The Pillars of Generalship

JOHN M. VERMILLION

A review of the spate of literature on the operational level of war published within the past two or three years suggests that the Army (at least those officers writing on the subject) is finally agreeing on how the term should be defined. Working definitions of the concept generally argue that the operational level of war encompasses the movement, support, and sequential employment of large military forces in the conduct of military campaigns to accomplish goals directed by theater strategy.[1]

Just as the Army has been able to perceive more clearly what warfare at the operational level entails, so also has it observed that the requirements of leadership at that level differ in some important respects from leadership at the tactical level. Indeed, the term operational art implies that the commander at this echelon requires special talents. To identify these special requirements should be a matter of high concern not only to those who aspire to command at the operational level, but also to all field-grade officers who might be staff officers at operational-level headquarters.

If it is advisable, then, to learn about the unique demands of leadership at the operational level, where does one look for instruction? The ideal circumstance is to serve with a latter-day Clausewitzian genius personally and directly. Commanders with transcendent intellectual and creative powers are rare, however, so to have a chance to observe a genius personally is nearly impossible. A second way, open to all, is through study of the sequence and tendencies of past events and the key personalities who drove them. The present essay rests mainly on this method. As a matter of plain fact, though, most US Army officers do not read military history with a critical eye. The majority of officers look for a third way.

The Army has tried to provide just such a third way. In Field Manual 22-999, *Leadership and Command at Senior Levels* (forthcoming

this year), Army leaders have provided guidance for leadership and command at the large-unit level in the context of AirLand Battle as described in Field Manual 100-5, *Operations*. Even the most biting critics must applaud the hard work and serious study which obviously underpin the new manual. Nonetheless, the work suffers badly precisely because of its sheer exhaustiveness. Every significant utterance on leadership seems to have found its way into the manual. It is full of lists, generally in threes. For example, the reader learns that senior leaders teach, train, and coach; that they must possess certain attributes, perspectives, and imperatives; and that they ought to possess three groups of skills—conceptual, competency, and communications. Subdivisions of major headings also commonly occur in threes, as in three types of attributes—standard bearer (read "example"), developer, and integrator.

By the time one finishes wading through endless alliterative lists of traits desirable in the operational-level commander, he has had drawn for him a commander with the piety of St. Paul, the intellect of Einstein, and the courage of Joan d'Arc. In short, FM 22-999 lacks focus and a selective sense of what is fundamentally important. To say everything is to say nothing. The purpose of this essay is to draw sharper distinctions between the junior and senior levels of leadership, and to offer a considered opinion about what characteristics seem to be most essential to those commanders whom, in AirLand Battle, we associate with the operational level of war.

On the Corporate Nature of Leadership

A false idea, namely that discussions about leadership need take into account the leader only, has spread throughout the Army and slowly influenced at least a generation of soldiers. The word leadership implies that a relationship exists between the leader and something else. The "something else," of course, is followers. By followers, however, I am not speaking of the subordinate commanders or the men in ranks. Entire books have been written on how various generals have inspired their troops to success in war. Rather, in the present context, I am speaking of those followers who comprise the general's staff—that immediate circle of assistants who act to translate the commander's operational will into battlefield reality. Little first-class work has been done to appraise the dynamics of leader-staff

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Major John M. Vermillion is G3 Plans Officer in the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized), Fort Stewart, Georgia. Holder of a B.S. from the US Military Academy and M.A. degrees from the University of South Carolina and Boston University, he attended the regular course and the School of Advanced Military Studies at Ft. Leavenworth before taking up his present assignment. Major Vermillion has had infantry assignments in Vietnam, Korea, and Germany.

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interaction. It is time to examine the evidence regarding leadership in this sense and then to hold the findings up to the bright light of common sense.

The exercise of generalship today carries with it tremendous difficulties. A division today is expected to cover a frontage comparable to that assigned to a corps in World War II. As the numbers and varieties of machines and weapons have multiplied, so also have logistical requirements. The higher the echelon of command, the more the general has to be responsible for, yet the less direct control he has over subordinate forces. With the advent of night vision equipment and vehicles with longer ranges of operations, combat operations can proceed unremittingly. Command functions combine into a process that is progressive and continuous. While a commander is exercising military command, he is responsible without respite for the effective and vigorous prosecution of the operations which will achieve his objectives and contribute to the execution of the overall mission. Obviously, no single man, unaided, can do this properly. He must have, as we have seen, a close circle of functional assistants.

