

# **LOGISTICS IN THE NORTHERN EUROPEAN COMMAND**

BY

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Variety is the key-note of a naval career, and one of the many experiences which may be encountered within its comprehensive scope is an appointment to a major NATO command. With its admixture of problems by land, sea and air, and its blend of military and political issues, there are plenty of opportunities of testing the versatility and imagination. This article, within the confines of its limited length, attempts to describe and explain the responsibilities of a technical officer appointed to the Logistics Division of such a command, and to give some insight into the sort of thing he is expected to do. Before entering into any details, however, it may be as well to outline the NATO organization in Europe in general, and the Northern European Command in particular.

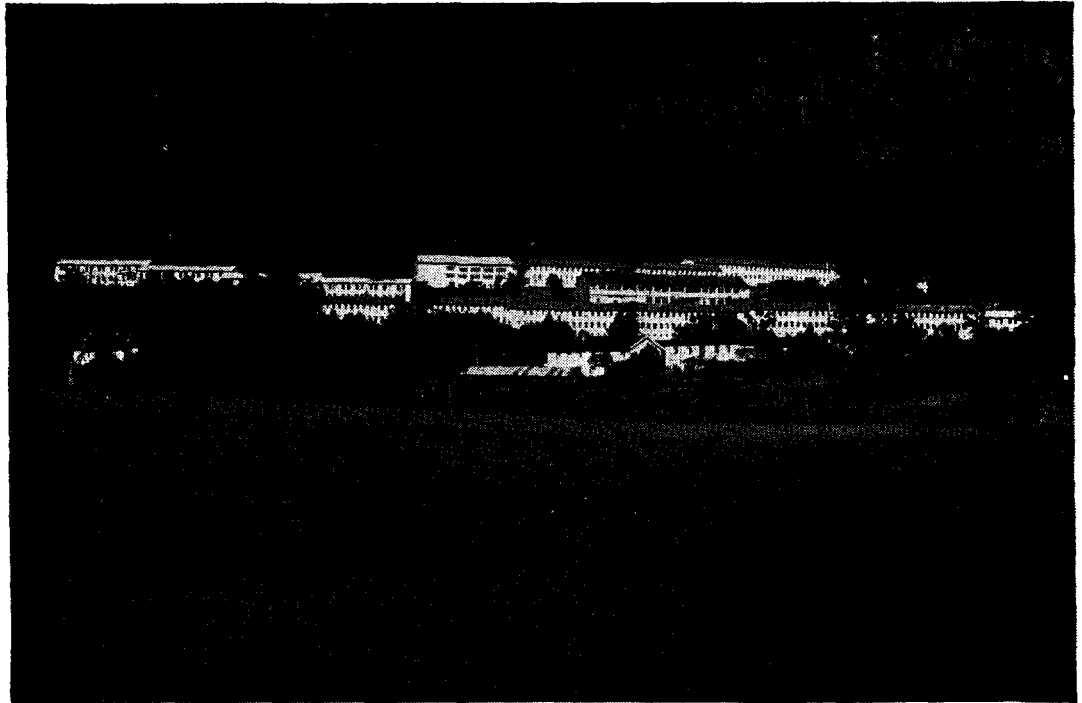


FIG. 1—THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE ALLIED FORCES NORTHERN EUROPE  
AT KOLSÅS, NEAR OSLO

### **The NATO Organization in Europe**

Under the command of SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander, Europe), whose headquarters are SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe), there are three major subordinate commands. These are the South European Command\* otherwise known as Allied Forces, Southern Europe (AFSOUTH); the Central European Command, otherwise known as AFCENT; and the Northern European Command otherwise known as AFNORTH. The Commanders-in-Chief are known respectively as CINCSOUTH, CINCENT and CINCNORTH. It is the command of the last-named, the Northern European Command, with which this article is primarily concerned, and its headquarters are at Kolsås, about 10 miles west of Oslo, on the fringe of the new suburban area of Bærum.

