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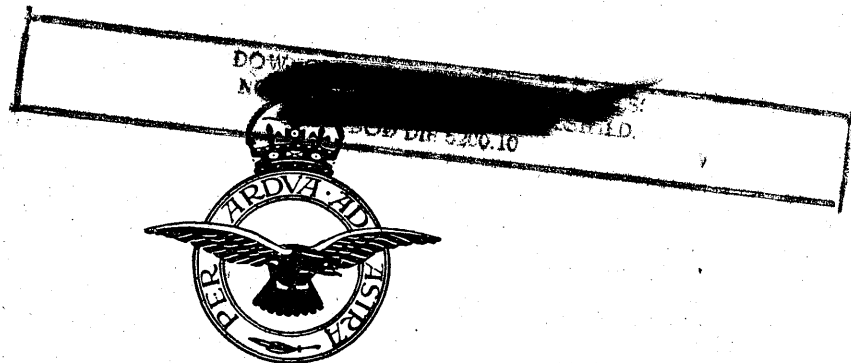
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Foreword

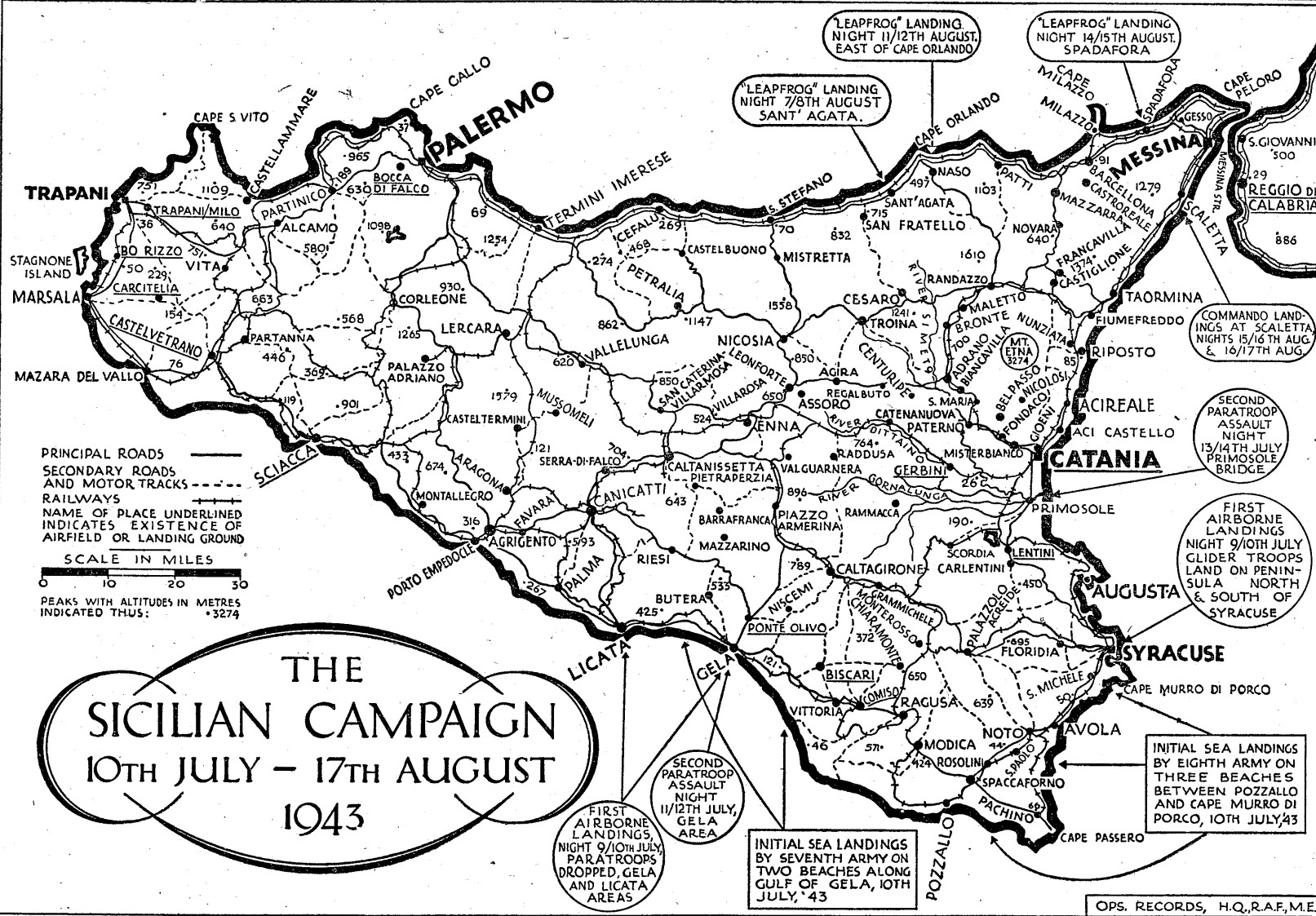
As announced in the Foreword of the last number of the Review, its name changes with this issue from the R.A.F. Middle East Review to the R.A.F. Mediterranean Review. The transition from a predominant Middle East viewpoint to the wider horizon demanded by a Mediterranean production must of necessity be gradual, and this number inevitably contains, apart from the historical narrative, articles more of Middle East than Mediterranean interest. No apology need be offered for that, however, for whereas Middle East may be regarded more-or-less as a pensioned warrior mainly employed on guard duty, it is true to say that the Mediterranean giant is equipped in great part with the former's weapons and experience.

The Mediterranean aspect, therefore, will be more fully developed in the next number, and for that reason the commencement of the Invasion of Italy, which really falls within the quarter under review, has been left over until Number 5. Additional to that reason is the fact that the Sicilian campaign, which may be regarded as a model combination of effort between the three Services, land, sea and air, has been considered here in its entirety.

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The Conquest Of Sicily

10th JULY TO 17th AUGUST, 1943

As the Tunisian campaign drew to its end in the first half of May, 1943, plans were formulated for the invasion of Sicily, a main bulwark of the southern defences of Hitler's European "Fortress".

Essential prerequisites of the invasion included the reduction of Pantelleria and the less important islands of Lampedusa, Lampione and Linosa; these were all in Allied hands by 13th June, as the result of a sustained aerial offensive, supplemented by naval bombardment. Details of the Allied air attacks were given in the previous number of the "Review", but it may be re-iterated here that against Pantelleria over 5,650 effective sorties were flown by Allied bombers and fighter-bombers, in the course of which approximately 6,500 tons of bombs were dropped. Against Lampedusa only 30 air attacks were needed in which about 5% of the bomb tonnage expended on Pantelleria was dropped.

Meanwhile, a strategic bombing programme had been carried out with the object of interfering with the enemy's "build-up" in the Central Mediterranean area in general and Sicily in particular. From the middle of May to the end of June constant attacks were delivered against the enemy's airfields in Sicily, Sardinia and Southern Italy, the enemy's ports and submarine bases in the same areas, the communications across the Messina Straits and industrial targets, particularly at Naples and Bari. In addition, the bombing attacks from the United Kingdom against targets in Northern Italy were supplemented by a few large-scale raids on Leghorn and Spezia from North-west Africa.

In the six weeks period mentioned Allied bombers and fighter-bombers of the North-west African Air Forces and Middle East Command (including Malta) flew 2,292 effective sorties against the enemy's Central Mediterranean airfields and 2,638 against his ports, bases and lines of communication. These totals are exclusive of the effort against Pantelleria and Lampedusa.

The following account of the Allied air operations, 1st July to 17th August, carried out in connection with the Sicilian invasion, is divided into four sections:—

- I. Preparatory Measures.*
- II. The Assault.*
- III. The Enemy's Stand at Catania*
- IV. The Reduction of the Island.*

I. PREPARATORY MEASURES

Preliminary Bombing Programme

The successful invasion of *Sicily* implied major commitments for the Allied air forces before, during and after the actual landings.

Mention has already been made in the preface above of the scale of bomber effort developed

from mid-May to the end of June against the enemy's airfields, bases and lines of communication; for the week immediately prior to the Sicilian landings the Air Plan provided for an even greater effort against enemy airfields. By "zero hour" it was hoped that the sustained

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attacks on the airfields, coupled with the casualties inflicted on the enemy's intercepting fighters, would have greatly reduced the enemy's first line strength in the Sicilian theatre of war, especially in fighter aircraft. In addition, the enemy's ports and lines of communication were to be attacked when necessary, in accordance with the intelligence provided by air reconnaissance.

Meanwhile, Home-based bombers were to continue their offensive against Northern Italian industrial targets, which, apart from the material damage caused, was certain to have an effect on the morale of the Italian people, which was already at low ebb.

Malta Prepares

For *Malta* the wheel had turned full circle: from being a besieged fortress in 1942 it was now destined to become a major base for offensive operations.

As early as January, 1943, work had begun on the task of improving the island's airfields. Existing airfields were extended and extra landing strips were prepared. Thus, by the end of June *Malta* could maintain and operate nearly 30 fighter squadrons. In addition, during that month U.S. Army Engineers constructed a landing strip at *Gozo* from which a further three squadrons could operate. The airfield on *Pantelleria* was also put into order and was soon able to accommodate several American long-range fighter squadrons.

Meanwhile, the provisioning of *Malta* went on apace and adequate stores, supplies and spares necessary for the operation and maintenance of the powerful air striking force were speedily accumulated.

Improvements were also made in the existing R.D.F. and fighter control facilities. In particular, a new Fighter Control Room was hewn out of the rock, an enlarged Filter Room was established, and additional R.D.F. stations were set up. For the battle period, also, a combined War Room was prepared with the object of providing an hour by hour picture of ground, naval and air operations. Close at hand, also, were the Army Support Centre and the Naval Co-operation Operations Room. Thus, full care was taken that during the period of the coming battle control would be immediate and as faultless as humanly possible.

On the eve of the Sicilian invasion nearly 40 squadrons were concentrated on *Malta* and the satellites *Gozo* and *Pantelleria*. The Island was ready to pay off old scores.

Main Features of the Air Plan

No radical change was necessary in the existing organisation and system of command in the Mediterranean theatre.

Under the direction of the Air Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, the Commanding General

North-west African Air Forces remained in command of the North-west African Allied air forces. The operational formations, the North-west African Strategic, Tactical and Coastal Air Forces were to remain unchanged in their basic organisation and functions, although it was envisaged that some redistribution of units might be necessary from time to time.

The provision of two subordinate Air Commanders by the A.O.C. Tactical Air Force for air task forces operating in *Sicily* is considered later.

The Middle East air forces not already under the operational control of the North-west African Air Forces (excluding, that is, No. 205 Group controlled by the Strategic Air Force and the Desert Air Force which was an integral part of the Tactical Air Force) were to remain under the existing system of command. The forces operating from the North African mainland comprised the Ninth U.S. Air Force (including the two R.A.F. heavy bomber squadrons under its operational control) and the A.H.Q. Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean and No. 201 (Naval Co-operation) squadrons. *Malta*, as already mentioned, accommodated a large fighter force derived from the North-west African Tactical Air Force in addition to the "garrison squadrons."

The A.O.C.-in-Chief, Middle East, was responsible for the administration of the air forces operating from the Middle East and *Malta* and the Commanding General, North-west African Air Forces had a similar responsibility in respect of all other air forces operating in the Mediterranean theatre concerned with the Sicilian invasion. In the initial stage of the campaign, also, H.Q., R.A.F., Middle East was to hold itself in readiness to assist in the maintenance of air forces based in *Sicily*.

After due consideration it was decided that the assault on *Sicily* should be launched against the south-eastern corner of the island and eight simultaneous pre-dawn landings were planned to take place on the beaches from *Licata* to east of *Avola*. The British assaults were to be made on the eastern seaboard and the American landings on the south-east shore. The immediate aim of the assault troops was the capture of the airfields and ports in south-eastern *Sicily* and the development of an assault on the key position of *Catania*. Subsequently, advances were to be made on *Palermo* and *Messina*.

By restricting the landing to the south-eastern corner of the island and ignoring the western shore tactical surprise was more likely and the dispersion of the air effort in covering assaults in the *Palermo* area was avoided.

In spite of the concentration of fighter squadrons on *Malta* and the satellite aerodromes, forward airfields from which our short-range fighters could effectively operate over the battle area in the initial stages were still not over-plentiful; in particular, fighters based in northern *Tunisia* could operate effectively over the most

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westerly of the assaults only and could not assist landings east of *Licata*.

As airfields were occupied in *Sicily*, however, it was planned for fighter squadrons from *Malta* to move in and their places on the island were to be taken by fighter-bomber squadrons, withdrawn, in the first instance, from *Pantelleria*. When room was available for the fighter-bombers in *Sicily* the landing grounds vacated by them in *Malta* were to be allotted to light bombers. These, in turn were to be established in *Sicily* when airfields became available.

A scheme was drawn up for an eastern air task force to support the Eighth Army and attached units and a western air task force to assist the U.S. Seventh Army. Until the eastern air task force was established in *Sicily* the greater part as already indicated was to be based in *Malta*; these squadrons were to be under the command of the A.O.C. *Malta* until they were transferred to *Sicily*, when the A.O.C. of the eastern air task force was to assume command. The American squadrons allotted to support the U.S. Seventh Army were to be derived mainly from *Tunisia* and accordingly came under the command of the A.O.C. of the western air task force forthwith. Both air task forces were to be under the control of A.O.C. North-west African Tactical Air Force. The speedy establishment of the two air task forces in *Sicily* was of vital importance in order to provide continuous close support to our advancing land forces.

The Allied medium and heavy bomber squadrons of the North-west African Air Forces (including No. 205 Group's Wellingtons) were to continue to operate from the North-west African mainland and the U.S. and R.A.F. heavy bombers under the control of the Ninth U.S. Air Force were to function from *Cyrenaica*, as formerly.

