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S A L E R N O

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With the Fifth Army, Italy.
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A great military experiment behind the formation of the Fifth Army has developed into one of the most successful Anglo-American ventures of the war. Composed of British and American troops, in less than three weeks of combat the Fifth Army can be said to rival the famous Eighth as a compact, unified fighting force. Co-operation is so close and the troops of both nations so intermingled that it is difficult to believe that the Fifth is anything but "a one nation" army.

Certainly since the moment the British and Americans landed on the beaches at opposite ends of Salerno Bay the soldiers have considered themselves more as a part of the Fifth Army than as British or American units. I think the very toughness of the landing did much to cement relations between British and Americans in this grand Fifth Army. General Clark's leadership has been brilliant and wise.

On the landing day I remember talking to a group of N.C.O.S. among whom I was during an enemy tank attack. Our position was not a happy one and a corporal said, "Our captain has just told us the British are sure having a tough time down their end of the bay, but they're holding on like us. Between us I guess we're going to make this Fifth Army mean something." Colleagues who landed with the British have since told me that when reports of the hard time we were having reached them similar sentiments were expressed.

As the campaign has progressed British and American units have found themselves fighting side by side with each other in some sectors, while in others certain operations have depended on the success of British or American patrols - but everything is done in the name of the Fifth Army.

I don't think Allied troops have ever worked closer or more harmoniously ^{together} than the elements of the Fifth Army from commanders down to privates. At General Clark's staff conferences there are as many British Officers present as Americans and suggestions by both are discussed freely on their merits. The same thing happens at other British conferences when a suggestion by an American officer is as attentively received as one by a member of the British General's own staff.

On the roads you see grinning Tommies sitting beside Yanks in jeeps, American soldiers perched on top of giant British tanks, and American staff cars driven by British officers. At Bivouacs and in the lines you'll see Tommies eating American field rations and Americans eating British rations. By some strange sense of taste the troops prefer each others rations with the exception of the two items - tea and coffee.

All the same I had lunch in an American general's mess up at the front yesterday and was served with boiling hot tea! The general told me he had never tasted tea till he landed in Italy and now he "traded" all his coffee rations for his British liaison officer's tea rations. This is the first time that a combined British and American army has tackled the Germans and the fact that the men of the Fifth Army have ~~pushed~~ ^{men} the Germans back every yard from the beaches to and through the mountains is the best indication of the success of the experiment of operating a joint army.

The Italian campaign has been a tough one from the word go and the ^{men} participating in it feel they've created something pretty fine in the Fifth Army, whether they are Americans or British. One of the most encouraging aspects of the "get together" spirit of the Fifth Army is that everyone is commenting on it. Whenever I have got into conversation with American or British troops someone has said "If we can stick together like this in battle why the hell can't we stick in peacetime?"

Americans particularly seem to realise the significance of the Anglo-American comradeship and trust being welded here before Naples and ask why can't it be so in Washington and in London. An American general with whom I lunched at the front yesterday put it thus, "Quite a lot of our American boys fighting here now beside the British are going to get into politics when they go back home and believe me they're going to make themselves felt on the matter of Anglo American fellowship."

This military experiment which I suppose originated more as an expedient than anything else has ramifications far beyond the muzzle of a "Long Tom" field gun. It may well be that through this Fifth Army the light of a great Anglo-American understanding might penetrate to those who insist that the American way and the British way could never meet. They're meeting out here alright. Ask the Germans.