### **The Northern European Command (NEC)**

The Northern European Command constitutes the northern flank of NATO and stretches from the North Cape to the Elbe, a distance of 1,350 miles as the crow flies, with the desolate wastes of Finnmark at one extremity, and the fertile plains of Schleswig-Holstein at the other (see FIG. 2). It is possible to consider this lengthy littoral in two distinct geographical parts, divided from each other by the Skagerrak. The northerly part consists of the kingdom of Norway, its mountainous 125,182 square miles sparsely filled by a population of only 3,700,000 people. Extending 280 miles due north of the Arctic circle, one of its main characteristics is its extreme length. By air the distance from Oslo to Kirkenes on the Russian frontier, is 970 miles, but by road this journey expands itself to no less than 1,548 miles, taking 5 days, a situation to which the tortuous and often unmetalled roads contribute to a considerable extent. This picture is not greatly relieved by alternative methods of transport, for

\*AFMED at Malta has recently been incorporated as a principal subordinate command to AFSOUTH and is known as NAVSOUTH.

# NORTHERN EUROPEAN COMMAND

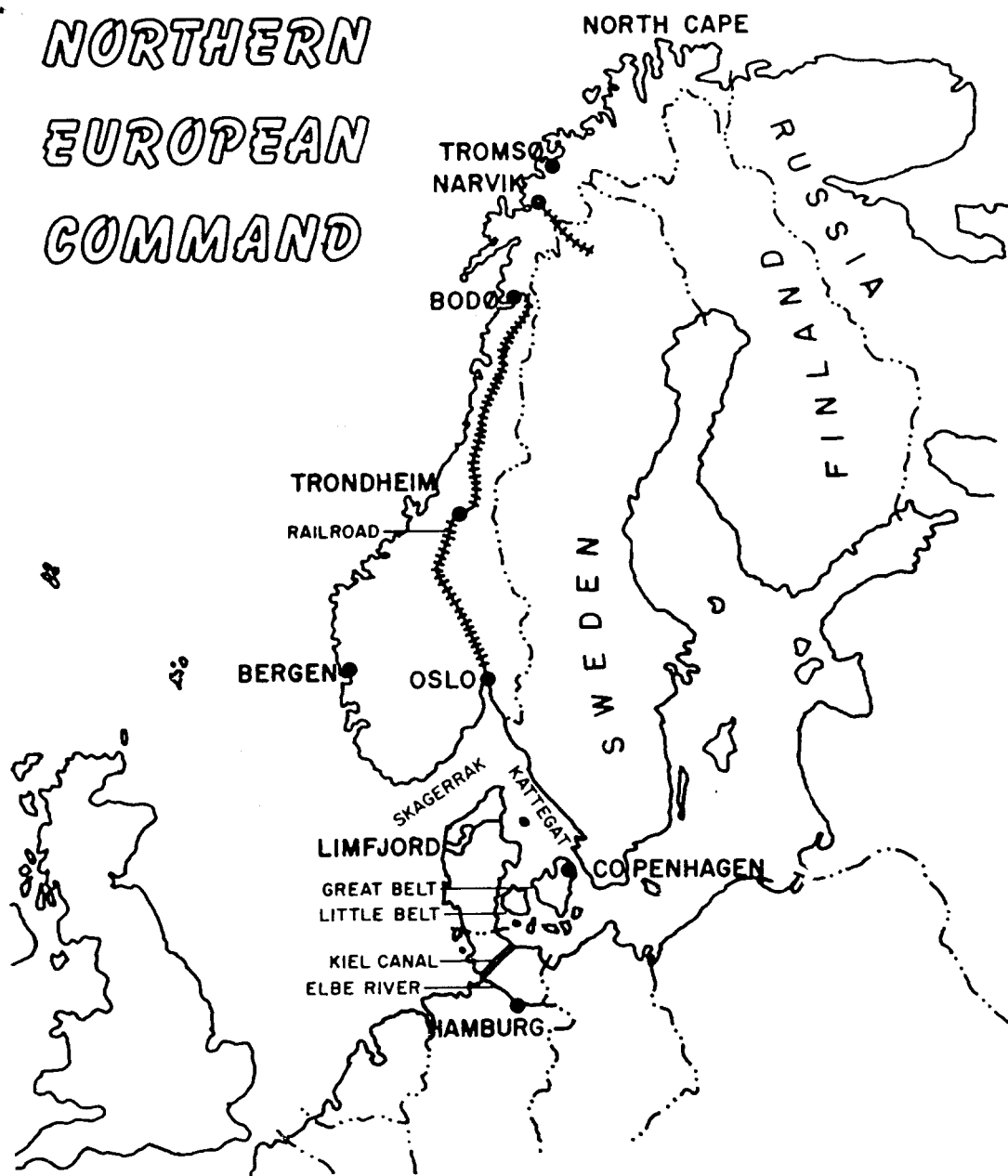
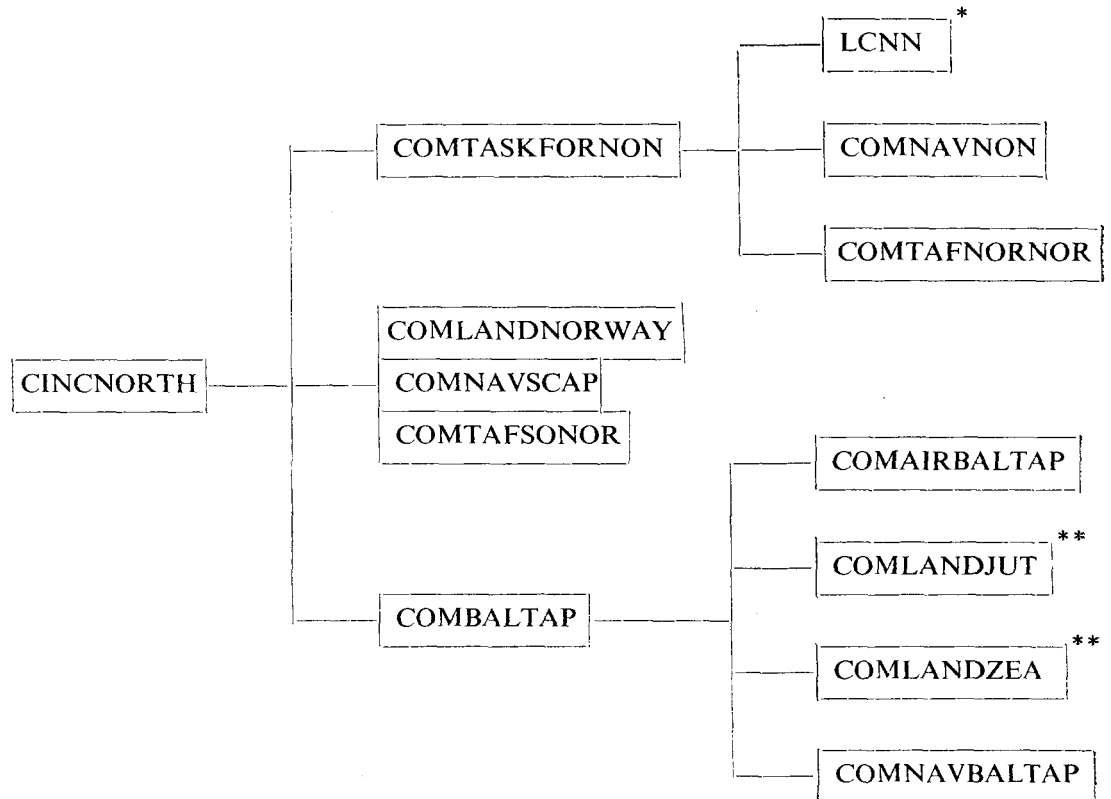


