

INTERVIEW WITH
General Charles Bolte

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg
Oral Historian

on

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for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



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Charles R. Bolte

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This interview is being conducted with General Charles Bolte in the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D. C. October 17, 1973. Present for the interview General Bolte and the interviewer Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library staff.



DR. BURG: General, let me start by asking you where you were educated, and about your original entrance into the service?

GENERAL BOLTE: Well, I was born in Chicago, Illinois, and went through the schools there, high school, and then to Armour Institute of Technology where I took a course in chemical engineering, having become interested in chemistry, and sort of indoctrinated in the engineering field, by my older brother who had gone then to Armour Institute, which is, of course, now Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. In 19--my father, incidentally, was a national guard officer and a volunteer officer, and served in Cuba in 1898 in the war with Spain and kept up his military activities, although he was a businessman in Chicago during my boyhood years. I may have been somewhat indoctrinated with the military then, although I had no particular ambitions until 1914; I was induced to go with a college chum to one of the student training camps established by General Leonard Wood, or under the auspices of General Leonard Wood, who had been



chief of staff and then commanding the Governors' Island District in eastern New York. He had become convinced that if a war were to occur there was going to be a need in American forces for young leaders. And he got War Department authority, in 1913 I think, to establish two student camps, one in New York and one in California. And I think there was one down in North Carolina, Asheville, I think, either that year or later. But anyway, in 1914 I was induced to go to one up in Ludington, Michigan. We paid our transportation and paid for our food but were issued uniforms and weapons and given rudimentary military training, under the auspices of an officer, with a company of infantry, I think, and a troop of cavalry, for five or six months during the summer of 1914.

BURG: Five or six months?

BOLTE: I mean five or six weeks.

BURG: Right.

BOLTE: I got interested in it, and while I hadn't graduated, I

went to the next year with this same college friend to San Francisco, at the Exposition there, and we were having a camp, a student camp, on the parade ground at Presidio, San Francisco. And, incidentally, that was the summer, and the year, at this time of the camp when the Pershing house burned and Mrs. Pershing and the children, except for the boy, were killed in that fire.

BURG: Oh, yes.



BOLTE: In 1915. But the Exposition was on; we had the access to that in uniform, and we did have the same rudimentary training-- a company of infantry to demonstrate what we were doing--the very beginnings. I was nineteen then, I guess. And was then solicited to come into the army, but I was too young, hadn't finished my work at college. And so the next year I went to the camp at Plattsburg, 1916, which the Leonard Wood camps had grown into; and, of course, this war was on in Europe and it looked as if we were going to go in. And, as everybody knows, the movement began there for building up some military forces and the Plattsburg camps started; that's where the word Plattsburg came, but they began way back in 1913 with Leonard Wood--

BURG: I see.

BOLTE:--and his convictions. Then I went to two successive camps that summer at Plattsburg and the second one was a businessman's camp, older men, and I remember there were some five millionaires in my company. They used to go down Saturday afternoon to New York on board meetings, but come back by reveille Monday morning. I got to be a student lieutenant. I decided to go in the regular army then and I was dissuaded from taking the regular examination and I took a reserve commission. And the result was I was commissioned in 1916 in the Reserve Corps, and in 1917 I was ordered to active duty as a 2nd lieutenant, infantry reserve, then which there was nothing lower on the military hierarchy in my opinion. [Laughter] And when war broke out, we entered the war in 1917, I was ordered to duty and sent to Fort Benjamin Harrison to the first of these training camps which were to produce the ninety-day wonders, the Sears-Roebuck lieutenants. And from that summer of 1917 I was assigned to the newly-organized regiment at Gettysburg, the 58th Infantry, and that became part of the 4th Division at Camp Green, North Carolina, and went overseas.



I was wounded at Montfaucon as an infantry officer and served, after 4 months in the hospital, up in Germany and finally as acting adjutant, I think, with the 4th Division--for a young captain, about 22,000 men in the division, I think,--

BURG: Yes, quite a responsibility.



BOLTE: By then I was approved for a permanent commission in the regular army and I stayed in there as a regular army officer, and I've served so all my, my life and I'd do it all over again.

BURG: What rank had you achieved by the end of the war? You were a captain?

BOLTE: World War II?

BURG: World War I.

BOLTE: World War I, I was a captain, temporary captain of infantry, and sent to Washington here to work on a history of the 4th Division. I worked on a history of the 4th Division with the then chief of staff of the division, Colonel [Christian Albert]

Back down in the historical branch of the War College for about ten months and we published a history of the 4th Division.

And then I was sent to Benning to the faculty, and then I was picked up by General Hines, John L. Hines, who had been General Pershing's adjutant in Cuba and a regimental commander, brigade, division, and corps and also my commander in France in the war.

BURG: You say he got up as high as corps commander?



BOLTE: Corps commander in the Argonne; he commanded the III Corps in the Argonne. And came back and, after commanding a division in the then disintegrating army, he was taken by General Pershing to be his deputy chief of staff and succeeded General Pershing as chief of staff. And I served as his aide, or pseudo aide--Chiefs could not have--legally--aides, only generals commanding, so I never drew "aides horse pay"--during those five years from 1921 until 1926. And then I left him and went to Benning on the faculty and then Leavenworth and then China.

BURG: Benning was then the infantry branch school?

BOLTE: Infantry school, the infantry school, yes; really the forerunner of the big army school system. There had been army schools: the school of musketry at Monterrey, and the school of

fire, I think, at Fort Sill. But Fort Benning in 1919, and thereafter, was really a forerunner of the big army school system, which in my opinion carried the torch of the military training in the army between the wars; when there were no troops to speak of for personnel to learn anything about actual troop leading, except in very small degree. But the schools, Benning, and then later Fort Riley, and then later Fort Knox and Fort Sill-- and of course, Leavenworth, which had been in effect before that time--were the ones that carried on and taught the principles and the rules, and so on, lacking the troops to carry out the actual performance. And I think they carried on the principles, and the traditions, and the guides for leadership, that proved their worth in World War II and thereafter.

BURG: In short, without them, we might have been in dire straits indeed in 1941?

BOLTE: I am sure of it and I'm sure--just as Leavenworth, in my opinion, did so much in World War I, because the regular corps of officers, and through them, the officers, the reserve officers,



trained by them began to talk the same language and understand the same principles and practices of leadership. And, incidentally, had a good many of their problems on the area around Metz in France, which in World War I became the St. Mihiel battle, and they were talking about territory and towns and roads and things that they had known and worked on the map at Leavenworth, which was quite a coincidence.

BURG: I understand that similar coincidences occurred--maybe they weren't coincidences--in the Second World War. Some officers have told me that problems that they worked on dealt with North Africa, for example, and to their utter amazement they found themselves, five, ten years later, actually there and carrying on actions in North Africa.

BOLTE: Well, in that connection, when General Marshall was the assistant commandant at the infantry school in the late twenties--twenty-seven or eight, right in there--one of his ideas or principles was to: "study the first six months of the next war." In other words, he use to position the staff and the people to



think about the things, the chaos and the confusions, that had happened in the previous war, and previous wars, and see if you couldn't do something about it to forestall it in the other. And the other was: get loose, get away from these stereotyped maps and procedures and the book, and branch out into new ground. And he said, "Throw away these fire control maps that you have here at Benning," and I remember when he said to the tactics class there, or the instructor of the tactics class, "Ride the class out here to a hill on horseback and give them a situation on the hill, and then gallop them ten miles to another hill and change the situation." Well it was a fine idea, but from the standpoints of the instructor, who was trying to give a situation orally to a group of a hundred students on horseback there, and require a solution, it was about impossible. But the idea was there. And among the maps that he said--"Throw away these fire control maps and go and get a Standard Oil map, with a roadmap here, something like that. Get some foreign maps." and lo, and behold, we had maps of North Africa.

BURG: I see, I see. Knowing that that's--



BOLTE: So China maps, that we--in other words, go and get some maps that you can get from the Intelligence people there, and put your problem on that, with foreign names, foreign things, completely strange to you--General Marshall was a pioneer in that idea.



BURG: The kind of maps that you might well have to work with, at least in the initial stages of an operation.

BOLTE: I'm sure that wasn't in his mind, that those were the-- but the idea was he wanted to get away from the standard map that you knew, that was on a one to twenty thousand, like the French maps were that we had in World War I. We did have fire, I mean, geographical maps of France there, the one to eighty thousand map was as complete--you could even find a house on the map there--road junctions, and so on. And he had experienced that in World War I, so his idea now was, you never know what you're going to be confronted with, and throw out this standard map, because you're not going to have them. You're going to have something else and nobody knows what it's going to be.

BURG: Right.

BOLTE: So school yourself to where you, you could face up to that situation and solve it with a minimum of information and a minimum of tools to work with.



BURG: Force these student officers to develop a flexibility that they might otherwise not have had.

BOLTE: That's right. And he was a master at that.

BURG: I see. Now you, yourself, went to Leavenworth; what year were you there as a student?

BOLTE: I went to Leavenworth in '30, '32--it was a two-year course. And I must say that the word was out to the students going there, "You've got to watch because you're up against it; you're going to be tested," and so on. They had had suicides, and the competition was artificial. I must say that I had better advice from two of my predecessors who said, "You work up till ten o'clock at night and go to bed and forget about it," and so on, advice that I followed. But we did have in my two years there,

five wives that tried to commit suicide and two succeeded, because of this artificial pressure placed upon the students in competition for standings and so on, which I think is all wrong. I don't think that's the kind of way to run a school like Leavenworth, and I survived it without--matter of fact, I thought at the time, and I still think, that the second year course was only half good. I mean, it wasn't, didn't fill the bill. The first year was enough; it was a busy year.



BURG: When had they changed to a two-year system, General?

BOLTE: I think they went to a two-year system before I got there, shortly after World War I. And I think they went back to it. I don't think there's a two-year course there now; I'm not sure what they do on it, but I think one year's enough at the staff college there. I think if they go to the service school and a staff college and one of the war colleges: Army, Navy, Air Force, possibly with one other course in the three or four years, that's enough of that, I think, for the--

BURG: In that second year while you were there, was there a

radical change in the syllabus for the second year over the first that made it less--

BOLTE: I think that--no, I don't think it was really worth it. I mean, it was supposed to be a larger theater of operations and in degree went up to the army group, but I think that could have been covered in the one year. And that's my own opinion. I think two years was too much to spend there on that type of instruction.



BURG: Did they rank people, as they had in earlier periods, in accordance with their standing--

BOLTE: Not so severely. Not so severely when I was there, but prior to that. And the reason for some of these tragedies that preceded--well, not really preceded my being there--was, I think, they were too severe in the rating of individuals and marking of papers. While I don't feel as strongly about Leavenworth in the lower groups, I think the idea of the war colleges of being instructions in which those who go there under the pseudonym of students are rated by instructors who were, in my

opinion, not much better qualified to rate their--juniors, really, is what they are--than they would be in ordinary chain of command. So I'm not very much in favor of the academic rating systems of the schools. I think you can rate the man, of course, as you would in the normal course as to whether he did his job and worked his job there, but as to his capabilities in the area of the so-called instruction, I don't think that's the place to rate them.



BURG: How about your own standing? Do you remember what it was in that class?

BOLTE: No, I don't think I ever questioned it. I don't think I ever--I don't think I was concerned. I don't know that anybody was particularly concerned about it. At least I just took it in stride and when the chief of infantry came out to talk about possibilities of assignment, I said I needed command duty and I'd like to go--I thought, maybe, foreign service in the Philippines. And when we got to my case and he said "Well, in that case, I'll send you out to China," where it was only

the infantry regiment, or such a regiment as it was, some eight, nine hundred men, thousand men. So--

BURG: Was that the 34th, General?

BOLTE: That was the 15th Infantry--

BURG: Oh, the 15th was out there.

BOLTE: --was stationed in Tientsin at that time.

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: This was '32 when we went out there, I think, '32 or '33, '32. And seven of us, I think, went out from that class, or five of us from that class, to join this regiment and spend about three years out there. That's quite a story in itself, because that was a very peculiar enclave out there of about eight or nine hundred men in a small garrison. A rather loose, inter-country garrison on the line of communications from Peking down to the gulf, supposedly to guard the line of communications, or the line of evacuation, in the case there



were any such repetitions as the Boxer thing in 1900.

BURG: Right.



BOLTE: And it was a rather ingrown sort of an experience, but it had its good points, and for company grade officers you learned, or renewed, some of the elements of command association and inter-association with your colleagues that you might have lost going to the schools and being separated from organization assignments.

BURG: Now would that three year assignment, General, have also brought you into contact with British or French officers similarly assigned?

BOLTE: To a certain extent. There was a British garrison, a French garrison, an Italian garrison, and Japanese, and the Americans--five countries. World War I, at the termination, had ended the occupation, or the extraterritorial position, of those other countries who had participated in the Boxer evacuation, the Germans, and the Dutch, and the Belgians, and

I guess two or three others maybe. But anyway, what was left were the Japanese, the French, the Italians, the British, and ourselves. And the inter-service relationships were not very much. I mean, a small social associations with the British, and to a certain extent, the French and the Italians. Our relationship with the Japanese were very limited. We did have an interchange of one social occasion, I think. And one captain and I went out in the field for about four or five days with the Japanese, over their protest--while they led a small garrison on a march and an exercise. They had invited themselves, two officers, to be with us on one of our little marches into the field, which were pretty primitive. I think they were rather contemptuous of what we done, so we invited ourselves to go with them for four days, I think, just another captain and myself and two soldiers, and we had our mounts, our Mongolian ponies. But I must say that it was an experience, because they didn't carry any field facilities. They pumped their water out of the ditches and boiled it, of course, on the rice, or kaoliang, whatever it happened to be, and gave you some dried fish. It wasn't very satisfying, and I carried



a couple of canteens of brandy and when my soldier orderly came over, I said "You'd better have a drink of this!" And he said, "Well, Captain, I'll never volunteer for anything again in my life!" He had been living with the Japanese soldiers and he didn't think it was very much.

BURG: Oh, boy, I'll bet!



BOLTE: But we learned something about how the Japanese lived. And I saw a Japanese officer smack one of the soldiers with the flat of his sword and knock him down, and that sort of thing, that gave me a different impression of the relationships--maybe just one incident--but we learned a little bit about them. And I don't think they had much respect for us and what we did. And we had our ideas about the way they did. Well, the only other relationships with the other countries were--we had boxing matches at the American compound there with the British, and the Italians, and the French, some; and, incidentally, one or two Japanese, and one or two Chinese. We kind of run them into it, but we always had to have a guard outside after the thing broke up in our compound, because there would have been

fighters outside after the boxing matches.

BURG: I can imagine.

BOLTE: It was a relationship and a very loose one. And the military relationship was even looser, because the Japanese and the British and the French had the territorial autonomy, which we did not have. We had no territory there. We lived, our troops, in a compound and it was rented from a real estate agency, and we lived around in the concessions there. And the Chinese sort of accepted that we had taken over the Old German concession, but we did not have extraterritoriality.

BURG: I see.

BOLTE: However, there was a sort of a loose agreement among the commandants there that if trouble happened, why we would gather to protect the foreign colony of Tientsin there. Well, it turned out that the Japanese, and the French, and the Italians, and the British, were all going to withdraw to the boundary of their own extraterritorial zones, and the Americans didn't have any. We had a boundary fixed along the railroad, which we



would defend, but we found our colleagues weren't going to defend that far out.

BURG: I see.



BOLTE: So we were in a sort of a quandary. And I remember the point being brought up, prior to my being out there at that time and studying, that the American commander pointed out to the American minister, State Department man, that the others were going to withdraw to their territorial boundaries and that the Americans didn't have any, except to withdraw to the United States. And that he had gone to the British commander and told him about that and the British commander had said "Well, why don't you?"

BURG: Interesting!

BOLTE: And so the American--the State Department would have been glad to get us out of China. So would the War Department. But when this went up through the American Minister and he talked to the British Minister in Peking and said that, "The American commander says he has no place to withdraw but to the

United States. Shall I recommend that to Washington?" And the Britisher said, "Oh, no!!! Let's let our governments work this thing out." Because they didn't want us to get out of there; the Japanese would have just moved in.

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: So it was a very interesting period there. And that lasted, of course, until the Marco Polo Bridge incident; the Japanese moved into North China and from then on, of course, the war came on. But I had come home by the time of the Marco Polo Bridge. But, prior to that, the Japanese had moved in along the railroad between Chinwangtao and Taku Bar, and Peking. And we were in difficulties then, because they wanted us to ask to use the railroad to move to the target range, and so on, and we couldn't of course, in good principle ask to use the railroad. The Japanese would have been delighted to have us ask. So what we did was to charter a ship to go around them. We made an envelopment and went down to the target range area by sea, and evacuated our people going home to the States by sea, instead of asking to use the railroad. It was a very interesting period.

BURG: Yes. Because they would have been delighted to tell us 'no'?

BOLTE: Well, I think they would have been delighted to let us have it, but they would have registered that fact that we had to come to them and ask for it.

BURG: Yes, I see.



BOLTE: They would have let us use it, I think. But they would have said, "Under our aegis".

BURG: Now did you come home in '35?

BOLTE: I came home then and went for a temporary command for a few months and then went to the Army War College as a student.

BURG: Had your family been in China with you?

BOLTE: Yes, oh, yes. My children went to school there and learned Chinese; it was a little American school, of course. And they were young, of course. I think the youngest was only

a year old when we went out there, four when we came back, and spoke Chinese fluently. And we came back and then I went to the Army War College as a student, and then stayed on on the faculty and then World War II came on.

BURG: Now did you say that you were on the faculty with General [William Hood] Simpson?

BOLTE: With Bill Simpson, yes.



BURG: Uh-huh. One year as a student and then--

BOLTE: One year as a student and--

BURG: --then faculty.

BOLTE: --General [John Lesesne] DeWitt was the commandant. Colonel [Ned Bernard] Rehkopf was the assistant commandant.

BURG: How does that colonel spell his name?

BOLTE: Rehkopf, R-e-h-k-o-p-f. Rehkopf, that's a good German name.

BURG: Right.

BOLTE: [Major General Edward P.] Ned King [Jr.] was the head of the War Plans Division of the faculty, the one that surrendered on Bataan and was a prisoner of the Japanese with [Lt. Gen. Jonathan Mayhew] Skinny Wainwright. I've forgotten who the other faculty members were now but Bill Simpson was in the G-2 and--I think, I'm not sure--I was in the G-3 section as the assistant with Tommy, no, [William W.] Bill Gordon, a cavalry colonel, Bill Gordon, was my chief. There were two in each section except the War Plans Section and they had five in there; [Gen. Joseph Lawton] Joe Collins was in there; [Gen. Joseph] Dorst Patch; [Col. Byron Quimby] B. Q. Jones, the Air Force, the Army Air Force man; and the Navy man, Navy captain, who was the Navy member of the faculty of the War College at that time--



BURG: Right.

BOLTE: --Eddie Foy, who took violent exception to one of the student committees which was required to prepare a war plan, theoretical war plan, for a contiguous theater. In other words,

it had to be on this continent and in order to do it they had to involve, of course, Canada and Great Britain, or something, to get it in there. And, of course, in order to have that in the Atlantic, they had to have the U. S. fleet out in the Pacific, not to be in the Atlantic. And Captain Foy, after they finished, he said, "Well, I don't know how you could ever have thought up such a situation as that, because I can assure you that in any war that this country gets into, the fleet will be in the right ocean at the time." He was commanding the Oklahoma in Pearl Harbor just before it was sunk, I think.

BURG: Good Lord!



BOLTE: Well, those are interesting incidents of the thing.

BURG: You were there then until we actually entered the war?

