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THE CONQUEST OF SICILY FROM 10TH JULY, 1943 TO 17TH AUGUST, 1943

The following Despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 9th October, 1946, by HIS EXCELLENCY FIELD-MARSHAL THE VISCOUNT ALEXANDER OF TUNIS, K.G., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., C.S.I., D.S.O., M.C., former General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Fifteenth Army Group.

The Decision.

At the Casablanca conference in mid-January, 1943, it was decided by the Prime Minister and President Roosevelt, assisted by the Combined Chiefs of Staff, that after Africa had been finally cleared of the enemy the island of Sicily should be assaulted and captured as a base for operations against Southern Europe and to open the Mediterranean to the shipping of the United Nations. I attended the conference and was designated the Commander-in-Chief of the group of Armies entrusted with the operation. As I was also appointed to an identical rôle in command of the operations then proceeding in Tunisia, in which I was soon involved in the day to day conduct of an intricate and difficult battle situation, it was not possible for me to take direct control immediately of the planning of the operations. A tentative outline plan had already been produced by the Joint Planning Staff in London, supplemented at Casablanca, and this was given, as a basis on which to work, to the nucleus of my future Headquarters, known for security purposes as "Force 141," which assembled at Bouzarea, near Algiers, on 12th February, 1943. This planning staff was headed by Major-General C. H. Gairdner, as Chief of General Staff.* The operation was given the code name HUSKY.

Although provision had thus been early made for the planning of the operation it was none the

* Succeeded in May by (the late) Major-General A. A. Richardson. The Headquarters was "integrated", i.e., Anglo-American, but organised on the British Staff System, just as Allied Force Headquarters, also integrated, was organised on the American system.

less surrounded with great difficulties. The prerequisite that the whole of the North African coastline should be cleared of the enemy meant that the battle in Tunisia took first priority and, until that was concluded, it would be impossible to know what resources would be available for the invasion of Sicily. The question of the date to be aimed at was also affected. It was calculated at Casablanca that the Tunisian campaign would be completed by 1st May and the target date for Sicily was provisionally fixed at the favourable moon period in July. The Combined Chiefs of Staff subsequently directed that an attempt should be made to advance this date to the corresponding period in June. This proved impossible, owing to the need for adequate training for the assaulting divisions and the preparation of the necessary administrative basis for the operation, and on 15th April the Combined Chiefs of Staff agreed that 10th July should be the target date.

Elements of the Problem.

The problems to which the main attention could be directed in the early stages of planning were those presented by geography and logistics and the probable scale of enemy resistance. The island of Sicily has been compared to "a jagged arrowhead with the broken point to the west." The total area is about ten thousand square miles, the greatest measurement from east to west is one hundred and fifty miles and the length of the coastline is about six hundred miles. In the north-eastern corner Cape Peloro is separated from the peninsula of Calabria by the Straits of Messina, only two miles at their narrowest. Cape Passero, the south-eastern corner, scene of a British naval victory in 1718, is about fifty-five miles due north of the island of Malta and about four hundred miles from Benghazi. At the western end of the island Cape Boeo (also known as Cape Lilibeo) is about ninety miles to the north-east of Cape Bon in Tunisia. In the straits between Tunisia and Sicily lies Pantelleria

which the Italians claimed to have transformed into a fortress of a strength to rival Malta.

The greater part of Sicily is mountainous with many peaks over three thousand feet. The most extensive plain lies south and west of Catania, dominated by the conical peak of Etna. All round the coast, however, except for a short stretch on the north coast, there is a narrow strip of low-lying country through which runs the main road encircling the island. The coastline is divided into a series of wide-sweeping bights, separated from each other by more or less prominent capes. Over ninety stretches of beach were enumerated by the planning staff, ranging from less than a hundred yards to many miles in length, usually of sand but sometimes of shingle; offshore gradients were in most cases rather shallow. These beaches generally admit direct access into the narrow coastal strip. The main ports, in order of importance, are Messina in the north-east, Palermo in the north-west, Catania and Syracuse on the east coast; none of these is a first class port and their daily clearance capacity was reckoned, after making due allowance for possible damage from air bombardment and demolitions, at four to five thousand tons per day for Messina, two thousand five hundred for Palermo, one thousand eight hundred for Catania and one thousand for Syracuse. Minor ports, all reckoned as having a capacity of about six hundred tons per day, are Augusta on the east coast (mainly a naval base with a good protected anchorage), Licata and Porto Empedocle on the south coast and Trapani on the west coast.

There were nineteen known airfields in Sicily when planning started, a figure which was subsequently raised by new construction to over thirty at the time of the attack. They fell into three main groups, in the east, south-east and west of the island. The first two were mutually self-supporting but could neither afford fighter cover to the western group nor be themselves covered from there. All were situated within some fifteen miles of the coast. Most important for the German Air Force was the eastern group, Catania-Gerbini; there were important supply and operational organisations here and the capture of the area would probably mean that the German Air Force could no longer operate effectively in Sicily. If we could bring these airfields into operation we could cover the Straits of Messina, only sixty-five miles away, and the German Air Force would be driven back on Naples and Brindisi, both about two hundred miles away, for the three small airfields in the toe of Italy were only suitable for use as advanced landing grounds.

It was more difficult to calculate the probable strength of the enemy defending forces. The greater part of these were known to be Italian and in January there were in the island three regular infantry divisions and five "coastal" divisions. The latter were composed of lower quality troops than the ordinary divisions, had a lower scale of equipment and were almost entirely non-mobile. Their task was to man the coastal defences and to form a covering screen to break the first impact of an assault and allow time for the intervention of the "field" divisions. The major interest centred on the latter. It was reasonable to expect that the Italians would wish to increase the garrison of so important and so obviously

threatened a portion of their metropolitan territory and, to be on the safe side, we calculated that by July the garrison would probably have risen to a total of eight mobile divisions, excluding the coastal divisions. It would be easy to reinforce, for communications were excellent, the train ferries at Messina could move up to forty thousand men in twenty-four hours or, in the same period, seven thousand five hundred men and seven hundred and fifty vehicles.

We were naturally particularly interested in the prospects of reinforcement by German troops. There were already in Sicily extensive German Air Force establishments, which included detachments for the ground defence of airfields as well as anti-aircraft gunners and the normal Air Force service troops, and there was also a fluctuating number of German troops at various points, particularly in the west, representing units in transit in Tunisia. Perhaps, when resistance ceased in Tunisia, it might be found that the Germans had been able to evacuate sufficient troops to Sicily to make a considerable difference to the strength of the island garrison. In any event it was likely that Germany would consider it necessary to reinforce the Italians and it was calculated that two out of the eight divisions expected as the strength of the garrison might be German. The Joint Planning Staff, in their original report, felt it necessary to state, "We are doubtful of the chances of success against a garrison which includes German formations." This seemed to me to be too strongly expressed, but all the commanders concerned agreed that if the Italians should be reinforced with substantial, well-equipped German forces before the attack the chances of success would be considerably reduced, not only because of the superior fighting quality of the Germans but because, if the German proportion of the garrison approached parity with the Italian, they would certainly demand a share, probably the predominant share, in the direction of the operations.

The First Plan.

When the headquarters of Force 141 was set up in Bouzarea on 12th February, 1943, the basis on which the staff were in the first instance to work was the plan drawn up for the Casablanca conference. This was accepted by me as a preliminary and tentative basis of planning, though I realised, from such attention as I had been able to give it, that it would undoubtedly need modification when I should be free to give my mind wholly to it. Certain elements were bound to remain constant. It was clear, as laid down in the plan, that for many reasons the operation would have to be a joint Anglo-American undertaking. Each nation would provide a task force of Army size commanded respectively by General Montgomery* and General Patton.† Naval and Air forces would be also jointly provided and commanded by Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham‡ and Air Chief Marshal Tedder.§ The British assault force would be mounted mainly from the Middle

* Now Field-Marshal the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, K G, G C B, D S O

† The late Lieutenant-General George S. Patton Junior

‡ Now Admiral of the Fleet the Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope, K T, G C B., O M, D S O.

§ Now Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder, G C B

East Command and the United States force from North Africa.

The strategic conception of the operation was influenced very largely by administrative considerations. It was still an essential element of the doctrine of amphibious warfare that sufficient major ports must be captured within a very short time of the initial landings to maintain all the forces required for the attainment of the objectives; beach maintenance could only be relied on as a very temporary measure. The experiences of operation TORCH, the North African landing, though difficult to interpret in view of the special circumstances of that operation, were held to confirm this view. This meant that attention was at once directed to the three major ports of Messina, Catania and Palermo. Messina was clearly out of the question as an immediate objective. It was strongly defended, difficult of access and well out of range of air cover that had to be provided from Tunisia and Malta. An assault on Catania could be given air cover, though the port itself was at the extreme end of our range, and successful exploitation would give us control of the main group of enemy airfields in the island, from which it would be possible to provide cover over the Straits of Messina, our final objective. On the other hand it was calculated that the port could only maintain four divisions in the first month and six divisions subsequently, and this would be insufficient for the reduction of the whole island. Palermo would give us sufficient maintenance facilities provided the enemy allowed us time enough to build up to the strength required. The disadvantages of an assault in that area were that it left the enemy in possession of Catania and Messina through which to reinforce, and the eastern and south-eastern groups of airfields, while exploitation towards Messina, our final objective, would be difficult.