FIG. 2

the rail network of Norway does not extend beyond Bodø (apart from the Narvik iron ore railway, which has a connection through Sweden), and even to reach this half-way point takes 24 hours from Oslo. The classic means of transport in Norway is, of course, the sea, and it is a salutary comment on the difficulty of land communications, to point out that the journey along the entire length of the country by this means is little slower than by road, and infinitely more easy; for, with a country of such an indented coastline, much of the sea passage can be made in sheltered waters. Known as the 'leads', these protected lanes played an important part in the 1939-45 war.

A second fact of vital importance is the weather, as the author who within hours of typing these lines has shifted 25 tons of snow off his roof, can testify! Although, owing to the influence of the Gulf Stream, the coastal areas of North Norway enjoy a much more equable climate than might be expected in such latitudes, the weather can, nevertheless, be very severe. Both in the South and



\*Land Command North Norway

\*\*Jutland and Zealand respectively

FIG. 3

in the North, certain routes are cut every winter, and it may come as a surprise to those not familiar with the country, that the main road from Oslo to Bergen is often among their number. The construction of an 'all-weather' route is currently under way, with many tunnels of great length, and high embankments, but the end of this work is not predicted until 1970. Temperatures vary in winter from around zero on the coast to minus 40 degrees C, or less, in inland districts, while in the extreme north it is dark for a long period in the winter months. Altogether, it is not an easy country for military operations, or for their logistic support.

