A Personal Narrative of my Association with Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, U. S. Navy

by

Admiral Francis S. Low, U. S. Navy (Ret.)

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OF ASSOCIATION
WITH
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FOREWORD

This monograph, having to do with certain phases of the career and characteristics of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, U. S. Navy (1879-1956), is written largely for my own satisfaction (and of necessity contains certain elements of autobiography) but may some day be of interest to children and grandchildren and possibly (after my demise) to any historian who may choose further to delve into the accomplishments of that little understood and immensely complicated individual.

What I shall say derives from contemporary notes and from a distinct and accurate recollection of events. Because this is a personal narrative I have purposely omitted elaboration on important historical matters which have already been covered by others.

My association with King, who was fourteen years my senior, was off and on through the years - more of this later - until 1939. From that time until 1944, the association was protracted and very close.

He was difficult to work for but serving with him was a liberal education - if one survived.

In my view, when the dust of contemporary history has cleared and those of another generation write with a greater sense of perspective than is now possible, MacArthur and

King will go down as our two great strategic minds of World War II. I say this in no derogation of many others who performed brilliantly. These matters will be detailed in the text. It is for this reason and because of my intimate knowledge of him that I draft these notes. For any future writer, there are incidents reported herein that, so far as I know, are nowhere else recorded.

Interspersed through much serious business will appear some humorous situations. This is important, I think, for two reasons:

(a) A proper sense of humor and of the ridiculous is often a saving grace, and King had a keen sense of such matters.

(b) Without such humor in relationship, one could not well have served under the orders of King.

There are twelve (12) copies of this monograph, distributed as follows:

Nine (9) copies to my wife, Alice Requa Low, for such future distribution as she may see fit;

One (1) copy to my old friend, that fine naval historian, Samuel E. Morison;

One (1) copy to Walter Muir Whitehill, who collaborated so effectively in the preparation

of Admiral King's autobiography; and

One (1) copy to Arthur B. Dunne, Senior Partner of Dunne, Dunne & Phelps of San Francisco, whose kindness in making his office facilities available to me was of immense value in the preparation of these notes.

It is my desire that all copies remain in the private hands of the individuals named above during my lifetime.

Francis S. Low
Admiral, United States Navy (Ret)
San Francisco, California
August, 1961

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I.

BRIEF HISTORY OF ADMIRAL KING.

Fleet Admiral King graduated from the Naval Academy in the class of 1901 and had routine assignments until about World War I (1917), at which time he was serving as Operations Officer on the Staff of Admiral Mayo, Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet. He told me many times that it was from Admiral Mayo that he learned how staffs should be organized and run. He had learned his lesson well.

As an interesting "flash back", one night before World War II when he and I were dining alone in his flagship, he divulged the only bit of personal information about himself in our many years of association. He said that as a young ensign he early realized that he had a tendency to be "soft" and that he knew, if he was to progress in the Navy, he would have to get a grip on himself.

He was reputed to be cold and tough, which I attribute, in large measure, to his building himself a suit of armor in his early days and rarely stepping out of it. I repeatedly observed, however, a very kindly side to his nature, but this, he did not wish observed by others.

He was a prolific writer on professional subjects. He was closely associated with higher naval education, having commanded the Naval Post-Graduate School, and

served as a member of a board known from its membership as the Knox-King-Pye Board, which established standards of post-graduate education that were controlling for many years. He became a naval aviator when a captain after World War I. He went on to various aviation assignments, including command of the Aircraft Tender Wright, the large carrier Lexington, and eventually, as a Vice Admiral, commanded Naval Air Pacific. His later assignments will develop as these notes progress.

My first knowledge that there was an E. J. King in the Navy came on my entrance into the Naval Academy in 1911. He and a classmate, Walter Vernou, had just finished a tour at the Academy as drill officers and they had left the brigade of midshipmen somewhat stunned and exhausted. So I judged King to be a person of considerable energy. My first personal encounter came in 1923 when I was serving as Flag Lieutenant on the Staff of Admiral Montgomery M. Taylor, who commanded the Submarine Force in the Atlantic.

I had played a good deal of baseball and naturally followed its course in and outside of the Navy. I noted that every winter the submarine base at Coco Solo, Canal Zone, had a top or nearly top team and that every summer the submarine base at New London, Connecticut (commanded by then Captain King) fielded a team of similar excellence.

As one of my several duties on Admiral Taylor's Staff was personnel, I initiated a study to determine the reason for this situation and was not surprised to find that practically the entire baseball squad was being transferred at appropriate times each year between the two bases.

This I reported to Admiral Taylor, a delightful, gruff old bachelor, and he said, "Low, transfer them all to sea duty." This I did, over my own signature, and thereby sowed a small whirlwind. Taylor's flagship was anchored in New London at the time and early the following morning along came Captain King, breathing fire. He brushed me aside when I met him at the gangway and practically ran up to Admiral Taylor's cabin. He emerged in about half an hour and exited as he had entered. Taylor sent for me and said, "Low, the order stands." I thought to myself how well I had selected a first class enemy for the future.

I did not see King again until 1939.

II.

RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM WHEN HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE GENERAL BOARD - 1939.

From 1937 to 1939 I had the pleasure of commanding Submarine Division 13 - which was the first division of the large submarines that in World War II contributed to the devastation of Japan by sinking some five million odd tons of her shipping as well as many warships. On completion of this tour of duty I was ordered to what was then known as the "Submarine Desk" in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations. This was a curious and fascinating assignment. Its responsibilities covered supervision of the submarine building program (i.e., how many types of ship each year, as well as their characteristics), justification of these requests before the General Board of the Navy, attending trials of new submarines and control of such ships until they joined their respective fleets and thereby became part of the operating forces. It was a full time job.

At this point I should explain the status and purpose of the General Board.

Shortly after the Spanish War (circa 1900), the General Board was constituted with Admiral of the Navy George Dewey as its first chairman. Dewey was the hero of Manila Bay and of the day. The Board was a collection of elder statesmen, all rear admirals or above on active duty, and

somewhat similar to a Japanese organization known as the Genro (retired military and politicos). The Genro was purely advisory whereas, while the General Board was also advisory to the Secretary of the Navy, it had "teeth" due to its composition of senior flag officers, all on active duty.

The Board functioned effectively until the early 1950s when it was overtaken by events to the extent that elements of the office of the Chief of Naval Operations were able more effectively to carry out its functions. And so, it was abolished after fifty odd years of useful service.

To return to my sequence, when I took over the Submarine Desk in 1939, King was a member of the General Board. I had to appear repeatedly before that august body in defense and support of our submarine building program and related matters. I might add, parenthetically, that at this time, all of the thoughtful naval people with whom I was associated were convinced that war was not far off, but the timing was uncertain. So, what we were talking about in connection with the submarine building program was not submarines for peacetime but those that would have to fight a war very shortly.

About this time a senior admiral who had had much to do with submarines, but who had never really been to sea in

them, favored the building of small submarines with what he termed "no hotel accommodations", i.e., few creature comforts, etc. The younger submarine people, such as myself, who had served in small submarines before, during and after World War I, knew from their own bitter experience that a certain degree of comfort was essential.