BOLTE: Well, no. When it looked as if we might be going to enter the war, which was--well, it was 1940, really, that General Marshall, then Chief of Staff, decided that there were too many presumably good officers being students at the War College, and on the faculty, so he closed down the War College in the last class,

which was the class that would graduate or did graduate, really, in 1940. This was before we got in the war because we didn't come in until the next year, you know, Pearl Harbor in December of '41.

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: This was the summer or spring of 1940. And he closed the War College and scattered us around to various assignments, or had us scattered around. For a period, I was sent up to the Chief of the Air Corps' office to presumably prepare papers for the Air Force to go to the Chief of Staff. And that didn't do very well. I was sent back to the War College on planning work, and then I remember Bedell Smith called me up once and said "The boss wants to know where you want to go" and I said, "Well, wherever he wants me to go." "No," he said, "that's no answer." And the upshot was that I went down to be G-3 of the newly-organized IV Corps in Jacksonville, Florida. And I served there during the winter of 1940-41 until I was tapped in May to go to London in the small, so-called "special observer group" that was sent there under the ABC conversations, the

agreements with the British earlier that year to--this group to consult with the British when as and if we got in the war--

BURG: Well, that's--

BOLTE: --sort of a secret group.



BURG: --May of 1941.

BOLTE: '41.

BURG: What was your rank then, General?

BOLTE: I was a lieutenant colonel then.

BURG: And who--

(Interruption)

BURG: You don't know then who picked you for that?

BOLTE: No, I was on duty as G-3 of the IV Corps in Jacksonville in May of 1941 and suddenly got a telephone call to come to Washington for extended overseas service and to pack up, and I moved up here. I found that I was the only one of the officers

away from Washington for this group; all the rest apparently had been all selected, and I think that [Maj. Gen.] Harry [James] Malony was the one that--we had been together on the faculty of the War College--and I suspect that he was the one that sort of nominated, you might say. And [Gen. Joseph Taggart] McNarney was the one who was forming up this group. He was going to be chief of staff to [Maj.] General [James Eugene] Chaney, who was to be the "special army observer," a term which of course got us into a unlimited amount of trouble, because from then on nobody in Washington could conceive of this group in London other than a bunch of "special observers," when it was really the nucleus of the headquarters-to-be if, as and when, we got in the war. But it was a secret title, of course, and there were only seventeen; General Chaney and sixteen officers, one in each group; Chief of Staff, General McNarney, G-1, 2, 3, 4, and War Plans, which I was, originally; and a quartermaster, an ordnance, a signal, a chemical, a doctor, and three or four air officers. And that group was to deal, in consultation with the British, who had a comparable group over in Washington, which they considered to be the mission.



BURG: I see, this is the group that--



BOLTE: We were set up to be a mission, when, as, and we got in the war, it was to be the mission, but Admiral [Ernest Joseph] King, I understand, said, "To hell with the mission; we're not going to have any mission over there", and so we were carried as "observers". And we had an unlimited amount of trouble in trying to correspond with authorities in Washington on the missions that General Chaney had been given to consult with the British in two general fields: one of them was the local field, that is, the British Isles and the continent of Europe and the area, on matters--U.S.-British matters--in that area. And in that area, we were to correspond with general headquarters, GHQ, which was then established under [Gen. Lesley James] McNair at the War College. And the other area was British-American tasks, jobs, or points at other parts of the world, in which we were to deal and correspond with the War Department. And if you can imagine trying to get Washington to sift out the two types of problems on which we would send in a message. And I remember very well that we tried to raise this

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point, and we thought we were dealing with two different agencies in Washington. And we said something about, "Everything is coming to us signed 'Marshall'", and we got a message back saying, "Messages signed 'Marshall' from Washington are signed by General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, United States Army," as if we didn't know in London, but--

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: --it was a complete lack of being en rapport, and I can understand it, because of course in Washington, God knows who was doing what to whom! And in the meantime, all this thing was going on over in the Pacific.

BURG: So you could be reporting on some particular problem--

BOLTE: Or asking questions, and so on, and we wouldn't get any--

BURG: --your report would go to McNair--

BOLTE: Should have.

BURG: --but the reply would come back from Marshall.

BOLTE: Yeah, and it--we got lost, we didn't know where it was.

BURG: So your basic contention is, it was an unfortunate choice of cover name--



BOLTE: Cover name, yes. And never was an understanding. And if you read in General Marshall's report of his visit to London in the spring of 1942--and also in General Eisenhower on his first trip over, and after he came over, and in another visit, I've forgotten where--but you'll find the same statement: that our people in London don't seem to know what we're doing here, and they don't seem to be en rapport, and they seem to be out of the picture, and there's no doubt about it. But who in the hell's blame was it? It was Washington that dealt with us as if we were observers, and I think General Eisenhower says in one message there, after he came over on his first visit, he said, "The British don't seem to understand that General Chaney is our commander here." And how much General Chaney, who was of course an air, army air force officer, was responsible, I don't know. But when General Eisenhower came back from his visit

over there, in his recommendation, he recommended a change-- recommended to General Marshall a change--and he wanted McNarney to go over there then, and of course the upshot was that he went over himself. But this was a very unhappy and very unsatisfactory, mixed-up situation there, and we in London, this little group, of course--because there was only one of us in each activity. There were ten sergeants between us to use and one warrant officer. And that's when we hired the British drivers, the five women drivers, that we had--

BURG: Kay Summersby among them.



BOLTE: --yeah, Kay Summersby and the other four, to drive us around London because there weren't any soldiers at that time. And it was a very limited group. We finally got a restricted communication. [Brig.] General [Jerry V.] Matejka, later General, was the signal officer--just one guy, and nobody with him, except he could get the help of one sergeant here of the ten--did finally get a sigaba [Ed Note: a cypher machine requiring separate operators and separate processing at both transmitting and receiving stations to encypher and decypher messages.] station communication set-up because he was

determined that we were going to have an independent, private communication line to Washington that the British couldn't read, and so on. And so we had to finally set up a code that we could--because the British, of course, at this time would have just taken us right into the fold. I mean, we hadn't grown into the picture yet, which we came later on.

BURG: Really, you must have put in then something like six to eight months--

BOLTE: Well, we went over in May of--



BURG: --before the war.

BOLTE: We went over in May of 1941 and we got in the war, of course--Pearl Harbor was in that December. And Ike came over in the summer of, in June, I think, of 1942, and most of us by then had left. I think that Matejka stayed, the signal man; [Brig. Gen.] Paul [R.] Hawley, the doctor, stayed. I think that's all; I think all the others either came home or went, and this is understandable. I mean, the new group came from Washington imbued with the big plans and the ideas that we had never

been acquainted with, and moved in and more or less just said, well--and the inevitable thing is that then you disappear and go somewhere else. I came back to go into the chain, division chain, and went up through the command of a division, training, as an assistant division commander, then took a division and then went over to Italy and commanded a division in the war. And [Brig. Gen. John E.] Dahlquist, my successor, and my number two, he came back and went into the division end of the game. [Brig. Gen. George Wesley] Griner [Jr.] came back, the G-4; the rest of them; Air Corps, I think only two of them stayed on for a while. But this is inevitable. The new group came over and moved into Norfolk House there to plan for the North African landing, and later for the trans-channel, and it was understandable. And we all felt, I think, a little bit, that we'd been left out; that we weren't kept up with the picture, and that we weren't needed any more. I mean, these new people came over.

BURG: Yes, I understand.



BOLTE: The same thing happens in all sorts of changeover from one philosophy to another. But we felt that in the year, or more, that we had accomplished enough in the preliminary reconnaissances and in the arrangements with the British, and so on, to possibly save two or three or four months at the end of the war. I really think that by the reconnaissances of Iceland and Northern Ireland, and the agreements on the air bases and a couple of air depots, just for example--and it's somewhat amusing; --that is the question of jurisdiction. And I suppose we negotiated, you might call it that, or discussed with the British for months, maybe almost a year, before a solution was found that when, as, and if, the Americans come over here, how are we going to handle this question. We now have this arrangement, of course, in foreign countries, and so on, but we didn't have any such thing there. And I can remember the British saying--I think, to Homer Case in a discussion-- "Well, we have the Poles, and the Dutch, and the French here." DeGaulle and so on there, "and we have an arrangement, what we call the Foreign Forces Act here." So Case replied, "do you mean to think you consider the forces of the United States, if



they ever come over here, in the same category as these refugee governments, because nothing could be further from the truth."

BURG: Yes, yes.



BOLTE: And I remember getting into a discussion, and they said, "Well, we'll waive jurisdiction." And I said, "You can't waive anything you don't have," I said, "Jurisdiction over the American troops, if, as, and when they come here, rests in the United States laws and in the Congress." Well, they had it out, you know, back and forth, and Dahlquist, the G-1, was working on it mostly. And of course, so far as the military was concerned, they said, "We don't want any part of it," --but for the old fellow sitting down in his club there, the idea that there was any jurisdiction over anybody there, other than His Majesty's Courts, was just unthinkable.

BURG: Right, right.

BOLTE: And finally, after all this time, they came up--instead of with the Visiting Forces Act, which went for these others--

with the American Forces Act. And that conceded, I'll say, jurisdiction over the--they were originally going to concede everything, or waive everything, except murder, manslaughter, and rape, and those were to be remain to His Majesty's courts. Well, we couldn't countenance that, so they finally had an American Forces Act which conceded the jurisdiction over the American forces.

BURG: Passed by Parliament then?



BOLTE: Yes, yes. It was done. And as I remember it, the first two cases--and this would have to be justified because I'm going on memory now--the first one was a case of statutory rape of a girl by an American soldier in a blitz dugout: I mean one of these shelters in there.

BURG: Bomb shelters, yes.

BOLTE: And he was acquitted by an American court and it turned out that, although the girl may have been under age, she certainly was a buxom lassie, and not only that, but she'd scratched his face, but she went up to the farmhouse and got some ointment

to come back and put on his face--

BURG: I see.



BOLTE: --and so on. Anyway, he was acquitted. The other was a case in Northern Ireland when General Marshall was there, and in his car--he was being driven--and there was a sergeant with a machine gun jeep behind. And an Irish bus cut in between--no passengers in it--inadvertently, between him and the jeep, and the sergeant fell against the machine gun and it went off and killed the driver of the Irish bus. Now this would have to be verified, but this is my recollection of it at the time, because we had to have a change of venue, and so on, because the turmoil it started in Northern Ireland over this. But that's the case. I remember those two cases coming up under the American jurisdiction, which were very unfortunate I think--

BURG: Yes, indeed.

BOLTE: --but it worked out in the long run. So these were things--and we had this ball with us there for months. This

is the sort of thing that we were doing, and feeling our way with this little group that was over there.



BURG: All right. Let's go back to May and fill in some of these things that I'm quite sure people are going to want to know about that aren't commonly known. Now, for example, how did you go over? What was your transportation over?

BOLTE: We were sent from Washington and we went over--not all together, because we went in two or three different groups-- on a Pan-Am Clipper to Lisbon. Commercial--

BURG: In civilian clothes?

BOLTE: Civilian clothes, and with a limited amount of baggage, and so on. And we went to Lisbon, where we were to park and be picked up by the British to take us from Lisbon, in Portugal, up to the British Isles. So we stayed at Estoril, really, outside of Lisbon there in a hotel, and I'm sure that our baggage was gone through. I mean they knew who we were; I mean, it seems to me there was every spy on the face of the earth was down there and met us, and knew who we were and

went through our baggage. And they had--



BURG: Lisbon was a hotbed of that kind of thing during the war.

BOLTE: Yeah, and we were out at Estoril there. We were picked up then, not all together but two or three at a time, I think, by British flying boat, and taken up to I think we landed in Ireland, Eire, with blacked-out curtains, and then were flown over to Blackpool, I think, from there. At least, the group I was with. So we flew from Estoril to Ireland, Eire, and then over to Blackpool, and that's the way I, with two or three others, got to England. And we flew over the Bay of Biscay in the clouds there, and I remember looking out the window and here was this fighter coming at us, like this, and we found out after we got in that we were flying over the Bismarck just at that time.

BURG: Oh, you were? Was this a British fighter that had made a run at you?

BOLTE: Yeah, a British fighter, yeah. We didn't know about it, of course, at the time, but I remember seeing that fighter coming there at us. And of course this was a British Sunderland overseas flying boat and easy to recognize.

BURG: Right. Military crew?



BOLTE: But we were over the Bay of Biscay, over the overcast there, at the time that the Bismarck business was going on--

BURG: I see.

BOLTE: --we found that out after we landed. Of course, that's just a--

BURG: Now you carried AGO cards indicating your--

BOLTE: Yes, we had that.

BURG: --that you were U. S. Army officers?

BOLTE: We had our identification, and so on, and so there wasn't any doubt about that. We were handled all right by agents that were doing--you know, transport people that

were seeing to it that we were moved around and taken to the hotel and then carried down to the transport, and just pushed around, that's all.

BURG: In theory, you were not there at all.

BOLTE: That's right.



BURG: This was all hush-hush.

BOLTE: We were and it solved difficulties after we got to London. We were all put up at the Dorchester there. It turned out that a deal was made through the Embassy that we could stay at the Dorchester, for a price. I think we paid only about half the rate there, and we were given an allowance through the Embassy for the time we were there.

BURG: So you had meals and quarters allowance?

BOLTE: Yeah, such as they were, yes.

BURG: Yes, right.

BOLTE: And then we'd go around trying to find some place to

eat because we didn't have--but later on, the clubs were very nice to us after we got identified; the military clubs, the Cavalry Club, and the others, but at first we were just the little man who wasn't there, that's all.

BURG: Had you been given British ration cards?

BOLTE: Yes, we had all the ration cards--

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: --and all the passes. God, I had passes to everything, the War Office, and the Admiralty, and so on. We were taken right into the fold so far as the British were concerned.

BURG: Taken quickly in?

BOLTE: Yeah, there was no doubt about that from the military standpoint.

BURG: I see.

BOLTE: But from the living standpoint, we were more or less on our own, but we did live at the Dorchester. Then, of course,

right at the time we got there, this apartment building at 20 Grosvenor was taken over by the Embassy for us.

BURG: I see.

BOLTE: On Grosvenor Square there.

BURG: That would become your office space then?

BOLTE: That became the office space and we dug in there. I can remember when--the Navy, of course, had already had an observer there before the army observer, and they had started in in this building and then the Embassy took it over for us completely. And we had our offices, and the Navy had their offices. And then the question came; they brought in a marine guard of a hundred marines. And I remember the G-1, our G-1 there, Dahlquist, going around with the Navy G-1 to find out where to put this hundred-marine guard there; the mess was to be in the basement. But they counted up and John said, "Well, it's just right, a hundred marines; there are fifty rooms for the servants back here," and the Navy guy said, "Well, remember the Navy rule," he said, "one or three



in a room." [Laughter]

BURG: Yes, of course! [Laughter]

BOLTE: Anyway, they put the marines up there and we had a marine guard, which they still have; it's still there in that building. Now when Ike came over in June of '42 to command-- this was on his second trip. He had been over before in April, I guess it was--he didn't like this building. He didn't like to be in an apartment building and he said, "We ought to be outside of London."

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: "I want to go out to a place where I got everybody with me outside." I said, "You can't do it." I said, "You got to be within twenty minutes of the British Ministries or you'll just be a subordinate that won't count." I said, "You go fifty miles out of London, you can't drive twenty miles an hour in the blackout." I said, "You'll be so far away, you won't count." Well, he didn't like it and got red in the face, and we went out and looked at Hounslow Barracks and some other place, but we stayed at Grosvenor Square until--



BURG: Found he had to.

BOLTE: --way later on.

BURG: Now, General, your one hundred-man marine guard, presumably they were uniformed?

BOLTE: Oh, yes, they were uniformed. But, you see, this is Embassy. You see, you can have things at an Embassy, just like you did in Peking--

BURG: I see. I see.



BOLTE: --well, you got the marines in Peking that are in uniform always. And they can be in uniform, that's a different thing. They're not troops in that sense.

BURG: All right, now let me ask you, how far was it from Dorchester House to Grosvenor Square? Did you use the tube to--

BOLTE: Oh, no, no. It wasn't--

BURG: --walking distance?

BOLTE: About five blocks up the street.

BURG: So you could walk.

BOLTE: Yeah, up Broadway Street, that's all; just walking distance.

BOLTE: And, of course, Claridge's was close, too. And that's where everybody had gone, to Claridge's coming over first, which of course was the swank place; all the missions, and so on. And when Marshall came over first, and when Ike came over first, and then when he came over finally, he went to Claridge's, and he said to me, "Can you move to Claridge's?" I said, "Well, I can move there if you want to, but," I said, "you ought to come to the Dorchester." I said, "Claridge's is just a hunk of sugar. If a bomb ever came, it'll just dissolve." But I said, "Dorchester is steel and concrete construction and you ought to move in there." Which he did. He didn't like it, but he moved over there to the Dorchester.

BURG: I see.



BOLTE: And we looked for a place outside of London but there wasn't any. There was one country club out there, Ravenswood, I think, Country Club, which was the headquarters, that is, the alternate headquarters, of the British Home Forces Command, which General [Sir Bernard] Paget was then in command of.

BURG: That's P-a-g-e-t?

BOLTE: P-a-g-e-t.



BURG: Right.

BOLTE: And that was one of the places that we thought of going to. And Ike wanted to go and look at it, and I said, "Well, you got to go down and call on General Paget." You see, Ike was a major-general, he was coming over; we didn't have any forces over there yet. I mean, we had the 34th Division coming into Northern Ireland and the 1st Armored was coming in, but we didn't have enough of a force. And he was, initially, just a major-general, you see. Although he told me, after about three or four days after that, he said, "I don't know where that third star is." He said, "General Marshall promised me it would be here by the time I came over."

Well, it came in after a few days, but I had told him before, I said, "You can't go outside of London. You got to be close to the British Ministries," and I said, "You want to look for a place outside, why you got to go down and call on General Paget of the Home Forces." Well, this has to be borne out by the record, and I think the minutes will show it, but when he first came over, he was in a conference--see, Paget commanded the Home Forces; he took over from Montgomery, I think--and they sat in a conference there in which Ike had put forth the Washington viewpoint. And if I'm not mistaken--I was told, I don't think I saw them--the minutes quote Paget as saying, "this man has dangerous ideas", and Ike saw the minutes!

[Laughter] So when Paget was in command of the Home Forces there and I said, "You got to go down and call on him; that's the only thing--" this was protocol. So he and I went down to call on Paget and after we'd met, and so on there, he said, "I understand you're looking for a headquarters outside of London. How about the Ravenswood Country Club?" Paget brought this up himself, you see.

BURG: I see.



BOLTE: Well, it didn't turn out to work that way, ultimately. But this was this going and calling and getting fitted into the picture there.

BURG: Paget had made the remark about "this man has dangerous ideas"--

BOLTE: Yeah, "dangerous ideas".

BURG: --after the first trip?



BOLTE: After the first trip there--

BURG: Right.

BOLTE: --in which Ike, I think, was putting forth the Washington philosophy, you see. Going to go across the Channel and--

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: --of course, this idea of, in '42, making any kind of an incursion on the continent, other than these raids that were being done--the commando raids there--

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: --under Mountbatten, and so on, to my mind was at that time--but, of course, people say, "Well, you were pro-British at that time and they didn't believe in trying to go across, either"--but to this day, it was impossible to think about putting anybody, landing across the channel in '42, or '43! There was no air cover, of course, and no possibility of air cover, and I just couldn't see it. But Washington, apparently, and General Marshall, I think-- [Forrest] Pogue quotes him--to his final day thought we ought to have made an effort in 1942. I just can't see it, and I couldn't see it then. So when General Marshall came over, on his trip after Ike had come over, and they were going down to deal with the British, he said "What are we going to do?" And Ike prepared all the papers. And Marshall went around the room with this, just Americans there at Claridge's and I can remember his saying to General Lee, that Christ-like character, John [Clifford] [Hodges] Lee, "Lee, can you sport ten divisions through the port of Cherbourg?" "Yes, sir!" Christ! I don't think he knew where Cherbourg was, let



alone the condition of the port! [Laughter] And we didn't have ten divisions, and weren't going to have, see, I mean, to my mind it was visionary!