The plan therefore proposed a simultaneous assault in the west and south-east. On D-day the Eastern Task Force (British) was to land at four points, Avola, Pachino, Pozzallo and Gela, with forces totalling three infantry divisions, four parachute and two tank battalions. The tasks of the force were to capture the ports of Syracuse and Augusta and the airfields at Pachino, Comiso and Ponte Olivo. At the same time an American force of one infantry division and a tank battalion from the Western Task Force (United States) was to land at Sciacca and Marinella in the south-western corner of the island to capture the airfields, in particular the large airfield at Castelvetrano, in order to be able to provide air cover over the landings in the Palermo area. On D plus 2 the main American landings would be made in the Palermo area, from the Gulf of Castellammare to Cape Zaffarano, east of the port, in a total strength of two infantry divisions and two tank battalions. The tasks of this force were to capture Palermo and cut off the enemy in the west of the island by linking up with the force at Castelvetrano. On D plus 3 the Eastern Task Force was to make another landing, with one infantry division, plus a brigade group, and an airborne division, in the Catania area, to capture the port and the Gerbini group of airfields. A reserve division was allotted to each Task Force, to follow up into Catania and Palermo, when secured, and by D plus 7 it was hoped that sufficient forces would be ashore to

deal with any forces which could be brought against them.

Modification of the First Plan.

The month of February and the early days of March were the most critical periods in Tunisia, where I assumed command on 19th February, and it was impossible for me to give the plans for Sicily any detailed attention. I did, however, suggest certain modifications to General Gairdner when he saw me at the end of February, for the consideration of his planning staff. These were directed to eliminate certain unsatisfactory points in the original London plan; to ensure, for instance, that divisions were employed as such and not split up unnecessarily, to provide a Force Reserve and to ensure a more concentrated use of our airborne forces to neutralise the beach defences by cancelling a proposed operation against communications in Calabria. I also considered at this time concentrating the efforts of both Task Forces against the south-eastern corner of the island. This was a proposal to which I was later to return but on first consideration it was rejected on the ground that port facilities in this area would be insufficient to support our whole force, and it still seemed essential to ensure the early capture of Palermo. To overrun the island if defended by a garrison of eight enemy divisions, which was the current Intelligence estimate of the probable enemy strength, would require at least ten divisions and I was informed that only with the use of both Palermo and Catania could we be sure of maintaining that number.

It would be unnecessary to describe in detail the many conferences at which the strategy of the attack was thrashed out until they resulted in the adoption of the final plan. Nor need I emphasise again the difficulties involved; I myself and my two future Army commanders were engaged actively in the field and even when a conference would have been physically possible the hazards of air communications in the uncertain weather of a North African spring often meant that we could not meet. The staff at Bouzarea were short-handed and many of the heads of branches, still fully employed at my Eighteenth Army Group Headquarters, were unable to take over as yet or divert their attention from the Tunisian battle. All that was possible was to work out loading tables, training schedules and all such matters which must of necessity be taken in hand long before the date of the assault, while preserving complete flexibility of mind about the objectives which might eventually be selected for the assault. Flexibility was, indeed, the keynote of the whole planning period and every proposed solution was examined on its own merits. It is for this reason that it is difficult to show in detail how the final plan grew to completion but it will be useful to consider the main aspects that presented themselves and sketch the way in which they contributed to the ultimate solution.

The air situation received my first attention. From our bases in Malta and Tunisia we could give air cover over the southern half of Sicily south of a line running from Trapani to Catania; both these two places, however, were near to the limit of effective air action. The plan provided for an early attack on all three groups of airfields, but at the cost of a loss of concentration. The Eastern Task Force, in particular, would be dispersed in assaults all along

the coast between Catania and Gela. This raised serious doubts as to whether it would be strong enough at the crucial point, the landing at Avola; it was vital that there should be no risk of failure here, for the whole enterprise depended on seizing the ports of Syracuse and Augusta, and if possible Catania, very soon after landing. The plan entrusted this task to one division and one brigade, only a third of the total force, and it was apparently impossible to increase this except by abandoning one of the other landings. The obvious solution was to divert the division which it was intended to land at Gela, and this was suggested by General Montgomery. On the other hand Air Chief Marshal Tedder pointed out that Ponte Olivo, the airfield centre inland from Gela, had been developed into a first class air base and unless it were captured for our use our air forces would labour under an intolerable situation. Admiral Cunningham agreed, from the naval point of view, that the risk of allowing the enemy air forces to operate from the south-eastern group of airfields would be unacceptable.

This was a serious dilemma since both the arguments for strengthening the east coast assault and for the early capture of the airfields inland from Gela were overwhelmingly strong. My first solution was to transfer to the Avola assault the division assigned to Gela and entrust the latter assault to an American division, transferred from the landings at Sciacca-Marinella, which would therefore have to be cancelled. It was not a satisfactory solution, for I was unwilling to put an isolated American division under command of Eighth Army, but it seemed the best available. Air cover for the assault on Palermo would now have to be given from the south-eastern group of airfields, when captured, and this would cause some delay. I recommended this change of plan to General Eisenhower on 19th March and at a conference on 20th March he agreed to it. My staff continued, however, to explore the possibility of mounting another British division and by 6th April it had been found possible to provide one from Middle East which would stage at Malta. I therefore, in the new plan which was presented on 6th April, restored the American assault at Sciacca-Marinella, added an armoured brigade to the Avola landing and still left the Eastern Task Force with a reserve division which could either be used for the landings south of Catania, as originally planned, or, as now seemed more likely, put in to support the main landings on the south-eastern coast. The western, American, assaults were put back a little, the Sciacca-Marinella landing to D plus 2 and Palermo to D plus 5 or later.

So far changes which had been adopted had represented only modifications of the plan as prepared by the Joint Planning Staff in London but as the time for a final decision approached I began to consider more and more the dangers presented by the dispersal of our forces. It was particularly difficult to estimate the likely scale of enemy resistance, and even our calculations of the fighting value of enemy troops seemed possibly subject to error. General Montgomery shared the same views. In a signal to me on 24th April he said: "Planning so far has been based on the assumption that the opposition will be slight and that Sicily

will be captured relatively easily.* Never was there a greater error. The Germans and also the Italians are fighting desperately now in Tunisia and will do so in Sicily." Indeed it was only natural to expect that the Italians would show some reasonable spirit in defence of their own soil for they were at that time, to our surprise, stubbornly resisting the Eighth Army attack on the Enfidaville positions. The estimate on which we were working, as already stated, assumed an enemy garrison of two German and six Italian mobile divisions and five Italian coastal divisions, against which we were bringing a force of just over ten divisions with two more in reserve. From the point of view of numbers, therefore, we had no actual superiority and such advantages as we enjoyed—the initiative to attack where we chose, command of sea and air, and a certain superiority in equipment, at least over the Italians—would be diminished by dispersion. Moreover, it must be remembered when considering the frame of mind in which we set out on this expedition that this was the first large-scale amphibious operation in the war against a defended coastline and opponents equipped with modern weapons. I am not belittling in any way the landings of 8th November, 1942, but the description I have given above could not be applied to the resistance met on that occasion and we could not expect the fighting in Sicily to cease as quickly as it had done in Algeria and Morocco. No care was too great to ensure that our first landing in Europe should be successful beyond doubt.

With the end of the fighting in Africa the enemy picture had become clearer. One extra Italian mobile division had been added to the garrison and the German forces in the island were reckoned as the equivalent of one division; but none of the forces in Africa had escaped and any further reinforcement must come from the mainland of Italy, from Germany and from enemy-occupied countries. There was still time, and excellent communications, to admit of such a reinforcement. The whole question of comparative strengths was due for discussion at a new conference on 27th April in Algiers.

The conference was eventually called, after some mishaps, on 29th April and attention was at once directed to proposals for strengthening the assault in the south-east. General Leese† represented Eighth Army's point of view. He argued that the Army was, on the present plan, divided into two halves which were too widely separated to be able to support each other and possibly too weak for either to be able to achieve their respective objects. He therefore proposed that both Corps should assault the east coast, one in the area of Avola and the other on either side of the Pachino peninsula (Cape Passero); this would give a firm base for the conquest of the island. Admiral Cunningham did not approve of the suggested change. Apart from his conviction, on general grounds, that in amphibious operations the landings should be dispersed, he considered it essential to secure the use of the south-

* Actually planning had been based on the appreciation that the mobile part of the garrison of the island would be more than doubled and I myself thought that the Joint Planning Staff had taken a rather unduly pessimistic view.

† Now Lieutenant-General Sir Oliver Leese, Bt, K C B, C B E, D S O

eastern airfields in order to give protection to ships lying off the beaches. Air Chief Marshal Tedder also entered strong objections from the air point of view. The Eighth Army plan would leave thirteen landing grounds in enemy hands, and this was far too many for effective neutralisation by air action. He considered that it was vital to success to capture these airfields for our own use at the earliest possible opportunity and gave as his formal opinion that unless this could be guaranteed he would be opposed to the whole operation. I was therefore faced with a complete contradiction of opinion between the Army view, represented by General Leese, and the views of the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean and the Air Commander-in-Chief. On the existing plan it was impossible to reconcile these conflicting points of view.

I therefore decided to recast the whole plan. I took the decision on 3rd May, based on a conference on 2nd May which I had been prevented from attending by impossible flying weather, to cancel the American assault in the west and transfer the whole weight of Seventh Army to the south-east of the island, on the immediate left of Eighth Army. I decided, in fact, to take a risk on the administrative side rather than the operational risk of dispersion of effort. This was contrary to what had hitherto been regarded as one of the fundamental principles of the operation: that we must capture Palermo at the earliest possible opportunity if we were to have a hope of maintaining sufficient forces for the reduction of the island. On my new plan the only ports we should be certain of capturing in the first stage would be Syracuse and Augusta, the latter more a naval anchorage than a port, and possibly Catania; the whole of Seventh Army would have to depend on beach maintenance except for such help as it might get from the small port of Licata which, as already stated, was only rated at a capacity of six hundred tons a day.* The risk was therefore grave, but there were two factors which brightened the prospect. The first was that there was a reasonable probability of suitable weather in July for beach maintenance. The second was the coming of the DUKW. I need not describe these ingenious amphibious vehicles, which are now familiar to everyone, but it is interesting to note, in view of the great part they later played, that I had never seen one up to that time. General Miller†, my Major General, Administration, had received advance reports and had ordered large quantities from the United States on 22nd March. When they arrived it was discovered that the claims made for them were fully justified by their performance. It is not too much to say, indeed, that the DUKW revolutionised the problem of beach maintenance. Nevertheless I arranged that Eighth Army should meet the commitment of providing a thousand tons per day through Syracuse for Seventh Army from D plus 14 to supplement their maintenance over the beaches until they could capture and bring into use the port of Palermo.