In any event, this matter boiled to the extent that finally the Submarine Conference, which consisted of the senior submarine officers in the Navy Department, and which was presided over by the "Submarine Desk", went before the General Board and "respectfully adhered to its opinion that large submarines were essential and rejected the small submarine philosophy". Thank God the General Board approved and that we had these fine large submarines in Wolrd War II.

I have cited this as one of many contraversial and often bitter hearings before the Board. During such hearings I do not recall ever having any direct dealings with King other than in the board room, but apparently the various positions I took must have made some favorable impression on him, as the subsequent paragraphs will reveal.

At this time Charles Edison was Secretary of the Navy. In some manner unknown to me, King came into his confidence to such an extent that Edison took King

on a flying trip to Pearl Harbor to evaluate the antiaircraft defenses of our Fleet. Gunnery people around my time, of whom I was one, knew they were totally inadequate as compared to those of other important Naval powers, but apparently few in our higher echelons of command understood this. But King did.

On his return from Pearl Harbor he sent for me and said that the Secretary had given him carte blanche to improve the antiaircraft defenses of all of our ships. This meant the issue by King, in the name of the Secretary, of detailed directives to every type of ship to install added antiaircraft armament. It cut completely across the usual "channels" and, in point of fact, got the job started in about three months instead of two or three years. This was immensely upsetting to those who had been for many years in the habit of advising, suggesting and vetoing, but rarely doing anything quickly.

King said I was to be one of his assistants. I thanked him for the compliment but said I already had more than a full job in my submarine responsibilities. He brushed this aside very neatly by saying this would only take half of each working day and who else would I recommend? I said, "Ned Cochrane" (then Assistant Chief of the Bureau of Ships and later to become a great Bureau Chief in World War II). This

appeared to shock him because he said, "Cochrane is too busy", to which I replied, "No busier than I am". So Cochrane was elected. We then selected an eminent gunnery lad named Hal Krick. For three months, mornings or afternoons, and often Saturday mornings, we four sweated over drawing boards containing the plans of every major type of ship in the Navy down to and including destroyers.

The basic problem was the elimination of what we in the Navy refer to as "top hamper", i.e., things high in the ship such as excess boats, bridges, cranes, search light platforms, etc., all with a view to obtaining improved overhead unobstructed arcs of fire for antiaircraft guns and determination of locations for additional guns. It was ruthless surgery and no one liked it. Before King signed directives in the name of the Secretary, we sent our proposal to each type of ship for immediate comment. I recall in particular the reply of one unsuspecting cruiser captain who said that if his navigation bridge was reduced as proposed he could not properly handle his ship. Little did he suspect that a few months hence King would be his Commander-in-Chief. Shortly after King took over, this cruiser captain was relieved. Sic transit gloria mundo.

I might say that while these improvements were of the "quick and dirty variety", they were absolutely essential and greatly improved our antiaircraft readiness.

After this trying but educational experience I thought that I might be permitted to resume my submarine duties, but such was not to be the case.

Several weeks after the AntiAircraft Board was concluded, King sent for me and said that Mr. Edison had ordained that he (King) was to be the senior member of a combined line and staff board to recommend improvements in the existing promotion situation, and related matters. The Board was to consist of nine members, King and Low the only two line members, and the others (all staff corps in a sense) consisted of one naval constructer, one engineering duty specialist, one aeronautical engineering specialist, one paymaster, one doctor, one civil engineer and one chaplain.

At this point I must give another "flash back" to what were probably the first days of our Navy. The differences between the "line" and "staff" (noncombatant but vital) have never been wholly resolved - and probably never will be - but it is an interesting and important problem to try to improve the relationship.

In this case there was, as I well knew, one vital and highly debatable issue; i.e., were the naval constructers going to be taken into the line of the Navy or remain a separate staff corps?

In the early 1920s when, in personnel matters, I sat

at the knee of my great and good friend John Sidney McCain, who in World War II, as a Vice Admiral, spelled off Pete Mitscher, in command of the Fast Carrier Task Forces, he said one day, "Mr. Low, the naval constructers are the elite and brains of the Navy (they all came from the top 10% of their classes). Therefore, when we are able to get them into the line we will have them with us, instead of as a small, separate corps espousing their own cause as opposed to the greater good of the Navy."

From much association with various officer personnel problems, so much did I agree with this philosophy that I thought and hoped that this Board might accomplish something along that line. So again, for several months, I devoted half my time to Board matters and still about 100% to the submarines. With a Board membership of nine, King did not believe (and I think he was so right) in a simple majority vote, so it was agreed that all matters should be settled on the basis of six votes being necessary to carry any motion.

We were able to resolve, generally by compromise, many of the less important matters. But when we finally came to the question of whether the naval constructers should remain a separate corps or be amalgamated with the line, the naval constructer member of the Board opposed any change, as did his superiors.

However, there were three members (Fulton, Low and Clark) in favor of bringing them into the line, and we three suspected (not without reason) that King was of the same view.

Each day for about two weeks secret ballots were taken and invariably the count was five against and four in favor, with little prospect of any concessions. One day, however, much to my surprise, the vote turned up as six against and three in favor. I never discussed the matter with King again, but I think he undoubtedly changed his vote for the sole purpose of coming to a decision. In any event, we three minority members quickly threw together a one-page minority report and then telephoned King and asked him if we might bring it up to him. As we entered his office he said impatiently, "I've been waiting for this", grabbed the report, read it quickly and rushed down to see Mr. Edison.

How things developed from that time on I never knew nor inquired, but several weeks after Mr. Edison received the Board's recommendations, the work of the Board was approved except that the naval constructers were brought into the line, although his action did not refer to the minority report.

My friend, Ned Cochrane, who was one of the principal opponents of this change, confided in me some years later

that he was glad it had taken place because he and many of his associates thought that a better relationship had been established - which was what had been desired.

III.

AS HIS OPERATIONS OFFICER IN THE ATLANTIC FLEET - 1940

Again I thought I would be able to return to my submarine duties but again I was mistaken. At this time I was slated for command of one of the new submarine squadrons which would have been a most pleasant assignment. King sent for me one day, however, and said that he was going to command the Atlantic Fleet and, would I care to come along as his Operations Officer. I had been so impressed by what I had seen of him that I accepted instanter, even though I knew it was going to be tough and that the submarine squadron assignment would have been far more pleasant. As I look back on things now, this was a major turning point in my career.

At this point I should say that the Atlantic Fleet of those pre-war days, known as a Squadron until King took over, consisted of old, tired ships and a considerable number of similar people. Our emphasis had for some years been in the Pacific. It was sometimes jokingly referred to as the "flower squadron" because of its social obligations. King was highly respected but I don't think much beloved, and I have always suspected that some of his contemporaries, who perhaps wished him no good or were jealous of his capabilities,

thought that this was a good way to get him on the shelf. Little did they know.

