

*Dwight
David
Eisenhower*

T H E C E N T E N N I A L

Introduction

For some time, military historians have been exploring the proposition that service in the Armed Forces of our Nation has been instrumental in preparing a notable number of Americans for positions of senior leadership in the government. Military service played a vital role, for example, in the development of such leaders as Andrew Jackson, Theodore Roosevelt, and Harry Truman.

In our own times, perhaps no man better exemplifies this proposition than Dwight David Eisenhower, General of the Army and the thirty-fourth President of the United States. Today, the name Eisenhower is synonymous with dynamic leadership in a complex international environment. But in 1941, this remarkable soldier was nearing the end of an undistinguished military career that had afforded him few opportunities to demonstrate his leadership. Yet, within three years and under the intense pressure of a global war, he rose to become Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe. The leadership skills that won the great land campaigns of the twentieth century did not come about overnight. They were the product of years of development—development that took place in the small peacetime Army of the 1920s and 30s. As we shape the force for the future, that example should serve as a source of inspiration for professionals throughout our ranks.

With this publication, the Army joins in the Nation's remembrance of the 100th anniversary of Dwight Eisenhower's birth. At the same time, this commemoration provides us with a special opportunity to reflect on how military service has prepared so many Americans to contribute so much to the Nation and to the world.

This booklet, prepared by the U.S. Army Center of Military History, will add to your understanding of a great American and help you appreciate the profound influence that a career of military service can have on the future of the Nation.

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16 March 1990



General of the Army Dwight David Eisenhower, Chief of Staff, United States Army. Portrait by Nicodemus Hufford, 1973.

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

Dwight D. Eisenhower was a master craftsman in the demanding art of leadership. For twenty years, first as a soldier and then as a statesman, he bore the daily responsibility for difficult decisions that had far-reaching consequences for the nation. An obscure Army officer in 1940, he was internationally known four years later as the Supreme Allied Commander who was leading the Allied armies, navies, and air forces in the crusade in Europe. But Eisenhower was more than just the coalition's chief soldier. He was also a statesman involved as deeply in arranging the political and diplomatic aspects of the alliance as the military. In the politico-military realm, he encountered the sorts of contentious international issues that could divide even friends and learned to mediate the conflicting demands of men and nations. In the process, he came personally to know the men who shaped the postwar world, leaders with whom he continued to deal as he became Army Chief of Staff in 1945, Commander in Chief of NATO forces in 1950, and President of the United States in 1953.

As the 1930s drew to a close, however, Eisenhower had no expectations of such lofty duties. In 1940, he finally attained the rank of colonel, the limit of his aspirations through the previous twenty-five years of service. During the 1920s and into the mid-1930s, there seemed little chance of another war and thus little chance for distinction. Nonetheless, like many of his generation of officers, Eisenhower diligently studied his profession, preparing himself for jobs he had no realistic expectation of ever holding. It was in those dusty years of peace that much of his schooling as a decision-maker took place.

Preparation for High Command

Dwight David, one of seven sons of David and Ida Eisenhower, was born 14 October 1890 in the little east Texas town of Denison. He grew up in Abilene, Kansas, where he absorbed the virtues of small town America that distinguished him the rest of his life—scrupulous honesty, self-reliance, determination, and hard work. Eisenhower, actively encouraged by his parents and brothers, saw education as a way to better himself and became as much of a scholar as he was an athlete. The balance between the two helped

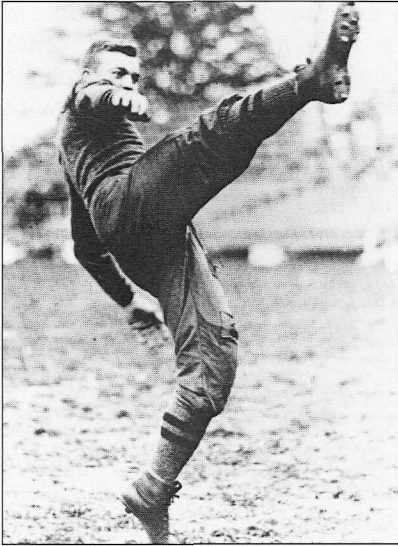
him obtain an appointment to the United States Military Academy in 1911.

