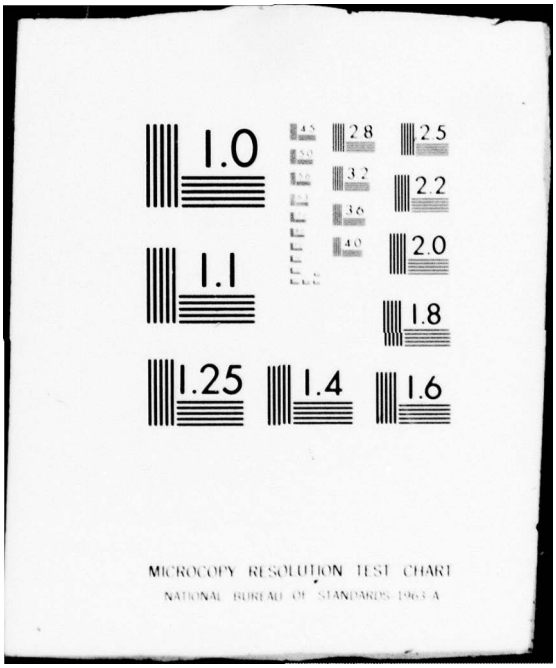
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lower ranking military officer by the Asquith ministry was done in a time of national peril. Another difference between the two incidents was that the August 5th meeting included the Commander of the BEF and the CIGS while this meeting specifically excluded them. Lloyd George, ibid., IV, 531-32; For Lloyd George's appraisal of his leading military subordinates see: ibid., IV, 504-11.

14 Because of a great public outcry in Great Britain following the announcement of the creation of the Supreme War Council and Lloyd George's Paris speech defending the action he was forced to publicly recant some of the stronger implications of the Rapallo Agreement. In the House of Commons, the Prime Minister rebutted an attack on the usefulness of the newly created Council by Mr. Asquith by saying that it was never intended to evolve into a Supreme Command under a Generalissimo.

15 Trask, U. S. In the Supreme War Council, 46-52.

16 Ibid., 39.

17 General Tasker Bliss to Newton Baker and General Peyton March, July 13, 1918, Supreme War Council Records, War Department Archives. Quoted in ibid.

18 For a grander view of the Supreme War Council's mission and utility cf. Trask, idid. and Thomas D. Shumate Jr., "The Allied Supreme War Council, 1917-1918", (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Univ. of Virginia, 1952). In practice the Council became a formalized structure for the conduct of political discussions similar to those which had taken place prior to its inception. Political conferences continued to be held outside of the Council's charter (e.g. the Doullens Conference of March 26, 1918 at which General Foch was authorized to direct all Allied military forces on the Western Front).

The military value of the Council stemmed from its logistical and administrative subcommittees rather than from the indecisive work of the Permanent Military Representatives. See: Report of the Military Board of Allied Supply, 2 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1924).

19 Douglas Haig, Diaries and Papers, H. 119. November 4, 1917. Only a brief mention of the creation of the Supreme War Council is found in Haig's papers. See also exchange of letters between General William Robertson and Haig, ibid., November 22 and 25, 1917.

20 Edmonds, BOH, 1918, I, 33-34.

21 Maurice, Lessons, III; Edmonds, ibid., 4. The proposals of the allied generals were contingent upon Russia's defeat and were never adopted by the political leaders.

22 For an excellent view of the institutional characteristics of the Council and the development of the powers of the Board of Permanent Military Representatives see: Trask, U. S. In the Supreme War Council, 38-46.

23 For a complete listing of the titles of the Joint Notes adopted by the Military Representatives see Appendix 1.

24 Ibid.

25 Text of M. R. Joint Note No. 12. Lloyd George, Memoirs, V, 251-60.

26 Translation of General Foch's "Memorandum of 1st June 1918", Edmonds, BOH, 1918, III, 349.

27 The British Armies in France and Flanders had requested 615,000 men for the year of 1918. The Government, motivated by a desire to restrict Haig's offensive capabilities along with a consideration of Great Britain's ability to support the war on the home front, largely ignored these requests. It is evident that sufficient manpower existed in the British Isles for the strength of the armies to be maintained at full establishment prior to the March 21st German offensive. A particularly odius move on the part of the Government to cover up its lack of manpower support was its arbitrary decision in January, 1918 to reduce the table of divisional organization from twelve infantry battalions to nine. This move was made without consulting the military leaders and directly against the wishes of the Army Council. Edmonds, BOH, 1918, I, 50-54 and 1918 Appendix, 30-34. Frederick Maurice, Intrigues of the War, (London: Laxley, 1922), passim.

28 Edmonds, BOH, 1918, I, 75.

29 Se débrouiller--The French counterpart of the British habit of "muddling through".

30 James E. Edmonds, A Short History of World War I (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 277-78.

31 "Resolutions adopted by the Supreme War Council on February 2, 1918 (fifth meeting)." BOH, 1918, I, 77-78.

32 Haig's reasonable opposition to the General Reserve plan was set forth in O. A. D. 776 excerpts of which are given below at pages

33 Ibid.

34 Executive War Board Note No. 1, February 6, 1918 and O. A. D. 770, Douglas Haig to British Military Representative, Supreme War Council, March 2, 1918. Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

35 Diary entry February 24, 1918, Blake ed., Private Papers of Sir Douglas Haig, 1914-1919 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 289.

36 Diary entry March 2, 1918, ibid., 291. The officer who relayed this information was General Clive.

37 O. A. D. 776, March 12, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

38 Ibid.

39 Edmonds, BOH, 1918, I, 84-86. Joint Letter, Executive War Board to Acting Chief of Staff, March 7, 1918, United States Army in the World War, 1917-1919 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1948), II, 238-39; Cablegram, General Tasker Bliss to Newton Baker, ibid., II, 240-41.

40 Georges Clemenceau, The Grandeur and Misery of Victory (New York: Harcourt and Brace, 1930), 37.

41 The creation of the Supreme Allied War Council in November 1917 was a significant event. Despite the author's view that it had little actual effect upon the military conduct of the war, it was a symbolic admission of the need for a formal tool to coordinate both military and political plans. It set the tone and much of the precedent for the Versailles Peace Conference and even the structure and philosophy of the League of Nations. The historical investigation of the evolution of the Supreme War Council and the position of the Generalissimo is remarkably limited. All general works on the war, of course, mention the situation and refer superficially to the measures taken. The only definitive work extant is Thomas D. Shumate Jr., "The Allied Supreme War Council, 1917--1918" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1952). Other works of varying quality and areas of specialization are: Tasker H. Bliss, "The Evolution of the Unified Command", Foreign Affairs, 1 (1922): 1-30; T. M. Hunter, "Foch and Eisenhower: A Study in Allied Supreme Command", Army Quarterly, 87 (1963): 33-52; L. Loucheur, "Le Commandement Unique", L'Illustration, 4438 (1928): 272-77; Maurice, Lessons of Allied Co-operation; and David F. Trask, The United States in the Supreme War Council.

CHAPTER V

THE REGIME OF THE GENERALISSIMO

With the equivocal stance assumed by the Supreme War Council at their March 14th meeting, the chances for establishing an inter-allied General Reserve and eventually a supranational military command appeared ended at last. Douglas Haig, perhaps feeling more secure in his position, now explained his entire defensive plan. He also offered his first detailed thoughts about the value of the Executive War Board and by implication the entire Supreme War Council.[1]

There was now little doubt that a massive German attack--to be christened the Friedensturm--on the Western Front was imminent. Field-Marshal Haig's intelligence services calculated that by April 1st the enemy would have 195 divisions available for employment in the west after transferring units from the now inactive Eastern Front (actually they massed 194). Two hundred divisions would face the Entente by May 1st. Haig's headquarters predicted that the assault would fall between Arras and St. Quentin anytime after March 1st. The predicted objective would be to split the British and French Armies which now made junction at Barisis. From this prescient analysis of the enemy's intentions it is obvious that Haig was in no way surprised by the German onslaught of the 21st of March. Although the actual offensive fell farther south, the English dispositions were made with a knowledge of the enemy's options and intentions rarely possessed by a military commander.[2]

In his discussion of the situation, Haig noted that of the 58 British and 2 Portugese divisions on the 125 mile front, only 10 were held as Army Reserve and 8 were at his disposal. Opposing the recently extended British line, were 40 German divisions in the line and 47 in reserve. In addition, 30 other German divisions could be transferred to this sector without drawing away from vital duties opposite the French.[3]

The peculiar situation of the British was that their northern and central lines were only an average of forty-five miles from the Channel coast. This lack of adequate maneuver room dictated that these sectors be held in greater strength. Noting the disproportionate weakness of the Fifth Army in the south, Haig realistically pointed out:

> The last reserve of 8 divisions held at the disposal of the F. M. C.-in-C. to meet the situation which will certainly arise on the British front, is far too small for the purpose, and is the minimum necessary to start a roulement of the divisions attacked... the front of [the Fifth Army] is already dangerously extended towards its junction with the French. The Fifth Army holds a front of 70,000 yards with 10 divisions and 1 in Army reserve. In this Army the III Corps of only 3 divisions is operating on a front of 29,000 yards.
>
> Our divisions on the whole front are holding on an average 5,500 yards which compares badly with the 3,000 yards usually alloted to a German division in a defensive battle.
>
> It is estimated that the enemy has sufficient resources to attack in force on a front of some 50 miles, say from the LA BASSE Canal to ST. QUENTIN, without having to withdraw any troops from the French front...[4]

Therefore, Haig expecting the assault, had to man his most threatened lines lightly and had to assume new portions of the line at a most inopportune time. This additional twenty-five miles of the line was the scene of the horrible devastation of the great Somme Battles of 1916 and the methodical despoiation of Ludendorff's planned withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line in April 1917. General Hubert Gough's Fifth Army

had been attempting to organize a coherent defensive system in this area from the neglected and half-finished French positions.

By early March, a civilian labor force of more than forty-eight thousand men was allotted to the Fifth Army to supplement the efforts of the fighting men in preparing defenses. Transportation of every essential of life, as well as the vast quantities of fortification materials required was nearly impossible. The barren and flattened terrain of the area was bereft of roadways and cover. Every house or tree in the area had been destroyed and most movement had to be done at night. To economize on the available labor, the local commanders decided to form a series of independent, but mutually supporting redoubts. Although this "blob system" would require less defensive work, it was calculated that nearly three hundred miles of new trenches, covered by barbed wire, would be required for an adequate defense. Such a task was virtually impossible within the short time remaining to the British before the Friedensturm.[5]

On January 7, 1918, Haig was summoned to London to explain what he expected to happen in the near future. He stated that he would not attack if he were in the position of the German military leaders primarily because the attack would fail and then leave the Central Powers open to final defeat during the Allied counter-offensive. Haig had never been a good speaker and his exposition apparently gave his listeners the impression that he did not expect a German attack. The next day in an apparently contradictory written statement, the Field-Marshal clearly showed his evaluation of the critical defensive situation on the Western Front for the next six months. The Germans might well attempt to force a decision by attacking in the spring. This would be in the nature of a gamble with

a determination to risk everything in order to gain a quick victory. The Allied armies must prepare to meet this assault and to replace the losses which would certainly be incurred. Knowing the expected limitations he would face in manpower, he warned the Cabinet that the troops available were inadequate. If a rate of 100,000 replacements per month could be maintained during the German offensive a gradually improving situation and ultimately a satisfactory peace settlement would be achieved.[6] At a later conference, only seven days before the German offensive began, Lloyd George met with Haig and again attempted to force Haig into committing himself against the possibility of a major German offensive.

> They [Lloyd George and Bonar Law] did their best to get me to say that the Germans would not attack! The P. M. remarked that I had 'given my opinion [on January 7th ?] that the Germans would only attack against small portions of our front.' I said that 'I had never said that. The question put to me was if I were a German General and confronted by the present situation would I attack!!... I now said that the German Army and its leaders seem drunk with their success in Russia and the middle East, so that it is impossible to foretell what they may not attempt. In any case we must be prepared to meet a very strong attack indeed on a 50 mile front, and for this, drafts are urgently required.[7]

Ludendorff Moves

With the inevitable arrival of a growing American Army, the German leaders realized that their only chance of winning the war lay in an early all-out offensive. The foolhardy decision to reinstitute unrestricted submarine warfare had by this time proved unable to defeat Great Britain. The final toss of the dice had to be made in a land offensive.

General Erich Ludendorff called a conference to prepare the plans for the German "last gamble" offensive on November 11, 1917 at Mons. The Chiefs of Staff of the groups of armies commanded by the Crown Prince and Prince Rupprecht were consulted without the presence of either commander, the Kaiser or even the nominal Chief of the General Staff, Paul von Hindenburg. This meeting emphasized the complete control and unity of command which would be henceforth exercised by Ludendorff over the entire military effort of the Central Powers. It was also indicative of the lack of civil restraint imposed upon the German High Command during the last year of the war.

Although the Germans regarded the British Armies as more obstinate and difficult to dislodge from defensive positions than the French, they knew that defeat of the British in France and Flanders was their only chance of decisive victory. A defeated French Army might always choose to retreat into the south of France and skillfully delay until the Americans came to their assistance. The British, however, were in a tenuous defensive position and if forced to retreat back on their Channel supply bases, might be separated from the French line and defeated in detail.

Preparing a series of alternate plans for attack at several points in the line, Ludendorff determined to begin the great offensive by mid-March.[8] He intended to strike violently at the rigid British defenses south of Arras and, once the British reserves had been shifted south, to strike further north.

The German leaders were careful to maintain secrecy and achieve surprise and disunion on the Allied defensive front. Activity on the French Champagne sector was intentionally increased and this move

succeeded in misleading the wary General Pétain into expecting the main offensive against his forces. This key diversion was to spell disaster for the cooperative defensive plans prepared by Field-Marshal Haig and General Pétain.