We boarded his flagship, the old battleship Texas, at Norfolk, Virginia, in December 1940. The Staff had all been selected, and, following his staff principles, it was exceedingly small in composition, which meant more work than usual but also, I think, more cohesive thinking.

To give an idea of the state of the Fleet, our first day the Chief of Staff and I opened the safe expecting to find reasonably up-to-date war plans, but there was only one -- the Green Plan -- for a war against Mexico! I mention this to show the base from which we had to start.

In late December 1940, the Fleet cleared the capes of the Chesapeake late one afternoon bound for Fajardo Roads, Puerto Rico. At sundown the signal was made, "darken ship", and, excepting for emergencies, I don't think that any ship of the Fleet was ever again lighted until the war was over. This signal caused considerable consternation amongst those who were not accustomed to such matters. On the way south King exercised them in evolutions of the ship and units of ships that left them pretty well exhausted.

It was during one of our first nights at sea, while proceeding south, that I had my first and only real row with King, that might easily have resulted in my summary detachment. In

the Middle Watch (Midnight to 4:00 a.m.) I executed a routine change of course or change of front signal and had the matter reported to the Admiral. He was on the bridge in five minutes and said, "Who made that signal?" I said, "I did, sir." Whereupon he took off on me and asked me if I didn't realize that everything I did was done in his name and that, by God, if I didn't I'd better start realizing it now, etc. etc. I thought his accusation so unwarranted and unfair that I retired to a wing of the bridge to nurse my pride, when a few minutes later he came over and put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Low, don't feel too badly about this." I was so angry that I turned on him and said, "Admiral, aside from asking for my immediate detachment, there is not one goddam thing that you can do to me that I can't take." I was amazed at my temerity and that I was not detached but nothing further happened.

It was during this period that the Atlantic Fleet, in a small way, initiated the type of amphibious exercise that was so successfully employed in all the Pacific campaigns.

King had come to sea as a rear admiral and it was expected that he would shortly be made a vice admiral. However, as the result of one of those internecine rows that sometimes happen in the Navy, a certain 4-star admiral in the Pacific had informed the Navy Department that he would

not serve under the orders of another 4-star admiral who was to be his senior, and that if he were ordered to do so he would retire. The Navy Department has a standard procedure for this sort of a threat. They simply say that they will approve the request for retirement. Thus it happened that a 4-star billet became available and was assigned to King, who broke his 4-star flag in Texas while we were at Fajardo Roads.

After several months in Puerto Rican waters it became apparent to King that he was too far from Washington, where he was called for frequent consultation, and arrangements were made to shift his flag from Texas to Augusta, which from then on based on Newport, Rhode Island.

Reproduced below is a classic letter issued shortly after he took command.

RESTRICTED

CINCLANT SERIAL (053) OF JANUARY 21, 1941

Subject: Exercise of Command - Excess of Detail in Orders and Instructions.

1. I have been concerned for many years over the increasing tendency - now grown almost to "standard practice" - of flag officers and other group commanders to issue orders and instructions in which their subordinates are told "how" as well as "what" to do to such an extent and in such detail that the "Custom of the service" has virtually become the antitheses of that essential element of command - "initiative of the subordinate."

2. We are preparing for - and are now close to - those active operations (commonly called war) which require the exercise and the utilization of the full powers and capabilities of every officer in command Status.

There will be neither time nor opportunity to do more than prescribe the several tasks of the several subordinates (to say "what", perhaps "when" and "where", and usually, for their intelligent cooperation, "why"); leaving to them - expecting and requiring of them - the capacity to perform the assigned tasks (to do the "how").

3. If subordinates are deprived - as they now are - of that training and experience which will enable them to act "on their own" - if they do not know, by constant practice, how to exercise "initiative of the subordinates" - if they are reluctant (afraid) to act because they are accustomed to detailed orders and instructions - if they are not habituated to think, to judge, to decide and to act for themselves in their several echelons of command - we shall be in sorry case when the time of "active operations" arrives.

4. The reasons for the current state of affairs - how did we get this way? - are many but among them are four which need mention; first, the "anxiety" of seniors that everything in their commands shall be conducted so correctly and go so smoothly, that none may comment unfavorably; second, those energetic activities of staffs which lead to infringement of (not to say interference with) the functions for which the lower echelons exist; third, the consequent "anxiety" of subordinates lest their exercise of initiative, even in their legitimate spheres, should result in their doing something which may prejudice their selection for promotion; fourth, the habit on the one hand and the expectation on the other of "nursing" and "being nursed", which lead respectively to that violation of command principles known as "orders to obey orders" and to that admission of incapacity or confusion evidenced by "request instructions".

5. Let us consider certain facts; first, submarines operating submerged are constantly confronted with situations requiring the correct exercise of judgment, decision and action; second, planes, whether operating singly or in company, are even more often called upon to act correctly; third, surface ships entering or leaving port, making a landfall, steaming in thick weather, etc., can and do meet such situations while "acting singly" and, as well, the problems involved in maneuvering in formations and dispositions. Yet these same people proven competent to do these things without benefit of "advice" from higher up - are, when grown in

years and experience to be echelon commanders, all too often not made full use of in conducting the affairs (administrative and operative) of their several echelons - echelons which exist for the purpose of facilitating command.

6. It is essential to extend the knowledge and the practice of "initiative of the subordinate" in principle and in application until they are universal in the exercise of command throughout all the echelons of command. Henceforth, we must all see to it that full use is made of the echelons of command - whether administrative (type) or operative (task) - by habitually framing orders and instructions to echelon commanders so as to tell them "what to do" but not "how to do it" unless the particular circumstances so demand.

7. The corollaries of paragraph 6 are:

(a) adopt the premise that the echelon commanders are competent in their several command echelons unless and until they themselves prove otherwise;

(b) teach them that they are not only expected to be competent for their several command echelons but that it is required of them that they be competent;

(c) train them - by guidance and supervision - to exercise foresight, to think, to judge, to decide and to act for themselves;

(d) stop "nursing" them;

(e) Finally, train ourselves to be satisfied with "acceptable solutions" even though they are not "staff solutions" or other particular solutions that we ourselves would prefer.

For many years I had observed inspiring messages such as the foregoing, but more frequently than not there was no follow-through. In this instance King himself lived exactly the sort of a life he describes in the letter and required it of all of his commanders and of his Staff. I have repeatedly seen him allow unit commanders and captains of private ships to work

themselves into situations from which there seemed to be very little hope of extrication and then calmly turn his back on them when they sought help; I never saw one case where the individual was not able to work himself out of his troubles.

His practice with his Staff was sometimes rather cruel and unusual, but when one came to understand it, not unfair. On papers sent to him he would sometimes make a small amount of detailed comment, but normally the paper was returned with "O. K. K." or "No. K.", no reason being given for the "No" and one only asked him once. So, the rejection had to be deduced but, after a few months of observing how his mind worked, it became somewhat easier.