The sailing of east and west-bound convoys to *Sicily* implied increased shipping protection commitments. Fighter protection and anti-submarine patrols were to be provided under the existing organisations. That is to say, convoys passing westwards through the Eastern Mediterranean were to receive protection from squadrons operating under A.H.Q. Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean and No. 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group, and east-bound convoys in the Central Mediterranean were to be protected by the North-west African Coastal Air Force. Wherever possible, the *Sicily* convoys were to be routed close to the North African coast and fighter squadrons engaged on shipping protection were to move up with their respective convoys, as far as practicable, in order to economise the fighter effort. On the day prior to the landings the invasion craft converging on *Malta* were to be protected by fighters from the island to an extent of a circle of 50 nautical miles radius from *Valetta*.

During and immediately after the Sicilian landings, before anti-aircraft defences could be established ashore, the fullest fighter protection was to be provided over the beaches. During the

hours of darkness, moreover, arrangements were made for night-fighters based in *Malta* and *Tunisia* to give the maximum protection to ships unloading at the beaches and to captured ports. As soon as C.G.I. could be installed on selected occupied airfields in *Sicily*, also, certain night-fighter squadrons were to be established there.

Reconnaissance

The Air Plan made provision for a constant watch to be kept on the enemy's strength and movements. For the initial period, arrangements were made for a detachment of the North-west African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing to operate from *Malta* in order to assist the work of No. 248 Wing. Other photographic reconnaissance units were to continue to function from *North Africa*.

Tactical reconnaissance requirements in the eastern area of the Sicilian battlefield were to be met by No. 40 Squadron S.A.A.F., operating from *Malta*; a similar commitment in respect of the western area was the responsibility of an American observation squadron based in *Tunisia*.

The Rôle of Air Transport

On the conclusion of the Tunisian campaign units of the Troop Carrier Command commenced training for the carrying out of a large-scale paratroop mission which was to precede the landing of our sea-borne troops.

During the pre-invasion period, also, American, British and French air transport units were available for the urgent transportation of personnel and freight. In addition, when the battle was joined the U.S. Transport Command was to undertake the evacuation of wounded as well as normal transport commitments.

Relative Air Strengths

The Allied air forces in the Mediterranean area were infinitely stronger than those of the Axis. For all operations connected with the Sicilian invasion it was estimated that a front-line strength of approximately 4,000 aircraft was available. This figure excludes the large American glider force.

R.A.F. squadrons provided the majority of the single and twin-engined offensive and defensive fighters and coastal aircraft while the bomber and air transport forces were composed principally of American units. With regard to the night bomber force, however, it should be noted that this consisted mainly of R.A.F. Wellingtons, Liberators and Halifaxes.

On the eve of the Sicilian invasion the German and Italian air forces had a total of 1,800 to 1,900 aircraft, excluding transport types, based in *Italy*, *Sicily*, *Sardinia* and southern *France*.

The enemy's fighters were based mainly in *Sicily*, *Southern Italy* and *Sardinia*. In *Sicily* and *Italy* (south of 41° north) it was estimated that the G.A.F. had approximately 260 single-engined fighters and fighter-bombers.

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Italians 200 single-engined fighters; in *Sardinia*, there were about 130 German single-engined fighters and fighter-bombers and 100 Italian fighters. The balance of the Italian single-engined force—approximately 230 aircraft—was located in central and northern *Italy*. The German twin-engined fighter force, which comprised some 75 aircraft, was based half in *Sicily* (including *Italy* south of 41° north) and half in *Italy* (north of 41° north). Night-fighter JU.88s appeared to be based entirely in central *Italy*.

Apart from 50 JU.88 bombers in *Sicily*, the German long-range bomber force was based principally in *Italy* (north of 40° north), with an additional strong force in southern *France*; bomber reconnaissance JU.88s were also based mainly in the two last mentioned areas. Italian bomber reconnaissance and torpedo bomber aircraft were located in central *Italy*, with detachments in *Sardinia* and *Sicily*.

In addition, in *Greece*, *Crete* and the *Dodecanese* there were approximately 265 German and 180 Italian aircraft; in particular, the German total included about 130 bombers, dive-bombers and reconnaissance aircraft.

The serviceability of enemy aircraft in the Mediterranean area in general was estimated to average 50%; in the battle area, however, the average serviceability was undoubtedly less.

The Opposing Land Forces

It was naturally impossible to gauge with accuracy the strength of the enemy's land forces prior to the invasion, but by the end of the first week's fighting it transpired that the forces ready to repel our attack were approximately as follows:—there were five Italian field divisions, two German field divisions, and five Italian coastal divisions. The coastal divisions were made up mainly of older men or men of low physical category and included a high proportion of Sicilians; in addition, their almost total immobility and the simple nature of the defence works rendered them unfitted to the task of opposing our assault troops. The Italian field divisions were men of better calibre and more adequately equipped. The German divisions were the reformed Herman Goering Division and an armoured formation which had been given the name of the 15th Panzer Division, "liquidated" in *Tunisia*. These two divisions were well equipped and included about 200 tanks; it became obvious that they would provide the hard core of resistance.

After considering all available evidence at the end of the campaign it was estimated that at the beginning of hostilities the Italian field forces, coastal defence and anti-aircraft artillery units comprised in round figures 216,000 men. In addition, there were probably about 28,000 Italian second-line troops composed of depot units, carabinieri, and local militia, and a further 50,000 in labour corps. German forces at the beginning of the Sicilian campaign, including anti-aircraft and

sectors, were estimated to comprise about 60,000 men.

The Allied invasion forces were made up of a re-organised Eighth Army, which now included Canadian units, and the Seventh U.S. Army. Most of the Allied troops were veterans of the North African campaign, and backed by sea and air superiority they were confident from the start of making the first breach in the defences of Occupied Europe.

Pre-Invasion Blitz on Sicilian Airfields

During the first nine days of July, in accordance with the preliminary bombing plan mentioned on page 5, the Allied air forces carried out intensive attacks on the enemy's airfields in *Sicily*. During this pre-invasion period the North-west African Air Forces carried out 394 heavy, 1,255 medium and 377 light bomber effective sorties against Sicilian landing grounds. In addition, Cyrenaican-based Liberators of the Ninth U.S. Air Force flew 126 effective sorties against these objectives and *Malta*-based Spitfire-bombers also made a few attacks.

The majority of the enemy's fighters in *Sicily* was now based in the east, with *Gerbini* airfield and its many satellites as the principal base. Accordingly, the greater part of the bomber effort was directed against landing grounds in the *Gerbini* area. From 4th to 9th July, inclusive, aircraft under the operational control of H.Q. North-west African Air Forces flew 294 heavy and 560 medium bomber sorties against the *Gerbini* landing grounds and U.S. Liberators of the Ninth U.S. Air Force flew 79 sorties.

Some indication of the havoc wrought at *Gerbini* is shown by the North-west African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing's report on the damage inflicted by 100 U.S. Fortresses on 5th July. Of the 54 aircraft present on the main airfield during the raid all but four were destroyed and at two satellite landing grounds a total of fourteen aircraft, mainly single-engined fighters, were destroyed. Widespread damage was caused, also, on several other *Gerbini* satellites. On the 5th, moreover, enemy fighters were induced to join battle. Approximately 100 enemy aircraft attacked a formation of 27 U.S. Fortresses and as a result of a long running fight 35 of the enemy were claimed as destroyed for the loss of two American bombers. Two further formations of heavy bombers, which attacked the same objectives about 20 minutes later, met no enemy opposition, and an escorted formation of U.S. Mitchells, which renewed the attack an hour afterwards, was also left unmolested. It was evident that the enemy's fighter force was in no condition to challenge every Allied raid, but attacked spasmodically only, in an endeavour to conserve strength for the critical days ahead.

In addition to the blitz on the *Gerbini* group of landing grounds, the following bomb loads were dropped on the other principal eastern airfields: *Biscari* 335.6 tons; *Comiso* 300 tons (including 1 tons dropped by U.S. Liberators): *Ca-*

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tania 139.4 tons. The majority of these attacks were carried out by N.A.A.F. medium bombers — U.S. Mitchells and Marauders operating by day and Wellingtons by night.

The western Sicilian landing grounds also received attention, but the Allied attacks in this quarter were not so intense as these landing grounds were now of secondary importance. *Sciacca* was attacked nine times by N.A.A.F. aircraft, in the course of which 130.7 tons of bombs were dropped. Many of the raids took place at night, and, in particular, R.A.F. and S.A.A.F. Bostons and Baltimores played a full part in this activity. Other western airfields attacked included those at *Trapani/Milo* and *Bo Rizzo*, against which 96 light and 45 medium and twelve light bomber effective sorties were flown, respectively.

The Allied air forces' attacks on the Sicilian airfields during the first nine days of July rendered many of them unserviceable and about a half of the enemy's aircraft formerly based there were either forced to withdraw to *South Italy* or moved to newly constructed landing grounds. In particular, on the eve of the Allied landings the main *Gerbini* airfield, seven of its satellites, and *Comiso* airfield were rendered unserviceable; in the west, also, as the result of the heavy attacks in June *Bocca di Falco* airfield appeared to be unserviceable and *Castelvetrano* was all but abandoned.

In addition to the great number of enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground in the course of the pre-invasion blitz on the Sicilian airfields, bombers operating under the control of the North-west African Air Forces claimed the destruction of 56 enemy fighters in combat for the loss of seven aircraft shot down by anti-aircraft fire and enemy air action and eight missing; escorting fighters accounted for another 45 enemy aircraft destroyed at the cost of seven shot down and five missing, and *Malta*-based Spitfires acting as top cover to the N.A.A.F. bombers also accounted for an appreciable number of enemy fighters. U.S. Liberators of the Ninth U.S. Air Force encountered little enemy air opposition in the course of their attacks on *Gerbini* and *Comiso* airfields and destroyed only one enemy fighter in combat without loss.

Attacks on Bases and Communications

As indicated in the preceding paragraphs the main activity of the Allied air forces prior to the Sicilian invasion was directed against the enemy's airfields. Attacks on his bases and lines of communication were consequently on a reduced scale.

In all, from 2nd to 9th July, inclusive, aircraft controlled by the North-west African Air Forces flew 194 bomber and fighter-bomber sorties against enemy ports bases and shipping and 698 against his positions and lines of communication; fighters meanwhile carried out 88 sorties on ground attacks and 68 on anti-shipping missions, in addition to their normal commitments of bom-

ber escort, offensive sweeps, shipping protection, and reconnaissance tasks.

The bomber attacks included 75 Wellington sorties against *Palermo* and 26 more against the important position at *Catania* and an attack by 21 U.S. Mitchells on targets in the *Caltagirone* area on the day before the invasion.

The fighter-bomber effort was directed chiefly against the harbours of *Porto Empedocle* and *Marsala*, but there were also successful U.S. Warhawk attacks on radar stations at *Cape Pasero*, *Palazzo*, *Catania* and *Syracuse*.

Shipping Protection

The protection of the convoys en route to *Sicily* involved increased commitments for the North-west African Coastal Air Force (which was considerably enlarged particularly by the addition of more Beaufighter squadrons) in the Central Mediterranean, and the Middle East squadrons controlled by Air Headquarters, Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean and No. 201 Group (reinforced by two long-range fighter squadrons loaned from *North-west Africa* and one from *Malta*) in the Eastern Mediterranean.

In the fighter protection of our east-bound convoys during the first nine days of July squadrons of the Coastal Air Force flew a total of 1,426 sorties, including the record number of 574 sorties on the 8th and 9th. In addition, 541 fighter sorties were flown on local defence. Naval co-operation aircraft, meanwhile, carried out 258 sorties on anti-submarine protection and submarine hunts.

Over our west-bound convoys the fighter squadrons controlled by Air Headquarters, Air Defences Eastern Mediterranean flew 1,421 sorties and carried out 257 sorties on local defence. Coastal aircraft of No. 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group, meanwhile, flew 314 sorties on anti-submarine close cover, area patrols and submarine hunts.

As the great armada converged on *Malta* during the morning of 9th July fighter protection was provided from the island. About two-thirds of the available fighter force was employed continuously on shipping protection, carrying out 413 sorties.

The only opposition of note to the massing of our invasion fleet was the attack on *Bizerta* on the night 6/7th July. Sixty-five enemy bombers dropped light explosive and incendiary bombs in an attempt to damage shipping in the harbour, but the harm done was negligible. One JU.88 was destroyed by night fighters and three more were shot down by our anti-aircraft fire.

It was clear that the Allied air forces' intensive attacks on the enemy's airfields had prevented the concentration of an effective air striking force and the combined naval and air force control of the Mediterranean sea-ways dissuaded the enemy from employing submarines on any appreciable scale.

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II. THE ASSAULT

The Assault from the Air

The invasion of *Sicily* began shortly before midnight 9/10th July, when British and American airborne units landed on the peninsulas north and south of *Syracuse* and on the coastal plain between *Gela* and *Licata*. The principal tasks of these troops were to harass the coastal defence forces, destroy the enemy's lines of communication to the coast and preserve those which would be of use to the Allied armies scheduled to land on the morrow.

Glider troops, drawn from the British 1st Airborne Division, operated in the *Syracuse* area and paratroops of the American 82nd Airborne Division were dropped in the *Gela - Licata* locality. Aircraft of the North-west African Troop Carrier Command carried out 109 C.47 (Dakota), 21 Albemarle and seven Halifax sorties in towing the gliders and 226 C.47 sorties conveying the parachute troops.

The strong headwinds encountered forced a number of gliders into the sea short of the target area but, on the whole, considering the difficulty of carrying out such a hazardous undertaking at night, the missions were satisfactorily completed. Many of the set tasks were performed by the airborne troops and the way was paved for the landings from the sea.

Protection for the aerial armada was provided by R.A.F. night fighters and, in addition, cannon Hurricanes of No. 73 Squadron preceded the transport fleet across the Sicilian coast in order to eliminate searchlights.

It was evident that the enemy had been taken by surprise and only slight anti-aircraft fire was encountered.

The operations of the Troop Carrier Command in connection with the subsequent attacks of Allied airborne troops are dealt with chronologically.

Bombing on the Night 9/10th July

On the night of the airborne assaults bombing attacks were delivered in order to soften resistance generally to our shock troops; as cover to the glider operations; to create a diversion while our airborne troops formed up for the attack, and to prevent enemy reserves being rushed up to the threatened areas.

