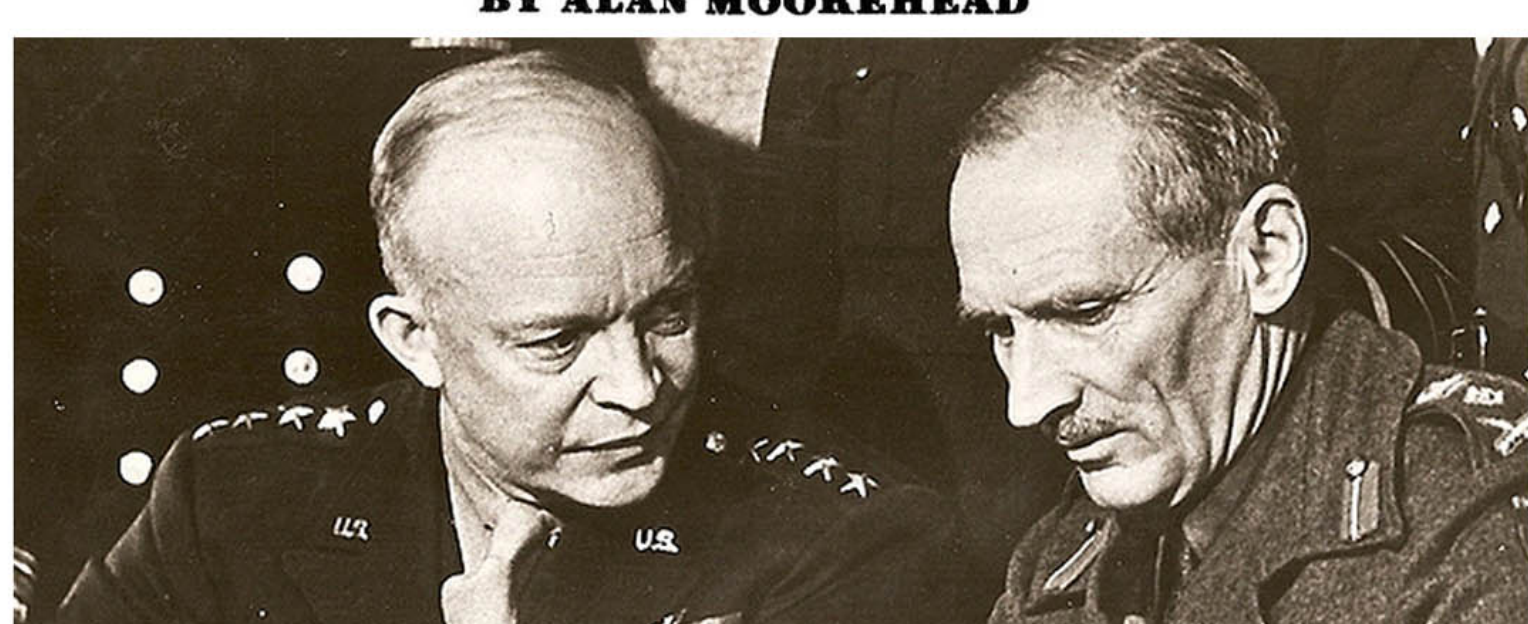


MONTGOMERY'S QUARREL WITH EISENHOWER

BY ALAN MOOREHEAD



To understand the historic quarrel between Eisenhower and Montgomery it is necessary to know the personalities of the men and the background of events.

The controversy was a serious one. Americans like Captain Butcher (Eisenhower's aide) and Ralph Ingersoll (in his book *Top Secret*) are critical of Montgomery. Ingersoll argues that Montgomery failed at Caen and jeopardized the entire invasion. He contends that the war would have been ended by Christmas, 1944, if Montgomery had not urged that the bulk of Allied supplies be given him for an attack in the north.

The controversy touched the highest levels. It provoked emotional prejudices. Before it was finished it had brought Eisenhower to the point of ultimatum: Either he or Montgomery would have to go. Let Washington and London decide.