In my opening paragraphs I emphasized his strategic sense. An excellent example is his initial operation plan for the Atlantic Fleet which I drafted under his guidance. He must have given much thought to this before he became the Fleet Commander, because the plan was strategically so sound that some years later, when I was asked by the President of the Naval War College to deliver a talk on the Atlantic Fleet strategic dispositions in WWII, and in preparation compared King's original plan with that which was in effect at war's end, there was no material difference between them except the numbers of units deployed. The basic structure had not changed.

One curious phase of his character is revealed by a minor occurrence while we were in Puerto Rico. King, his chief of Staff and I messed together in his cabin. One morning I was having rather a miserable breakfast and had no newspaper or press news to read. He walked over from his desk and threw on the table my fitness report, which is rendered periodically, and said, "Here. There is no news, so you might enjoy reading this." I looked it over and concluded it was much better than I was entitled to, so after breakfast I returned it to him at his desk with the simple statement that I thought it was too good for me. Whereupon he turned to me in rage and said, "Don't say that. It is a reflection on my judgment."

From the time we shifted his flag to Augusta at Newport, about every two weeks I flew with King to Washington where he conferred with the Chief of Naval Operations and others, and I know that during this period, he also contributed materially to the thinking in the Navy Department. On one of these trips he accompanied the Chief of Naval Operations and some other senior people to the White House where a naval presentation was made to the President. I was not present but was told by one who was, that when it came to King he outlined his theory of the conduct of the coming war not only so

clearly and precisely as to be impressive, but also so presciently in its foresight that it differed only in detail from the way matters actually developed. I have no doubt but that this one encounter with F.D.R. had a considerable bearing on King's later appointment to our highest naval post.

During our time at Newport we made two cruises to Bermuda, as well as the memorable trip when we took the President to Argentia, Newfoundland, for his first meeting with Mr. Churchill, who came over in a British battleship, Prince of Wales, later sunk in Southeast Asia. I will not dwell on the Argentia meeting because that is already well covered by historians.

On our first trip to Bermuda we had Mr. Morganthau, the Secretary of the Treasury, as guest. It was standard practice in the Atlantic Fleet that when ships left or entered port they should fire at antiaircraft targets supplied by local forces. When returning Mr. Morganthau to Newport, King roused him out early one morning that he might observe an antiaircraft practice. Unfortunately, the sky was about 70% cloud covered and Augusta repeatedly cancelled firing runs because of the target being obscured. In those days before the war a lot of peacetime habits continued and one was that five minutes before a ship was to fire, the bugler sounded "officers call" for the purpose of getting observers to their

stations. This particular morning officers call must have been sounded half a dozen times, each time to have the run cancelled. I could see that Mr. Morganthau, knowing nothing about it and probably caring less, was somewhat bored, and that Admiral King was becoming more and more irritated. As the ship was turning for its seventh run, I came into the flag cabin from the outside bridge seeking to add a note of cheerfulness to a rather grim situation and said, "Admiral, I think they're really going to fire on this run". Whereupon he gave me a bleak look and said, "They can't fire. They have not sounded officers call."

On our second trip to Bermuda we took Mr. Frank Knox, the Secretary of the Navy, and as we were approaching Newport on return the news broke of the German battleship, Bismarck, being loose in the Atlantic with a large part of the British Navy in pursuit. In spite of our neutrality patrol and open escort of Icelandic ships from New York to Iceland, we were still neutral, but King deployed all long range Naval aircraft in a search pattern with orders, of course, not to participate in anything but the search. He specifically told his aviation officer to be certain that none of these aircraft landed in Narragansett Bay. In spite of this, some did, but his aviation officer, thinking perhaps to soften the coming blow on those who had returned to Narragansett Bay, said to him rather

nervously, "Admiral, there must be a Narragansett Bay in Newfoundland". To this King replied, "There had better be".

The attack on Pearl Harbor was flashed to us at Newport about 1:00 p.m. December 7. The next day or the day following, King was on his way to Washington and never returned to Augusta.

IV.

AS HIS OPERATIONS OFFICER WHEN HE BECAME COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, UNITED STATES FLEET, AND CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS (COMINCH) -- Early 1942

Shortly after December 7th it was decided that King was to be Commander-in-Chief, United States Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations, for which combined duties he chose the abbreviation of COMINCH in preference to the term CINCUS, which had been in use for years. It was at this time he is reputed to have made the remark, which I am sure he did, "When they get in trouble they send for the sons of bitches."

Within a few days of King's arrival in Washington, he selected as his Chief of Staff Admiral R. S. Edwards (one of the great unsung heroes of the war) and directed that Commander G. L. Russel, his Flag Secretary in Augusta, and I, report for duty on his Staff in Washington.

Practically his first order to Nimitz was one emphasizing the absolute necessity of keeping open the lines of communication from the West Coast to Australia. Shortly after this our first stepping stone was established at Bora-Bora.

It was during these first trying weeks that we lost too many ships at the battle of Savao Island, but that apparently

was the only way we could learn. I was slated to take command of the cruiser Vincennes which was sunk in this action so, I had to wait until Wichita became available.

In connection with the maintenance of the line of communications to Australia, King also appreciated that the Japanese advance southward must be blunted. This he intended to do by taking Guadalcanal. It was not to be too simple, however, because General Marshall, the Chief of Staff of the Army, did not read the picture as did King, and offered serious opposition. King, however, persisted, but in finally gaining approval of the Joint Chiefs of Staff for this operation, he was forced to make commitments to Marshall for subsequent transfers of Naval units to the Atlantic - Marshall, I think, never fully understood the Pacific.

In January or February, 1942, I proposed to King the operation which resulted in the Doolittle raid on Tokyo from the carrier Hornet, commanded by Pete Mitscher. I will not elaborate here because it is reported in detail in a book by Quentin Reynolds, The Amazing Mr. Doolittle, and was also recorded on a CBS Documentary in 1961, in which Doolittle, Admiral D. B. Duncan, myself, and others, described our parts. I do think, however, it should be emphasized that at inception, none of us had any idea of the broad consequences and of their impingement on the Japanese military

mind which one keen observer once remarked was frequently beset by "mental indigestion". The raid was intended primarily as a booster of morale at a time when we were at low ebb and needed it. As Japanese writings become available, it is more and more evident that the raid had a profound effect on their strategic thinking for the balance of the war. This is emphasized in a remarkable book, Midway--The Battle that Doomed Japan, by two Japanese naval aviators who were at Midway, and, interestingly enough, one of whom (Fuchida) led the attack on Pearl Harbor. Here, I cannot refrain from quoting one priceless sentence from the Preface of one of the authors:

> "As a consequence of my studies, I am firmly convinced that the Pacific War was started by men who did not understand the sea, and fought by men who did not understand the Air."

I have quoted this because I think it was so true of the Japanese situation. It would apply with equal force to any country that permitted its military philosophy to be dominated by one service or by a senior individual of one service. This happened to Germany in WW I and WW II and to Japan in WW II.

It is well-known that the battle of Midway, in which the Japanese lost four of their most important aircraft carriers, was a major turning point in the Pacific war. At this time our Pacific forces, particularly aircraft carriers, were thin, and it was only by the use of important broken codes that King was able

with confidence to direct Nimitz to assemble all carriers in preparation for this battle.