But such a requirement is by no means new. From the middle of the last century, the tasks of the general in command have been too numerous and too complex for any one man to manage effectively, and the general staff system thus gradually emerged. Helmuth von Moltke saw that the Industrial Revolution had let loose the powers to mobilize, equip, and direct enormous armies, and that this development demanded the creation of a complex and highly professional staff. In fact, "the General Staff was essentially intended to form a collective substitute for genius, which no army can count on producing at need."[2] The Army need not aim so high as to produce geniuses, but generals solidly grounded in the fundamentals of the profession. With a wise selection of subordinates, the "average" general can have a successful command. On the other hand, history demonstrates conclusively that some of its most acclaimed generals have failed when stripped of their right-hand men.

Superior generals surround themselves with staff officers who complement them by covering their blind spots. Consider the case of Napoleon Bonaparte, widely acknowledged to be the most esteemed soldier who ever led troops into battle. Some histories depict Marshal Berthier, the Emperor's chief of staff, as nothing more than an exalted clerk. Napoleon from time to time spoke publicly about Berthier in such pejorative language, but this probably was a consequence of the Emperor's personal insecurity. Napoleon needed a chief of staff who would endure the waspish sting of his burning intellect, and, yes, even occasional humiliation. The fact is, though, that Berthier's responsibilities were heavy, to such a degree that he often worked 20-hour days. He personally controlled the division of labor on Napoleon's staff, all finances, and all appointments. Most important, he supervised the issue of all of Napoleon's orders regarding troop movements, operations, and artillery and engineer employment.[3]

Napoleon was an operational-level planner nonpareil. Nonetheless, he needed someone with Berthier's energy, dedication, and retentive capacity to translate broad instructions into polished orders fit to be delivered to the corps commanders. Berthier had an exceptional talent for drafting clear, concise orders. As David Chandler notes, "Bonaparte owed much of his early success to the administrative talents of Berthier."[4]

Only at the end, in 1815, did Berthier's worth to his Emperor become clear. On 1 June 1815, during the Waterloo campaign, Berthier reportedly committed suicide, possibly because of his inability to tolerate any longer the rebukes of his commander. Napoleon thereupon was forced to substitute Soult, an able corps commander. Almost immediately, "Soult was to be responsible for perpetuating several mistakes and misunderstandings in the written orders he issued, and these, taken together, account for a great deal of Napoleon's ultimate difficulties."[5] At Waterloo, Napoleon is said to have cried out, "If only Berthier was here, then my orders would have been carried out."[6]

In analyzing the dynamics of the Napoleon-Berthier relationship, it seems fair to suggest that Berthier was not flashingly quick. He was a man of deeply intelligent judgment rather than of brilliance. He was capable of making Napoleon's desire, if not vision, his own, of knowing how the Emperor wanted things to appear, then of being tough and stubborn enough to make them turn out that way. He would dutifully execute every directive concerning an operation, but without adding a single idea of his own, or perhaps without comprehending the subtleties of the Emperor's thoughts. Now, ponder how suitably Berthier met Napoleon's requirements. Napoleon was a commander so knowledgeable and so quick to focus his knowledge that even his apparently spontaneous reactions often emerged as intricate and fully developed ideas. That capacity can paralyze a staff. The interesting work of creation was done for them, and tedium does not stir the imagination. It is likely that many minds sharper than Berthier's, not just Soult's, would have failed precisely because the temptation to bring their fertile imaginations to bear would have been irresistible.

During the 1807-1814 reorganization of the Prussian Army, General Gerhard von Scharnhorst ordered reforms many effects of which are still evident today. A regulation issued by Scharnhorst in 1810 was perhaps the most influential. He made the chief of staff a full partner in command decisions. By 1813 all Prussian commanding generals had chiefs of staff with whom they were expected to form effective partnerships. One of the most famous and effective of these teams was that of Gerhard von Blücher and his chief, Count Neithardt von Gneisenau. They were effective because they complemented each other perfectly. Whereas Blücher was a "brave, charismatic, but impatient man," Gneisenau was his polar opposite: cool, methodical, yet courageous and determined.[7] Gordon Craig here elaborates on the inspired collaboration of Blücher and Gneisenau:

> Blücher, who recognized his own shortcomings and the genius of his chief of staff, relied implicitly on Gneisenau's judgement; and he was not wholly joking when—while receiving an honorary degree at Oxford after the war—he remarked: "If I am to become a doctor, you must at least make Gneisenau an apothecary, for we two belong always together."[8]

In contrast to Napoleon and Berthier, in this case the chief developed the plans and the commander executed them. The Gneisenau-Blücher model of teamwork remains the supreme example of its kind for the German army.