In short, there are two versions of the campaign in France and Germany. This is Montgomery's side of it, as told by Alan Moorehead, Britain's famed war correspondent, in *Montgomery: A Biography*. His account of the Eisenhower-Montgomery friction was made possible only by access to Montgomery's official correspondence and other military documents.

IN FRANCE, early in 1944, a piece of great good fortune had befallen the Allies. Hitler had decided to pit Rommel as his field general for one last decisive throw against his old desert enemy, Montgomery.

It would be difficult to imagine anything more auspicious for the Allied cause. Rommel never was the match of Montgomery in a set piece battle. Impulsive, erratic and restless by temperament, he allowed his line to be flung off balance whenever a struggle dragged on.

To oppose invasion of Europe, Rommel rushed all his main defenses up to the coast. Everything to Rommel depended on the Atlantic Wall. A complex about the Wall had grown up in the German army. It *must* hold.

In England, Montgomery was ranged on the side of the planners who opposed an early landing in 1944. He refused to budge until all was ready; until all the railways were geared, all the stocks delivered to the ports, the pipe lines and the wharves completed and the latest tanks delivered from America.

Montgomery had revived in England the idea of personal leadership in the military field, just as Churchill had done it some years previously in the political field. Perhaps, as many said, his besetting sin was vanity; certainly he appeared at times to be intransigent and stubborn to the point of bigotry, to oppose others simply for the love of opposing them.

But these vices, if they existed in him, had also distilled a virtue which was regrettably lacking at times among the officers struggling up to a high command: he was nobody's sycophant, he could not be dined and wined into an amenable frame of mind, he could not be impressed by a show of authority nor were his wits clouded by ceremony. Nor was he unduly handicapped by the niceties of tact and diplomacy. He was wholly unbribable—even by the subtlest forms of bribery. And he never intrigued.

By the time the invasion was ready Churchill, most of the British Cabinet and a great part of the Allied command were ardent admirers of Montgomery's skill, his confidence and his toughness of moral character. But Churchill was a warm-blooded man. His was not the surgical ap-

proach to war. He chafed at the endless preparations, the logistics, the mountainous tables of tonnages, the graphs, the figures.

He queried the loading program. He thought there were too many vehicles on the boats. Get the soldiers ashore. That was the thing. The paraphernalia could follow afterward. Barely a week before D-Day he decided to go down to Montgomery's headquarters to address the general's staff upon the subject. Montgomery was waiting to receive him but first led the way into a study. There Montgomery put down his cards on the table.

It was unwise, he said, for the Prime Minister to speak to the staff at that moment. Even if he, Montgomery, was wrong it was too late now to alter things. The loaded trains were running to the ports. If the Prime Minister insisted on any alterations at this eleventh hour—then someone else must be found to lead the expedition.

The bombshell fell quietly on the room. Suddenly Churchill gave way. He had had something more than a tolerable or a human burden on his mind in the past few months; and now this was too much. Possibly he saw, and with a sense of overwhelming relief, that events now had reached the point where they were beyond control of any one man.

Churchill got up and went out. The generals, the brigadiers and the colonels were drawn up in a line. One by one Montgomery introduced them. Everyone sensed there had been a crisis. Most of them guessed what had taken place in the study.

Churchill got to the head of the line and surveyed them for a moment without speaking. Then the old lion had his final roar. Some sly imp made him say, and with dignity: "I'm not allowed to talk to you, gentlemen." Then he walked out. The scene was all his.

On the following day, June 6, 1944, the blow was struck and Montgomery followed his shock troops over to Normandy.

At the time of the invasion, Montgomery believed that the Germans could have been thrown out of the war by the following Christmas and the Japanese defeated within six months thereafter. During the campaign and afterward, he stuck to his view that the war might have ended according to his timetable had he remained in control of the armies in the field.

To the public the events flowed by in a coherent and connected pattern under the guiding hand of Eisenhower. One great milestone followed another: First the unbelievable success of the landing in June and the capture of Cherbourg. Then, through July and August, the long, anxious battle of the bridgehead ending with the American breakout through St. Lô and the encirclement and destruction of the German army in the Falaise Pocket. Then through the last days of the summer the kaleidoscopic and delirious pursuit, the fall of Paris, Brussels, Holland, the new American army

sweeping up from southern France, and the Russian avalanche to the Oder.