BURG: The presumption being, "If I could get ten divisions here to you, could you then--

BOLTE: Yeah, could you do it?

BURG: --support them?"

BOLTE: But it was impossible.

BURG: And there had been no planning, I presume, for any such--

BOLTE: And of course the British weren't--

BURG: --operation?

BOLTE: --they were holding back, you see, for various reasons. The philosophy is that Churchill was looking to the soft under-belly, and the British didn't want to go through another big battle on the continent, and all of this sort of



thing.

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: But we were imbued with the idea "We're going to go on in there!" And anything that's going to interfere with it was wrong. Well, I believe that's so, but you had to be practical. When General Marshall got around to me and he says, "Bolte, what do you think about it?", and I said, "Well, from the military standpoint, I don't think it's feasible, but if the Russian situation demands that you do something, why, you never know what you can accomplish." Well, he didn't like my answer, and Ike didn't like my answer, but I still think that was the answer. And Ike says in his papers that it was impossible to talk about '42, and even '43, of a lodgement, a permanent lodgement from which you could go on on the continent of--anyway, that's how this thing was--

BURG: Was your entire observer group at that meeting?

BOLTE: No, no, no.

BURG: It was not the sixteen men?



BOLTE: No, no! I was the only one, I think, of the staff there. Lee, of course, was SOS [Services of Supply], and I don't think any of the other staff were there, Dahlquist or Griner. Only one of each group, you see, and I think I was the only one that was at that particular meeting. And I don't remember anybody else, except Ike of course, he was at that meeting and I was his chief of staff at the time, but--

BURG: And this occurred after Eisenhower had arrived there permanently--

BOLTE: Yes, yes.



BURG: --sometime after of June of '42?

BOLTE: Yeah, yeah, I've forgotten. It was June 24th--I've forgotten what the date was when Marshall came over to sew this thing up with the British. Hopkins came and, oh, I've forgotten who all was in that party. It's in the books over there.

BURG: Now, that was purely an American military--

BOLTE: That's all it was there, yeah.

BURG: --group, at that meeting?



BOLTE: Yeah. And when you asked about how we came over-- now these ten sergeants, of course, in the very beginning were to be brought over by the adjutant of the thing, [Colonel Iverson] Brooks Summers. So we all, as I say, flew over in parties to Lisbon and on up that way, but he had to come over by sea, because they were to bring in all the typewriters and what office stuff they were to have.

BURG: Yes. Good, I wondered where that stuff had come from.

BOLTE: So he was to bring them over, these ten sergeants and one warrant officer, and Lieutenant-Colonel Summers. Well, he went to negotiate with the British in New York and it was agreed that he would go over on a destroyer. And so it was all set to go up to Halifax and go out from Halifax on that destroyer. When they got up there the British destroyer captain said, "We've been hooked onto a convoy and we never will get over there on the thing." And Summers said, "Well, this

won't do at all. I'm supposed to get these men over there. Can we go to the admiral?" So they went to the British admiral and Summers said, "I explained to him that we had to get these men over under this" and he quoted the act of ABC and the rest of them, and the admiral finally turned this destroyer captain loose there and either he or Brooks said, "Well," I guess maybe Brooks said, "Well, you ought to have an escort." So finally it wound up to be two destroyers were going over independently, and so they went over on his destroyers, but Brooks said that these God-damned guys wanted to find a submarine, and he said, "We quartered the North Atlantic, going back and forth over there," he said, "it was the most miserable trip anybody ever went on." So when they got to London and got down on the train from wherever they came in, Liverpool or some place, Dahlquist met them, the G-1, and he said these ten sergeants got on there in the bus, whatever it was, and he said, "What kind of a trip did you have, Sergeant?" And the First Sergeant salutes and said, "Aw, O.K." And the men on the back seat said, "For Christ's sake, tell him the truth!" [Laughter] And I could just see



those poor guys hanging on; no place for them to sleep or anything else, you see.

BURG: Yes, of course! And remarkable, you know, at that time, that the British would divert two destroyers from very essential convoy work.

BOLTE: Yeah, convoy, yeah. But he said this--of course Brooks must have put over this thing. Apparently they had carte blanche, I mean for this group under this ABC arrangement, and so on. Because I was surprised at how, now I won't say amenable, but how agreeable everything was, you know, and how we were just taken into the British secrecy and all the rest of it there.

BURG: All right. Now, when you got there and you commenced your work, and I'm talking now about these--

BOLTE: I was then plans officer. See, you had G-1,2,3,4 and Plans and I was opposite number with the navy plans, Captain [Ralph S.] Strat Wentworth, and we had an office together. We presumably were supposed to work jointly on American plans.



vis-à-vis the British. Well, I never got very far with the Navy on the thing. I mean, we were nice friends and so on, but I never was let into anything that they were--even when Pearl Harbor happened. They just were so tight-mouthed about it, they never let us--and they were getting all their dope from the British anyway. Because they didn't have any communications to Pearl Harbor; they had some to the Navy Department. So I can't say that the joint American Army-Navy planning got very far in the headquarters there in London, other than getting the marine guard settled in the headquarters building, and something like that.



BURG: So far as you knew, our American Naval captain, Wentworth, might have been making his own plans.

BOLTE: He was, yeah, he was working with the admiral here, and they were on their own and they did their--I don't think we ever had any back and forth. I can't remember anything together. And he'd work on these messages, you see, and put them in his drawer, and so on.

BURG: Did you share an office with him?

BOLTE: Had to share an office with him there. Sat opposite

each other here. Perfectly agreeable, and all that. And they had an operations room set up with maps and charts, a navy room there, and I did have access to it, and I suppose maybe General Chaney got in there, I don't know. But so far as being integrated is concerned, why, it wasn't, that's all.

BURG: And so you were formulating plans--



BOLTE: Trying to deal with the British, but it was purely army versus--well, I did talk some, we talked with the air ministry, of course, more than--our people did--with the air ministry more than anybody else, but some with the Admiralty. But the navy dealt with the Admiralty and we didn't have much to do with them. So we didn't have any of this really that we ought to have had.

BURG: Had you received any kind of directive as to what it was, specifically, that you were to do, linking up with the British for--

BOLTE: Yes, yes. We had this basic directive that General Chaney had, under the ABC conversations, which he was told

when he went over there in the summer of '41 that "it is your mission to negotiate and dis--"

(Interruption)



BURG: I should--just a second--we'll break away from that other point. You were saying, with regard to where some of these men are now, that Dahlquist--

BOLTE: That were in that original group--

BURG: Uh-huh.

BOLTE: --there are practically none left.

BURG: Dahlquist is in a nursing home here?

BOLTE: Dahlquist is in a nursing home. [Colonel Homer] Case, who was the G-2 and came back to command in the anti-aircraft artillery brigade, and so on, lives out on the west coast, Homer Case.

BURG: Do you know where he's to be found?

BOLTE: Near San Francisco, I've forgotten where it is--

BURG: All right.

BOLTE: --he's in the list of retired general officers that is published there by the department. Griner, George Griner, who was the G-4--

BURG: Does he spell his name, G-r-e--

BOLTE: G-r-i-n-e-r.

BURG: O.K.

BOLTE: He lives down in, I think, Alabama. These officers are--he's a retired major-general; commanded a division in Saipan in the war after all this business. I don't think there's anybody else. No, Matejka, who was the signal officer, the one signal officer we had and who stayed into North Africa, lives here in Washington, I think, and I see him once in a while. He's pretty much on the ball. And, of course, he stayed with Ike into North Africa and then, I don't know, came back I guess. But the others are gone: McNarney, [Harold M.] McClelland, [Alfred J.] Al Lyon--



BURG: Chaney, himself.

BOLTE: --Chaney, himself, lived here for years. And his was rather a sad story, because I think he was more or less cavalierly replaced by General Eisenhower--not that General Eisenhower had any--except he recommended a change--when he came back from the trip that he made in April, whatever it was--to General Marshall; that there should be a change.

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: And so one morning I went in with papers, to General Chaney, as Chief of Staff, and he leaned back and said, "Well, you know I'm being relieved." Well, you could have hit me between the eyes; I didn't anticipate this and I said, "Well, I'll go with you wherever you want me to go", or something like that, I've forgotten. And this message that he had from General Marshall was that, "Without any reflection on you, I think we need somebody over there who is more au courant with our plans in the War Department and you can stand relieved whenever you want to," and so General Chaney was just going to pack up and go home, and I said, "General, you can't go without

calling on the British Chiefs of Staff." "Well," he said, "I'll go down and see [Air Chief Marshall Sir Charles] Portal." Which he went down and said good-bye to Portal, and then I went with him out to Northolt, I guess it was, or the airfield, and he got on the airplane and came home. I found out later that he was reassigned to the job that he had had when he went to England, which was commanding the First Air Force in Long Island, Mineola.

BURG: I see.



BOLTE: But I learned then that he had gone in to see General Marshall, who wouldn't see him or didn't see him, and he finally saw the secretary, Mr. Stimson, who said that he couldn't intervene, or whatever it was. And I think that Old General [Henry H.] Arnold was out to get his scalp. I don't know why, but I understand that he was--they didn't agree, of course, in the air prospects in England. They were philosophically apart, apparently--

BURG: They were.

BOLTE: --and had had some run-ins. So General Chaney was just relieved and sent to that job. And I think General Arnold tried to bust him, but he didn't get busted back to brigadier-general, or whatever it was. And he moved to Sheppard Field in Texas and then out to a Colorado field, and then out--finally, he wound up, I think, commanding an air base, I think, in Okinawa, or somewhere, at the end of the war. And then came here to live in Washington. A very fine old gentleman, but apparently he didn't fit in with the prospects, as they had the idea in Washington here, and I think--I know--when General Arnold came over on one trip, they really had it out in the office together, and apparently General Arnold, from Washington, was trying to run where our air units would go and what they were going to do. And on the organizational setup there, Chaney was not in agreement with the--and I'll say his staff was probably with him on it--in the organizational setup as visualized by the air force in Washington.

BURG: You were present in a nearby office when that--

BOLTE: Yes, yes, and Chaney told me about it. He said they



had had this run-in, and he said General Arnold had come over there and then had gone down to talk to the British Air Ministry, taking Chaney's staff officers with him, and not telling Chaney about it. It was about some place to put squadrons or something, and Chaney said, "I told him that you're interfering in things over here that don't concern you", or something like that, so they really had it out. And it was inevitable, I guess, that the change was going to be made. And maybe it had to be, I guess.



BURG: What seemed to be the chief bone of contention there, General, with regard to that sort of an argument? Was it that Chaney wanted to use a different chain of command than the British system?

BOLTE: Well, this is--I think he got along more, he was more inclined to work with the British; that is, into their setup, and so on. And I have to say this, that I understand, or it's my understanding, there were three phases in the U.S. activity with respect to the British Isles. The first, under the ABC agreement, was that if we got into it the primary,

and practically the sole, effort of the Americans from the British Isles would be air. Heavy bombardment, mainly, with fighter protection.

BURG: I see.



BOLTE: American. And that that there would be a regiment of infantry would come over, just to show the flag, and there would be certain anti-aircraft artillery to take part with the British anti-aircraft and the defenses we could send over, and maybe some defensive fighter protection to go into the air defense of Great Britain. But, primarily, the British effort was going to be heavy bombardment, and going to be daytime bombardment, which the American knew.

BURG: The American air effort in Britain, you mean.

BOLTE: The Americans. And Chaney's idea was, "Well, then the headquarters of the Americans is going to be an air, a U.S. Army Air Force headquarters; that's it, that's me! I'm going to be it, and the infantry or the supply, and all the rest of it will be the tail of this command, which is the U.S.

command, but it's going to be mainly heavy bombardment," whatever you call it.

BURG: I understand.



BOLTE: And that obtained until after we got in the war and the Germans were knocking at the door of Egypt, and so on, and the British were hard put to it and had to practically strip the British Isles and elsewhere. We were by now going to take over Iceland, you see, and let the British come out, and we would take over the defense of Northern Ireland then, and also begin to build some defenses in England, and you send the stuff around to the Middle East. That's the second phase there, which is really the American participation in the defense of the British Isles, including also the offensive against Britain, including Eire, by Germany. And that obtained until the third phase, which was the decision made then to invade; and then, of course, was the big buildup, what they called ROUNDUP. Initially, SLEDGEHAMMER or BOLERO, for ROUNDUP invasion, and that's the third phase. Well, Chaney didn't fit into those phases if his concept was still that the American effort was

going to be heavy bombardment from the British Isles.

BURG: Right.

BOLTE: This came way later, but in Washington, of course, they were talking about a massive invasion in maybe '42, '43, anyway. So we'll say he was kind of out of step, and if you read into the Air Force history of this period in there, [General] Ira [Clarence] Eaker says in that, "I just can't understand how anybody didn't want to be promoted to a higher job", and we're going to have an Air Force Headquarters and a ground force headquarters and a service command, you see. And [General Carl] Spaatz, well, he finally became the Air Force, 8th Air Force, headquarters, and this is an organizational setup. So maybe Chaney was--maybe he hadn't caught up with the game. But you have to bear in mind that nobody in Washington ever told anybody in this little group over here what--we weren't au courant with the thoughts. So when they finally got over, well, the only thing was, "You all, you go someplace else; we've got this thing", and carry on.

BURG: So to the best of your ability, you were carrying out



the instructions.

BOLTE: That's right.

BURG: In fact, when we left that, you were talking about the directive which had been given to Chaney in the first place.

BOLTE: That's right, that's right, yeah.



BURG: And you had started to tell me what that directive was.

BOLTE: Yeah, that directive, of course, was to deal with the British in these two phases; in planning now, because we weren't in the war. One with local things and the other with the rest of the world. And that's where we got into this hassle in trying to communicate with Washington, because it was not getting anywhere here. This pace was growing of course, anyway, and you never knew how to put your finger on it.

BURG: Washington was growing, that is. Yes.

BOLTE: Yeah, and you never could get to the one--and so, we just felt we were out on a limb, and of course when Pearl Harbor happened, for three or four months, we were forgotten

about--I mean, we didn't--nobody even thought about us over there. The very little trickle that we got in the way of troops coming over, or something like that. So we went through a very unhappy period there trying to carry out our job. We did make these reconnaissances, the staff. Northern Ireland--

BURG: That is, members of your group actually went to Northern Ireland?

BOLTE: Yeah, went over there and made reconnaissances, and agreements, and understandings. And also to Iceland and made the preliminary agreements and the arrangements there. Also the bases in Huntingdonshire, the air fields, and so on, in the British Isles. This is all before we got in the war. Because I remember going over myself to Northern Ireland there, and we went, among other places, around Lough Erne, over the lake over there, and here the U.S. Navy was having built by contractors a naval base that was going to be at Londonderry there, for destroyers and an air, airboat--what do you call them? Catalina. --base on Lough Erne. And I said to the-- there was a British Royal Air Force commander with us, or commodore, air commodore, and I said, "Well, I got to look at this thing from the air. I can't decide all this business



about defenses." We were talking about army, U.S., putting in defenses, anti-aircraft, and maybe ground defenses, here in Northern Ireland. So they said, "Well you can go up in this Catalina here"; it was an American-built flying boat there, with an RAF crew, but British, I mean an American naval lieutenant in uniform was the pilot. This was in June of 1941-- [Laughter]

BURG: Oh-ho.

BOLTE: --and I said, "Well I got to fly over this thing." And I think three of us, [Lt. Col.] Frank [Augustus] Hart, the marine, and John Dahlquist, maybe, and I went in there. And we got in this big flying boat and they said, "Now you got to stay within visual hailing distance because we can't talk radio on this or anything, but you can fly over and around the lake." So down the lake we went for about three miles there, I guess, while they got this overloaded Catalina boat taking off there. And well, this oughtn't to go on; you can turn that off for a minute there--

BURG: We can take it out if you want to.



BOLTE: --tell this story because--I've forgotten--Frank Hart, I guess, he said, "That's like old Sophie Nisbee. She was dancing around there at the grand ball down there around Birmingham someplace, and she slipped and she fell, sat down on the floor and she was rocking herself and everybody says, 'Sophie Nisbee, you hurt yourself?' She said, 'No, I just trying to get my setdown unstuck.'" [Laughter] And here was this flying boat--that's exactly what this thing--and he finally took it off there, and we went around and we looked it over and then we landed. And I think we split a seam landing because this thing was so loaded, and we hadn't dropped any bombs or anything like that. But, anyway, that was an example of what we were doing, because we were talking about the defenses of this naval base, which ultimately was abandoned. They stopped the construction because they found they didn't need it, I think. But they were also building a naval base up at Glasgow in the Clyde and--a naval destroyer base, mainly--and we were to provide the anti-aircraft artillery and the protection of that naval base there, jointly, with the U.S. Navy. And then with the air depots, one to be at--well at



Londonderry, there was a field there at the valley--I've forgotten where it is--outside of Limavady, outside of Londonderry, and three of us got into fighters to look it over from the air; the marine, Frank Hart, and [Brigadier General Dale D.] "Heinie" Hinman, the anti-aircraft, and me, the three of us. And there were these things where you sat facing to the rear; the pilot was there and you were a gunner facing to the rear. And they just took us up and flew us around there, and we got down and I realized that Frank Hart hadn't known how to do this parachute, you know. And I said, "Well, Frank, if you had to bail out you were supposed to pull this," and he turned white, he hadn't gotten the instructions on how to do it, and he realized--[Laughter]

BURG: I see.

BOLTE: --that he didn't know. And I said, "You were supposed to pull this thing out here in case you had to bail out." Well, these are just incidents on the thing. Now we got involved in this question of the function of the headquarters there, in a new command relationship here, which we hadn't--at least, I



hadn't--heard of talked about in the War College, which I was on the faculty. Here we were with a U. S. Army anti-aircraft artillery in the defenses of the Clyde, around Glasgow, on a base that was a U.S. Naval base. That is, it was conceded to be a naval base under a navy commander, but the anti-aircraft was going to fire in conjunction with the British anti-aircraft, defending the British Isles with anti-aircraft fire. Now these were U.S. Army troops and, of course, they were under the command of the U. S. Army Commanding General of all the U.S. troops in London there. But they were on a naval base, and who was going to tell what the traffic rules would be and when the lights would go out and when they could drink beer? The U. S. naval commander of that. But when are they going to fire in the air? There's going to be the British anti-aircraft commander who is going to tell them when to fire.

BURG: I see the problem.

BOLTE: So this guy commanding the American anti-aircraft artillery had three bosses; his ultimate boss, of course,



there--and his immediate commander--and the navy commander, U. S. Navy, and the British commander. So we tried to write it down in a thing about operational command and administrative command, and of course the ultimate command rested in this fellow in London. And we tried to put it out, and I remember it going back here, and I think it was McNair or [Maj. Gen. Harry James] Malony who is on record as saying, "This complicated business. There is only one thing I understand and that's command." But, you see, we were trying to lay the groundwork for--how do you handle these forces that come over into the British Isles, that are going to do these different things with all these different commanders in the chain of control? Who is going to be the man that they obey. This was all part of our work in the beginning in these negotiations, if you want to call them. And it took a lot of conversation around the table and trying to come to some kind of common ground and--

BURG: Now, who--

BOLTE: --I remember one conference there that the British commanders-in-chief--now there was the Home Forces Commander



and the naval commander of the British Home Fleet, and the air defenses of Great Britain [Air Chief Marshal Sir William] Sholto Douglas, I guess; and [Admiral Sir Bertram H.] Ramsay was the fleet navy fellow, and Paget was the Home Forces--and they had a meeting, and [Admiral Lord Louis] Mountbatten was there because he had the Commandos, the forces that went overseas. He was a vice-admiral, and air marshal, and made lieutenant-general, I guess; all three, he had commissions in all three services.