Montgomery, Patton, and Rommel

Soon after World War II, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery was asked to enumerate his requirements for a good general. He listed nine items. The first was "Have a good chief of staff."[9] And so he did, throughout the war. In his own work, *The Path to Leadership*, Montgomery referred to a good chief of staff as a "pearl of very great price."[10]

As did the other generals mentioned thus far, Montgomery chose the men who worked for him. He insisted upon his right to install soldiers of his own choosing in all key positions. Shortly after Dunkirk, Montgomery described his plan to get the 3rd Division on its feet. He called together his staff and the senior officers in every unit in the division and announced who was to take command in each case. He personally and unilaterally, without waiting for War Office approval, appointed all commanders down to battalion. In Nigel Hamilton's words, Montgomery's "essential drive was to get the 'right man for the right job' . . . . [This was,] together with his unique ability to abstract the essentials of any problem, the touchstone of his genius as a commander. The conduct of battle had borne out how dependent a commander is on his subordinate officers."[11]

Montgomery tried to hold on to the same staff as he progressed in rank through the war; in this endeavor he was reasonably successful. The mainstay of most general staffs, but of Montgomery's in particular, was the chief of staff. The Field Marshal was fortunate to have had Major General Francis de Guingand serve him in this capacity for the better part of the war. De Guingand's comments about his old boss are intriguing in that they explode the usual public image of Montgomery. According to de Guingand, Montgomery naturally tended to be rash and impetuous, not deliberate and wholly rational. The main business of his chief of staff was not to carry out detailed staff work or to make decisions in the absence of the commander, but to "keep Bernard's two great virtues [will and discipline] in tandem."[12] When the War Office thrust an unwanted chief on Montgomery, the invariable result for the command was mediocrity or failure.

Instructively, the single greatest failure with which Montgomery is associated, the Dieppe raid, occurred during a period of flux in his staff. In

March 1942 during his tenure as commander, South-East Army, his chief of staff, Brigadier John Sinclair, was transferred over Montgomery's opposition. The commander then turned to the War Office with a personal request for "Simbo" Simpson to replace Sinclair. London refused him not only in this request, but also in his bid for two other staff officers on whom he had depended heavily in earlier assignments. At this time he was denied the strong steadying influence of a de Guingand, and the predictable outcome was a too-quick acceptance of an ill-conceived plan. It seems highly likely that had de Guingand been present, he would have checked Montgomery's essential rashness: "There was . . . a fatal vacuum at this critical moment: and Bernard, as the one soldier—apart from Brooke—who possessed the undisputed prestige and authority to scrap the project, tragically agreed to undertake the raid."[13]

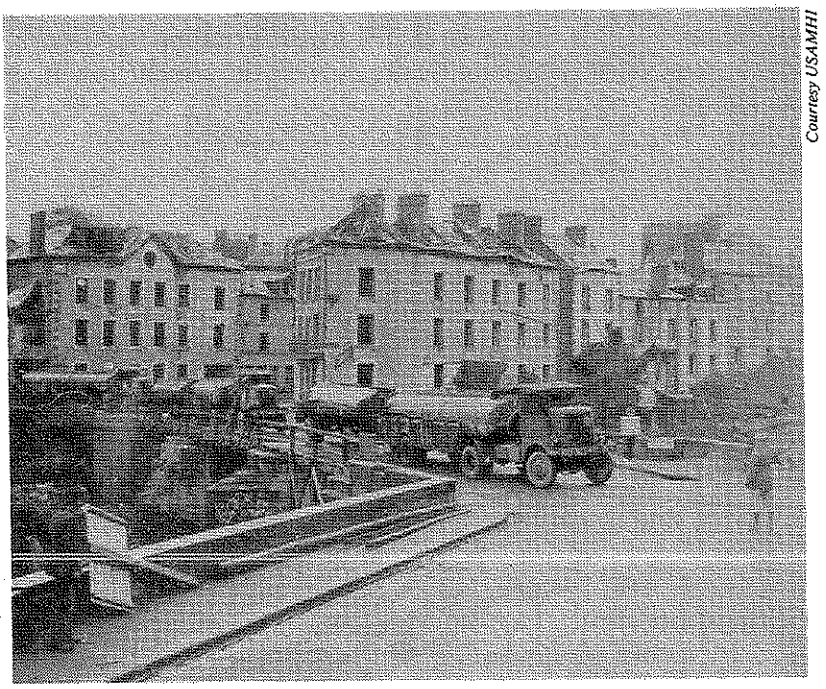
The qualities and talents necessary to be a good staff officer are far different from those necessary to be a good commander. George Patton's career as well as any underscores this point. In the truest sense, Patton was a "general" officer. He abhorred involvement with details; indeed, few great commanders come to mind who felt otherwise. Patton was temperamentally unsuited to the role of staff officer. In his staff assignments he received poor efficiency reports for his performance.[14] The point is that at the operational level, no matter how brilliant the commander, the most glittering conception will go awry if it is not undergirded by the grinding hard work of his staff, which must churn out empirically correct movement tables, time-distance calculations, and logistical data.