From day to day one talked of the ending of the war. Then the failure of Arnhem, the slow release of Antwerp, the abrupt halt all along the line ending with the ominous German counteroffensive at Christmas in the Ardennes. Then the dragging winter attacks up to the Rhine. And finally, in the spring, the breaking of the tidal wave which engulfed Germany from the east and the west.

Each event appeared to follow on, logically and inevitably.

Differences of Opinion

But this was not so. The gravest divisions of opinion developed in the Allied High Command. Personal jealousies flared up. There were many moments of the most serious doubts and hesitations. Vain and ridiculously emotional national rivalries clouded the issues. And often prejudices took fire through the lack of information and the unavoidable confusion of war.

Montgomery wandered, a prickly and lonely prophet, through these political thickets. To his opponents he seemed to be forever growling vainly out of his lair: "Have done. Away with these arguments. There is only one way to settle the war and that is to let me finish it for you. Just relax and hand over the business to me."

At first Montgomery was away on his own. From June until August, from the landing until the Falaise Pocket, he controlled the Allied armies in the field, and the general direction of the tactical battle was his own. Let us dip into his own account of the engagement:

"Once ashore and firmly established my plan was to threaten to break out on the eastern flank—that is, in the Caen sector; by this threat to draw the main enemy reserves into that sector, to fight them there and keep them there, using the British and Canadian armies for the purpose. Having got the main enemy reserves committed on the *eastern* flank, my plan was to make the breakout on the *western* flank, using for this purpose the American armies under General Bradley, and pivoting on Caen; this attack was to be delivered southward down to the Loire and then to proceed eastward in a wide sweep up to the Seine about Paris.

"This would cut off all the enemy forces south of the Seine, over which river the bridges were to be destroyed by air action. This general plan was given out by me to the general officers of the field armies in London in March, 1944—that is, three months before D-Day.

"The operations developed in June, July and August exactly as I planned. I had given D plus 90 as a target date for being lined up on the Seine; actually the first crossing of the river was made on D plus 75."

After the landing in France, Mont-

gomery's initiative was maintained; but this was not apparent at the time. A "slogging match" developed, a bitter and excruciating series of battles which did not appear to be getting us anywhere. To the public who did not know the plan and the devious phases of its unfolding, and to the soldier who could not see the battle for the bullets, these hideous and changing conflicts of June and July seemed to be without pattern or direction, a chaos in which luck and courage governed all. Even some of those in command who knew the plan began to lose heart, so fierce and continuous was the struggle. And in the absence of detailed and consecutive news from hour to hour their minds began to fill with doubts.

It had been hoped in the planning that Caen would fall to the British in the assault. It did not fall; and immediately all those people who judge campaigns by the capture of towns and place names began to imagine that we had failed. They forgot that it was not Caen we wanted, but to attract the bulk of the German armor and artillery to this end of the bridgehead so that the Americans would be able to make an easier breakout at the other end. And this is precisely what happened. Although Caen did not fall in June, Rommel reacted entirely to Montgomery's plan by directing the bulk of his striking forces against the British on the outskirts of the city.

As these battles grew fiercer through June, people at home began to suggest: "Montgomery has failed. He is getting nowhere. Why does not Caen fall?" At length Eisenhower was forced to take notice of them and his fears were confided to the Prime Minister. Did Monty really know what he was doing?

Strategy According to Plan

Mr. Churchill crossed to Montgomery's headquarters in France and found there the most surprising confidence. Setbacks? What setbacks? The battle was going excellently to plan. Having been beaten in the first assault, Rommel was still hoping to wipe out the bridgehead and he was going about it in precisely the wrong way. He was draining the rest of France of reserves in order to fight the decisive battle then and there in Normandy.