In changing my plan in this way to obtain concentration of force I was proceeding on

* Seventh Army actually managed to raise this figure in practice to a thousand tons per day

† Major-General C H Miller, C B , C B E , D S O

sound strategic lines but there was one consideration which gave me some concern and which I should like to mention here. As I have said, I had decided to take a calculated administrative risk for operational reasons; but this risk was unevenly divided and almost the whole would fall on the Seventh Army. In other ways also it might well seem that the American troops were being given the tougher and less spectacular tasks: their beaches were more exposed than Eighth Army's and on some there were awkward sand bars, they would have only one small port for maintenance and Eighth Army would have the glory of capturing the more obviously attractive objectives of Syracuse, Catania and Messina, names which would bulk larger in press headlines than Gela or Licata or the obscure townships of central Sicily. Both I and my staff felt that this division of tasks might possibly, on these understandable grounds, cause some feeling of resentment. I knew, from the Tunisian campaign, General Patton's punctilious and scrupulous sense of duty and that there was no possibility of his questioning any orders he might receive from me, but in the case of so difficult and important an operation and since it might appear that an American Commander was being required to scrap the results of difficult and tedious planning and undertake a heavier burden than he had expected at the order of a British superior, I felt a natural anxiety about American reactions. I wish to place on record here that General Patton at once fell in with my new plan, the military advantages of which were as clear to him as to me, and neither he nor anyone in Seventh Army raised any form of objection. It is an impressive example of the spirit of complete loyalty and inter-Allied co-operation which inspired all operations with which I was associated in the Mediterranean theatre.

The Final Plan

The new plan was approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 12th May, the day before that on which German resistance in Tunisia came to an end. I accordingly issued on 19th May my Operation Instruction No. 1. This laid down the principles on which the plan of operations was based and the tasks of the two Armies. At the risk of some repetition of facts already given it will serve a useful purpose to set out the main lines of this instruction.

“ An operation is to be prepared to seize and hold the island of Sicily as a base for future operations . . . The intention of the Allied Commander-in-Chief is to seize and hold the island by operations in five phases ”

“ Phase 1.

Preparatory measures by Naval and Air forces to neutralize enemy naval efforts and to gain air supremacy.

“ Phase 2.

Pre-dawn seaborne assaults, assisted by airborne landings with the object of seizing airfields and the ports of Syracuse and Licata.

“ Phase 3.

The establishment of a firm base from which to conduct operations for the capture of the ports of Augusta and Catania, and the Gerbini group of airfields.

“ Phase 4.

The capture of the ports and airfields outlined in Phase 3.

“ Phase 5.

The reduction of the island.”

The naval, ground and air commanders were nominated as follows: Eastern Task Force, Vice-Admiral B. H. Ramsay; Western Task Force, Vice-Admiral H. K. Hewitt; Seventh Army, Lieutenant-General George S. Patton Junior, Eighth Army, General Sir Bernard Montgomery, North-west African Tactical Air Forces, Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, Seventh Army Air Force, Colonel Lawrence P. Hickey, U.S.A.A.F., Eighth Army (Desert Air Force), Air Vice Marshal H. Broadhurst.

The Army tasks were defined as follows:

(a) *Eighth Army.*

(i) The assault between Syracuse and Pozzallo, supported by such parachute troops as could be lifted in one third of the available transport aircraft.

(ii) Capture of the port of Syracuse and the airfield at Pachino.

(iii) Establish itself on the general line Syracuse—Pozzallo—Ragusa and gain touch with Seventh Army.

(iv) The rapid capture of the ports of Augusta and Catania and the Gerbini group of airfields.

(b) *Seventh Army.*

(i) The assault between Cape Scaramia and Licata, supported by such parachute troops as could be lifted in two thirds of the available transport aircraft.

(ii) Capture of the port of Licata and the airfields of Ponte Olivo, Biscari and Comiso.

(iii) Establish itself so as to gain contact with Eighth Army at Ragusa and protect the airfields and port in (ii) above.

(iv) Subsequently to prevent enemy reserves moving eastwards against the left flank of Eighth Army

Future tasks for the Armies were only sketched out at this stage but I indicated that my intention for the first phase was to establish the group of Armies across the south-eastern corner of the island on a line from Catania to Licata with a view to final operations for the reduction of the island. It was not practicable to plan further ahead for the present but I was clear in my own mind how I wanted to develop operations after the firm base had been established. The next thing to do was to split the island in half, and the first stage would be to seize and hold the irregular rectangle of roads in the centre round Caltanissetta and Enna. This would by itself seriously hamper all enemy east-west communications. From there I should be able to press on to Nicosia, which would leave only the north coast road open to the enemy, and then to the coast near San Stefano. I could probably only maintain a small force at San Stefano but if it could hold firm the interruption of communications would be complete.

On 21st May my headquarters issued Operation Instruction No 2 which gave fuller details of the forces to be used and the conduct of

operations in the first two phases, the Preparatory Measures and the Assault. Eighth Army were allotted two Corps Headquarters, six infantry divisions, one infantry brigade and one airborne division.* Seventh Army had one Corps Headquarters, four infantry divisions, one armoured division and one airborne division.† One infantry division in each Army was designated as reserve, not to be used without reference to me, and a further infantry division of those allotted to Eighth Army was designated as a reinforcing division, only to be moved from North Africa if need should arise. In the event it was not needed and became available, therefore, for the landings at Salerno.

Eighth Army's plan called for a simultaneous assault by both Corps. On the right 13 Corps was to land on a three brigade front, with 5 Division right and the 50th left, over the beaches from Cape Murro di Porco, south of Syracuse, to just south of Noto. Commandos were to land on Cape Murro di Porco to capture the coast defence guns there and a brigade of 1 Airborne Division was to be landed in gliders to capture the bridge over the River Anapo south of Syracuse, and also, by a landing in the western suburbs, to assist in the capture of the town. 5 Division, when ashore, was to move north and capture Syracuse and Augusta while 50 Division secured Avola and protected the left flank. Subsequently the Corps was to move north and capture Catania, being relieved in its original area by 30 Corps. 30 Corps was to assault on the left of 13 Corps with 231 Infantry Brigade on the right at Marzamemi, on the east of the peninsula of Cape Passero, 51 Division, four battalions up, astride the tip of the peninsula and 1 Canadian Division, two brigades up, on the west side. A Special Service Brigade of two Royal Marine Commandos was to land on the Canadians' left. The first task of the Corps was to seize the airfield at Pachino, which had been ploughed up by the enemy, and restore its serviceability at the earliest possible moment. It was then to seize the line of the road from Noto to Ispica (also known as Spaccaforno) and thereafter relieve 50 Division of 13 Corps at Avola. In the second phase the Corps' objective was the high ground in the area Palazzolo—Ragusa, and at the latter place the Canadians were to make contact with the Americans.

Seventh Army's assaults were divided between two forces, II Corps on the right and 3 Infantry Division, reinforced, on the left. II Corps consisted of 45 Infantry Division on the right and 1 Infantry Division, less one Regimental Combat Team, on the left together with Rangers and a tank battalion. The Corps task was to land in the Gulf of Gela, from Cape Scaramia to Gela town, and capture the airfields at Ponte Olivo, Comiso and Biscari, subsequently to make contact with Eighth Army in the area of Ragusa. Parachutists of 505 Regimental Combat Team were to be dropped on the night of D minus 1/D-day about four miles inland and six miles east of Gela to capture the high ground and road

* 13 and 30 Corps Headquarters, 5, 46, 50, 51, 78 and 1 Canadian Infantry Divisions, 231 Infantry Brigade and 1 Airborne Division

† II Corps Headquarters, 1, 3, 9 and 45 Infantry Divisions, 2 Armoured Division and 82 Airborne Division

junctions covering 1 Division's beaches. On the left of the Army front 3 Infantry Division, with a Combat Command of 2 Armoured Division, was to land in the area of Licata and capture the port and airfield. To support either of these assaulting forces a floating reserve sailed with the Army, consisting of the remainder of 2 Armoured Division and one Regimental Combat Team of 1 Infantry Division. In reserve in North Africa was the remainder of 82 Airborne Division, less those elements which had already been dropped before the landings, and 9 Infantry Division. The frontage of attack of the two Armies covered about a hundred miles, from Cape Murro di Porco to Licata.

The problem of assembling these forces for a simultaneous assault was perhaps the most complicated that ever faced a planning staff, for they were mounted from all over the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean and in part from the United Kingdom and United States. Of the British forces 5 and 50 Divisions and 231 Infantry Brigade came from Suez in ships; 51 Division came from Tunisia in craft and part of it staged at Malta *en route*; 1 Canadian Division sailed from the United Kingdom in two ship convoys. 78 Division, earmarked for reserve, was waiting in the Sousse—Sfax area to be ferried across in craft. Seventh Army used the ports west of Tunis. 1 Division came from the Algiers area, partly in ships and partly in craft; 3 Division from Bizerta and 2 Armoured and 9 Divisions from Oran, again partly in ships and partly in craft; 45 Division came from the United States, staging in the Oran area. Both the airborne divisions, 1 British and 82 United States, were based on Kairouan in Tunisia. From the command point of view also there was extreme dispersion. My Headquarters was originally near Algiers and later at La Marsa, near Carthage, with a small Tactical Headquarters on Malta. Seventh Army Headquarters was near Oran for the planning stage, subsequently moving to Bizerta, Eighth Army Headquarters was originally in Cairo and moved to Malta for the assault; Admiral Cunningham established his Headquarters also in Malta, and Mediterranean Air Command Headquarters and the Headquarters of the Tactical and Strategic Air Forces were all grouped around Carthage, adjacent to my main Headquarters.

