

felt by Survey, who found the shortage of photographic units a great handicap.

73. A further great difficulty was the distance which separated Allied Force Headquarters from Cairo. This necessarily made co-ordination and liaison difficult, and planning would have been much easier had the staffs of the forces involved been concentrated in one area instead of being over 1,500 miles apart. My chief administrative officers and those from the War Office could then have made co-ordinated visits and held combined administrative staff conferences, at which problems could have been considered and decided, instead of examining these problems by signal, with inevitable delay.

74. The role allotted to Middle East remained unchanged, but its implications varied considerably as planning went forward. The operational plan for Eastern Task Force, which controlled the detailed planning in Cairo, originally contemplated an assault landing on the South-east corner of Sicily, followed by an assault landing at Catania. Both assaults were to be prepared by Middle East and were to be commanded by Eighth Army, under Allied Force Headquarters. The initial assault in the South-east was to be undertaken by the 13th Corps, with the 5th and 56th Divisions, an army tank battalion, an armoured regiment and a commando, all mounted from Egypt; the subsequent assault landing at Catania was to be undertaken by the 3rd Division, a brigade group and two commandos, all mounted from the United Kingdom and later coming under the command of the 13th Corps. There was also to be a follow-up division (not assault-trained) from North Africa.

75. This plan, however, was subjected to both major and minor modifications as preparations went forward. The assault-landing at Catania was abandoned; the 56th Division was diverted to Tunisia and later to the 10th Corps, its place in the 13th Corps being taken by the 50th Division, which was withdrawn from Tunisia for re-forming and training. The 30th Corps was nominated as the second corps of Eastern Task Force, to carry out an assault on the South coast of the island in the Modica area, whilst Western Task Force concentrated its initial assault just to the West, in the Gela area; the 3rd Division was transferred to the 30th Corps when the assault on Catania was abandoned. Later, the 3rd Division was withdrawn and its place was taken by the 1st Canadian Division, with the 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, to be mounted with a commando from the United Kingdom. The 51st Division was eventually nominated as the second division of the 30th Corps, which was to include the 231st Brigade. The 1st Airborne Division was also given a role in Eastern Task Force, and the 78th Division was to be the follow-up division. Both of these divisions were to be mounted from North Africa, and Middle East only had the responsibility of planning for them and of providing the 4th Parachute Brigade for the 1st Airborne Division.

76. These changes very considerably increased the difficulties of planning, and of training and equipping the force; but preparations were in fact completed to time although the date of the assault was advanced and the period for preparation was cut down as planning continued.

77. Experience showed that the planning of combined operations requires far more detail and consequently a larger and possibly more specialised staff than normal operations.

78. The most important subject of detailed planning, to which all other considerations were preliminary and subordinate, was the ultimate embarkation and shipment of the force.

79. By the end of February an outline plan had been prepared. The force to be mounted from Middle East required sixty M.T. ships and twenty-five troopships in addition to a large number of landing craft. To enable vehicles and stores to be discharged in the order of priority laid down by Twelfth Army Headquarters, plans were made for stores-ships to be tactically loaded. To implement this, in mid-April a pre-stowage planning staff was set up at Cairo: this included representatives of the War Office and of the Ministry of War Transport, who had had experience of planning stowage for the landing in Algeria.

80. Planning for anti-aircraft defence involved a two-fold problem. It was necessary to provide strong anti-aircraft cover for the Suez Canal and for the Middle East ports of concentration in addition to anti-aircraft protection for the assault. The Middle East Bases would be valuable targets at any time during the last five weeks of preparation, and strong anti-aircraft reinforcements had to be deployed for their defence. Units for this reinforcement programme were provided by bringing back a proportion of the Eighth Army anti-aircraft units and by reinforcements from the United Kingdom.

81. The planning for the anti-aircraft and coast defences of ports and airfields in Sicily, when they should be captured, with its complicated problems of distribution and co-ordination, was carried out by an inter-services committee.

82. Signals planning had to deal with problems for implementing the inter-communications plan, the provision of units and equipment, the provision of special equipment for combined operations for non-signals units, and the provision of communications in embarkation areas during the loading of formations.

83. One of the main difficulties anticipated was that of bridging the gap between the landing craft and the water's edge on the very shallow beaches. To assist in the solution of this problem considerable experimental work had to be carried out.

84. Originally it was intended that Malta should be used as a casualty clearing station area, but this was vetoed by the Royal Navy. Arrangements were accordingly made for the evacuation of casualties from the beaches direct to Tripoli, Sousse and Sfax; Middle East was responsible only for Tripoli, where plans were made to provide 9,000 hospital beds and accommodation for 4,550 convalescents. To implement the evacuation plan, eight hospital ships and four carriers were required. Of these the latter were provided from the United Kingdom and the former from the Middle East, India and South Africa. They were to rendezvous at Tripoli fully equipped.

85. Large dumps of stretchers, blankets and hospital linen were also established at base ports, and extra medical supplies and equipment were provided for the medical units in the