Rommel had been bluffed by the Allied deception plans. He continued to fear a second Allied landing in the Pas-de-Calais area and so he was cautiously bringing down his reserves piecemeal into Normandy. One by one they were being defeated and in the end, if this went on, there would be no divisions left for a later stand on the Seine.

Montgomery reminded Churchill of the plan which had been agreed upon in March. Well, then, here was the plan in operation. Let the newspapers and critics hold their hands for a moment and they would see a victory.

Convinced, Churchill returned to England and passed on what had been said

to Eisenhower. The Supreme Commander, if not exactly happy, was also inclined to put his trust in Montgomery, and from this moment until the closing of the gap at Falaise, Eisenhower loyally confirmed Montgomery's control.

The controversy might have ended here but for the appearance of several popular postwar books in America. Captain Harry C. Butcher in his *My Three Years with Eisenhower* reports that in June, 1944, at SHAEF there were constant complaints at the slowness of Montgomery, who "waited so long (at Caen) that two Panzer divisions were drawn against him." This is set in contrast to Bradley's rapid progress on the right flank. Again, under the date of July 20th, Captain Butcher says, "Tedder says the British Chiefs of Staff would support any recommendation Ike might care to make with respect to Montgomery for not succeeding in going places with his big three-armored-division push (again near Caen)."

It seems incredible (especially as Captain Butcher was Eisenhower's chief aide at the time) that the SHAEF commanders could have had no notion of Montgomery's plan or that they could not have perceived that Montgomery was doing precisely what he had said he would do—attract the German armor to Caen so that Bradley could break out on the right flank.

Mr. Ralph Ingersoll, an American journalist who was attached to Bradley's staff, also wrote a book, *Top Secret*, which was published in 1946. He, too, makes the astonishing assertion that "Montgomery failed at Caen." He appears to believe (and the view was given wide currency in America) that the plan was for the British and Canadians to break out of Caen toward Paris, and that when this failed a dangerous stalemate developed. It is also suggested that at this point (in July) the strategy had to be changed: The feeble British were left behind at Caen while the Americans opened up an entirely new salient on the right.

As we now know from the officially published documents, the role of the British at this stage was never to break out and the strategy was never changed. The plan as laid down by Montgomery in March, 1944, was followed to the letter and with overwhelming success. Very deliberately the British with their staying powers were set to attract and meet the great bulk of the German armor in a slogging match around Caen, while the Americans with their marvelous equipment, their mobility and their ardor for quick movement were given the fast-riding role in the west at St. Lô.

However, at the time, Montgomery's plan was going ahead.

On July 25th the Americans started their breakout through St. Lô. From there, they were to race on to Paris, the Seine and eastern France. It was the end. It was also probably the last of the classic land battles ever to be seen or endured in Europe.

Montgomery had made good his word a hundred times over. The plan had been pure gold. He had fought his greatest battle. And now he was entirely master of the battlefield, and the road led on directly to the final *coup de grâce*.

It was at this point in August that Eisenhower sent word that Montgomery must step down. He must revert to the minor command of the two British armies while Eisenhower himself took up

the operational direction in the field. To Montgomery the news could hardly be other than bitterly disappointing; a humiliating blow that took the edge off the whole victory.

It was a difficult moment for everybody. Eisenhower had done nothing which had not been prearranged. It had been accepted from the first that he was the Supreme Commander and that he must one day cross over to France and gather up the reins himself. There was no discourtesy and certainly no jealousy in the manner in which he took over the operational command; indeed he made it clear that Montgomery's future advice on the general conduct of the war would hold high priority.

To Eisenhower it seemed that he had no choice. There were now five American armies deployed as against two British. The American generals (let alone Congress and the American public) were wholly unwilling to continue under Montgomery's command—it was a slur on their own ability. Moreover an Allied Headquarters had been created to meet this very situation, and Montgomery was not the man who had been nominated by Britain as the second in command. That position had been given to Air Marshal Tedder. If Montgomery continued to supplant Eisenhower and Tedder, there would be an outcry in the United States press and Parliament.

