

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.