

resistance flickered up in Sicily, the bid to regain superiority failed. The cumulative effect of our air strategy and fighting had been so to reduce his numerical strength and ability to hit back, that during the final Italian offensive enemy air action could be virtually disregarded as an effective factor.

16. Although the enemy's air force in Italy was a negligible quantity, he had in that country a formidable array of 1,000 heavy and 2,200 light flak guns as well as countless small arms in an anti-aircraft role. He was therefore capable of putting up a very strong defence at important targets, and the Tactical Air Force had been compelled to develop a fairly complicated system of anti-flak tactics in order to avoid undue losses.

17. The freedom of the air enjoyed by the Allies in the Italian theatre allowed the greatest flexibility in the use of air effort, resulting in a high degree of efficiency. Moreover, its effect upon the morale of the German troops was most depressing; it kept them constantly reminded of the great advantage in material and weapons enjoyed by the Allies.

#### *The Naval Situation.*

18. The Allied Navies in the Mediterranean were as much masters of the seas as the Allied Air Forces were masters of the air. There were no major enemy surface units left in the theatre, while submarines had been driven from it by the thoroughness and efficiency of our combined naval-air operations, and by the overrunning of their bases. The chief threat which remained was offered by small craft and midget submarines.

19. The major task of the Allied Navies was to maintain the assault on the enemy's few remaining coastal sea routes, whose importance increased as the Air Forces' policy of destroying the enemy's land communications achieved substantial successes. This assault was carried out by British and United States Coastal Forces and destroyers, operating from Naval Advanced Bases at Ancona, Leghorn and in the South of France. In addition a mixed force of French, British and United States cruisers and destroyers, under a French Admiral, was operating continuously in support of the seaward flank of the Allied Forces holding the Franco-Italian frontier, giving gun-support from the sea. This force, which was known as "Flank Force," was under constant threat of attack from the enemy's explosive motor boats and midget submarines.

20. The enemy had carried out a programme of intensive mining, both to protect his coastal convoy routes and to hamper naval operations in support of the coming offensive. As these mines could be easily and quickly laid from small craft of various types, and as he had an adequate stock of mines, the result was to produce a minesweeping problem greater than any which had previously confronted the Navy in the Mediterranean. It was estimated that some 7,000 mines had been laid in the Gulf of Genoa, and 12,000 in the Northern Adriatic, where the whole area was particularly suitable for mine laying. The enemy also prepared detailed plans for the denial of harbours by

demolitions, blocking and mining, in all of which work he had by this time had a great deal of experience.

#### *The Maintenance Aspect.*

21. By dint of the fine efforts of the R.A.F. Maintenance Organisation the degree of aircraft serviceability was high when the land battle started. The policy during the battle was to use our air forces to the maximum extent of which the aircrews and maintenance personnel were capable. It was confidently believed that the enemy could be defeated within 21 days, and the event proved that this estimate and the policy of an all-out effort was sound.

22. The same policy was followed by the Army, which had sufficient ammunition and supplies and reserves for only about 21 days of intense operations.

23. From the foregoing paragraphs it will be seen that we had all the necessary superiority in equipment—especially aircraft and tanks—to launch a successful offensive. Most important was our predominance in the air, which meant that our own army was safe from air attack and at the same time could be led forward and constantly assisted by the Air Force.

### PART II.

#### THE ORDER OF BATTLE.

##### ORDER OF BATTLE ON MARCH 16TH, 1945.

24. The Mediterranean Allied Air Force was formed on December 10th, 1943. By March, 1945, it had already built up a fine reputation of accomplishment, and I was privileged to be in command during its highest peak of achievement and ultimate victory. The work of this integrated British-American Command has now finished, but let us hope that the lessons and advantages of co-operation which have been learned will be put to even better use in peace.

25. M.A.A.F. consisted of all operational units in the Mediterranean Theatre (which included Turkey, the Balkans, Central and South Western Europe, but excluded the Middle East); the main components were the Royal Air Force (including units of the Dominion Air Forces under its command) and the United States Army Air Forces. Operational control of all these units was exercised by the Air Commander-in-Chief, who was responsible through the Supreme Allied Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. The Air C.-in-C. also held the appointment of Commanding General United States Air Forces, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations.

26. As Deputy Air Commander-in-Chief, M.A.A.F., I exercised such responsibilities in regard to the Allied Air Forces as might be delegated to me by the Air Commander-in-Chief. As Commander-in-Chief Royal Air Force Mediterranean and Middle East, I was responsible for all R.A.F. operations in the MEDME Theatre; responsible to the Air C.-in-C., M.A.A.F., for those in that part of MEDME falling within his province, and to the Chief of the Air Staff for those in the remainder of the theatre. When I took over from Air Marshal Sir John Slessor, K.C.B., D.S.O., M.C., on March 16th to become Deputy C.-in-C., M.A.A.F., and C.-in-C., R.A.F., MEDME,