The area south of the Skagerrak consists of the Kingdom of Denmark, and the German province of Schleswig-Holstein. Conditions here are a little more normal, and do not call for so much comment. Apart from the impedances caused in Denmark by the Great Belt, the Little Belt and, to a lesser extent, the Limfjord (in North Jutland), communications are much faster than in Norway. The density of population, and concentration of industry is also greater, and the climate, although it can occasionally be severe, to the extent of freezing up the Baltic, is generally a more reasonable proposition. Special mention might perhaps be made of the Danish island of Bornholm, the position of which is very isolated, and a full 130 miles to the eastward.

The classical strategic importance of the area is that it commands the exit from the Baltic, Peter the Great's 'Window to the West', but in more recent times the value of North Norway in exerting control of the Northern seas, and the passage round the North Cape, has been amply demonstrated. From the land standpoint, the Northern European Command covers the northern flank of NATO forces fighting in Central Europe, while in the missile age, it has acquired a new importance as the geographical basis of a far flung early warning radar line.

Taken as a whole, therefore, the area has a strategic importance which in its northern tracts at least, is out of all proportion to its economic value.

### **The Command Structure of the Northern European Command**

The organization of the NEC is shown diagrammatically in FIG. 3, which shows the Principal Subordinate Commanders (PSCs) under CINCNORTH, and their immediate subordinates.

Taking Norway first, it will be noticed that in the North there is a Joint Service Command (Commander Task Force North Norway), but that in the South there are three separate service commands (Commander Naval Forces Scandinavian Approaches, Commander Land Forces Norway, and Commander Tactical Air Forces, South Norway). It is proposed in the future to amalgamate the southern trio into a joint South Norwegian Command, but at the date of writing this has not been implemented.

In the Denmark-Schleswig-Holstein area, the Principal Subordinate Commander is the Commander, Allied Forces Baltic Approaches (COMBALTAP), who is joint service, and who has direct command of all three services within his area. The commands under COMBALTAP in the command chain are shown in FIG. 3.

This reasonably orderly array is made somewhat complicated by the fact that certain commands are allied in peace and war (AFNORTH itself, COMBALTAP and COMLANDNORWAY), while the others are national in peace and allied in war, with certain national qualifications in some cases.

The commands which are allied in peace and war are manned on a multi-national basis, the personnel being U.S., British, Danish, Norwegian and German. At AFNORTH, the proportions (in the same order) are approximately 28, 30, 17, 17 and 8 per cent, while at COMBALTAP there is, naturally, a German-Danish preponderance. Certain of the subordinate commands (e.g., COMNAVBALTAP) have a multi-national character, but here the preponderance comes from the 'host' nation.

The official allied language is English, in which the Scandinavians are adept, and which the Germans, to their credit, master well. This might be an appropriate point at which to inject the comment that, while an English-speaking officer obviously has a great advantage in being able to use his mother tongue, there is a considerable benefit to be obtained in acquiring at least a working knowledge of the language of the country in which he is a temporary resident. Apart from easing the communications problem, it is well received by the nationals concerned. With the advent of closer co-operation with continental countries, inability to speak more than one's own language fluently appears to be becoming an anachronism.

This description of the command structure of the NEC leads on to a consideration of the national organizations with which it must work.

### **The Relations between Allied and National Authorities**

One of the fundamentals to be grasped in attempting to appreciate how NATO works, is the relationship between the Allied and National authorities. NATO is, by definition, an alliance, and an allied headquarters does not, therefore, become a supra-national authority. Certain powers are delegated to it by the nations concerned, and these are defined in documents known as Delegations of Authority, prepared by the individual nations themselves, and agreed with SHAPE. At the same time, there are definite limitations to what an allied commander is empowered to do, and, in any event, it goes without saying that he is entirely dependent on national co-operation. This indeed, is the basis of the whole alliance.

Nowhere is this problem more acute than in Logistics. Unlike operational matters, 'Logs' has a nasty habit of being inextricably mixed up with the civilian organization of a nation, and of dealing with items which are very much national property. So much so is this the case, that pessimists dismiss the whole impasse with the phrase 'Logistics is a National Responsibility'! This, like many other such sweeping phrases, is only a half truth.

It would be much nearer the truth to say that in logistics, it is a national responsibility to provide the actual material, while it is an allied responsibility to estimate the overall logistic requirements of the Command, and to co-ordinate the individual national resources.