During these first few months, and indeed for many months later, the U-boat operations in the Atlantic were devastating. We were actually rather helpless for lack of adequate antisubmarine forces and so, the slaughter continued.

About March of 1942, at my own request, I was ordered to command the heavy cruiser Wichita. Before leaving, in a conversation with Admiral Edwards, I made a suggestion that apparently came back to bite me. In connection with the U-boat threat, I told him I thought, regardless of the paucity of our present forces, that our organization was basically wrong and that we should have a completely separate organization to deal with the U-boats, but one that could also integrate its efforts with the huge staff available to Cominch, so that there would be no duplication of effort. (How often have I heard that expression?)

I then, with great pleasure and a sigh of relief, proceeded to New York and took command of Wichita. We participated, as part of the Covering Force, in the landing operations at Casablanca in November 1942 and were then dispatched to Noumae to join Admiral Halsey's forces, as practically all the heavy cruisers in the South Pacific had by that time been seriously wounded.

In the South Pacific we participated in the Solomons operation. One night off Grinnell Is the ship astern of me, Chicago, was sunk as the result of a Japanese torpedo plane attack. We were hit by a torpedo, but fortunately it was a dud.

We then prepared to proceed to the Aleutians to participate in operations there when a dispatch came from Washington directing that I be relieved of command of Wichita and return to Admiral King's Staff in Washington via Australia, where I was to call on MacArthur and then confer with Halsey and Nimitz on my way back to Washington.

My mention of the Aleutians reminds me of a story Admiral Edwards told me after the war, which I do not think is recorded elsewhere.

In mid 1943 as part of our Aleutian operations we landed on Kiska to find no Japanese present, but only dogs and hot coffee. The Japanese had performed the extraordinary feat of evacuating over 5000 people in less than an hour.

As so often happens, the initial report addressed to the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, Admiral King and others, reported the bare fact that the landing was made without opposition and that only dogs and hot coffee were encountered.

Mr. Knox, an impatient newspaper man, who wanted

to know everything instanter, sent for King (who had no more information than did Knox) and demanded, in peremptory tones, an immediate explanation. He ended his peroration by saying, several times, "Admiral, what does this mean?"

King, who I imagine was equally out of sorts, and as unaware of what really happened, as was Knox, replied:

> "Mr. Secretary, what it means is that for the first time in recorded military history, dogs have been known to prepare coffee".

V.

AS HIS CHIEF OF STAFF, 10th FLEET, From Mid-1943 to Late 1944

On my return to Washington in March or April, 1943, by which time I had been promoted to Rear Admiral, I was advised that my title was to be Assistant Chief of Staff, Anti-submarine. The nature of the U-boat menace had not changed materially, excepting that we were getting more forces in the shape of antisubmarine craft and airplanes, so our performance was improved, but not sufficiently.

General Marshall was constantly complaining of the threat to troopships, although none had been or ever were lost, and in effect, was also threatening to establish his own antisubmarine navy!

At the Casablanca meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff (British and U.S.) which had only recently taken place, the position was taken that combat of the U-boats would be a first charge against the resources of all.

Organizational matters remained more or less on dead center for a few weeks until King made up his mind to create a separate fleet (the 10th), for the sole purpose of combating U-boats in the Atlantic. The next problem was, who was to be Commander, 10th Fleet?

Three rear admirals were under consideration, one a

line officer with no speciality qualifications, and two, who were Naval aviators. In addition to my duties as Assistant Chief of Staff, Antisubmarine, world-wide, I was also to be Chief of Staff, 10th Fleet. I was not impressed by any of the names under consideration and consider it fortunate that, for one reason or another, none was readily available.

In the meantime I was carrying out A/S duties, but without some sort of a head or an organization, it was not a satisfactory arrangement.

Finally one day in desperation, I went in to King and said, "Admiral, Commander, 10th Fleet should be a Naval aviator". He, too, was apparently somewhat desperate, because, with small hesitation, he replied, "He is", to which I replied, "Who?" King answered, "Me". Thus the matter was quickly settled in this somewhat unorthodox and amusing manner.

The 10th Fleet operations, though vital, were a small part of the Naval world-wide picture and clearly, King could give to the 10th Fleet no more than supervisory attention. The actual work, therefore, was delegated to me as his Chief of Staff. I kept him informed of matters of importance or sought approval of major policy changes and from time to time, when highly important and interesting developments were afoot, I took him and a few other privileged souls to our Plotting Room, which was so Top Secret that only half a dozen people were ever

allowed there. In it we filtered various bits of information that came to us and took our decisions as to tactical applications.

The 10th Fleet was once described as a "phantom fleet", and this it was, to a degree.

I drafted the charter, approved by King, which gave the Commander, 10th Fleet (King) authority to take over control of any or all units of the Atlantic Fleet. This authority was never exercised as we were able to work out a satisfactory arrangement with the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet, allowing him to direct all operations, but most of the antisubmarine operations were the result of information generated by 10th Fleet.

Only on one occasion was this authority ever seriously considered, and that was a day when King became exceedingly angry (which was effortless) at what he considered a dereliction on the part of the Commander-in-Chief, Atlantic Fleet, and said to me, "I am going to take over operational control". I replied, "You cannot do it". This apparently rather shocked the old boy, for he replied, "Who says I can't?" He could have, of course. I qualified my first remark by saying that I did not mean that he could not, but that he should not, because matters were in train and would be worked out. This seemed to mollify him.

The 10th Fleet was very simply organized, with an Operations Department, a Readiness Department which handled all material matters, Intelligence, a very large Convoy and Routing Division, a Scientific Counsel, the Anti-submarine Warfare Operational Research Group (abbreviated ASWORG) and a Publications Section that issued a monthly antisubmarine bulletin which detailed successes and failures and kept all interested parties fully advised as to all technical developments - a most valuable publication.

There were many curious cross-currents, of interest and amusement now, but of very real concern then.

Before World War II the Navy had not properly appreciated the value of scientific research and guidance. We quickly learned.

Partially to demonstrate his appreciation of the value of scientific research, King created, as an integral part of the 10th Fleet, the Scientific Counsel. This originally consisted of Dr. V. Bush as Chairman, Dr. John Tate and a Vice President of the United Fruit Co. The Counsel was privy to everything we did except our highly secret operational procedures, which were really none of their affair, but Bush, in particular, was offended by this and took his complant directly to King, who rejected it.

Another interesting and most useful organization was

the ASWORG, (which abbreviation they disliked but when asked to improve upon it, could not do so) which consisted of about 150 scientists and engineers whose specialties covered the entire scientific spectrum. They were invaluable in analysis and in evaluation of German devices and of information with respect to them that came to our notice. Many of them were then, and are today, a considerable part of the hard core of Research.

I had little trouble with the Naval elements of the 10th Fleet, but the scientific people, mostly individualists and unacquainted with Naval procedures and discipline, were quite different and required most careful handling.

Elements of the Army Air Corps (now the Air Force) were made available for antisubmarine duty. They were a constant problem. They did not want to endure the boring hours of search. They wanted to attack and get medals and never did understand that except in fortuitous circumstances of availability of accurate Intelligence, attack generally was the product of previous search.

