

The secretariat which undertakes this work lives in a large not-so-tidy room close to the General, and it is one of the liveliest interiors in the headquarters. A team of young men of talent, British and American, some of them lawyers, most of them experienced in the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns, here deal at ruthless speed with paper, while also standing by to undertake delicate and intricate staff missions at short notice. If their attitude is sometimes light-hearted, their objectives are always lucidity and candour.

"This welter of words . . ." is how one member of the secretariat was describing a prodigiously bulky file in his written precis of its contents—a precis which would go forward to one of the Chiefs summarizing the whole file upon a single sheet. The form-filling public upon both sides of the Atlantic might well look with envy toward this most important Anglo-American unit which is, and will be, the machinery for turning word into action until action is no longer necessary.

### **The Holy of Holies**

The brain-centre of the invasion is grouped in a simple pattern of executive

blocks. Hidden in their midst is the war room, heavily guarded, pregnant with all the secrets of battle. In less than five minutes you can walk round the whole of SHAEF. Everything is at hand; it is meant to be.

The living together of Americans and British has taken permanent shape. They share the officers' club. They have separate messes of their own, but membership is interchangeable. A symbol of the unity are the headquarters insignia—a drawn sword upon the jet black background of Nazi oppression. It is a military shoulder badge, but permission has been obtained for R.A.F. men on headquarters staff to wear it upon blue battledress. To every man on the staff of SHAEF goes the honour of wearing this badge.

There is little more to be noted of this quiet encampment hidden upon British soil. A day spent at a thousand other points in Britain would reveal the infinitely greater drama of movement; but one would look far indeed for an acre of soil which would yield such an unhurried deliberate dynamic as Europe's last hours of enslavement run out.

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### **Unhappy Life for U-Boat Captains**

The life of a U-boat captain is an unhappy one these days. Not only does he have to run a gauntlet of United Nations destroyers, escort vessels, airplanes and blimps which have taken a heavy toll of German submarines, but even if he gets through and torpedoes a tanker, he has no assurance that his mission is accomplished.

Allied headquarters in London now reveal that many tankers have been saved from sinking after being hit by torpedoes through the use of compressed-air pumps. Air lines are stretched the length of the tanker, and pumps set up at the bow and stern. If a ship is torpedoed, compressed air is forced into the damaged sections at a pressure high enough to keep out the water.

A British tanker—the first to be rigged with the compressors—was hit by three torpedoes, then steamed 1,200 miles (1,920 kilometers) to the United States for repairs, thanks to the compressed-air pumps. Another British tanker, the second to have the equipment installed, was hit by a torpedo when she had 12,000 tons of benzine and kerosene aboard. The U-boat surfaced to watch the tanker sink, but had to submerge because of the fumes. The tanker threw her compressors into play and the ship was saved. The English say that one tanker saved would pay for the installation of the new equipment on the whole British tanker fleet. It takes only two days to install the equipment, which has played an important part in winning the Battle of the Atlantic for the United Nations.