The precise means whereby this is achieved are various. It may be the negotiation of a bilateral agreement, enabling one nation to utilize the facilities of another—perhaps for the storage of emergency supplies, or for maintenance. It may be in assisting in the formulation of some joint plan (perhaps for the use of the ACE\* Mobile Force), or in the arranging and implementing of an exercise. The NATO staff officer has to be something of a diplomat, and to oil the wheels of negotiations and arrangements such as these, especially when they get stuck!

In carrying out this type of work, contact is necessarily made with the Ministries of Defence, and Chiefs of Defence of the countries of the Command. CINCNORTH has direct access to Ministries of Defence when required, although normally most of the business is done through Chiefs of Defence, or, by arrangement with CHODs, through single service channels. In the latter case, it is the author's experience that 'service-colour-loyalty' often goes far to surmounting international barriers, and is a most pleasant experience. Personal contacts of this nature are at a working level, and experience shows the strength of a common understanding. If it is an odd experience at first, to find oneself walking down the corridors of a foreign Ministry of Defence, one is soon put at ease by an invariably courteous reception.

This background of the balance between allied and national authorities can probably best be concluded by the following quotation from the NEC Logistic 'Bible', the 'Logistic Policy and Guidance'. This document sets down the fundamentally agreed principles, policies, and responsibilities of the allied and national authorities, and is the common basis upon which the remainder of the structure rests. Its opening paragraph expresses the delicate balance to be drawn in an alliance where national sovereignty must be respected. It runs as follows: 'The logistic concept of CINCNORTH and the nations of N.E.C. is to develop an acceptable logistic support system, which balances international co-operation and national sovereignty.' This statement expresses concisely the aim of the Logistic staff officer in AFNORTH. Before, however, describing in more detail how he strives to achieve this desideratum, a short dissertation on the exact meaning of the word 'logistics' is probably in season.

## Logistics

Research into the definition of the term 'logistics' reveals that this word has acquired a wider meaning in the past ten years than that originally attributed to it. In its original connotation it was defined as: 'That branch of the military art which embraces the details of the transport, quartering, and supply of troops'. The current NATO definition, however, shows that the term is regarded in that organization as having a much more comprehensive meaning, and runs as follows: 'The marshalling and employment of military resources in support

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\*ACE = Allied Command Europe.

of military operations, embracing the five functions of Supply and Maintenance, Medical, Movement and Transport, Construction and Facilities (often known as Infrastructure and Engineering), Communications, and Administrative Management.'

It is clear from these two definitions that there is a certain vagueness about the exact point where logistics begins and stops. It can either be considered as restricted purely to the material support of operations, conceived broadly as a supply and transport problem, or it can be widened to encompass the whole ramifications of 'the marshalling and employment of military resources in support of military operations'. This latter definition can be considered to include matters as diverse as maintenance, supply, transport, dockyards, and even the construction of harbours, airfields and depots. Thus, seen from the R.N. angle, the term 'logistics' could well be interpreted on this basis, as to mean all the fields now covered by the Third and Fourth Sea Lords (excepting R and D), and the maritime aspects of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works. Such a comprehensive connotation of the word 'logistics' goes far beyond the original and narrower definition, and now seems to have gained official acceptance by the recent organization of the top structure of the Ministry of Defence, whereby the Secretary of State for Defence has a Minister of Defence (Administration), and a Chief Adviser, Personnel and Logistics. This rearrangement is a pointer to the direction in which we are moving in this era of reorganization, and suggests that the wider meaning of the term 'logistics', as understood in NATO, and on the Continent, is taking deeper root in Britain.

Now that something of the geography and organization of the North European Command, and the meaning of the term 'logistics', have been described and discussed, it is possible to examine in more detail the sort of work carried out by the Logistics Division at CINCNORTH's Headquarters at Kolsås.

### **The Logistics Division at AFNORTH**

The Logistics Division at AFNORTH is headed by an Assistant Chief of Staff, who is a Colonel of the U.S. Army. Under the latter come the separate branches of the Division, namely, Plans, Supply and Maintenance, Movement and Transport, Infrastructure and Engineering, and Medical, each headed by its own Branch Chief, who is of half Colonel rank, except for the last which is headed by the Command Medical Officer, a full colonel. The author is a member of the Plans Branch, the Chief of which is normally a Commander (Fregatten-Kapitän) of the German Navy.