BURG: I see. I didn't know that.



BOLTE: Yeah, all three services. So they sat there, and I think Ike was there, and we were kind of in the back row. I sat in the back row there, and Paget was in the chair. And apparently their business was to draw up their part of an invasion plan, in the very beginnings, the start of it you might say. And Paget said, "Well, the staff has brought up a paper for us to send on up high." And he said, "This has been fixed for Sholto Douglas", and he turned to Mountbatten and he said, "They haven't fixed this for your signature because you're not a commander-in-chief." Mountbatten was just going

to say something, and just as he was going to say something, Paget said, "Besides you couldn't very well write a memorandum to yourself." [Laughter] See, he sat on the level with Churchill and the chiefs-of-staff, also. And that about stopped him then; he couldn't say anything more. It was a very clever sort of a thing. And all these orthodox services, you see, kind of looked on Mountbatten, with this tri-commissions and so on--he had been brought back from Norfolk to take over from, from old Admiral--I can't think of his name now. Well, he was about superannuated, I guess--and so Mountbatten came over to take this joint operations business, and the commandos and so on. I remember a little cocktail party we had, a luncheon with him, and I went home and wrote in my diary, I said, "I met a guy who's got it!" I think he just impressed me, absolutely, like something. And here he was. The orthodox services took a dim view of him, and, of course, he had access to Churchill and the joint chiefs, and also he was a cousin of the Royal Family, too.

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: So when Ike came over to Northolt and landed there, I went out to meet him, of course, as the chief of staff still there. And there was a brigadier from the War Office, and an air commodore from the air force, and a commodore from the navy; there were three of them, the orthodox services, and Mountbatten! And so when we went into London in the car, why it was Eisenhower and Mountbatten and me in the car. And the three services, I could see them looking over with a sour look on the thing. But on the way in--Ike had known Mountbatten, of course, over here before they went over, and apparently was much impressed with him, I think. And Mountbatten said in the car, though, that he wasn't looking for anything in this war. All he would like to command was a capital ship. That's what he'd like to do.

BURG: I see, I see.

BOLTE: He had no ambitions about it at all. I was very much impressed with him there. But that was in the car when we rode in from Northolt. I suppose they worked it out finally, because they had a committee system, you see, more than we



do. I don't believe in it, and Ike didn't believe in it. He said, "You got to have a single commander on the thing."

BURG: Yes, they did it considerably different than we did.

BOLTE: Yes, they always have, of course, throughout history. Their history in Quebec and in the Caribbean, and so on, was always the army and the navy. That's it.

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: Who was it? Lord Whoever-it-was, made the statement that between two stools the backside falls to the ground!

[Laughter] Something like that. I've forgotten just the term of it, who he was, Lord Somebody. They always believe in that committee. Of course, when they got into the Mediterranean, Ike insisted on it. But it was a sort of a compromise, because they still were commanding more or less independently, autonomously, and they had to be, but it's fascinating. A friend of mine gave me the Hopkins, Johns Hopkins, volumes.

BURG: The War Years?

BOLTE: Yes. And, of course, I disappeared from that picture in '42, in the summer of '42, and came back and went in the other way and wound up in Italy, in command of a division in Italy. So, I'm personally interested in the initial part, and I'm fascinated by watching the correspondence back and forth between George Marshall and Ike Eisenhower, there. And to my mind it is one of the fascinating guidebooks, I think, for any student or military man, in its relationships. It makes me think something of the Pershing-Baker-Wilson backup in the First War. But I think that this one is just outstanding. And I believe that anybody that reads that correspondence back and forth between those two men--it is not only unique, but I think it is a wonderful exposition of the relationship and the conduct of that kind of an operation. Of course, both of them, I think, were outstanding in their abilities, and that's why they came into this thing and could be successful in it.

BURG: Yes, you're right. All right, General, we'll start out at about that point on our next session.





INTERVIEW WITH
General Charles Bolte

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg
Oral Historian

on

August 14, 1974

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library

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This interview is being conducted with General Charles Bolte in the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D. C. on August 14, 1974. Present for the interview General Bolte and the interviewer Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Library staff.



GEN: BOLTE: --it's a period that I know. My family says, "You ought to write about it." And there are not very many of that little group that went over there who are still living. General Dahlquist is one and he is out of the picture.

DR. BURG: What was his first name, by the way, General?

GEN. BOLTE: John E. Dahlquist, and he finally retired as a general, commanding the Army Ground Forces, and also commanded in Europe, but he's out now and very ill.

DR. BURG: And now in a nursing home in Florida.

GEN. BOLTE: That's right.

DR. BURG: But with an adopted son, who is a retired sergeant, living in the Washington area.

GEN. BOLTE: Who is of the same name, who is accessible, but knows very little about any of that past history.

BURG: It would be a question of the father's papers.



BOLTE: [Maj. Gen. James Eugene] Chaney, of course, who was the first special observer and then the commander in London, is long dead; [Major Gen. Joseph Taggart] McNarney, who was his first chief of staff and who organized the thing, is long dead and gone; [Brig. Gen. Donald A.] Davison, the engineer of this group of sixteen that went over, is gone; [Gen. Alfred J.] Al Lyon, the air force's officer is gone; I don't know about the [Brig. Gen.] Paul [Ramsey] Hawley, of course, the doctor, is long gone; the ordnance officer [Col. John W.] Jack Coffey, was killed in an airplane accident and he is gone; the signal officer, [Brig.] Gen. Jerry [V.] Matejka, is alive and busy and in business and so on. And he is a very fine officer, and he is still in business, I think, but he's a contemporary of mine. Pushing his eighties, I guess, nearly.

BURG: Is he located here in this area, do you know?

BOLTE: I think he lives here in Washington, if I'm not mistaken. I don't see him very often but I think he lives here and he's

connected with a Boston firm so--and Jerry Matejka stayed on with Eisenhower and went to North Africa in the signal end of the thing and then disappeared, as far as I know.

BURG: Why did he stay on, General? Was there a particular reason?

BOLTE: Because he was a signal officer and he was a necessary officer in the service; and Paul Hawley stayed on, the doctor; and the ordnance officer stayed on, and the engineer officer stayed on. But the administrative officers, Dahlquist and I-- I came home, I was chief of staff; Dahlquist was G-1--this is for Eisenhower after he came over. We were the residual chief of staff. [Col.] Homer Case was G-2, and he is living now out on the west coast as a retired general officer--brigadier-general, I guess he retired, maybe major-general. And [Brig. Gen.] George [Wesley] Griner, G-4, is retired and lives down in, I think, Mississippi, I'm not sure, but he's in the list of retired officers.

BURG: How about Hawley, did he spell his name, H-a-w-l-e-y?



BOLTE: H-a-w-l-e-y and he became--he was the surgeon. He wasn't in the initial group that went over in 1917--no, I'm a little wrong in my dates--

BURG: A world war too soon. [Laughter]

BOLTE: [Laughter] I'm mixed up on my wars! In 1941, before Pearl Harbor--this group went over in June of 1941, before Pearl Harbor, and Hawley was not the doctor then. Pete Welsh was the doctor but he disappeared somewhere, and Hawley stayed on all through North Africa and I believe was surgeon-general of the theater way up into the invasion of France. And he died not long ago over here in Maryland.

BURG: And Griner, did he spell his name--

BOLTE: George Griner was the G-4, G-r-i-n-e-r, George W. Griner, and he is a retired major-general and he was the G-4 of the little group that went over in 1941. Now, I should go back to that, of course--maybe I covered it before--but it was decided, before we got into the war, it was decided with the British that there would be an exchange of groups--undercover groups, you





might call them, or military observers--in London and in Washington. And the British group in Washington became the mission here and finally, as you know, Sir John [Greer] Dill and the rest of them became the active mission. The group that went over to England was called originally the Special Observers Group; there had been a special naval observer and this became the special army observer. And it was made up of General Chaney, a major-general of the air corps at that time, and General MacNarney, a brigadier-general and his chief of staff, and a G-1,2,3, and 4 and a war plans division and then a chief of each service, engineer, ordnance, signal corps, medical, and chemical warfare and so on--air corps--a total of sixteen, plus General Chaney, and one warrant officer and ten non-commissioned officers went over to form this and their cover name was Special Observer; SPOBS, was the nickname given to it. And it arrived over in London in late May and early June of 1941. That is, long before we got into the war. With the "observer" nickname, you might say, but with the purpose of talking and discussing as to what we would do if we ever got into the war. Sort of a

pre-decision and negotiations. And a great deal developed over that period up to Pearl Harbor, and after that until the summer of 1942. And much was accomplished. One was the visit and investigation, and so on, of Iceland, to which the marines and the contingent was moved over there under the Atlantic doctrine of FDR about the western hemisphere, and so on. Also reconnaissance of Northern Ireland and of Scotland and so on for facilities, when, as, and if we ever got into the war. And much was done during that period of months before we got in and also up to the time that we really began to move into the British Isles physically. An accomplishment that I think, in my own personal opinion, may have saved months at the end of the war by the things that were done at that time. I have to say that during this whole period that took over the attitude of the--and after Pearl Harbor and we got into the war and the turmoil started in the departments and the government in Washington--this little group in London was still looked on as a little observer group, a sort of a channel there. Although on January 6th, 1942, General Chaney, then the chief of this mission, had a telegram, a cable, which came over and said, "You are now appointed



as commanding general of all United States army forces in or to arrive in the British Isles." That's January 6th.

BURG: One month after we entered the war.



BOLTE: One month after we entered the war. And he proceeded to go ahead with all the things. And we had been in civilian clothes; we still didn't have any uniforms except the ones we had taken over in our air cargo when we came over, so we didn't have much in the way of the change of clothing. We appeared in civilian clothes and we dealt with the British and we talked with them and negotiated, and our people went out and inspected the facilities for air fields and air bases and depots, and the idea was that this time, that if we got in the war, American effort from the British Isles would be largely, or almost entirely, heavy bombardment. The navy, of course, would be involved in it in protecting the Atlantic, and the air would have something to do with the coastal patrols that was protecting the thing. But as far as land was concerned, there would be a little token force of a brigade of infantry or something put in there to show the flag, but most of the effort would be air effort,

heavy bombardment. And most of General Chaney's concerns then, with his staff, were looking at airfields, air bases, and so on, working with the British. Now at this time the British, of course, were faced with a very critical period in North Africa and the Middle East in Egypt. I mean, Rommel was knocking at the door. And they had to make a very, very basic decision then; that is, to strip the British Isles of as much as they could spare to send around to the Middle East. We were now in the war, so we said, well, we would take over the defense of Northern Ireland and the job of going down into the Ireland, Eire, itself if the Germans try to land over there. In other words, we'll take that over. We haven't got much force--we were moving the 34th Division to Northern Ireland and an armored division was coming in the process. But the British then began to strip themselves in the British Isles of stuff to send around to the Middle East. And that situation--that's the third phase, you see--first, America was going to heavy bombardment in the British Isles; the next, we took over the quasi-defense of the British Isles, you might say; and then we went in, finally to the third phase when the decision was made with Churchill and Roosevelt,





and all of the rest of it, that we will go to North Africa. But ultimately, we'll go across from the British Isles, and Britain then became the buildup for all the U.S. forces that took part in the invasion of France. And General Eisenhower came over-- General Chaney having been air officer and more or less out of the picture for the heavy bombardment--General Eisenhower came over to take over the idea of crossing the Channel. And then, of course, no sooner had he gotten over there then the decision was changed: "We can't go across the Channel today--this was 1942, maybe '43--we'll go down into North Africa." And as he said to me, "I'm in the position of a guy that has thrown overboard the plan that I worked on to carry out and that I thought we were going to do: go across the Channel." But that's the time that General Marshall came over there--in April, I believe it was, maybe later, June, I guess; I've forgotten dates now--to meet finally with the British with an idea, "Now, we're going across the Channel." In '42! Well, of course, the British were having no part of it. Who was going to do it, the British? We didn't have anything over there to cross the Channel. And Mr. Churchill and all the rest of them were--they had played along with the Americans to keep them on this thing but--I don't say sucked them into it with an idea to come on in--but they weren't going to go across the

Channel in '42. And, as I say with my favorite story, "it couldn't be did from this formation!" There wasn't any question about it! (to me) And when General Marshall came over that--it was June, I guess--he had a meeting at Claridge's there, with General Eisenhower and all the staff, Americans; General [John Clifford Hodges] Lee, who was now the commander of the SOS there, the communications, and all of us in the staff. And I remember when he went around the room, and he said, "Bolte, what do you think of it?" And I said, "Well, General, I think from a military standpoint it isn't feasible." And I said, "If the Russians are pressing so hard you have to do something, you never can tell." He didn't like my answer. General Eisenhower didn't like my answer. I was his chief of staff, but that was a fact. I mean, it was absolute fairy tales to talk of going across the Channel in anything in 1942. You didn't have enough air, couldn't support anything, it would have been terrible to land there and get kicked off. And that's what they decided, so it didn't happen in '42, and it didn't happen in '43! It couldn't, and it didn't happen until '44, when you had the buildup of force that was sufficient to go across and beat it. And yet to this day, you'll find in the records the fact that General Marshall, up to the time he died, felt that we ought to have



tried it in 1942. I just can't understand that military philosophy, of course, the Americans have always been keyed to it, and you never can tell what you can do if you go ahead and try it, but what a fiasco! And, of course, the British were just not going to have any part of it.



BURG: Did you feel, General, that they would have preferred to avoid that cross-Channel attack throughout the war? Or do you think that their attitude was one of, "Well not '42, and probably not '43, but ultimately?"

BOLTE: Well, I think philosophically they would rather have gone around the edges and done something--the Churchill soft underbelly, and so on--I think they did have a recollection of the terrible things that happened in the First World War. And, of course, the typical American idea was strike to the heart; go on right through and do it! And we were in variance in our basic philosophy there. But I thought at the time--and of course, as so many people said and they always do, that after you've been over there a little while, you begin to get the philosophy of where you are. The State Department runs up

against this all the time, I think, with their people who go into a country and pretty soon they either are completely out or else they begin to adopt the view of the country where they are. And we were--and you'll find it in Eisenhower's memoirs, and in his aide's memoirs, and some of the others--that some of the people that were over there too long had begun to absorb the British viewpoint on the thing. And maybe we did, but I still think to this day that it would have been perfectly asinine to have attempted to cross the English Channel in 1942. And this was talking about a decision that had been made in the summer, June, I think, to go across up to September. You couldn't conceive--and the British didn't have anything in the British Isles, and we didn't have anything in the British Isles! And there wasn't enough shipping! It would have been the most fantastic kind of a repetition of the Dieppe raid, or something like that.

BURG: Your own personal view would be if the Russians at that point, say in the autumn of '42, were hard pressed, maybe then in desperation it would have to be done.



BOLTE: Maybe, yes. And of course people have pointed out afterwards that there was a change in the Russian situation there, up to the time of Stalingrad and the things that were happening there, that until that happened they were in trouble.

BURG: Of course one of the contingency plans would have concerned Russian disaster; we might have had to do something in '42.

BOLTE: Might have had to do something, yes.



BURG: Or as an unlikely, very unlikely, circumstance, some kind of internal revolt in Germany; we might have had to act in '42.

BOLTE: Yes, well, that philosophy was always up there, that if the Germans began to weaken--well, they didn't weaken and they weren't weakening, and they didn't weaken even up to the end. They didn't weaken until they were really whipped.

BURG: Right. Now if you been influenced, General--I realize as many do who have read the books you've mentioned--there's that very strong feeling in Washington and with some of the

people who came out, Eisenhower and others, that yes, the mission in London didn't have this kind of gung-ho feeling about the war. Now if you yourself had been influenced by a British viewpoint, would there have been specific British military officers who would have influenced you, or would it have been just the fact that you were in London and absorbed in--



BOLTE: Oh, I think so. I talked, of course, with [Maj. Gen. John N.] Kennedy in Plans; I talked to the Joint Planning Committee there with the British. And I remember one, Colonel Guierbach, made a great impression on me one day when he pointed out how serious the situation was and--as I remember what he said--that "east of the Suez area in Egypt we have no gun of caliber larger than three inches. And we have no armor." That's east of, maybe, the east coast of the Mediterranean in Egypt. In other words, he pointed to me how weak the British Empire was throughout all of India and on. And he made quite an impression on me and I know I made a written report to General Chaney that went on to Washington, I suppose, of the situation in which the British saw themselves, and maybe playing for

sympathy. And I remember very well the time not long after we had arrived over with this group, with MacNarney as the chief of staff to General Chaney, and this observer group. I've forgotten the date but I think it was before we got into war; that is, before Pearl Harbor, maybe it was the late summer of 1941. A group of us, including MacNarney, went down to the Southeastern Command to look at the defenses, we'll say of the British Isles, in case the Germans were to go to invade. And among other things, we went down to the Dungeness Peninsula, which is a triangle of rather flat land that goes out into the English Channel down there, down south of the mouth of the Thames. And we looked and on the fields there--it's fairly flat--there were posts, you know, to prevent landings or something by air. And across the base of this triangular peninsula there were the remnants of an old ditch which had been put in there by Pitt at the time when Napoleon was going to land over here. I mean, we people looked at this thing going back there, and Joe MacNarney said to me when we went back--he had been the member of the War Plans Division in the department, you know, who was doing the business with negotiations and the ABC conversations--



and he said to me, "Charley, I feel like a murderer." Those were his words to me after having looked at this, at the weakness of this thing--of the idea of Hitler and the Germans crossing, and this is what the British had to stop it. The street names had been taken off all the streets, you see, and all the preparations of these little pillboxes built in around the crossroads into England, and so on. And it was pathetic. And all the eyes in Washington--then, of course, when Pearl Harbor happened, then the eyes in Washington turned to the Pacific and we just fell out on the arguments and all about it. And Griner, the G-4, said to me one day, "Well, Charley, we might as well pack our bags and go on home."

BURG: Your thought was that all our military effort was going to be turned to the other side.

BOLTE: It was shot, yes. And that's the way the public was turning and as far as we were concerned, we were in the goldrums. Now I mention these things because there have been some accounts of this period of the predecessor commands. That is, the SPOBS and we coined the word, USAPI, U.S. Army Forces in the British



Isles, and then we finally came to the European Theater. I go back to the time when General Chaney had his telegram on January the 6th, 1942, and it said, "You are in command," but it gave him none of the instructions that General Pershing had when he went over to be a theater commander. Nothing had been given to him, and he had no administrative instructions, or authority, or anything. People were going to come to Northern Ireland and they set up--Washington just looked on it as a force going to Northern Ireland and a force going to Iceland, and as far as Chaney was concerned in London, why it didn't come to him, or anything like that. And then Eisenhower came over as OPD with [Gen. Henry H.] Hap Arnold and [Gen. Brehon Burke] Somervell and [Brig. Gen. John E.] Ed Hull and somebody else. And among other things, Eisenhower asked me as Chaney's chief of staff "Is there anything that you want me to carry back that you think?" and so on. And I said, "Well, the guy needs a directive." I said, "He hasn't got any directive. He was told January 6 that he was in command here and he hasn't got anything that tells--he hasn't got even an order to fight the Germans.



