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Col. T. J. Betts

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Interview with Col T. J. Betts (formerly Brig Gen Betts, deputy G-2 of SHAEF), now of CIA, at Temp Bldg K, Washington, 18 May 1950, by F C Pogue.

Betts was a language officer of War Dept. Had graduated from Univ of Va; went into army in TM I. stayed on. In 1938 came to War Dept G-2 as a major. Was Far Eastern expert; Chinese language officer. Had several jobs at G-2. Became an intelligence executive. Little practice, but lots of theory in G-2 work. Went to TRIDENT, QUADRANT and SEXTANT as G-2 representative and JIC representative.

Was at BG at Cairo Conference. Thought at the time he would be deputy to Gen George Strong. Had talked to Morgan in Oct 43. Found in December I was to be American G-2 on Allied staff. Went over just before Christmas 1943.

COSSAC still in existence. Percy Whitefoord was G-2. COSSAC concept not necessarily a "Foch concept", but always economical in manpower. Whitefoord also wanted to keep Hq small. He had only 20-30 officers. He wanted to keep it very small.

Important Intel agency was Theater Intelligence Section--located at Peter Robinson store. Had about 200 officers. Farmed out much of their work. Formed in 1940 because of fear of invasion; studied Ger dispositions. After June 41 and attack on Russia fear of invasion lapsed. By first of 1942 interest in counter-invasion raised. Once more studied dispositions of Germans. Great body of knowledge. Were awfully good. By time I got there out of more than 200 members, about 75 to 100 were Americans. Head was John Austen, who became what we would call Chief of Evaluation at SHAEF. TIS originally under home Forces. Never belonged to SHAEF. Did much work for GSGS; lots of map work. GSGS short of men and money, had to use other people as much as possible.

JIC-deliberative body. Farmed out task to TIS, ISIS. I had great respect for these people. Unlike some of our people who at a KIC mtg would merely read off a report, these people were good at coming up with some ideas. Foreign Office man had great influence in these meetings.

When Smith came to London he announced that he would have a big headquarters. Started gradual infiltration of AFHQ people; didn't force issue. Whitefoord felt his own concept giving over. Must have felt very bad because he not only went back to Colonel, but his whole idea of a G-2 section was thrown out. Smith brought up Foord to be chief of intelligence. I offered to resign, but was asked to stay on as deputy both by Bedell and later by Strong. Our ranks began to fill from Americans. Got Curtis from AFHQ, Collins from Washington. Still a small staff. I went to AFHQ to see how they worked<sup>4</sup> went to 15 X Gp. Whiteley told Foord to work out a scheme for opnl intelligence. Influenced by AFHQ. Our staff was really the AFHQ scheme beefed up. We also had air and naval elements.

Later -Whiteley took Charles West's job and Strong came up. Recruits from TIS came over. Foord took John Fast's job. Some changes made in staff. Some were antipathetic; air people rather difficult since they had to serve two masters. Show as finally put on went on to the end. Thinks between 6 June and end of war only changed in numbers some 10-15.

Gale helpful in personnel changes. He was a big man; perhaps biggest man next to Smith and Ike we got from AFHQ. Did not deal with current ops. Always busy with next week. Would say how many bridges will we need. Always looking for bottlenecks. Not personally likeable. I saw these things about him, although I didn't like him particularly. May not have had as big a place with us as in Mediterranean. People under-rate him at SHAEF because he didn't bother with current things.

SHAEF morale curve very interesting. Had little personal rivalry in the beginning. Much of this due to Ike--the architect of victory (you know he was probably the only man on D Day who thought the thing might fail). From 1 April on our set-up was good. From D Day until October we were a band of brothers. Then the imminence of victory got us. Many who wanted to have good jobs elsewhere began to leave. From October to the end of the war morale was on the downgrade; more rivalry.

Strong, Foord and Austen were the big names in our G-2 set-up. Austen a treasure--he called himself a collator; we called him evaluator. Weighed intelligence. Foord had been a regular army officer; then went into business. Was General Manager or President of Abdullah cigarettes; made lot of money. He was a management man. Knows how to get people to do their best.

On interpretation Austen was magnificent.