To Montgomery these arguments were not conclusive. He had won a great victory. He had demonstrated a skill which had brought the Allies overwhelming success. Surely he was entitled to follow up that success. It was inefficient and dangerous to change horses in midstream.

As for the American press, Montgomery argued, this point was of no account. *Victories were the only thing that mattered, not public opinion.*

Disagree on Tactics

These two points of view were already irreconcilable enough, but something much more insoluble intervened. Supreme headquarters and Montgomery were radically opposed on the actual tactics of the campaign as it should be fought from the Seine onward.

Montgomery believed that the moment had come to throw Germany out of the war with one bold and decisive stroke. Given some forty divisions, or about a million men, and the cream of the air force, he was confident he could make one major thrust along the northern coast of Europe, enter the Ruhr and bring Germans to surrender. To do this he estimated that the Allies would have to halt on the right (in central France) and divert all priorities in gasoline, vehicles and other equipment to the northern column. Indeed, with that plan in view he had already ordered Bradley to seize Paris, plug the gap between Paris and Orléans and then stop.

Supreme headquarters strongly disagreed. One could not leave all France behind and expose a flank hundreds of miles in length. The thrust could never be maintained. It was absolutely necessary to capture first a large supply port on the North Sea. All the armies (there were now seven) must move up to the Rhine together.

Montgomery protested that this would mean that the war would drag on for months; that if we presented a long thin front to the enemy then Rundstedt would

hold it off and we would be nowhere strong enough to break it. Now in August was the moment when he was unable to withstand one concentrated blow.

The arguments swayed back and forth through correspondence and subordinates and were continued in a painful meeting between Eisenhower and Montgomery themselves in Montgomery's caravan. Montgomery would not and Eisenhower could not back down. And so it came to a matter of the senior man exerting his authority. Montgomery has summed up the issue himself:

"The Supreme Commander came to the decision that we should not at this stage stick out our neck in one single thrust deep into enemy territory, owing to our lack of major deep-water ports. The line of communications still stretched to the Normandy beaches and Cherbourg peninsula and the autumn weather was close upon us. He therefore decided that the early opening up of deep-water ports and the improvement of our maintenance facilities were prerequisites to the final assault on Germany proper. He directed that our immediate aim should be the establishment of bridges over the Rhine throughout its entire length, and that we should not go beyond this until Antwerp or Rotterdam could be opened."

Montgomery went off obediently enough to clean up the deep-water port of Antwerp. No personal animosity remained between him and Eisenhower. They had disagreed on a technical level, but each continued to respect the integrity and honesty of the other. Courtiers about the High Command whispered

On September 4th, Montgomery wrote to Eisenhower stressing his opposition to the SHAEF plan. He reiterated that we would be nowhere strong enough to get decisive results quickly, the Germans would thus be given time to recover and we would become involved in a long winter campaign.

Again Montgomery asserted that there must be under Eisenhower a land force commander who would co-ordinate the armies and keep close up with the battle. The face of modern war was such, he argued, that a battle could very quickly get out of hand unless some one commander was able to give his sole and undivided attention to it. Eisenhower himself was already involved with too many problems: political, international, financial, governmental. Therefore, let Eisenhower have an Army C-in-C just as he already had an Air and a Navy C-in-C.

The letter can hardly have made agreeable reading to the soldiers at SHAEF. But Montgomery appended a startling suggestion. "If," he said, "I am not suitable for the appointment of C-in-C in the field, let Bradley have the job."

On September 15th, Eisenhower followed up his orders with a letter to Montgomery saying, "We shall soon have captured the Ruhr, and the Saar and the Frankfurt area, and I would like your views as to what we should do next."

Montgomery received this letter at a time when he was fighting increasing resistance on the Leopold Canal and other lines. He replied that he saw no chance of capturing the Ruhr or the Saar or the Frankfurt area unless the command and the strategy were reorganized in what he considered a more professional way.