The functions of the Plans Branch cover the forward planning of logistics in the NEC, the task of logistic liaison with the other Divisions, of the Headquarters and the routine chore of co-ordinating the different branches within the Division itself. Thus in several senses, a Plans Branch officer feels like the signalman at Clapham Junction, handling a multitude of joint service problems, but only tackling a few in depth. However, this at least has the advantage of providing a broad view of the whole field, and it is from this vantage point that the following outline description of the essence of the job is made.

### **The Tasks of the Logistics Division**

A complete description of the tasks of each branch of the Logs Division would require more space than can be spared here. Since the only R.N. appointment is to Plans Branch, this will be described first in rather more detail, followed by a few paragraphs summarizing the functions of the other four branches.

### **Plans Branch**

The primary peace-time function of the Logs Plans Branch is to ensure that the logistic support in the area is matched to the operational mission as described in the Command's Emergency Defence Plan. This entails close liaison with the Operations and Plans Divisions, the constant monitoring of the logistic requirements, and the evaluation of national logistic plans. In this position Plans Branch relies on the specialized advice of the other branches as described in subsequent paragraphs.

A second function, as mentioned earlier, is to negotiate in peace-time the necessary bilateral agreements between the nations concerned for mutual logistic support. Stated like this, this process sounds simple, but in fact the need for diplomatic tact and the capacity to phrase the wording of such agreements acceptably, to say nothing of the details of timing, staffing and inspection, make these negotiations protracted and, at times, tedious. Yet these agreements are the logistic cement of NATO. Examples are: the storage of ammunition, fuel and material in another country, or reciprocal arrangements for repairs.

In peace and in war the Division must be able to present to the CINC an up-to-date and accurate picture of the logistic situation, and to highlight current critical limitations. The ability to do this depends upon the manipulation of a reporting system, which must give a continuous record of the state of the stocks, and facilities, and yet not be swamped in detail. With the advent of automation, it should be possible to increase the detail without clerical labour, but in any case the object is to be able to keep abreast of the overall logistic capacity. The Logs Plans officer must be familiar with these reports, and be able to extract from them the essential information, allowing for inevitable national idiosyncracies!

Among the reports, one which stands out in importance is the Annual Logistic Estimate, an annual overall estimation of the logistics in the command and their major limitations. The Staff Officer concerned, in conjunction with an assistant from the other two Services, has to arrange and edit this mass of material into an orderly array, brief his own CINC and despatch it punctually to SHAPE. Later in the year it is customary to make a verbal presentation accompanied by maps and diagrams at SHAPE.

Exercises form a major commitment of Plans Branch, which has the task of devising the logistic 'play' for the operational exercises, and also arranging purely logistic study periods. The preparatory work requires considerable liaison with the Joint Exercise Planning Division and with the logistic departments of the nations themselves. In the actual exercises, members of Logs Division act as far as the exercise permits, in their war-time role, maintaining overall control of the situation, and providing the Command with the necessary briefings.

This brief summary can only give an outline idea of the many problems tackled by the Logs Plans Branch. It can, however, be added as a final comment, that, under the overall guidance of SHAPE, it guides logistic policy, and co-ordinates the different aspects of planning. As such, it requires a capacity to turn from the general to the particular, the historical to the technical, and sometimes (but not often), the sublime to the ridiculous!

### **Supply and Maintenance**

The Supply and Maintenance branch, as its name implies, concentrates on such problems as the necessary levels of stocks, the degree to which they are 'balanced' (i.e., proportioned evenly), re-supply, and storage problems. A close acquaintance with the geographical distribution of supplies, ammunition



'POL' (Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants), and material is required. In addition, problems of maintenance, from the upkeep of equipment like early warning radars to cross-servicing of aircraft, come within S and M's terms of reference. In its routine work the branch studies and makes recommendations on all aspects of the above, from stock levels to standardization, and from attrition rates to salvage and repair.

### **Movement and Transport**

The mobility of logistics is a study of its own, and requires specialized knowledge by land, sea, and air. Apart from maintaining a detailed knowledge of communications and transport facilities, it is the special task of the M and T branch to keep in close touch with national transport agencies, and to ensure that the right organization exists to facilitate the movement of personnel and material throughout the area. The Scandinavian countries of the NEC, owing to their smaller population, depend to a considerable extent on civilian resources (e.g., private lorries, and commercial aircraft for transport in war), and this accentuates the need for a capable allied liaison authority.