Patton demanded that he be permitted to select his staff. Although this mode of operation did not conform to the methods of the US Army replacement system, Patton, for whatever reason, got away with making these decisions himself. When he arrived in England to assume command of Third Army, he shocked the staff then in place by announcing that he was moving them out to make room for his own men. All those he brought on had served with him in North Africa and Sicily; most had backgrounds in Patton's 2d Armored Division. The man who held Patton's staff together, Brigadier General Hugh Gaffey, has been termed "a staff officer of genius."[15] Gaffey held the post as Patton's chief of staff until the early autumn of 1944, when Patton sent him down to command 4th Armored Division, and eventually a corps. Gaffey's replacement was Brigadier General Hobart Gay, a longtime cavalry associate of Patton. According to historian Hubert Essame, "Both were equally competent in the exercise of their intricate craft, . . . both were in the mind of their master."[16]

As one would expect, Patton had an excellent relationship with the staff, making it a personal policy never to interfere with them on matters of minor detail. Like many outstanding German commanders, but unlike some of his American counterparts, Patton promoted an open and frank dialogue between his staff and himself. They did not hesitate to disagree with him.

What was best for Third Army came first. George Patton did not play hunches. He had the wisdom to rely on his staff for sound advice, and they consistently gave it to him. His G-2, Colonel Oscar Koch, for example, was felt by many to have the most penetrating mind in the US Army in the intelligence field. Koch always had available for Patton the best, most accurate intelligence estimates to be found at any level of command. Patton's famous 90-degree turn from the Saar bridgehead to the Ardennes has received countless well-deserved accolades in history texts, but seldom are we reminded that at bottom the action was made possible by a dutiful staff officer. It was Koch who persuaded his commander before the fact that planning should commence at once to deal with the situation which would arise if the Germans staged an attack in the Ardennes area.[17] Patton was served equally well by other members of the staff. His primary logistician, Colonel Walter J. Muller, was known throughout the European Theater as "the best quartermaster since Moses."[18]

As for Field Marshal Erwin Rommel's success in North Africa, David Irving suggests six reasons. One pertained to his good equipment, two to Rommel's individual talents, and three took note of the high-quality personnel who worked for him.[19] Like Patton and Montgomery, Rommel "appropriated" his *Panzer* army staff. Without question, this was one of



Courtesy USAMHI

Patton's staff included Colonel Walter J. Muller, called "the best quartermaster since Moses." Shown here is part of the "Red Ball Express" that fueled Patton's armored advance.

the most remarkably competent staffs assembled in modern times. Siegfried Westphal, later a general officer in command, was the operations officer and a man for whom Rommel had the highest professional respect. F. W. von Mellenthin, destined to wear two stars before the war's end, ran the intelligence section. More than anyone else, Alfred Gause, Rommel's chief of staff, was "in the mind" of the commander. He could anticipate with near-perfect accuracy what Rommel needed and when he needed it. Gause stayed on as Rommel's chief from early 1941 until April 1944, at which time Rommel's wife, as a result of a petty domestic dispute with Gause and his wife, prevailed upon her husband to release Gause. Rommel selected Hans Speidel to succeed Gause. Observe that in this instance, too, the commander chose a man whose temperament, intellect, and personality were nearly opposite his own. The highly literate, sophisticated Speidel was "a useful complement to Rommel's own one-track mind."[20]

Operational leadership is a corporate endeavor, not individual, and it requires full complementarity between the commander and his staff. Sadly, as obvious as this point may appear, it is ignored with frightening regularity by those charged with preparing the US Army's official pronouncements on the subject of leadership.

The Concerns of War

Getting right down to the basics, what are the essential things that the operational-level commander must cause to happen if he is to be successful in war? They are two in number. First, information must be communicated from the commander to his instruments of war, that is, his troops and weapons. Second, physical force must be applied against the enemy by these instruments of war in a manner calculated to produce the desired result. Let us discuss these two concerns in order.

Before a general can begin to communicate the wherewithal to win victories, he must prepare himself for the task. One of the most difficult parts of such preparation, especially in combat, is to find time to think problems through fully in order to make sound decisions and to plan future operations. Montgomery termed these respites "oases of thought." He believed fervently that the senior combat leader "must allow a certain amount of time [each day] for quiet thought and reflection."[21] He habitually went to bed at 2130, even amid tough battles. Patton as well as Montgomery made time to reflect and think ahead. Each lived apart from his main headquarters in the company of a small group of officers and noncommissioned officers. Each let his chief of staff handle the details, and never allowed himself to do so.[22]

Noting that he had seen too many of his peers collapse under the stresses of high command, Sir William Slim insisted that he "have ample leisure in which to think, and unbroken sleep."[23] His permanent order was

not to be disturbed unless there arose a crisis no one else could handle. As with any other aspect of combat, commanders must train in peacetime to do well what war will demand. Douglas MacArthur and George Marshall gave this personal training their devout attention. While Superintendent at West Point, MacArthur often worked in his quarters study until 1200 or 1300 instead of going to his office, where he might be distracted. Years later, in the Philippines, he had a standing daily appointment at a Manila movie house for a 2100 showing. He did not care what was playing; he fell asleep as quickly as he sat down. He found moviegoing a convenient way to unburden himself, to undergo a daily psychic housecleaning.