We had one situation develop at Bermuda where there were some Army antisubmarine planes, when, with a known U-Boat in the area, they refused the orders of the Naval Commander because they had not come through what they considered the proper Army echelon. This we corrected quickly, but it was most annoying.

The constant friction created by these Army echelons finally resulted in Marshall making to King the ridiculous proposal that a Major General Willis Hale (now deceased), who had made quite a name for himself in the Pacific, should be designated as Commander, Naval Air, 10th Fleet. Hale knew nothing of the Navy or of antisubmarine operations. This fast ball had to be fielded quickly, which we did the same day by designating a newly promoted rear admiral aviator as Commander, Naval Air, 10th Fleet. Thus, we were able, with tongue only slightly in cheek, to advise Marshall that a qualified Naval aviator already held the post.

The friction continued, however, particularly in a group of heavy bombers in England manned by the Army but under the operational control of the British.

There was only one solution, i.e., get the Army completely out of the antisubmarine business. We therefore offered, by a certain date, to replace all of their personnel with Naval ranks and ratings and to take custody of their planes. This apparently shocked them and I think they thought we could not do it, for they acceded.

We then started an intensive training program in land based bombers. We met our date and from that time on we had only the U-boats with which to contend.

The results of the operations of the 10th Fleet are well covered in Sam Morison's excellent volumes and in other published histories. I regret I cannot go into more detail, but about all that should be written by historians has been written. There are other most interesting matters in the Top Secret files of the Navy Department that are and should be only for those in the military services who need such information in the pursuit of their further duties.

There is, however, one incident I feel free to disclose because it resulted entirely from low grade Intelligence.

One day there came to our notice an intercepted dispatch from Tokyo to Berlin, in a code that had long since been broken, saying that very shortly a large I-class Japanese submarine (twice as large as any in our Navy) would sail from Japan to Germany, via the Cape of Good Hope and would pass to the westward of the Azores. Approximate dates were given. The message went on to say that a large group of top Japanese scientists would be embarked and that the sole purpose of the voyage was to enable these scientists to have access to German techniques, procedures, devices, etc. Here was Big Nipponese Game.

We bided our time and in due course the I-boat reached the Atlantic and commenced radio transmissions - a grave failing of both of our major enemies.

From England through Iceland, Greenland, the east coast of the United States and areas of northeast South America, we had many radio direction-finder stations. They were closely coordinated and the shortest of enemy transmissions would generally give bearings to two or more stations. These "fixes" were immediately transmitted to Washington and thence to 10th Fleet.

In this case we were able to plot the I-boat's progress with reasonable accuracy. Normally we would have assigned one antisubmarine group (a small aircraft carrier and half a dozen destroyer types) to such a task. This case, however, was too important to risk failure. So, we deployed three groups across the I-boat's projected track - and good that we did.

The submarine eluded the first two groups but the third group scored a "Kill".

Our antisubmarine people often complained, good naturedly, that before our Evaluation Board would credit them with a U-boat sunk, they had to produce the "Captain's pants".

I might add, parenthetically, that after the war with some eight or nine hundred odd U-boats (German and Italian) known sunk, our count was only one or two off, so I think we were neither too lenient nor too strict.

In this instance, no "pants" were recovered but there

Page 38, after penultimate paragraph insert -

I should not leave 10th Fleet matters without mention of the capture of U-505 by Capt. (now Vice Adm. ret) D. V. (Dan) Gallery - one of the most colorful, brave and important of actions. All credit belongs to Gallery. He took none of us into his confidence with respect of his intentions.

Dan commanded CVE Guadalcanal (a baby flat-top) and a group of escorts. He was on routine patrol in the vicinity of the Cape Verde Islands.

One Sunday noon a "flash" came from Dan saying he had captured U-505 and what should he do with her? When I went to King and said "Admiral, I have here a despatch from Dan Gallery saying he has captured U-505 and he requests your desires as to her disposition", for the first and only time I observed it, he was momentarily speechless - but not for long.

A quick decision was essential but we knew nothing of U-505's condition. Casablanca, a few hundred miles away, was the logical destination but Casablanca lacked security. From the nature of the engagement we were convinced the ship must be intact with much information that would prove important and we therefore felt it essential the Germans not learn of the capture.

Accordingly, we took the hard and risky decision of ordering her to Bermuda. Immediately, all appropriate elements of the Atlantic Fleet (oilers, tugs, etc.) went into action and U-505 made Bermuda safely.

This was a great display of seamanship and airmanship on the part of Gallery and his associates. Until a fleet tug took over the tow of U-505, Guadalcanal had to tow her, at about 5 kts., on a steady course and at the same time launch and recover her aircraft anti-submarine patrols. Guadalcanal was a sitting-duck!

With a few of my top people I flew to Bermuda to greet U-505. We found code books (invaluable) and four accoustic torpedoes. Our smart scientific peoplehad quite accurately deduced the pattern of these bothersome torpedoes but it was comforting to be able to compare our deductions with actual performance and thereby refine and confirm our theories. We also, quite amusingly, found many bottles of 4711, eau de Cologne, which apparently was a favorite bathing lotion of the German "hands." This story is well told by Gallery (a talented writer) in his book, "Twenty Million Tons Under the Sea." U-505 now rests, high and dry, at the Museum of Science and Industry at Chicago.

I doubt that another U-boat will be captured in many years. None was captured "live" in WW I. In WW II we captured U-505, tested her and preserved her. The British captured a U-boat off Ireland and later sank her in tests.

did come to the surface much debris that could only have come from the interior of a ship, as well as dismembered human limbs.

The "Kill" was shortly further confirmed by frantic Japanese signals demanding of the Germans information as to the I-boat. Neither nation ever learned anything from anyone.

Thus it happened that many fine, Japanese scientific minds went prematurely to their Ancestors.

After about a year and a half as Chief of Staff, 10th Fleet by which time the U-boat menace had been reduced to a threat, I finally prevailed upon King to let me go to sea (he had already rejected a previous request by McCain that I go as the latter's Chief of Staff in the fast carrier task forces) and was assigned command of the Battle Cruiser Division (Guam and Alaska), where I participated the last months of the war in the Okinawa campaign and later in the demilitarization of Japanese Naval forces in Korea.

VI.

EPILOGUE

On assignment to duty in Washington in 1950, as a Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, I called upon King shortly after reporting. He had relinquished his high command in 1945 but as a Fleet Admiral remained on active duty and had an office in the Navy Department. His health had deteriorated perceptibly. With the aid of Walter Muir Whitehill, Director of the Athenaeum in Boston, who had been an Assistant Flag Secretary to King for several years in Washington, he was preparing his autobiography.

All things considered, I think Whitehill did an excellent job against the odds of difficulty of communication and King's determination to include minutiae as to his early days, when all that really should have been treated, with an appropriate background summary, were King's performance for the year before the war in the Atlantic and his performance as COMINCH from 1941 to 1945.