The bedrock values of his upbringing, Eisenhower discovered, were also those of West Point's code of Duty, Honor, and Country. The oath of allegiance that he took when he became a cadet signified his acceptance of the civic responsibilities inherent in both codes and remained a cherished moment for the rest of his life. Eisenhower was a good, if not spectacular, cadet, scholar, and athlete, graduating in the upper third of his class in 1915. Of equal importance to the education he received was the friendship of such cadets as Omar Bradley, James A. Van Fleet, and Joseph T. McNarney, all members of the "class the stars fell on," and with men in classes immediately senior and junior to his.

Traits that became valuable years later first emerged at West Point. Eisenhower had the knack of saying the right thing to gain others' cooperation. His strong personality and overwhelming good nature inspired trust. Classmates regarded him as a natural leader who looked for ways to smooth over disputes and organize a group's efforts toward a common goal. As the new second lieutenant of infantry left West Point for his first assignment, it was clear that he was well suited to the world of team play and cooperative endeavor that characterized the Army.

After two years with the 19th Infantry at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, Eisenhower's career accelerated as America began to mobilize for World War I. Regular officers in the rapidly expanding Army found themselves briskly promoted and given challenging commands. Already a Regular Army captain in 1917, Eisenhower was a temporary lieutenant colonel just over a year later. Some of his peers distinguished themselves in France, but Eisenhower never left the United States, a fact that bitterly disappointed him. Instead, he spent the war training troops that others would lead in battle. At the armistice, he was in command of Camp Colt, the Army's tank corps training center on the Civil War battlefield at Gettysburg.

Peace brought demobilization to an Army that had grown to more than two million men. The service contracted to 850,000 in 1919 and then declined to average around 140,000 for the next decade and a half. The officer corps grew smaller as well, and the regulars necessarily returned to their permanent grades. Eisenhower reverted to the rank of captain in June 1920, but he was promoted to Regular Army major a few days later. He held that rank for the next sixteen years of peacetime duty in an Army that appeared to many to have no real function.



Cadet Eisenhower, United States Military Academy Class of 1915. Classmates regarded him as a natural leader who looked for ways to smooth over disputes and organize a group's efforts toward a common goal.

Critics of the Army had a strong argument. After the defeat of Imperial Germany, there seemed to be no apparent enemy to justify the continued expenses of a standing army or to sustain any popular zeal for military preparedness. An enemy for an army is like sin for an evangelist, but only in the Pacific was there a credible threat, and American war planners agreed that a war against Japan would be a naval war, by and large. Thus the consequences of peace for the Army were reduced budgets and a smaller force, and for its officers, a succession of dreary postings to the little forts and camps that made up the interwar service.

Eisenhower's assignments in the postwar period were much like those of any other officer. He had limited time with troops and did not manage to get a battalion command until 1940. He spent years in miscellaneous administrative duties that included recruiting, periodic details as a football coach, and staff work. In 1927 and 1929 he served on the American Battle Monuments Commission and wrote a guide to American battlefields in France. In due course, he attended the Command and General Staff School and, because he graduated at the top of his class, later gained admittance to the prestigious Army War College and the Army Industrial College.

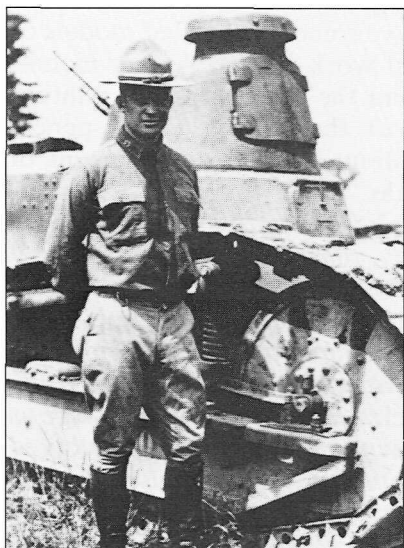
Eisenhower's peacetime service was unique in several respects, however. His World War I service training troops for the tank

corps and a subsequent tank corps assignment at Fort Meade in 1920 gave him an early familiarity with armor that few other officers could match. More significantly, the brigade to which he was assigned was under the command of George S. Patton, with whom Eisenhower forged an enduring friendship. The two men began an intensive study program to prepare themselves for the day when they would be students at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, methodically working their way through the tactical problems the school had used in previous years. Because of his work with Patton, Eisenhower was a serious student of tactics when he met Brig. Gen. Fox Conner, one of the most important influences in his life.