Similarly, during his World War II years as Army Chief of Staff, General Marshall usually left his office by 1500 each day and rarely made any important decisions after that hour. Fully aware that his decisions could make the difference between life and death for large numbers of field combatants, he strove to be as mentally and emotionally prepared as possible to make good decisions. In short, periods of rigorously protected solitude are enormously important to the general in command. If the mind is the key to victory, the general must tend and exercise his mind with a view to its health just as he would his body. This recommendation is not often heard in the US Army.

Combat orders express the commander's desires. History and common sense demonstrate that clarity, conciseness, and rapidity of dissemination are the measures of a good order. At the operational level the general must possess the power, derived from clarity of expression only, to knife through thick layers of command to be understood. Superior commanders at the operational level almost universally have been guided by a concern and talent for clear literary exposition. This does not mean that they must be able to facilely toss off arcane knowledge, but merely that they appreciate the strength of words carefully and economically employed. Even when the commander leaves it to principal staff assistants to actually write out the order, as Napoleon did with Berthier, he still must assure that such orders are prepared in clear, simple language. Commanders who communicate well orally and in writing are likely to have developed this ability over long years of wide reading. Indeed, we may take as axiomatic the proposition that great leaders are great readers.

Conciseness and rapidity of dissemination go hand in hand. More often than not, the unit that acts first wins. This means that time and the saving of it should be at the core of the orders-generating process. Failure in timely issuance of orders is a cardinal error. Fortunately, the leader may avoid this error by following the principle that all orders must be as brief and simple as possible.

Many World War II commanders issued oral orders exclusively. General Heinz Gaedcke, a combat commander with considerable experience

on the Russian front, followed the practice of most German generals in giving oral orders. In his opinion, "To actually operate using formal written orders would have been far too slow. Going through the staff mill, correcting, rewriting, and reproducing in order to put out a written order would have meant we would have been too late with every attack we ever attempted."[24] General Gaedcke added that while serving in the postwar German army, he pulled out of the archives some of his orders from the first Russian campaign. He remarked on this occasion that the new generation of officers probably would find inconceivable the running of a field army with such a small staff and on the basis of such simple, brief instructions: "It was a most peculiar feeling to see the orders, all very simple, that I had written in pencil so that the rain wouldn't smear them—and each had the radio operator's stamp to confirm that they had been transmitted."[25]

The Sixth Army commander, General Balck, whom General Gaedcke served for a time as chief of staff, declared that he could present a five-minute oral order which would last a good commander eight days.[26] Asked after the war about his technique for giving orders, General Balck replied: "Even my largest and most important operations orders were [oral]. After all there wasn't any need for written orders. As division commander, I forbade the use of written orders within my division."[27]

The clever commander will discover many ways to reduce the time it takes to communicate direct, unambiguous instructions to his subordinates. Working toward this goal should be a main objective of the operational-echelon commander.

Ironically, one of the toughest tests facing the commander is deciding when *not* to communicate, i.e. in deciding when to control and when not to. If successful fighting units of the 20th century have proved anything, it is that operations must be decentralized to the lowest level possible. Because the operational commander cannot do everything himself (in fact, he rarely will control combat units directly), he must delegate extensively. Commanders might profit from the example of General Ulysses S. Grant, who pledged never to do himself that which someone else could do as well or better. He "trusted subordinates thoroughly, giving only general directions, not hampering them with petty instructions."[28] Sir William Slim spoke for a legion of successful senior commanders when he summarized the compelling case for decentralization:

> Commanders at all levels had to act more on their own; they were given greater latitude to work out their own plans to achieve what they knew was the Army Commander's intention. In time they developed to a marked degree the flexibility of mind and a firmness of decision that enabled them to act swiftly to take advantage of sudden information or changing circumstances without reference to their superiors . . . . This acting without orders, in anticipation of

> orders, or without waiting for approval, yet always within the overall intention, must become second nature . . . and must go down to the smallest units.[29]

By decentralizing control to low tactical echelons, the operational commander implicitly places heavier weight on his overall intent and lighter weight on detailed orders, thus speeding up the processes of information flow and decisionmaking. The benefits of decentralization are easy to identify. Nonetheless, many in the US Army remain uncomfortable with the practice of issuing mission orders and allowing subordinates broad decision authority within the context of the commander's intent. Among many explanations for this uneasiness, a significant one involves the poor fit of decentralized control with present leadership doctrine. By spotlighting the commander, by exalting his image to the neglect of the follower, the Army subtly and unwittingly has engendered the erroneous notion that the wheel of command will turn only on the strength of the commander.