And yet we're in the war." He went back and wrote the directive. And if you look in the book, you'll see that it is dated July 6, six months later, that the directive was drafted and Marshall said, "O.K., you're going over and carry it out." And here was this fellow, for six months over there, trying to do something. I admit that Chaney was air minded; he was looking at that initial job which was going to be bombardment, and the airplanes and the air bases and the air fields, and so on. And Arnold, Hap Arnold, in Washington was still running the thing from Washington, and telling where the squadrons ought to go and what they ought to do. And he came over there at this time, I say, with General Eisenhower and Somervell and so on. And [Maj. Gen. Mark Wayne] Clark was along, Wayne Clark; and Wayne, whom I'd known of course, came to me and he said, "We want to all have dinner tonight at Claridge's, just General Eisenhower's people that we know. That is, you and John Dahlquist and George Griner and Jerry Matejka, and so on, but we didn't think of having General Chaney to it." And so I went and told General Chaney about this.



BURG: They weren't going to invite him? [Laughter]



BOLTE: Well, no, it wasn't going to be for everybody, you see. It was just going to be on a staff level, you might say. And we went, General Chaney's staff, to Claridge's and we walked in there and here was everybody, Arnold, Somervell, Eisenhower, Hull, and all the rest of them. And Clark said, "Well, we didn't know that they were all going to join us. It was just Ike and I that were doing this thing," and so on. And my people--here I was chief of staff to Chaney--and my people looked at me in horror and I thought, "My God, what is this going to be!" And these guys stood up in the banquet room there, a dining room in Claridge's, and talked about the trans-oceanic airplane thing, and they were just talking about Washington, Hap Arnold and all the rest of them, to where we just cringed. We thought these waiters could be listening, anybody could be listening. They didn't have any more idea of secrecy or--and the next day, I told General Chaney about it. I mean, I felt like a renegade, like a traitor, or something, and I went in and told him, I said, "General, I had no idea of this thing." I'm convinced to the

day that he died that General Chaney thought this was all an engineered sort of thing that was finally going to move to get him out; he didn't belong there and they were all over, looking this thing over, and going to get him out. And while he and I were very compatible here, we had lunch and we met, and so on here, and I always--my admiration and my affection for him--and I still think that those guys just came over there with "to hell with what's going on over here--Washington--they don't know what's going on and we'll run this thing from here." It was a very uncomfortable period and--

BURG: Your recollection too, evidently, General Bolte, is that they did not come to you, sort of opposite number to opposite number, and sit down with you as individuals and say, "Now what is going on here?" "What is the situation here?"

BOLTE: No, they didn't, they just came over and--

BURG: They brought the word.

BOLTE:--they brought the word, and they were over on their own and they were just going to ride roughshod over this group that



was over there and that's, of course, what happened. And it was a very uncomfortable, very unpleasant thing, and I remember General Arnold, who was then chief of the air corps and the number one in all this business, he came over in this group and he went down and talked to [Air Chief Marshal Sir Charles P. A.] Portal, the chief of the air staff, and others. And whom did he take with him? He took [Gen. Harold M.] McClelland, who was the G-3 of this little group of Chaney's, who was an air officer; he took Al Lyon, the air officer, and one other, and went down and talked to the British on things. And I knew nothing about that, but when General Chaney called me into the office, and he was just unloading, he said, "Arnold went down there and he"--he and Arnold in the office together--and he said, "I told him 'You went down there and made commitments on the location of air squadrons, and so on, because you're meddling into things that don't belong to you!'" I mean, they were really fierce. Here's the chief of the air corps and the commanding general, or he thought he was, and Arnold said, "Oh, those were just recommendations," and so on. But that isn't what the minutes showed down in the air officer--chief of Portal's



office said the Americans, so and so, have agreed, see? This is what he did, he went down. Well, I think Arnold--when they all came back here, of course, it was ultimately that I went in one morning and took my papers to General Chaney there, as you do, and he set back and said, "Well, you know, I'm being relieved." Well, you could hit me between the eyes like that, you know, I-- and so he showed me a cable that he had from General Marshall which said that "we have decided over here that we need somebody over in London who is more au courant with the plans that we have in Washington here, and so I have decided to send General Eisenhower over and you can leave whenever you wish." In other words, there was no turnover or anything like that. This is just-- this is heartbreaking you know.

BURG: No transition period whatsoever?

BOLTE: And I said, "Well, General, I will go with you wherever or whatever you want on the thing." And he said, "No, I'll just go." So he went to pack up and I said, "General, you can't go without going in and seeing the British chiefs of staff." I mean, after all he was the senior American in the whole thing.



"Well," he said, "I'll go down and say good-bye to Portal."
And he went down to say good-bye to Air Chief Marshall Portal there, and then I went out with him, out to the airport there. He packed his trunk, and his bag, and his suitcase and went back and got in an airplane out there. It happened that King Peter of Yugoslavia was also going on the same plane, so there was much more foof-a-rah about that young fellow going. But General Chaney just slipped out and went back home and came back here.



BURG: Portal was the only man on the British side that he saw.

BOLTE: That he went to say good-bye to. And this to my mind was just absolutely a heartbreaking thing. And he came back and the rest of it I learned about later, of course, that he was reassigned to the to the 1st Air Force in Long Island, Mineola Field there, LaGuardia Field, which was under [Lt.] General [Hugh A.] Drum of the First Army, which is where he was when he was selected to go over to London. So he was back in the same place. And then, from this letter that I told you that he wrote to General Dahlquist--that I had read--he told

about going in to see General Marshall, who wouldn't see him, was too busy to see him, or something. And he finally saw Mr. Patterson, who said, "Well, I can't interfere in matters of general officers," and so on. Hap Arnold, I understood, had visited two air fields up in the area that General Chaney came back to, and in one of them he asked two youngsters there, "When did you last see your commanding general?" Well, it just happened that they had just reported, so they said, Well, they hadn't seen him. And then he went to another place and said, "When did you last have a flying job?", or something, and they didn't have any and they just had come there. So he started in trying to bust General Chaney, and apparently it didn't succeed because Chaney wound up going from there to Sheppard Air Force Base, and then out to Lowry Field, and then out to Okinawa and he commanded a base in Okinawa at the end of the war, when the war was ended. So it was a very--to my mind--a very tragic treatment of him. Now, maybe General Chaney was, I won't say narrow-minded, but maybe he was keyed to this first mission of the air and he wasn't in on the picture of what Washington was envisaging as our--



[Interruption]



BOLTE:--little bits and things that are factual, as far as you can remember dates and places, but are, nevertheless, your recollections of the way things were going about, and so on.

BURG: And very definitely your strong impression is that Chaney was sent over, originally, and briefed that our role in England, should we go into the war, was going to be in heavy bombardment?

BOLTE: Heavy bombardment from the British Isles.

BURG: And nobody ever changed that opinion? No one ever gave a new directive.

BOLTE: No, nobody ever changed it with him at all, because there was no other idea of this great development in Washington of the cross-Channel thing. And then North Africa didn't come in until after Chaney had left, and so on. So that was--he was in this one, as I say, the first of the three periods of American-British participation in the war. The first was this heavy bombardment, if we got in the war. We'd go do something

somewhere else, that's all. The second was the British had to get down in the Middle East everything they could do; we will take over the defense--and we didn't have anything to take over with, God knows--but there was a period that we were supposed to--if Hitler tried to land, besides coming across the Channel and coming in there around Dungeness and so on, it was an idea that he'd also go over into Eire, you see. That was to get in behind, or his forces would, and the British northern forces, taken over by us then, were to rush down to the south coast of Eire and that is what we were supposed to do. The British Northern Ireland Command was--if he went up there--was to rush down to the south, and that's the second period of the American participation in the British Isles.

BURG: Now that second phase came after we had actually entered the war in December, '41?

BOLTE: Yes, yes.

BURG: And did you get a directive or set of instructions on that?

BOLTE: No, no! Nothing! Now bear in mind that Washington now was looking to the Pacific, looking the other way. And



what we got was very meager and chaotic; I mean, we couldn't get answers! For instance, you know GHQ was set up at McNair's headquarters in two sets. When it was originally set up, General Marshall told me himself, personally, when he took me out of the temporary job in the air corps office, he said, "I'm setting up general headquarters but initially only in its planning, its troops in this country. But I have in mind an operations division and I have you in mind for it." This he told me, personally, in his office, "But," he said, "I don't want you to say anything about it."

BURG: When did he tell you that?

BOLTE: In his office summer of '41, yes.

BURG: Before you went over to England?

BOLTE: Before I went over to England. And I went down to the War College, where McNair had come in to set up this headquarters, and I met McNair, whom I had never known, and Wayne Clark, who now was his right hand man, later chief of staff, but at that time sort of chief of training. Because McNair was literally



supposed to be chief of staff to GHQ, which was commanded by General Marshall, the chief of staff--that is this potential GHQ. So Clark was really G-3 to McNair, who was chief of staff to General Marshall, the commander of the general headquarters. And McNair--we shook hands and Clark introduced me to him--and McNair said, "You're coming to me, are you?" Well, of course Marshall said, "I don't want you to say anything about that." And I said, "Well, that's that I understand," or something, well that's the last I heard of it, anyway. And I went to Corps down in Florida, and then finally from Florida, I went over to London on this group. In the meantime, the GHQ was set up here and in two parts, and Clark was in the training end of it for training troops in the continental United States and an operations division was set up with [Brig. Gen.] Harry [J.] Malony as the head of the operations division. Now McNair was deaf and he didn't hear well, and he didn't see General Marshall as you would expect. And not only that, but he was physically away from General Marshall. So Clark would go up more and see General Marshall, or hear him whenever he wanted him, and Malony tried to set up this



operations thing which was going to handle these overseas theaters, including Northern Ireland which was now being set up, and it didn't work, that's all. Because--well, partly, jealousy between Malony and Clark and the operations overseas and the training in this country, and partly because McNair couldn't-- Marshall couldn't deal with him, and finally the OPD was moved up into the department, of course, and that's where the overseas operations were run then. And no longer under McNair, and McNair became training completely. But Harry Maloney wrote me a letter, which I have somewhere on a piece of paper there, when he was being dissolved out of the operations control there in McNair's headquarters, and he said--I've forgotten--"Blasted from without and sabotaged from within. This is the day of the freewheeler and the ball of fire." And this was his swan song, and he said, "I just want you to know about this." And he wrote me in London about it, that he was being thrown out on his ear so far as the overseas planning and the operations were concerned. In other words, it just went by the board and operations went up and then Harry went in to command a training division. He is dead now; you can't find out much from him. But I have that



scribbled piece of paper there, which was a lament over the thing of the disappearance of the operations, overseas operations, functions of the McNair headquarters at the War College building down at Fort McNair. I understand how it came about but-- McNair, I don't think, was very much concerned with the overseas operation thing. He was keyed to the training in this country and that's what it became, of course, his principal job. But Harry certainly--it certainly was a lament. I can remember we had some correspondence because shortly after we got over to London--and then we were going to get into the war--and here was the navy having bases before we got into the war but their money, through civilian firms, was building a base in Northern Ireland. Two bases, one at Londonderry where the bay is, and also on Loch Erne, the lake there, for the air forces for the patrol. And also two bases over at Glasgow in the Clyde. Well, those were built by American contractors, of course, under U.S. Navy contract, you see, if, as, and when we got into the war. And I went over there with this civilian troubles thing, you see, to go and reconnoiter these two bases, and up in the Clyde somewhat, and I remember being--this can go in here, I



think, all right--but on Loch Erne, I said, "Well, I got to get up and look over the thing from the air. I can't tell about where we're going to put troops to defend this thing with anti-aircraft, and so on." So we got into a PBY. American flying boat there--this is June of 1941--with a RAF crew and a U.S. Navy pilot, in uniform, flying this flying boat down Loch Erne there, to go over and take off, and stuff, and he said, "You've got to stay within visual distance, because we can't have any radio contact when you want to go over and look at this thing." So here we went down there. I remember the anti-aircraft fellow Colonel Heinie Hinman was with me too on this thing. And this pilot rocking, both of them, rocking this thing to get it off the lake because it was loaded with I don't know how many thousands tons of bombs and gasoline. And the navy pilot turned to me and he said, "This is like old Liza at that dance there, where she fell down and was sitting down there on the floor and her partner said, 'You hurt yourself, Liza?' And she said, 'No, I'm just trying to get my sucker unstuck.'" [Laughter] And there were were trying to get off this field. Well we did.

BURG: Off that lake.



BOLTE: Yeah, off this lake, and we did, you know, and landed and I think we sprang a leak when we landed because it was terrific. I never got--well, anyway that's the part of this story of this question of--then we got in the war but prior to that, I was trying to write here on this question of who was responsible for what. Here I was Chaney's man in Washington; also, I guess then at the time, I was planning officer, because he hadn't got in yet, and here--well, take the Clyde. Here was a navy base and navy personnel were going to be there. The base was under a navy commander, of course; he was supposed to command this. He was the one that said when you can have beer, and when you're going to turn the lights off, and what the traffic is going to be in there. But there's anti-aircraft in there, U.S. Army anti-aircraft; they have to conform to this navy fellow here--this commander, or whatever he is, captain of the U.S. Navy--as to whether they can wear uniforms or go in the streets or what they have to do. But if they fire, they fire under the Air Defenses of the British Isles, which is the British anti-aircraft fellow there. And so they get their orders for one thing from the U. S. Navy fellow for certain



things, and from the British anti-aircraft officer from the Air Defenses of Great Britain; when after all, they all are under General Chaney in London here if it comes to be whether they go home or not, or whether they stay there, and so on. So I tried to write this thing out as to operational control and administrative command and so on.

BURG: What a mess.



BOLTE: And I got a letter back that was reputed to be from Mc Nair; I don't know whether Malony wrote it or not, and the answer was, "I don't understand anything except command." Well, my efforts all went to naught. Well of course, if we'd gotten into this now, we know what it is, we have operational control. I mean, mixed commands, not only of our own, but mixed of other nations, and we've worked out the system where you as a commander of a Nation don't have the right to court martial a guy or do certain things to him there, it's only his own people have that. And you don't pay him, somebody else does, but we've worked it out pretty well. But we didn't have it then.

BURG: And whoever responded to that was so out of touch with what you were doing.



BOLTE: Out of touch, yeah. He just wrote to me and said, "I don't understand anything but command." Well, now to show the other side of the thing, when General Eisenhower came over, shortly after he came over, he told me he wanted me to write an order to put Admiral--what was his name? The navy fellow that was in command of the--the Admiral, anyway--"I want him set up as a corps commander, equivalent to"--Clark was going to be corps commander of the 2nd Corps, and "Scrappy" [Maj. Gen. Russell P.] Hartle was over in Northern Ireland, and Dick Bonesteel's father was up in Iceland. those three--? and I want the navy fellow [set up as]? opposite number. And me, stupid old guy, who had been an instructor in joint operations at the Army War College, and indoctrinated with this idea that you can't put army and navy forces together, you see--they have the doctrine of paramount interest, and all that sort of thing--I didn't know at the time that General King had told Ike when he went over there--and it's in his book, I think, or in his memoirs, or somewhere--when he went over there--

BURG: You mean Admiral King?



BOLTE: Yeah, Admiral King told him, and it's in writing there, that "when you go over there the navy is under your command completely, and I don't want anything about the doctrine of paramount interest," or this, that, and the other thing, which I would like to have known when Ike came over, because I was obsolete in my views on the thing. And I protested about this to him and he said, "I don't give a goddamn, that's the way I want it!" Well, I said, "O.K. that's the way you're going to have it." But you can see, I mention this as one of the little things where with Ike, having heard the sergeant that said, "Well, Captain Jones didn't do it that way," you see, I was in that position here, and I found myself on little things out of balance completely. I mean, if I had thought enough about it, I would have seen they were trivial, and so on. That he, after all, was going to do this thing that he had been [sent?] over there [to do?] but I began to--little things--he hadn't been over there more than, well, twenty-four hours, when he told me, he said, "You're going to go back and Bedell Smith

is coming over here. You're going back to command."

BURG: He told you that only twenty-four hours after his arrival on the second trip, when he came over to take over?

BOLTE: The day after he got--yeah, when he came over to take over. He told me, he said, "You're going to go home." And, incidentally, he--in his papers--he gave me, right then, when he wrote General Marshall he gave me the most fulsome statement. That's printed in, you know, the Hopkins books, in which he--

BURG: Yes, The War Papers.

BOLTE: --says that this guy, I want to put in a good word for him, and he's going places, and he'll do anything and you can depend on him, and so on. He gave me a very, very--but from then on, we began to have all these little trivial things. They wouldn't amount to anything. But, he went to Claridge's, of course; that's where everybody that came over went to Claridge's.

BURG: To stay?



BOLTE: And so the next day he said to me, "Can you move into Claridge's?" I was living in the Dorchester with all the rest of the staff, G-1,2,3,4, and we had made a dicker with the Dorchester, which was very good accommodations and we got a good cost--what Claridge's did anyway. Claridge's was a blue stocking thing, and I said, "Well, I can if you want to," but I said, "You ought to move into the Dorchester because, " I said, "Claridge's is a pile of sugar! A bomb and it'll dissolve!" And I said, "The Dorchester is steel and concrete, and so on." Well, he didn't like it, but he moved to the Dorchester. He lived there, you see, until he set up his headquarters, or his place outside. And then one morning he came in after about two or three days there and he said, "I got the shock of my life last night." [he ?] said, "I walked in the door of the Dorchester and there was Bob Littlejohn in civilian clothes." Bob Littlejohn was the quartermaster member of the thing, quite high up. And I said, "Well, General," I said, "we've been wearing civilian clothes off duty here, off hours." And I said, "Those of us that came over a year and a quarter ago." I said, "had one uniform that we couldn't wear." I mean,



we came over in secret in 1941, before we got in the war. We had a uniform but we couldn't put it on until Pearl Harbor. And I said, "That's all we had." And I said, "I bought two more civilian suits." I was wearing civilian clothes. "I've got one uniform and I put that on when I have to wear a uniform." "Well," he said, "I don't like it; I'm not going to issue the orders, but I don't want to see any more of it." Well this is a quandary, because there were eighteen of us then, or something, that didn't have but the one uniform, that's all. And we hadn't gone and had any more made. Well, this is another thing. Then, of course, he said, "I don't like your place here. I don't like it. You've all living at the hotel here, and you're all working in this apartment building here." This thing that we had taken over there in Grosvenor Square, which the Navy had first occupied. The Embassy had gotten it for us and so that's where we were set up. He said, "You're all living in hotels, and the office and the headquarters here and I don't like it. It's not [the rent or anything?]. I want to go outside of London." I said, "You can't do it." He was only a major-general then but nothing--no troops, you see. This was



in June, we'll say, of 1942, and the 34th Division coming in and the 1st Division in Northern Ireland, maybe forty thousand personnel, and he was only a major-general. I said, "You can't go out in the country, because you can't drive more than fifteen miles an hour in a blackout." And I said, "You go fifty miles away from London and the ministries will-- you're going to punt, that's all." Well he didn't like it, but he stayed there! This is the point I'm making that I was telling him things that in my period over there--the period that I was working with--knew, what you might say, the facts of life at that time and he didn't like it. He was looking forward to this big plan that we're going to build up a force here of a million and a half and we're going to go across the Channel, and all that sort of thing, and "you guys don't--you don't know--you're not in the picture, that's all there is to it."

BURG: Still though, it sounds like he wasn't, at least in the incidents that you've mentioned, totally unreasonable. He did go to the Dorchester, he stayed in London.



BOLTE: He came to the Dorchester, he stayed at Grosvenor Square. I remember because I went out with him to make a reconnaissance of where he'd like to go. He said He'd like to get out of here and one of the places we went to was Hounslow Barracks, which I think was built in 1870, or something like that, and had fireplaces, you know. But it was the grimmest place! [Laughter] And it wasn't even occupied. I think that's one place they showed us. And they had offered us--or no, we had heard about--the Ravenswood Country Club, and I found out that we couldn't have it as an alternate CP because it was the alternate CP for the British ground forces, defense forces. So the upshot of it was that when we were looking for a headquarters, I finally convinced him that he had to go down and call on--what the hell is the name of the British ground forces then? Oh, Home Forces they called it. And incidentally this--I can't remember the names--anyway, he had been in the conference of the Home Forces when Ike was over on his visit, you see, and he'd sat in the committee meeting and this fellow had said afterwards, applicable of Ike, "This man has dangerous ideas." And Ike saw the minutes later on. [Laughter]



BURG: What did that British officer feel were some of the more dangerous ideas that Eisenhower had, do you remember?