Strong--strong intuitive element. Knew Germans very well. Not a troop commander. Complex character, Something of a worrier. Possibly angered some people because he was a close man. Worried over getting a better billet. Worried a lot over getting a German car; it disappeared when he did. He thought Joe Ewart (attractive man--idolater of Monty) who went from us to 21 A Gp poisoned Monty and Williams against him (Strong). Doesn't think Ewart did. Thinks there was natural antipathy on part of 21 A Gp towards SHAEF.

I went and sent people to American armies. Got along well with Sibert. Williams said that Strong and I were welcome, but not the others; stay away from armies. Lots of telephoning went on back and forward. I worried about security, but we were moving so fast it didn't matter.

Relations between Americans at G-2 better than between British.

They had served over a period of years together; lots of old feuds and wrangles. We were pitchforked in together and Americans got along all right.

(Monty was first important British general to learn what we did a long time before that a modern soldier doesn't want to be killed anonymously. If you can tell him why his death or fighting may accomplish something he will go along. Monty had very few professional soldiers on his side, but the Tommies liked him).

I had some intuition. At times you can feel things are going to happen. My chief contribution came from the fact that I thought a G-2 should know what his own troops could do. After breakthrough Strong worried about what Germans might do to us. I wasn't because I knew our capabilities, and that helped to read the German ones.

British began to fear American primacy in the various divisions, as we put more and more troops in the field. They didn't want to be crushed. Felt they had to hold on by finesse. However, I found myself pushing up Americans in key places. Some cleavage developed. No idea of replacing British in the places held by Foord and Austen since we had no one to replace them. They were the best of the lot. But would try to get my people up just under them. I was under pressure by our people to see that Americans were favored. Much pushing and hauling over who would be forward. Big morale problem. I wanted morale to be right and spend much time on it.

Censorship and CIC reported directly to me. Foord and Austen usually forward. After SHAEF Fwd went to Reims Foord and I ran virtually 2 headquarters; going back and forward.

(The crime of Bedell's career was getting us into the field at Jullouville, and then we sat without telephones and the battle going on by us. He wanted to get away from London; probably upset because cut off from Ike. But the field was no place for us. Virtually had to send mounted messengers).

Conferences--Smith had a review of the situation every morning beginning at 9; continued about 45 minutes. Never saw Ike at one except 2-3 times. Tedder sometimes there; didn't preside. G-2 and G-3 always presented appreciations. Ike often held personal conference (He spent 1/3 time with troops, 1/3 on political-economic affairs, 1/3 around headquarters). He didn't like to be near his headquarters. They gave him a villa near the Trianon Hotel at Versailles, but he moved to St Cloud and then would call people to him. Paid little attention to intelligence. Someone once drew his map of Europe-consisted of a line for the Rhine, a circle for the Ruhr, a circle for Berlin. He didn't ask for intelligence at the conference when he decided to make the decision. He didn't care how many Germans were there then. The question was "Can we go?" He had a great ability to know what he needed to know. What are the elements. Then he had a quick breakdown into the two or three things he wanted to know and called the people who could tell him. Of course, Bedell picked up a lot of the information for him.

Ardennes---On 11 December we had our first information of the existence of a German strategic reserve. We found the 5th Pz Army was being held in reserve; wondered where it was. We felt it could attack in the Ardennes, down the Moselle or after we launched our attack. Didn't think they would do the latter. When news came on the 11th that Germans were thickening the infantry in the Ardennes, Strong and Eisenhower talked to Bradley who was at St Cloud that day. Strong waned that a counterattack was coming. Eisenhower asked Bradley how about it. Bradley said he couldn't keep changing his dispositions to meet possible German attacks. Soon would have no army. Strong didn't see Eisenhower again until the 16th. Was in conference with him (and perhaps Bradley) when news came. I took the message of the Ardennes attack down from my office where it had been brought to me. Gave slip to Strong. I think this was first news he had.

About 6:30 PM (had been a rough day) on 12 December Foord came to see Strong and me. Here is report from 12 A Gp. We know it is wrong. Strong said it wasn't too serious since he

had already warned Bradley. I said let's telephone Sibert. I think it slipped out while Sibert's back was turned. (Not certain but thinks Sibert had gone to 9th Army on 12 Dec and boys had put out a report). I did not telephone 12<sup>th</sup> A Gp. Foord said on 13th he had telephoned and they were alerted. (Betts pointed out that reports of 2k 12th H Gp and SHAEF were never intended to take the place of other intelligence reports since the lower echelons had more immediate information on some points. Further much delicate information left out. Sometimes people who wrote the reports didn't know the most secret information at all. Part of the purpose of the report was to raise morale. Written in colloquial manner. Never heard of SHAEF withdrawing a report)

We argued a great deal after Christmas over the mission of the Germans. However once we got the air in, we got confidence. After a few days decided they didn't have the push to go to the Channel. What else did they want to do? Thought they might be going down the Moselle. Until after the war I didn't know about Liege.