The final facet of the communication function with which the operational-level commander must be ready to cope is uncertainty, ambiguity, or "noise" (Clausewitz's "friction"). It is astonishing that anyone can perform well as a general in wartime command. Crucial decisions have to be made under "conditions of enormous stress, when *actual* noise, fatigue, lack of sleep, poor food, and grinding responsibility add their quotas to the ever-present threat of total annihilation."[30] Even during the Iranian rescue mission, when some of these conditions did not exist, the sources of friction were plentiful and potent. The Holloway panel investigating the failure of the mission concluded that "the basic weakness displayed by [the Joint Task Force Commander's] staff" was that his "planners were not sufficiently sensitive to those 'areas of great uncertainty' that might have had a shattering impact on the rescue mission."[31] The goal is to be like Grant, "for whom confusion had no terror."[32]

General Archibald Wavell claimed that the first essential of a general is robustness, which he defined as "the ability to stand the shocks of war."[33] The general, Wavell wrote, will constantly be at the mercy of unreliable information, uncertain factors, and unexpected strains. In order to cope in this environment, then, "all material of war, including the general, must have a certain solidity, a high margin over the normal breaking strain."[34] He can develop this toughness only by spending most of his peacetime training in the art and science of warcraft. One cannot expect to play a rough game without getting dirty. The Germans played many rough and dirty games during the interwar years, and as a result were generally better prepared than the Allies. In any event, the friction of war, producing a surfeit of "noise" and a welter of incomplete, erroneous, or conflicting data, stresses to the uttermost a commander's ability to keep his thoughts focused and his communications selective and germane.

Delivering Force on the Objective

After communications, the next fundamental concern in warfighting involves bringing armed force effectively to bear upon the enemy. Force will be applied most effectively if the operational-level commander ascertains, preferably before hostilities begin, the condition he wants to obtain at the end of the conflict. Only if he understands the end he seeks will he be able to prepare a clear statement of intent. No coherent campaign is possible without a lucid vision of how it should conclude. Evidence suggests that planners sometimes do not tend to this crucial first decision.

Students in the School of Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth recently participated in an eight-day Southwest Asia wargame. The pertinent part of the scenario portrayed a takeover by anti-American rebel forces of several key cities in Iran, mostly in the southern part of the country. The rebels threatened to seize the Persian Gulf ports, and thereby shut down oil cargo out of the Gulf. Twenty-plus Soviet divisions from three *fronts* entered Iran in support of the rebels. In response to the threat to its national interests as expressed by the Carter Doctrine, the United States deployed a Joint Task Force to assist the loyalist Iranian forces. Ground forces consisted of roughly five and one-half Army divisions under the control of a field army headquarters plus one Marine Amphibious Force.

SAMS students decided early in the planning that their mission, to "defeat" rebel and Soviet forces in Iran and to facilitate the flow of oil out of the Persian Gulf, needed clarification. What was the defeat criterion? Restore Iran's national borders? Destroy all Soviet and rebel forces within the borders of Iran? Or should they emphasize the second part of the mission statement, to facilitate the West's and Japan's access to Persian Gulf oil? Answers to such questions make a mighty difference. In the absence of a National Command Authority player cell, the students judged that NCA intent was to optimize chances for the uninterrupted flow of oil, consistent with means. With this understanding, they concentrated on securing the vital Gulf ports of Chah Bahar, Bushehr, and Bandar Abbas. The ground commander (in this exercise, the notional US Ninth Army commander) determined that he would attempt to drive out, or prevent from entering, any enemy forces in an area centered on Bandar Abbas and circumscribed by an arc running roughly through Shiraz, Kerman, and Bam, some 250 miles away. This decision made sense in three important respects. First, in the ground commander's opinion, the US force was too small to fight much superior enemy forces across the vast entirety of Iran itself. Second, with almost no infrastructure from which to establish supply operations, to move farther than 250 miles inland would have been logistically unsupportable. Third, this course of action permitted friendly forces to exploit the excellent defensible terrain of the Zagros Mountains. Fourth, a secure enclave would be available from which to launch attacks to

the northwest should the NCA subsequently decide upon a more ambitious and aggressive course.