Eisenhower accompanied Conner to Panama in 1922, where the general assumed command of the 20th Infantry Brigade. The young major became his chief of staff. The two men developed a unique relationship when Conner decided to superintend Eisenhower's military education. Under Conner's tutelage, Eisenhower perfected his administrative and tactical techniques by drafting formal orders for each day's operations in the brigade and by analyzing the tactical problems of fighting on the terrain in Panama. The general also directed an intensive reading program that introduced Eisenhower to Plato and Tacitus, influential thinkers such as Nietzsche, the various military writers of his day, and Clausewitz, whose *On War* he read three times.

In Socratic dialogues that accompanied Eisenhower's readings, Conner and his student discussed the nature of war. One important aspect of those discussions was Conner's insistence that the Treaty of Versailles made another war inevitable within thirty years, and that any future war would be waged by a coalition of which the United States would be a part. Because of his dialogues with Conner, Eisenhower was well aware of the defects in the allied military command structure of the First World War, and he began pondering the question of coalition warfare as early as 1924.

The eventual consequence of Eisenhower's attendance at the Army's senior military schools was a posting to the War Department in the early 1930s, the first of a series of high-level assignments that accustomed him to dealing with issues of Army-wide significance. In 1930 he became special assistant to General Douglas MacArthur, then Chief of Staff. During those Depression years the Chief of Staff faced an uphill struggle to justify the Army's budget to a Congress intent on slashing military appropriations, while trying to allocate scarce resources to a service with a great



Schooling in the varied tasks of a future Supreme Commander. Captain Eisenhower, at Camp Meade, Maryland, 1920; training troops for the tank corps gave him an early familiarity with armor that few other officers could match. Below, Eisenhower in the Philippines, 1935; for the next four years, his duties in helping to create the defenses of those islands were as much diplomatic as they were military.



many pressing needs. Through that period, Eisenhower drafted MacArthur's speeches, lobbied Congress, and helped to prepare Chief of Staff annual reports that have since been called models of their kind. Eisenhower's confidential work for MacArthur included careful studies of mobilization and the relationship of military power to the industrial capacity of the nation. Other papers considered mechanization, mobilization, and the development of air power in relation to ground battle.

MacArthur recognized his subordinate's talents and considered him the best staff officer in the Army, remarking that his principal strength was an ability to look at problems from the point of view of the high command. When MacArthur went to the Philippines as military adviser to the government of that commonwealth in 1935, he took Eisenhower along as his assistant. For the next four years, his duties in helping to create the defenses of those islands were as much diplomatic as they were military, inasmuch as they involved frequent coordination with the American High Commissioner and with the government of the Philippines.

Eisenhower returned to the United States at the end of 1939. The next two, fast-paced years were crucial ones in which the experience of filling a series of key administrative and coordinative posts in an operational Army rounded out his professional education. During his first year back in the country, he briefly commanded a battalion of the 15th Infantry and then served as regimental executive officer. Late in 1940 he became chief of staff of the 3d Infantry Division at Fort Lewis. March 1941 saw yet another reassignment, as Eisenhower progressed to become chief of staff of the newly activated IX Corps. Finally, in June 1941, he stepped up to the headquarters of Third Army at San Antonio. There he took up duties as chief of staff to Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger.

From his vantage point in Third Army, Eisenhower studied the problems of the expanding Army and grasped the nature of the citizen-soldier force he was helping to build. It was obvious to him that the discipline and traditions of the Regular Army were inappropriate for the mobilization Army. The new soldiers needed thorough training, but they also had to understand the reasons for the tasks they were required to do. He likewise observed the problems as officers with little practical experience began to grapple with command of combat units. Success in higher command, he concluded, demanded officers who were orderly and logical without being slow and methodical, and who struck an appropriate balance between charisma and empty flashiness.

The culmination of his prewar training came in the Louisiana maneuvers of 1941, the largest and most realistic held in the United States to that point. Third Army decisively defeated Lt. Gen. Ben Lear's opposing Second Army in wide-ranging war games that got national publicity, and in which Eisenhower was credited with devising Third Army's plan of battle.

Marshall's Protege

Five days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought an American declaration of war on the Axis Powers, Col. Walter Bedell Smith telephoned Third Army's chief of staff. Smith, Secretary of the General Staff in the War Department, told Eisenhower that General George C. Marshall wanted him in Washington immediately. Marshall knew Eisenhower by reputation as a man who would assume responsibility, but he put that reputation to a test immediately. When Eisenhower reported for duty, Marshall posed a problem to which he already knew the answer. He asked for a recommendation on how the entire Pacific strategy should be handled. Eisenhower returned to the Chief of Staff's office a few hours later and briefed a strategic concept with which Marshall agreed. The Chief of Staff ended the interview with clear instructions. "Eisenhower," he said, "the Department is filled with able men who analyze their problems well but feel compelled always to bring them to me for final solution. I must have assistants who will solve their own problems and tell me later what they have done."