Thinks we were caught off base not because we didn't think they wouldn't attack, but because of the intense desire of the commanders to get on the offensive themselves. All during October we were trying to get going. Had to worry with the dams. Got on everybody's nerves because we weren't moving. Thinks this desire for the offensive got into G-2. Didn't care if the Germans attacked or not. Bull said we have crowded our people in the line to the point the troops get in each other's way. Would have been smart if we had dropped them back for a strategic reserve. Didn't think of a strategic reserve because up to that time our reserve was always arriving in the next ship from the United States.

Morgan--fish out of water. Never made his official influence felt in G-2. Doesn't think he coordinated G-2 and G-3. This handled mainly by the fact that Strong and Whiteley always lived in the same billet; worked out own coordination. They always invited me in. However, I didn't stay with them at Versailles, because they put us in servant's quarters, very cold place. I found an apartment with radiant heat. Saw no reason why I should live so badly in J Hazen Hyde's house, so moved to apartment. Still ate in mess with Whiteley, Strongg, Gale, Kenner and one or two others. Says Morgan was always busy, but never clear what he did.

Dull had great strength of character. Ideas came from Whiteley.

Bedell could be ruthless, but wasn't actually mean. However, he made a team with Ike. Bedell would soften the victims up and Ike would soothe their feelings. Bedell would scream at somebody who wanted two divisions until the man would feel like a criminal. Then Ike would give the man one and he would be grateful. Bedell could be very smooth and polished; had been a White House aide. But he felt someone had to be ruthless.

Bill Quinn--G-2 of 7th Army--very good. Scowl good at 9th Army--predecessor not good and had to get rid of him. Koch-unimaginative but hard worker. Dickson --ok.

Sibert--ambitious, competent, not a G-2 specialist but learned fast. Had been military attaché in Rio. Had to learn technical side of job. Org of 12th A Gp section good. Sibert cold-blooded, discarded people fast. Large turnover.

Trip to Moscow-left France on 30th. Then over to 20 Grosevenor. Left our top secret papers there. Got up at 5:15 next morning and without any coffee or anything Bull and I went over to get the papers. Security man not there. Had a terrible time finding him. Got out to the airport to find that crew had doused the plane with gasoline (they said it accidentally overflowed) and it was a fire hazard. So we had to spend New Year's in London. Left on 1 Jan. Spent 3-4 days in Naples. Weather bad so Bull and I went to Rome (Bull had never been there). We thought it odd that Dakota weather plane kept coming and going to Crimea and we couldn't. Next went to Cairo. Held up again there. Thinks Tedder couldn't stand idea of going to Russia in Liberator. When a York showed up at Cairo, weather got better, and we left in it. Very valuable trip. Almost first and last time the Russians were so pleasant and so candid. Attack already started. But we really wanted to know about larch when we would be crossing the Rhine. Stalin not boastful or over-confident. Said his main drive would have-to stop about 1 Feb but would try to close to the Oder; did better than that.

Says he did not have operation in Russia. Had been wounded in the summer over Alderney. Got dermatitis; skin kept coming off his leg. Leg swelled up in Moscow. US doctor at Embassy looked him over. sent him to shuttle base at Poltava where they had several good doctors. No operation. Several days treatment and then to Cairo to stay for six weeks.

Tedder--excellent man. Chief work with air. Not a vice commander. Kept fly boys in order. Never aware of his making a command decision. Air boys had a dull time at SHAEF.

Robb--did very little while L-M was operating. SHAEF had no air of its am. Wasn't a great deal for staff to do. Robb good man; clear thinker.

Redoubt-never took it too seriously. Got dope on it from Germans about same time as Volkssturm. Made a study of possibilities, but didn't really think it would be serious. Never heard any other element discussed in stopping of drive at Elbe except the logistical one. Thinks Gale made the recommendation they stop there for that reason. Ike's idea was let's get along with the Russians. No idea of outmaneuvering them.