

made for the provision and distribution of adequate supplies of British Military Administration currency and for the exchange into this currency of the local money in the hands of the embarking troops. In view of the large numbers of troops and the large sums involved, this entailed a considerable organisation.

144. Postal services laboured under severe difficulties. The need for the strictest security was a great handicap, the facilities enjoyed by the Middle East and British North African components of the force required adjustment to make them similar, and the division of complete units into several parties distributed over the Middle East in transit to Sicily and in Sicily itself made the re-direction and diversion of mail extremely difficult.

145. As maintenance of Eighth Army was a Middle East responsibility in the initial stages, there was a large volume of administrative signal traffic between Middle East and Eighth Army. On 14th August (with Eighth Army finally established in Sicily), submarine cable fullerphone was established between Sicily and Malta to meet signal traffic back to 15 Army Group and General Headquarters Middle East, by means other than wireless. Malta cleared traffic to and from Algiers and the Delta by submarine cable. This fullerphone circuit was replaced by high-speed morse on 9th September.

146. Whilst Middle East Base played this important part in the Sicilian operations, Malta, an outlying portion of my command, also fulfilled a role which necessitated most careful planning and administration. The 231st Brigade was taken from the garrison, trained and re-equipped in the Middle East, and took part in the assault and subsequent operations. In addition to providing this brigade, Malta was also called upon to use all of its facilities to the utmost in preparation for the attack on Sicily.

147. Owing to the lack of accommodation and other facilities, it was decided that Malta should not be developed as an advanced base. Its role, therefore, became that of a combined advanced headquarters and staging post. In preparation for the assault it had to accommodate the assault troops of the 51st Division, numerous army and corps troops and Royal Air Force personnel, the main headquarters of the 30th Corps and Twelfth (later Eighth) Army, Headquarters of the Desert Air Force, Naval Headquarters and Tactical Headquarters of the Army Group; in all an additional commitment of approximately 30,000 personnel and 2,700 vehicles.

148. Although a large proportion of the vehicles arrived at Malta in landing craft, the discharge of the cargo ships placed a great strain on the movement and transportation facilities. To deal with this extra commitment a number of additional staff was sent to the island as well as extra administrative units, including two general transport and eight pioneer companies.

149. Accommodation on Malta, which had never been large, had been substantially reduced by bombing. Twelve tented camp sites and eighteen bivouac areas, each to accommodate 1,000 men and 70 vehicles, were therefore

prepared. A well-boring section was despatched to the island and sixteen bores were sunk for military and civilian needs in areas where the existing water supply was insufficient.

150. Twelve hards, selected by the Royal Navy, were prepared in the Grand Harbour and Marsh Muscetto Harbour; of these only four could be used for L.S.Ts. owing either to lack of draught or to the unsuitability of road approaches.

151. Even when the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers personnel in Malta had been strengthened by a draft from Middle East, not more than 300 vehicles could be water-proofed a day. Three vehicle marshalling parks were therefore organised within two miles of the hards. There vehicles, after waterproofing, were assembled until they were called forward for loading. These three areas could accommodate only 900 vehicles. Another vehicle marshalling park capable of holding 600 vehicles was therefore organised about five miles from the hards. It was realised that, after stage two of the waterproofing, vehicles should not be driven more than two miles, but in view of the congestion in the harbour area and the necessity to hold sufficient vehicles in readiness for embarkation, this distance was accepted.

152. Royal Air Force units were the first to arrive, on 3rd June, 1943. From this date until 7th July, units arrived continuously either by landing craft or by troopships. Stores of all natures, both reserves for Eighth Army and for the maintenance of Malta, were also received during this period.

153. Advanced holdings were established of 3,200 tons of supplies, 5,000 tons of petrol and oil and 6,000 tons of ammunition. In addition, small reserves were held of vital Ordnance stores, including hospital requirements and waterproofing kits. Ultimately, a substantial proportion of the petrol and oil and ammunition was not required and was used for Malta maintenance. The ammunition proved of great value, especially for emergency demands to cover unforeseen expenditure.

154. Originally it had been intended that Malta should be used as a casualty clearing area for evacuation from the beaches, but as the Royal Navy objected to hospital ships and carriers calling at the ports the plan was abandoned and Malta was prepared as a medical reserve area only, for the reception of such casualties as might arrive in normal naval and military craft destined for the island. For this purpose, 7,760 beds (including 1,000 for convalescents) were held ready, but in actual fact these were not all used. The casualties which passed through Malta were mainly airborne personnel and other survivors picked up by naval vessels.

155. During the period 8th-16th July, a total of 20,400 personnel, 2,700 vehicles and 3,500 tons of stores was embarked and loaded at Malta. The call forward of personnel and vehicles after the initial assault presented some difficulty, and quick turn-round of craft was maintained only at the expense of a certain amount of discomfort to the troops and congestion at the quayside. This arose because the number of craft available for the next flight was seldom known sufficiently early,