Haig was also deceived, for a time, into believing the initial assault would come in the extreme north and this was a factor in his decision to man this section strongly. However, he realized that the French would more readily reinforce the southern portion of the line than that in the north. By February 1st the indications of a German assault between the Scarpe and Oise rivers were obvious enough to be accepted by the local British commanders but Haig remained dubious of the assault reaching as far south as the Fifth Army's sector. On March 2nd, he announced to his Army commanders:

> ... the necessity for being ready as soon as possible to meet a big offensive of prolonged duration. I also told the Army Commanders that I was very pleased at all I had seen on the fronts of the three Armies which I had recently visited. Plans were sound and thorough and much work had already been done. I was only afraid that the enemy would find our front so very strong that he will hesitate to commit his Army to the attack with the almost certainty of losing very heavily.[9]

The German offensive began at 4:40 P. M. on the 21st of March, the exact date predicted by General Gough, the Fifth Army commander. The violent bombardment caught about one-third of the defending troops in the forward defensive zone and inflicted heavy casualties. The infantry assault began five hours later and was aided by a thick, low-lying fog which hampered the observation of the mutually supporting redoubts. The German fire support was not seriously affected by the fog since it was registered on the fixed defensive positions and they could fire their missions from map coordinates. By nightfall, the Germans had penetrated the forward zone and in several places had succeeded in

piercing the battle zone as well. The rear zone--the final protection, far removed to the rear--existed only in theory and was little more than a series of chalk lines on the ground. The next day, again aided by poor visibility, the attack succeeded in reaching open country north and west of St. Quentin. At 1:00 P. M. on March 22nd, Gough ordered a retirement behind the Somme River and by the next day the enemy were advancing north of Peronne and threatened to separate the British Third and Fifth Armies.

Haig continued to believe that the offensive in the south was a diversion (which it was supposed to be) and was slow to send reserves to relieve the Fifth Army. On the enemy side, the rapid success of the German forces convinced Ludendorff that the entire British defensive system had collapsed; that he could now safely move upon the vital rail junction at Amiens. Thus, Ludendorff made the fatal error of following the tactically opportune course of pressing the second Somme Battle rather than initiating the main offensive further north after the British had shifted their reserves. The greatest danger of the British position, however, lay in the reaction of the French Army and its commander.

At 4:00 P. M. on the 23rd, General Pétain arrived at GHQ to discuss the implementation of the joint defensive plans previously arranged. He stated that two armies, under General Fayolle, "would operate in the Somme and keep [the British and French] Armies in touch with one another." To Haig, Pétain appeared most anxious to do all he could to support his British allies and at this date still agreed in principle to holding the line together. However, when asked by Haig "to concentrate a large force (20 divisions) about Amiens, P.[etain] said he was most anxious to do all he could to support... but he expected that the enemy was about to attack him in Champagne." Haig realized that if contact between the two armies

were lost "the British [would] be rounded up and driven into the sea! This must be prevented even at the cost of drawing back the North flank on the sea coast."[10]

The next day, after attempting to remedy the precipitate withdrawal of Gough's Army, Haig returned to his chateau headquarters at Dury at 11:00 P. M. There he found General Pétain "most anxious, unbalanced and much upset." Haig calmly explained his intention of concentrating the Third Army to attack southward if the Germans threatened Amiens; he asked "[Pétain] to concentrate as large a force as possible about Amiens astride the Somme to cooperate on the [British] right."

Still worried about the threatened Champagne front, Pétain hedged his expected losses. He replied that Fayolle's force was concentrating about Mondidier but that in the event the Germans advanced any further the order had been given "to fall back South Westwards towards Beauvais in order to cover Paris." Haig immediately grasped what this irresolute order meant; the separation of the French and British Armies and the penetration of the German armies to the coast. His first question to his ally was "do you intend to abandon my right flank?" Petain weakly nodded assent and Haig presumed that this was the result of political treachery and the order of the French Government to "cover Paris at all costs." Haig's instructions from Lord Kitchener and his personal conviction were "our armies' existence in France depends on keeping the French and British Armies united." He therefore hurried to report the serious change in the French strategy to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Secretary of State for War. He further requested that these two authorities come to France immediately in an attempt to stem this false move.[11]

In Haig's diary entry on the 25th, he reiterated his horror at the implications in Petain's announcement of the previous evening. Yet he states that "Lawrence [Haig's Chief of Staff] at once left me to telegraph to Wilson (C. I. G. S., London) requesting him and Lord Milner to come to France at once."[12]

In further expanding his thoughts on this matter, Haig instructed his government:

> ... that General Foch or some other determined General who would fight, should be given supreme control of the operations in France.[13]

Reflecting on his experience and responsibilities, Haig "knew Foch's strategical ideas were in conformity with the orders given [to him] by Lord Kitchener when [he] became C. in C., and that he was a man of great courage and decision as shown during the fighting in October and November 1914."

When General Henry Wilson arrived at 11:00 A. M., Haig gave him a review of the situation and stressed the need for gaining French support "at once with 20 divisions of good quality, North of the Somme." Haig now hoped to gain time until the French could be brought into action. The Third British Army was now holding the shoulders of the German breakthrough but Haig was correct in stating that the British "were now confronting the weight of the German Army single handed."[14]

On the 26th, after a confused attempt by all of the principals to meet on the previous day, the representatives of the British and French military and political hierarchies met in the town hall at Doullens. After separate meetings with three of his army commanders and with Lord Milner to coordinate the British opinion on the crisis, Field-Marshal Haig met with President Poincaré, Premier Clemenceau, Lord Milner, and Generals

Foch, Pétain, and Wilson. This assemblage, called in the heat of the greatest crisis for the Western Allies in the War, was to make the momentous decision to unify the command of the Franco-British forces--up to that moment an unattainable goal.

Field-Marshal Haig opened the conference by emphasizing the critical requirement for the French to hurry large reinforcements to the beleagured British Fifth Army. General Petain rather piously claimed that the British Fifth Army no longer existed as a fighting force and that nine French divisions were now engaged south of the German penetration. Haig insisted and the conference unanimously agreed that "AMIENS must be covered at all costs."[15]

During the discussion on how best to relieve General Gough's weary troops in front of Amiens, Haig stated that the British would hold from Arras to the Somme at all costs. Petain remained equivocal. Lord Milner then interjected the obvious fact that fresh troops had to be put in at once. The French Commander-in-Chief adamantly claimed that he was moving as quickly as possible with a relief force to aid the British but could not endanger his own positions. At this point, General Foch, the Chief of Staff of the French Army and his government's principal military advisor, emphasized the necessity of instant action and of impressing on all troops the necessity of holding all ground regardless of the costs. General Wilson agreed with this stand. Perhaps Foch could now gloat over his prediction of the need for an Inter-Allied General Reserve to meet just such a situation, but now was the time for resolute action and not spiteful recrimination.

Lord Milner and Field-Marshal Haig then adjourned to a private discussion and after this the British delegation agreed to allow the French

to appoint a military coordinator in the threatened area. M. Clemenceau then drew up a resolution proposing "that General Foch be appointed to coordinate the operations of the Allied Armies about AMIENS to cover that place."[16]

After this proposal was read, Douglas Haig pointed out the difficulty of anyone performing this mission at the juncture of the French and British lines without the authority to draw forces from throughout the theater. He therefore proposed that the statement be modified so that General Foch's authority would be extended to coordinate all Allied operations on the Western Front. With this self-effacing and realistic proposal, Haig accepted Foch as his superior and unified the Allied command structure. The grateful political leaders quickly accepted the Field-Marshal's recommendation and the meeting unanimously voted its adoption.

General Foch, upon assuming his new powers, immediately set the tone of defiance and moral certitude which would mark his regime. His first instructions, on March 26th, in untechnical language merely ordered the troops in the area of battle to insure that all positions were held at all costs. He also emphasized that the British and French forces, remaining in close touch, must cover Amiens.[17]

The disorganization and apparently heavy losses of the British Fifth Army caused many persons behind the lines to fear that a break-through had occurred in the friendly line. In fact, the line was still generally intact. The remnants of the British III Corps and two Cavalry divisions which had been on Gough's far right, now joined with the French Third Army in continuing the southern end of the German pocket. For the sake of unity of command on the local level, Haig transferred the

remaining elements of the Fifth Army, south of the Somme River, to the command of General Fayolle in the Group of Armies of Reserve.

The British troops, untrained in the techniques of open warfare, greatly reduced in number, and weary after six days and nights of constant action, still managed to retire effectively. In addition to the twelve French Infantry and five Cavalry divisions now actively engaged, Foch's change of orders had five more Infantry divisions enroute to the battlefield. Most of these reinforcements were used to strengthen the French line however, and not to relieve the fatigued British units.

In many instances, the French units arriving in the field did so without adequate services of support. Some units came into action carrying only the individual issue of fifty rounds of small arms ammunition; with no artillery, transport, or even provisions for messing. These units quickly folded and joined the flood of civilians to the rear.[18]

With the shocking battle news returning from the front, the British War Cabinet met in a series of meetings from the 23rd to the 30th of March. The enemy had forced the issue; reinforcements had to be sent to Haig's command or the war would be lost. Miraculously the Cabinet, which had been unable to even make the normal replacements a short time earlier, now determined that there were trained troops available.[19] Twenty-seven thousand drafts were immediately available along with 50,000 trained boys between the ages of 18 1/2 and 19 years; previously trained soldiers working in agriculture and the munitions industries of 45,000 and 16,000 respectively were found; and 88,000 troops on leave were returned to the front. Plans were also discussed to send Marines, raise the age limit for conscription to 45 years and even to extend conscription to Ireland. Lloyd George further agreed to recall two Infantry divisions and five

brigades of field artillery from Italy, two divisions from General Allenby's forces in Palestine and twelve battalions from Salonika. As previously mentioned, only "scraps" had reached the British Armies in France prior to the March 21st attack but after realizing the gravity of the situation facing the Allies the War Cabinet sent more than 540,000 replacements.[20]

It must be remembered that Douglas Haig had not sought unity of command as an abstract principle. At the Doullens Conference he had moved for Foch's appointment on the pragmatic grounds of stopping Pétain's defeatism and revitalizing the Allied military effort. The ancillary motive of gaining active French support to save his weary Fifth Army from defeat was another consideration. However, once the unpalatable decision had been made, he stuck to his commitment. An apocryphal story pictures Sir Douglas as accepting the new command structure with the comment "I can work with a man but not a committee."[21] Three days after Foch's appointment, the two military leaders met at Abbeville and Haig noted in his diary:

> He [Foch] tells me that he is doing all he can to expedite the arrival of French Divisions, and until they come we can only do our best to hold on to our present positions. It is most important to prevent the enemy from placing guns near enough to shell the great railway depot and troop sidings near Amiens (Longeau) on the east of the town. By April 2nd I gather that the French should have sufficient troops concentrated to admit of them starting an offensive. But will they?
>
> I think Foch has brought great energy to bear on the present situation, and has, instead of permitting French troops to retire S.W. from Amiens, insisted on some of them relieving our tired troops and on covering Amiens at all costs. He and I are quite in agreement as to the general plan of operations.[22]

The next day, M. Clemenceau shared Haig's usual luncheon out of his picnic basket at Dury. Clemenceau expressed his confidence that Haig would loyally support and cooperate with Foch. "It was Pétain and Foch

who he feared would squabble." Commenting on his recent performance in the face of danger, he stated "Pétain is a very nervous man and sometimes may not carry out all he has promised." Haig reiterated his excellent relations with the French C.-in-C. in the past but "in the present operations he has been slow to decide and slower still in acting. At times his nerve seems to have gone and he imagines that he is to be attacked in force. Hence the troubled position of affairs about Amiens."[23]

On April 3rd, another Franco-British conference was held in the Beauvais townhall. General Foch, after considering his position, had appealed to Premier Clemenceau for a more definite and logical sphere of authority. The French proposed that coordination of the Allied efforts previously entrusted to Foch be expanded to "authority over all strategical direction of military operations on the Western Front." The British, represented by Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Haig and General Wilson, readily agreed to the modification which would grant Foch the power to plan for future operations rather than reacting to existing situations. A safety clause, reminiscent of the War Office's instructions to Haig, was included in the Beauvais Agreement. It provided that:

> The C.-in-C. of the British, French and American Armies will have full control of the tactical action of their respective Armies. Each C.-in-C. will have the right of appeal to his Government if, in his opinion, his Army is endangered by reason of any order from General Foch.24

In his diary that evening, Haig expressed his complete support of the course taken. Furthermore, he felt that this in no real sense altered his cooperative efforts with the French:

> I was in full agreement [with the Beauvais Accord] and explained that this new arrangement did not in any way alter my attitude towards Foch, or C.-in-C. French Army. I had always in accordance with Lord Kitchener's orders to me regarded the latter as being responsible for indicating <u>the general strategical</u> policy, and as

far as possible, I tried to fall in with his strategical plan of operations.25

Despite this air of equanimity, Haig continued this diary entry with some bitter comments on the support he was receiving from others:

... Foch and Pétain both stated their determination to start attacking 'as soon as possible.' But will they ever attack? I doubt whether the French Army, as a whole, is now fit for an offensive.

General Bliss and Pershing were also at the Conference. 120,000 American Infantry are to arrive monthly for four months--480,000. I hope the Yankees will not disappoint us in this. They have seldom done anything yet which they have promised.

