

Rear-Admiral T. H. Troubridge, D.S.O. (Rear-Admiral (G)) for the excellent training which he gave them.

5. *Period of Preparation and Planning.*—The conditions that would result from the large distances between the various headquarters had been foreseen, and, as expected, planning by telegram inevitably led to misunderstandings and a large number of amendments to the operation orders in the last few days. Due to the unavoidable delay in getting the operation orders to the various Task Group Commanders, considerable complications arose by the inclusion in some of their orders of matter which was properly the concern of higher authorities. This again increased the number of amendments necessary, and presented great difficulties to the smaller craft who received a mass of orders and amendments a few days before the operation.

6. *The Plan.*—There are two outstanding points about the plan which call for remark. The first has to do with the operational and the other with the administrative aspect. In my opinion the primary consideration is the operational aspect. The army must first examine the implications of the land campaign necessary to achieve the object in view. After this the administrative authorities must assess the administrative implications. In the early stages of planning for "Husky" too little importance and attention was paid to the operational aspect whilst too much was paid to the administrative, with the result that the outline plan given to the Commanders of the Eastern Task Force was operationally unacceptable. This situation was further complicated by the pre-occupation of the Army and Air Commanders with current operations and the wide dispersal of all planning authorities which resulted in a prolonged period of negotiation and delay.

In the end military necessity dictated the acceptance of administrative risks and the choice of a sound operational plan. It is to be hoped that plans for future operations will be based on operational requirements and not to suit the administrative appreciations, which incidentally always appear ultra-conservative in probabilities.

By the time the final orders were issued I felt entirely satisfied that the best plan available to us had been adopted, and my hopes that the weight of our attacks on a narrow front would overwhelm the enemy were, in the event, justified.

7. *Mounting of the Operation in the Middle East.*—From the moment of my arrival in Cairo on 2nd March, 1943, every possible assistance was afforded myself and my staff in the mounting and preparation for "Husky" by the Commander-in-Chief, Levant, Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, K.C.B., O.B.E., and his successors, Admirals Sir Ralph Leatham, K.C.B., and Sir John H. D. Cunningham, K.C.B., M.V.O., and the other naval authorities and departments in the Middle East. All the resources of the Levant Station, personnel, material and training, were made available and too great credit cannot be given to that Command for its share in the successful operations which followed.

Training in the Middle East was satisfactory. The rehearsals were carried out in the

Gulf of Aqaba from 10th to 17th June but were necessarily limited in scope, as only four M.T. ships and four L.C.T. were able to be present, no L.C.I.(L)* were available, and a limit had to be placed on the number of beachings that could be made by operational assault craft.

8. *Move to Malta.*—With my staff I took passage to Malta in H.M.S. ORION, arriving late on 2nd July. It had always been foreseen that there would be a large amount for my staff to do on arrival at Malta in the few days available previous to the operation, e.g., the allocation of landing craft by numbers to flotillas and task groups, and the briefing of the large number of landing craft and smaller warships based there. The forethought given to these matters by Vice-Admiral Malta enabled the work to be undertaken expeditiously and with his full understanding. I cannot speak too highly of the assistance given by Vice-Admiral A. J. Power, C.B., C.V.O., and his staff throughout the period that I was in Malta. His organisation enabled the heavy and intricate programme of loading, sailing and refuelling, etc., to proceed without a hitch, and all my requirements were readily and efficiently met.

9. *Narrative of the Operation.*—A composite narrative for the Task Force is attached. More detailed narratives for each sector are included in the Task Group Commanders' reports.

The Eastern Naval Task Force came under my operational control at 1200 on D-1, 9th July, and I was afloat on that and the following day with my flag flying in H.M.S. ANTWERP. Weather conditions were fair during the forenoon, and although the wind had risen slightly by noon, at which time I was in company with the four main ship convoys, south of Malta, I was not seriously concerned. The L.C.T. convoys from Tripoli and Tunisia had previously been spoken off Malta earlier in the day, and they and the ship convoys were all in their appointed positions. During the afternoon and evening the wind increased steadily from the north-west to a strength of at least 6 and by 1800 a nasty sea was running.

The effect of these conditions on the landing craft and at the beaches caused me some anxiety but postponement did not seriously enter into my mind. My reasoning was based on long acquaintance with Mediterranean weather conditions which led me to expect that the wind would go down suddenly before morning, together with the knowledge that all but one of my landings were to be made on a weather shore where conditions would not be too bad. It may be stated here that the wind and sea did start to drop soon after midnight and daylight saw the beginning of a perfect day with a clear blue sky and steadily decreasing swell. Except at BARK WEST,† where Force "V"‡ had to compete with a slight sea and swell, conditions at the beaches were perfect. It must be remembered, however, that the L.S.I. reached their release positions at 0030, before the wind and sea had abated to any extent, and the conditions in which the L.C.A.§

Admiralty footnotes:

* L.C.I.(L)—Landing Craft, Infantry (Large).

† BARK WEST—one of the British assault beaches (see Plan).

‡ Force "V"—a British Task Force under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Philip L. Vian, K.B.E.

§ L.C.A.—Landing Craft, Assault.