Stalemate on the Rhine

A longer and in some ways more grueling engagement followed in October with the reduction of the approaches to Antwerp, which was to become the vital port for the Allies. In early November the port was clear. Meanwhile, things had not gone too well all along the line; somehow the German rout at Falaise had turned into a bitter defense, and all hope of finishing the war before Christmas had vanished. There was no sign anywhere of the Allies achieving an early passage of the river. The armies had come up to the Rhine together and now they were blocked. It was impossible to deny that a great many of the dire things Montgomery had predicted about the SHAEF plan had actually come to pass.

Restless, frustrated and impatient, Montgomery wrote again to the Supreme Commander. On December 13th the letter was delivered to Eisenhower, who by then had taken up his headquarters at Versailles, outside Paris. In it Montgomery declared that the strategy since Falaise had not been successful. Things indeed had gone wrong ever since Eisenhower himself had taken over the direct command in his remote headquarters. If the Supreme Commander would not appoint a deputy to combine the battle at the front, then Montgomery had another suggestion. Let him organize the theater into "fronts" with a C-in-C in charge of each front. Resources should be allotted to each front in accordance with its problems and tasks.

The northern front, Montgomery urged, should be given to himself and it should extend southward as far as the Ardennes. This would mean placing the American Ninth Army as well as the British and Canadians under Montgomery; and thus they would proceed to the capture of the Ruhr.

General Bradley at once hotly opposed this plan. In Washington also the idea of again placing American troops under British command was strongly opposed—even resented.

In London the British Chiefs of Staff, reviewing the disappointing results of the autumn, on the whole, took Montgomery's side.

Here, then, was a disagreement running beyond personalities into the sphere of governments, and Eisenhower needed a more than human patience and tact to cope with it. The argument was continuing in a desultory way when suddenly the Germans struck in the Ardennes with the largest assembly of armor ever seen in Europe; the object nothing less than the recapture of Antwerp and the cutting of the Allied forces in half. The American armies were split down the center. Through December 16th and 17th the situation was out of control.

At Supreme Headquarters in Versailles there was a commotion as the appalling news came in. Conference followed conference. It was useless now to discuss whether in fact the general strategy was wrong; the thing was to do something quickly. Major General Whiteley, a senior British officer attached to Eisenhower, suggested that Montgomery should be called in.

At once, as though they had been waiting for this very day, the rivalries flared out. A strong faction at Supreme Headquarters (it was British as well as

American) had never admitted Montgomery's skill in the battle of Normandy: indeed it believed that he had mishandled it. They had urged his replacement while the battle was on and they could see no reason for calling him in now. They disliked his personality, they suspected he would be all too ready to crow over the matter and exacerbate feelings in every direction.

Eisenhower Makes Decision

Another group, while no lovers of the Montgomery manner, were willing to admit his skill and believed that at least he could be given some measure of control. Eisenhower decided that Montgomery should have command of the First and Ninth American armies then in the thick of the fighting in the north. Bradley meanwhile should continue in control of the remaining American forces on the southern flank of the battle.

Thus began the incident of the Ardennes, which was clouded by the crisis at the time and seems to have become more clouded by prejudices and emotional rivalries ever since.

What happened in the Ardennes? The facts as we read them in the Intelligence reports and the war diaries seem clear enough. The Germans struck with two Panzer armies and made a deep penetration at a point where the Americans were regrouping: They demolished an untried American division and proceeded at speed toward Liège and the River Meuse, leaving isolated pockets of American resistance behind them.

Montgomery, acting on his own initiative as the first reports came in, canceled the mustering of his British armies for a battle in the extreme north and instead began to cover the approaches to Brussels and Antwerp.

On December 20th he assumed command of the First and Ninth American Armies in the main battle area. Judging that the Germans intended to continue toward Liège, he canceled the American plans for counterattack and instead formed a defensive line.

To continue in Montgomery's own words: "The battle of the Ardennes was won primarily by the stanch fighting qualities of the American soldier, and the enemy's subsequent confusion was completed by the intense air action which became possible as weather conditions improved. Sixth SS Panzer Army broke itself against the northern shoulder of the salient while Fifth Panzer Army spent its drive in the fierce battles which centered on Bastogne. Regrouping the First and Ninth U.S. Armies, assisted by British formations, made possible the rapid formation of a reserve corps of four U.S. divisions under General Collins. The action of this corps, co-ordinated with the drive from the south by General Patton's Third Army, pinched the enemy forces out of the salient.