There were two other persons, Admirals R. S. Edwards and C. M. Cooke, who had served in very senior positions with King all of his time in Washington, whom I implored to set down their thoughts, but at that time Cooke had some connection with the Chinese Nationalists and was a good deal in Formosa, and Edwards begged off on grounds of health.

Edwards has now gone to his Maker, but I hope he left some records. Cooke is a prolific and able writer and I also hope he has in his files data that will be useful to others in the future.

As I read through this manuscript, I am fearful I have talked too much of my own experiences. But as I said at the outset, a certain amount of my own experiences were necessary as a backdrop to my service with King.

I have recorded here only some of the outstanding examples of King's always clearheaded thinking. There was only one flaw I ever perceived in his mental processes.

So tenacious of view was he, that given bad advice - which was bound to happen from time to time - if he had issued an order, he sometimes held on longer than most would. On the other hand, given sound advice, combined with his own acute judgment, he rarely went wrong.

His strategic thinking, viewed in summary, is impressive:

(a) His correct over-all appreciation of the manner in which the war would develop, as presented to F.D.R. in 1940;

(b) His so correct appraisal of the Atlantic situation that his original operation plan of early 1940 scarcely differed from the final plan of 1945;

(c) Once we were in the war, his immediate appraisal of the vital need of keeping open the line of communications to Australia;

(d) His one-man stand for the need of controlling Guadalcanal - which he won only after much blood between himself and Marshall had run in the scuppers;

(e) The masterful marshalling of our limited forces, which enabled Nimitz and Spruance, by their own superior handling, to change the whole course of the Pacific war at the battle of Midway;

(f) His correct concept for the need of such an organization as the 10th Fleet to combat the U-boat menace in the Atlantic.

Many military, particularly the British, who have written war books, have emphasized what they refer to as King's anti-British attitude. Hence, in bringing this work to a close, I can do no better than quote a letter I wrote Sir Arthur Bryant in 1960 and one to General Hollis, a Royal Marine, in 1961, together with Hollis's reply, even though my letters cover some of the ground already outlined. Bryant never replied. I think this was possibly because he showed the letter to Allenbrooke, who was probably offended - and good enough for him.

1879 Broadway
San Francisco 9, California
U. S. A.
22 January 1960

Sir Arthur Bryant
c/o Doubleday, & Co., Inc.
Garden City, New York

Dear Sir Arthur,

I have read with enjoyment your two books based on Lord Allenbrooke's diaries.

It is particularly interesting to me to note the vein running through your two works, as well as in the products of other writers, as to the difficulties with Admiral King.

Were the whole background understood by his many critics, I do not think anyone (least of all a junior such as myself) has to rise in defense of King. He was so little known and understood by many of his contemporaries that I venture to throw some light on this rather obscure picture.

My justification for writing this letter is that I was King's Operations Officer in our Atlantic Fleet the year before we came into the war. During this period we took F. D. R. to Argentia for his first meeting with the P. M. After Pearl Harbor King took me to Washington with him in the same capacity.

After about six months there I "sprang" myself for command of a heavy cruiser at Casablanca (Torsh) and later in the Solomons. About a year later I was "sprung" back as a junior Rear Admiral to become King's Chief of Staff for Tenth Fleet matters which had to do with the war against the U-boats. In late 1944 I "sprang" myself to sea again where I enjoyed command of our so-called battle cruiser division during the entire Okinawa campaign, culminating in participation in acceptance of the Japanese surrender in Korea.

During all of my service with King I lived in his several flag ships and messed with him. For a lad fourteen years his junior I think I knew him better than anyone around my time (and indeed better than most of his contemporaries) and was privy to most of his thinking. Once in an

angry mood, he astounded and confused me by saying to me that I was his sternest critic.

As I read the multitudinous memoirs resulting from WWII, many poorly done and a few, like yours, excellent, it seems to me that King is a primary target for these accusations:

a. he was difficult

b. he was anti-British

c. he had a limited strategic horizon and his principal concern was with the Pacific War to the prejudice of the prior defeat of Germany.

I address myself to these three allegations:

a. He was difficult - and most exacting. But tough as it was, it was a pleasure and an education to work for one who knew precisely what he wanted accomplished but whose broad comprehension of the exercise of command permitted him only to direct as to what and when (and why, for the more intelligent understanding of his subordinates) but never, how. To the possible detriment of his own reputation and career he repeatedly allowed (forced) members of his own staff and all of his subordinate commanders to "stew in their own juice", rather than tell them how. He did not believe in nursing and being nursed. In short, he had the broad view, practiced it and required such practice by others.

While I had the pleasure of meeting Allenbrooke only once at a dinner that King gave in Washington, from my observation on this one occasion, other things I have heard of him and your two volumes, it would not occur to me that he and King would have seen eye to eye. Both were inclined to be impatient of stupidity (a fine trait) and somewhat imperious.

King is represented as being "cold", that, I am satisfied, was a suit of armour. One evening in 1941 when he and I were alone at dinner in Augusta at Newport, R.I., for reasons unknown to me, he discussed his early years in the Navy. He said that within a year of his graduation from our Naval Academy in 1901 he came to realize that if he was to get along, he had to toughen up. I suspect it was then that he clad himself in armour, and few ever pierced it.

Exacting as he was, I repeatedly perceived small chinks in that suit when he would make the most humane and considerate gestures.

b. He was anti-British - He was not. He was sometimes apprehensive (particularly in the early stages of the war when our forces were few and spread thin) that the British would try to take over both strategic and tactical direction. It is understandable that such an attitude must often have made him appear to be anti.

In point of fact, what he principally rebelled against was what he considered the unsound concept of tactical integration of naval forces of different nationalities.

It is interesting to note that apparently a similar view is a problem that is now causing de Gaulle difficulty with respect to NATO.

I think too that the record will show (or if it does not do so, then I know that what follows is approximately correct) that at one time the P. M. advanced to F. D. R. the thesis that so far as the sea war was concerned the U. K. and the U. S. should, by mutual agreement, establish their own "chop line" and each take over supervision and strategic direction of the smaller navies within their respective areas. This, of course, was an affront to friends and neighbors on both sides of the Atlantic but I think as a practical matter made great good sense. If the chips are ever down again (which, God forbid) matters could work out that way.

As a naval man I think we are far from the point where we can effectively come to tactical integration of many disparate groups. The ground and air problems are not, I think, so difficult.

Again, Triumph in the West emphasizes King's objection to British naval participation in the Pacific War. Here again, it was not anti-British thinking but rather his concern with naval tactical integration. I was a unit commander in one of our carrier task forces in the Okinawa operation and when the British task force joined up it was not possible to integrate them tactically. As a separate task force they performed well.

As an aside here, lest I too be accused of being anti-British, I should like to observe that while I think in the snap

and speed of aircraft carrier operations we excelled in WWII, in the early 1950s, with your Sir Michael Denny (then my opposite number) I collaborated in the British conceived projects of the steam catapult and the angled deck for aircraft carriers, which were the two vital features that practically saved the aircraft carrier from extinction. I am amused by Dill's comments to Allenbrooke (page 106 - Triumph in the West) that he (Dill) had a sneaking regard for King and that his (King's) war with the U. S. Army "is as bitter as his war with us".