BOLTE: Well, I suppose Ike--then, he was Operations in the Pentagon and he was talking about crossing the Channel, and all this kind of thing, you know. You know, big things from Washington, looking at the thing over there. And I can't remember his name now, the commanding general of the Home Forces there. [General Bernard Paget, Commander of Home Forces]



BURG: I think we can pick him up, because I believe I know who you refer to.

BOLTE: Yeah. So I told Ike, "We've got to go down and call on him." So we did and while we were there, he said, the Britisher said, "I understand you're looking for a headquarters outside of London. Have you looked at the Ravenswood Country Club?" Which was going to be his alternate headquarters, so he finally came--see, as long as you went to see him then he was perfectly willing to make the--but we had been turned down by his staff people all around this thing. So the point is, if you were

over there you had to go and make a gesture. It's like when we try to set up the officers' club in South Audley Street there. We hadn't been there very long, you see, before we were beginning to have troops come in, and so on, and then they had to have a place for the officers, and also a place for the soldiers, so we finally arranged to take over this bombed-out club. I've forgotten what club it was but we were going to take it over and we wanted to set up a bar, and so on there. Well, we found we couldn't get the liquor. And we couldn't get the liquor until we went to the head of the British/Scotch-liquor industry there in the British Isles, and you couldn't do it unless a general went down to call on him. So I went down to call on this guy and have a little drink or something. "Oh," he said, "I understand you all are trying to get some Scotch for your club up here." And damned if we didn't get it, you see. But the major couldn't do anything. I had to go down there, and we got the scotch and set up the club all right. But this is the way you-- hell, we were in another guy's house and another guy's country and as Americans do, we were very apt to kind of walk in and 'get out of my way! We'll take over here and we're going to run this thing.'



BURG: Never mind the formalities: let's get down to it.

BOLTE: Just like John C.H. Lee, that Christ-like character, you know? He hadn't come over very long to be the commander of the services of supply, and one of the first things he did-- this is before Ike came over, and Chaney was still in command then. Lee was sent over to take over the building up of the logistics setup for this embryonic theater that was coming on, and Chaney wasn't interested in the administrative end of the thing. He told me, he said, "I don't want to have anything to do with it." Well, I was in a quandary, because I could see all the services chiefs, you see, engineers whatever, going under this fellow here, who was going to command the services of supply, which is what he finally did. He took over the whole business, and the top guy was just going to be an operational fellow. Well one of the first things Lee did, who was living at the Cumberland--I guess that's where he went in--was to have a dinner for the British tops that he was going to have. And we went, and I want to tell you, with the filet mignon, and the oranges, and the apples, and the things--



these guys hadn't seen anything like this, you know, and this bastard came in there and just spread this stuff, because he had access to the ships and the things that were coming in. Talk about bad taste! I just--we just--we had been there for a year and a half and we knew that if you went in and bought a scotch at the bar, you got a little bit of scotch, about like that, and that's about it, and you didn't ask for any more, because it wasn't cricket. I mean that's all there was. Maybe you had money, but the American came in and said, "I got a lot of money, I'll pay for the damned thing. What do you say it is? Seventy cents? I'll give you a dollar and a half for it." Well, we just did too much of that, and Lee did that, that sort of thing. And I think he finally--well, I'm just reminiscing on all this business. But when Ike was going to go to North Africa--and that's when the big decision was made and he came--I went in and he told me, he said, "I'm in the position of a man that has got to throw out his plan that he's been working on, that he was absolutely headed for, and take a plan that I've been against from the beginning," which was to go into North Africa. And



that's what he was going to do. And later on, when he was getting in the planning, he was going to go and he said he was going to leave Lee as his deputy in the British Isles when he went to North Africa. Well, Lee was the commander of the services forces and, of course, he dug himself in by then, you know; a very fine administrator and a martinet, you know, all this kind of stuff. But he never did leave him. Instead, they sent and got Andrews who was G-4, I mean G-3, in the Pentagon, Air Force guy, and he came over to be Ike's deputy in the British Isles when Ike--who still was going to command the whole place--went to North Africa. And then Andrews was killed in an airplane up in the mountains in Scotland. I think he had flown up north to Iceland and was killed, and Devers went over, you see, to fill in, to fill in as the theater guy staying there. And Lee wasn't, you see, and I never could figure out why Ike, who told me, "I'm leaving Lee here as my deputy."

BURG: Lee stayed on though in the British Isles?

BOLTE: Oh, yes, he became the commander of the SOS all the way. And if you read some of the letters after he went to France,



when he moved his headquarters into Paris, and some of the letters that Eisenhower wrote him as commander in chief, and said, "You will stop anybody else coming into Paris and you will send around and sent out every individual that doesn't have to be in here, and you will turn in all of your cars above, so and so, and your own, and turn--oh, he just gave Lee hell.

BURG: Because Com Z was living high on the hog.

BOLTE: Com Z was Lee, and he just went in there, you know, and put his name in the Hotel George Cinq: "This is the residence of Lieutenant-General John C. H. Lee and you will conduct yourself accordingly," and all that kind of crap. Well, he was that kind of a guy. Well, anyhow, I couldn't figure out--what I didn't figure out--why Ike didn't leave him, but there were little things. Now Pleas Rogers, who was the commander of the headquarters in London and also in Paris all through the war--he's a retired brigadier-general lives down here in West Virginia; awful good guy, a friend of long time--

BURG: The first name was that a nickname?



BOLTE: Pleasant B. Rogers, he was christened. So it was P-l-e-a-s, Please B. Rogers. And I saw him the other day and he's a guy, of course, he was the housekeeper all the way from before Ike came over until the end of the war, in London and then in Paris. Because when he came in, in the early days in London--and we were beginning to get in some medicos and some signal people, and so on. And they were running around London in their shirt sleeves and nobody was responsible, and Dahlquist said to me, "We've got to have a command, a headquarters." And Pleas Rogers had just come into report as a colonel from Front Royal, an old infantryman but he had quartermaster insignia, he had been a remount commander down at Front Royal. And I said, "Pleas, you're the London base commander." And he said, "Can I take these off and put on infantry?" And I said to Dahlquist, "Can I do it?" He said, "You can do anything." I said, "Pleas, you're in the infantry again." He became the headquartermasters commander then, and from then on to the end of the war, and he knows more about the ins and outs of what was going on the inside than anyone. Well, anyway, after the war, I said, "Pleas, I never figured out why Ike didn't leave John C. H.



Lee in command." Well he said, "I don't know anything else." But I said, "I can tell you one thing." You see, shortly after Ike got over there he told me, he said, "I want you living at the Dorchester. I want you to put me on so the finance officer will pay my bills. Not my laundry or my personal things, because my aids will take care of that, but I have to entertain the British and I have to have dinners and banquets and the finance officer takes care of this." I said, "O.K.," so I got that fixed up. So then I went and went through the war and after the war, I said to Pleas and Pleas said, "Well, I don't know but," he said, "You know, sometime later Lee sent for me and said, 'I want you to put me up on the same basis as General Eisenhower.'" And the finance officer ok'd these things and Pleas says, "The first bill, I think, was for two thousand pounds! I don't know what--for all these dinners, and so on."

BURG: About ten thousand dollars!



BOLTE: Oh, terrific, you see. [Laughter] And Pleas says, "I took it in and dropped it on Bedell Smith's desk." And Bedell looked at it and said, "What's that?" And he said,

"I told him." And Bedell said, "You go tell that son-of-a-bitch to pay his own bills." [Laughter] Pleas said, "I didn't quite tell him in those words, but," he said, "I took it back." And I think Lee had money. I think he--I don't know if he had money--but, anyway, that's the story. And I think that Ike began to realize this fellow was free wheeling. I mean, he was just--and he had been that way under Chaney. He came over, apparently, with carte blanche from Summervell over here, and maybe from Marshall, to go over and set up the logistic setup, ignoring Chaney. I mean this is what we felt, you know. The guy--you put him in command over there! Why don't you give him the means?' and so on. And this fellow Lee came over there and proceeded to just go and do things, which he did, and did all during the war, and he did a wonderful job. But for me, chief of staff to Chaney, and then to Eisenhower, to have this fellow free wheeling around there, I couldn't understand it. So I finally went out, that's all, because I wasn't on that wave length. But that's the way Lee did. He came to me--no, I guess he went to the British--shortly after he got over there--I found the story--now going over to command the



SOS, he went to New York to see [Lt.] General [James G.] Harbord, who had been Pershing's SOS commander, and General Harbord had told him that the greatest physical instrument that he had was his train. General Harbord had a train in France in which he had his headquarters, and his car could move up on it, and he could go anywhere he wanted to on the French railroads, and so on. So Lee went to the British and said, "I want a train." Well, the King didn't have a train. Prime Minister had a train but the King didn't have a train; he had a car that attached onto the regular train, but--

[Interruption]



BOLTE: Well this has to do with the train that General Lee wanted immediately so that he could travel around the British Isles. And the King didn't have a train. The Prime minister had one. But finally he got it, and I remember the British chief of administration, who I think is their adjutant general, who asked me in rather--not caustic, but what do you want to say? --"What does General Lee think about his train?", or something, because he had made a lot of trouble for him. But later on

General Eisenhower told me, personally, "I want that train labeled as the Theater Commander's Train." He said, "General Lee can use it, without reference to this headquarters, as he needs to, but it's to be known as the Theater Commander's Train." That was General Eisenhower's orders to me on the thing. So with great glee, I issued an order, made a record, that that train, which had been gotten from the British, was the Theater Commander's Train. But General Lee, I'd say was a dynamic--a very capable engineer officer. He had run this second training division, and so on, and had been given instructions, I'm sure, by General Summervell over here: "You go on over there and get this thing organized." And it all ignored General Chaney on the thing, who was not interested himself, anyway, in the setup of administration. As I say, he was interested in the heavy bombardment; where are the airfields going to be, what airplanes are they going to use, and all the rest of this thing.

BURG: In conclusion on this session, it's your opinion, I would think, judging from what you've told me about General Chaney, that Chaney could have risen to the occasion had he been given the necessary instructions. That is, had Washington made it clear to



him what that third phase was.

BOLTE: I was told by Virgil Peterson, who was the inspector general of the army, and who was required to make the inspection of General Chaney in his command of the 1st Air Force when he came back from London. He was ordered to make the inspection, where these things came out, with the allegations that were made that he hadn't been training his people or getting on to his people. Virgil Peterson told me that Chaney was in mind as a replacement for General Marshall, you can't believe it, but that's how high he--Virgil Peterson, the Inspector General--and they were all classmates; he and him were classmates--how high General Chaney was considered in his mind, anyway, at the start of the war when he was selected to go over to England as the special observer. My own personal opinion is that the air force was more interested in getting Chaney away from the center of air force or air corps development under Arnold, just the same as they did with [Major] General [George Howard] Brett of the air corps that they sent to Australia and then over to Egypt. They had a way of getting--clearing the slate for themselves



under the tight control. Now maybe I'm disloyal to [Gen. Carl] Spaatz and [Gen. Ira Clarence] Eaker and Arnold and some of the others, and I'm not an air man myself, but I'm pro-Chaney, I guess. But I think that he was so highly regarded outside of the air corps at the beginning, and yet in the air corps itself they wanted to get him away.

BURG: In effect, a clique, an air corps clique, wanted to move him out of there.

BOLTE: That's right. Now I'm just talking about internal politics that I probably don't know anything about. But these were impressions that I had.

BURG: May I ask you, when did Virgil Peterson tell you this, about Chaney being possibly a replacement, or being considered a replacement?

BOLTE: After Chaney came back and Peterson had to make this inspection of the 1st Air Force when the complaints about Chaney-- and Peterson asking me questions about it, and so on, and said, "You know how he was regarded at the beginning of the war," and



so on, "as a replacement for General Marshall." That is high enough up for a top position of some kind.

BURG: So you were back in the states yourself at that time, late '42?

BOLTE: Late '42. I left there in July, I guess, of '42. I was only with General Eisenhower a matter of weeks. I don't know, six or eight weeks, something like that. And although he had told me I was coming back right away, but he said Bedell Smith can't come over right away because he's sick, and also he was trying to--Smith was supposed to orient Admiral [William Daniel] Leahy, who was now going to be chief of staff to President Roosevelt. And Bedell Smith had to give him an orientation, and so Ike said, "He can't come over, so you stay on for awhile." And I stayed on for awhile until it just appeared to him that we were just not on the same wave length, I guess, that's all. So one day he finally said, "Well, you better go along, too." And so I went, that's all there was to it. But he was very nice to me after the war; as I say, he nominated me for four stars when he was president, so I think



I got every--. But I just try to tell the story as I saw it at the time and from the experience that I had there. And I go back to what General Marshall said, "Study the first six months of the next [Last?] war," because this was one of the most chaotic periods, and the wonder is that we ever got on the tracks and got into it in time to go when we did.

BURG: All right, this closes an interview session, second interview session, with General Charles Bolte being conducted in the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D.C., on August 14, 1974. Present for the interview General Bolte and Dr. Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff. Thank you very much, general.



INTERVIEW WITH
General Charles Bolte

by

Dr. Maclyn Burg
Oral Historian

on

January 29, 1975

for

Dwight D. Eisenhower Library



This interview was conducted at the Army-Navy Club in Washington, D.C. on January 29th, 1975. Present for the interview were General Charles Bolte and Dr. Maclyn Burg of the Eisenhower Library staff.

DR. BURG: Well, it seems to be running again, so whatever that was--some momentary foul-up. I'll kind of keep an eye on it, so don't be disturbed if I lean forward from time to time.

GEN. BOLTE: Not a bit. You want to sit here?



DR. BURG: No, no. This is fine. When you and I were talking last--in fact, we were talking at lunch on my last trip to Washington--you had told me a little story about going with General Eisenhower to visit--would it have been Nancy Astor, Lady Astor? And you told me that the General knew that she loved to get gifts.

GEN. BOLTE: No--now this was not General Eisenhower. This was General Chaney.

DR. BURG: Oh, it was with Chaney.

BOLTE: Chaney, and he told me, "We're going to Cliveden and visit Lady Astor, and she does like to have somebody bring something." So he and I went down there and surely enough she met us at the door and said, "What have you brought me?" And he had a box with a cake in it of some kind--I've forgotten what the cake was--and we went on in and met the other people. I think [Maj. Gen. Joseph] Joe McNarney was there also. And George Bernard Shaw, and some others that I didn't know. And I think there was a kind of a tea, but I don't remember anything of any substance. And of course there was nothing to drink at all because she was an absolute teetotaler.

BURG: I see.



BOLTE: But later on in the afternoon--I think alone--she took me in a sort of a stroll through a little cemetery there at Cliveden and showed me that this was where those that were buried from the First War that had died there in the hospital. And I saw a 4th Division monument to a 4th Division man. And I said, "That was my outfit. I was in that 4th Division."

And she said, "You weren't in the First War." I said, "I certainly was. I was a captain." She said, "Well, you're very well preserved." I said, "Well, the same to you!" "Well," she said, "if I had seen Waldorf's father's will before we buried him, I'd had him stuffed and put in the Library." [Laughter] And that's my recollection of my visit to Cliveden on the thing.



BURG: She--General Eisenhower never met her, to your knowledge.

BOLTE: No. No. Now later, after General Eisenhower came over, there was a date to be kept at one of the hotels--I've forgotten--for tea, and I went instead of Ike to tea and just sat with her and had tea. I was his substitute, apparently. He very definitely either had planned ahead of time, or he developed the plan, that he was not going to divert himself from the job that he had to do there by what you might call social occasions or things like--maybe this was unimportant to him. I don't know.

BURG: I was going to ask you if he had differed from General Chaney in that respect.

BOLTE: Oh, definitely. General Chaney, I think, had a feeling of obligation, of social obligation, of doing things. He was not a society bud of any kind. But one of the first things that happened after General Eisenhower came over, within a matter of days, was the dedication of the American forces Red Cross Club, where there was going to be a dedication and a ceremony there and so on, and I guess I informed him--I don't know--and he didn't want to go but he went. And it was a real--sort of the dedication of the club, and quite a crowd there and all this sort of thing, and he had to make a speech. But he was literally red-faced about it and--

BURG: Oh, he was?

BOLTE: --I think he repressed his feelings, but I think he was angry as could-be that he had been literally sucked in to a thing that was insignificant compared with the thing that he had in his mind when he came over there that had to be done!

BURG: Yes. Was this fairly soon after he had come over?



BOLTE: Very shortly. Been a matter of days--

BURG: Yes. I see.



BOLTE: --and it was almost planned ahead of time, I guess. And I accepted it as his chief of staff as a sort of a thing that--this is the dedication of a club for American soldiers here, the Red Cross, and it was a routine kind of a thing. And I was amazed at his ire at having to go down to this show that he thought was--I think--thought was a waste of time. Because I'm sure, afterwards, that he came over imbued with the mission that had to be done, and to have these other things that diverted his effort or strength or anything else were anathema to him. I think he just--

BURG: Well, General Bolte, did he thereafter instruct you not to accept invitations of that kind?

BOLTE: He told me that he would only have military functions. That is, when he had to have the chiefs of staff or go to the chiefs of staff thing; he wanted no other diversions on the--

and here we, who had been there to course for a year or more, were sort of worked into the British living, social sort of a system. Whereas the people from Washington came over, I think with the true American spirit; we've got one thing we're going to do and we musn't be diverted from it. And I think those of us who had been there probably, in the minds of the newcomers, were criticized for having gotten into the doldrums of daily life, you might say, in London.



BURG: Now, General, did that create embarrassment for you?

It occurs to me that it could. You would naturally by then have friends among the British civilians, for example--

BOLTE: That is true and I felt that--well, I think there's a reference in, oh, the aide's book there, My Three Years With Eisenhower--the Navy--

BURG: Yes, Commander Butcher. Captain Butcher.

BOLTE: Butcher--who I think was a reference there to the fact that on Sunday, or something like that, that the chief of

staff wasn't there or something. Well, the headquarters was there and it operated all right. But we had accustomed ourselves to the British way of living. And yet, I think the people that came over from Washington were just rarin' to go, which is probably a very good thing. Because I remember when Ira Eaker came over to start the 8th Bomber Command, that later became the 8th Air Force. Ira was an old friend of mine and we had our usual--he came in my office and we-- "How do you do" and all this. And he sat down by me and he said--pounding the desk--he said, "I'll tell you one thing, Charlie. I'll never take an order from a Britisher!" Well it wasn't very long before he and [Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur] "Bomber" Harris, the head of the bomber command, were just like ham and eggs; I mean they got along beautifully together. But in hindsight, and I think even at the time, I got the feeling that these people, newcomers, had come from Washington with instructions, either definitely or impliedly, "Now don't go over there and get in the hands of the British and let them tell you what you're going to do. You go in there and--" We



felt that they were Americans coming in here just, "We're going to move in! Get out of the way! We'll take over this thing and we'll do it!" Which I think is a probably a typical American way of going into something.

BURG: Our attitude was "You've been running a pretty shabby war and now we're going to tidy things up." [Laughter]

BOLTE: Yes. And the British idea was, "You fellas have stood by here and let us hold the sack and now you come in here and move into our house, and want to push us out of the way." And it's a very difficult situation to overcome. That's why one of the very fine things that Ike did was to right away say, "When these soldiers go to a British home, are invited--as they will be--to come in there, I want them to take something from the mess. Take some butter or some meat or some eggs, or something like that, that are all in short supply--"

BURG: Right.