Training was carried out at a number of different stations; it was not as thorough as I should have liked, but the pressing considerations of time and shortage of craft imposed serious limitations. The British forces mounted from Middle East carried out "dryshod"* training in the desert and had some very incomplete landing rehearsals in the Gulf of Aqaba. The Canadian Division had been well trained in the United Kingdom but its attempted exercise on the Ayrshire coast had to be cancelled as soon as it had begun owing to bad weather. 51 Division, which had no previous training or experience in combined operations, was put through a short course at Djidjelli, much hampered by shortage of craft.

* "Dryshod" was a technical term meaning exercises carried out on land simulating landings from craft.

The American 3 Division trained at Bizerta and La Goulette and 1 Infantry and 2 Armoured Divisions at the old established training area of Arzew, near Algiers. 45 Division had been trained in Chesapeake Bay before embarking, and had a short rehearsal at Arzew after their arrival in North African waters.

The tasks of the Naval forces (British and United States) fell under four main heads: the cover of the whole operation against interference by enemy naval forces, the close support of the convoys to their destination and the delivery of the troops to the beaches, close support of the landings by gunfire, and the maintenance by sea of the forces landed, including the protection of shipping off the beaches. The Naval Covering Force, consisting of four battleships, two aircraft carriers, four cruisers and some eighteen destroyers, was concentrated in the Ionian Sea by 9th July. In this position it was well placed to meet any threat from the Italian Taranto fleet, or from the Spezia fleet if it should attempt to reinforce through the Straits of Messina. An additional force of two battleships, two cruisers and six destroyers, based at Algiers, provided cover for convoys on the North African coast and constituted a reserve for the reinforcement or relief of the covering force if required. A light covering force of cruisers and destroyers was despatched on 9th July to protect the northern flank of Eighth Army. The main bases of this covering force were Mers-el-Kebir, Alexandria and Malta, with fuelling and ammunitioning facilities at Tobruk and at Benghazi.

For the air forces of Mediterranean Air Command the battle for Sicily could be said to have begun with the last minute of the battle for Tunisia, or even, to some extent, still earlier, and D-day represented merely a peak of intensity. They were faced first by an administrative problem. After the enemy surrender in Tunisia many air force units required rest and refitting and an extensive programme of airfield construction in northern Tunisia was put in hand. Although, therefore, preparatory bombing of enemy installations began at once it was not intended to apply more than steady pressure until about one week before the assault. During the preparatory phase targets were mainly strategic but a steady programme of interference with the enemy ground and air build-up in Sicily was carried out. A particularly heavy scale of attack was directed against the Messina rail ferry. By 1st June only one of the original five ferry boats was still in operation and the harbour facilities at both ends were very heavily damaged. The traffic was continued by lighters and small craft. From about D minus 7 the air forces went over to a concentrated and powerful attack on the enemy air force; enemy airfields in the island were attacked both by bomber aircraft and, where within range, by fighter sweeps. Radar installations, which would give warning of the approaching invasion fleets, were also successfully attacked. We were thus able to ensure air superiority over the landing beaches and very shortly, when the captured airfields in the south-east came into use, over the whole island. The total aircraft, including transports but excluding gliders, employed in the operation came to over four thousand, divided into one hundred and ten British and one hundred and thirty-two American squadrons.

Enemy Strength and Dispositions.

It is now time to consider "the other side of the hill" and review briefly the strength which the enemy could bring to meet our attack. Since January the Axis had been reinforcing Sicily, but not on the scale which we had allowed for; it had produced the two German divisions we had expected but only one extra Italian division instead of three. My Intelligence Staff was able to follow with some success the enemy preparations for invasion. The Italian Order of Battle was fairly easily established but the German only became clear towards the end of June, a fact which reflects the tardiness with which the Germans reinforced the island. It will be realised that the task of establishing the enemy Order of Battle in Sicily was surrounded with many difficulties; normal means were not available as we were not in contact with the enemy and so good was the police and counter-espionage system in Sicily that we were unable to obtain any information direct from the island. It is gratifying to record that, in spite of these difficulties, one captured Italian general considered our Order of Battle to be superior to the official document in his possession.* I will not, however, detail the steps by which the enemy picture was built up, but give the situation as it was on the day of the invasion.

Command in Sicily was exercised by the Sixth Army (Italian), with headquarters near Enna. The Army Commander was General Guzzoni, a sixty-six year old officer who had recently been recalled from the retired list on which he was placed in 1940; he was assisted by a German liaison officer, General von Senger und Etterlin, later a Corps commander in Italy. The west of the island was commanded by XII Corps, headquarters Corleone, with 28 (Aosta) Division covering the Marsala-Trapani area with headquarters near Salemi and 26 (Assietta) Division covering the south-west with headquarters north of Santa Margherita. The eastern and central portion of the island was the responsibility of XVI Corps, headquarters Piazza Armerina; its two field divisions were 4 (Livorno) at Caltanissetta, a nodal point of road communications in the centre of the island, and 54 (Napoli) north of Palazzolo, inland from Syracuse. The coastal defences were assigned to five "Coastal Divisions" and an autonomous coastal regiment; these forces played, in the event, little part in the defence of the island and need not be further considered. It will be seen that the Italians showed a tendency to concentrate greater strength in the western part of the island, the nearest to Tunisia, and had only one division in the south-eastern corner.

The original German forces in the island consisted mainly of drafts in transit to Tunisia. When resistance collapsed in Africa they were organised into a provisional division known first as "Division Sicily" but later as 15

Panzer Division,* in memory of one of the formations destroyed in Africa. Its commander was General Baade who had commanded a regiment of the original 15 Panzer Division in Africa and was later famous in Italy as the commander of 90 Panzer Grenadier Division. It was divided into three battle groups of all arms and these were dispersed to provide extra stiffening for the Italians at points considered vital: one battle group was in the extreme west between Marsala and Mazzara, a second in the centre of the island with divisional headquarters, and the third in the Catania area. There was a detachment from the central battle group covering the airfields at Biscari and Comiso. This central group, and divisional headquarters, moved west immediately before D-day in accordance with the enemy appreciation that that part of the island was our most likely target. The second German division was the Hermann Goering Panzer Division. Part of this formation had fought in Africa and been destroyed there, but the remainder, after re-forming in Italy near Naples, began to arrive in the island late in June. It was divided into two battle groups: one was in the Catania area, where it took under command the regimental group from 15 Panzer Division which was already there, and the second was established in the area of Caltagirone, from where it was able to operate against Gela or the Comiso airfields. This battle group had relieved the group from 15 Panzer Division which was moving to the west as already stated.

Besides their forces in Sicily the Germans were moving troops into other parts of the Italian homeland. By the beginning of July there were about five German divisions in southern Italy, one in Sardinia and a regimental group in Corsica. These were therefore available for the reinforcement of Sicily, though the event was to show that the Germans were prepared to reinforce the island from as far away as France.

To sum up, the enemy forces opposing me in Sicily amounted in round figures to about three hundred and fifteen thousand Italians and fifty thousand Germans, the latter total rising to ninety thousand when the reinforcing divisions which arrived after the attack began are included.†

Capture of Pantelleria.

Before the attack began General Eisenhower decided to assault and capture the island of Pantelleria and subsequently the minor islands of the Pelagian group. The original plan for Sicily had proposed that Pantelleria should be merely silenced by heavy bombardment, for any losses in amphibious equipment which might be incurred in an attempt to capture the island would directly reduce the resources available for the main operation; it was obviously more economical, however, to capture the airfield on the island for our own use rather than merely deny it to the enemy. A further

* It was not a real Panzer Division and had only one tank battalion; after the Sicilian campaign it was renamed Panzer Grenadier Division, which name it retained.

* One serious error was made. By an extraordinary series of coincidences a body of evidence was built up which made it appear that an extra Italian division (103 Piacenza) was in the area south of Catania. This was in fact false, but the mistake was discovered before it could have any untoward effect.

† Enemy air force strength amounted to about eight hundred German and seven hundred Italian combat aircraft counting all those based in Sicily, Sardinia, Italy and South France. The Italian battle fleet included six battleships and two 8-inch cruisers.

advantage lay in denying to the enemy the use of the RDF* stations there. The operation, which was preceded by a very heavy Air and Naval bombardment, was carried out under direct command of General Eisenhower, using 1 (British) Infantry Division. It was entirely successful at negligible loss, and the use of the airfield was very valuable for the Sicilian campaign.

Invasion and Conquest of Sicily.

The period of planning for the invasion of Sicily was unusually prolonged and it was possible to devote a more intensive study to the subject than is generally the case. I have omitted, in the account given above, a good many of the stages in that planning but it is essential to give sufficient detail to make quite clear the nature of the problem with which we were faced and the solution which was eventually adopted. This has also made it possible to present the narrative of operations in a much briefer form since on the whole in this case the conventional phrase is justified and operations proceeded according to plan. I should like to take the opportunity now, before passing on to the narrative of events, of giving their due credit to the men who made success possible.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Force, was the man on whom fell the ultimate responsibility of taking the great decisions. He commanded directly all sea, land and air forces in the theatre. He and his staff could not have been more helpful to me throughout; I knew that when he had given his confidence he would support me through everything and I had already had the happiest experience in Tunisia of what that support could be. His great merits as a commander have been too well illustrated in all the campaigns in Europe to need further tribute from me but I would like to single out one aspect in which I think he excelled: the gift for managing a coalition of different allies in arms. In almost all the wars in which Great Britain has been involved we have fought as a member of a coalition and a British commander has, therefore, what I may call a deep historic sense of the difficulties of combining the efforts of an allied force; he can remember the controversies of Marlborough with the Dutch Field Deputies and Wellington going down on his knees to humour the fractiousness of a Spanish General. Throughout all the operations which I commanded in the Mediterranean the British and American forces fought not merely as two armies with the same general objective and the same war aims but as a single homogeneous army and, without for a moment derogating from the spirit of loyal co-operation of all commanders and men, there is no doubt that the inspiration which gave life and vigour to that co-operation derived originally from General Eisenhower.

