

ward area in order to ensure the early occupation of a port, in this case, Bougie. These losses and the damage suffered by various ships at Algiers serve to point again to the essential importance of establishing properly directed fighter protection at the earliest moment. This was a lesson well learnt in the Western Desert campaign, and well digested by all concerned; but now in the novel circumstances of amphibious entry to a new theatre of operations new lessons had to be learnt by bitter experience. These lessons all relate to the necessity, in the combined planning stage, of assuring the necessary priority for the establishment of R.A.F. ground control and servicing equipment ashore at an early stage.

Anti-Aircraft Gunfire.

30. A striking feature of the operation at Algiers and to eastward of that port was the number of enemy aircraft shot down by ships' gunfire, warships and merchant vessels alike. This was perhaps the first great undertaking by our seaborne forces in which ships entered the area of operations adequately armed. We suffered loss, but the toll paid by the enemy was high.

31. The presence of the anti-aircraft ships at occupied ports was invaluable.

Administrative Arrangements.

32. The administrative arrangements for this operation worked well, due chiefly to the detailed planning carried out by the Admiralty departments and the administrative staff at Norfolk House.*

The efficiency with which the administrative section of the Plans Division at the Admiralty met all my requirements and interpreted them to the Supply Departments, where they were well implemented, fully justified the establishment of this section and, together with the assistance rendered by the Second Sea Lord's office and the department of the Director of Personal Services, contributed greatly to the success of the operation.

In future operations the planning should ensure an adequate supply of clothing for naval and merchant seamen from D day.

The Naval and Victualling Store Departments at Gibraltar were inadequately manned to achieve their full functions.

Advance to the East.

33. No sooner was Algiers occupied than the Flag Officer, Inshore Squadron† in co-operation with the General Officer Commanding 1st Army pressed on energetically with the task of expanding the occupation eastward. The acquiescence of the French enabled the occupation of Bone to be quickly undertaken, and it was not until we were within 16 miles of Tunis that the Axis forces were able to stop the tide of our advance.

34. During the initial planning stage, I advocated a landing at Bizerta, and it is a matter of lasting regret to me that this bolder conception was not implemented. Had we been prepared to throw even a small force into the eastward ports, the Axis would have been forestalled

in their first token occupation and success would have been complete. They were surprised and off their balance. We failed to give the final push which would have tipped the scales.

35. To sum up, there were few new lessons learnt, but many old ones received fresh emphasis. Those which require most firmly to be borne in mind are

(a) The need for boldness and the value of holding even a small highly mobile reserve to exploit success daringly.

(b) The importance of not overestimating the enemy's resources, exemplified in this case by the infra-red equipment bogey, which led us to lie too far offshore at the initial landings.

(c) The importance of training in a service which is no longer manned by a majority of prime seamen, and the need for combined training with the soldiers with whom they are to work.

(d) The importance of carrying out such beach reconnaissance as is required well in advance, to gain security.

(e) The vital necessity for immediate installation of a proper air defence system at occupied ports.

(f) The need of co-ordination in the various elements of Naval Port Parties who should be assembled and organised under one command before embarkation.

(g) The necessity for promulgating experienced advice about conditions in a theatre of operations to units joining from other stations.

36. That the operation achieved the success it did was due, in so far as general operations are concerned,

(a) To the high measure of secrecy achieved, which enabled us to gain surprise.

(b) To the sound planning and forethought shown in the Naval sphere by Admiral Sir Bertram H. Ramsay, K.C.B., M.V.O.*, who made a contribution not easily measured to the smooth running of the seaborne operations.

(c) To the excellent co-operation which existed through all ranks of the services of both nations, the foundations of which were laid during the period of combined planning at Norfolk House.

(d) To the compact and efficient arrangement of the Combined Headquarters at Gibraltar.

(e) To the high standard of seamanship and technical efficiency which is mercifully still maintained in the units of the Fleet. In this connection the value of the Western Approaches training is outstanding.

(f) To the courage, determination and adaptability of the Merchant Navy.

37. In conclusion I feel it should be placed on record that in this most difficult of all types of operation with a number of services involved and despite the difficulties inherent in welding together the systems of command and organisation of two nations, there reigned a spirit of comradeship and understanding which provided that vital force which

Admiralty footnotes:—

* Norfolk House—in St. James's Square, London; the pre-operational H.Q. of the Allied Commander-in-Chief.

† Flag Officer, Inshore Squadron—Vice-Admiral Sir Harold M. Burrough, K.B.E., C.B., D.S.O

Admiralty footnote:—

* Deputy Naval Commander Expeditionary Force.