"The enemy had been prevented from crossing the Meuse in the nick of time. A detailed study of the battle would show how rapid regrouping enabled the Allies to regain the initiative which the enemy had temporarily seized. Once we were sure of the Meuse crossings it became increasingly apparent that the opportunity had come to turn the enemy's position to our advantage. Hitler's pro-

jected counteroffensive ended in a tactical defeat, and the Germans received a tremendous battering." It was on New Year's Day, 1945, that the worst was over.

Those who were with Montgomery at this time were astonished at the snap and incisiveness of his orders. Under the stimulus of rapid action all his old intensity and certainty came racing back. It might not be altogether wrong to say that he was enjoying himself.

He returned to Belgium after the fray full of enthusiasm. Dressed in a red beret and a camouflaged parachutist's jacket (he had recently been made Colonel Commandant of the Parachute Regiment), he gathered the war correspondents to tell them his version of the story.

His summing up, at this press conference, was not inaccurate so far as it went, but there was a slight flavor of patronage in his references to the part played by Bradley and the other American generals.

Being human, they—and many of the staff—did not enjoy the spectacle of Montgomery appearing to come to the rescue. When Montgomery chose this moment to make his public statement on how he had fought the battle of the Ardennes with American troops, and at the same time renewed his demands to be placed in permanent control of American forces—then feelings leaped into active dislike.

General Bradley complained that Montgomery's statements were making him (Bradley) ridiculous and lowering his authority in the eyes of his men. Discipline was suffering. When Bradley put out his own version of the Ardennes battle, a version which diminished the role Montgomery had played, the British press flamed out angrily. And still Montgomery persisted that, for the conquest of the Ruhr at least, he should be given the full command in the north.

To rival American commanders it sounded as if he were saying: "There you are. Look what happened in the Ardennes. You had to call on me for assistance. I had to get you out of the mess." If Montgomery did not say quite this he did continue to indicate strongly that he felt the general direction of the campaign was at fault, and that the picking and thrusting at the Rhine was advancing nobody. Things were getting very near an open breach between Supreme Headquarters and 21 Army Group.

It was in the first week of January, immediately after the battle of the Ardennes, that Montgomery wrote to Eisenhower yet again asking for a rearrangement of the command, on the grounds that the strategical plan directed from Versailles was continuing to fail. Eisenhower replied saying he could not alter his position, and he added that the field marshal by his constant prediction of failure was doing harm to the Allied cause.

from Churchill assuring him of the respect and support of the British government.

It was at this point that Eisenhower did something which was both magnanimous and shrewd: Having established his authority he suddenly turned around and gave Montgomery what he wanted. The theater was organized into fronts and the Ninth American Army was placed

jected counteroffensive ended in a tactical defeat, and the Germans received a tremendous battering." It was on New Year's Day, 1945, that the worst was over.

Those who were with Montgomery at this time were astonished at the snap and incisiveness of his orders. Under the stimulus of rapid action all his old intensity and certainty came racing back. It might not be altogether wrong to say that he was enjoying himself.

He returned to Belgium after the fray full of enthusiasm. Dressed in a red beret and a camouflaged parachutist's jacket (he had recently been made Colonel Commandant of the Parachute Regiment), he gathered the war correspondents to tell them his version of the story.

His summing up, at this press conference, was not inaccurate so far as it went, but there was a slight flavor of patronage in his references to the part played by Bradley and the other American generals.

Being human, they—and many of the staff—did not enjoy the spectacle of Montgomery appearing to come to the rescue. When Montgomery chose this moment to make his public statement on how he had fought the battle of the Ardennes with American troops, and at the same time renewed his demands to be placed in permanent control of American forces—then feelings leaped into active dislike.