### **Infrastructure and Engineering**

The provision of adequate harbours, airfields, depots, and a variety of other facilities is a vital backbone to any logistics plan. The I and E Branch corresponds in many ways to our own Ministry of Public Buildings and Works, and consists primarily of a team of service and civilian civil engineers, who supervise the construction and maintenance of NATO facilities throughout the area. The name 'NATO' should be emphasized, as the responsibility of Logs I and E Branch is limited to what are known as 'NATO Common Funded Facilities'. Nevertheless, these are very extensive, and include, for example, the Danish naval bases of Frederikshavn and Korsør, and the big Norwegian base at Haakonsværn, near Bergen.

The review of the nation's engineering plans, their costing and, later, their subsequent inspection at various stages of construction, gives I and E Branch a very full-time peace-time task.

### **Medical**

The Logistics Division is graced by the presence of the Command's Medical Officer, a full Colonel. His task consists of reviewing the medical plans in support of operations, and making recommendations on a whole range of medical matters, from hospitals to medicine, and evacuation.

### **General Comments**

This article has attempted to portray something of the background of a NATO Major Subordinate Command, and, at the same time, to remove any air of mystery which may surround the appointment of a 'Staff Officer, Logistics'. It remains now to gather up some overall impressions of this vast organization, and, having done this, to conclude on the domestic background.

It might be thought that in an organization so large, it would be easy to lose sight of the ultimate aim and purpose. It is true that partly owing to its size, but also to its international character, the wheels of NATO move more slowly. Yet it must be remembered that the task is no less than the linking up of the military resources and plans of fourteen nations, of differing organizations, traditions and language. Nor is it only confined to the military field, for, although outside the compass of this article, NATO aims at a tremendous amount of fusion in the realms of scientific and technical effort.

Moreover, although progress seen at close quarters may appear to have slow, looking back it is possible to see that the existence of NATO has been a real factor in diplomatic circles, a verdict upon which later historians will almost certainly agree. Therefore, however slow, and however nibbling each successive tour of office may have seemed to its occupant, the gradual process has developed a sufficient degree of international co-operation at a working level, to lend depth and reality to a paper treaty. A study of European history between 1918 and 1939 suggests that the labours of NATO are not in vain.

If, however, a degree of international co-operation has been achieved, it remains true that logistics is still fundamentally a national responsibility, and is, therefore, decentralized. It is easy to develop the idea that the most efficient way to administrate logistics in NATO would be to do so centrally. This view is, however, well ahead of its time, for national sovereignty is still with us, and, indeed, likely to remain so for a long time to come. One step, however, has been taken in this direction, by the formation of the SHAPE Logistic Co-ordination Centre (LCC). This centre is visualized as handling 'ACE-wide' logistic problems, for instance, the maintenance of advanced weapons and radars which are of common manufacture. It is also visualized that the committee will be in a position to make rapid logistic decisions in time of war, although the precise manner how this is to be achieved is not clear. Whether this experiment will succeed or not remains to be seen. The author believes that in certain specialized fields, some centralization would be useful, but that otherwise, military organizations cannot outrun international political and economic development. It seems likely, therefore, that for the next decade at least, logistics will remain primarily a national responsibility.

### **The Domestic Side**

It would be a pity to conclude an article on an appointment in a foreign country without some comment on interesting aspects of the domestic side which such temporary residence involves. The excitement for the author came within an hour of landing in Oslo, when his 'sponsor', an executive commander, introduced him to the niceties of Norwegian domestic cold water systems in an absent-minded way, and flooded a cellar! After this watery beginning, however, rapid progress was made, from the summer when sunset and sunrise could be viewed practically simultaneously, to winter when it was discovered you skied *uphill* in Norway as well as down! It was also found that 'snow-rydding' became very much a part of daily life to the extent of a ton or two a day in mid-winter!

An annual highlight of British activities at Kolsås is the Queen's Birthday Ball, and it fell to the author to organize this celebrated event. With the splendid co-operation of Norwegians, as well as British, it was possible to secure in Oslo, two enormous photographs of the Queen, two of the Duke of Edinburgh, one of H.M.S. *Victory*, a plan of Trafalgar and a picture of Lord Nelson! The assembly of this material into Kolsås, in addition to the collection of 50 gold rampant lions climbing up stairs, all the Anglo-Norwegian streamers in the Nedre Slottes Gata (Lower Castle Street), and a full-size Beefeater, to say nothing of the other domestic necessities, was a logistic exercise in itself! It would take another article, however, to describe that!

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