That conversation set the tone of the relationship between the two men. Eisenhower approached his job by trying to put himself into Marshall's place and resolve a problem the way his chief would do it, had he the time. The results were good, and Marshall soon gave Eisenhower increasingly demanding problems that tested his abilities to the fullest. His assignment in War Plans Division, where he was the responsible staff officer for arranging support for the Philippines and Far East in general, turned out to have problems with no reasonable solution. The ultimately fruitless attempt to help the Army's defenders of the Philippines, stranded by the calamity that had befallen the Pacific Fleet, dominated Eisenhower's attention for months. While struggling with that task he also began to deal with other and broader issues. At the end of December 1941, for example, he accompanied Marshall to the Arcadia Conference at which the United States

and Great Britain confirmed their "Germany first" strategy and created the Combined Chiefs of Staff to direct the war. Winston Churchill, who met Eisenhower at the conference, was impressed by his trenchant assessment of the European situation.

Shortly thereafter, Eisenhower became chief of the War Plans Division (subsequently Operations Division), the office widely regarded as the brains of the Army, and threw himself into drafting basic strategy for the war against the Axis. In late February 1942, Marshall asked for a memorandum to outline for the President and the Combined Chiefs the general strategy the Allies should pursue. In response, Eisenhower drafted a document that was in effect a precis of the next three years of the war. He observed that there were many desirable objectives the alliance might pursue, but warned that the resources did not exist to tackle every problem. Instead, he wrote, it was crucial to concentrate exclusively on those operations that were *necessary* to defeat the Axis. In his view, such a resolutely disciplined strategic conception offered the only hope of victory.

In a tightly focused summary, he sketched the actions necessary to prevent defeat while the Allies armed and organized themselves to take the offensive. Holding rigidly to the distinction between the necessary and the desirable, Eisenhower delineated a plan that included security for the North American arsenal, maintenance of Great Britain, and lend-lease to keep the Soviet Union in the war. His analysis excluded Pacific operations, so important to Americans for emotional reasons, as being of secondary importance.

Turning to the question of which offensive operation would contribute most directly to Axis defeat, he reasoned that Germany was the most dangerous enemy and the only one that all three members of the coalition could attack simultaneously. He accordingly reaffirmed the alliance's earliest strategic conception of dealing with Europe first and advocated a culminating attack on Germany through northern France, using Great Britain as a base. He adduced many advantages for this plan. The United States was already supplying Great Britain's needs, and to conduct the build-up there for the attack involved the minimum additional demands for shipping and escort vessels. A United Kingdom base was closest to the Continent, had plentiful airfields, and was the only logical place from which to employ the bulk of British Empire forces. Concentration of forces there also presented a threat that would oblige Germany to station large numbers of troops in

France, thus immediately relieving some of the pressure on the Soviet Union.

Nothing in Eisenhower's paper was new, but the logic of its presentation refocused War Department attention on Germany. In practical terms, his work described the tasks the United States and Great Britain had to accomplish and amounted to a directive to the future commander of the Allied forces. The cumulative effect of Eisenhower's staff work in the War Department and his dealings with the British convinced General Marshall that this was the man to take command of American forces in the European Theater. On 25 June 1942, he designated Eisenhower Commanding General, European Theater, with headquarters in London.

The selection was an act of faith. Over the years Eisenhower had worked for a series of excellent men whose recommendations carried considerable weight. Pershing, Conner, MacArthur, and Krueger, among others, believed he would be a good commander, but the fact was that Eisenhower, the commander, was unproven in 1941. He had never served in combat, had small experience with troops, and little background in directing the efforts of large units of men and equipment. On the other hand, he had a solid reputation as a superb staff officer whose extended duty in senior headquarters had given him the ability to abstract the essentials of a problem. Most important, however, was that Eisenhower had earned George Marshall's trust, and that Marshall saw in him a man who had the vision to execute the strategy the Allies had agreed upon.

