

to be built up. The solution decided upon was the establishment at Naples of an Advanced Administrative Echelon of A.F.H.Q., which on 24th October took over the functions of administration formerly exercised by Fortbase. Major-General Robertson, who had commanded Fortbase, was appointed to the command of the Echelon; he was instructed to co-ordinate all administration on the mainland of Italy, to make the necessary arrangements to support the operations of Fifteenth Army Group and the North-West African Tactical Air Forces, and to act as personal administrative adviser to the Army Group Commander.

The primary task of the new headquarters was to undertake the reorganisation of our lines of communication. From the disposition of the forces at the time, it followed that Eighth Army should be supplied by the Heel ports and the east coast roads, while Fifth Army used Naples and roads on the west coast, each Army taking over additional ports as it moved north. It was not, however, possible to keep British and American lines of supply separate, as they had been in Sicily; for the Heel ports were not capable of supporting the whole British force and furthermore there was—and would be for a long time yet—at least one British Corps under American command near the west coast. Naples, with its large though damaged port, was clearly capable of being developed to accept a great tonnage; and so it was decided to establish a full complement of British depots there and in the Heel, resources being split equally between the two areas. At first sight this might appear wasteful in administrative resources; but it did allow a flexibility that was invaluable later when it came to switching large forces rapidly from one coast to the other.

By the end of the year the new headquarters had succeeded in its major reorganisation and there was a great change from the uncomfortable position of October. Although the build-up had not gone as fast as had at one time been hoped—due mainly to lack of transport facilities—the main commodities were, with the exception of ammunition⁽¹⁾, in good supply. Port development was sound and Naples was unloading some 15,000 tons daily; on the east coast the position had weakened to some extent as a result of the German air raid of 1st December which had destroyed 17 ships and 40,000 tons of cargo at Bari, but there was still a daily turnover of from 10,000 to 11,000 tons per day. We could at last say that our base in Italy was now quite firm.

A further reorganisation took place when General Eisenhower left the Mediterranean theatre. It was decided then that all responsibility for Italy should devolve as much as possible on Fifteenth Army Group. The obvious step then was to transfer the A.F.H.Q. Administrative Echelon entire to that Headquarters, renamed "Headquarters Allied Armies in Italy." This transfer involved no change in the administrative system, and took place on 24th February, 1944. After this reorganisation the administrative side of the campaign presented no problems out of the ordinary.⁽²⁾ So successful was the basis which had been laid that the great regrouping of the

spring of 1944 was carried out without a hitch and the pursuit from the Garigliano to the Arno proceeded without ever being embarrassed by shortage of supplies.

ANNEX I to Appendix "K"

THE AMMUNITION SHORTAGE IN ITALY

On two occasions during the fighting in Italy—in the winter of 1943-44 and again a year later—operations were prejudiced by a shortage of gun ammunition. The first shortage was, initially, an artificial one and there were always enough rounds in the gun pits; but the fact that fighting was heavier than had been expected, that the arrival of the Strategic Air Force in Italy delayed the build-up of reserves, and that there was a general shortage of transport and harbour facilities meant that reserves at Army level were inadequate. To meet this local shortage, considerably aggravated by our commitment at Anzio early in 1944, it was necessary to ship to Italy all available surplus stocks from the Middle East, North Africa and Sicily and the result was a shortage of ammunition throughout the Mediterranean theatre so serious that in early February I flew home to the War Office in an attempt to obtain immediate shipments of ammunition and an increase in the general allotment. I managed to obtain a certain increase, after I had fully explained our difficulties, but I was forced to issue stringent orders that the expenditure of ammunition should be drastically rationed and, except when they were repelling an attack or supporting an offensive, 25 pounders would be limited to 15 and medium guns to 10 rounds per gun per day.

The ammunition crisis again came to a head in the late autumn of 1944, and this time it was not only a theatre shortage but was, in fact, world-wide and affected American as well as British stocks. The first notification we had of it came in a message from the War Office in August which said that a shortfall in production meant that future supplies would have to be cut down. This news, coming at a time when we were engaged in the "Gothic" line battles with their heavy expenditure of ammunition, caused grave concern. The immediate shortage was overcome by the use of A.F.H.Q.'s reserve but this unfortunately could be no widow's cruse and by mid-November the position was so acute that no large-scale offensive could be considered for another four months. Again it was necessary to impose a strict system of rationing which was to remain in force until the final offensive began in the spring of 1945.

ANNEX II to Appendix "K"

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ANZIO BRIDGEHEAD

My administrative staff regarded the commitment entailed by the Anzio bridgehead as very heavy. The plan relied on the continuous maintenance of a mixed force, requiring both British and American supplies, over open beaches for an indefinite time at a season when the weather was likely to be at its worst. It is very much to their credit that these serious difficulties were overcome.

⁽¹⁾ Annex I.

⁽²⁾ I add a note, at Annex II, on the maintenance of the Anzio bridgehead, which presented certain original features.