

dropped from 200,000 in June to 91,000 in October and 45,000 in January, 1944. Therefore, on 14th December, 1943, Headquarters Tripolitania District, was reduced to the status of Headquarters Tripolitania Area.

Sicily.

64. The successes achieved in Tunisia, to which the satisfactory maintenance of Eighth Army and the administrative arrangements in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania had largely contributed, removed the enemy threat to Egypt and the Canal from the West. The defensive period for my command was over, and I was free to develop offensive operations within the scope of my resources. The first stage in carrying the war into Europe was to be an attack on Sicily, to be followed by an invasion of the Italian mainland. As the Tunisian campaign reached its conclusion, my command was steadily freed to make preparations for this overseas offensive.

65. In the North, also, I was no longer concerned with the problem of countering an Axis threat to Egypt and was able to concentrate on plans and training for future operations. When the Russians held Stalingrad, and subsequently counter-attacked, the threat of a German advance through Turkey into the Lebanon and so, possibly, towards Egypt was removed. As long as this threat to Egypt from the North had been a serious possibility, Ninth Army had had an important operational role in Syria and the Lebanon, and troops had been concentrated and plans made with this in view. When the threat was removed I was able to revise the role of Ninth Army and to turn it very largely into a centre for training.

66. The same considerations which enabled me to develop Ninth Army largely as a training centre made it possible for the War Office to revise the role of Persia and Iraq Command (which had been separated from Middle East Command in September, 1942) and to draft troops thence to Ninth Army for training for the invasion of Sicily and for other operations.

67. Many of these troops were administrative units, without which it would have been impossible to mount the Eastern Task Force for Sicily from Middle East resources. The two major formations so received were the 5th and the 56th British Infantry Divisions. Of these, the 5th Division arrived in Middle East on 16th February, 1943, and was re-equipped, fully trained, and ready to take its part in the assault on Sicily by July. The 56th Division arrived in Middle East in March, to train and re-equip for Sicily: but early in April it became necessary to send the Division (except for 168th Brigade, which remained to complete its training for Sicily) to Eighth Army, to gain battle experience and to replace the casualties sustained by the army at Mareth.

68. In addition to troops transferred from Persia and Iraq Command for training for Sicily, the 3rd Corps Headquarters was also transferred to Ninth Army for training and re-equipping in April. They brought with them from Persia and Iraq the 8th Indian Division and 7th Army Group, Royal Artillery, and also took under command the 10th Indian Division, from Cyprus. In addition, the 2nd Polish Corps arrived in Ninth Army in August and September, with Corps Troops, the 3rd Carpathian Infantry Division, the 5th Kresowa

Infantry Division, the 2nd Polish Army Tank Brigade, the 3rd Carpathian Lancers, Army Group Polish Artillery and the 7th Polish Anti-tank Regiment. Ninth Army also received the 31st Indian Armoured Division from Iraq in October, and the 4th Indian Division was given its mountain warfare training there on its return from Tunisia, whilst the 13th Corps Headquarters carried out its early training for the attack on Sicily under Ninth Army before being brought to Cairo to act as the first planning staff for the operation.

69. All of these formations required considerable equipment, especially in vehicles, artillery, and signals stores; some of them needed re-organisation to bring them on to the latest British war establishments, and all of them made serious demands on the training establishments in Syria and the Lebanon, which had to be greatly enlarged. The Mountain Warfare Training Establishment, in particular, had to be increased, so that training could be given both to the formations destined for Sicily and to those for which other roles were reserved.

70. As early as February, 1943, plans and preparations for the invasion of Sicily were put in hand. The attack was to be carried out by a Western (American) and an Eastern (British) Task Force, for which Middle East Command had a four-fold role. I had to carry out detailed administrative planning for the Eastern Task Force; to organise, train and equip two Corps; to mount these two Corps for the operation, and subsequently to maintain the whole of the British forces in Sicily for a period. This maintenance commitment was to last from the fourth week of the attack until a later date, on which Allied Force Headquarters (Algiers) would take over administrative control; for the first four weeks of the operation, during which the first four convoys were due to arrive, formations were to be maintained by the command which mounted them. After Allied Force Headquarters had taken over administrative control of all forces in Sicily, Middle East was to be given a role of partial maintenance.

71. The first step in carrying out my task was the organisation of a staff to carry out the detailed planning for Eastern Task Force. In February, 1943, a planning headquarters was formed round the 13th Corps Headquarters in Cairo. As it became possible to release elements of Eighth Army Headquarters from the operations in Tunisia, Rear Headquarters of Eighth Army took over the planning from the 13th Corps Headquarters, and planning became the responsibility of Eighth Army Headquarters, assisted by a planning increment and planning staffs of the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force. At this stage the planning staff was designated Twelfth Army. The elements of Eighth Army Headquarters which were not absorbed in planning remained in Tripoli, commanding units and formations of Eighth Army.

72. Difficulties in detailed planning were to some extent inevitable owing to the need to give priority to the claims of Tunisia while planning a future operation which was to be carried out by the same commanders, staffs and units. Nor were matters made easier by the fact that planning for yet further operations was begun even before the Sicilian attack was launched. These difficulties were particularly