

INVASION'S OWN MAINSPRING

Where SHAEF Does Its Work

By JOHN PUDNEY, Official Observer with the Royal Air Force

FOR AT least half a day, on my appointment as R.A.F. official observer, I imagined that SHAEF was the name of an American General wielding phenomenal power behind the scenes. Discussing any aspect of invasion, somebody would say "SHAEF says *this* ought to be done" and somebody else would say "We had better refer *that* to SHAEF to get a ruling . . ." So SHAEF was the character to meet, I imagined. Everything originated from SHAEF.

A world conditioned by war to assimilate combinations of initials has rapidly tumbled to the fact that SHAEF stands for Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces—the source, indeed, from which everything originates. From an encampment of a few acres in Britain emanate the orders which set every tank in motion, which direct the mission of every aircraft, which control the courses of Navies, and which execute the agreed policies of the Allied nations.

Within this encampment are the brains which control the manifold limbs of war. It is a quiet place, removed from the thunder of the air limb striking across the seas. The only movement in this headquarters is one of paper; and the paper which moves is the most potent and secret component of war. The design it makes is the very pattern of European liberation.

In the spacious office of the Supreme Commander, General Eisenhower, three silk standards stand alongside the General's desk, making an heraldic pattern against the wall. They are the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack, and the four white stars on a scarlet field which is the General's personal standard. There is a very English open fire in this office room, with brass fire-dogs; and if the visitor be invited to the leisure of contemplating his surroundings, there are souvenirs of much recent history to be noted. Framed upon a wall above the Supreme Commander's head, for example, there is the

very rough draft of a signal from the President of the United States to Marshal Stalin scribbled in hasty pencil and countersigned by the one word "Roosevelt" in ink. It is the original message which announced Eisenhower's appointment to the supreme command.

Distinguished Souvenirs

Upon the other walls of the room can be traced the course of events in signed photographs. There is King George VI; there is Generalissimo Chang Kai Chek with an impressive signature running vertically. Upon the General's desk is a brass ash-tray manufactured by men of the Royal Navy from the first shell fired in the salute for Independence Day ordered by Admiral Cunningham in the Mediterranean.

SHAEF is matter of fact in its layout. There is no grandeur anywhere in the huted encampment. The rather dark, narrow passage which is shared by the mixed American and British staffs of Eisenhower and Tedder is less impressive than an executive corridor in any small town office block. In Air Chief Marshal Tedder's office there are no flags; but there is one oil painting, which hangs over the brick fireplace. It is by an R.A.F. aircraftman, and it shows Typhoons in flight along the south coast of England. Unique to Tedder's room is a formidable sprig of African thorn which sits on the desk in front of the visitor to this office. Its object is to prevent the visitor's fist from banging the desk.

Paper Work—With Vitality

Since SHAEF governs its great war potentials by paper special consideration has been given to quick and easy appreciation of "paper work." The Chief of Staff, General Walter B. Smith, employs a secretariat whose task is to inject the paper with vitality, movement, and at-a-glance intelligibility.