The SAMS students' decision is not offered as an approved solution. It did not even provide for securing the Iranian oil fields, at least not initially. Rather, it is used to illustrate the importance of establishing the ends of the campaign. Shortly after the SAMS exercise, the students visited each of the operational-level headquarters actually assigned a comparable mission. Ominously, when questioned about the ends they hoped to achieve, four headquarters responded with four different answers. The reason for their differences was that they had never gotten together to agree on ends before allocating means and drawing up plans.

After he decides the end he seeks, the next question the commander must confront is "How do I sequence the actions of the command to produce the desired conclusion to the conflict?" The short answer is that he must think through a series of battles and major operations which will constitute the campaign. He must weigh probabilities and risks and the challenges of battle management. This is anticipation. Good intelligence analyses will help him immensely, as will an in-depth knowledge of the enemy and his psychological predispositions. Despite the imponderables, he must fashion his thoughts into a convincing, coherent outline for a campaign plan. He presents the outline, representing his vision of how the campaign is to unfold, to the staff for refinement.

Although the commander need not be perfectly prescient, it helps immeasurably if his vision matches reality with reasonable fidelity. Planning at the operational level is tougher than at the tactical level because there is a narrower margin for error. The commander had better make the right decisions most of the time and on the big issues because once large formations are set in motion, it is nearly impossible to cause them to halt or change directions quickly. As Colonel Wallace Franz has written: "Operational (large) units, once set in motion, do not conform readily to later modifications. There must be the fullest realization that any adaptation of means cannot be immediate and instantaneous."[35]

Like a member of a football kickoff team, the forces being employed at the operational level must move downfield at top speed with controlled fury. While charging hard, and under the threat of being knocked off his feet from multiple directions, each player must be capable of moving rapidly out of his assigned lane of responsibility if conditions change radically, for example, if the returner has run past him and is going toward the other side of the field. To carry the analogy a step further, if all has gone well for the kickoff team, they will have disrupted the opposition's timing by clogging all eleven potential running lanes. When this situation develops, the opposition's set play collapses and the runner must freelance. If my team is much smaller than the opponent's, I have to rely on quickness, rapid thinking, hit-and-run tactics, and deceptive moves (all of which together

define AirLand Battle doctrine's "agility") to give me the advantage I want.

But all the agility in the world will not be sufficient to guarantee victory. In the real world, it is not unusual for the commander's ideal operational end to exceed his actual operational resources. And it is in recognizing this disconnect that the commander's art must be most acute.

The 18th-century English neoclassicists believed that the antithetical forces of reason and passion struggled for possession of a man's personality. On the actual battlefield the same struggle constantly is being enacted in the mind of the commander. Commanders are sorely tempted to allow emotion to cloud good judgment in decisionmaking. The art lies in realizing when and to what extent to let emotions intervene, to sense when it is proper to discard reason and turn to passion, to let the heart rule the head. Stated differently, the internal conflict is between will and judgment. The force of will usually counsels "can" to the commander while judgment may signal a "cannot."

Nearly every treatise on generalship speaks of the tremendous importance of the will to prevail. The truth of this observation is obvious. The flip side of tenacity, though, is obstinacy. More serious lapses of generalship may have occurred because of a failure to distinguish between tenacity and obstinacy than for any other reason. The general must ever be conscious of the true limitations and capabilities of his forces. As S. L. A. Marshall rightly claims:

> The will does not operate in a vacuum. It cannot be imposed successfully if it runs counter to reason. Things are not done in war primarily because a man wills it; they are done because they are do-able. The limits for the commander in battle are defined by the general circumstances. What he asks of his men must be consistent with the possibilities of the situation.[36]

The way a general understands what his forces can or cannot do is through what Sir John Hackett terms the principle of total engagement. By this he means that the general somehow completely fuses his own identity with the corporate whole of his men.[37] He reaches this state by being a participant in combat, not merely a prompter. In discussing the 1915 Turkish siege of British forces in Kut, India, Norman Dixon furnishes an example of a general who was a prompter and no more. The British commander, Major General Townshend, stayed apart from his soldiers. He had no sense of the true condition of his four weak brigades. As a consequence, his reports lied regarding casualties, food supplies, medical aid, and estimates of Turkish strength.[38] In all, some 43,000 British soldiers needlessly became casualties because their commander lost all physical and emotional contact with his fighting troops. Only when the commander achieves a total moral fusion with his troops will he be able to sense whether they are being asked to do the impossible.

Leadership in War: Summing Up

Doctrine on leadership ought to talk about leadership in war. This is not the case with present manuals. Field Manuals 22-100 and 22-999 speak mostly about personal attributes desirable in a leader. The problem with so much emphasis on personal qualities is that even if the key ones could be identified, a leader probably cannot adhere to them all at the same time or all the time. Let us also recall that those commonly acclaimed as "great" leaders are not necessarily good men. It is possible to be morally blemished and still be a highly effective combat commander.