The attacks in the western area were carried out by R.A.F. and S.A.A.F. light bombers and U.S. medium bombers under the operational control of the North-west African Air Forces. A total of 22 S.A.A.F. and R.A.F. Bostons and Balmores attacked targets at *Niscemi*, *Butera*, *Ponte Olivo* airfield, and eastwards as far as *Canicatti*, causing many fires, and 25 R.A.F. and S.A.A.F. Bostons effectively bombed the airfields at *Sciacca* and *Milo* in the west. Mean-

while, 24 U.S. Mitchells made attacks over a wide area, concentrating mainly on the *Piazza Armerina-Caltagirone-Biscari* area in attacks on enemy reserves but extended their range to *Sciacca* in the west and *Floridia* in the east.

Later that night a large force of No. 205 Group Wellingtons (including North-west African Strategic Air Force Wellingtons now under its operational control) attacked targets in the *Syracuse* area, in order to create a diversion while British airborne troops formed up to assault the town, made a diversionary attack on *Catania*, and bombed enemy reserve formations. The scale of effort of these important attacks was as follows:— 55 aircraft attacked targets in the *Syracuse* isthmus, dropping all bombs in the specified areas, and nine successfully attacked the *Syracuse* seaplane base; nineteen Wellingtons bombed *Catania*, scoring hits on the town and the docks, while dummy paratroops were dropped to create confusion; nineteen bombers attacked the enemy's reserves at *Canicatti*, *Caltanissetta*, *Caltagirone* and *Palazzolo Acreide*; and six more aircraft carried out other specific attacks.

The General Officer Commanding 1st Airborne Division later informed the A.O.C. No. 205 Group that although his troops "were not in a position to take immediate advantage of the bombing, *Syracuse* was easily captured during the following evening largely as a result of it".

In addition to the above-mentioned attacks, immediately prior to the landings mentioned in the following paragraphs, eleven R.A.F. Cyrenaican-based Liberators and Halifaxes bombed *Avola*, *Noto* and *San Paolo*, in order to weaken resistance to the Eighth Army's initial attacks.

The Landings

At 04.00 hours 10th July, British, Canadian and American forces carried out landings all round the south-east coast of *Sicily* north of *Syracuse* to west of *Licata*, supported by Allied naval and air forces. Nearly 2,800 vessels of different sizes took part in this extensive amphibious operation, ranging from the largest battleship to the smallest landing craft, and the sea forces participating included units of the Royal Indian, Netherlands, Polish and Greek Navies in addition to the Anglo-American forces. The adverse winds which had already interfered with our airborne assaults, together with a slight swell, caused delays in the arrivals of some of the smaller vessels, but, in the main, the landings were executed according to plan.

British and Canadian troops of the Eighth Army landed on three specified beaches between *Pozzallo* and *Cape Murro di Porco*, and the American Seventh Army landed at two beaches along the Gulf of *Gela*. The Eighth Army had as its immediate objective the capture of *Pachino* land-

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Paratroops emplaning in full operational kit.

ing ground and *Syracuse*, to be followed by an advance up the east coast to *Catania* and *Messina*; the Seventh Army's tasks were first to secure *Licata* and *Gela* and then to press on to *Caltanissetta*, in order to cut the roads leading to the invasion areas.

At this initial stage contact was made only with the ill-trained demoralised Italian coastal troops, who offered little resistance. Bridgeheads were quickly established on all beaches and supplies and reinforcements poured in.

By 13.30 hours the entire *Pachino* peninsula

was occupied and repairs to the ploughed-up landing ground were under way. By the early evening forward troops of the Eighth Army had crossed the bay of *Syracuse* and by 21.00 hours the town had fallen intact. The Italians had had no time—or inclination—to carry out demolitions and the majority of the civil population, moreover, proved friendly and willing to co-operate.

To the west, the U.S. Seventh Army also made good progress. *Licata* was speedily captured and an advance was made on *Vittoria*.

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Fighter Protection

North-west African-based U.S. Warhawks flew an appreciable number of sorties in protecting landings and unloading at the most westerly point, but, in general, the patrolling of the beaches was the responsibility of the R.A.F. Spitfire squadrons based on *Malta* and U.S. fighters operating from the satellites *Gozo* and *Pantelleria*.

As the fighters based on *Malta* and its satellite airfields were not numerous enough to provide constant patrols for each of the five landings throughout the sixteen hours of daylight the following programme was adhered to:—

- (1) Throughout the hours of daylight fighter cover was given to at least two of the beaches concerned.
- (2) All landing areas were provided with continuous fighter patrols for the first two hours of daylight; from 10.30 to 12.30 hours; from 16.00 to 17.30 hours, and for the last one and a half hours of daylight. These periods were correctly anticipated as the most likely times for enemy attacks.

- (3) A reserve Spitfire Wing was held in readiness to reinforce patrols which required assistance. In the event, these fighters were not called upon for the task and some were employed in escorting U.S. medium bombers in the attacks mentioned in the following sub-section.

During the first day of the landings fighters based on *Malta* and the satellite islands flew a total of 1,092 sorties on beach patrol. The cover provided proved extremely successful. The Allied Navies were prepared for a loss of 300 ships during the day prior to and the actual day of the landings; in the event, up to nightfall of 10th July twelve ships only were successfully attacked from the air. Most of the enemy attacks were delivered against shipping lying off *Licata* and *Gela*, where the American troops were being protected by U.S. fighter squadrons. Many of the American ships in the area lay as far as six miles off the beaches and the fighters patrolling over the shipping were thus unable to afford full protection to the beaches and small craft plying between the ships and the shore. Another



Troops wading ashore off Sicily.

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Amphibious craft coming ashore.

fact which militated against 100% fighter protection in all areas was the fact that Naval anti-aircraft guns so frequently engaged our fighter patrols that squadrons were eventually obliged to fly as high as 10,000 to 14,000 feet instead of 5,000 to 8,000, as ordered.

During the day of the initial landings Allied fighters based on *Malta* and the satellite airfields destroyed two JU.88s, one HE.111, and nine enemy fighters, and probably destroyed or damaged fourteen more aircraft; Allied losses through enemy action were eleven Spitfires shot down and missing. No. 324 Group's U.S. Warhawks, operating from *North-west Africa*, in their patrols over the most westerly point of the landings accounted for another JU.88.

Air Attacks

While the landings on 10th July were in progress the Allied bombers and fighter-bombers continued their attacks on the enemy's Sicilian airfields, positions and lines of communication.

The *Gerbini* satellites, the enemy's main Sicilian landing grounds, received the heaviest attack, a total of 51 U.S. Fortresses operating

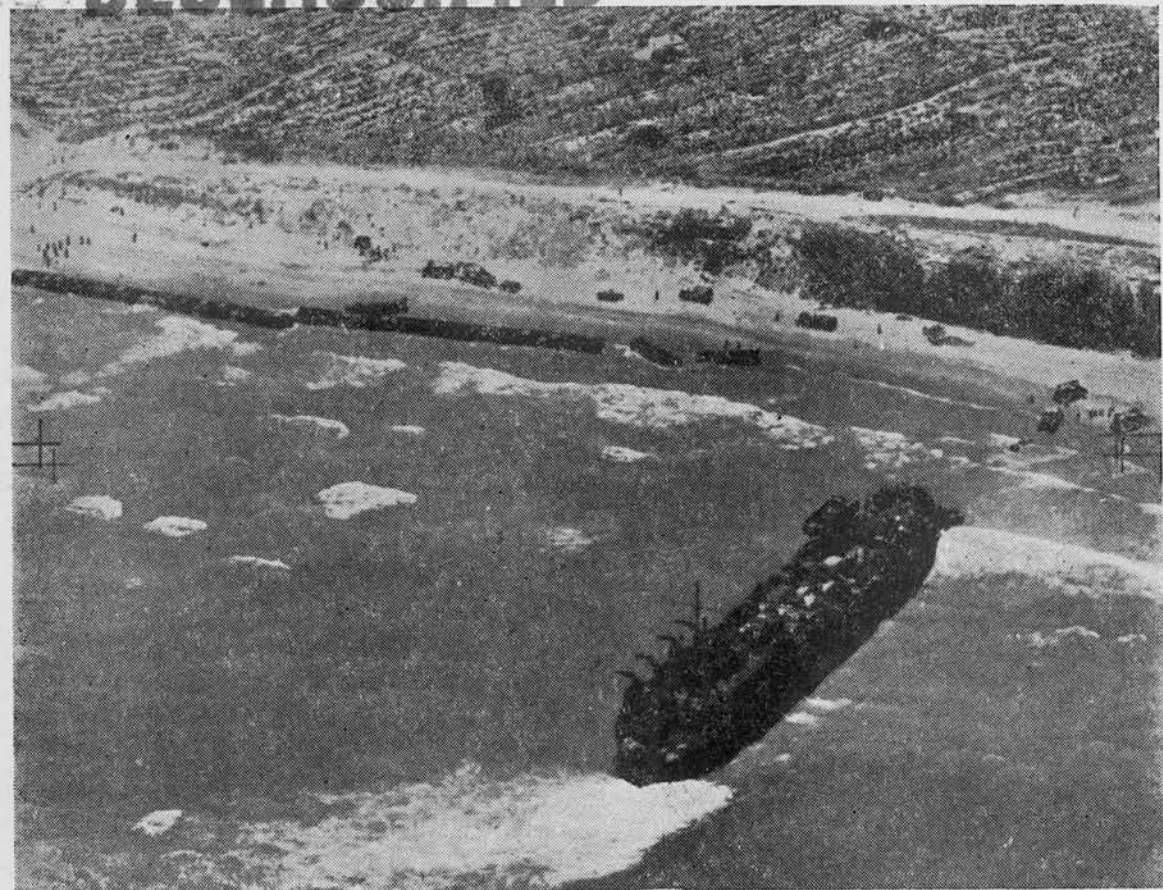
against satellites numbers four and five and 28 against number nine. In each case the targets were reported to be well covered with bomb bursts. The enemy's western airfields at *Sciacca* and *Milo (Trapani)*, meanwhile, were effectively bombed by 71 U.S. Mitchells.

The attacks on enemy targets at *Palazzola Acreide* were continued by 36 U.S. Mitchells, which encountered no opposition either in the air or from the ground. Further north 24 U.S. Fortresses and 28 Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberators bombed the marshalling yards at *Catania*, in order to hinder the reinforcement of the enemy's main strong points. Explosions followed by huge fires were caused and smoke from the latter was visible for 80 miles on the heavy bombers' return journey.

During the day, also, North-west African U.S. A.36s carried out intensive attacks on the enemy's communications and positions. The A. 36, a dive-bomber derived from the P.51 (Mustang) by the addition of bomb racks and dive brakes, had made its appearance in the African theatre of war in June. Although particularly adapted for dive-bombing it was also employed

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View of the landing from the air.

as a glider-bomber for attacks in broken country; it remained, however, fundamentally a fighter, and the usual formation was the fighter defensive formation of twelve aircraft line abreast. When the assigned targets were well described great success was achieved by the A.36s. It is worth noting that at this stage it carried a greater bomb-load than any other fighter-bomber in use, excluding the P.38 (Lightning). On the 10th the A.36s carried out a total of 169 sorties in bombing and strafing attacks in the *Agrigento*, *Barrafranca*, *Caltanissetta*, *Grammichele*, and *Valllunga* areas. The targets attacked included road junctions, bridges, railways, trains, gun positions and transport vehicles. These attacks greatly assisted the Seventh Army's advance and hindered the movement of Axis troops from the north-west of the island to the invasion area.

In addition to the above-mentioned attacks U.S. Lightnings successfully strafed an R.D.F. station in south-west *Sicily*.

Meanwhile, 21 U.S. Liberators of the Ninth U.S. Air Force effectively attacked the Italian airfield at *Vibo Valentia*, causing numerous fires and scoring direct hits on hangars.

The enemy's air opposition to the Allied attacking aircraft on the 10th was slight, and of the enemy fighters which attempted interception seventeen were shot down. Allied losses were three U.S. Mitchells and two A.36s shot down or missing and a number of other aircraft damaged, including eighteen U.S. Mitchells; these casualties were believed to be caused entirely by the intense flak encountered.

Air Activity Night 10/11th July

That night, 10/11th July, U.S. Mitchells, Bostons and Baltimores from *North-west Africa* operated over the western and central areas of the island: the main target was *Milo* airfield, but *Sciacca*, *Trapani* and the enemy's central lines of communications, particularly at *Caltanissetta*, also received attention. In all, 79 U.S. Mitchell and 58 light bomber effective sorties were flown on these attacks. In addition, fourteen Wellingtons attacked the *Gerbini* landing ground over a period of three to four hours, encountering negligible opposition. No. 205 Group's effort on this night was limited owing to the fact that heavy attacks on *Augusta* and *Catania* planned to support further airborne

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landings were cancelled due to the postponement of these missions, and the scale of the attack on *Gerbini* was limited by an accident on a runway.

By the evening of 10th July a G.C.I. station had been disembarked and was put into operation during the night. This and G.C.I. stations operating in L.S.Ts (Landing Ships Tanks) proved invaluable in extending the range of the *Malta* control now that enemy night bombers were beginning to operate against our shipping lying off the south-east coast of *Sicily*.

During the night *Malta*-based Beaufighters destroyed two JU.88s and one Cant. Z.1007 and probably destroyed a JU.88 in the *Augusta* and *Syracuse* areas; intruder Mosquitoes also probably destroyed a JU.88 south-east of *Castelvetrano*.

