

so that it was necessary in some cases to move down to the docks personnel and vehicles ordered by the ferry control and to keep them there until craft became available.

156. Once the operations had started and the troops which had been staged there had been ferried to Sicily, Malta's role diminished. The dumps of supplies, petrol and oil, ammunition and Ordnance stores were partially despatched. Supplies of bread, approximately 18,000 lbs. daily, were shipped from 22nd July to 13th August. Apart from that, little was done by the island except to meet small urgent demands.

157. Undoubtedly Malta was used to full capacity. The hards in the Grand Harbour were of necessity extremely close together and difficult of access, but our air superiority discouraged the enemy from attempting any appreciable interference. Further, owing to lack of suitable sites, three of the vehicle marshalling parks were also in the middle of the harbour area. One vehicle marshalling park was camouflaged most successfully, but lack of labour and material did not permit of this being done for the others.

158. The administrative arrangements at Malta worked smoothly, thanks to the co-operation of the Royal Navy and the hard work of the garrison, and the island proved invaluable in the mounting of our overseas offensive in the Mediterranean.

159. The success achieved in preparing and mounting the offensive against Sicily was demonstrated by the operations. Eighth Army and its lines of communication and administration were firmly established, and on 12th August, 1943, 15 Army Group, under Allied Force Headquarters, took over administrative responsibility for Eighth Army. The actual hand-over took some weeks, but with effect from that date Middle East Command was officially relieved of this responsibility.

Italy.

160. In anticipation of the successful conclusion of the Sicilian campaign, plans were next made for exploitation in Italy. The planning was carried out at Allied Force Headquarters, and I was not directly concerned at this stage, although, at the request of Allied Force Headquarters, Middle East Survey revised some two hundred maps for the operation, despite the continued lack of suitable aircraft.

161. The plan, finally, called on Middle East to mount the 10th Corps Headquarters, Corps troops, the 7th Armoured Division and the 56th Division. These formations were to be mounted from the Tripoli area and were to take part in the attack either on the toe of Italy or at Salerno. In the end, although they were mounted for operations in the toe of Italy, they were launched against Salerno. The remainder of the force was to be mounted in North Africa and was not a commitment of Middle East Command.

162. Accordingly, the 10th Corps Headquarters, the 7th Armoured Division and the 56th Division were concentrated in the Tripoli area and were trained and equipped for their task. Re-equipment in artillery and vehicles was carried through without any great strain,

mainly by stripping the 1st Armoured Division and the 4th Indian Division, who were at that time without an operational role, whilst signals, engineer and other equipment was also provided and the formations were brought up to their full scale of both armoured and other vehicles.

163. The task of equipping these formations, at a distance of over a thousand miles from the main base in Egypt, and with the planning staff still further removed (at Algiers) provided a sharp contrast to the advantages which had been gained by withdrawing most of Eighth Army to Egypt for re-equipment for the attack on Sicily. Much confusion was caused by the inevitable lack of close liaison, and to meet urgent demands considerable use had to be made of air transport, as a result of which the freight carried by air from Cairo to Tripolitania rose from 1,600 lbs. in July to 135,000 lbs. in August and 154,000 lbs. in September.

164. The arrangements for concentration and embarkation were delegated very largely to Headquarters Tripolitania District, owing to the great distance from the main base at which the operation had to be mounted, and in spite of the fact that a single port was used for the embarkation of so large a force, and of the distance from main base, the task was successfully accomplished. For the assault, nine personnel ships, eight stores ships and ten L.S.Ts. sailed from Tripoli on 7th September, whilst a further 170 L.S.Ts. completed the Corps by mid-November. In all, including follow-up shipping, some 73,000 men, 14,000 vehicles, 600 guns and 400 tanks were embarked from Tripoli, involving the use of 342 vessels.

165. Eighth Army crossed from Sicily into Italy on 3rd September, and the assault landing at Salerno was carried out on the 9th by which date preparations for launching the 10th Corps were complete. Although most of this embarkation was successfully delegated to Headquarters Tripolitania District, the Middle East base ports were also called on to ship 4,500 tons of stores direct.

166. Middle East Command was responsible for maintaining this force for the first three weeks of the operation, that is to say, from 9th September to 2nd October. For this period, convoys were loaded with 43,500 tons of stores.

167. From 2nd October onwards, maintenance of the force in Italy was on the basis of the Eastern and Western Group system, which was also being used for the other forces, including Eighth Army, in Sicily and Italy. Under this system the War Office made demands on Middle East, but in order to simplify the shipping problem Allied Force Headquarters also informed Middle East, every ten days, of the separate demands for Naples and the toe of Italy respectively.

168. From 13th September, the normal ten-day convoys from Middle East were switched from Sicily to Italy, but normal maintenance and the building up of reserves were affected by the demands made on port and shipping capacities by the move to Italy of follow-up divisions. This demand was made heavier because, in view of the low holding of reserve stores in Italy, the first three follow-up divisions had to take with them sixty days' reserves of