The P. M. [David Lloyd George] looked as if he had been thoroughly frightened, and he seemed still in a funk... He talks and argues so! And he appears to me to be a thorough imposter... He is looking out for a scapegoat for the retreat of the Fifth Army. I pointed out that 'fewer men, extended front and increased hostile forces,' were the main causes to which the retreat may be attributed... L. G. seems a 'cur' and when I am with him I cannot resist a feeling of distrust of him and his intentions.26

On the field of battle the power of the defensive reasserted itself over the tremendous German drive to split the Allied line. The difficult nature of the terrain on the Somme battlefield, combined with increasing German losses, slowed and gradually halted the offensive only ten miles short of Amiens. The British Third Army firmly repulsed a German attempt to turn its flank between Amiens and Arras. The Germans apparently lacked the final drive to exploit their successes in the Fifth Army area and the French, after the 28th, began arriving in adequate numbers and with proper support in the south.27

On the 28th, Ludendorff ordered the execution of supporting attacks north and south of Arras. The British were well-prepared in this sector and turned the Germans back with heavy losses. The Hutier tactics had now used up many of the elite German storm troops and the remaining infantrymen reverted to the linear attack formation of former days. Six

ranks deep and shoulder to shoulder to shoulder, the attackers were now being cut down by accurate machine gun and artillery fire.

Fighting continued until April 5th when Ludendorff realized that he must end the battle or settle into a battle of attrition. The Germans could spare neither the time nor the resources for such wasteful operations. The offensives, which were code named St. Michael 1, 2, and 3, had succeeded in capturing 70,000 prisoners, 1,100 guns and immense quantities of stores. The British Army had faltered and fallen back but it had not been decisively defeated. Strategic victory had eluded Ludendorff. The German Army would fight again with bravery and determination in four more attempts to end the war but would never display the same confidence or power displayed during the opening offensive.[28]

Foch in Command

Through an exchange of letters and telegraph messages, General Foch's formal title was agreed upon on April 14th. Known as the General in Chief of the Allied Armies in France, his actual powers were somewhat more limited than his title implied. His position was never analagous to that of General Dwight D. Eisenhower in the second war. He did not control a large inter-allied staff nor did he exercise a pervasive effect upon the subordinate units under his command. The complex and, in some respects efficient machinery of the Board of Permanent Military Representatives at Versailles could have formed the nucleus of such an organization, but this was not done. The Military Representatives and their organizations were allowed to founder and produced little of value for the rest of the war.[29]

Against the entire trend of modern warfare toward complexity and more rigid control, Foch reverted to a personal and political approach to command. His small personal staff of about twenty officers relied on information supplied from the British and French General Staffs and the field armies.[30]

Because the Great War was brought to a successful conclusion on the Western Front only eight months after the elevation of Foch to the Supreme Command, many have confused this decision as being the turning point of the war and the chief reason for victory. In fact, the man and the system which he adopted possessed no particular ingredient which brought about victory. The strategic abilities of Haig and Petain reasserted themselves in the coming months and provided the effectiveness to defeat the enemy. The moral ascendency provided by Foch to the Allied cause cannot be ignored but this gift was unadorned by an adequate military insight.

The General was the same Foch who, as Commandant of the War College, had inspired the "Young Turks" with the importance of morale and the offensive in battle; the same Foch who was disgraced after the tremendous losses his armies suffered during the Somme Battles of 1916. Foch in March, 1918 was a vibrant leader, dedicated to the offensive and the expulsion of the "Boche" from the soil of "la patrie". He was however, imprecise in judgement and planned on a grand plane. He issued enigmatic orders with all the spirit of a Napoleon, but seemed to ignore the increased complexity of operations and the need for detailed staff work and coordination of arms. Yet he was courageous and steadfast--it was for these qualities that he had been given his appointment.

Sir James Edmonds, the official historian of the British Army in the Great War, in commenting on the problems which Foch's method of command created in the Franco-British military structure notes:

> Certain new difficulties at once arose when Foch took charge, as he was not accustomed to command British troops; nor were British generals accustomed to receive the kind of directives and orders which he issued. There should have been British staff officers on his staff to 'interpret' him... French generals... felt themselves entitled by custom to use discretion in executing orders given by superior officers not in close touch with local conditions... A close study of the methods of possible Allies is in the highest degree necessary for intelligent and smooth co-operation.31

Foch chose to plan by inspiration and issue directives far removed from the grim realities of the trenches. This method soon irritated Haig as well as his subordinates. He even went so far as to recommend that Foch replace Pétain as French Commander-in-Chief in addition to his new duties just so that he would be served by a proper staff and a complement of liaison personnel.[32] This proposal, of course, would have resulted in exactly the same command structure forced upon Haig by Lloyd George and General Nivelle in 1917.

The German Tide Breaks and Ebbs

The northern German attack, the Battle of Lys, opened on the morning of April 9th. Once again initial successes spurred Ludendorff's optimism. Fortunately for the attacking forces, their selected point of attack was manned along five miles by unreliable Portugese troops, which were in the process of being relieved of their front line duties. One Portugese division broke ranks and fled to the rear, carrying their artillery with them. Within three hours of the initial assault, the Germans had breached the last defensive system and reached open country. This gap was closed only with great difficulty by British reserve units.

North of the Lys river, the Germans retook the Messines Ridge and by April 12th had moved dangerously close to another key railroad center, Hazebrouck. The Germans were held up only by the superhuman efforts of reserve units and by local commanders organizing administrative and rear-echelon personnel into defensive teams. These setbacks were not quickly remedied by the new Generalissimo, as Haig had expected. During the second German offensive, his old fear of French flaccidity was reinforced. In this battle, Foch was slow to transfer troops north and when they did arrive they took little active part in the fight.

On April 11th, Haig again pointed out the critical situation in his northern sector and appealed for assistance. Foch replied that the British had to stand fast and to expect no further French reinforcement. Foch was faced with the problem of continuing to refit and retrain the French Armies, but he was, at this early date, planning a grand counter-stroke which would win the war.

That night, Haig penned his historic and characteristic message to his soldiers:

> Many amongst us are now tired. To those I would say that Victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest... There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man; there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each man must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the Freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.33

Haig continued to press Foch to support the British northern sector with French reinforcements without success. On April 14th, the Field-Marshal felt compelled to "place on record [his] opinion that the arrangements made [by Foch were] insufficient to meet the present situation."[34] The Generalissimo, perhaps recalling the tenacity of

the British soldier in the first two battles of Ypres, ignored these requests. His actions for the remainder of the war would be based upon two unshakeable tenets:

1) No large unit should be relieved while engaged or a battle is in progress.

2) The only chance for either tactical or strategical victory lay in counter-attacks.

While these rules were the epitome of military determination and bravery, their inflexible application brought great suffering to the weary tommy and poilu in the trenches.[35]

On the day following Haig's protest, Foch grandly announced: "La bataille de Hazebrouck est finie." Certainly the troops then engaged in stemming the German onslaught would have been utterly amazed at such a pronouncement. In fact, the battle was not yet over and the proof of this was the loss of Kemmel Hill by one of the few French units in the northern line ten days after Foch made his statement. But, in the final analysis, Foch was correct. Despite his poor grasp of the situation in the north and his inflexible policies, the British did slow and finally stop the Germans on April 30th. Ludendorff had attracted more than half of the Allied reserves to the British front and now decided to shift his offensive resources southward to General Petain's Champagne sector. The Germans now had a dangerous salient to defend in Flanders and would require a month to mount the attack upon the French line.

German headquarters prepared for their assault upon the Chemin des Dames Ridge with a practiced and meticulous attitude. The artillery coordinator, Colonel Bruchmuller, who had developed the system of violent preparation from the Riga operations, now performed his duties flawlessly.[36]

The German commanders and General Staff sections, after the experience of the past weeks performed smoothly and skillfully for Operation Blucher. Their preparations were too good as it turned out; this southern thrust was to be just another diversion.

The military and technical competence displayed by Ludendorff's staff and that of the Crown Prince assured complete surprise on the French front. On May 27th, despite sharp warnings from the American Expeditionary Force's intelligence section, the French were caught completely by surprise. Again luck was initially with the First Quartermaster General. As in his first two offensives, his assault struck a particularly vulnerable point. After Petain's fears of a Champagne offensive had proved false, he had allowed his command to assume that the enemy would not assault the strong Chemin des Dames positions. The French defenses were thus weakly held and General Duchesne, violating instructions and the lessons of defense recently learned by all other commanders, continued to man his front heavily. Another cruel twist lay in the fact that four weak British divisions were in the line after being rotated by Foch to the "quiet" Champagne sector for recuperation.

The cumulative result of Gallic incompetence and Teutonic persistence was foreordained. On the first day of the assault, the storm of Bruchmuller's 3,719 guns began promptly at 1:00 A. M. All front line units virtually disappeared in a holocaust equalled only by the British mine and artillery preparation on the Messines-Wytschaete Ridge in the previous year. At 3:40 A. M., the German Storm Troops quickly moved forward across the Aisne River. By evening, the German spearhead had advanced twelve miles, a feat undreamed of on the Western

Front for the last three years. Two days later, the attackers had secured Soissons and reached the Marne River on the 31st.

Ludendorff was as surprised as the bewildered French at the phenomenal success of the German diversionary operation. Not learning from the ultimate frustration of their past opportunism, the German commanders pressed the attack home and followed tactical success. Blucher now became the main offensive effort rather than a diversion.

Yet, with the glorious successes achieved by German arms there were unmistakable omens of the resurgence of the defensive; all the advances had been triangular, with a steep apex. General Petain, the practical and methodical defender, was directing effective holding actions on the flanks of the attack. Another dangerous salient was forming. The lengthening supply lines, served by only one main railroad, began to impede progress. Gradually, Allied reserves arrived on the scene to hold the shoulders of the attack. On June 9th, Ludendorff attempted his final offensive thrust, but was successfully repulsed by a counter-attack mounted by General Mangin. In this action, the American Expeditionary Force participated for the first time in active combat operations during the Battle of Belleau Wood. This debut provided further proof that the balance had finally shifted against the Central Powers.

While this great battle was raging in the south, Haig had three definite factors to consider in his planning. First, the principal German reserve, under Crown Prince Rupprecht--thirty-nine divisions of fresh troops on May 29th, thirty-two on June 3rd--was a potent force opposing him despite its declining numbers. Secondly, he had to prepare to assist the French in the south upon Foch's order. Finally, the British commander had to prepare for the decisive counterstrokes against the Germans to be launched once they had failed.

Foch, apparently more concerned with the German thrust towards Paris than he had been over the imminent destruction of the British Army in Flanders, anxiously set up plans for shifting reserves to stem the latest offensive. At the meeting of the Supreme Allied War Council on the 1st of June, the French Government asked Lloyd George to transfer all American troops serving in the British sector to support Pétain. The intention was for the untrained Americans to relieve French units in quiet sectors. Haig opposed this proposal:

> I said that it would be very wrong to employ these new troops in the way proposed by the French, because, being on so wide a front, the companies would never get a chance of getting together and training. I hoped to quicken up the training of the Americans, and to render four Divisions fit for the line by the middle of June.[37]

On the 4th of June, Foch increased his demands upon the British. He now asked for three British divisions to support the Somme area before Amiens immediately and for plans to be drawn for the shipping of all British reserves south on call. Haig's reaction was to comply with the order but to also make a "formal protest against any troops leaving [his] command until the bulk of the Reserves of Prince Rupprecht's Armies had become involved in the Battle." He forwarded a copy of this protest to the War Office in London.[38] These actions were strictly in accordance with the Beauvais Agreement and fortunately this was the last public disagreement between Foch and Haig.

Lord Milner, now officially the Secretary of State for War, traveled to Paris in response to Haig's protest. At the French War Ministry, an inter-allied meeting was held to resolve this issue of Foch's preparations to strip the British Armies of all their reserve units. Milner expressed the British Government's concern with the strategical plans

and complete support for Haig's position. The British Field-Marshal then explained his compliance with Foch's orders and general agreement with the necessity of preparing plans for all eventualities. However, he resented Foch's arbitrary acts of withdrawing units and artillery support from the British sector without reference to British GHQ or in some cases to the Army headquarters concerned.[39]

Milner and Clemenceau fully agreed with Haig's position on this matter and instructed Foch to use the chain of command more effectively. This was yet another result of the inadequate staff and liaison procedures used by Foch.

The Generalissimo then insisted upon the right, in principle, to order troops of any nationality wherever he thought fit and at the shortest notice. This power was recognised so long as adequate liaison between the Supreme Command and British headquarters was maintained. This power, the logical result of the Doullens and Beauvais Agreements, was finally realized by the British Government and its rather naive view of the problems involved in placing its soldiers under a foreign commander was dispelled. Haig accordingly requested a modification of his orders from the War Office.

Lord Milner issued Haig's new instructions on the 21st of June.[40] The letter reaffirmed all but one paragraph of the original instructions given by Field-Marshal Kitchener in 1915.[41] In place of the assurance that Haig's command was an independent one and that [he was] in no case [to] come under the orders of any Allied General" a new command formula was given.

> In pursuit of those objectives [defeat of the Germans] you will carry out loyally any instructions issued to you by the Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces. At the same time, if

> any order given by him appears to you to imperil the British Army, it is agreed between the Allied Governments that you should be at liberty to appeal to the British Government before executing such order.[42]

In addition to this rather awkward military arrangement, the growing fear of the War Cabinet that the French were attempting to dominate the British forces administratively was included. This fear was similar to that of General John J. Pershing who guarded against a loss of national identity in an amalgamation of his troops into other armies.

> It is the desire of His Majesty's Government to keep the British Forces under your command as far as possible together. If at any time the Allied Commander-in-Chief finds it necessary to transfer any portion of the British troops for the purposes of roulement it should be distinctly understood that this is only a temporary arrangement and that as soon as practicable the troops thus detached should be reunited to the main body of the British Forces.

Again, this was a rather impossible requirement from the military standpoint. Either a military commander has the authority commensurate with his responsibility or his position is hopelessly compromised. On the one hand Lloyd George had given Foch supreme power while offering Douglas Haig the opportunity, at the first crisis to undercut this authority. This first crisis was not long in coming and quickly undid the sophistry of the politicians.