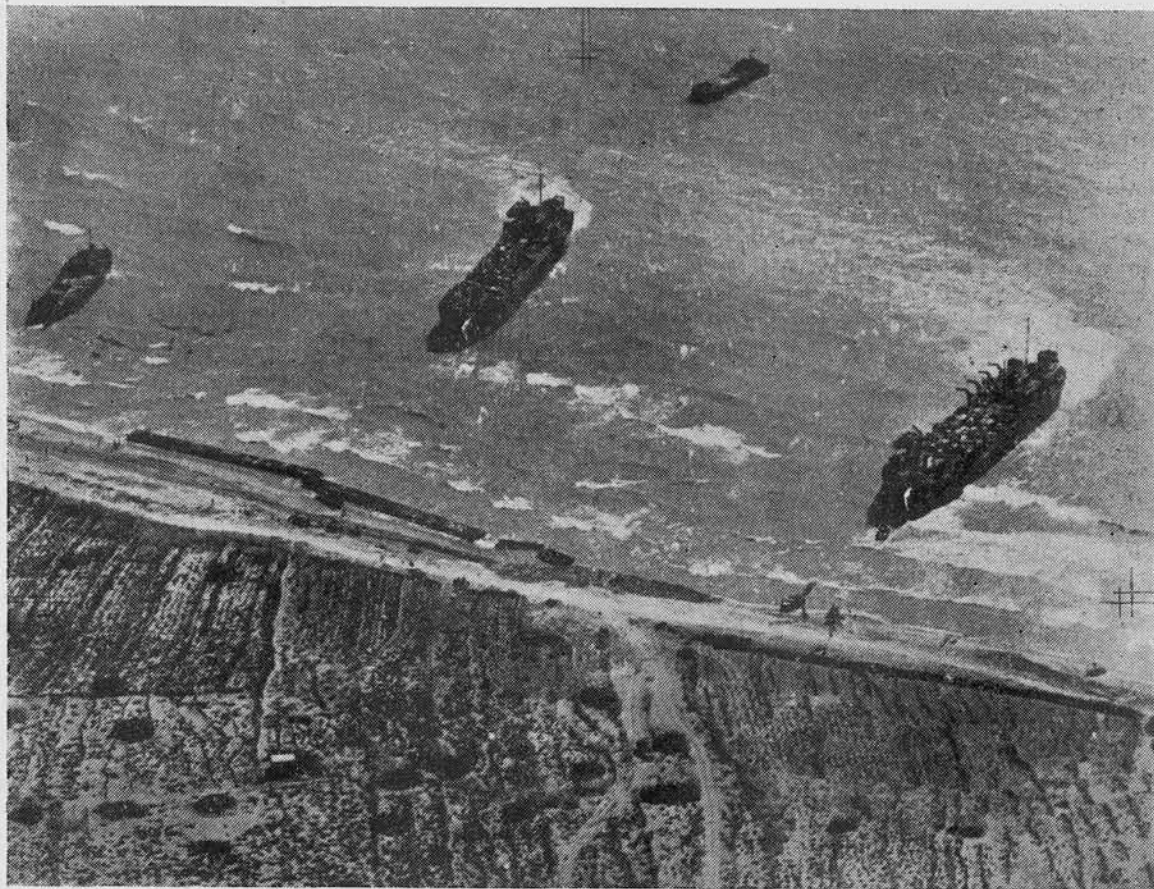
Bridgeheads Firmly Established

On the 11th, with bridgeheads firmly established, our land forces made further advances in the coastal area. Progress was made northwards and westwards from *Syracuse* along the roads leading to *Catania* and *Caltagirone*, respectively, while to the south *Avola* and *Noto* fell and the escarpment to the west was occupied. Further south *Rosolini*, *Spaccaforro* and *Pozzallo* were

captured and an advance was begun towards *Modica* and *Ragusa*. To the west of this area American troops advanced to within two miles of *Vittoria*, effected some penetration in the *Gela* area, and occupied the high ground east, north and west of *Licata*. The resistance offered to all these advances was still feeble.

Throughout the day the maximum air support was afforded from the North African mainland and *Malta*.

The North-west African heavy bomber effort, carried out by 83 U.S. Fortresses, was again directed against the marshalling yards at *Catania*. Explosions and huge fires were caused, the smoke from which could be seen for 140 miles on the return journey, and many hits were registered on the warehouses, repair buildings and oil storage installations. The attacks on the *Gerbini* landing ground were continued by 47 U.S. Marauders and the western airfields at *Milo* and *Sciacca* were bombed by 27 U.S. Marauders and 36 U.S. Mitchells, respectively. Nearly 100 U.S. Lightnings were despatched on offensive sweeps and to bomb targets of opportunity in *Central Sicily*, and an even greater number of A.36s attacked transport columns, trains and airfields, destroying or dam-



Note the open doors in the bows from which vehicles are driven out.

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aging 248 vehicles, two locomotives and several grounded aircraft, particularly in the region of *San Caterina*, *Caltanissetta* and *Porto Empedocle*. Fighter escort for the bomber and fighter-bomber formations was provided by a total of 117 aircraft from *North-west Africa*, and 22 Spitfire sorties from *Malta* acted as escort to bombers attacking *Gerbini*.

The Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberator attacks were again concentrated against the enemy's air bases in the toe of *Italy*. Sixty-eight effective sorties were flown against the airfields at *Vibo Valentia* and *Reggio di Calabria* and widespread damage to airfield facilities and grounded aircraft was reported. Considerable air opposition was encountered and two enemy fighters were destroyed without loss to the Liberators.

Meanwhile, *Malta*-based Spitfires and U.S. Warhawks continued their beach patrols, flying 872 sorties. A mixed bag of 28 enemy aircraft were shot down, five probably destroyed and sixteen damaged for the loss of one Spitfire and one Warhawk. During the day, also, 58 Kittyhawk-bombers, escorted by Spitfires, went into action, bombing and strafing enemy transport vehicles on the road between *Augusta* and *Catania*.

Our main air attacks on *Sicily* during the night 11/12th July were delivered against air and supply bases in the west of the island. Forty-eight U.S. Mitchells effectively bombed *Bo Rizzo* airfield and 30 Wellingtons attacked targets at *Trapani*, *Marsala*, and *Mazzara de Vallo*, causing fires and explosions. The Wellington attacks preceded a naval bombardment scheduled to commence at 01.00 hours and great care had to be taken to be off the target before this began and to keep clear of the Navy's formidable anti-aircraft fire. A further Wellington force of 26 aircraft bombed and machine-gunned hangars and grounded aircraft at *Porto Corvino Ravello* airfield, near *Salerno*, at which enemy bombers were based.

From *Cyrenaica* pressure was maintained during the night against the enemy's air bases across the *Messina* Straits, twelve Liberators and Halifaxes successfully attacking *Reggio di Calabria* airfield.

Malta-based Mosquitoes continued their intruder patrols over the enemy's air bases in north-eastern *Sicily* and southern *Italy*, shooting down an unidentified aircraft over *Crotone*. Night fighters were also active, shooting down two JU.88s and an HE.111 which were operating against our shipping off the landing beaches.

Our land forces were also on the move during the night; in particular, Seventh Army troops occupied the important airfield at *Comiso*, where repairs were begun immediately by moonlight.

The Second Paratroop Assault

On the night of the 11/12th, also, the Troop Carrier Command carried out a further paratroop mission, which aimed at dropping troops of the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division in front of

our forward units in the *Gela* area. The mission was less successful than its predecessor and out of 144 C.47s despatched 23 failed to return. Difficulty was experienced in following the course through lanes of safe transit which had to be determined in accordance with the operations of the Allied sea and land forces. The unarmed transport aircraft encountered intense flak and were attacked by enemy aircraft; one squadron, in particular, ran foul of anti-aircraft fire from our Naval vessels which were being bombed by enemy aircraft from a high altitude.

Capture of Augusta

On 12th July *Ponte Olivo* landing ground to the north-west of *Gela* was captured; elements of the Seventh and Eighth Armies made contact in the *Ragusa* area; the advance westwards from *Syracuse* went beyond *Palazzolo Acreide*; and Naval units entered *Augusta* harbour, which had previously been subjected to bombardment from the sea. The town itself was occupied in the early hours of the 13th, after a Commando raid on the 4 inch coastal defence battery, and port installations were found to be almost intact.

Lack of vehicles prevented the conveyance of the infantry during this period and our troops had to march and fight in extremely hot weather.

Heavy air attacks were made during the day on the *Messina* communications in order to hinder the enemy's reinforcement programme. The North-west African heavy bombers carried out 79 U.S. Fortress sorties against the *Messina* railway bridges and 72 Cyrenaican-based U.S. Liberators attacked the ferry slips and railway yards at *San Giovanni* and *Reggio di Calabria*. In the following days these attacks on the enemy's main supply line were intensified.

Gerbini airfield and its satellites received their daily attack, delivered by 36 U.S. Mitchells, and *Agrigento* and *Canicatti* were bombed by 27 and 31 U.S. Marauders, respectively. In addition, nearly 1,000 sorties were flown by North-west African-based fighters and fighter-bombers on sweeps and strafing missions against the enemy's rear lines of communications in southern and central *Sicily*, particularly in the vicinity of *Caltanissetta*, *Enna* and *Casteltermini*.

The main air effort from *Malta* was still directed to the provision of fighter cover for the landing beaches and shipping in the occupied harbours. Spitfires and U.S. Warhawks carried out 897 sorties on these duties and succeeded in shooting down 24 enemy aircraft, probably destroying nine, and damaging a further 21 for the loss of eight Spitfires and one Warhawk. Escorted Kittyhawk-bombers, meanwhile, continued their attacks on gun positions and other targets on the *Syracuse-Augusta* road.

A Good Night's Hunting

During the night 12/13th July the Allied air forces kept up their 24 hour bombing programme.

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Results of bombing at Augusta.

Forty-six U.S. Mitchells attacked *Termini* docks, with light bombers acting as "path-finders", in order to hinder the enemy's reinforcement and 45 Wellingtons dropped 75 tons of bombs on enemy concentrations at *Caltanissetta* and *Enna*; a lesser Wellington effort was directed against the *Gerbini* landing grounds and light bombers carried out limited attacks on *Sciacca* landing ground and communications south-east of *Palermo*. In addition, Cyrenaican-based R.A.F. heavy bombers attacked the enemy's air bases at *Reggio di Calabria* and *Vibo Valentia* in the toe of *Italy*.

The high-light of the night's air activity, however, was the success achieved by *Malta*-based Beaufighters and Mosquitoes. Operating in clear moonlight the night-fighters had an excellent night's hunting, shooting down five JU.88s, three HE.111s, two Cant. Z.1007s and one DO.217 without loss to themselves.

Further Airborne Missions

The same night, 12/13th July, two Albemarles dropped a small detachment of the British 1st Airborne Division detailed to attack and harass certain enemy lines of communication and rear areas in north-east *Sicily*; one Albemarle was lost in the course of this mission.

A similar mission was attempted on the following night but the pre-arranged ground aids were not visible and the aircraft were obliged to return to base with their task unaccomplished.

Establishment of the Air Task Forces in Sicily

The success achieved by our land forces in occupying enemy landing grounds and the assistance afforded by the R.A.F. Servicing Commandoes allowed the transference of squadrons to *Sicily* to commence on 13th July. On that day No. 244 Wing Spitfires (less No. 417 Squadron which followed later) left for *Pachino* and during the

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next three days six more R.A.F. Spitfire squadrons were installed at *Comiso* and six U.S. fighter squadrons moved in to *Licata* and *Ponte Olivo*.

Thereafter, the transference of Tactical Air Force squadrons to *Sicily* in accordance with the Air Plan occurred at regular intervals, and full air support to our advancing land forces was continued without a break.

Reduced Enemy Air Resistance

The 13th July proved to be the last day on which the enemy put up any effective air resistance in *Sicily*. His vital coastal radar posts had been lost on invasion day and other key installations were constantly attacked by fighter-bombers from *North-west Africa*; he now had recourse to spotty coverage only. Fighter control was complicated further by the elimination of established airfields and the occupation of new landing grounds.

Malta-based Spitfires and U.S. Warhawks continued their patrols of the beaches and harbours, carrying out 732 sorties. As the result of numerous combats 24 enemy aircraft were shot down, three probably destroyed and 25 damaged for the loss of one Spitfire. JU.87 dive-bombers again showed their vulnerability to fighter attack; No. 234 Squadron intercepted twelve unescorted dive-bombers and shot down five of them and damaged the remainder.

Malta-based Kittyhawks were also active during the day, carrying out 54 sorties against the enemy's communications between *San Michele* and *Grammichele* and at *Curlentini* and *Lentini*.

Targets attacked from *North-west Africa* on the 13th included a total of 76 U.S. Fortress sorties against *Catania* and *Milo/Trapani* airfields, 23 U.S. Marauder sorties against *Carcitella* landing ground, and 108 escorted U.S. Mitchell sorties against enemy positions and communications at *Enna*. Fighter-bombers, meanwhile, bombed and strafed targets in the *Castelvetrano*, *Termini*, *Corleone*, *Caltanissetta* and *San Caterina* areas, where a total of 118 transport vehicles were claimed as destroyed, and six locomotives and 45 railway carriages and trucks were destroyed at *Leonforte*.

As a result of bombing the *Gerbini* and *Catania* landing grounds (the latter also having been subjected to bombardment from the sea) were now untenable and the enemy's dwindling air activity was further limited by successful attacks on his air bases at *Vibo Valentia* and *Crotone*, in the toe and heel of *Italy*, by a total of 73 Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberators.

In addition, the trickle of supplies reaching the enemy's Sicilian forces was reduced by a successful shipping strike carried out by Coastal Air Force Beaufighters north-north-east of *Palermo*, which resulted in the sinking of a merchant vessel and the setting on fire of two escorting destroyers.

Paratroop Mission in the Plain of Catania

During the night 13/14th troops of the First British Paratroop Brigade were dropped over the plain of *Catania* in order to secure the key bridge at *Primosole* over the *Gornalunga* river. One hundred and five C.47s, seven Halifaxes, and 23 Albacores were employed with nineteen gliders in tow, some of which transported Jeeps and six-pounder guns. The parachutists seized the bridge, removed the demolition charges placed there by the enemy, and held their positions till 09.00 hours on the following day when they had to withdraw owing to lack of ammunition.

The venture proved a costly one as ten C.47s, one Halifax and three Albacores were lost, but the paratroop mission performed an extremely valuable piece of work.

Meanwhile, our air attacks were continued against enemy positions and concentrations, particularly at *Enna*, by U.S. Mitchells and light bombers and the Wellington force flew over 70 effective sorties in attacks on the marshalling yards at *Messina* and *Palermo*.

