

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.

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