BOLTE: --and if I remember rightly, we in the staff probably

raised a little objection and said, "Well, how can you do this? I mean, the soldier can't go and take what he wants." "Well," he said, "that's what I want done." And it was a very fine thing because they did go into the British homes there and they carried along with 'em, maybe it's a chunk of cheese or maybe it was a piece of bacon, or something like that, and it helped. But he saw that, and whoever--if he thought it in his own mind--but I remember very well his telling me that. That he wanted that done. And so we went ahead and carried out what he wanted.

BURG: Right.



BOLTE: And I am not unconscious of the fact that I was in the position of a guy that had been there before, and I had my ideas, and when he told me one day that Admiral--begins with "H", [Admiral Henry Kent Hewitt] the Navy's senior commander, came over there to be his navy commander. I can't recall the names off hand--he said, "I want him to be put in the position of an equal--as a corps commander." Well, I had been indoctrinated

with the old Navy-Army board doctrine that you couldn't combine forces in that sense and I raised some little doubt about it there, but he said, "That's what I want done." And I issued an order that the Admiral was comparable to corps commanders. I didn't know at the time, but I found out later, that Admiral King had told Ike when he came over there-- and it's in writing and in his book and elsewhere--that as far as you're concerned, the Navy forces that are put over there on that thing are under your command as much as anything else. And I don't want to hear anything about doctrine of primary interests, or this or that, or cooperation--I want that understood. I didn't know that he'd told Ike that, you see, when he came over. But that, to my mind, was a marvelous lift to give him, to go over there and be sure that all the Army and Navy forces, and of course the Air--it was Army Air Corps then--were all under his command. A lot different than the situation in the Pacific with the Navy forces and the Army forces out there.

BURG: Precisely. Everything seemed to be divided.



BOLTE: Yeah. But written down--I'm not sure whether it's in his book or where it is--but the instructions for the-- he quotes, I think, Admiral King as telling him the Navy forces over there are under your command. Well, this is unique!

BURG: Especially coming from Admiral King.

BOLTE: Exactly.

BURG: And it was not expected.

BOLTE: Of course, I've got my tongue in my cheek because Admiral King was also looking at the Pacific on the other side. And what little bit of the Navy that was going to be given over here was--well, you might as well give it to Eisenhower as--

BURG: Give him two rowboats, because we're talking about massive fleets!

BOLTE: Yes! There's another side to it here. But that is a fact that that's what he gave him, and that must have been



a very great relief to Ike to know that. And that's when he told me, he said, "I want Admiral--"

BURG: Well, we'll find his name.

BOLTE: Yeah. "H"

BURG: Begins with H. [Hewitt]



BOLTE: --"to be put in the position as a corps commander," which Wayne Clark was going to be, of course, the II Corps commander, "and I want him to be the Navy equal and they get equal treatment," and so forth. Which was new to me, because I had been an instructor at the Army War College on joint army and navy operations which had for years been dictated to by the old antiquated system of primary interests and doctrine and all the rest of this thing. Neither one would be under the other, and cooperation, which is a terrible thing in my opinion--cooperation is fine but the old Army and Navy doctrine is obsolete. War taught us that--that you'd better, by gosh, put your troops together. It taught us

that in the Atlantic; I don't say that it did in the Pacific.

[Laughter]

BURG: Let me ask you this, General. Can you tell me, as you look back on it now, can you give me some examples of how your job changed when Eisenhower arrived? You'd been chief of staff to Chaney and now you are chief of staff for a period of time to Eisenhower. What differences now stand out in your mind about your own job?



BOLTE: Yes. Immediately, you see, there came over with Ike, [Colonel?] Lowell [M.] Riley, [Colonel Claude B.] Buddy Ferenbaugh, Wayne Clark--no Wayne wasn't, yes, I guess he was on that trip-- and some others, and they shortly proceeded to set up in Norfolk House another headquarters. This was after the decision was made to go into North Africa, you see. Because when Ike first came over he was all imbued with the idea that we're going to cross the Channel just as fast as we can.

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: And even to this day, when you read into Forrest Pogue's account of General Marshall, and also into General Eisenhower's papers, they were convinced in 1942 that we were going to cross the Channel. Well, in '42, it's absurd! I mean there was no more chance than the man in the world! You couldn't support any air from there, except at just the Pas de Calais, a little bitty place there for a few minutes. A landing was--even Mountbatten's raids at Dieppe, and so on, were a flash in the pan. And to talk about--as General Marshall was still talking about it after the war--that we should have figured on going across the Channel in '42 or '43. Well we couldn't until '44. So this change took place and of course there was a period of days, weeks, that went by before it finally filtered down to Ike and others that we're not going to cross the Channel now. We're going to build up this force, but we're going to go in to North Africa first. And he said to me, "I'm in the position of a man who's got to go and carry out an operation that I didn't believe in and that I recommended against!"

BURG: That is TORCH.



BOLTE: That's TORCH, going into North Africa.

BURG: Yeah. Yeah.



BOLTE: So everything had to be switched. And this headquarters was set up then in Norfolk House and the, if you want to call 'em, theater staff--me and the others that were around with me, Dahlquist and the G-4 and so on--began to die on the vine, you might say. And in the meantime the logistics set-up had developed under John C.H. Lee, who came over before Ike while Chaney was still there, apparently with instructions from Washington to just take over and build up the logistics set-up there, and almost ignored Chaney on the thing, and his staff. And Lee began to proceed to deal with the British and build up a theater staff there with quartermaster, engineer and all the rest of 'em, and I felt with the few that had come over originally there--there was a G-1, 2, 3, 4 and a planner and an engineer, and ordnance, signal, and medical, and so on--we, the little handful, where do we stand on this thing? And I went into to Ike and I said, "I don't understand this." He said, "I want

you to--I'm tired of having my name as the only one here in the public papers and I want you to see to it that Clark"--who was then the embryo II Corps down at Salisbury--" and John C. Lee"--who as I say, had preceeded Eisenhower and was setting up his SOS Headquarters--"and the Air Force"--under Eaker at the time and then Spaatz came at this time--"and have them have some publicity on the thing." And I said, "Well, I don't quite understand Clark's position. He's commanding the II Corps." And I said, "He's got two seniors to him there." One was [Major General Russell P.] Scrappy Hartle in Northern Ireland who commanded the only troops we had there, which was about 40,000 troops of the 1st Armored Division and the 34th Division. and [Major General Charles H.] Bonesteel up in Iceland. Well he said, "Clark is my senior ground force advisor." Well I don't know what a senior ground force advisor was, but pretty soon I began to realize that Clark was, in effect, either superceding me as chief of staff, or as a deputy to Eisenhower was giving me instructions as chief of staff. Among them, he came out to me one day and he said, "I want you to send this message to [Major General] Terry [de la M.] Allen in New York," who was commanding then the 1st Division,



which was going to come over. And it instructed Terry Allen to put his bedding rolls and his rolling kitchens on the upper decks because they're going to march from their debarkation point to their camping place, which was going to be Salisbury Plain. And I said to Wayne Clark, "Has this been cleared with the British?" Well he said, "You go ahead and send it, that's all." So I gathered he was speaking for Eisenhower, coming out of Ike's office to me as the chief of staff and giving me this. So I sent the message. And the next thing, he came in the next day and told me, "I want that ship to be brought in to Bristol because they're going to march to Salisbury Plain." Well I said, "This has got to be cleared with the British." And I sent for Griner, the G-4, and Griner said, "I'm not going to even clear it with the British." he said, "They're coming over on the Queen Mary." And I said, "The Queen Mary goes in up at the Clyde, and they're not going to bring it down the Irish Sea and lose a day and a half each way and bring it 500 miles closer to the German air over in France--"

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: "--and besides," he said, "It can't come into Bristol because there isn't enough water!" So I went into Eisenhower's office, and fortunately Lee was in there, the logistics commander, and I said, "It can't be did." And Ike flushed up and so on, but Lee backed me up. He said, "No, you can't bring the 1st Division into Bristol down here in the lower part of the Irish Sea. It's going to come in up there in the Clyde where all the stuff was coming in." So this kind of stuff was going on, you see, and frankly I didn't know where I stood and who did what. And it just had to wind up that we had to dissolve the remnants of this original group that had gone over there and I was the first, I guess, to come home. And I no sooner got back to Washington than I went into--when I could--to General McNair and I said, "You got two people over there"--that's Dahlquist who was G-1 and Griner who was the G-4--and I said, "They were brought over--" and they finally got divisions in the war, later, and the Air Force fella--of course, the Air Force, Air Corps, was taking care of itself on the thing. Matejka stayed on, the signal officer, because he had set up the communications and he went to North Africa, but he eventually left the Theater, I think.



The doctors stayed on all the way through, I think. But this is the natural take-over of the new people that came in and they were imbued with the ideas in Washington, what had been on and the plans that were--the only fault was that Washington was not keeping Chaney and his staff informed of what was going on. We were in the dark. We just didn't know. So--

BURG: One of the major things that happened to you, really, was that you ran headlong and quite naturally into a team which had been formed in Washington--

BOLTE: Formed in Washington to come over and win this war--

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: --that's all.

BURG: Yes. Those of you who were there, without anyone's real intent, were out of that pattern.

BOLTE: That's right. We just didn't fit into it, that's all.

BURG: Yes. Yes.

BOLTE: And even Kay Summersby speaks in her book, you know, of that little group of Americans that had been over here and "too many liquid lunches"--that's the phrase she uses there on the thing--that we were in the backwater, you see. No--

BURG: In Claridges every noon for a two hour lunch and martinis.

BOLTE: Yeah, but the British, the British did. They knocked off at noon, but boy, they worked up until midnight. I mean their hours were entirely different than ours. They started late in the morning. They had a break at the period in the middle of the day and then they came back to work and worked up until midnight. I guess old Churchill piped the tune for them on it--he kept absurd hours--

BURG: Yes, definitely. Yes he did.

BOLTE: --but I remember George Griner saying, "Well, it gets to be five o'clock at the end of the day, I've finished my work." And that's all--he was the G-4 of the thing. And of course there wasn't much to do. I mean you were feeling your way here without



any great amount of information. And yet, I think, and I honestly think, that that small group that went over there, called SPOBS, which was the embryo that developed into the headquarters of the theater, did enough in that--we'll say a year--to gain four to six months at the end of the war, by the reconnaissances that were made of the air fields and the depots, and Northern Ireland and Iceland, and the steps that were taken by that little group of associated--nobody knows what it may have meant, with the buzz bombs coming on in the last few months of the war there.

BURG: Yes. So your feeling was that there was ground work--

BOLTE: There was work--no doubt about it. The fields, the reconnanissances that were made there, the trips back and forth to get the troops; first the Marines and then the troops up into Iceland, and then the division to come into Northern Ireland, and the 8 or 10 Air Corps fields that developed in Huntingtongshire District, and the depots at Loch Erne, I mean, no--Loch Neagh--over in Northern Ireland and the Burtonwood over in England. All these things were done ahead of time. Let us take, for instance,



the question of jurisdiction, which now is presumably solved by the status of forces, grievance, or whatever we have around the world. Here we are contemplating the first American soldiers to come over and be stationed in the British Isles. Well, the Britisher said, in effect, to our people, "Well, we have a visiting Force Act here in England for those forces that are visiting here, you might say, in the British Isles." Whereupon my colleague on the staff says, "Do I understand that you're going to consider the forces of the United States in the same category as these refugee governments that you've got here? The Poles, and the Dutch, and the--because it's a far different kind of a thing." Our contention was that the control of the American forces so far as legality is concerned, rests in the Constitution of the United States and the laws of Congress, and not-- Well, yes, but to a Britisher in his club down here to have anything other than His Majesty's government on the thing--and so we began to work on this thing with the British. Now the War Office said, "We don't care. I mean you can nail anything you want on this thing." But over almost a year, finally, there was passed by the Parliament the American Forces Act, and they



told me that before working on this thing, "Why we'll concede jurisdiction over everything except murder, manslaughter and rape." And those are the--I said, "You can't concede anything. These people are under the laws of the United States." Well they finally passed an act there on the thing, and by god, the first two cases that came up as I recollect--one was a soldier, court-martialed in an American court for raping a 16 year old girl in a shelter, dugout shelter, and he was acquitted. And he was acquitted partly on the basis that, while she scratched his face, she'd gone up to the farm house and gotten some bandages and some stuff to cover his face and fix him all up in the thing. And it turned out--well, anyway he was acquitted. And the next case, if I am not mistaken--and this ought to be checked on--was over in Northern Ireland when General Marshall was on his visit over there and was in a British car and being followed by an American army jeep with a sergeant. And an Irish bus with no passengers cut in between the jeep and General Marshall's car, going across Northern Ireland. And the American sergeant in the jeep fell against the machine gun and it went off and killed the driver of the Irish bus. We had a



court-martial. We had to have a change of venue. And the sergeant was acquitted on the thing. But you can imagine to have the first two cases that came up with American jurisdiction, what kind of a system were we trying to run on this thing. But, of course, the British were--"Let's do anything to get these guys in here and get this show on the road."

BURG: Even though it violated all their traditional ways--

BOLTE: All their tradition, yeah. I can imagine the old Britisher sitting in his club and having the idea that anybody is going to have anything to say about this other than the "bobby" on the street, and so on. Well these are all the birth pangs of this early group over there and what they accomplished, and I'm sure they accomplished a lot and some of it has been written up in some of the green books there.

BURG: The official Army history.



BOLTE: The official Army history on the thing.

BURG: Let me ask you, when you were relieved and you came back to the United States, who was it that announced that decision to you, General? Who told you?

BOLTE: I saw the message that General Eisenhower sent back and said, "I am sending Bolte and Case--" Case was the G-2 of this group --and this is really what precipitated it, I guess, because Ike had told me the day after he landed, when he got there and I met him at Norfolk, and he told me the next day, he said, "You're going home and you're going back into the chain of division command and Beedle Smith is going to come over here. But Beedle isn't well, and also Admiral Leahy has got a job that Beedle has to [do]?, so you stay on for awhile." He told me that. But these things began to build up then, as I say, and I began to realize that we were done, that's all. And so he told me one day--see, Bob McClure had, I'll say, wangled himself--Bob's dead now, God rest his soul--wangled himself a job as assistant attache at the embassy--

BURG: With John Winant.

BOLTE: Yes, Bob had been out on the Fourth Army staff, I think, in San Francisco. But he wanted to get into this so he came over to be assistant attache, and apparently there had been something back and forth about it on the consolidation of the attache's office with the headquarters. And Ike said to me one morning,



"I want McClure over here as G-2." And I said, "Well, what are you going to do about Case?" Now Colonel Case was the G-2 of this little group that went over there and he, I'll say, sacrificed any chance to go home or do anything toward advancement to do his G-2 duty. "Well, I don't know Case, I know McClure and I want McClure over here." This was on a Friday. And Monday he said, "Where's McClure?" And I said, "Well, I think he's closing up the attache's office." "I don't give a goddamn, I want him over here!" So I called up McClure and I said, "You get over here and get over here fast." So then a couple of days later I--poor old Homer here was--with McClure coming over from assistant attache to be G-2 of the theater, what happens to Case? I asked Ike and I said, "What are you going to do about Case?" "Well, I don't know. I hadn't thought about it. He ought to go home, and you ought to go, too." And that was my dismissal. Then he sent a message back that "I'm sending Bolte and Case home and recommend them for"--I don't remember, command, something like that. And I--

[Interruption]

--and these are my, my--



BURG: Well, it's all very useful. Useful indeed.

BOLTE: So, I don't know. I came back, and I went in and I thought I'd see General Marshall. I thought, here, I came to be--direct from Eisenhower and the theater back to Washington, and no--I don't know whether George Marshall ever saw--I suppose he knew I was coming back, anyway. But we were just little bugs. I mean there were bigger things going on.

BURG: Your orders were to report here in Washington, through the War Department?

BOLTE: I was--yeah. Yeah, I reported back to, I guess the War Plans Division, because I saw--oh, what's his name?

something--and so for a few days-- [Brig. Gen. Charles Gailey]

BURG: It wasn't Hull or Handy?

BOLTE: No, it wasn't. No. But I did see McNarney, because I went in to plug for a DSM for General Chaney. See, I thought that he had been, really, very cavalierly treated on the thing. I thought it was too bad. I mean, really, when I go back to the, the morning I went in to see General Chaney with some



papers there and sat at the desk, and I thought he looked badly, and he leaned back and said, "Well, I'm being relieved, you know." Well, I didn't know. You could have hit me between the eyes on the thing. And I stumbled around and said, "Well, whenever you want me, or I'll go with you, or do whatever you want," sort of a thing. He'd brought me to be his chief of staff. Then I saw the message from General Marshall which said that "we've decided that"--well, it's all in the record there--"that we have to have somebody over in London who is better acquainted with our plans there and so--

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: --I'm sending General Eisenhower over and you can leave whenever you want to." Well, this is kind of a cavalier thing. So he went and packed his trunk over at the Dorchester Hotel and I said, "General you can't walk out of here without saying good-bye to the joint chiefs of staff, the British chiefs."

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: I mean, he was hurt, of course, and his orders were to go back and report in and so he said, "Well, I'll go and see



Portal," Chief of the Air Staff, who was a friend of his, which he did. And then I went out with him to, not Northholt but the other airport there, and it so happened that King Peter of--what was it?--

BURG: Was it Yugoslavia?

BOLTE: --Yugoslavia, was going home, or coming over to the States, on the same plane and so Chaney kind of slipped in, went back on. And I--well I saw him afterwards in Washington in the years subsequent, and I saw some correspondence that-- he never said very much to me about it but he had--apparently General Marshall wouldn't see him, and he did get into see Mr. Patterson, the secretary--or Mr. Stimson, I mean--and Stimson said, "I'm sorry, I can't interfere with general officers on the thing." And Chaney's orders were to go back to Mitchell Field, Long Island, to command the 1st Air Force, which is where he'd come from when he went over to--

BURG: Correct.

BOLTE: --and apparently Hap Arnold was just on his trail. And



Hap Arnold had made a visit up there to that Air Force area shortly thereafter and I understood that he'd asked one lieutenant, "When did you see the commanding general last?" Well, he'd never seen him. "When did you last fly?" Well, the kids hadn't been there two days and they hadn't flown, so Arnold tried to get Chaney busted. But he was moved to Sheppard Field in Texas and commanded as a major general and then he went up to Denver and commanded the base up in Denver, and he wound up the war as a base commander in Okinawa. But he never was reduced in rank. So I thought he was very cavalierly treated by the Air Corps. But he didn't belong to the clique; he didn't belong to the club, that's all. And so they just threw him out on the dust heap.

BURG: So you were trying to get a DSM for him when you got back here?

BOLTE: I tried--yes, and I went and I did see McNarney about it and he did get a DSM as a result. And then I went and sat by a desk down in the War Plans Division, planning division there, until finally I got--after about a week, I felt they



have seen Ike's message, because I'd walk around the corridors and I could tell, they'd dodge around the corner. At least, I felt that way--that they... And I thought that George Marshall, who knew me personally, would have wanted to know something fresh from London; could I tell him anything, or something like that. But no, he was too busy, I guess. So pretty soon, in about two days, I got the instructions that I'm to report to General McNair, who was commanding the ground forces. And McNair said, "Come in and sit down." He said, "I have you in line for a division command. I'm taking 'em along in seniority here and so you're going to go as an assistant division commander." And then I came back into the line, the chain of command, and got my division and all the rest of it and got back into the run of things as a commander, which I must say was a lot happier for me than to be a staff man.

BURG: Well, is it safe to say, General, that while you were here in Washington, before you went off to become an assistant division commander, that no one discussed your London experiences with you?



BOLTE: Yeah. Nobody wanted to hear me. Nobody wanted to do anything about it, no. No.

BURG: It was never brought up.

BOLTE: Huh-uh. No.