Malta-based Beaufighters and Mosquitoes took their nightly toll of enemy bombers, shooting down five aircraft.

The Advance Continued

On 14th July patrols of the Eighth Army were in contact with enemy rearguards in the area *Chiaromonte-Monterosso*. A German counter-attack had a flash-in-the-pan success in the early morning when enemy troops reached the seaplane base at *Augusta*, but by noon the position had been restored. The German troops which had originally been in western *Sicily* had now moved eastwards and were concentrated in the north-eastern part of the island. On the Seventh Army's front, our troops captured *Biscari* airfield, *Maz-zarino* and *Canicatti*.

During the day *Malta*-based Spitfires made their last considerable effort on beach patrols. The enemy's air resistance by day was now practically negligible; only 40 enemy aircraft were reported airborne and of these the Spitfires shot down four and probably destroyed two more without incurring any loss.

Close support was also provided by 34 escorted Kittyhawk-bombers which operated against targets in the *Caltagirone* and *Lentini* areas, where considerable resistance was being offered to our land forces; and 24 U.S. Warhawk-bombers made their first appearance in the Sicilian campaign in bombing enemy transport vehicles near *Lentini*.

Attacks delivered from the North African mainland were chiefly concentrated on *Messina*, U.S. Fortresses, Mitchells and Marauders of the North-west African Air Forces flying a total of 179 sorties and Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberators 73 sorties. Large fires and explosions were caused in the vicinity of the marshalling yards and harbour and a big oil storage tank was blown up. These attacks were followed up that night by

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ten Cyrenaican-based R.A.F. heavy bomber sorties. As a result of the combined attacks the ferry service now appeared to be in disuse.

The key base of *Enna*, in the centre of the island, was again heavily attacked by 60 U.S. medium bombers, and U.S. fighter-bombers, operating at full intensity, attacked targets of opportunity all over the battlefield, and hindered the intake of supplies into *North-east Sicily* by attacks on *Milazzo* docks and barges at *Scaletta*, south of *Messina*.

The continuous bombing of enemy transport and positions was continued during the night by Bostons and Baltimores; in particular, enemy vehicles on the road south of *Villarosa* to *Enna* were successfully attacked from 4,000 to 1,000 feet; *Lercara* town was bombed, and traffic on the main road to the west was also attacked. In addition 48 U.S. Mitchells bombed the enemy's important base at *Palermo* and targets in that area generally.

Malta-based Mosquitoes and Beaufighters again had an extremely successful night, shooting down twelve enemy aircraft, including nine JU.88s.

The Wellington attacks in the *Naples* area during the night, which heralded the renewal of the offensive against Italian targets, are considered in the next column.

Ground Situation on 15th July

On 15th July our land forces re-captured the important *Primosole* bridge and by the evening we held the general line *Primosole-Scordia-Grammichele-Mazzerino-Riesi-Canicatti-Favara-Palma*.

The whole of the *Hyblean* plateau, where determined troops might well have fought a delaying action, was now in our hands, and the Eighth Army was beginning to debouch on to the plain of *Catania*. The German forces had now been reinforced to some extent by parachutists acting in a ground rôle and it was clear that strong opposition could be expected.

Enemy Air Resistance Broken in Sicily

The enemy's air resistance in *Sicily* had now been broken. Spitfires, which flew 171 sorties on offensive patrols over the *Catania* and *Gerbini* areas on the 15th, did not encounter a single enemy aircraft, and few were seen by fighters escorting our bombers and fighter-bombers.

Throughout the day U.S. fighter-bombers continued their attacks on enemy transport and positions, concentrating particularly on hindering the movement of troops across *Central Sicily* to the threatened areas in the east and south, attacking positions and transport vehicles in the area around *Mt. Etna*, and enemy vehicles west of *Catania*. Weight was also given to the attacks in the *Catania* sector by U.S. Mitchell attacks on the town of *Paterno*. Meanwhile, the reinforcing of *North-west Sicily* was hindered by the bombing of *Termini* railway station by U.S. A.36s and the strafing of truck convoys in the same area.

Attacks on Enemy Shipping

During the first week of the Sicilian campaign the Coastal Air Force scored successes against enemy shipping in Central Mediterranean waters on almost every day.

The week's "bag" comprised two merchant ships (of unspecified tonnage) and one 4,000 ton tanker sunk, two merchant ships totalling 12,000 tons probably sunk, and seven vessels damaged (including two transport ships of 9,000 and 12,000 tons, respectively, and a destroyer).

The above-mentioned results include successes scored off *Sardinia* and *Corsica* in addition to attacks against the main stream of sea traffic off *Sicily* and the Italian western seaboard.

Air Offensive Against Southern Italy

While the air attacks were continued at intensity against Sicilian targets the decision was taken to strike increasingly heavy blows against the enemy's rail communications and supply and air bases in *Southern Italy* in order to prevent the reinforcement of the island and the building up of air resistance.

The renewal of the air offensive against the Italian mainland was initiated on the night 14/15th July by No. 205 Group's Wellingtons. The two Neapolitan airfields at *Capodichino* and *Pomigliano* were attacked by fifteen and sixteen aircraft, respectively, and many fires caused among buildings and grounded aircraft. A greater effort was directed against *Naples* docks, where 44 Wellingtons caused considerable destruction in the area west of the harbour, in spite of the enemy's attempt to obscure the target with a smoke screen. A feature of the attack on *Capodichino* was the dropping of 330,000 leaflets.

On the next day, 15th July, the *Naples* marshalling yards received a shattering blow from 79 U.S. Fortresses, which dropped 212 tons of 1,000 and 500 lb. bombs on their target. Photographs taken after the raid revealed that severe damage was inflicted and much rolling stock was destroyed. In the central part of the yards sixteen trains were hit and practically all the tracks in this area were damaged and blocked. Other damage included the setting on fire of two oil tanks and damage to buildings in the vicinity of the oil refinery.

During the same day, Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberators carried out 68 effective sorties against the enemy's important air base at *Foggia*.

The following night, 15/16th July, the Wellington force flew a total of 62 effective sorties against the docks and marshalling yards at *Reggio di Calabria* and *San Giovanni*, across the *Straits of Messina*, and the airfields at *Reggio*, *Vibo Valentia* and *Crotone*. In addition 2,308,000 leaflets were dropped in the areas attacked.

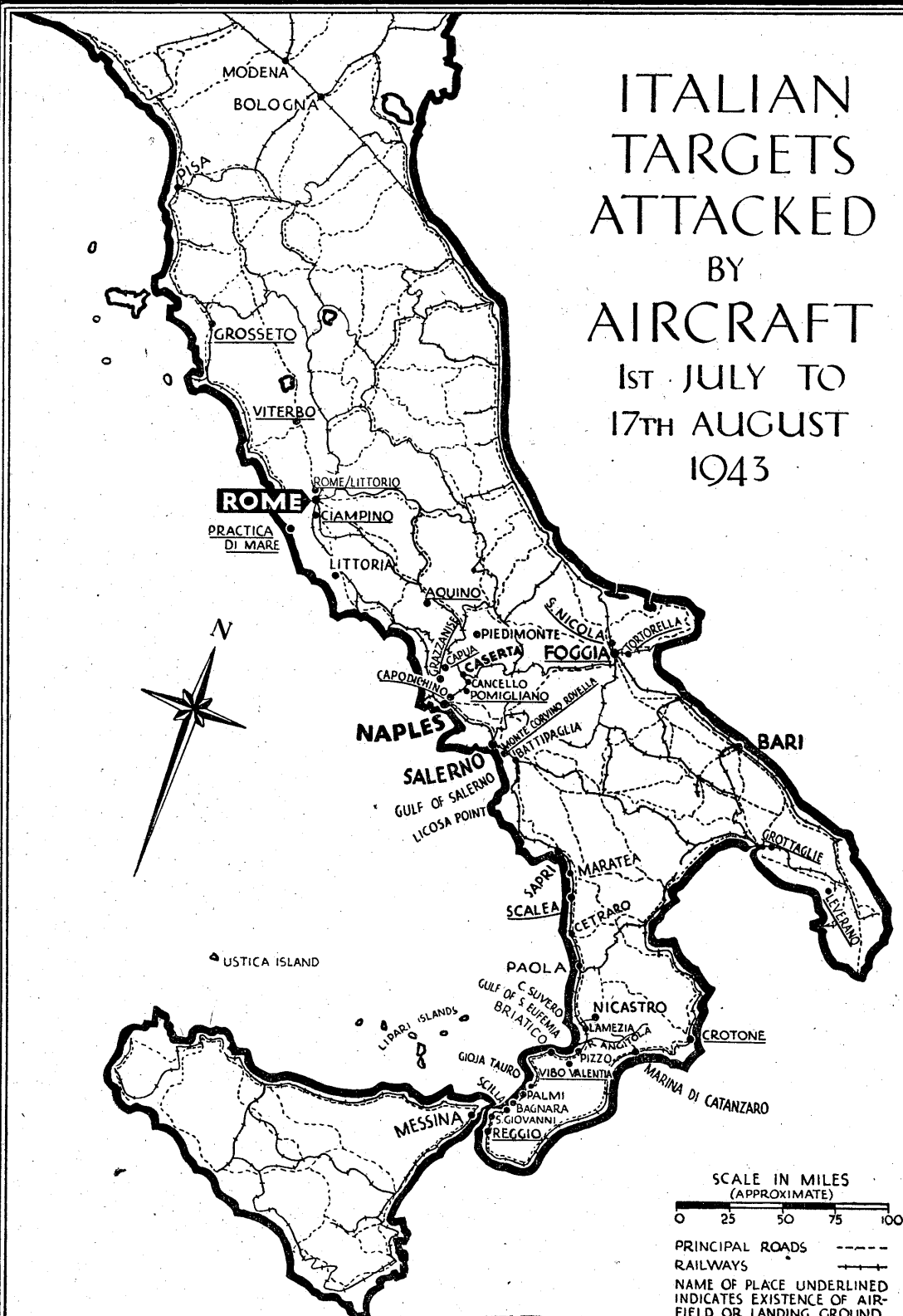
The attack on *Crotone* airfield was supplemented, also, by attacks delivered by seven Cyrenaican-based R.A.F. heavy bombers.

On the 16th the attacks across the *Messina Straits* were continued by over 100 U.S. Fort-

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ITALIAN
TARGETS
ATTACKED
BY
AIRCRAFT
1ST JULY TO
17TH AUGUST
1943



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resses which caused widespread devastation at *San Giovanni*, particularly in the railway yards and barracks area. One hundred and seventeen U.S. Mitchells and Marauders, meanwhile, concentrated on the airfield at *Vibo Valentia*. Photographs taken after the attack showed that of 78 aircraft present on the airfield, 50 were destroyed and two damaged.

During the night the Wellington force was entrusted with the dropping of the joint Churchill-Roosevelt warning to the Italian people, informing them of the uselessness of continued resistance; 1,720,000 of these leaflets were distributed over *Rome* and *Naples* and other towns in *Southern Italy*. In addition, a total of 59 Wellingtons continued the attacks on the *Naples* marshalling yards and *Capodichino* airfield.

The following day, 17th July, was a fateful one for *Naples*. In the morning 71 Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberators attacked the marshalling yards, and succeeded in placing a heavy concentration of bombs in the target area, causing huge fires and explosions. Two Liberators were destroyed by anti-aircraft fire and considerable air opposition was encountered.

The morning attack was followed up in the afternoon by 111 U.S. Fortresses, 108 U.S. Marauders and 72 U.S. Mitchells from *North-west Africa*. Five hundred and forty-eight tons of bombs were rained on the marshalling yards, shell and torpedo factory, repair and textile plants, and on the Royal Arsenal, where tremendous explosions were caused. Huge fires were started and after the third attack a pall of heavy smoke spreading across the town obscured many parts of the target area. Although intense and heavy flak was encountered only six U.S. Marauders were lost. Enemy fighter opposition during these later attacks was on an extremely limited scale.

The intensive effort against *Naples* on 17th July had a great effect in dislocating the enemy's supply system; an even more far-reaching result was the shattering blow delivered to the sinking Italian morale.

Further air attacks on Italian targets are considered on page 22.

Fall of Caltagirone and Porto Empedocle

While the bombing of the Italian supply and air bases was in progress, our land forces, backed by full air support, were securing fresh objectives in every sector of the Sicilian battlefield.

On 16th July, elements of the Eighth Army began to infiltrate across the river *Gornalunga* and threatened the *Gerbini* landing grounds. The Germans attempted a counter-attack against our positions at the *Primosole* bridge, but this proved unsuccessful. Further west, Canadian troops took *Caltagirone* and pushed along the road in the direction of *Piazza Armerina*.

The following day the Eighth Army extended its *Primosole* bridgehead north of the river against desperate German resistance, and continued to infiltrate armoured units across the *Gornalunga*.

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To the west, the Canadians captured *Montemacchia* and *Piazza Armerina*.

All of the enemy's effective forces—that is the German units—were now north of the line *Primosole* bridge—*Piazza Armerina*—*San Caterina*. The Italians were fighting more half-heartedly than ever and the whole weight of the main defence fell upon the stronger of the Axis brethren.

On the Seventh Army's front *Pietraperzia*, *Serra di Falco*, *Agrigento* and *Porto Empedocle* fell into our hands and a firm line was established north of these points.

During the two days under immediate review—16th and 17th July—Spitfires flew 235 sorties on offensive sweeps over the *Gerbini* and *Catania* areas in support of the Eighth Army's advance; six enemy aircraft were shot down and two probably destroyed for the loss of one Spitfire.

Beaefighters and Mosquitoes during the nights 16/17th and 17/18th on interception patrols in eastern *Sicily* shot down a total of sixteen enemy aircraft without loss to themselves.

Fighter-bombers, meanwhile, flew a total of 148 sorties on attacks on Sicilian targets. In particular, the *Leonforte* marshalling yards, north of *Enna*, and road convoys at *Randazzo*, the important supply base and road junction north of *Mt. Etna*, were bombed by U.S. Lightnings; Kittyhawk-bombers attacked vehicles on the road near *Paterno*; U.S. Warhawk-bombers attacked the radar station on *Ustica* island, which provided early warning of raids in the north; and numerous U.S. A.36s attacked targets of opportunity in all sectors, bombing and straffing tanks, trucks, trains, railway stations, and shipping in *Termini* harbour.