As to the first point, Dill and King were good friends. With Marshall, King made it possible for Dill to be buried in the Arlington National Cemetery.

As to the second point, a good deal of King's trouble resulted from the decision taken at Casablanca, that the anti-U-boat war was to be a first charge against our joint resources.

At that time what was then our Army Air Corps was becoming increasingly independent and while some elements were under naval orders for antisubmarine business, they did not care for it and on one occasion that I vividly recall, practically "refused duty" unless orders came through an Air Corps echelon! We corrected that concept in short order.

At one time Marshall and Arnold thought to solve the problem by having the Army take over all anti-U-boat operations. Exactly how they thought they would be competent to carry out broad naval operations I do not know - excepting perhaps they were engaging in the same sort of "thinking" as is exemplified in Pinafore.

It was such philosophy, however, that caused so many of our difficulties. The matter was finally resolved by the Navy training and furnishing flight crews and taking over all Army Air Corps planes engaged in the anti-U-boat war. Our problem then was only with the U-boats.

c. He had a limited strategic horizon and his principal concern was with the Pacific war to the prejudice of the prior defeat of Germany.

These are really two allegations but they are best dealt with as a whole.

(1) (a). Strategic Horizon - Shortly after King assumed command of the Atlantic Fleet in Dec. 1940 he issued an Operation Plan (which he must have ticked off in his own mind many months previously) which not only stood up during his year of command, The Neutrality Patrol, etc., but also, required no material strategic re-deployment of forces during the entire war - not bad strategic thinking.

(b) A few months before Pearl Harbor I made a routine flight with him to Washington where he was called to the White House to present to F.D.R. his concept of what our global strategy should be. Present, were most of the top people. His presentation, which deviated only in detail from what actually happened later, was so impressive that it had a distinct bearing on his later designation as COMINCH.

(c) Without question Allenbrooke showed a broad grasp of the essentials of Global Strategy. I think the record also shows that MacArthur's and King's concepts were no less perceptive - the main difference being that the latter two did not openly record their qualities of prescience.

(d) His principal concern was with the Pacific War, etc. First of all, he demanded and rendered complete loyalty. The fact, however, of his subscribing to the high level, overriding decision for the initial defeat of Germany did not (nor should it) deter him from deploying his own limited Pacific forces to the best advantage for the initial holding action against Japan.

King's early realization that the Japanese thrust to the south had to be blunted (and quickly) was what lead him to insist on the Guadalcanal operation. His efforts to have this endorsed by our Joint Chiefs were carried on single handed against the strong opposition of Marshall and others. As so often happens he had to concede to Marshall, certain stated naval forces to the European Theatre. This he did. The results of the Guadalcanal strategy speak for themselves.

Under this heading I have only mentioned a few of the most important operations. There were many other instances in which King's strategic sense and foresight paid huge dividends; e.g. Midway was a great tactical victory and a turning point. This was brought about as the result of bold strategic re-deployments.

It is indeed unfortunate that King did not keep a day to day diary - equally so that immediately after the war he did not set forth his views; perhaps not for publication then but at least for the record at a later date.

Immediately after the war when I was still on active duty (I retired in 1956) I tried to prevail upon Admiral R. S. Edwards who was King's Chief of Staff and/or Deputy during the entire war and upon Admiral C. M. Cooke, his Chief Planner to go to Washington where complete records were available and record King's contributions.

Edwards was not well and Cooke had other commitments. As a result when Whitehill (an historian of great competence) got around to the task of collaboration, matters had deteriorated to the extent that it was not possible to produce a work that adequately recorded King's great contribution.

I have made these few notes not for publication but in the belief they may be of interest and value to you in clarifying certain points of view and to provide background should you undertake any subsequent works in the areas I have mentioned. If you think he would be interested I should be glad for Allenbrooke to know of these expressions of fact and opinion.

Very sincerely,

FRANCIS S. LOW
Admiral, U. S. Navy (Ret)

1879 Broadway
San Francisco 9, California
March 23, 1961

General Sir Leslie Hollis KCB KBE
c/o Michael Joseph, Ltd.
26 Bloomsbury Street
London W.C. 1 England

Dear General Hollis:

I have just read with great pleasure your book, "War at the Top". I was Admiral King's Operations Officer in the Atlantic the year before we entered the war and recall meeting you at Argentia when F.D.R. and the P.M. first met.

Referring to pages 272-279 I wonder if you can tell me where the work of the European Advisory Commission is more fully documented. I think this facet little understood and that many (including myself) would do well further to acquaint themselves with what transpired.

I have noted in many British writings the consistent position that King was anti-British - I do not think this was the case. In addition to my year with him in the Atlantic I served on his staff at two other times during the war. I was always a member of his small mess and knew him well.

He was difficult to work for. And with what was assumed by many to be an anti-British attitude was, in fact, a strong opposition to "mixed forces", i.e. tactical integration of naval units of two or more countries. So strongly did he hold to this position that I am sure "anti-mixed-forces" was frequently misunderstood as anti-British. Then too, when we entered the war, to which you were already geared, and veterans, he did have an understandable feeling that the veterans would try to take over, which I am sure was sometimes reflected in his always impatient attitude.

He was genuinely fond of Pound and Dill.

Sincerely,

F. S. Low
Admiral USN (Ret.)

Page 49 - After Author's note add -

Here, I should add a note of deep personal regret.

Admiral King died on 25 June 1956. His funeral was on 29 June. I was honored in being designated an honorary pall bearer but was also under orders from the Navy Dept. to conduct my retirement ceremonies in San Francisco on 30 June. The two dates were obviously incompatible so I assumed the old gentleman would not have wanted me to be A.O.L. or A.W.O.L. and, therefore, was forced to regret the opportunity to pay my last respects to one I so greatly admired.

General Hollis's reply:

14th April 1961

"Dear Admiral Low,

Thank you so much for your kindly letter of March 23. I could not reply before, as I was in hospital, but now 'released'.

Your letter was very timely, as I am writing another book called 'Top Brass & Others', in which I refer to Admiral King again. You have put me on the tracks, and so I shall not make the mistake again of calling him 'Anti-British'. Your description of his attitude is, I am sure, the correct one and I will use it in this new book.

I am afraid I cannot, yet, help you much over the European Advisory Commission. I will, however, get in touch with our Cabinet Office boys & find out if there is some official record of the Commission's work, which I could pass on to you, but it may take a little time.

My best regards, and again, my thanks for your letter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Leslie Hollis

Gener[illegible]. M. (ret)

P. S. I always got on well with Admiral King. There are many advantages in being a Marine!"

General Leslie Hollis
Birchlands
Haywards Heath
England

Author's Note: Hollis's P. S. is most amusing. Our Marines are an integral part of the Naval Establishment and one of the world's greatest fighting organizations. King was one of the many warm admirers of Marines, so I suspect there is a grain of truth in what Hollis says.

Finis