

priority was therefore assigned to such attacks and in practice they were normally limited to attacks on jet-propelled fighter installations.

(f) Attacks against communications outside Germany. Attacks against these targets included the following, the priority of which was determined by reconnaissance and other intelligence and which was specified by special instructions from Headquarters M.A.A.F.

- (1) Railway communications between S.E. Germany and the Danubian Plains.
- (2) Railway communications between South Germany and Austria, and Italy.
- (3) Communications in Yugoslavia.
- (4) Communications in Italy.

Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force.

150. The general commitments of the Tactical Air Force for March remained basically the same as in the previous two months. Their priority and scope were:—

- (a) the disruption of enemy lines of communication;
- (b) the destruction of enemy supplies and dumps;
- (c) the support of ground operations by air attacks;
- (d) reconnaissance duties;
- (e) counter air force operations and provision of air protection over the forward areas;
- (f) the dropping of supplies to Italian Partisans and other Special Duties operations.

151. The Commanding General, M.A.T.A.F., was responsible for the selection of targets for offensive air operations in Italy, and no targets in Italy were to be attacked by other formations except upon his request or approval. He maintained at H.Q., M.A.S.A.F., and H.Q., M.A.C.A.F., a list of targets from which individual objectives could be selected by them when an opportunity for attack occurred. If M.A.T.A.F. required priority assistance from M.A.S.A.F., a request was made to Headquarters M.A.A.F. for approval.

152. Owing to the negligible effort of the German Air Force, the counter air force operations and air protection for our forward areas were only minor activities. The major objective was to reduce the enemy army's ability to fight by attacks on his lines of communications and supply dumps. Reconnaissance work was a constant need and was handled by the specialised squadrons concerned.

The Balkan Air Force.

153. The function of Balkan Air Force during March was primarily to give all possible air support to Marshal Tito's Yugoslav Army of National Liberation, in both bombing and Special Duties operations. Details of this have been given in Part III, which deals specifically with the subject. In addition, B.A.F. was responsible for the selection of targets for air operations in Yugoslavia, and the communication of this list to M.A.S.A.F., M.A.T.A.F., and M.A.C.A.F. When the other air forces found an opportunity to operate against previously accepted targets in Yugoslavia consistent with their other priorities; they confirmed with B.A.F. that the targets selected were still

cleared for attack. If B.A.F. desired either to solicit additional assistance from M.A.S.A.F. or to obtain a higher priority on accepted targets, it forwarded a request to Headquarters M.A.A.F. for decision.

Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force.

154. The primary task of the Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force continued to be the protection of our own shipping, the attacking of enemy shipping of all types and the provision of air sea rescue facilities. In addition to this, tactical sorties were flown, giving assistance to Balkan Air Force activities in Northern Yugoslavia, and to M.A.T.A.F.'s programme of interdiction in the western part of the Po Valley.

OPERATIONAL EFFORT PRIOR TO THE ITALIAN OFFENSIVE.

155. An analysis of the bombing effort of the Command during March and early April shows that there were four broad objectives.

- (a) The completion of the destruction of the enemy's oil resources.
- (b) Attacks on communications in South-East Europe in order to aid the Russian drive into Austria and Northern Yugoslavia.
- (c) Interdiction of the enemy's communications, leading into, and inside Italy, and the destruction of his supply dumps and installations, in preparation for the army's final offensive.
- (d) Support for the offensive of the Fourth Yugoslav Army.

The first three tasks are dealt with in detail below, while the fourth has been dealt with in Part III.

Oil Targets.

156. By the middle of March, 1945, the air campaign against enemy oil targets had achieved almost complete success. Begun nearly a year before, as a co-ordinated offensive with Bomber Command and the VIIIth Air Force operating from the United Kingdom, it had, assisted by the advances of the Russian armies, so nearly completed its task, that there were by March, 1945, only six known active plants within range of M.A.S.A.F. Of these the most important was that at Ruhland, seventy miles south of Berlin and over 700 miles from M.A.S.A.F. bases. In the third week in March, it was attacked three times by M.A.S.A.F. Fortresses with over one thousand tons of bombs, and successfully neutralised. In March also, attacks were made on the already damaged refineries in the Vienna area, and on two small refineries in the Western Hungarian oil region.

157. These raids brought the offensive to a successful conclusion, for on March 26th, the petrol output of refineries still in enemy hands and within range of M.A.S.A.F. was estimated to be, for all practical purposes, nil; and during April, it was judged to be a waste of effort to make any further raids on oil targets from Italian bases.

158. The overall result of the Anglo-American two-way bombing and of Allied ground advances by the end of March, even allowing for some small production from new underground plants, was to reduce the enemy's production of liquid fuels and lubricants to less