While awaiting the final spasms of the German last gamble offensives, Foch, on July 13th, ordered four British divisions and a Corps headquarters to move into the Champagne sector under General Pétain's command. Haig was in London on leave at the time this order was received and his Chief of Staff, Major-General Lawrence, only partially followed the instructions. British intelligence had discounted Foch's fears of another German offensive and Lawrence assumed the responsibility of tempering the order until the Field-Marshal returned. He dispatched one division east into Champagne with one other to follow in time.

When Haig returned on the 14th, he approved of Lawrence's decision but now found that Foch demanded an additional four divisions--a total of eight. Haig and Foch met the next day to discuss the situation but by this time the Germans had struck a final blow in Champagne, contrary to British intelligence estimates.

The British War Cabinet again intervened through the medium of General Henry Wilson.[43] Wilson called Haig prior to his conference with Foch and informed him of the Government's anxiety over shifting any British troops while Crown Prince Rupprecht's heavy reserve opposite the British line remained intact. He further hinted: "that if you consider the British Army is endangered or if you think that General Foch is not acting solely on military considerations they (the War Cabinet) rely on the exercise of your judgement, under the Beauvais agreement, as to the security of the British front..."[44]

Here was a perfect opening. If Haig wished now to destroy the Supreme Command, he need only appeal to his government a second time. He would have been supported and the temperamental Foch would have, in all likelihood, relinquished his authority entirely. But Haig was too responsible for such a shallow motive to influence his decision. He now realized the need for the eight British divisions behind the French line and assumed the responsibility for weakening his front for the common good of the Coalition.

That evening Haig, in the privacy of his study, noted the full irony of the situation in his diary.

> ... I was directed to obey all his [Foch's] orders at once and notify War Cabinet if I took exception to any of them. On the other hand, Milner's instructions to me dated 22nd June 1918 [sic], lay down 'You will carry out loyally any instructions issued to you by the C. in C. Allied Forces. At the same time, if

> any order given by him appears to you to imperil the British Army,xxx you should appeal to the British Government before executing such order.' This is a case of 'heads you win and tails I lose.' If things go well, the Government take credit to themselves and the Generalissimo; if badly, the Field-Marshal will be blamed.[45]

Fortunately, three days after this decision was taken, General Mangin struck the first in the series of Allied counter-strokes and doomed Ludendorff's planned second Lys offensive. But for this, Haig would indeed have been another military scapegoat added to Lloyd George's collection. Here, perhaps more clearly than at any other time in his career, Haig's moral supremacy is exposed and his right to credit for maintaining what little Allied unity there was in the Great War is clearly seen.[46]

Advance to Victory

The time for reducing the German bulges had finally come. Ludendorff postponed yet again his offensive in Flanders. As he received the news of the Franco-American counterattack on the western flank of the Marne salient in Rupprecht's headquarters, he ordered an end to immediate preparations and nervously returned south. His task was now to extricate his forces from the sack into which he had allowed them to become trapped. In this endeavor he was aided now by the fiery offensive spirit of Foch. The Generalissimo ordered assaults on all fronts of the bulge and continuous pressure on the retreating Germans. This philosophy directly contradicted Petain's instructions to withdraw slowly in the south and east while attacking across the chord of the salient from the west to entrap all forces inside. There is some doubt that Petain's planned maneuver would have been completely

successful due to the general lack of mobility of the infantry and the unreliability of the new tank weapon, but it appears that even a partial success would have been more rewarding at far less cost than Foch's unremitting frontal assaults.

But retreat under pressure--even when that pressure is improperly applied--is a most difficult maneuver at best. The total losses of the Germans in this Second Battle of the Marne were 100,000, including 35,000 prisoners and 650 guns. This was not a great loss compared to other bloody encounters of the war, but it did signal the beginning of the great allied push to victory. It was furthermore the first concrete victory for General Foch during an unbroken string of holding actions. Foch's "great military orchestra", as he was wont to describe the Allied armies on the Western Front, could now commence the offensive.

It is interesting to note that at this point in the war no military leader, let alone political spokesman, foresaw an end to the war in 1918 with the exception of Field-Marshal Haig. Despite his successes in retaking some lost ground, Foch looked forward to a series of isolated and limited attacks to secure the railway systems in 1918. Foch dared not expect victory until the summer of 1919.[47] Ludendorff felt that he could continue the war and planned to strike another offensive in Flanders. But perhaps the most glaring example of an unrealistic evaluation of the war situation in the waning summer months came from Lloyd George's personally selected military advisor, General Henry Wilson. In only one of a long series of military miscalculations, Wilson presented a thirty-one page paper to the War Cabinet on July 21st entitled "British Military Policy, 1918-1919."[48]

In this position statement, Wilson viewed the remainder of 1918 and much of 1919 as only a "period of preparation." He even asked the question: "... will it be possible to accomplish it [victory] in 1919 or must we wait until 1920?" He counselled the husbanding of resources until at least the 1st of July and the incorporation of "every mechanical auxillery" into the army. Although Wilson was the most ardent of Westerners at the outbreak of the war, his new master, Lloyd George, influenced him to reverse his field:

> (ii) During this period a British reserve of 3 or 4 divisions should be stationed in Italy.
> (iv) ... [improve] our position in Palestine by gaining possession of the Hejaz railway about Amman.
> (v) The most urgent task in the meantime is the establishment of British control of the Caspian and a secure Lines [sic] of Communication to it from Baghad.
> (vi) ... after the war it is imperative for the future security of Egypt and India that a wide no man's land should be maintained between our present railheads ... and those of the enemy.
> (vii) The re-constitution of Russia in some form as an armed and independent state, strong enough to withstand German infiltration and aggression is a vital British interest.

No polemic by a defender of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig could so thoroughly damn the ineptitude and lack of vision of the Imperial General Staff and the Government. Haig, in a letter appended to this document in 1927, claims to have largely ignored the entire paper at the time he was preparing for the Amiens Battle. He characterizes the statements made by Wilson as "priceless absurdities" and concludes: "thank God that the G. S. in London in 1918 had no influence over our military decision at G.H.Q. in France."[49]

To further emphasize the muddled reasoning of the British leaders at home and their lack of contact with the field command, another paper entitled "Munitions Policy, 1919 or 1920" dated September 5, 1918 by the Minister of Munitions, Winston S. Churchill, is of interest.[50]

In the introductory paragraph, Churchill lauds "the extremely important paper written by the Chief of Staff [Wilson]" which affirms that the German Armies in the West could be defeated in the summer of 1919. The author calls for a refusal of large commitments of artillery or equipment in order to "ease up the strain on our own population, civil industries, shipping, &c" in order to hold out until 1920. The man stigmatized for the great disaster at the Dardanelles, now called for "an increasing proportion of our war effort [to] be devoted to the East, to ensure the defence of India, ... to rebuild the Russian fighting front, and to [prosecute] our attacks upon the Turkish Empire." Churchill advised that the British "should be content to play a very subordinate role in France."

Criticizing this paper, Haig wrote cryptic notes in utter disbelief--"What rubbish" and "I saw the S of S for War ... in hopes of getting him to send all possible reinforcements to France so as to win this autumn or early next year! D.H."

Fortunately for the Allied nations, Douglas Haig now had a clear conception that victory was obtainable before the end of the year. As early as May 17th, he had visited General Henry Rawlinson's Fourth Army headquarters and instructed him "to begin studying, in conjunction with General Debeney, the question of an attack eastwards from Villers Bretonneux in combination with an attack from the French front S. of Roye. [Haig] gave him details of the scheme."[51] This was the genesis of the Battle of Amiens, the real turning point of the war.

On August 8th at 4:30 A. M., the first large-scale British attack began. Spearheaded by Australian and Canadian units, which had

not been weakened by organizational shifts or the defensive battles of the past months, Rawlinson's army advanced rapidly. Supported by a strong tank force and 2,000 guns, the assault completely surprised the Germans. At the end of the day, British units had advanced seven miles and had captured 15,000 prisoners and 350 guns. But the attack was not pressed after the second day. In the face of the enthusiasm of the subordinate commanders, the British high command was wary of accepting grievous losses against prepared and alerted defense systems.

To the promising, but not spectacular results of this first attack must be added the great moral depression which now engulfed the German high command. Ludendorff plummetted into despair and spoke of the "black day" of his army. The successful employment of integrated tank-infantry attacks by the British had equally depressed the field commanders and soldiers.

Haig, after a personal reconnaissance of his front on August 12th, was convinced that a continued assault on the heavily fortified and naturally strong enemy positions, even if successful, would be too costly. Accordingly, he prepared to initiate attacks with his armies to the north with the objective of outflanking the defenders and dislodging the general defensive line. Finally the lessons learned at fearful cost at Loos, the Somme and 3rd Ypres were being applied--Haig was to reinforce success but break off operations where the enemy was too strong. An acceptance of the law of diminishing returns was the keynote of Haig's conversion to a more sensible tactical and strategic method of attack. Unfortunately, Foch was not moved by this change of policy.

Haig now assumed an adamant position and would follow the orders of Foch in the conduct of operations only if he concurred with them. The main factor in the impetus of the Allied advance was now the British Armies and there was little Foch could do to discipline his theoretical subordinate. Foch insisted that the British success east of Amiens be continued and the method of frontal attack be pressed home. This Haig refused to do and in the end Foch was forced to give in; Haig had his way.

In a fit of temper, Foch then ordered General Mangin's Tenth French Army to attack north of Soissons on August 18th. This assault achieved little except more French casualties. However, on the 20th, Mangin drove his armies forward another two miles and captured 8,000 prisoners and 200 guns.

The August battles, in retrospect, appear as a perfectly planned and mutually supporting series of attacks. Each one was broken off almost as soon as its initial momentum was slowed by enemy defenses. New attacks profited by close proximity from those which preceded and it appears that a master plan for these strokes was in operation. In fact, though each action was instituted under Foch's ridiculous doctrine--"Tout le monde a la baitaille"-- steam-roller tactics all along the front. These same attacks were halted largely against Foch's desires--the French through logistical breakdowns, the British through the strong-willed insistence of their commander.

General Julian Byng's Third Army commenced its operations on August 21st, just north of Rawlinson's victory. Two hundred tanks provided the shock action for the assault. The lack of a heavy artillery preparation and thick fog assured the enemy's complete surprise. The infantry advanced rapidly until it reached the main

defensive line and halted awaiting the displacement forward of its artillery. The Germans attempted an aggressive counter-attack and were roundly repulsed.

The Fourth Army pushed its lines forward on the 22nd and formed a continuous front with the Third Army. On the next day, a combined attack by both armies pushed the Germans back another three miles and Ludendorff viewed this as another "black day" for his army. German units were disappearing in combat with no hope of replacement. The Allies were now outflanking all positions rather than battering their men against skillfully prepared German defensive works. The British, following the lead of their commander, were converts to a new creed of efficient advances and practiced it with fervor. Significantly, a large number of German soldiers, outflanked by the new tactics, now preferred to surrender rather than fight on to the end.

On the 26th, the British line advanced to the Siegfried Position. This fortified barrier was more than fifty miles long and joined into other defensive works on either end. It now appeared that a frontal assault against this strong position was inevitable. Haig realized that the enemy must be kept unbalanced and that he must violate his newly found instinct to preserve his forces to do this.

As Sir Douglas contemplated the Hindenburg Line--7,000 to 10,000 yards in depth, and fitted with every defensive device that German ingenuity could provide--a new annoyance entered his life from London. A personal telegram from General Wilson was brought to Haig's headquarters by his operations officer. Once again, the War

Cabinet and the Imperial Staff were hedging their bets and disclaimed any responsibility for possible disaster:

> Just a word of caution in regard to incurring heavy losses in attacks on Hindenburg Line as opposed to losses when driving the enemy back to that line. I do not mean to say that you have incurred such losses, but I know the War Cabinet would become anxious if we received heavy punishment in attacking the Hindenburg Line, without success.
>
> Signed
> Wilson [52]

Surely no military leader could be placed in a more difficult position by his government. If the British continued their advance and incurred heavy losses the Field-Marshal would be relieved; if he carried out the necessary attacks he could remain only if the cost was light. But if he acted indecisively and refrained from action, he could still keep his command although he would not be fulfilling his mission or his great responsibility to the millions of men who served under him. Haig again acted resolutely and assumed the correct military attitude regardless of the personal consequences. Realizing that he "could hope for no mercy" he rebuked Wilson and the "frock coats":

> My dear Henry,
> With reference to your wire re casualties in attacking the Hindenburg Line--what a wretched lot! and how well they mean to support me! What confidence! Please call their attention to my action two weeks ago when the French pressed me to attack the strong line of defence east of Roye-Chaules front. I wrote you at the time and instead of attacking south of the Somme I started Byng's attack. I assure you I watch the drafts most carefully.53

The assaults were ordered and they were bloody. On the evening of August 30th, the 2nd Australian Division began its advance across the Somme River in the direction of Peronne and the hills of Mont St. Quentin. The German defenders--five divisions--had orders that they were to hold at all costs. The attack commenced on the morning of the 31st

and by 7:00 A. M., owing to complete surprise, the attackers secured the village of Mont St. Quentin. The Germans counterattacked furiously and killed the majority of the leading Australian troops. The survivors were pushed down the hill into an enemy trench network on the river bank. The vicious fighting continued for the rest of the day but determination and bravery alone still proved insufficient in a frontal attack upon prepared positions.

While the Germans were focusing their attention upon Mount St. Quentin, other Australians easily secured Peronne during the night. This movement distracted the German commander and, being uncertain as to which position to hold, he weakened the defensive force at Mont St. Quentin. The result was that the Australian's next attack up the hill succeeded in dislodging the enemy. This time German counterattacks failed.

The next morning, south of Peronne, another brigade of the Australian Corps crossed the Somme and advanced westward. This move outflanked the German defensive system in the area and the entire line was forced to withdraw. The Dominion troops had acquitted themselves with an unselfishness and dash reminiscent of the battles of 1915.

While these actions were in progress, General Byng's Third Army advanced in the north beyond Bapaume and outflanked the enemy in the north as well.