General Bradley complained that Montgomery's statements were making him (Bradley) ridiculous and lowering his authority in the eyes of his men. Discipline was suffering. When Bradley put out his own version of the Ardennes battle, a version which diminished the role Montgomery had played, the British press flamed out angrily. And still Montgomery persisted that, for the conquest of the Ruhr at least, he should be given the full command in the north.

To rival American commanders it sounded as if he were saying: "There you are. Look what happened in the Ardennes. You had to call on me for assistance. I had to get you out of the mess." If Montgomery did not say quite this he did continue to indicate strongly that he felt the general direction of the campaign was at fault, and that the picking and thrusting at the Rhine was advancing nobody. Things were getting very near an open breach between Supreme Headquarters and 21 Army Group.

It was in the first week of January, immediately after the battle of the Ardennes, that Montgomery wrote to Eisenhower yet again asking for a rearrangement of the command, on the grounds that the strategical plan directed from Versailles was continuing to fail. Eisenhower replied saying he could not alter his position, and he added that the field marshal by his constant prediction of failure was doing harm to the Allied cause.

It was at this point that Eisenhower did something which was both magnanimous and shrewd: Having established his authority he suddenly turned around and gave Montgomery what he wanted. The theater was organized into fronts and the Ninth American Army was placed under Montgomery's command. Together the Allies crossed the Rhine in great force. The crisis was over. It was

never to recur.

This was a much more serious impasse than the earlier contretemps in the autumn, and at length Eisenhower declared, not without feeling, that the issue had gone too far. He had exhausted every argument. He had gone to the limit of his powers in making concessions to Montgomery. Both tact and reason seemed useless. In his earnestness he thumped upon the table. Very well. If Montgomery wanted a showdown he should have it. Let the matter go back to Washington and London. Let them decide. It was either he or Montgomery. One of them would have to go.

This ultimatum arrived late at night. Montgomery heard the news silently. He had pushed his beliefs to the climax, failed, and that was that. Here was a matter in which not even Churchill would intervene.

A telegram accepting Eisenhower's authority was written out and dispatched at once. Immediately a modest and charming reply was received from Eisenhower, assuring Montgomery of the widest powers Supreme Headquarters was able to give him. At the same time a friendly letter was sent by Montgomery to Bradley saying that it had been an honor to command American troops, and Bradley received a similar note

Teamwork Brings Victory

There was never anything more in the dispute than this, and subsequent attempts to magnify the disagreements were simply mischievous and untrue. When the campaign was over Montgomery himself summed up the matter very clearly. "When Allies work together," he wrote, "there are bound to be different points of view, and when these occur it is essential that they are thrashed out fully and frankly; but once a final decision is given, it is the duty of all members of the team to carry out that decision loyally. The Allied team worked in this spirit, and by its teamwork achieved overwhelming victory.

"In June, 1945, when the German war was over and Supreme Headquarters was being dissolved, I wrote to General Eisenhower and thanked him for all that he had done for the British armies, and for myself. I said that I wanted him to know that I, a British general, had been proud to serve under American command. Ike, as I like to call him, wrote me this very charming letter:

" 'Dear Monty: Your note to me written on the 7th is one of the finest things I have ever received. I am intensely gratified that you feel as you do. In the aftermath of this Allied effort, enduring friendships and feelings of mutual respect among higher commanders will have a most beneficial effect. The team must continue to exist in spirit.

" 'Your own high place among leaders of your country is firmly fixed, and it has never been easy for me to disagree with what I knew to be your real convictions. But it will always be a great privilege to bear evidence to the fact that whenever decision was made, regardless of your personal opinion, your loyalty and efficiency in execution were to be counted upon with certainty.

" 'I hope you realize how deeply appreciative I am of your letter and the spirit that prompted you to write it, as well as of the tremendous help and as-

sistance that you have been to me and to this whole Allied Force since it was first formed. In whatever years are left to both of us, possibly we may occasionally meet, not only to reminisce, but to exemplify the spirit of comradeship that I trust will exist between our two countries for all time.

" 'With warm personal regards,

" 'As ever, IKE.' "

Collier's

October 5, 1946

p. 12