BURG: Not even among the officers of your own rank? None of your friends who might have been here discussed it with you?

BOLTE: No, no, no, no. I felt as if I were shunned. I mean I'd been sent home, that's all. I've forgotten the wording of the message but it was something like that. "I'm sending Bolte and Case home as I don't have any place for them--" which I think is a thing to kind of say"--and recommend them for command duty", or something like that. I don't remember.

BURG: So that--

BOLTE: I mean, I'm sure that Ike just was thinking this is just incidental, this is trivia. Wasn't making any great point about it at all. But--

BURG: McNair didn't say a word about it either.



BOLTE: No, nothing. He said, "You've been sent down to me." He said, "You're in line for command and I pick 'em according to seniority. That is, there are others ahead of you." But there was nothing at all about any opprobrium attached to any of this and, of course, after I look back at it, I see that this was inevitable. I mean, this was an excrescence that now had lost its position in the scheme of things and it was--

BURG: Yes.

BOLTE: --it was inevitable. It had to be about--and the new group, and this is Clark, of course, and Gruenther and Lowell Riley. You might--[^]Buddy Ferenbaugh might be able to tell you something about it. I don't know whether you've ever talked to him about it.

BURG: No.

BOLTE: He came over on the plane with Ike and these others that I've mentioned and got off at Northholt and I went out to meet them there, and it was very amusing because here was Ike coming over, major general to take over from a major general. Well,



this wasn't very much; there weren't American troops or anything else very much at this time. And there to meet him was a brigadier from the War Office and an air marshal, or air vice marshal, or something, from the air ministry, and a commander or rear admiral, something, from the Admiralty. Three of them. And Mountbatten. And when we went into London, in the car was Ike and me and Mountbatten, see? And the other three services, I could see the look on their faces. They were saying, "Well, the bastard came in and took over this thing." Because he had been commissioned an air commodore, a vice marshal and a lieutenant general.

BURG: Mountbatten was?

BOLTE: All three of 'em. Yeah. And so he came in in the car and I remember the conversation on the way in. Ike had met him and knew him before, of course, and Mountbatten said, well, his ambition this war was to command a big Navy ship. That's what he wanted to do.

BURG: Yes. Yeah.



BOLTE: I mean, he was very, very modest about it. Talking to Ike about it and they were just chatting about this and so on. And I just remember the look on the faces of those three orthodox services there when they saw Mountbatten just preempt him and--

BURG: Yes. The man from combined operations--[Laughter]

BOLTE: Yes. Combined ops, you see.

BURG: Uh-huh. A little bit of nothing.

BOLTE: Yeah. So it was--

BURG: Now when you were assigned as assistant division commander, what division was that?

BOLTE: Well, I went to the 91st Division. But first, when McNair told me, I was to go to the 76th Division, which was then stationed at Ft. Meade. Bill Gallagher's father-in-law, Maj. Gen. William R. Schmidt, had it there and I was to go and be number two. But in the ensuing two or three days, or something like that, I was suddenly switched to the 91st Division



out at Camp White, Oregon, which was forming there under [Major General Charles H.] Charlie Gerhardt. And that was an experience, a separate experience, I can assure you.

BURG: Because of the personality of General Gerhardt?

BOLTE: Yeah. Who was a fine little feisty guy, but had no more business commanding a big division then or since, but was selected by General Marshall because of some dashing cavalry thing he did in the Louisiana Maneuvers, and jumped up to brigadier general over the heads of Clark and others. And I went out there to the 91st Division, which hadn't even formed; this was just nothing but the cadre.

BURG: Yes.



BOLTE: And I learned later that, of course, there were-- through the radio that I was coming over to take over and all this kind of thing, which Charlie must have heard. But I had gone to the motor transport school as a preliminary to this along with others, including Perc Clarkson, who had been the assistant division commander before me and who was now going to get a division.

BURG: Is that P-e-r-k?

BOLTE: "Perc", Percy Clarkson.

BURG: Oh, Percy Clarkson.

BOLTE: Percy Clarkson, yeah. And at the Holabird Motor School, "Perc" told me about this cadre of this division under Charlie at White. And he said--Stanley Ott was the artillery commander--there was Clarkson, and Stanley Ott, and then Charlie Gerhardt, the commander. And they had a run-in a few days before in which Charlie had announced that all of the officers of the cadre together--some hundred officers I guess--had announced that he was going to have loyalty, by god, and that's all there was to it, and he said to his chief of staff, "And don't you hide behind my skirts, either. You're going to come in on this thing." So Clarkson talking to Ott, telling me about it afterwards, he said, "I said to Stanley Ott, 'I've got to go in and talk to him about this thing because this is no way to do.'" And he said, "You won't believe it but Stanley Ott said to me, 'Perc, don't you go in there to him tonight. He's got a loaded .45 on his hip.'"



BURG: Gee whiz!

BOLTE: This is the division commander, this is Perc Clarkson at the motor school telling me what I was coming out to go into.

BURG: You're going to be number two to that!



BOLTE: Well, I had known Charlie, casually. He had commanded a cavalry squadron in the exercise defending Monterey Bay in the winter before, in a landing from the north. And he had done it in such a silly damn way; I mean, he'd acted as a cavalry commander and--a major he was then--and I was assigned as a junior umpire. And I'm damned if where--the landing was in the bay and then they had to make a six mile march, administratively, to get onto the Ft. Ord reservation through the civilian community, you see. The troops had to come up the road. Charlie with his squadron of cavalry was parked in the woods by the side of the road to come out and--can you imagine? in a maneuver? An exercise. Suspended here for the time being until we get 'em back on the reservation, then we'll line 'em up on the thing. And Joe Collins told me, he said, "Well I found one of Charlie's

troops there and he was jumping out with a gun, and he had two sedans and a truck there that he'd captured already." Well, this is Indian fighting, see. So after about two or three weeks with that experience with Charlie, I told my wife, who came out there, I said, "Benny, I hope I never go to war under this fella." I said, "He cannot command a big outfit. I know that now and I've been an instructor and all the rest of it," and I said, "You can't tell...." Well, that's the last I saw of him until after the war, but my two friends who commanded corps--you see he was taken away from--I don't mean to malign anybody on this, but this is all fact anyway. He was taken, of course, by Marshall and taken away from the 91st and given the 29th Division, which landed on Omaha Beach and went on up into the fight. My two corps commander friends, [Maj. Gen. Manton S.] Eddy and [Maj. Gen. Gilbert Richard] Doc Cook, both of whom are dead now, they said, "We corps commanders--" including Major General Raymond McLain-- "said during the war up there, Charlie Gerhardt commands a corps. Three divisions; one in the line, one in the hospital, and one under the sod." Isn't that an awful comment to make of a man



who is put in command of a division, with eligibility for higher command? We couldn't do it. All he knew was toujours attaque. Well, he lives down in Florida now. He's retired. But of course he was busted after the war. He was down at the bottom of the list and was reduced to Colonel and went into the Second Army staff at Ft. Meade, but he had his stars restored when he was put on the retired list. He lives down in Florida. He stepped out too close to the flagpole in Brazil and they sent him home. So, he's injudicious. I like the little guy; he's a feister, and he's a wonderful shot and a wonderful tennis player and badminton, and all the rest of it, but--

BURG: Wasted his men.



BOLTE: I'm glad--yeah--I'm glad I didn't go to war with him. I started out--very shortly after I got there at Camp White, Oregon, which is up in the mountains--and fortunately, I just started in a jeep to go around and to acquaint myself with the countryside. I couldn't ride in the sedan; he wouldn't allow that. You either rode in the jeep or a horse or a bicycle. He had extreme views as to what you should do so he--I hadn't

been there but--well, I'll tell you. The day after I reported from--now, I had been chief of staff in London for a year and a half, and I reported in to Charlie and I said-- I know some of this background--and I said, "Well, I'm your man; whatever you say." I disarmed him and I went in and sat down at my desk, and the G-3 came in, Bill Bartlett. He said, "You ready to take the Division Commander's Test?" I said, "What?" "Everybody joins the Division, doesn't matter whether he's a General or a Private, takes this test." I said, "Well, what is it?" He said, "Five questions." "Well, what are they?" "Well, here they are. You got twenty minutes," or something like that. The first one was: What are the essentials of a combat order? Well, I'd taught combat orders, I thought I could put that down. I wrote something. The second: Describe "stack arms." Christ almighty!

BURG: You mean the manual of arms maneuver to stack arms?

BOLTE: Yes! This is the question--describe stack arms. The next was: Describe "change step, march." That's when you advance left to left foot.



BURG: Yes. Yes.

BOLTE: The next was: Describe the resuscitation of a man from drowning. Well, by this time, I was beside myself. At my desk alone in this barracks shack here with this thing; come a brigadier general from London to join this fella, and this is what was thrown in my lap. I've forgotten the 5th question--there were five. And I wrote and scribbled. I must have--I don't suppose anybody could understand any of it. And I took it and put it into the basket on Charlie Gerhardt's desk. He was away. I got it back the next day marked "98". He cut me two points on combat orders. Now if you can imagine the absurdity--

BURG: That's --

BOLTE: --of a man at my age--it was then 45 years old or something--coming into this kind of a thing. I don't know. I--"the boy must be crazy." I don't think he was crazy, but I think he was just completely off the beam. I mean he was a-- he could make a dashing Indian fighter or something like that, but to ever have put him up in that position. Anyhow, that was



my experience with him and I want to tell you, I--[Laughter]

BURG: So you had a fairly brief time with him--

BOLTE: About five months, I guess it was.

BURG: Then you got your own division.

BOLTE: Then I got a phone call. I was down in Texas, I guess, and visiting the Tank--Development [Fort Hood], or whatever they call those things--and I got a phone call to call Washington and I called Washington and [Brig. Gen. Floyd L.] Parks answered the phone, who was McNair's chief of staff, and he said, "You're going to get the 69th Division, to start it and train it down in Shelby, Mississippi. And you're lucky, I'm your number two." And I said, "Who is that?" He said, "Parks." I said, "Do I know him?" He said, "Me!" [Laughter] So he came down to be my assistant division commander and we activated this 69th Division up in--oh, for a year, year and a quarter--and then I was all of a sudden snatched and sent over to Italy to take over the 34th when [Maj. Gen. Charles W.] Ryder was leaving it to come back home.



BURG: Now when would that have been?

BOLTE: That was the summer of '44.

BURG: Summer of '44.

BOLTE: Yeah. June of '44. And I'd had the 69th for about a year, and I'd trained them and I had 'em--and I thought--

[Phone call]

BURG: Whoops.

BOLTE: I'm taking too much now of your time, we've got all kinds of--

[Interruption]

BOLTE: I've really run on here, Mac, I--

BURG: No, no, you have not.

BOLTE: I don't know that I've ever added very much, but I've told you the--



BURG: Well, you've cleared up areas that we knew almost nothing about, General.

BOLTE: Well, that's always the way it is. I mean, you get--unless those things are recorded somewhere, and they're not. And I never have wanted--the family have always said, "Why don't you write?" Well, I said, "I'm not going to do it. I can't..."

BURG: Well, I was going to ask you this in the balance of our time. Leaving the 69th, having trained it, schooled it as you did, must have been a great blow to you.

BOLTE: It was a heartbreak, heartbreak. But, of course, it wasn't--it had been raped, of course, like a number of other divisions. When Eisenhower put in requests for a 120 day's replacements, before he went across the Channel, see. He asked for 120 day's replacements.

BURG: That was based on the estimates of your losses.

BOLTE: Yeah, they cut him down, I think, to 90 or 60, I'm not sure what. But they raped about, I'll say 20 divisions of



the--mostly what was left in the States, because I lost in the 69th, I think, about 10,000 men and about a 1,000 officers.

BURG: Say two-thirds of the division.

BOLTE: At a point when I had just finished the D Series and they were ready to go.

BURG: Um-hum.

BOLTE: And General Marshall had come down to make one of his frequent trips through there, and I had said at dinner, I said, "Are we going to get our chance?" And he didn't answer me then. We went on and so on, and before he left on the plane the next day at noon, he said, "You'll get your chance." And that's the last I saw of him.

BURG: But not with the 69th.

BOLTE: No. And then, all of a sudden, I got a secret order-- don't say anything to anybody or anything, just come to Washington. And then I got ready for extended service overseas and I--



BURG: Who had sent you that order?

BOLTE: I can't remember.

BURG: It was not by telephone call?

BOLTE: I think it was. I think it was, because I was not allowed to tell anybody or anything about it. I just left. I guess--I don't--I didn't even tell my chief of staff, I guess. I just, I just bowed out and went to--and my number two took over. I guess I told Parks, "I'm ordered to Washington," or, "I gotta go to Washington," or something like that. But there was no record of it, or anything as to what I was going to do, or anything except that I was told to be ready for extended overseas service. I guess it was on the phone because now I can remember. I said, "What am I going to do?" And they said, well, something that gave me an idea of the Mediterranean or Italy, or something like that. And then I said--they made some reference to Doc Ryder, not by name, but--who had the division, whom I knew, I'd served with him. So I knew then that I was going over and take the 34th Division from Doc Ryder before I left Shelby, Mississippi.



BURG: Was the 34th, at that point, a problem division in any way?

BOLTE: Yes. Yes. And it is in the records. The 34th, of course, was the first division to go overseas to Northern Ireland. Before it had even finished its training in the Louisiana Maneuvers it was the first division to go over there. And it went into Northern Ireland and all this [sounds like turberburly?] and it was having a period of training and trying to do things, and finally it was to be designated to go into North Africa. And the job was to get rid of the old fellows and get the new ones, and [Maj. Gen. Russel P.] Scrappy Hartle was sent out, and Doc Ryder took it over, and they began to prune it down to go into North Africa. Well, when it went in, of course, it went in in these odd places, and it had a hell of a time at Algiers. And it went into that first fight and it lost a battalion, I think. And I don't think it covered itself with glory until towards the tail end, when it took that Hill 609, or whatever it was, which was a marvelous job that it did and it restored itself in the minds of some people. But I don't think it ever recovered its reputation, .



and of course after Africa, it sent into Italy and it was up on the Garigliano and the Rapido and Cassino, and it was a very terrible period and it got a reputation of--as the 1st Division did, of course. The 1st Division did when Terry Allen and [Brig. Gen. Theodore] Roosevelt [Jr.] had it and they thought, like the 34th after North Africa, "Well we've done our bit now. Let somebody else do it; we ought to go home." And they began to build up this feeling and people back home--and I remember "Bring the 34th home." And when--oh, the Ambassador, what's her name?

BURG: Not Clare Booth Luce?



BOLTE: Clare Booth Luce came over and she came up to visit the 34th Division, which was up in the mountains in the Apennines there, Christmas of 1944, and I had word from the Army that she want to go and visit the front line. And I told the Army Commander, [Lt. Gen. Lucian K.] Truscott then over the phone, I said, "I will not take her to the front line." I said, "I will go up to one of the right regiments, which we can do behind the hill; you and I and she and nobody else, because," I said, "they'll shoot at you against the snow." She came up in the jeep with Truscott and had Christmas lunch with me there and she said,

"How far am I from the front line?" I said, "You're about 800 yards from the front line." In fact, I said, "You stay here." Well she had lunch and so on. I remember that because after lunch, I said, "I guess somebody ought to be kind of finding a place for you to go." And she said, "Yes, don't you have some place?" [Laughter] Well the regimental commander had had his little box put out, and some tent around it, so I said, "Well I'll come up and stand guard. There is a little place out here." So I stood guard while these soldiers were coming down saying something about "...this mother-fuckin' war!" Ooh, God!! [Laughter] But she'd asked for it anyway. And she was the only member of that committee of Congress that went up there. Well then she went back and started, "Bring the 34th home." And I began to run into this trouble with my men, "We've been over here." Well cripes! They were new! So when she came back in the spring, in April, to visit the 8th Army, the British Army, and came over to my place again and said, "How are your men doing?" I said, "You are hurting the name of a very fine combat division here by this business about getting the 34th home, and I'm getting letters, and the men, and--".



Well, she said, "Well you're in for your 500th day of combat, aren't you?" I said, "I'm not! I haven't been here 8 months!" And I said, "My infantry hasn't been here anywhere near that. They don't last that long." "Well, what's the answer?" I said, "I'll get a man out after a year in the line, but you gotta give me replacements, and don't get this business home." I said, "These men, some of 'em, haven't been here two, three months. But they've all got the idea, "the 34th oughta go home!" I said, "Nuts!" So she went back and changed her tune then; bring individuals, yes, after they have spent this period. Then, as I said before, when I went up to Germany right after the war was ended--I took a plane up--and I wanted to see Ike. I hadn't seen him since I left London. As I say, I stayed the night with [Maj. Gen. ?] Ben [M.] Sawbridge, who was G-1 there, and I said, "I just am worried. I don't know how Ike--". He said, "Oh, you don't need to worry about that." He said, "He wanted another division from Italy, you know. But he said, 'I've [been] given that goddamned 34th Division. Charlie Bolte's done a damned good job with it, but; he said, 'I don't want it.'" So he said, "You don't need to worry about Ike." He said, "As far as you're concerned." So I felt, well, I'd regained a



little bit then. But I had felt, of course, naturally--I had left London, I felt, with my tail between my legs; I mean, I was going home from a--I wasn't needed there anymore. Well, that's just what happened, that's all. And so--

BURG: So at that time, sometime after May of 1945, was the first opportunity you'd had to find out how you stood with Eisenhower.

BOLTE: Yes, that's the first reassurance I had.



BURG: Uh-huh.

BOLTE: Then, as I told you, I came back here and went into Plans, War Plans, and then Jake picked me up as a chief of staff and--

BURG: That's General Devers.

BOLTE: Devers--and then I wasn't quite sure about how that was. But, as I say, Jackie told me, he said, "He's got you--he said to me, 'I don't know why I'd do a thing like that.'" Which was referring back to when he sent me home, see, something like that.

BURG: Oh, Eisenhower had said that to Devers?

BOLTE: To Devers, and Devers told me. He said, "Shut the door." Because I told him, I said, "I don't know if this was a very wise idea for you to take me in here on this thing." He said, "Oh, well, you don't need to worry about him." He said, "This is what he told me. He said, "I don't know why--." And then Joe Collins, who had been taken up to be the chief of information for Ike, told me, he said, "He's got you on every important list that he's got there, so you don't need to worry about that." So I felt better about it, and of course as I say, he nominated me for my fourth star here, and he was cordial, as he and Mamie were to us at the occasions at the White House, and so on. And when he came down to his--although this is just the other way. When he came down to Ft. Monroe, when John was going to marry Barbara there, and Jackie was commanding at Monroe, you see. And I was his chief of staff, or deputy, and Ike, as Chief of Staff, was going to come down to the wedding. But he either hadn't been invited or he wasn't going to go and stay with the



Devers, who lived on the post, which is the normal thing you would have thought. He was going to go to the Chamberlain Hotel. And I went out to meet him out at Langley Field when he landed. He said he was coming down not as Chief of Staff, but as the father of the groom. So I went out to meet him and whereupon he said, "Hello [Maj. Gen. Paul W.] Baade." [Laughter] He had me mixed up with Paul Baade then so I began to feel, well, doesn't matter. So we rode back in the car together, and I had fortunately gone out ahead of time because I knew that he didn't want these outriders or motorcycles or cars on there. He wanted to come in and go to the Chamberlain, which he did. In the meantime, I was making all the arrangements. Jakie said, "You fix up the wedding." So I fixed all the arrangements for the wedding and I put [in] some comfort stations. I didn't know whether there was going to be a crowd there for the army chief of staff. But there really wasn't. But I had some comfort stations and "I want the doctor in his office at the hospital, because I know something's going to happen and I don't want to have to run around." So we had the wedding in the Chapel of the Centurian, and then we went out to the Beach Club for the reception and--