There is no simple set of rules by which to establish the pillars of generalship. One rule in any set, though, is that the good general must be adept at the art of choosing competent and compatible subordinates, especially his chief of staff. The Army can modify its personnel system to permit senior commanders to select their own staffs. Surely the devising of such a system is within man's ingenuity. This is a *must-do* requirement if the Army is serious about developing warcraft as something distinct from witchcraft. Every superior combat commander in modern times has relied on the brilliant staff work of men he has hand-picked to assist him. Surely there is a lesson in this observation. Chief executive officers of all large corporations choose their own principal subordinates. No university president in his right mind would attempt to assign the nine assistants to the head football coach, nor for that matter would any head coach worth his salt accept such a proposition. The quality of the great majority of today's Army officers is superb. The issue, then, is not so much whether competent officers will surround the senior commander, but whether he will have officers around him who best complement him. Under the Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, CINCs of unified and specified commands will have veto authority over officers nominated for assignment to their staffs. This is a step in the right direction.

Having selected an able staff, the commanding general in combat must then look to his communicating. He should pay special attention to carving out of his schedule time to think; to issuing simple, unambiguous orders; to decentralizing control to the lowest levels possible; and to developing a tolerance for the uncertain and the unexpected. With respect to the delivery of force, the operational-level commander must furnish a clear-sighted vision of the conditions he wants to obtain at the conclusion of the campaign. Based upon an accurate understanding of the capabilities and limitations of the forces he commands, he must conjure a sequence of actions that will bring to fruition the desired outcome. Finally, the commander must be able to discern with certain knowledge the fine distinctions between tenacity and obstinacy.

In the final analysis, US Army operational-level leadership doctrine must step away from preachments on the Boy Scout virtues writ large,

and toward the genuine requirements of wartime command. It must also abandon the idea that the general should and can master all the skills practiced by those subordinate to him; that time has long since passed. Instead, he should spend his precious time preparing to make the kinds of decisions war will require him to make, thereby strengthening the pillars of his generalship against the day they must bear the awful weight of war.

NOTES

1. Gregory Fontenot, "The Promise of Cobra: The Reality of Manchuria," *Military Review*, 65 (September 1985), 54. Fontenot credits Lieutenant Colonel Harold R. Winton for this definition of the operational level of war.
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3. David Chandler, *The Campaigns of Napoleon* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 373.
4. Ibid., p. 56.
5. Ibid., p. 1021.
6. Gunther E. Rothenberg, *The Art of War in the Age of Napoleon* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980), p. 210.
7. Ibid., p. 192.
8. Gordon A. Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army* (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1955), pp. 62-63.
9. Harvey DeWeerd, *Great Soldiers of the Second World War* (London: R. Hale, 1946), p. 117.
10. Bernard L. Montgomery, *The Path to Leadership* (New York: Putnam, 1961), p. 247.
11. Nigel Hamilton, *Monty: The Making of a General, 1887-1942* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981), pp. 405-06.
12. Ibid., p. 553.
13. Ibid.
14. Hubert Essame, *Patton: A Study in Command* (New York: Scribners, 1974), pp. 23-24.
15. Ibid., p. 121.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., pp. 216, 225.
18. Ibid., p. 122.
19. David Irving, *The Trail of the Fox* (New York: Avon, 1978), pp. 170-71.
20. Ibid., p. 406.
21. Montgomery, pp. 249-50.
22. Essame, p. 40.
23. William Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (London: Cassell, 1956), p. 213.
24. Translation of taped conversation with Lieutenant General Heinz Gaedcke, Battelle Laboratories, Columbus, Ohio, 1979, p. 38.
25. Ibid., p. 37.
26. Translation of taped conversation with General Hermann Balck, Battelle Laboratories, Columbus, Ohio, 1979, p. 26.
27. Ibid., p. 25.
28. J. F. C. Fuller, *Grant and Lee* (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1957), p. 74.
29. Slim, pp. 541-42.
30. Norman Dixon, *On the Psychology of Military Incompetence* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), p. 32.
31. Paul B. Ryan, *The Iranian Rescue Mission* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 1985), p. 76.
32. Fuller, p. 75.
33. Archibald Wavell, *Generals and Generalship* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), p. 41. Reprinted with other works in US Army War College's Art of War Colloquium series, December 1983.
34. Ibid., p. 42.
35. Wallace Franz, "Maneuver: The Dynamic Element of Combat," *Military Review*, 63 (May 1983), p. 5.
36. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (1947; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1978), p. 175.
37. Hackett, p. 228.
38. Dixon, pp. 95-99.