The Commanders-in-Chief of the naval and air forces in the theatre came, in the chain of command, directly under General Eisenhower and occupied therefore a position co-ordinate with my own. It is for this reason that I have dealt only summarily in this despatch with their operations but I must at this point try to

make clear the debt which land operations owed to the sister services. On Admiral Cunningham fell the weight of what was in some ways the most arduous, detailed and vital part of the operation, the actual conveyance of the troops to their objectives. I do not mean merely to point out the obvious: that to invade an island it is necessary to cross the sea; but to evoke to the imagination some picture of the gigantic nature of the task of conveying for such distances, assembling and directing to obscure and unlit beaches in an enemy territory an Armada of over two thousand ships and craft. I must mention only in passing the assistance of naval gunfire on the beaches and the silent strength of the covering forces waiting, and hoping, for the appearance in defence of its native soil of that fleet which once claimed to dominate the Mediterranean. It is a theme which can be adequately described only by a naval specialist, and one of which the Royal Navy and the United States Navy are justly proud. Air Chief Marshal Tedder, Commander-in-Chief of the allied air forces in the Mediterranean, was an old colleague from the Middle East. His mastery of air strategy was demonstrated in Africa, Sicily and Italy and his mastery of the art of war as a whole was shown by his subsequent appointment as Deputy Supreme Commander, of all three arms, to General Eisenhower for operations in France and Germany. I have referred elsewhere to the work of the allied air forces. To sum it up it is only necessary to say they gave us command of the air and to demonstrate it to point to the protection our troops enjoyed in the first critical days when the fighters swarmed over the great, vulnerable convoys and the fighter-bombers hunted up and down the roads of Sicily seeking and destroying enemy reinforcements moving up to the beaches. The Commander of the Tactical Air Forces, Air Marshal Coningham, was another old colleague from the Middle East. His headquarters moved always with mine and our contact was so close that the word co-operation is too weak; we were two parts of the same machine and worked as one.

Of the Armies under my command I had already had successful experience. General Patton, commanding Seventh Army, had already served under me in Tunisia and I had complete confidence in him. He had there taken command of a body of troops, the excellent material of which had been prevented hitherto from showing its full capabilities by a certain lack of experience and by difficulties of terrain and climate, and had transformed it by his inspiration into a fast-moving and hard-hitting force crowned with victory. Seventh Army was certainly fast-moving and hard-hitting and it undoubtedly owed these qualities to the leadership of its commander. General Montgomery was also a commander in whom I had every trust and confidence. He and his Eighth Army had served under my command since August, 1942. Fresh from a campaign where they had advanced eighteen hundred miles in six months to share in the capture of a quarter of a million prisoners, they showed in Sicily that they could apply the lessons learnt then to a very different type of terrain and style of fighting. I was glad to welcome, in addition to the veteran formations of the Desert, the splendid 1 Canadian Division, trained to a hair in the United Kingdom and

* RDF = Radio Direction Finding (now known as Radar).

eager and confident for battle. I also welcomed 78 Division, the most experienced of First Army's divisions. As will appear, Eighth Army had to face the heaviest opposition from the Germans and had some of the hardest fighting of the campaign in their struggle for the plain of Catania. The stubbornness of the German defence was more than equalled by their stubbornness, and their skill and endurance in the heat of a Sicilian summer brought them the success they thoroughly deserved.

I must add here my thanks to my own staff. Most of the senior British officers had come with me from Middle East when I set up the headquarters of Eighteenth Army Group in Tunisia; of the Americans some had also served on that staff, some came from Allied Force Headquarters and elsewhere. They made a fine team, headed by my Chief of Staff, General Richardson and his American Deputy, General Lemnitzer.*

In the circumstances, therefore, it was natural for me to feel that everything that could possibly be done to make the operation a success had been done. We had a team of commanders and men who since the previous autumn had known nothing but success. I had no illusions that the task would be easy but I had confidence that we were bringing to this task the best that Great Britain and the United States could provide.

On the afternoon of 9th July the various convoys from both ends of the Mediterranean began to arrive in their assembly areas east and south of Malta and from there, when assembled, to move north to their landing areas. That afternoon the wind began to rise and the sea became suddenly choppy with the characteristic short, steep swell of the Central Mediterranean. It was a bad omen for the assault at dawn, but I was assured that these sudden storms were liable to drop as suddenly as they arose, and it would certainly be too dangerous to attempt a postponement at this stage. We had quite clearly, contrary to all reasonable expectations, achieved strategic surprise and evidence appeared to show that the Germans were, as we had hoped, thinning out in the assault area to reinforce western Sicily. After dusk that night I went down to Cape Delimara, the south-eastern point of Malta, to watch the gliders fly past for the landing in support of Eighth Army. As the tandem-wise pairs of tow and glider came flying low, now in twos and threes, now in larger groups, with the roar of their engines partly carried away by the gale and their veiled navigation lights showing fitfully in the half light of the moon, I took note that the first invasion of European soil was under way. On my right the quiet expanse of Marsa Scirocco waited for the Italian fleet which, two months hence, was to anchor there in humble surrender.

Shortly after midnight the wind began to fall off and the swell to subside. These conditions had favoured us in one respect, for at many places along the coast the hostile garrisons, which had been on the alert for weeks, were lulled into a sense of security by the bad weather and, believing that no one would attempt a landing under such conditions,

relaxed their vigil.* Resistance was slight on the beaches on both Army fronts and by first light it could be said that all landings had been successful at the cost of very small casualties. The airborne attack had been less fortunate. The wind was still blowing at some forty miles per hour when the parachutists were dropped and the gliders slipped, and many of the pilots of the transport and tow aircraft, who had had no previous experience in actual operations, ran into difficulties with their navigation or were disconcerted by enemy anti-aircraft fire. The result was that the American airborne troops were scattered in small parties over an area of some fifty miles from Licata to Noto; in Eighth Army's area nearly fifty of the hundred and thirty-four gliders of 1 Airlanding Brigade which took off from Tunisia came down in the sea, about seventy-five came safely to land somewhere in south-eastern Sicily and only twelve landed in the correct dropping zone. The force which actually reached the bridge south of Syracuse, the Brigade's main objective, only numbered eight officers and sixty-five men, but they held the bridge until 1530 hours on D-day, when nineteen survivors were relieved at the last minute by 5 Division troops. However, in spite of this miscarriage, the effect on the nerves of the none too steady Italian troops of the descent of these airborne forces all over south-eastern Sicily was of the utmost value to the assault. Small isolated units of parachutists seized vital points, attacked roads and created widespread panic which undoubtedly disorganised all plans for defence.

Owing to the swell raised by the gale of the previous day some of the landings, especially on the more exposed Seventh Army beaches, suffered a slight delay; but the weakness of the defence soon allowed us to make up any time which had been lost. On the right 13 Corps made good its initial bridgehead, seized the high ground overlooking the coast road and, advancing over the bridge captured by 1 Airborne Division, entered Syracuse at 2100 hours on the evening of D-day. This was a particularly fine feat of arms. It involved a landing on a defended coast followed immediately by a march to a flank without waiting to consolidate the beachhead and, owing to the partial failure of the airborne operation, it had to be carried out in less strength and without the tactical advantages which had been planned. 30 Corps had captured all its beaches by 0545 hours, Pachino landing ground by 1000 hours and the town of Pachino by 1330 hours. During the first day Eighth Army made no contact with any of the Italian mobile divisions or with any German troops; the men of the coastal divisions who were met made little difficulty in surrendering after slight resistance. Seventh Army had met equally poor opposition and easily seized all its D-day objectives. Licata, Gela, Scoglitti and Marina di Ragusa were all in our hands and in the afternoon the floating reserve was ordered to disembark in the Gela area. This was the centre of the Army's front which now consisted of three separate bridgeheads: 3 Division at Licata, 1 Infantry and 2 Armoured at Gela and 45 Division on the right at the south-eastern end of the Gulf of Gela. The Gela bridgehead, now strengthened by the

* It was also of assistance in helping the craft to cross the off-lying sand bars which formed "false beaches" on some of the American beaches.

* Major-General Lyman L. Lemnitzer

addition of the reserve, was the smallest, and enemy tanks had already been seen approaching from the north-east, a presage of what was to come on the morrow.

Next day, the 11th, Eighth Army continued to press on up the east coast in the direction of Catania. 30 Corps on the left extended its bridgehead to Pozzallo and Ispica, but the main weight of interest lay with 13 Corps which pushed on a marching column to Priolo, half-way to Augusta. The heat was intense and few vehicles were as yet ashore; contact was first made that day with the Italian 54 Division, outside Syracuse. On the American front, in the meantime, a more serious battle was developing. The battle group of the Hermann Goering Division which was disposed to cover the centre of the island and the Ponte Olivo airfields made a strong and deliberate counter-attack on 1 Infantry Division at Gela. From 0800 hours to 1630 hours these attacks continued, supported by a battalion of tanks, and at one stage penetrated to the beach, but they were repulsed in hard fighting in which the direct fire of naval escort ships played a considerable part. By the end of the day landing strips were made available for our aircraft at Gela and Licata; in Eighth Army's sector we had Pachino, and the bridgehead was assuming very solid proportions.

