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Victory in Europe

Service in the Post-War World

By Ralph Hauenstein

For me, one of the pinnacle events of my life is the day that Germany surrendered to the Allied forces -- it was one of both satisfaction and jubilation! However, with the German surrender, we almost immediately were faced with the problem of transferring troops to the Pacific Theater. One of our main concerns was the possibility of real discontent among the troops selected to be transferred; having "won" their part of the war, would they object to entering another? We were all very proud of the troops, who had no real problem with this issue; this was war, and let's get it over in a hurry. The training of our troops was so complete that they understood and accepted.



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Shortly after hostilities ended, officers of the general staff of SHAEF and ETOUSA were ordered to appear at the Arc de Triomphe and attend a ceremony at which the self-proclaimed president of France, General de Gaulle, would honor the officers' wartime efforts. In other words, all of the officers of the two commands, from General Eisenhower down for both U.S. and the U.K. Commands were to be in attendance. We formed a circle around the Arc and awaited the arrival of President de Gaulle. We stood there for an interminable length of time, awaiting his arrival, and finally we could hear shouts coming from down the Champs-Elysees. There came the president, standing in his car waving to the people along the street, as he approached the Arc de Triomphe. When he arrived, rather than stopping immediately, and recognizing the senior officers present, he made a complete tour around the Arc. He then proceeded to give recognition and decoration to various officers. It appeared to all of us that it was a complete insult that such an incident would take place. It served to further enforce the negative feelings that many of the officers held regarding de Gaulle. It was at this ceremony that I received my Croix de Guerre, but I decided not to wait in the line that long, and consequently it was delivered to me at a later time.

After the end of the war, I had only a short time in postwar Germany, as I was high on the point list for redeployment to the States. Effective 1 July 1945, ETOUSA became United States Forces European Theater (USFET), headquartered in Frankfurt. USFET with a dual role: first, governing the American Sector of Germany; second, serving as the command for the U.S. occupation forces in Germany. General Lucius D. Clay, Eisenhower's deputy, was the principal U.S. Army officer handling the governing of the American Sector in Germany. This was an interesting time, as our previous enemy was now a segmented nation that had to be brought back into world society. General Eisenhower, who was known to have a definite hatred for the German military and what they had inflicted on the world, now as responsible for the German people's reentry into a postwar environment. His attitude of a wary benevolence to the Germans spread throughout his command and greatly assisted in making the task a challenge, though not a repugnant operation. He was of the opinion that civilians should take over the governing functions as soon as the military threat had ceased. This change would involve the German people in the reconstruction of their country.

At the conflict's end, I was involved in the transition of a wartime intelligence operation to a new concept of establishing intelligence priorities for an occupying army in Germany. The transition required not only developing the intelligence for the army but also assisting in our establishing the role of the OSS in a peacetime environment. Our main mission for the U.S. Army intelligence personnel in occupied Germany consisted of developing intelligence on the activities of the following:

- Underground military, paramilitary, and political organizations
- Former Nazi leaders, personalities, and organizations
- Counteractivities to the military, political, and economic terms of the surrender
- Counteractivities to the currency-control regulations
- Black market and hoarding
- Locating property stolen from other countries by the Germans
- Locating the assets held in other countries by German nationals or their nominees
- Locating evidence leading to the identification, apprehension, and conviction of war criminals

All of this was a major shift of effort but equally important.

I returned to the United States on 1 July 1945. My role as an intelligence officer during this conflict was but one of millions working together to bring about Allied victory in a conflict of greater magnitude than any before. It had been a long tour of duty, difficult for my family and for myself, but the memories enriched me, made me a stronger person, and imbued in me a deep-seated pride for my country, my countrymen, and my own role in securing their preservation and safety.

My new assignment was to the Pentagon, where I eventually "managed" my own discharge orders. While assigned to the Pentagon, I was tasked to assist with the selection of candidates to man the newly formed Central Intelligence Agency. Since I had worked with most of the intelligence personnel in Europe, I knew which ones would be suitable recruits for the agency. I was relieved from active duty with the United States Army on 26 June 1946. It had been a long stint of duty, difficult for my family, but a phase of my life that I have always been very proud of, as has my family.

Ralph Hauenstein served as chief of intelligence for the U.S. Army in the European Theater of Operations (ETOUSA) during World War II. This essay is excerpted from *Intelligence Was My Line: Inside Eisenhower's Other Command*, by Ralph Hauenstein and Donald Markle.