

moved his Tactical Headquarters to the Governor's Palace at Malta leaving Main Headquarters at La Marsa.

THE MOUNTING.

The operation was successfully mounted from North African and Middle East ports according to plan.* The mounting of this operation within two months of the conclusion of the Tunisian campaign was a very remarkable achievement on the part of all administrative staffs and formations responsible under AFHQ and GHQ Middle East, including the Naval and Sea Transport authorities concerned. It also involved very heavy commitments in the supply and maintenance of the large air forces operating in support from airfields in North Africa, Middle East, Malta, Pantelleria and Lampedusa.

THE OPERATION.

The assault on Sicily by Seventh and Eighth Armies, supported by the Royal Navy, United States Navy and the North-west African Air Forces, took place according to plan on 10th July 1943, in spite of an exceptionally high wind. There was little or no opposition on the beaches. Syracuse was in our hands by D plus 1 and was opened to receive the first convoy on D plus 3 by 86 Base Area (Brigadier H. C. N. Trollope) under command of Eighth Army. Licata was captured by 3 United States Division according to plan.

Beach maintenance was carried out by both Task Forces satisfactorily and the rate of discharge over the beaches was much higher than had been anticipated. From 10th July the weather was favourable and the sea calm; air and sea superiority was established and although there were some losses of craft and shipping due to enemy action, these did not seriously affect maintenance. No serious administrative shortages were encountered, and the DUKWS proved a marked success for transport from ship and landing craft to beach depot area.

By D plus 14 FORTBASE had taken over the general administration of the beaches and of the ports of Syracuse and Augusta from Eighth Army in accordance with the plan.

Seventh Army.

On the Seventh Army front in the western half of the island, the German forces retired eastwards towards the Messina peninsula, and there was no serious resistance from the Italian forces. The Commander-in-Chief directed that Palermo should be captured and the port opened up as the main base of supply for Seventh Army. This gave Seventh Army the port they needed and switched their main axis of supply for the final attack on the Messina peninsula from beaches and two small ports in the south to Palermo and eastwards along the north coast.

The main administrative problems confronting the staff of Seventh Army in the course of this operation ashore were:—

(a) To maintain the divisions in the initial advance to Palermo and the western end of

the island from beach maintenance areas and from the small ports of Licata and Empedocle in the south.

(b) To open up Palermo port and to switch the convoys from the southern ports and beaches to the axis of supply along the north coast for the final drive against Messina.

(c) To get supplies of all natures to the troops over mountainous and narrow roads in poor condition with limited mechanical transport in the face of considerable demolitions that had been carried out on roads and railways by the enemy. In the final advance on Messina it was found necessary to supply the forward American divisions by sea from landing craft since the coast road from Palermo had been cut by demolitions.

(d) To maintain the Air Forces operating from Comiso and Ponte Olivo.

In spite of these problems and difficulties the troops never went short, and particular credit is due to the United States Engineer units who carried out repairs to roads and railways with great energy and speed.

Eighth Army.

On the Eighth Army front in the eastern half of the island strong German resistance was encountered on the general line south of Catania and to the west then running northwards round Mount Etna.

Maintenance over the beaches of the Pachino Peninsula and south of Syracuse was successfully achieved. Although some ships were lost owing to enemy air action no serious interference with maintenance resulted. The ports of Syracuse and Augusta were opened according to plan.

It was the administrative policy of Eighth Army to:—

(a) Form a main base of supply for Eighth Army at Syracuse.

(b) Utilise Augusta in the initial stages for the maintenance of 13 Corps on the eastern flank.

(c) Maintain 30 Corps from beach maintenance areas, but to close these down as soon as possible and shift the supply axis of this Corps on to the Syracuse main depot area.

The railways and such locomotives and rolling stock as were available were used to the maximum possible extent and Corps railheads were opened up as far forward as circumstances permitted. Roads were narrow and twisty but, with good Q (Movements) traffic control, presented no insuperable difficulties in the movement of mechanical transport, and all demands for ammunition and other supplies were adequately met.

After the capture of Catania, this port was used for the maintenance of Air Forces located on the Gerbini airfields and subsequently for the mounting of operations against the Toe of Italy. The port of Augusta was closed for maintenance and handed over to the Royal Navy, stocks in beach maintenance areas being cleared into Syracuse depots according to plan.

The outstanding administrative feature of this operation was the speed with which ports were opened to shipping immediately after capture and the efficient manner in which stores

* War Office footnote. In addition 1 Canadian Division, ancillary units and 3,000 R A F personnel were embarked in the United Kingdom and transported to Sicily. 45 U S Division (less 1 Regimental Combat Team) and ancillary units were mounted from the United States of America.