The German Command put in the eastern group of Hermann Goering Division to defend Augusta but the impetus of our assault was such that, after being held up at Priolo all day of the 12th, 5 Division was able to capture the town next morning before dawn. Seventh Army had counter-attacked the Germans opposing them and by the 13th were firmly in possession of the three vital airfield areas of Comiso, Biscari and Ponte Olivo. Both Armies were pushing ahead impetuously and it seemed as though nothing could stop them. Ahead of the troops, the Tactical Air Force bombed intensively the lines of communication in the centre of the island to hold up the movements of enemy forces across Sicily. On my right General Montgomery was developing two thrusts, one with 13 Corps due north on to Catania, which he hoped to capture on the 16th, and one on the left with the Canadians whom he was hoping to send in a wide out-flanking movement through Caltagirone and Enna to come in behind the enemy north of Mount Etna. This meant that Seventh Army would be free to pivot on its left and strengthen its grasp on the central portion of the island, preparatory to carrying out the task for which I had designated it. 30 Corps would be advancing straight across the front of Seventh Army's right wing where 45 Division, although fresh from the United States with no previous battle experience, had been making striking progress.

I issued orders for the new plan on 13th July. The new boundary between the two Armies gave to Eighth Army the road Vizzini-Caltagirone-Piazza Armerina-Enna; it then ran due north to the north coast west of San Stefano, which was 30 Corps' ultimate objective. Eighth Army's attack on the right began on the night of the 13th, when 1 Parachute Brigade was dropped to capture the Primosole bridge over the River Simeto; at the southern edge of the Catania plain. 5 Division, followed by 50 Division, were to attack north-

wards to make contact with the parachutists, establish a bridgehead over the river and advance on Catania. The parachutist operation was successful, though only about half reached the right area, and about two hundred men with five anti-tank guns seized the bridge, removed the demolition charges and prepared to defend the position until relieved. All day on the 14th they withstood enemy counter-attacks and only withdrew after dark to a ridge to the southward from which they could still cover the bridge. Early on the 15th contact was made with the main body which had been delayed by strong German counter-attacks, in one of which Augusta had been temporarily lost. The vital bridge was intact and on the 15th we succeeded in getting some troops across, though it was not until the 17th that we could consolidate our shallow bridgehead north of the river. This stubborn and partly successful defence was due to the arrival of German reinforcements. A regiment of parachutists from 7 Air Division* was taken from Tarascon, in Southern France, and brought by air via Naples to the area south of Catania. It was these excellent troops who were mainly responsible for the defence of the line of the Simeto.

On the right, therefore, we had been only partially successful; the capture of the bridgehead over the Simeto was a considerable advantage, but we had been halted south of Catania. In the centre, the sector of 30 Corps, we had made steady progress, but the nature of the country and the exiguous road-net meant that that progress had been slow. Vizzini was captured on the 14th, after strong resistance, by 51 Division assisted by 45 (United States). The Canadians then went into the lead capturing Grammichele and Caltagirone on the 15th and Piazza Armerina on the 16th.† Their next objective was Enna, the centre of the island and meeting point of a network of main roads against which the bomber effort of the air forces had been focussed during the first five days of the invasion. Seventh Army was now re-organising in order to meet the needs of its changed directive. On 15th July General Patton created a Provisional Corps Headquarters to command the left flank of the Army, consisting of 3 Infantry Division, with under command 4 Tabor of Goums,‡ old friends from Tunisian days, and 82 Airborne Division. II Corps continued to command the right flank with 1 and 45 Divisions, while 2 Armoured Division was under Army command. II Corps had made good progress northwards and 45 Division on its right had co-operated with 30 Corps in the capture of Vizzini and Caltagirone; on the 16th, however, the Division reached the new inter-Army boundary and started to transfer to the left wing of the Corps, behind 1 Division. 3 Division in the Provisional Corps made ground westwards along the coast and inland beyond Canicatti, which it had captured on the 12th. The

* This was the original German airborne division which had been responsible for the invasion of Crete. It was at that moment engaged in splitting into 1 and 2 Parachute Divisions; 3 Regiment, which is the one in question here, was assigned, either already or later, to 1 Parachute Division.

† War Office footnote. According to official records, Caltagirone was captured at 0400 hours, 16th July, 1943, and Piazza Armerina at 0600 hours, 17th July, 1943.

‡ Goums are composed of French Moroccan native troops particularly skilled in mountain warfare. A Tabor is the approximate equivalent of a battalion.

Germans were now withdrawing across the front of Seventh Army from west to east. They had already decided that the most they could hope to hold was the north-eastern portion of the island and on the 16th 15 Panzer Division was reconnoitring the northern slopes of Etna. XIV Panzer Corps was arriving to take command in the island and its intentions clearly were to rely no further on the Italians but to secure a defensible position with its own German troops which would cover Messina, to ensure an eventual evacuation, and deny us as long as possible the airfields in the Catania plain.

On 16th July I issued a second directive to both Armies. In it I laid down three axes of advance for Eighth Army: northwards through Catania; from Leonforte to Adrano to sever communications this side of Etna; and via Nicosia-Troina-Randazzo to sweep round the northern slopes of Etna. I was already concerned with the problem of the Messina peninsula. It is a long, mountainous, isosceles triangle with the great mass of Etna almost filling its base. The southern slopes of the mountain dominate the plain below and give perfect observation of any attack we could mount on the Gerbini airfields or the port of Catania. Our attack to drive the Germans from the island must therefore be canalized either side of Etna, in difficult country with few and bad roads. I hoped that Eighth Army would be able to mount a rapid attack on this formidable position before the Germans could assume a good position of defence. Seventh Army was ordered to protect the rear of this attack by seizing the central rectangle of roads around Enna and cutting the east-west road at Petralia. If it were found possible without involving heavy casualties General Patton was to capture Agrigento and Porto Empedocle, which would be useful for maintenance.

In accordance with this directive General Montgomery attacked northwards from his Simeto bridgehead on the night 17th/18th July. Two brigades of 50 Division made the attack but met very heavy resistance and gained little ground. The Air Force, at this period, was concentrating almost entirely on action to break the enemy's resistance at Catania. To this end, a continuous bombardment was maintained against all rail, road and air communications by which supplies might reach that area. The enemy had now concentrated the whole of the Hermann Goering Division in this area and added to it six battalions of 1 Parachute Division and two "Fortress" battalions rushed across from Calabria. The ground on this front was open but intersected with water courses which made difficult the employment of our armour. On the 19th General Montgomery informed me that he had decided not to persist with his thrust on the right, but to increase the pressure on his left. His first plan was to attack towards Misterbianco with 5 Division on the left of 13 Corps but this attack also met the same heavy resistance and could only draw level with 50 Division's bridgehead. 30 Corps now began to apply pressure. On the 20th 51 Division crossed the Dittaino River at Sferro and advanced on the Gerbini airfields but was driven back to the bridgehead by a counter-attack on the 21st. On 30 Corps' left the Canadian division, with 231 Brigade on its

right, was still making the wide sweep as originally planned but it was now clear that Eighth Army would not have the strength to encircle Etna on both sides against the stout resistance of the Germans. The Canadians were therefore ordered to advance to Leonforte and then turn east to Adrano, the centre of the three original thrusts, abandoning the proposed encirclement through Randazzo. The Germans were continuing to reinforce, for we identified part of 29 Panzer Grenadier Division opposing 30 Corps on the 20th. On that day General Montgomery ordered forward his reserve division, the 78th, from North Africa.

Seventh Army continued to make good progress following my directive of the 16th. The Provisional Corps took Porto Empedocle the same day and Agrigento the next, and II Corps captured Caltanissetta on the 18th. 15 Panzer Division had by now succeeded in making a rather scrambling retreat across Seventh Army's front, and were coming into line with the Hermann Goering Division to oppose 30 Corps' advance. There were therefore no German troops west or north-west of Seventh Army and there was no reason to anticipate effective resistance from the Italians on this front. Now that Eighth Army were stopped south of Catania I should need Seventh Army as the left arm of my enveloping movement round Etna. I therefore issued another directive to Seventh Army on 18th July. In this I ordered General Patton to push north after the capture of Petralia, which was provided for in my previous directive to him, and cut the north coast road. As soon as he had secured a line across the island from Campofelice on the north coast to Agrigento on the south he was to advance and mop up the whole western part of the island.

The rapid and wide-sweeping manoeuvres envisaged in this directive were very welcome to General Patton and he immediately set on foot the measures necessary to carry them out with that dash and drive which were characteristic of his conduct of operations. II Corps was given the task of securing the base in the centre of the island and cutting the north coast road, and the Provisional Corps, to which on 20th July he assigned 2 Armoured Division, was given that of the reduction of western Sicily. On the 20th the former entered Enna with the Canadians and the latter captured Sciacca, which had once been deemed an objective worthy of a separate amphibious landing. Progress was so good that I decided to push rapidly ahead with Seventh Army. On the 20th I directed General Patton to turn eastwards on reaching the north coast and develop a threat along the coast road and the road Petralia—Nicosia—Cesaro. This meant an alteration in the inter-Army boundary which entrusted the Americans with the operation north of Etna. In order to sustain this threat General Patton was ordered to capture at the earliest possible opportunity the port of Palermo and bring it into use as his main base of supply. American maintenance would then be switched from the south coast beaches and the ports of Licata and Empedocle to an axis running along the north coast from west to east.

The new directive was put into force with great rapidity and energy. The Provisional

Corps entered Palermo on the evening of the 22nd and 45 Division of II Corps cut the north coast road east of Termini Imerese on the next day. These rapid advances had involved little serious fighting but considerable feats of endurance, for a large proportion of the troops had to march long distances in the sweltering damp heat of a Sicilian summer, far more trying than anything we had experienced in Libya or Tunisia. Seventh Army during this period took thirty-six thousand prisoners, nineteen thousand of them between the 16th and the 22nd.

