

fact that in March, 1943, forty pioneer companies (13,000 men) were employed in the District.

To meet the heavy demand for labour, the experiment of using Prisoners of War Working units was tried. Three such units were in use, mainly on roads, by the end of May, and the number was increased to seven by the end of the year. On the whole, the experiment worked well.

53. A further source of labour was the civilian population. Under International Law I was responsible for the military government of occupied enemy territories in my command, and from 5th March, 1943, I delegated this responsibility to the Civil Affairs Branch and the Chief Political Officer, Middle East Forces, Brigadier H. R. Hone. Under him, the administration of the civilian population of Cyrenaica District was organised by the British Military Administration of Cyrenaica (the use of the formula Occupied Enemy Territory Administration—O.E.T.A.—being abandoned); the Deputy Chief Civil Affairs Officer dealt with the civilian population under the direction of the Military Commander. The British Military Administration in Cyrenaica was faced with a friendly but hungry population, and its chief tasks were the provision of food and the organisation of labour. Supplies were despatched from the Middle East Base to supplement captured stocks and local produce, and the control of supplies made the organisation of labour easier, since it was possible to secure local labour in considerable numbers by paying partly in rations, particularly in sugar, tea and cigarettes.

54. The provision of garrisons for the District was not a serious problem. At Tobruk and Benghazi anti-aircraft protection and coastal defence batteries were needed, while anti-aircraft protection was also necessary on the Cyrenaica airfields; but for ordinary local defence purposes, during the Tunisian campaign, only a battalion of the Sudan Defence Force was needed to supplement the Libyan Arab Force (recruited originally from Cyrenaican refugees in Egypt and from Cyrenaican prisoners of war volunteers, and later converted into the Cyrenaican Gendarmerie).

55. Although the traffic for Eighth Army through the ports of Tobruk and Benghazi declined rapidly as Tripoli was developed, the responsibilities of Cyrenaica District remained. Once the Tunisian campaign was over, the decline in the volume of traffic through the District became still more marked; for example, whereas traffic on the Western Desert Railway reached 65,000 tons in January, 1943, it had fallen to 6,000 tons in December; imports at Benghazi dropped from 50,000 tons in January, 1943, to 17,000 tons in December, and from April onwards no stores were brought into Tobruk by sea.

56. Nevertheless, during the summer months the facilities of the District were of considerable value. The Royal Air Force and the local garrisons had to be maintained and supplied, and when Eighth Army was re-formed for the attack on Sicily those units and formations which were recalled to Egypt were staged on their journey. For the invasion of Sicily, 2,700 personnel and 846 vehicles were embarked at Benghazi.

57. To conform to the reduction in the importance of the District, the organisation was changed from time to time. When it was originally established, the District included 83 Area at Benghazi and 99 Sub-Area at Tobruk. In March, when District Headquarters moved to Barce, 93 Sub-Area relieved 83 Area at Benghazi, and in November, when the traffic through Tobruk had considerably declined, Tobruk Zone Headquarters relieved 99 Sub-Area there. Ultimately, on 15th December, Headquarters Cyrenaica District was abolished and Headquarters, Cyrenaica Area, took over, relieving 93 Sub-Area at Benghazi.

Tripolitania.

58. Similar arrangements to those made in Cyrenaica District were also made in Tripolitania. Here, Headquarters Tripolitania Base and Lines of Communication, took over responsibility from Gabes to El Hamma with Advanced Headquarters at Sfax on 24th April, when part of Rear Headquarters of Eighth Army was withdrawn to prepare for the invasion of Sicily. The Advanced Headquarters at Sfax was closed on 1st June, when First Army took over responsibility for Tunisia.

59. On 16th July, 1943, Headquarters Tripolitania Base and Lines of Communication, was replaced by Headquarters Tripolitania District, under the command of Major-General N. Clowes. Tripolitania District Headquarters was under direct command of General Headquarters Middle East, and was given a heavy task to perform in re-equipping parts of Eighth Army for operations in Sicily and in preparing the 10th Corps for operations in Italy.

60. In preparation for Sicily, the advanced base at Tripoli had to maintain a force of over 200,000 men during May and June. For this operation, 32,000 men, 6,000 vehicles and 310 guns were embarked from the port of Tripoli. For the attack on Italy, the whole of the 10th Corps Headquarters, the 56th Division and the 7th Armoured Division embarked from this port. This involved the use of 342 vessels and the embarkation of 73,000 men, 14,000 vehicles, 686 guns and 447 tanks.

61. After Eighth Army had departed for Sicily and Italy, the port of Tripoli was still used for its partial maintenance. In particular, Tripolitania became a medical base for the evacuation of casualties from Sicily, receiving 10,321 casualties by sea and 3,708 by air during the campaign.

62. Within Tripolitania District the same problems of maintenance, local administration and food supplies were encountered as in Cyrenaica District. Here also the British Military Administration set up courts, recruited a police force, assisted the Italian agricultural population, provided and distributed food, and assisted greatly in the provision of labour for military purposes.

63. Owing to its role in preparing for the Sicilian and Italian operations, the commitments of Tripolitania District did not decline quite so rapidly as did those of Cyrenaica District. But imports, which reached their peak with 131,000 tons in April, were only 91,000 tons in June and had dropped to 40,000 tons in July; during December they were down to 16,000 tons. Similarly the ration strength