Already the air plan for reducing *Catania* by the systematic bombing of the lines of approach in addition to attacks on the position itself was being implemented. Thus the bomber effort against battlefield targets from the night 15/16th to the night 17/18th July, inclusive, included an attack on the night 15/16th by 46 U.S. Mitchells, aided by Boston flare-droppers, on *Randazzo*; the bombing of *Vulguarnera*, north of *Piazza Armerina*, on the Canadians' front, by 24 U.S. Mitchells on the 16th; an attack on the enemy's *Catania* positions on the night 16/17th by four Bostons and 30 U.S. Mitchells; an attack on *Paterno*, west of *Catania*, by 24 U.S. Mitchells on the 17th; and the bombing of enemy positions west of *Catania* by 42 U.S. Mitchells and four Bostons, which also acted as illuminators, on the night 17/18th.

The Advance in Central Sicily

On the Eighth Army's front heavy fighting was continued north of *Primosole* bridge on the 18th. Our troops continued to operate north of the *Gornalunga*, however, and by the evening two brigades had crossed the river *Simeto*. Further west, *Raddusa* had fallen into our hands. On the following day, 19th July, some progress was made in the area six miles south-west of *Catania*.

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and a counter-attack, supported by tanks, aimed at *Primosole* bridge was beaten off. In addition, the 51st Infantry Division in the face of determined opposition established two bridgeheads across the *Dittaino* river three miles south-west and four miles north-west of *Gerbini*. To the west, in spite of considerable resistance an advance was made to within fourteen miles of *Enna*.

On the Seventh Army's front *Caltanissetta*, *Caterina* and *Aragona* were captured on the 18th. The following day an advance was made in the area north-north-west of *Caterina*, and *Mussomeli* was reached further west; in the coastal sector the American 82nd Airborne Division reached the area north-west of *Montallegro*.

In the course of the two days, 18th and 19th July, Allied fighters flew a total of 428 sorties on offensive patrols; two ME.109s and two ME.110s were destroyed and one ME.110 was probably destroyed for the loss of one Spitfire; all the interceptions took place in the *Catania*, *Etna*, and *Riposto* areas. In addition, on the morning of the 19th, Spitfires escorting a convoy of three troopships and three destroyers into *Augusta* prevented four R.E.2001 bombers, escorted by six other R.E.2001s, from damaging the vessels and shot six of the enemy aircraft down.

Ground strafing and fighter-bomber attacks were carried out by a total of 224 Allied aircraft. The biggest effort was made by U.S. A.36s. On the 18th attacks were concentrated on *Adrano*, across the *Simeto* river, on the road leading south-east to *Catania*; in the *Caterina* area, in order to aid the attacking troops of the Seventh Army; and on the supply base at *Termini*, south-east of *Palermo*. The following day successful attacks were made on trains being loaded at *Fondaco*. U.S. Warhawks also did good work in bombing railway yards at *Alicamo* and *Castelvetrano*, western *Sicily*, and in attacking warehouses, petrol storage, and trains in the same areas.

The main medium bomber effort in *Sicily*, meanwhile, was directed against the enemy's positions at *Catania* on the night 18/19th, when attacks were made by 25 U.S. Mitchells, aided by Boston flare-droppers, and on *Randazzo*, on the 18th and 19th, when 17 American medium bombers bombed the railway and road bridges in order to hinder the enemy's reinforcement of the *Catania* sector generally.

Air Offensive on Italy Continued

Meanwhile, the air offensive against the Axis supply and air bases in *Southern Italy* was continued at high intensity.

On the night 17/18th a total of 62 Wellingtons were detailed to attack the enemy's air bases at *Monte Corvino* and *Pomigliano*, in the *Salerno* and *Naples* areas respectively. Cloud and ground haze made identification of the targets difficult but bursts in each case were observed across the landing grounds and large fires were started. In addition, 1,401,000 leaflets were dropped in the target areas.

During the night, also, nine R.A.F. Cyrenaican-based heavy bombers continued the bombing of *San Giovanni* across the *Messina* Straits.

In the early hours of the 19th four Wellingtons dropped 864,000 special leaflets entitled "Citizens of Rome," which pointed out in no uncertain fashion the uselessness of Italian resistance and the disaster awaiting the Italian people as a result of their collaboration with the Germans.

The Attack on Rome

After full consideration of all likely repercussions—military, political and religious—consequent on an air bombardment of *Italy's* capital, it was decided that the time was now opportune for this long-awaited attack to be made.

Crews were carefully briefed for definite military targets only in order that the minimum damage should be done to a city unique for its religious and historical associations, and the population had been previously warned that an attack was imminent.

The blow was delivered on the morning of 19th July by a force of 158 U.S. Fortresses of the North-west African Strategic Air Force and 112 Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberators.

In the afternoon, also, 216 U.S. Mitchells and 105 U.S. Marauders, escorted by U.S. Lightnings, all of the North-west African Air Force, attacked the *Ciampino* airfield, south of the city.

Although our aircraft were traced to the *Rome* area by radar and the attack was expected hourly the enemy air opposition was negligible. Not a single American aircraft failed to return from the morning mission and two bombers only were lost in the afternoon attack on *Ciampino*.

Excellent photographic coverage by the North-west African Photographic Reconnaissance Wing revealed that all targets were attacked successfully. The *Lorenzo* railway yards, engine houses and locomotive shops were devastated and large sheds in the main freight depôt and much track and rolling stock were severely damaged. The *Tobonelli* steel plant, a large chemical plant, the tram garage and the passenger car depôt were all hard hit and damage was inflicted on industrial buildings to the south-west of the target. At the *Littorio* railway yards about 80 hits were scored along the entire length of the marshalling yards and sidings, including 50 direct hits on rolling stock and tracks. In addition, the locomotive depôt and workshops were badly damaged. The *Ciampino* north airfield was rendered temporarily unserviceable and apart from 24 grounded aircraft destroyed or damaged hits were scored on ammunition dumps, administrative buildings, hangars and barracks. At the south airfield similar damage was done to airfield facilities and at least fourteen aircraft were observed damaged or burnt out.

In the city of *Rome* itself no damage was caused except to a few buildings in the immediate vicinity of the *Lorenzo* railway yards.

Apart from the tremendous blow inflicted on the enemy's communications and air strength the

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Lorenzo marshalling yards, Rome, under attack on 19th July, 1943.

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CIAMPINO NORTH A/D

D.I.R. No. D.73

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Assessment of damage at Ciampino North airfield, Rome.

1. Ammunition dump: two out of three storage sheds damaged.
2. Three buildings damaged and one big shed partly destroyed.
3. Two shed type buildings, one gutted and one damaged.
4. A direct hit has damaged the upper storeys of the Administrative block.
5. Blast damage to West Hangar.
6. Blast damage to roof of Central Hangar.
7. Roofing stripped and structure damaged of East Hangar.
8. Three direct hits on two-day stores sheds.
9. Barracks severely damaged by two possible direct hits and huts partially destroyed.
10. Three sheds destroyed by fire.
11. One shed destroyed by fire.
12. Crater blocking road; direct hit on light railway; four trucks still burning.
13. Twenty aircraft damaged or burnt out.
14. Small dumps of stores burnt out.

There are nearly 600 large, medium or small craters on landing and dispersal areas, not including those made by fragmentation bombs.

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1. Repair sheds damaged by fire and 4-5 direct hits.
2. Six-day hangar damaged.
3. Sheds and buildings damaged by two near misses.
4. Two shed type hangars damaged by eight bombs on and between them; one large aircraft blown in two by direct hit.
5. Small shed damaged.
6. Presumed Recreation Hall damaged by direct hit. Presumed kitchen and Mess Hall damaged by 2-3 near misses. Five other small buildings damaged

7. Six-day hangar damaged by one or two direct hits.
8. Twelve damaged or destroyed aircraft on landing field or dispersal area.

Nearly 200 craters on landing ground or dispersal areas, not including those made by fragmentation bombs.

Unnumbered arrows indicate destroyed or damaged houses.

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effect on Italian morale was incalculable. The war had been brought to the very heart of *Italy* and from this time the desire of the people to be unfettered from the cracking German war machine became more and more manifest.

Liquidation of Enemy's Sicilian Air Bases

Of the few Sicilian airfields still in the enemy's

hands on 19th July all but two—*Trapani/Milo* and *Bocca di Falco*, in the north-west of the island—were unserviceable. The only active aircraft were eleven single-engined fighters at *Bocca di Falco*. Two days later the enemy's air activity from Sicilian bases, which during the campaign had never been particularly active, was definitely dead.

III. THE ENEMY'S STAND AT CATANIA

The Occupation of Western Sicily

During the fourth week in July the Seventh Army made spectacular progress which resulted in the occupation of the entire western part of *Sicily*.

An advance westwards from *Agrigento* reached *Castelvetrano* on 21st July and the western ports of *Marsala* and *Trapani* fell like ripe fruit on the 23rd and 24th, respectively. An advance to the north, meanwhile, from positions in *Central Sicily* resulted in the occupation of *Enna* on 20th July and *Palermo* was reached by nightfall on the 22nd. The important base of *Enna*, in particular, had been attacked by a total of 212 medium, 30 light and 107 fighter-bombers from 10th to 16th July, inclusive.

Actually, the Air Plan had envisaged the fall of *Catania* before *Palermo*, but the delay in cutting the Central Sicilian roads enabled the enemy to reinforce the *Catania* sector from the north-west.

The troops opposing the Seventh Army were entirely Italians. These, now convinced beyond all doubt of certain defeat on the battlefield and the further devastation of their homeland, and realising at long last that they were mere pawns in the Nazi game, were only too eager to pass into captivity for the rest of the war, or slip quietly back to their Sicilian homes and normal peacetime activities.

Apart from the hopelessness of the military position Italian morale received another jolt by the overthrow of Mussolini on the 25th and the resultant uncertainty which followed the collapse of the Fascist régime.

Owing to the nature of the Seventh Army's advance and the absence of enemy air opposition air support on a large scale was not necessary. Some of the most successful attacks in western *Sicily* during the four days of spectacular advance were made on targets of opportunity by 44 U.S. Warhawks, including 28 carrying bombs, on 20th July. The railway yards at *Partinico* were attacked and the track was bombed from *Alcamo* almost to *Trapani*; in addition, attacks were made on gun positions south of *Castellamare*, on ammunition dumps west of *Vitta* and a radar station on the southern tip of *Stagnone* island. On this and the following day, successful attacks were also made by a total of 32 U.S. Warhawks

and A.36s on the *Partinico* railway yards and the roads to the north. Meanwhile, U.S. A.36s bombed and strafed troops, vehicles and artillery positions in the *Petralia* area.

During the 25th and 26th the American troops re-grouped for a further thrust eastwards. They repulsed an enemy attack eight miles north-west of *Nicosia* and on the northern coast reached a point eight miles west of *San Stefano*.

In order to soften resistance to this coastal push from the night 19/20th to 26th July light bombers made two night attacks and U.S. A.36s, operating each day, bombed and strafed communications and supply dumps in the *San Stefano* area and to the east and south-east.

By the end of July the Seventh Army had advanced southwards to *Nicosia* and eastwards beyond *San Stefano*.

Fierce Fighting on Eighth Army's Front

South of *Catania* fierce fighting continued but in spite of the strongly defended positions held by the enemy in this sector heavy casualties were inflicted on his forces. The Herman Goering division was now holding on while the 15th Armoured Division came eastwards to form up on its right flank.

Even heavier fighting, however, took place on the central front to the west of *Catania*, where the Canadians made steady headway in the face of determined opposition. On the 21st and 22nd our troops engaged strong elements of the 15th Armoured Division south-west of *Agira* and in the region of *Leonforte*. The Germans here were fighting back grimly in order to keep open the road running eastwards and in the hope of reinforcing the north-eastern stronghold with Italians. *Assoro*, south-east of *Leonforte*, fell to the Canadians' assault on 22nd and on the following day *Leonforte* was captured.

The enemy's 15th Armoured Division was now forced to withdraw eastwards along the roads through *Petralia*, *Nicosia*, *Troina* and north and east of *Leonforte* and *Nicosia*, under cover of heavy artillery fire and flak, to join up with the Herman Goering Division. The German units suffered heavy casualties on this and the succeeding days at the hands of our land and air forces.

Nicosia, ten miles north-east of *Leonforte*, was captured on the 24th, and in the face of strong

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enemy opposition the Canadians, aided by Kittyhawk bomber attacks, pushed on towards *Agira* which was still in Axis hands. The following day our troops fought their way astride the *Agira* road but during the evening were forced to withdraw.

During the 26th and 27th, however, the Canadians continued to maintain pressure in the *Agira* sector, supported by the air attacks on the *Regalbuto* area mentioned in the following sub-section, and reached positions overlooking *Agira* on three sides. On the 29th the town was captured.

Further south a British force improved its positions on the *Dittaino* river before *Catenanuova*, aided by Kittyhawk bomber attacks, and occupied the town on the same day as *Agira* fell.

Air Attacks in the Battle Area

Full air support was afforded by our air forces during the period of the stranglehold on the *Catania* area mentioned in the preceding paragraphs.

The air plan aimed at the isolation of the main *Catania* position by the systematic bombing and straffing of every line of reinforcement and approach. The ring formed by *Misterbianco*, *Paterno*, *Adrano*, *Regalbuto*, *Troina*, *Cesaro*, *Bronte*, *Randazzo*, *Fiumefreddo*, *Riposto* and *Acireale* were kept under constant attack and the connecting roads were also constantly strafed. Meanwhile, attacks were continued on *Catania* itself.

From the night 19/20th July to the end of the month aircraft under the control of the North-west African Tactical Air Force flew a total of 84 medium, 705 light and 1,170 fighter-bomber sorties against the targets mentioned in the preceding paragraph. The fighter-bomber attacks on the harbours at *Catania*, *Riposto* and *Acireale* are not included in the above total but are considered in the later sub-section, "Attacks on Sicilian Harbours".