The last week of July was characterised by a comparative lull on the Eighth Army front and the transference of the American effort to the axis of the north coast road and the road running parallel to it to the south. General Montgomery wished to rest his troops and await the arrival of 78 Division before resuming the offensive. I fixed on 1st August as the date at which both Armies should be ready to recommence active operations and I expected that after that date the process of clearing the island would be fairly rapid. The Germans had now four divisions in Sicily, Hermann Goering, 15 Panzer, 29 Panzer Grenadier and 1 Parachute, but they were not all complete and the first two had already suffered heavy casualties. General Hube, a man in whom Hitler was reported to have great confidence, had arrived to command them from the XIV Panzer Corps Headquarters. I moved my own headquarters over to Sicily and opened in a dusty but well-concealed site in an almond grove near Cassibile on 28th July.

Activity on Eighth Army front during this period was confined to the left flank where the Canadians and 231 Brigade continued to make ground. Nissoria fell on the 24th and Agira on the 28th. 78 Division had now arrived and it was General Montgomery's intention to use it in an attack down the axis Catenanuova—Adrano. The capture of Adrano would mean that the great mass of Etna was interposed between the two halves of the German force and the enemy's lateral communications would be pushed back to the far side of the mountain. On the night of the 29th 78 Division, with 3 Canadian Brigade under command, attacked and captured Catenanuova. There was further fighting before the bridgehead over the Dittano was firm and on the night of 1st August the division proceeded to the attack on Centuripe. This hill city on an isolated pinnacle of rock was the main outpost of the Adrano position and was defended with fanatical vigour by troops of the Hermann Goering Division reinforced by 3 Parachute Regiment, perhaps the best German troops in Sicily. Fighting continued in the steep, cobbled streets of the town all the next day and it was not cleared until the morning of the 3rd. The storming of Centuripe was a particularly fine feat and its effects were widespread, for from that time the front once more became fluid. In face of the threat to Adrano the enemy position covering Catania became untenable.

Seventh Army in the meantime was pushing eastwards along the north coast. This was in accordance with my directive of 23rd July which called for the maximum pressure in this area. General Patton calculated that he

could operate one division on each of the two roads and in order to keep up the pressure proposed to relieve the leading formations regularly. He therefore sent for 9 Division, his reserve in North Africa, which was to sail direct to Palermo.* 45 Division began the advance along the coast road and 1 Division on the southern road; on 25th July the former captured Cefalu and the latter Gangi. On the 28th 1 Division took Nicosia and by 2nd August had advanced to near Troina. On the north coast 45 Division captured San Stefano on 31st July, where it was relieved on 2nd August by 3 Division. 9 Division was now in position behind the 1st on the southern road and the 45th behind the 3rd on the coast road and Seventh Army was in a position to keep up pressure continuously until they reached Messina.† Meanwhile, far to the rear, the whole of western Sicily had been cleared.

Operations were continuous and continuously successful from 3rd August onwards until the final reduction of the island. On that day Centuripe fell, 13 Corps began to advance on Catania and Seventh Army began the bloody attack on Troina. 5 Division, supported by the 50th on its right, began to attack on the night 3rd/4th August and by the 5th Catania, Misterbianco, and Paterno were in our hands. Adrano still resisted but it fell to 78 Division on the night of the 6th, together with Biancavilla in 51 Division's sector. All this time some of the fiercest and costliest fighting of the campaign was raging in and around Troina. 15 Panzer Division offered a desperate resistance lasting four days, though by the end of that period their position was becoming rather precarious, and 29 Panzer Grenadier Division offered an almost equally stubborn resistance on the coastal sector at Santa Agata and San Fratello. Troina was finally cleared on 6th August. General Patton now mounted a small amphibious operation on the north coast behind the enemy lines which was brilliantly successful and led to the capture on the 8th of Santa Agata which had been holding out against us for six days. On the southern road 9 Division passed through the 1st and captured Cesaro on the 8th. The next vital point north of Etna was Randazzo, the capture of which would leave the enemy with only one more lateral road across the peninsula. Both 9 and 78 Divisions were now converging on this point, though the latter had had some hard fighting for Bronte, which it captured on 8th August. Randazzo eventually fell on the 13th and 78 Division passed into reserve. On the coast road a further German line of resistance at Capo d'Orlando was turned by another seaborne hook behind it on the night 10th/11th August. These two small amphibious operations were prepared at very short notice and were most ably executed. They were of the utmost assistance in accelerating the advance on the coastal road which was delayed by extensive demoli-

* One Regimental Combat Team was already in the island having arrived to reinforce II Corps on 15th July at Licata.

† This was done by employing one regiment at a time on each axis for a short period of about forty-eight hours each, relieving continuously with the other two regiments of this division and then with the next division. This meant continuous fresh troops in action and must have imposed an intolerable strain on the German defence.

tions. This road was in part built *en corniche* and the work of the American engineers in restoring it was worthy of the highest praise.

East of Etna the country offered many obstacles to a rapid advance. It is a thickly inhabited narrow strip, confined between the mountains and the coast, and the cultivation, especially the walls of the vineyards and olive groves, makes it excellent defensive terrain. 5 and 50 Divisions could make only slow progress, although the enemy had by now decided to evacuate and was seeking only to impose the maximum delay. Thanks to the difficulties of the terrain which I have already mentioned, he was able to extricate a high proportion of his troops, though not, of course, their heavy equipment. The Messina area was very heavily defended; anti-aircraft fire, for instance, was described by our pilots as worse than over the Ruhr. General Montgomery was anxious to bring a Corps into reserve to prepare for the invasion of Italy and on 13th August he pulled out 5 Division and 13 Corps Headquarters to join the Canadian Division in preparation for the new assault. 50 and 51 Divisions continued the pursuit. An attempted landing in rear of the enemy on the night of 15th August, in the style of those carried out on the north coast, was very nearly successful but the enemy were retreating too fast for any to be cut off.

On the night of 16th August the leading troops of 3 United States Division entered Messina. They were joined next morning by Commandos from 30 Corps. Just before dawn on the 17th, according to the German account, General Hube, the German commander, sailed from a beach north of Messina in the last boat to leave the island. Sicily had been conquered in thirty-eight days.

APPENDIX.

HQ FIFTEENTH ARMY GROUP.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT ON THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN.

10th July—17th August, 1943.

THE PLANNING PHASE.

Planning for the Sicilian campaign began at Bouzarea, near Algiers, in February, 1943. Brigadier E. P. Nares and Brigadier-General Archelaus L. Hamblen, United States Army, were appointed for Administrative planning with British and American planning staffs representing Q (Maintenance), Q (Movements and Transportation), A Branch and the G-4 and G-1 Branches.* To the above was added a strong R.A.F. team of planners which worked throughout in the joint scheme.

Considerations of concentration of force had originally suggested an attack by both Armies on the south-eastern corner of the island but this had been abandoned in the first plan on the administrative grounds that there was no port on the southern shores of sufficient capacity to maintain the forces in that area which could be captured. They would, therefore, have to be maintained indefinitely over the beaches. The

lessons of TORCH Operation* had indicated that it was necessary to capture a suitable port within forty-eight hours. Consequently it was decided to proceed with the plan for the U.S. Seventh Army to assault in the area of Palermo and capture that port and for the British Eighth Army to capture Syracuse together with the airfields of Comiso and Ponte Olivo.

In May the Allied Commander-in-Chief directed that the administrative aspects of the original plan should be reviewed. After full examination, the administrative risks involved in assaulting in the south-east corner of the island were accepted and a plan of campaign using this area for the assault was evolved.

On 23rd May the staff of Eighteenth Army Group was dissolved, the Tunisian campaign having been concluded. Major-General C. H. Miller, MGA Eighteenth Army Group, was appointed MGA Force 141 (later known as Fifteenth Army Group) and the Administrative Staff was concentrated at Algiers to complete the planning of the Sicilian campaign. The War Establishment of Fifteenth Army Group initially approved included the Administrative Staffs of all Services and departments, but was not implemented in full, only those officers immediately required for planning being appointed. It was later decided that these Services and departments would not be required until the allied forces had been established on the mainland of Italy and that for the Sicilian campaign HQ Fifteenth Army Group would only fulfil the function of operational command and co-ordination as HQ Eighteenth Army Group had done during the Tunisian campaign.

In view of the unknown risks involved in maintaining the United States Seventh Army over beaches for an indefinite period, it was decided to set up a detachment of a United States Base Section in Syracuse on D plus 10 together with the British Base Area designated for that port and to include American ships in the D plus 14 convoy for discharge at 1,000 tons per day at the expense of Eighth Army for the maintenance of Seventh Army. The object of this decision was to relieve the maintenance of Seventh Army over the beaches at the earliest date possible. It was further decided that HQ Tripoli Base Area (redesignated FORTBASE on arrival in Sicily) should move to Syracuse as early as possible after the capture of that port to co-ordinate shipping demands and maintenance between Eighth Army, Seventh Army and the Air Forces in accordance with the policy laid down by Fifteenth Army Group. In the event this co-ordination was not required since all the maintenance requirements of Seventh Army were successfully and adequately provided over the beaches and through Licata and Empedocle.

On 22nd June, the Naval and Army Task Forces together with the supporting Air Forces, both British and United States, taking part in the operation presented their outline plans before the Allied Commander-in-Chief and the three Service Commanders-in-Chief at Algiers.

On 24th June HQ Fifteenth Army Group moved from Algiers to the British Consulate at La Marsa, and on 4th July General Alexander

* War Office footnote: G-4 and G-1 Branches are the American equivalents of the British Q and A Branches.

* Operation TORCH was the Anglo-American assault on French North Africa, 8th November, 1942

moved his Tactical Headquarters to the Governor's Palace at Malta leaving Main Headquarters at La Marsa.

THE MOUNTING.