On the 2nd of September, the Canadian Corps, under General Henry Horne's First Army, broke through the German's Wotan Position (known by the British as the Drocourt-Queant switch line). These actions precipitated the German High Command's order to retire from the entire Marne salient.

General Pershing, following the fixed objective of forming a cohesive American sector, had withdrawn five of his divisions operating under Haig's direction on the 12th of August. This move, taken just before Haig's great offensive began, upset him and caused some recrimination. That evening Haig mused: "What will History say regarding this action of the Americans leaving the British zone when the decisive battle of the war is at its height, and the decision is still in doubt."[54] Although disappointed, the Field-Marshal was nevertheless cooperative with the American commander and Pershing respected his straightforwardness.[55]

Pershing formed the American Expeditionary Force around the St. Mihiel salient, east of Verdun. The reduction of the salient was a correct military objective but following this, Pershing intended to continue the attack toward Metz into the virtually impregnable defensive system built by the Germans in the past three years. Such a continuation of the American attack, aside from being costly, would have diverged from the principal Allied offensives to the north. Haig, therefore, wrote to Foch suggesting that the Americans be halted after the St. Mihiel salient was reduced and their forces shifted into a concentric attack from the south toward Cambrai.[56] Haig realized that Pershing might object to a directed objective and suggested that Foch choose Mezieres, north of the Argonne Forest, for the American assault. Haig further suggested that final victory in 1918 would be possible if this strategic direction were adopted. Foch enthusiastically accepted Haig's proposal. Later, he was surprised to find that even the cooly logical General Petain accepted this proposal.[57] On August 30th, Foch visited Pershing's headquarters and skillfully substituted Mezieres

for Metz as the ultimate strategic direction for the AEF. Although Pershing later chose to fight east of the Argonne Forest, Haig's strategic appreciation shaped the final vast offensive ordered by Marshal Foch.[58]

The Grand Assault was planned to commence on September 26th with the Americans and the French Fourth Army attacking north towards Mezieres. One day later, the British First, Third, and Fourth Armies were to proceed southward into the Hindenburg Line. General Plumer's Second Army, with Belgian and French support, was to again break out of the Ypres salient and drive along the Belgian coast on the 28th. The next day, Rawlinson's Fourth Army and the French First Army under Debeney, would reduce the German defensive line frontally. These bold plans would have been foolhardy a few months earlier, but the German military forces were now suffering extreme physical hardship and their morale was ebbing quickly. The British naval blockade's inexorable pressure upon Germany's economy was finally having a telling effect upon civilian and military determination to fight on. The recent failure of the Friedensturm and the growing Allied superiority served to remind the German soldier that defeat was certain and prolonging its coming would make it only more terrible.

Foch's final offensive was not wholly successful, but was the catalyst that finally ended the war with military victory. After an initial advance, the French and Americans in the south were bogged down with logistical problems and by extremely heavy losses caused by overcrowding of troops in restrictive terrain. The Belgian and British in the north advanced eight miles only to be stopped again by Flanders

mud. But on the 29th, the British were successful in smashing through the southern section of the Hindenburg Line and finally reached open country behind the rearmost German defensive zone. Although the British were too weak to exploit their victory, the shattering of the Hindenburg Line caused Ludendorff to lose his nerve. He insisted that the Imperial Government of Germany request an immediate armistice.

The events on the battlefield now became secondary to political and diplomatic maneuvering for an end to the fighting. A new German Government was installed on October 3rd under Prince Max of Baden. The new political leaders requested an armistice in line with President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points. After an extended exchange of diplomatic notes, the Chancellor of Germany reorganized the German constitutional form of government to provide full control to the elected Reichstag. Ludendorff was removed as the effective head of the military forces; he was replaced by General Groener.[59] As Imperial Germany failed and began to collapse, her partners in the Central Powers lost heart and submitted to the eventual victory of the Entente Powers.

As peace through victory became an increasingly certain goal, the British Government chose to ignore their leading military commander. Sir Douglas Haig had proved unerringly correct in the final year of the war. His warnings as well as his optimistic predictions had been borne out. The great moral certitude which he provided to the Allied cause had pulled it through its darkest hours and impelled it on to certain victory on the battlefield. With peace in sight, David Lloyd George chose not only to disregard, but also to bypass Haig on military matters. It is apparent that the principal reason for this attitude was the Prime Minister's personal dislike for the stiff and inarticulate soldier.

Although Haig's optimism had proved unjustified in the past; he now tempered it with realism. Lloyd George did not speak with Haig about the military conditions for an armistice until October 19th. At this time, perhaps recalling his overzealousness in the past, the Field-Marshal counselled a moderate settlement which could be enforced.[60] He stated that Germany was not yet completely defeated and that her armies could delay effectively back into their own territory.

> A very large part of the German Army has been badly beaten, but the whole Field Army has not yet been broken up.... general disorganization... is not yet apparent.... The French Army seems greatly worn out.... [The] American Army is disorganized, ill-equipped and ill-trained... it must take at least a year before it becomes a serious fighting force.... The British Army has fought hard. It is a veteran force, very confident in itself but its infantry is already 50,000 under strength.... [It] is not sufficiently fresh or strong to force a decision by itself....
>
> A careful consideration of the military situation on the Western Front, and keeping British interests in view, forces me to the conclusion that an armistice with Germany should be concluded on the following basis:-
>
> 1. Complete and immediate evacuation of Belgium and occupied French territories. Alsace and Loraine must also be evacuated and Metz and Strasbourg handed forthwith to the Allies.
> 2. Rolling stock of French and Belgian railways or equivalent to be returned, inhabitants repatriated etc.

Haig was not vindictive and he saw no reason to expend further resources if Britain's war aims could be satisfied without this. Of course, the conditions which caused this assessment rapidly changed and a more severe and uncompromising armistice agreement became possible. Yet Haig, unlike so many of his comrades in arms, realized that the purpose of the war just concluded was to secure a lasting peace. On November 27th, he noted the repressive attitude of the French toward the beaten enemy:

> The French are anxious to be very strict, e.g., to forbid the German postal system to function.... This, of course, is

> out of the question. We must not forget that it is to our interest to return to Peace methods at once, to have Germany a prosperous, not an impoverished country. Furthermore, we ought not to make Germany our enemy for many years to come.61

The Supreme Allied War Council accepted the recommendations of Marshal Foch and General Pershing and imposed harsh armistice terms on the German nation. Such action was taken against Germany despite the fact that her armies were never completely defeated and the Allies were still on their own territory when the guns were silenced. The peace treaty which followed the halt in fighting was even more repressive and humiliating to the defeated powers.

Notes for CHAPTER V

[1] O.A.D. 777, March 11, 1918, The Diaries and Papers of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, National Library of Scotland, H. 124.

[2] For a detailed discussion of the British defensive preparations see Barrie Pitt, 1918, The Last Act (New York: Norton, 1963), 52-74. The British troops were improperly trained for conducting defensive operations, especially those conducted in a mobile situation. Haig was well aware of this training problem but his shortages of personnel precluded pulling men from the line for adequate retraining.

[3] O.A.D. 777, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

[4] Ibid.

[5] It was perhaps, unfortunate that General Hubert Gough was placed in command of the defensive battles. He was a cavalryman and was noted for his dash and aggressive spirit and not tenacity and concentration on details which are the qualities most needed by a defensive commander. For a discussion of the many problems confronting Gough see his The Fifth Army (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931), 221-59.

[6] Diary entries January 7, 9, and February 2, 1918, Robert Blake, ed., The Private Papers of Douglas Haig, 1914-1919 (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1952), 277-28 and 282.

[7] Diary entry, March 14, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

[8] See: Pitt, The Last Act, passim. for details of the German offensive preparations.

[9] Diary entry, March 2, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

[10] Diary entry, March 23, 1918, ibid., H. 124.

[11] "Proces-verbal of Conference at Dury" and diary entry, March 24, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

[12] Ibid.; In fact, Lord Milner was a minister without portfolio at the time and Lord Derby was the Secretary of State for War. Lord Milner succeeded Derby in May but may have been designated as such and was considered by Haig to be the de facto Secretary of State for War. John A. Fairlie, British War Administration (New York: Oxford University Press, 1919), 53.

[13] Diary entry, March 25, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

14 Ibid.

15 "Proces-verbal of Third Conference at Doullens, March 26, 1918," Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

16 At an earlier meeting, General Wilson broached the subject of command authority and recommended that Premier Clemenceau be directed to coordinate these defenses. This ludicrous suggestion was dismissed by Foch as only adding to the difficulties of the situation, since Clemenceau would seek professional advice from both Petain and himself. Since it was obvious that the two French military leaders disagreed on the methods to be used in counteracting the problem, Clemenceau could not effectively control or coordinate the defense.

17 James E. Edmonds, Official History of the War: Military Operations in France and Belgium, 1918 (London: Macmillan, 1927), II, 2-7. These orders were communicated verbally to General Petain at the Doullens Conference. Foch sent General Barthelemy to General Gough's headquarters.

18 Diary entry, March 27, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

19 In 1935, Colonel C. Allanson, the GSO I at the War Office in 1918, confirmed that 120,000 troops were withheld from the British forces in France. The reasons given for such a move such as concealment from enemy observation, saving foreign exchange and bolstering public morale are shallow when compared to the suffering this decision caused the troops defending the line. B. H. Liddell Hart, Memoirs, I, 365-69. Despite Gough's thorough assessment of the problems and Haig's numerous warnings, the Government did little to prepare. Only one division was returned from Italy and no substantial reinforcements were sent to the Western Front. The War Cabinet, especially Lloyd George, were responsible for the policy of keeping a large number of troops in subsidiary theaters of war at a critical time. Sir Llewellyn Woodward, Great Britain and the War of 1914-1918 (London: Methuen, 1967), 322.

20 Edmonds, BOH, 1918, II, 10-11. This was the total from March 21 through August 31, 1918. By the end of March, all material losses were replenished from stocks within the theater.

21 John Charteris, Field-Marshal Earl Haig (New York: Scribner, 1929), 345.

22 Diary entry, March 29, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124. For an example of the complete support which Haig accorded to the new Generalissimo see: O.A.D. 797, GHQ to Army commanders, ibid.

23 Diary entry, March 30, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 124.

24 "Proces-verbal of Conference at Beauvais, April 3, 1918," Diaries and Papers, H. 125.

25 Diary entry, April 3, 1918, ibid., H. 125.

26 Ibid.

27 The oft-repeated claim that the German soldiers' discovery of the plentiful supplies behind the British lines caused the advance to be slowed down appears to be false. Although there must have been a loss of credibility of German propaganda about the submarine campaign, there was no large-scale plundering and lack of discipline. These elements did affect the progress of the April offensive in Flanders, however. Llewllyn Woodward, Great Britain in the War (London: Methuen, 1967), 389 fn.

28 Although historical comparison is not within the scope of this paper, the author is obliged to note the strong parallels which exist between the March 21st offensive of 1918 and a later last ditch attempt by the Germans to secure victory during the Second World War. The Battle of the Bulge, conducted from December 16, 1944 to January, 1945, was Hitler's final counter-offensive and was designed to split the advancing allied forces along the boundary of the national component armies. This attempt also failed after initial success, marked the destruction of the remaining German offensive potential and the beginning of the ultimate Allied victory.

29 David Trask, The United States in the Supreme War Council (Middleton, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 65; Shumate, "The Allied Supreme War Council, 1917-1918," (doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 1952), 841-43 and 857-70. Frederick Maurice indicated that this situation occurred because it was not desired to make Foch too powerful. This was just another example of the half-measures adopted by the Allied political leaders in military direction.

30 For a detailed comparison of the methods of the two Allied Supreme Commanders see: T. M. Hunter, "Foch and Eisenhower: A Study in Allied Supreme Command," Army Quarterly 87 (1963), 33-52.

31 Edmonds, BOH, 1918, II, 486-87.

32 John Terraine, Ordeal of Victory (New York: Lippincott, 1963), 426-27.

33 "Special Order of the Day, April 11, 1918," Diaries and Papers, H. 125. The literary quality of this appeal may be open to question and certainly does not substantiate Brigadier General Charteris' claim that Haig was as facile with his pen as he was clumsy with the spoken word. However, this message was of inestimable importance to the morale of the British defenders. Although the French reinforcements promised were, in fact, not rushing to the aid of the British, the words did inspire the weary man in the trench to display gallant determination. An example of this inspiration at the lowest level are the special orders issued by an unknown subaltern in the 1st Australian Division:

"1) This position will be held, and the section will remain here until relieved.
2) The enemy cannot be allowed to interfere with this programme.
3) If the section cannot remain here alive it will remain here dead, but in any case it will remain here....
5) Should all guns be blown out, the section will use Mills grenades and other novelties."
Quoted in Edmonds, BOH, 1918, II, 249 fn.

34 O.A.D. 818, letter Douglas Haig to Ferdinand Foch, April 15, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 125.

35 Ferdinand Foch, The Memoirs of Marshal Foch, trans. T. Bently Mott, (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, Doran, 1931), 280-88 and 291.

36 Bruchmuller's technique was so successful that he was nicknamed Durchbruchmuller, literally "Through-break Muller". Pitt, Last Act, 138. A greater compliment to Col. Bruchmuller's ability was shown to him by the Allies who copied his techniques and made the unexpected, violent artillery preparation the standard for the remainder of the war.

37 Diary entry, June 1, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 128.

38 Diary entry, June 4, 1918, ibid.; See also telegram, Foch to Haig and O.A.D. 861, Haig to Foch, ibid.

39 "Proces-verbal of Meeting at Ministere de la Guerre, Paris, June 7, 1918," ibid., H. 128; Note, Lord Milner to Haig, ibid.; Diary entry, ibid.

40 Letter, Lord Milner to Douglas Haig, June 21, 1918, ibid., H. 128.

41 Cf. infra pp 13-14.

42 121/France/2357, Lord Milner to Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, British Armies in France [Douglas Haig], June 21, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 128.