The Allied fighters, meanwhile, flew nearly 1,000 sorties on offensive patrols on all sectors of the battlefield but no conclusive engagements with enemy aircraft were reported.

The most consistent effort was directed against *Randazzo*, the important road junction which connected the Axis positions in the north with those on the east coast. During the twelve days under review attacks were made by 43 medium, 46 light and 178 fighter-bombers on the town, bridges and roads in the vicinity. Perhaps the most successful raid of the series was that carried out by 36 U.S. Warhawks on 22nd July, when 40 enemy vehicles were claimed as destroyed and 25 damaged.

Of almost equal consistency were the attacks delivered on the *Troina* area by twelve medium, 97 light and 135 fighter-bombers; the bombers concentrated on the town and main road junction, and the fighter-bombers (including 76 U.S. A.36s) attacked targets on the *Troina-Randazzo* road.

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The attacks on *Regalbuto* were those made on *Regalbuto*, a few miles east of *Agira*, on the 26th and 27th while the Canadians were making their thrust in the *Agira* sector. On the 26th R.A.F. and U.S. light bombers flew a total of 212 sorties in attacks on *Regalbuto* and these were supplemented by 22 Kittyhawk-bomber sorties; considerable damage was done to the town and roads in the vicinity. On the following day the attacks were renewed by 82 more light bombers. These attacks, followed by 82 light bombers and eleven fighter-bomber sorties on *Centuripe*, further east, on 28th and 31st July materially helped our thrust eastwards from *Agira*.

Catania itself, during the twelve days under consideration, was attacked by a total of 150 U.S. A.36s, U.S. Warhawks, and Kittyhawks; these attacks do not include the bombing of the harbour. Particular attention was paid to the marshalling yards and railway bridges in order to hinder the transportation of supplies and troop movements.

Among the other strategic strong points guarding the approaches to the enemy's north-eastern area of resistance, *Misterbianco*, *Adrano*, *Paterno* and *Cesaro* received the main weight of the air attacks.

The attacks on *Riposto*, on the coast to the north of *Catania*, are more properly regarded as part of the plan to limit the reinforcing and supplying of the *Catania* position and are considered later.

Allied Forces Re-group for Final Attack

The Allied forces, now re-grouping for the final assault, had a formidable task in front of them. In the southern *Catania* sector the enemy held strongly defended positions which had been improved by wiring and digging and the whole of the Germans' right flank was in difficult mountainous country, easily defended and giving no scope for mobile tank warfare. There were three main roads only in *North-eastern Sicily* along which large-scale Allied attacks could be developed:— that circling *Mt. Etna*, the *Catania-Messina* coast road; and the northern coastal road.

The beginning of the end was in sight, but the way was still hard and hazardous.

Attacks on Sicilian Harbours

While the air attacks on battlefield targets were in progress constant air attacks were delivered on the few remaining harbours in north-east *Sicily* still in Axis hands. Such craft as escaped our sea forces, which were operating at times even in the *Messina Straits*, were often caught in the enemy's Sicilian reinforcing ports, and the damage inflicted on harbour facilities further limited the scanty supplies reaching the enemy's hard-pressed army.

The previous heavy air attacks on the *Messina* ferry terminal and those across the Straits

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U.S. Mitchells of the N.A.T.A.F. on low level bombing of Sicilian roads.

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had ended the train ferry service, and the enemy had recourse mainly to the employment of small craft such as "F"-boats, Siebel ferries and barges in his attempt to pass supplies across to *Messina*. During the last twelve days in July 59 U.S. Warhawks and A.36s attacked *Messina* harbour: the A.36 attacks resulted in damage to a cruiser and two destroyers, and the Warhawks scored near misses on a 400 foot transport and two patrol boats, in addition to the bombing of two barges, two ferries and a steamer with unobserved results.

Riposto harbour, to the north of the *Catania* position, was attacked by a total of 111 U.S. Warhawks and Kittyhawks. Considerable damage was inflicted on the docks and jetties and direct hits were scored on barges and small freighters.

Acireale, further south, was also attacked on one occasion by eleven U.S. Warhawks which caused damaged to the harbour facilities.

The heaviest attacks, however, were made against *Milazzo*, at this stage the enemy's busiest harbour. From 24th to 31st July, inclusive, 38 medium, 160 light, and 211 fighter-bombers made attacks on the harbour and 48 fighter-bombers attacked the marshalling yards, the main bridges and roads in the vicinity. Apart from the medium bomber attacks, carried out by U.S. Mitchells, aided by flare-dropping Bostons, the effort was made by day. The bomber attacks resulted in widespread damage to the harbour installations and near misses on a tanker and several small vessels. The fighter-bomber attacks, delivered almost entirely by U.S. A.36s and U.S. Warhawks, resulted in direct hits being scored on two 1,000 ton vessels, a 500 ton vessel, a "large ship" of unreported size and two freighters, in addition to numerous near misses on other shipping in the harbour and damage to the quays and docks.

Attacks on Enemy Shipping at Sea

During the last week in July, also, aircraft of the North-west African Air Forces flew 106 effective bomber and fighter sorties against enemy shipping at sea.

Of the twelve attacks delivered the most successful were those made by Coastal Air Force Beaufighters. A 2,000 ton merchant vessel was sunk and a schooner probably sunk west of *Naples* on 24th July, and a barge was left ablaze; a 1,500 ton merchant vessel was sunk off the Sardinian coast on the 26th; and on the 29th a merchant vessel of 8,000 tons was probably sunk and a destroyer and an M.T.B. were set on fire north of *Licosa* Point, the southern extremity of the Gulf of *Salerno*.

Destruction of Air Transport

In addition to the attacks on the enemy's sea-borne supplies and Sicilian harbours successful blows were also struck at the enemy's air transport force. In particular, on 25th July 33 Spit-

fires of No. 322 Wing, operating from the airfield at *Lentini*, south of *Catania*, shot down 21 JU.52s and four escorting ME.109s off *Milazzo*.

Attacks on Italian Communications Continued

Simultaneously with the air attacks on the enemy's shipping at sea, air transport and Sicilian harbours, the offensive against Italian bases and communications was maintained at high intensity.

Photographic coverage revealed that as a result of the shattering blow to *Naples* on 17th July, mentioned on page 21, rail traffic through the *Naples* marshalling yards was still completely stopped. Traffic could by-pass the city, however, through the junctions at *Cancello* and *Caserta*. Accordingly heavy attacks were now made on the railway junctions at *Salerno*, *Battipaglia*, and *Foggia* to prevent supplies reaching *Southern Italy* and *Sicily*.

Concerted attacks were made on all three junctions on 22nd July, when 71 U.S. Fortresses attacked *Foggia*, 52 U.S. Mitchells attacked *Salerno* and 48 more U.S. Mitchells bombed *Battipaglia*. In addition, 39 Wellingtons had previously attacked *Salerno* on the night 21st/22nd July and 66 more Wellington sorties were flown against this target on the nights 22nd/23rd and 23rd/24th. At *Salerno* all rail traffic through the junction was stopped and great damage was done to rolling stock. All main lines were destroyed at *Battipaglia*, and rail traffic through *Foggia* was also definitely stopped owing to the cutting of the main lines. Rail traffic to *Southern Italy* was consequently bottle-necked pending repairs to the three junctions attacked.

Additional attacks on southern Italian communications were made by 35 Wellingtons on the night 23rd/24th, when the *San Giovanni* docks were bombed; by a total of 48 U.S. Mitchells on 24th and 26th July when the marshalling yards at *Paola* were attacked; and by eleven R.A.F. Cyrenaican-based heavy bombers on the night 20th/21st July when the *Reggio di Calabria* railway yards were bombed.

In the north, also, a heavy blow was struck at the *Bologna* marshalling yards by 51 U.S. Fortresses on 24th July. At least seventeen tracks were put out of commission and much devastation was caused to rolling stock by the blowing up of an ammunition train in the north forwarding sidings. Locomotive depôts and stores were hit, the through lines east to west were cut in several places, the main line northwards was blocked, and the northern loop line was damaged.

The subsequent attacks on Italian bases and communications during the last fortnight of the Sicilian campaign are considered on page 34.

Intensive Bombing of Italian Airfields

The air attacks, meanwhile, on the series of airfields in *Italy* were continued unabated.

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The air bases attacked may be divided into four main classes according to their locality:—airfields in the foot of *Italy*, in the *Naples* area, in the *Rome* area, and those to the north of *Rome*.

In the toe of *Italy Vibo Valentia* airfield was attacked by eight Cyrenaican-based R.A.F. heavy bombers on the night 19/20th July and on the following day 71 escorted U.S. Mitchells and Marauders renewed the attack with loads of 20 lb. fragmentation bombs. *Crotone*, to the north-east, was attacked by 26 Wellingtons on the night 20th/21st and by 72 U.S. Mitchells on the 23rd. Meanwhile, our reconnaissance aircraft reported increasingly large concentrations of single-engined aircraft at *Leverano* airfield in the heel of *Italy*. This airfield was accordingly bombed by 69 U.S. Fortresses on 23rd July, when 828 x 500 lb. bombs were dropped plumb on the target. The bombers were attacked by a force of enemy fighters, twelve of which were destroyed without loss incurred by the Fortresses. The airfield was rendered unserviceable and our reconnaissance aircraft on the following day reported that of 38 ME.109s around the perimeter at least eighteen were damaged or burnt out and the remainder must have been damaged owing to their proximity to bomb craters. *Grottaglie* airfield, also in the heel of *Italy*, was attacked by 46 U.S. Fortresses on 30th July; apart from the destruction of grounded aircraft the two main hangars were completely gutted.

Further north, in the instep of *Italy*, the landing ground at *Scalea* had come into use as a single-engined fighter base. This airfield was effectively bombed by 36 escorted U.S. Mitchells on the 27th.

The vulnerability of the enemy's landing grounds in the foot of *Italy* induced him to transfer more and more aircraft further north and during the last week of July there was a noticeable reluctance to replace destroyed and damaged fighters, particularly in the Italian "heel."

Attacks on the enemy's airfields in the *Naples* area included that on *Aquino*, north-north-west of *Naples*, on which JU.52s, JU.88s, ME.110s and single-engined fighters had been seen by reconnaissance aircraft; the important Neapolitan air base at *Capodichino*, which was used particularly by JU.52s and ME.110/210s; *Capua* airfield, a JU.52 base; and *Monte Corvino* airfield, on which single-engined fighters and ME.110s were based. In all, attacks were delivered by seventeen heavy bombers and 395 medium bombers (including 216 Wellingtons). Some indication of the destruction caused during these raids is given by the evidence of photographic reconnaissance. At *Aquino* airfield, for example, attacked by 65 Wellingtons on the night 19/20th July considerable damage was done to hangars and administrative buildings, about 100 craters were apparent on the landing area and 36 aircraft were damaged or burnt out on the ground.

At *Monte Corvino* airfield, attacked by 72 U.S. Mitchells on the following afternoon, 26 grounded

aircraft were damaged or destroyed, including thirteen ME.110s and six large aircraft.

In the *Rome* area, *Pratica di Mare* airfield, to the south of the city, was attacked on two occasions by a total of 69 Wellingtons and U.S. Mitchells and the airfield at *Viterbo*, north of *Rome*, was bombed by 54 U.S. Fortresses on 29th July. In particular, the American medium bombers destroyed or damaged 25 grounded aircraft at *Pratica di Mare* and the heavy bombers caused heavy damage to all three hangars at *Viterbo* and 36 medium and large aircraft were burnt out and six others seriously damaged.

To the north of *Rome*, half way to *Pisa*, the important air base at *Grosseto* was attacked by 70 U.S. Fortresses on 21st July: cloud cover prevented an accurate estimate of the damage inflicted but it was evident that at least one ME.323 and four medium bombers were destroyed on the ground and barracks, repair shops, administrative buildings and a hangar received many direct hits.

The intensive air attacks on the Italian airfields mentioned above, and the subsequent bombing indicated on page 40, further reduced the enemy's declining air resistance and paved the way for the subsequent invasion of the Italian mainland.

Negligible Enemy Air Effort

The enemy's air effort during the last week in July continued to be on a small scale and, apart from a daylight raid on *Palermo* and some dive-bombing at *Enna*, *Agrigento* and *Sciacca*, was made mainly at night.

On the night 24/25th July JU.88s attacked *Augusta* and *Syracuse*; Beaufighters succeeded in shooting two of the raiders down. On the same night 25 JU.88s and HE.111s made the first attack on *Malta* since the beginning of the campaign. Six JU.88s were destroyed—three by Beaufighters and Mosquitoes and three by anti-aircraft fire.

The enemy's fighter opposition to our intensive air attacks on Italian targets remained negligible.

Early Attacks on Evacuation Shipping

During the last week in July there were signs of a limited evacuation by sea, particularly from the *Catania*, *Messina*, *Milazzo* and *Orlando* areas. The merchant vessels, barges, freighters, Siebel ferries, and other small craft employed by the enemy were attacked with considerable success by a total of 226 U.S. A.36s, U.S. Warhawks and Kittyhawks.

When the evacuation was in full swing in August the fighter-bomber effort against evacuation shipping was intensified. These later attacks are considered on page 39.

Fall of Catania

During the first few days of the fourth week of the campaign, *Catania*, the enemy's main

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A typical bombing attack on a Sicilian airfield — right up the runway.

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centre of resistance, showed signs of becoming untenable. The fall of *Catenanuova* on 29th July and the capture of *Regalbuto* four days later threw the enemy back on the road *Paterno-Adrano-Cesaro-San Fratello* while providing our troops with excellent lateral communications. The thrust from *Centuripe* and *Regalbuto* towards *Adrano* now threatened the entire *Catania* position. On 3rd August preparations for the withdrawal of the Herman Goering Division were reported and two days later, together with *Misterbianco* to the west of the town, the position was in our hands.