The operation was successfully mounted from North African and Middle East ports according to plan.* The mounting of this operation within two months of the conclusion of the Tunisian campaign was a very remarkable achievement on the part of all administrative staffs and formations responsible under AFHQ and GHQ Middle East, including the Naval and Sea Transport authorities concerned. It also involved very heavy commitments in the supply and maintenance of the large air forces operating in support from airfields in North Africa, Middle East, Malta, Pantelleria and Lampedusa.

THE OPERATION.

The assault on Sicily by Seventh and Eighth Armies, supported by the Royal Navy, United States Navy and the North-west African Air Forces, took place according to plan on 10th July 1943, in spite of an exceptionally high wind. There was little or no opposition on the beaches Syracuse was in our hands by D plus 1 and was opened to receive the first convoy on D plus 3 by 86 Base Area (Brigadier H. C. N. Trollope) under command of Eighth Army. Licata was captured by 3 United States Division according to plan.

Beach maintenance was carried out by both Task Forces satisfactorily and the rate of discharge over the beaches was much higher than had been anticipated. From 10th July the weather was favourable and the sea calm; air and sea superiority was established and although there were some losses of craft and shipping due to enemy action, these did not seriously affect maintenance. No serious administrative shortages were encountered, and the DUKWS proved a marked success for transport from ship and landing craft to beach depot area.

By D plus 14 FORTBASE had taken over the general administration of the beaches and of the ports of Syracuse and Augusta from Eighth Army in accordance with the plan.

Seventh Army.

On the Seventh Army front in the western half of the island, the German forces retired eastwards towards the Messina peninsula, and there was no serious resistance from the Italian forces. The Commander-in-Chief directed that Palermo should be captured and the port opened up as the main base of supply for Seventh Army. This gave Seventh Army the port they needed and switched their main axis of supply for the final attack on the Messina peninsula from beaches and two small ports in the south to Palermo and eastwards along the north coast.

The main administrative problems confronting the staff of Seventh Army in the course of this operation ashore were:—

(a) To maintain the divisions in the initial advance to Palermo and the western end of

the island from beach maintenance areas and from the small ports of Licata and Empedocle in the south.

(b) To open up Palermo port and to switch the convoys from the southern ports and beaches to the axis of supply along the north coast for the final drive against Messina.

(c) To get supplies of all natures to the troops over mountainous and narrow roads in poor condition with limited mechanical transport in the face of considerable demolitions that had been carried out on roads and railways by the enemy. In the final advance on Messina it was found necessary to supply the forward American divisions by sea from landing craft since the coast road from Palermo had been cut by demolitions.

(d) To maintain the Air Forces operating from Comiso and Ponte Olivo.

In spite of these problems and difficulties the troops never went short, and particular credit is due to the United States Engineer units who carried out repairs to roads and railways with great energy and speed.

Eighth Army.

On the Eighth Army front in the eastern half of the island strong German resistance was encountered on the general line south of Catania and to the west then running northwards round Mount Etna.

Maintenance over the beaches of the Pachino Peninsula and south of Syracuse was successfully achieved. Although some ships were lost owing to enemy air action no serious interference with maintenance resulted. The ports of Syracuse and Augusta were opened according to plan.

It was the administrative policy of Eighth Army to:—

(a) Form a main base of supply for Eighth Army at Syracuse.

(b) Utilise Augusta in the initial stages for the maintenance of 13 Corps on the eastern flank.

(c) Maintain 30 Corps from beach maintenance areas, but to close these down as soon as possible and shift the supply axis of this Corps on to the Syracuse main depot area.

The railways and such locomotives and rolling stock as were available were used to the maximum possible extent and Corps railheads were opened up as far forward as circumstances permitted. Roads were narrow and twisty but, with good Q (Movements) traffic control, presented no insuperable difficulties in the movement of mechanical transport, and all demands for ammunition and other supplies were adequately met.

After the capture of Catania, this port was used for the maintenance of Air Forces located on the Gerbini airfields and subsequently for the mounting of operations against the Toe of Italy. The port of Augusta was closed for maintenance and handed over to the Royal Navy, stocks in beach maintenance areas being cleared into Syracuse depots according to plan.

The outstanding administrative feature of this operation was the speed with which ports were opened to shipping immediately after capture and the efficient manner in which stores

* *War Office footnote* In addition 1 Canadian Division, ancillary units and 3,000 R A F personnel were embarked in the United Kingdom and transported to Sicily 45 U S Division (less 1 Regimental Combat Team) and ancillary units were mounted from the United States of America.

were off-loaded, transported into depots and moved by rail and road to the forward troops. This was due to:—

(a) The fact that FORTBASE and most of the Base Areas and Sub-Areas concerned had had considerable previous experience in this type of work during the campaigns in the Western Desert

(b) The high standard of co-operation which had been developed with the Royal Navy, the Air Forces and the Anti-Aircraft in opening up ports to shipping and in protecting them against enemy air attack.

(c) The efficient work of the Q (Movements and Transportation) Staffs and Transportation units concerned with all port working.

Maintenance of the Air Forces.

The main airfields in Sicily were located at Gerbini near Catania in eastern Sicily, and at Comiso and Ponte Olivo on the southern coast. The latter were rapidly captured by Seventh Army and the necessary supplies moved to them from the beach maintenance areas. Seventh Army Engineers arranged to erect bulk petrol storage at Gela and to lay pipelines from there to the Comiso and Ponte Olivo airfields, an operation which was successfully carried out and saved much transport. At Syracuse and Augusta, and later at Catania, bulk storage was found intact. After the capture of Catania, its port was used to maintain the Air Forces that occupied the Gerbini airfields.

Throughout the operation Air Force supplies were successfully maintained, although at times in the early stages the margin of safety was a small one. Considerable difficulties were encountered owing to the fact that American Air Force supplies were shipped from the United States at the same time as ground force supplies, the former were required for delivery at eastern ports in the neighbourhood of which the Air Forces were mainly located, and the latter at Palermo which was the main port of supply for Seventh Army.

Air Transport.

Transport aircraft were available in large numbers for the first time in the Mediterranean campaigns. Full use was made of them for the rapid conveyance of air force supplies, mails and urgent stores (particularly Ordnance stores), and for the evacuation of casualties to hospitals on the mainland. A very large proportion of the total sick and wounded, both British and American, were successfully evacuated by air, and there is no doubt that a certain limited number of aircraft under exclusive medical control are required to enable serious casualties to be evacuated promptly.

Medical.

Medical arrangements worked very well except that the organisation for calling forward hospital ships for evacuation from the ports of eastern Sicily was initially unsatisfactory and had subsequently to be improved. In view of the dangers of malaria in Sicily at this time of the year, preventive measures were taken by all troops before and during the operation. The incidence of malaria during the campaign was therefore not unduly high.

CONCLUSION OF OPERATIONS.

When the capture of Messina brought operations to a close on 17th August the Administrative boundary between Seventh and Eighth

Armies was made to coincide with the Civil Administrative boundaries. The whole of Seventh Army, except for certain Artillery and Engineer units required in support of Eighth Army for the next operation against the Toe of Italy, was withdrawn to the western half of the island where it could be most easily and economically maintained. The United States Island Base Section assumed Administrative control of the port of Palermo and all American stocks were moved to this area except those required for local maintenance. The ports of Licata and Empedocle were closed.

Civil Administration under AMGOT* (headed by Major-General Lord Rennell) had been set up in all districts immediately behind the armies as they advanced.

All necessary Administrative arrangements were at once put in hand for mounting subsequent operations against the mainland of Italy. These were the responsibility of Seventh Army in the west and FORTBASE in the east

The Administrative Organisation†

It was the Administrative plan of Eighth Army to move HQ Tripoli Base Area, which had been established under its command soon after the capture of Tripoli to carry out general and local administration of that area as the Advanced Base for the Tunisian campaign, into Sicily where it was to undertake similar duties at Syracuse and in eastern Sicily as soon as possible. The great advantage of this plan was that it retained the existing administrative organisation of Eighth Army and made use of a most experienced and efficient team under the GOC Base Area, which knew the Army's requirements and had its complete confidence as well as that of GHQ Middle East. On the other hand it meant that there could be no place in Sicily for the full establishment of the Administrative Staff, Services and departments of Fifteenth Army Group, and it was clearly unsuitable for the general administration of the mainland of Italy with a single axis of supply from North Africa and the West under AFHQ. It was, however, decided to adopt the existing organisation for the Sicilian campaign and not to make any change until the allied forces had been established on the Italian mainland except for placing FORTBASE under command of Fifteenth Army Group instead of Eighth Army when it arrived in Sicily.

The administrative organisation therefore for the Sicilian campaign can be summarised as follows:—

(a) Fifteenth Army Group was responsible for administrative policy and co-ordination of general administration of all ground and air forces in Sicily, in accordance with the Army Group Commander's plan of operation.

(b) Seventh Army was responsible for general and local administration in western Sicily including the port of Palermo. This port was not taken over by the United States Island Base Section under CG NATOUSA‡ until operations had been concluded.

* AMGOT = Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories

† War Office footnote The following paragraphs deal with Administration from the Army aspect only. Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Forces had its own Administrative organisation

‡ CG NATOUSA = Commanding General, North African Theatre of Operations, United States Army.

(c) FORTBASE assumed responsibility for general administration of all ports and beaches in eastern Sicily under command of Fifteenth Army Group, whilst local administration in eastern Sicily was carried out by Eighth Army through the various Base Areas and Sub-Areas.

This organisation proved entirely satisfactory under the particular circumstances involving

the capture of an island by two armies maintained initially on two separate supply axes with a view to a further advance across the sea to the mainland of Italy. It would, however, have been more satisfactory if Palermo had been taken over immediately after capture by the United States Island Base Section. The Army Administrative Staff would then have been free to devote its attention entirely to the maintenance of formations in battle.

23

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