43 Lloyd George, in his memoirs, denies any knowledge of this last minute meddling in military matters. Yet it seems, from Wilson's embarrassed apologies in his next communication, that he would never have forwarded such advice without firm instructions from the War Cabinet.

44 Diary entry, July 15, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 129.

45 Ibid.

[46] A further insight into the magnitude of Haig's action is that almost contemporaneously with his support of Foch, his opposite number General Pétain, was appealing to his government for relief from Foch's imperious orders. Clemenceau, who by this time was weary of Pétain's pessimism, rescinded Pétain's right of appeal under the Beauvais Agreement and placed him specifically under the orders of Foch.

[47] Foch, Memoirs, 375-79.

[48] 0.1/168/480, Secret paper, "British Military Policy, 1918-1919," Diaries and Papers, H. 130.

[49] Letter, Douglas Haig to "Archimedes" [B.G. James E. Edmonds], September 22, 1927, Diaries and Papers, H. 130.

[50] Winston S. Churchill, "Munitions Policy, 1919 or 1920," [Secret], Diaries and Papers, H. 131.

[51] Diary entry, May 17, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 127.

[52] Diary entry, August 29, 1918, Blake ed., Private Papers, 325. This portion of the diary entry is not included in the typed version of Diaries and Papers, H. 130. The telegram is not included in the attached papers either. This is the only observed instance in which Blake's edition contains more material than the National Library of Scotland's collection. However, this message is quoted verbatim in Duff Cooper, Haig, II, 360. Lloyd George denies that the War Cabinet was consulted on this matter. He also claims that the Cabinet would not have concurred in the general tone of caution. Lloyd George, Memoirs, VI, 376-77. The Prime Minister, in his self-serving reminiscences, attributes Wilson's action to a "streak of mischief--not to say malice--in his nature." LTC Maurice P. A. Hankey, the secretary of the War Cabinet, does not specifically mention the message but verifies that Lloyd George was highly critical of Douglas Haig's performance at this time and feared that he might accept heavy losses for little or no gain. The Prime Minister was seriously considering replacing Haig. Hankey, The Supreme Command (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), II, 829.

[53] Letter, Douglas Haig to Henry Wilson, September 1, 1918, quoted in Terraine, Ordeal of Victory, 463.

[54] Diary entry, August 25, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 130; see also diary entry August 27, 1918, ibid.

[55] Pershing told Haig: "At any rate I always know when I am dealing with you what your opinion is on the question at issue. This is not always the case with the French." Diary entry, August 12, 1918, Diaries and Papers, H. 130.

[56] Diary entry, August 27, 1918, ibid.

57 The planned concentric advance by the British and Americans would leave the main French force, in the center, only the mission of holding their front. Pétain was chary of expending any more French troops and this plan fit in well with his desires.

58 Foch was installed as a Marshal of France on August 14, 1918.

59 Groener was chosen primarily because of his expert knowledge of the internal railway network; he had been the Chief of Field Railways. In addition, he was the son of a noncommissioned officer and did not have the odium of being from the Prussian military caste. Woodward, Great Britain and the War, 419 fn.

60 "Memorandum by Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig In Regard to the Military Conditions of an Armistice," Diaries and Papers, H. 131.

61 Diary entry, November 27, 1918, ibid., H. 133.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The first total war presented the belligerents with unique problems of command and coordination. While coalition warfare had been a recurring phenomenon throughout recorded history, World War I differed radically from other major conflicts in the magnitude of the forces involved, the technological methods used to prosecute it and in the geographical impact of the military and naval operations. From another aspect--the total involvement of the civilian population of the belligerents and many neutral states--this war's consequences were felt universally.

Military stalemate in the principal theater of operations rapidly invalidated the popular military philosophies of the nineteenth century. The new weapons of the Industrial Revolution--the machine gun, the quick-firing howitzer and heavy artillery--made the existing modes of battlefield mobility useless and caused a return to seige warfare along a 400 mile trench line.

After the Central Powers lost the initial advantage gained by early successes, the Entente Powers gradually realized that they could not effectively utilize the initiative they held without precise methods for coordinating their military efforts. This paper has chronicled four

distinct methods attempted by the Entente Powers to achieve the illusive goal of unified effort. At this point it might be well to ask whether Allied strategy was ever really coordinated. It might be better to describe it as various levels of coordination between isolated national military strategies. This is not offered as a condemnation, for any coalition policy will always consist, in large measure, of badly sychronized compromises and can never be compared to a policy from one source of authority.[1]

In the first two years of the war a makeshift structure of military cooperation evolved under the leadership of General Joseph Joffre. This was possible because of the overwhelming sacrifices and contributions of the French nation to the alliance and General Joffre's personal stature and power. The system, if it may be so called, was dependent upon irregular conferences of military commanders sometimes with the advice and consent of their political superiors. This method achieved a certain amount of synchronization between the separate fronts and, in some measure, provided for mutual support between French and British forces on the Western Front. However, the appalling losses incurred prior to 1917 caused great revulsion within the democratic societies and their political hierarchies. This caused the political leaders to insist upon a strong voice in determining war strategy.

Thus in 1917, the politicians, principally Mr. Lloyd George and M. Briand, enforced their own form of unified command. During the Calais Conference, the British Prime

Minister ordered his Commander-in-Chief to subordinate himself and his forces to the new French commander. The unprecedented subordination of the growing British forces, even for the brief period of the Nivelle Offensive, greatly hampered the logical progression of events toward an effective Allied command organization to coordinate the Entente's military power. The bitterness engendered by this action within the British High Command and the distrust it earned in all other sectors of the west when General Nivelle's Offensive failed, cast a great deal of doubt upon the military wisdom of the political leaders. As a direct result, the period following Nivelle's failure was one of almost complete failure in cooperative efforts. The results of the offensive also caused the politicians to avoid their constitutional responsibilities and let the higher direction of the war pass, by default, into the narrow control of the national theater commanders.

Not until November, 1917 did the politicians take an active hand in shaping combined military policy again. With the impending defeat of the Italian Army, they chose to form a formal Supreme War Council to act as the high coordinating authority. Yet this council lacked the real decisiveness needed to meet crises which arose. The Supreme War Council had a permanently functioning international military staff section in the form of the Board of Permanent Military Representatives. However, these officers could only act after unanimous agreement and then only to recommend actions to be taken by the Supreme Council of Premiers. Although of

great potential importance, the Supreme War Council never successfully intervened in the perogatives of the national commanders--Haig and Pétain.

The final solution to the military coordination problem--which was, perhaps, the most difficult of solution in the war--was promulgated under the most harrowing circumstances. The near-defeat by the German offensives of March, 1918 forced the Allied Council and military leaders to accept the direction of a generalissimo--Marshal Foch. A key point to remember here is that the initiative for this appointment came from the British military commander who felt that this move was the last chance to keep the French nation in the war.

Marshal Ferdinand Foch performed the invaluable function of shoring up the flagging allied war cause. He never effectively interferred with the operational control of his international subordinates, although he received Premier Clemenceau's support in ordering General Petain's complete subordination. Foch's method of leadership was neither detailed enough nor based upon the new tactical doctrines developed by his theoretical subordinates. However he was in charge when the Central Powers collapsed and his method and style of leadership have been attributed as being significant factors in the final victory.

This paper has disputed the validity of this general appraisal of Foch's leadership. The Generalissimo was in power for too short a time and he never had the facilities with which to really control the vast armies on the front.

The final command structure was a result of evolutionary forces and the vagaries of battlefield and political confrontations. Therefore all periods of the Great War must be considered when evaluating the effectiveness of combined operations.

Two factors which greatly affected the course of allied military cooperation but have received little historical or military attention were the establishment of a Supreme War Council in late 1917 and the personal and professional attitudes of Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig.

Institutionalized Cooperation

The military and civil collapse of Russia in 1917, resulted in the ability of Germany and Austria-Hungary to concentrate their forces on the Western Front. Improved Allied coordination then became a necessary condition for continuing the war. With the added threat of the collapse of Italy in November, 1917, political intervention to enforce military cooperation was afforded another opportunity. The method used did not create a unified command which was thought to be unacceptable after General Nivelle's experiment. The council formed only unified political control and provided united public positions.

The Supreme Allied War Council contained two features which proved to be unique in the history of coalition warfare: its provision for regular meetings and the establishment of a permanently functioning advisory board of international military representatives. In this sense, it can be said that

the machinery of coordination embodied in the Supreme War Council was as much a product of the first total war as was any other military technique or weapons system which evolved during its course.

As might have been expected the creation of the Council was greeted by differing attitudes ranging from indifference to open hostility in the member states. This was a measure of the continuing spirit of national particularism which had dominated the relationships within the alliance and were only subordinated to military reality with the greatest difficulty.

Each of the three European members of the Council participated with particular national objectives in mind. The French and British each sought to dominate the alliance while the Italians viewed it as a means to avoid domination. The United States entered the war and the Supreme War Council in a relatively impartial spirit and had no desire to dominate the coalition. President Wilson viewed the Council as a means of attaining adequate military cooperation to end the war quickly.

Born in an atmosphere of compromise, the Council worked to achieve some measure of collective Allied sanction for military projects which were often based on purely national interests. This result is hardly surprising given the debilities of its internal operation and the preceding experiences with combined military operations.

Perhaps more importantly, the effect of the Council upon Allied public opinion in uniting and buoying the spirit

of the peoples in the member nations should be cited. Once a decision had been announced by the Council, it became a basis for strong collective suasion to enforce it if a contracting party failed in its execution. The weight of collective Allied approval made the policies of the Council much less vulnerable to repudiation than were those of previous ad hoc conferences and bilateral understandings.

From the purely military standpoint, the Board of Military Representatives, which evolved into the Executive War Board, afforded its members the opportunity of developing functions and powers equivalent to those of an Allied Generalissimo for all theaters without impinging upon national pride and sensibilities. This chance was ruined by the adament opposition of the national field commanders.

The lessons learned or perhaps the habits formed by the Allied Supreme War Council created unclear but certainly decisive precedents for the conduct of subsequent Allied ventures. The negotiations for the armistice and the final peace agreements were held within an expanded form of the Council. Additionally the Supreme War Council formed at the outbreak of the Second World War, while not an exact duplicate of that in the First World War, had many common forms and purposes which suggest a strong historical link.

Haig--A Forgotten Factor

Field-Marshal Haig acted as the British Empire commander on the Western Front during the critical final years of the war. His service in high command spanned the four

distinct command systems which have been identified and he exerted a strong influence upon the daily functioning of these systems and the ultimate forms which they took.[2] The impress of his personal prejudices and previous experiences can be discerned in each formula for command used on the Western Front.

In attempting to place a value upon Haig's contribution to Allied unity of command, one might be tempted to pass off the praise of Marshal Foch as a mere post-war accolade, rendered as a matter of course. Yet the praise is quite specific:

> Never at any time in history has the British Army achieved greater results in attack than in this unbroken offensive lasting 116 days,... The victory gained was indeed complete..... thanks above all to the unselfishness of the wise, loyal and energetic policy of their Commander-in-Chief, who made easy a great combination, and sanctioned a prolonged and gigantic effort. Was it not the insight of an experienced and enlightened Commander which led him to intervene as he did, with his own Government on the 24th of March, .1918, and with the Allied Governments assembled at Doullens on the 26th, to the end that the French and British Armies might at once be placed under a single command, even though his personal position should thereby suffer? In the events that followed, did he not prove that he was above all anxious to... move in perfect harmony with the general Allied plan...? 3

This statement, while overestimating Haig's acquiescence in the final stages of victory, adequately acknowledges his pivitol role in Allied cooperation.

The German enemy is no less specific in pointing to Haig's part in the final decision. Although the official monograph on the Great War refuses to admit German defeat

on the battlefield, it firmly fixes upon Field-Marshal Haig the major credit for preventing a German victory.

> The circumstances that Haig never could act really independently, but always had to make his decisions subject to conditions imposed on him, is no reason to deny him the position of a commander-in-chief. Dependence on others was often the fate of great commanders. What is more important is whether his actions were conducted with strategic ability, firm will, strength of character, acceptance of responsibility and political insight. Haig possessed all these qualities and used them in 'harmonious combination' as Clausewitz requires of a great commander. By means of these powers he saved France in 1916 and 1917, and preeminently on that historic day, the 26th March 1918. Finally: if the ultimate victory over the Central Powers was not accomplished on the battlefield, but was gained on quite another plane, yet in the last three years of the war Haig contributed the most to prevent a German victory. Thus he really remained 'master of the field'. [4]

Allusions to Passchendaele and the Somme have been coated with the venom of the post-war era. These battles, often grossly misrepresented, are used to damn Haig to oblivion without further discussion or even verification of the supposed facts. In truth, there was great suffering and sacrifice on the stagnant battlefields of 1915-1917, but the British armies did impose their will upon the enemy. During the grinding battles of attrition, they inflicted greater casualties upon the German forces than they sustained themselves. Alone among all the armies on the Western Front, the British units maintained their morale and confidence, despite appalling physical conditions.

Haig is frequently characterized as an unfeeling and unimaginative individual.[5] He is indicted for isolating him-

self in palatial headquarters, far from the trench lines, and moving pins on his large map board which doomed thousands of helpless men to destruction. The Field-Marshal was a dour and proper Scotsman and was not given to emotional displays. Yet his concern for the welfare of his men and their suffering in the trenches pervades the nocturnal summaries in his diary.[6] He was baffled, as were all the Allied and German high commanders, by the problem of breaking the stalemate of the trench lines. His instant appreciation of the new tank weapon [7] and his understanding of the practical problems of Allied military cooperation show that he was not devoid of imagination. His biting and vitriolic commentaries, preserved in his diaries, are ample proof of very real feelings. Far from being cold, he was, if anything, overly sensitive and jealous of his personal image.

