A Model British General
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Gen. Sir Charles Keightley

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LONDON, Oct. 31—If Sir Charles Keightley were cast as a British General in a movie, critics would protest that the character was overdrawn.

The ruddy face, the bristling mustache, the drawling voice are almost too real to be true. They cover a rather subtle, reticent person with a highly developed gift for tactical leadership.

Man in the News

By irony of history, General Keightley, the man who handed over the Suez Canal base two years ago to Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, has been selected to be commander in chief of the allied forces invading Egypt. Officially, according to the Ministry of Defense, he is directing forces "which will intervene to secure compliance with the requirements stated yesterday by those Governments to the Israeli and Egyptian Governments."

The ironical aspect of situation is probably not lost on the general. Like most professional officers, he took what they called "a poor view" of the decision to evacuate the canal zone under the British-Egyptian treaty. These officers thought that evacuation would create a vacuum into which either the Russians or their pawns would move.

General Keightley and his fellow officers would be shocked if they were accused of thinking about the subject on the abstruse terms of global strategy. They like to be thought of as simple soldiers. But events indicate they were thinking a good deal harder than many politicians, American as well as British.

The new commander, who is 55 years old and married, has all the qualifications for a successful British general. His education — Marlborough College and the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst—was an impeccable prologue to a military career.

Record Is Impressive

His regiment is the Fifth Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards. Inniskilling is derived from that especially combative village in Ireland that has fathered two regiments of the British Army.

His military record is impressive. General Keightley was one of the few tank officers who emerged from the fighting in France and Flanders in 1940 with an enhanced reputation. His big chance was command of the Sixth Armored Division in Tunisia in 1942 and 1943.

The division was new to battle. General Keightley whipped it into shape, retrieved its mistakes, saw that it did not make the same mistake twice and eventually led it through Tunis and up the white roads of Cape Bon to the German Dunkirk. Since he had participated in the British Dunkirk, he took some satisfaction in seeing that, in the German version, no one was evacuated.

Later in the war, he commanded the V Corps of the British Eighth Army. This was one of many corps that claim credit for cracking the Germans' Gothic Line in northern Italy. But the V Corps knocked out seven German divisions in succession, and its claims are better than most.

Along the way, the general collected the medals that are the emblems of a soldier's success. In addition to the Distinguished Service Order and Knight Commander of the Bath, he won the American Legion of Merit and the French Legion d'Honneur and Croix de Guerre.

A general who wins the medals of his own service, George Patton used to say, probably is just a naturally combative cuss, but the fellow who wins foreign medals also gets along with his allies.

Behind all this, General Keightley is less sedate than his training or his antecedents —his father was a clergyman—would lead one to believe. He has a somewhat shy humor and, when aroused, a fierce and not unlikeable pride in his profession.



Associated Press

Back on familiar ground

Is he a good general?

American tank officers in Africa and Italy thought highly of him and of his penchant for deception in battle.. Like Rommel and Patton, he realizes that the sergeant majors' ability to rouse men and keep them moving is indispensable to a commander.

Once when the road up Cape Bon was blocked by a German position, he took his tanks through the surf in moonlight to flank the position. Yet this feat, although spectacular, was out of keeping with his usual military approach. He is a planner, a schemer, rather than the passionate military type like Rommel and Patton.

General Keightley has one matchless advantage in his current command. He served in Egypt, both as a young officer and as commander in chief. He will be fighting over ground familiar to him for a generation and against Egyptian forces whose capabilities he understands.

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