Supreme Commander

Eisenhower's close professional relationship with the Chief of Staff continued after he moved to London. The new theater commander continued to look at problems as he believed Marshall would see them, and he solved them in accordance with his understanding of the Chief of Staff's policies. That was fortunate, because the grand alliance against the Axis was in large part Marshall's conception; the Supreme Allied Command in Europe was the direct result of his drive and determination; and the essential Allied strategy was the product of his imagination. Where policy was concerned, Marshall's was the guiding hand. Eisenhower was perfectly attuned to his chief's ideas, and was the ideal officer to translate Marshall's grand strategy into practice.

Eisenhower, however, was more than just Marshall's agent. The Supreme Allied Command in Europe would never have worked without Eisenhower, for he virtually invented the concept of Allied unity of command and persuaded the British to accept it in lieu of the committee system to which they were accustomed. His personal qualities played a large part in gaining acceptance of a much more centralized and powerful Allied command than had existed in World War I. Men instinctively trusted him, and his measured approach to command reinforced a conviction that he was an honest broker whose central purpose was the defeat of the enemy, rather than the pursuit of any national agenda. Eisenhower, in short, was the essential man in the coalition against Hitler.

The job of Supreme Commander lay in the future when he arrived in England. At first, he was only the commander of American troops in the European Theater, and had the immediate task of assembling the means with which to pursue the war. Few combat-ready American soldiers were in the United Kingdom at the time, and there was a shortage of ships, landing craft, weapons, ammunition, air power, and solid intelligence about the enemy. Eisenhower devoted himself to energizing his staff, building a solid relationship with the British ally, and managing Operation BOLERO, as the buildup of resources for the ultimate invasion of Europe was dubbed. In November of 1942, incident to the decision to land British and American troops in North Africa (Operation TORCH), the Combined Chiefs of Staff appointed Eisenhower Commander in Chief, Allied Forces, for that invasion.

Both Marshall and Eisenhower had resisted the decision for TORCH because it was a diversion of resources from the invasion of Europe, an operation they insisted was far more important. Nonetheless, a confluence of political and military considerations on both sides of the Atlantic argued in favor of TORCH, and their combined weight overwhelmed War Department objections. American military plans had never envisioned an invasion of Europe before 1943, except in the most exceptional circumstances, but President Franklin D. Roosevelt had concluded that he simply could not wait that long for American soldiers to begin fighting the nation's chief enemy. He accordingly directed Marshall to find some way to come to grips with the Germans in 1942. At the same time, American commanders in the Pacific were casting covetous eyes on the men and equipment BOLERO was concentrating in Europe. Unless Eisenhower made some use of that military power soon, Marshall knew, MacArthur and the Navy would submit

persuasive arguments to transfer it to their commands. Reflecting longstanding British concern for the Mediterranean, Prime Minister Churchill strongly supported a North African campaign as one component of a peripheral strategy to tighten the ring around Germany. Bowing to the inevitable, Marshall at last selected TORCH as the best of a poor lot of options. It was up to Eisenhower to carry the plan through.

Eisenhower later said that the command decisions relating to TORCH were among the most worrisome that he had to make in the entire war. The unprecedented scope and complexity of the operation depended upon amphibious landings, which were inherently risky and with which his forces had little worthwhile experience. Added to this concern was a nagging uncertainty as to how the Vichy French would react when the United States launched an invasion of the territory of a neutral nation without a declaration of war. Moreover, TORCH was America's first campaign in the crucial European Theater, and it was Eisenhower's debut in the ticklish business of commanding Allied officers who were not only senior in rank, but also more experienced. At the time of TORCH, Lieutenant General Eisenhower's permanent grade was still lieutenant colonel.

Mediterranean operations inevitably delayed the final invasion of Europe, but it turned out that TORCH had important benefits outside the realm of strategy. Battle was the only sure measure of equipment, some of which proved inadequate, and of training and leadership. North Africa accordingly became the laboratory in which he tested both men and concepts in Allied cooperation. At the tactical level, American soldiers absorbed the lessons of their first battles, and American commanders adjusted their training to acknowledge the defects war had revealed. Allied commanders learned something of the difficulties of fighting alongside each other, and the entire Allied force gained invaluable experience in planning and conducting amphibious landings. Eisenhower discovered that handling coalition warfare involving the three armed services of two nations in a campaign launched on hostile soil by amphibious landings, where logistical and administrative support did not previously exist, was even more complex than he had imagined.

TORCH and the subsequent Mediterranean operations were a period in which Eisenhower matured and gained self-confidence as a commander. Simultaneously, his Anglo-American staff settled down and became proficient in combined staff planning and