

advantage lay in denying to the enemy the use of the RDF* stations there. The operation, which was preceded by a very heavy Air and Naval bombardment, was carried out under direct command of General Eisenhower, using 1 (British) Infantry Division. It was entirely successful at negligible loss, and the use of the airfield was very valuable for the Sicilian campaign.

Invasion and Conquest of Sicily.

The period of planning for the invasion of Sicily was unusually prolonged and it was possible to devote a more intensive study to the subject than is generally the case. I have omitted, in the account given above, a good many of the stages in that planning but it is essential to give sufficient detail to make quite clear the nature of the problem with which we were faced and the solution which was eventually adopted. This has also made it possible to present the narrative of operations in a much briefer form since on the whole in this case the conventional phrase is justified and operations proceeded according to plan. I should like to take the opportunity now, before passing on to the narrative of events, of giving their due credit to the men who made success possible.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief, Allied Expeditionary Force, was the man on whom fell the ultimate responsibility of taking the great decisions. He commanded directly all sea, land and air forces in the theatre. He and his staff could not have been more helpful to me throughout; I knew that when he had given his confidence he would support me through everything and I had already had the happiest experience in Tunisia of what that support could be. His great merits as a commander have been too well illustrated in all the campaigns in Europe to need further tribute from me but I would like to single out one aspect in which I think he excelled: the gift for managing a coalition of different allies in arms. In almost all the wars in which Great Britain has been involved we have fought as a member of a coalition and a British commander has, therefore, what I may call a deep historic sense of the difficulties of combining the efforts of an allied force; he can remember the controversies of Marlborough with the Dutch Field Deputies and Wellington going down on his knees to humour the fractiousness of a Spanish General. Throughout all the operations which I commanded in the Mediterranean the British and American forces fought not merely as two armies with the same general objective and the same war aims but as a single homogeneous army and, without for a moment derogating from the spirit of loyal co-operation of all commanders and men, there is no doubt that the inspiration which gave life and vigour to that co-operation derived originally from General Eisenhower.

The Commanders-in-Chief of the naval and air forces in the theatre came, in the chain of command, directly under General Eisenhower and occupied therefore a position co-ordinate with my own. It is for this reason that I have dealt only summarily in this despatch with their operations but I must at this point try to

make clear the debt which land operations owed to the sister services. On Admiral Cunningham fell the weight of what was in some ways the most arduous, detailed and vital part of the operation, the actual conveyance of the troops to their objectives. I do not mean merely to point out the obvious: that to invade an island it is necessary to cross the sea; but to evoke to the imagination some picture of the gigantic nature of the task of conveying for such distances, assembling and directing to obscure and unlit beaches in an enemy territory an Armada of over two thousand ships and craft. I must mention only in passing the assistance of naval gunfire on the beaches and the silent strength of the covering forces waiting, and hoping, for the appearance in defence of its native soil of that fleet which once claimed to dominate the Mediterranean. It is a theme which can be adequately described only by a naval specialist, and one of which the Royal Navy and the United States Navy are justly proud. Air Chief Marshal Tedder, Commander-in-Chief of the allied air forces in the Mediterranean, was an old colleague from the Middle East. His mastery of air strategy was demonstrated in Africa, Sicily and Italy and his mastery of the art of war as a whole was shown by his subsequent appointment as Deputy Supreme Commander, of all three arms, to General Eisenhower for operations in France and Germany. I have referred elsewhere to the work of the allied air forces. To sum it up it is only necessary to say they gave us command of the air and to demonstrate it to point to the protection our troops enjoyed in the first critical days when the fighters swarmed over the great, vulnerable convoys and the fighter-bombers hunted up and down the roads of Sicily seeking and destroying enemy reinforcements moving up to the beaches. The Commander of the Tactical Air Forces, Air Marshal Coningham, was another old colleague from the Middle East. His headquarters moved always with mine and our contact was so close that the word co-operation is too weak; we were two parts of the same machine and worked as one.

Of the Armies under my command I had already had successful experience. General Patton, commanding Seventh Army, had already served under me in Tunisia and I had complete confidence in him. He had there taken command of a body of troops, the excellent material of which had been prevented hitherto from showing its full capabilities by a certain lack of experience and by difficulties of terrain and climate, and had transformed it by his inspiration into a fast-moving and hard-hitting force crowned with victory. Seventh Army was certainly fast-moving and hard-hitting and it undoubtedly owed these qualities to the leadership of its commander. General Montgomery was also a commander in whom I had every trust and confidence. He and his Eighth Army had served under my command since August, 1942. Fresh from a campaign where they had advanced eighteen hundred miles in six months to share in the capture of a quarter of a million prisoners, they showed in Sicily that they could apply the lessons learnt then to a very different type of terrain and style of fighting. I was glad to welcome, in addition to the veteran formations of the Desert, the splendid 1 Canadian Division, trained to a hair in the United Kingdom and

* RDF = Radio Direction Finding (now known as Radar).