A patrician model of a professional soldier was a vulnerable target for derision in the frenetic and irreverent decades between the world wars. Modern analysts find it more profitable to denounce incompetence than to attempt to understand the mood of the Great War and the restrictive medium in which it was fought. There were no great high commanders in that war; each military leader had basic flaws which deny him entry into the pantheon of Great Captains. But Haig's performance in the final stage of the war--his acceptance of a supreme commander, his tactical innovations, and his perceptive analysis of the war aims of the British Empire--places him far above his contemporaries.

The release of Haig's personal diaries now provides a unique opportunity for the historian to impartially access

his actions during the war. Although these documents often reveal their author as a prejudiced and unreasonable observer, they are consistent in thrust and have not been doctored to eliminate obvious errors or misjudgements.[8]

There is little doubt that Field-Marshal Haig was the single most important commander in the Allied coalition during the final two years of the war. His armies prevented the Germans from completing the destruction of the French at Verdun and distracted Ludendorff from the utter helplessness of the French Army during the 1917 mutinies. In the final months of the war, it was the British and not the French or the Americans who blunted the German last gambles for victory and then turned to defeat the principal enemy decisively in the only theater of operations where final victory could be achieved.

The French sacrificed an entire generation of young men in the first two years of the war in order to stave off defeat. The American presence in the final year of the war provided an immeasurable stimulus to the flagging Allied morale. Perhaps the most ignored factor in the final victory on land was the cumulative effect of the complete naval blockade which weakened the entire German nation. All of these factors contributed to victory and it has not been the purpose of this work to denigrate them; rather it is merely suggested that the vital importance of Douglas Haig and his armies should also be understood.

Air Vice-Marshal E. J. Kingston McCloughry, in his study of the political direction and high command in war, restates an immutable rule:

> ...whatever the nature of war, or the weapons employed, human agencies in one form or another, despite their inherent limitations, are always of prime importance. Indeed, although the nature, scope and degree, of the influence of individuals have changed with the evolution of war, this factor has always been an overriding one. 9

Douglas Haig's conversion to efficient and flexible tactical methods in the last stage of the war and the resultant end of the war within four months must rank as the greatest vindication of this axiom. As C. B. M.F. Cruttwell, a leading chronicler of the Great War has observed:

> In the last hundred days of the war he showed a vision and calculated resolution in taking chances worthy of a great captain. His career in the war is a curious example of how exactly the same qualities in dissimilar circumstances make both a bad and a good general. 10

If future commanders are to learn from their predecessors, it is the moral and not the technical lessons which should be stressed. The sense of responsibility for other lives--often the lifeblood of the nation--requires a moral certitude incomparably greater in a military commander than in any other leader. Great Britain's belated preparations for a modern global war was insufficient to meet the crisis of 1914-1918. The selection and training of military leaders in pre-war England was woefully inadequate. That a workmanlike, professional soldier with narrow horizons was able to eventually rise to meet the great responsibilities of the war, not the bloody and wasteful experiments which preceded the final victory, is the lesson of Haig's period in command.

Notes for CHAPTER VI

[1]C. R. M. F. Cruttwell, The Role of British Strategy in the Great War (London: Cambridge University Press, 1936), pp. 4-5.

[2]For a visualization of these four systems refer to Appendix 2.

[3]Sir Douglas Haig's Despatches, December 1915-April 1919, ed. J. H. Boraston, introduction by Marshal Foch, (London: J. M. Dent, 1919), xiii.

[4]Translated from "Heerfuhres des Weltkrieges ," quoted in James Edmonds, Official History of the Great War: Military Operations in France and Belgium, 1917 (London: Macmillan, 1948), II, p. v.

[5]Aside from the scholarly interpretations such as those of Leon Wolff and Allan Clark, the general public has a stereotyped vision of the British High Command as a bumbling and heartless organization. A most recent example of this groundless and undisciplined reasoning was published in the January 18th 1971 issue of Time Magazine. In an article which criticized the poor management of the Penn Central Railroad, an executive was quoted as condemning the management of that company as "the most unqualified, irresponsible and inept single bunch of leaders since the British General Staff in World War I." Such gross simplification and distortion is generally accepted without question in current allusions to the British High Command fifty years ago. "The Cities," Time, XCVII (January 18, 1971), p. 47.

[6]The Field-Marshal also identified personally with his former men after the war. He refused to accept any personal honors, titles or grants until adequate compensation or "batta" had been granted to the veterans, widows and orphans of the army. His dedication to the British Legion and his work in uniting the various splinter veterans groups throughout the Empire show real concern beyond any superficial expression of sympathy.

[7]Although Haig's initial use of the tank in the Battle of the Somme was inconsequential, it does not appear, as has been charged by several armor theoreticians, that he ruined the effectiveness of the weapons system. In all probability the German intelligence network would have discerned the secret weapon within a few months of the Somme Battles. The Battle of Cambrai, in November, 1917, showed that the tank's shock

effect and mobility were just as effective as if the debut had been postponed until that date. In the final campaign of the war--after the Battle of Amiens--Haig's tank corps, in combination with the French and American armored forces, played a decisive tactical role. Ludendorff did not perceive the value of the tank until it was too late. Throughout Haig's supposed misuse of the tank, the Royal Tank Regiment continuously improved its vehicles, tactics, and technical methods of supply and repair. If the weapon had been saved, it would have been even more unreliable and vulnerable; it exhibited these qualities to a great degree in any event.

[8]The most striking example of Haig's misconceptions of reality was his diary entry on July 1, 1916 in which he observed that his armies had begun the Somme Battle well and had suffered only moderate losses. In fact, his forces had made little gain that day and at the cost of the single day's greatest loss in the history of the British Army. It is exactly because of such mistakes and the fact that they were not ammended or excised, that these diaries have such great historical value.

[9]Edgar J. Kingston-McCloughry, The Direction of War (New York: Praeger, 1955), p. 23.

[10]Cruttwell, British Strategy in the Great War, p. 90.

Appendix 1

List of Joint Notes Adopted by the Board of Permanent Military Representatives

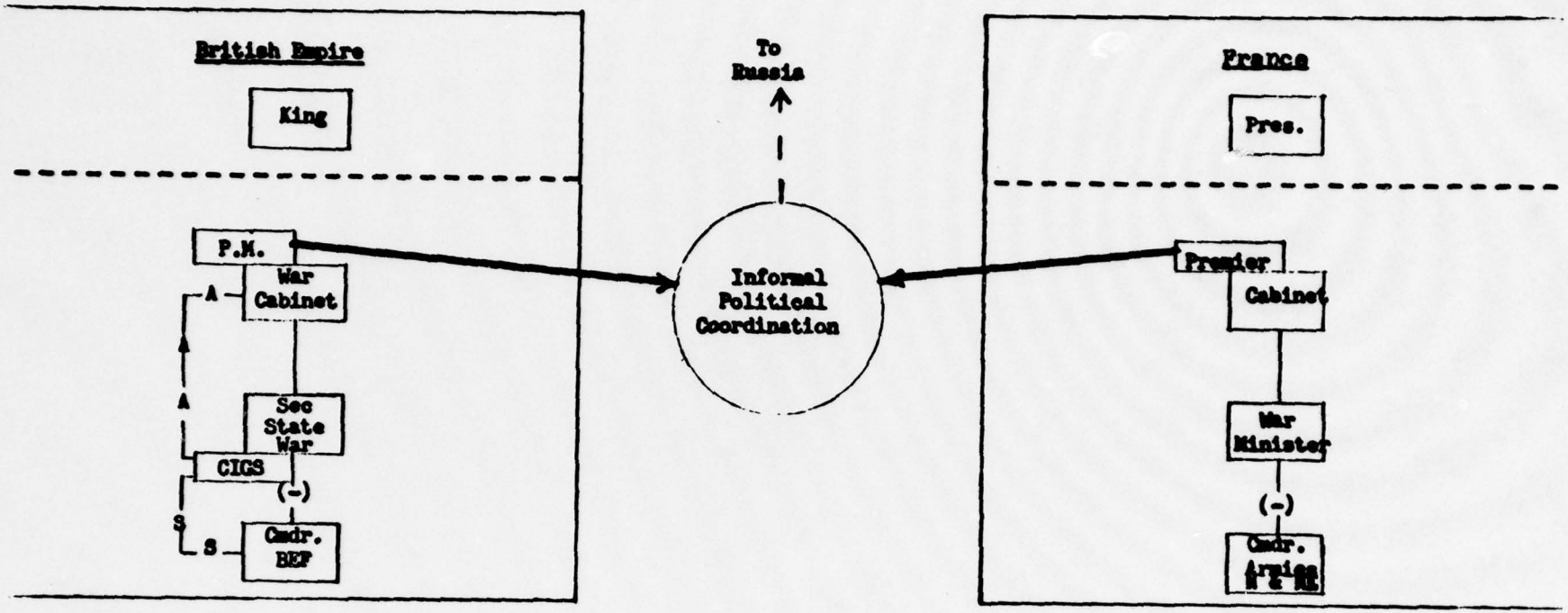
No.	Title	Date adopted by the Military Representatives
1	Military Policy.	December 13, 1917
2	Increase in the Number of Divisions in the Belgium Army.	December 20, 1917
3	[Untitled. Concerns reinforcement of Italy]	December 19, 1917
4	The Balkan Problem.	December 23, 1917
5	The Situation in Russia.	December 24, 1917
6	The Italian Problem.	December 25, 1917
7	Aviation [Committee].	January 9, 1918
8	Transportation [Committee].	January 9, 1918
9	Tanks [Committee].	January 9, 1918
10	Extension of the British Front.	January 10, 1918
11	Chinese Battalions.	January 21, 1918
12	1918 Campaign.	January 21, 1918
13	Supply [Committee].	January 25, 1918
14	The General Reserve.	January 25, 1918
15	General Inter-Allied Reserve [Security].	February 6, 1918
16	Japanese Intervention in Siberia.	February 19, 1918
17	Dutch Shipping.	March 12, 1918
18	American Reinforcements--Western Front.	March 27, 1918
19	Plans for Supporting the Italian Army in the Event of an Enemy Offensive on That Front.	March 27, 1918

No.	Title	Date adopted by the Military Representatives
20	The Situation in the Eastern Theater.	April 8, 1918
21	Allied Naval Activities in the Adriatic.	April 8, 1918
22	Transport Between France and Italy.	April 18, 1918
23	Utilization of Belgian Railway Resources.	April 18, 1918
24	Shipment of Rolling Stock from the United States.	April 18, 1918
25	Transportation of Czech Troops from Russia.	April 27, 1918
26	Reduction in the Number of Horses in the Allied Armies and in the Oats and Hay Ration.	May 19, 1918
27	Relations to be Established with the Dutch General Staff in Case Military Assistance Should Be Given by the Entente Powers.	May 18, 1918
28	Inter-Allied Transportation Council: Procedure and Appointment of Chairman.	May 18, 1918
29	Supply of Textiles for the Central Powers.	May 28, 1918
30	Production and Tactics for Tanks.	May 30, 1918
31	Allied Intervention at Russian Artic Ports.	June 3, 1918
32	The Utilization of Yugo-Slav Prisoners of Serbian Race in the Serbian Army.	July 3, 1918
33	Measures Imperative To Take in Order To Increase the Capacity of the Modane [Railway] Line with a View to Possible Strategic Demands.	July 5, 1918
34	Recruitment in Abyssinia.	July 16, 1918
35	Bombing Air Force.	August 3, 1918

No.	Title	Date adopted by the Military Representatives
36	Tanks--Construction of Chateauroux Factory.	August 27, 1918
37	General Military Policy of the Allies for the Autumn of 1918 and for the Year 1919.	September 10, 1918
38	Cardinal Points of Allied Action in Russia.	October 8, 1918
39	The Stoppage of Supplies of Coal to Italy.	October 28, 1918

Allied Military Cooperation

August, 1914 - November, 1916



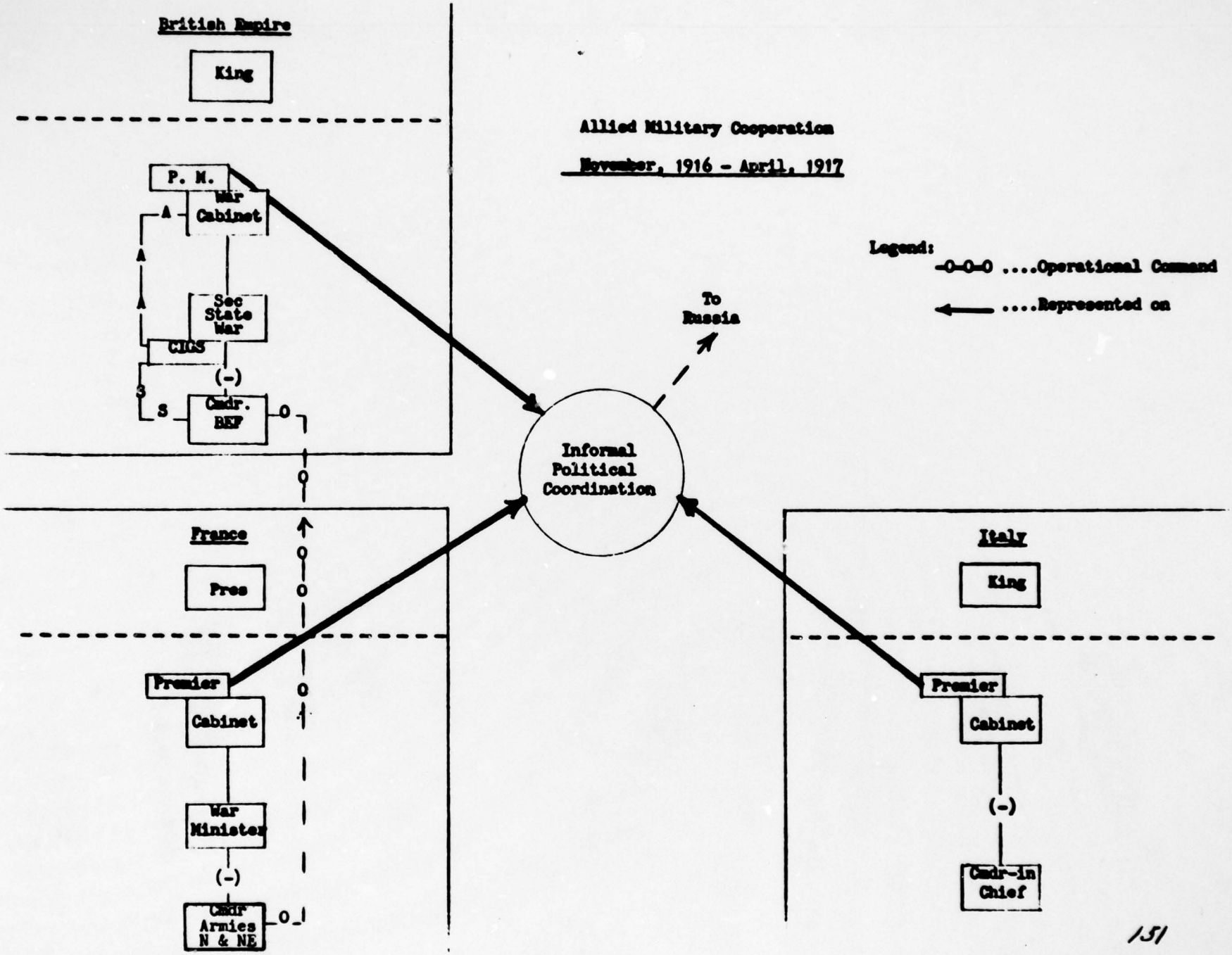
Legend:

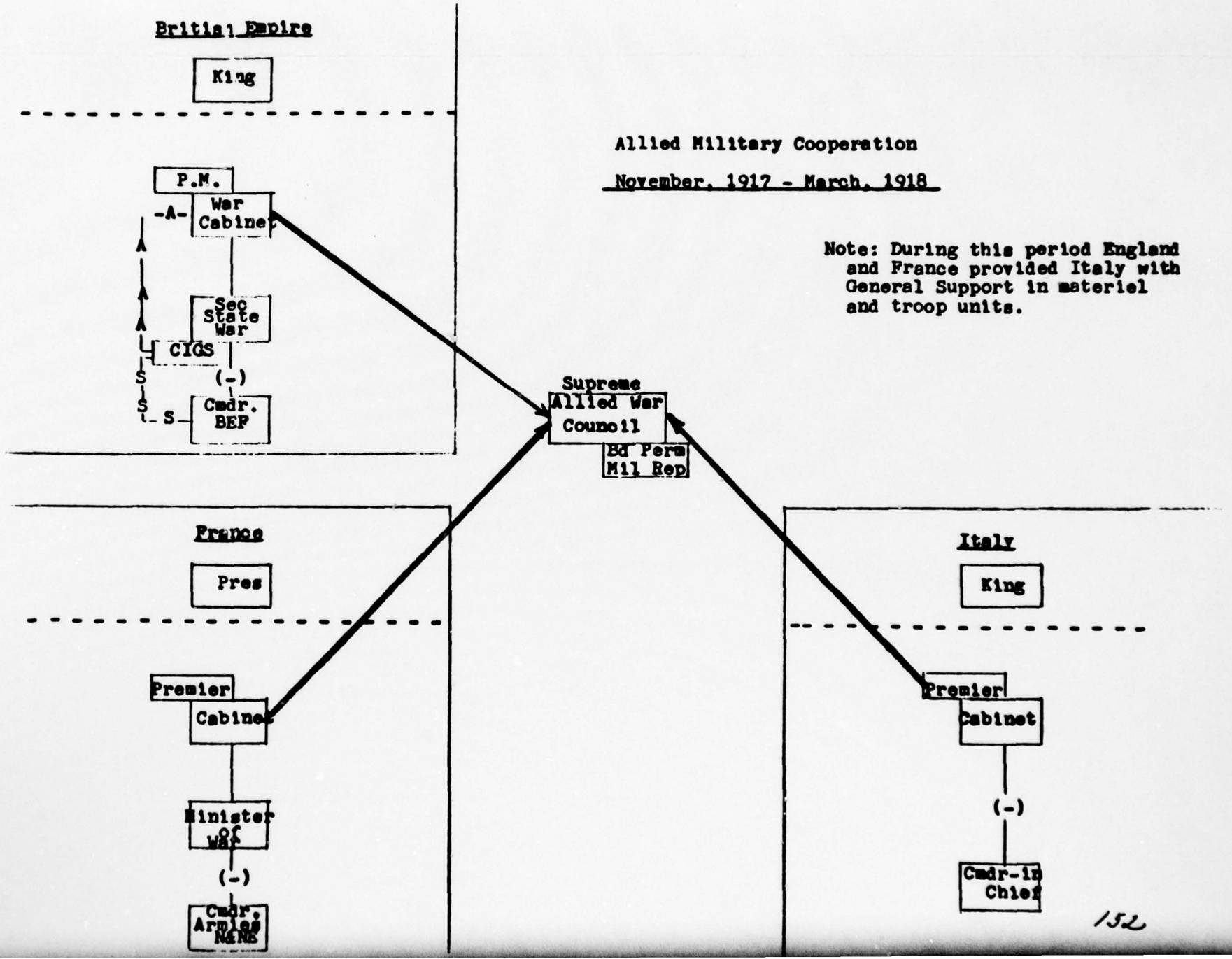
-A-A-A .....Advisor

-S-S-S .....Strategic Direction

-(-)-(-) .....Command less Operational Command

Note: Above symbols apply for the following Appendices.

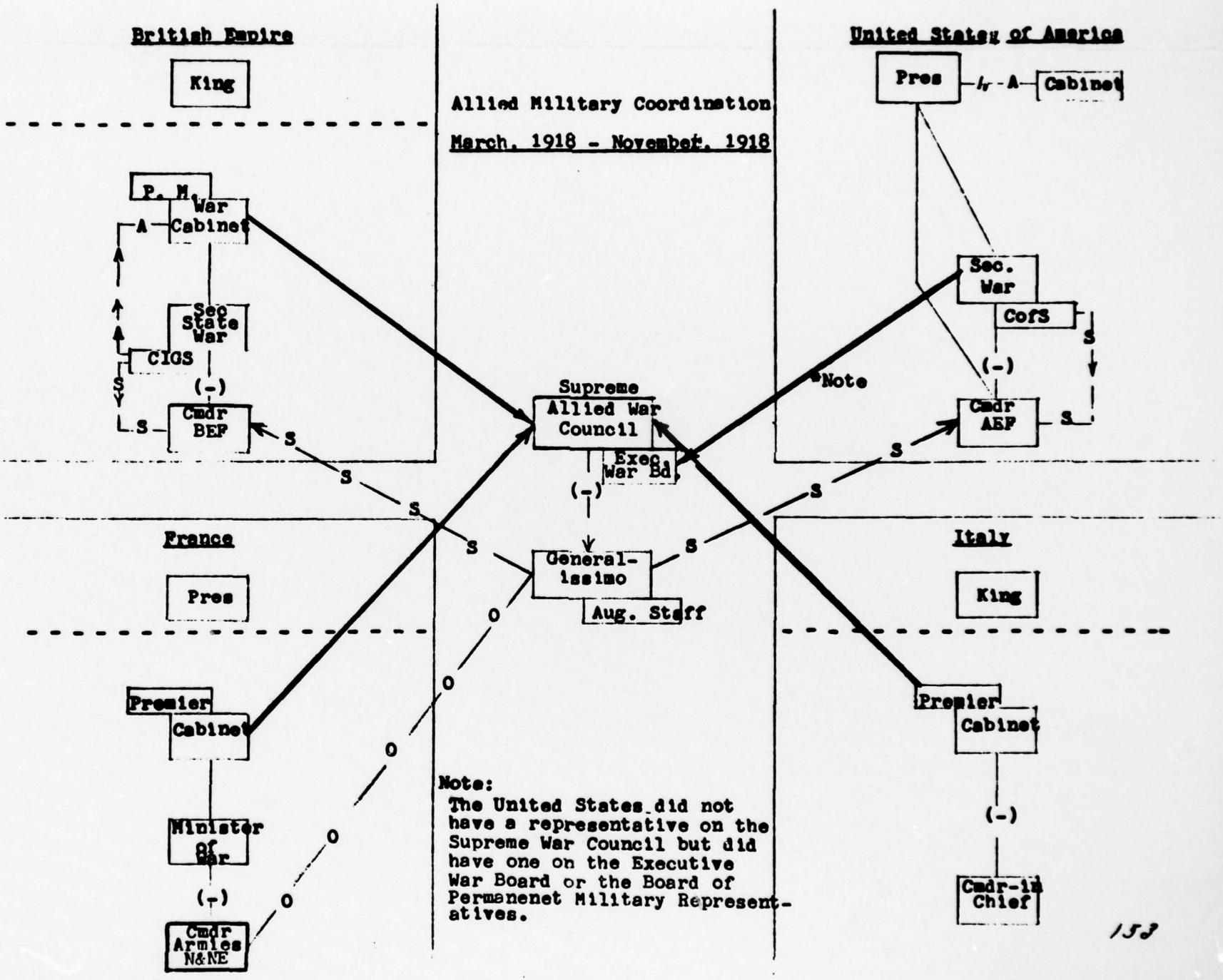

British Empire
King
P. M.
War Cabinet
A
A
A
Sec State War
CIGS
(-)
S
S
Cmdr. BEF
O
O
To Russia
Informal Political Coordination
France
Pres
Premier
Cabinet
War Minister
(-)
Cmdr Armies N & NE
O
O
O
O
O
Italy
King
Premier
Cabinet
(-)
Cmdr-in Chief
Allied Military Cooperation
November, 1916 - April, 1917
Legend:
-O-O-O ....Operational Command
←—— ....Represented on



Allied Military Cooperation

November, 1917 - March, 1918

Note: During this period England and France provided Italy with General Support in materiel and troop units.


British Empire
King
P. M.
War Cabinet
A
Sec State War
CIGS
(-)
Cmdr BEF
S
Allied Military Coordination
March, 1918 - November, 1918
United States of America
Pres
A
Cabinet
Sec. War
CofS
(-)
Cmdr AEF
S
Note
Supreme Allied War Council
Exec War Bd
(-)
General-issimo
Aug. Staff
France
Pres
Premier
Cabinet
Minister of War
(-)
Cmdr Armies N&NE
Italy
King
Premier
Cabinet
(-)
Cmdr-in Chief
Note:
The United States did not have a representative on the Supreme War Council but did have one on the Executive War Board or the Board of Permanenet Military Representatives.

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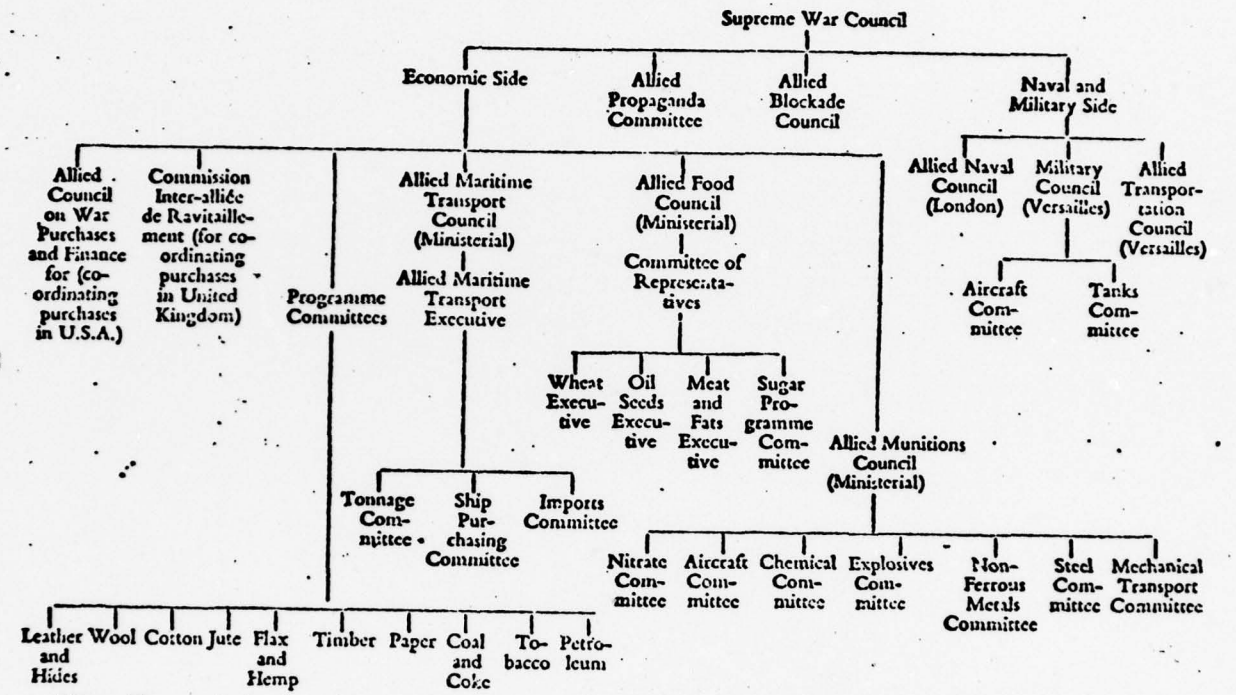
INTER-ALLIED WAR ORGANISATION, NOVEMBER 1918.



NOTE.—The organisation shown here is approximate only. It was in a state of continuous development. There were many links between the various executives which cannot be shown in diagrammatic form.

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