Our land forces entered *Catania* at dawn on 5th August without any enemy opposition, the Commanding Officer of the Eighth Army advanced troops having received a notice typed in English to the effect that "the authorities and functionaries of the city... were awaiting orders". Our troops were met by a seething mob of citizens who expressed delight at the departure of the Germans and begged for food.

The intensive air attacks on all approaches to *Catania* mentioned on page 27 had been con-

tinued in the early days of August and had virtually isolated the position. During the first four days in August, in fact, attacks on targets in the *Troina-Randazzo-Paterno* triangle exceeded the 250 mark for medium bomber sorties and nearly 400 for light and fighter-bombers, respectively. In particular, heavy attacks were delivered on *Adrano* in support of the thrust from *Regalbuto*. Our advance in this area is considered in the following section, IV—"Reduction of the Island".

From the beginning of the Sicilian campaign to the fall of *Catania* the Seventh U.S. Army captured 91,600 prisoners; during the same period the Eighth Army, which had come up against the main resistance, took 28,000 prisoners.

Eighth Army casualties (including Canadians) killed, wounded and missing were 9,353 and the Seventh Army's casualties totalled 7,700.

With the fall of *Catania* the enemy's forces were obliged to withdraw to their final bridgehead. The end was now in sight.



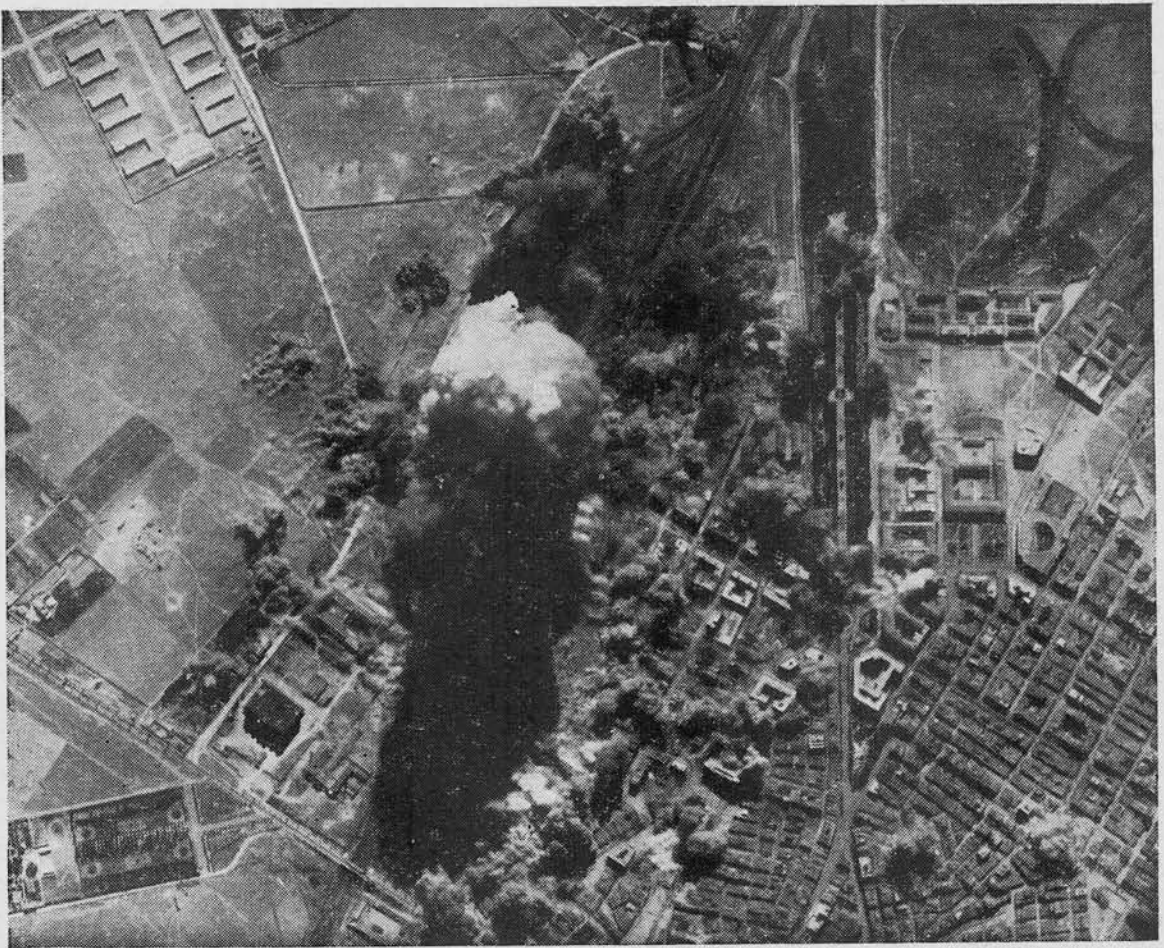
Bologna marshalling yards under attack, 24th July, 1943.

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British troops entering Catania.



Attack by U.S. Fortresses on Foggia railway communications in progress, 22nd July, 1943.

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IV. REDUCTION OF THE ISLAND

Capture of Troina

While the enemy was evacuating the *Catania* position the Seventh Army advanced steadily eastwards along several parallel roads and captured *Troina* on 6th August.

During the first six days in August our air attacks on *Troina* comprised twelve medium and 130 fighter-bomber sorties in addition to strafing attacks. This air support greatly assisted the Seventh Army's advance.

Troina and roads in the vicinity had been predominantly a fighter-bomber target, 265 sorties being made by fighter-bombers from 18th July to the time of its fall as compared with twelve by medium and 97 by light bombers.

Fall of Adrano

Meanwhile, in the central sector of the Eighth Army's front our troops had captured *Paterno* and threatened *Belpasso*. On the 6th further pressure in the central sector resulted in the capture of *Biancavilla* and by the afternoon our land forces had reached the outskirts of *Adrano*. The town finally fell in the evening after a determined resistance.

As our thrust against *Adrano* drew ever nearer the air offensive against this most important strong-point was intensified. From 1st to 6th August 129 medium, 223 light and 24 fighter-bomber sorties were flown in attacks on the town, troop and gun concentrations, ammunition dumps and roads in the vicinity as compared with 58 medium, 142 light and 82 fighter-bomber sorties during the last fortnight in July.

With the fall of *Adrano* the German scheme to establish a firm line south of *Mount Etna* was impossible to fulfil, and a withdrawal in the coastal sector north of *Catania* became necessary to conform with the right flank which was being pushed back towards *Bronte*. The enemy's line now ran south-east from the foothills of *Mount Etna* through *Nicolosi* to a point on the coast between *Catania* and *Acireale*, while to the north-west the line ran through *Bronte* and *Cesaro* to *San Fratello*.

On both the Seventh and Eighth Army fronts, however, the enemy was making full use of mining and demolitions which rendered our advance in the difficult country of north-east *Sicily* slow and hazardous. Above all, it must be freely admitted that the German units were fighting with the grimmest determination.

Air Attacks on Tactical Targets

In addition to the air attacks on *Adrano* and *Troina* intensive attacks were made during the first six days in August on other tactical targets in the battlefield and rear areas. Seven attacks were made on north-east Sicilian roads in the course of which nearly 153 tons of bombs were dropped: this total, however, included some at-

tacks in the *Troina* area, already mentioned, and some in the *Messina* area which are considered in the following sub-section. One hundred and forty tons of bombs were dropped on targets of opportunity in north-east *Sicily* including such targets as enemy transport vehicles and encampments. Specific gun positions received a load of nearly 30 tons and the enemy's positions at *Bronte*, *Paterno*, *Centuripe* (on 3rd August only) *Randazzo*, *St. Maria*, *Francavilla*, *Cesaro* and others points of resistance were subjected to attacks involving the expenditure of a total bomb load of 343 tons.

Attacks on Messina, Cape Peloro and Milazzo

While the air attacks against battlefield targets were being carried out at full intensity during the first week in August, attacks were renewed on a large scale against the harbour, marshalling yards, bridges, roads and troops at *Messina* and towards the end of the week against the beaches extending westwards to *Cape Peloro*. The attacks had a dual aim:—to prevent last-minute supplies reaching the enemy's hard-pressed forces and to strike at his main evacuation point.

From 1st to 7/8th August, inclusive, attacks were delivered by a total of 121 U.S. Fortresses, 269 Wellingtons and 225 R.A.F. and U.S. fighter-bombers. The heavy bombers concentrated on the town of *Messina* itself (hitting amongst other objectives the gas works and commercial buildings) and on the cross-roads and highway bridges. The Wellingtons struck first at the marshalling yards and later at targets on the evacuation beach between *Messina* and *Cape Peloro*. The main fighter-bomber effort was directed against shipping in the harbour; supplies piled on the docks were destroyed and an appreciable number of small craft were sunk or damaged.

Meanwhile, over 200 U.S. Warhawks and Kittyhawks supplemented our Naval operations in the *Messina Straits* by attacks on small craft already described as "evacuation shipping"; in particular, several Siebel ferries and barges were sunk or set on fire and near misses were scored on numerous other small vessels. Air attacks were also continued on *Milazzo*. Against the harbour itself attacks were delivered by a total of 24 medium, 23 light and 91 fighter-bombers and additional attacks on the town, marshalling yards and nearby camps were carried out by 34 fighter-bombers.

Attacks on Italian Bases and Communications

As part of the plan to force the enemy to abandon his Sicilian bridgehead attacks were continued on *Naples* and vital rail communications in *Southern Italy*.

During the first week in August *Naples* was attacked twice by U.S. Fortresses and on three nights by Wellingtons.

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The American heavy bomber attacks were made on the 1st and 4th of the month. On the 1st 23 aircraft operated against the docks and 47 concentrated their attacks on the nearby air base at *Capodichino*. In all, 181 tons of bombs were dropped and both targets were reported to be well covered by bomb bursts. In particular, photographs revealed that at least 29 grounded aircraft were destroyed or damaged at *Capodichino*. On the second occasion 77 U.S. Fortresses attacked the docks and submarine base, again reporting a good covering of the target. A feature of the Fortress attacks on *Naples* was the increased enemy fighter opposition. On 1st August the bombers were attacked by approximately 25 German fighters and their escort, consisting of 50 U.S. Lightnings, was engaged by about 35 Italian fighters; seven enemy fighters were destroyed for the loss of one Fortress. During the attack on the 4th the Fortresses claimed the destruction of one ME.109, one MC. 202 and one FW.190 and the probable destruction of eleven other aircraft; two Fortresses were shot down and 49 others were damaged by heavy accurate flak.

The Wellington attacks on *Naples* were aimed at the marshalling yards against which a total of 170 effective sorties were flown; two aircraft only failed to return from these missions. On several occasions some of the aircraft operating acted as "path-finders" and in every raid fires were started which were often accompanied by explosions. These attacks greatly hindered the enemy's attempts to put the marshalling yards in commission again after the heavy July attacks. A feature of the attacks was the dropping of 180,000 "Mothers of Italy" and 1,200,000 "Italiana Soldati" leaflets on the night 6/7th August.

Further south railway targets at *Battipaglia*, *Marina Catanzaro* and *Paola* were heavily attacked. By night a total of 147 Wellingtons bombed all three targets and day attacks were made by 135 U.S. medium bombers on *Marina Catanzaro* and *Paola*. Particularly heavy damage was inflicted on the railway yards and bridges at *Marina Catanzaro*, against which 137 effective sorties were flown.

From *Cyrenaica* R.A.F. heavy bombers flew 27 effective sorties against the marshalling yards and railway bridges at *Reggio di Calabria* and *San Giovanni* in the toe of *Italy*. The Liberator effort of the Ninth U.S. Force, meanwhile, was directed against the *Ploesti* oil refineries in *Rumania*: this attack is described elsewhere in the Review.

Enemy Air Attacks on Palermo

During the first week of August the enemy attempted to hinder our recommissioning of *Palermo* harbour as a supply-base.

In the early hours of the 1st, 25 JU.88s and DO.217s made a successful attack, rendering the best dock temporarily unserviceable; in addition,

rations and petrol supplies were destroyed, an ammunition train was blown up and a diesel vessel was sunk. The second raid, however, carried out on the 4th, achieved little success.

In the first raid seven enemy aircraft, and in the second four, were destroyed.

The Advance Continues

On the Eighth Army front our troops followed up the enemy's retreating troops in the coastal sector: *Aci Castello* fell into our hands on the 7th August and *Acireale* on the following day.

Meanwhile, to the west our seizure of *Adrano* was exploited for operations northwards, and a decisive threat to the enemy was developed along the *Adrano-Bronte-Randazzo* road on the heels of the air blitz mentioned below. *Bronte* was captured on the 8th and on the next day our troops were already several miles on the road to *Randazzo*, the last road junction connecting the Axis positions in the north with those on the east coast.

As our troops approached *Randazzo* the position was attacked from the air with ever-increasing intensity. On the 7th *Randazzo* town and its approaches were attacked by 104 U.S. Mitchells, 142 U.S. Bostons and R.A.F. and S.A.A.F. Bostons and Baltimores; intense heavy flak was encountered; two U.S. Mitchells failed to return and many aircraft were damaged. At the same time a small R.A.F. Boston force straddled *Maletto*, seven miles to the south-west, with bombs. Meanwhile, U.S. A.36s and Warhawks continued to carry out strafing attacks in close support of our land forces and other R.A.F. and U.S. fighter-bombers helped them in this activity when returning from bombing *Messina*.

Sea and Air Landings behind Enemy Lines

The Seventh Army was also advancing. Before dawn on 8th August units made sea and air landings behind the enemy's lines south-west of *Cape Orlando* on the north coast and, by establishing themselves on high ground overlooking the coast, now harassed the enemy lines retreating before the advance of the main Seventh Army. The latter had captured *San Fratello* and *Sant' Agata* in the coastal sector on the 8th and forces advancing from *Troina* occupied *Cesaro* by the evening of the same day. The next morning the latter troops advanced along the *Cesaro-Randazzo* road and made contact with elements of the Eighth Army moving along the parallel road *Bronte - Randazzo*.

The Seventh Army's advance was materially helped on the 7th by U.S. A.36s and Warhawk-bomber sorties on the *Agata* railway tunnel, gun positions, and road junction to the north-west of the town. On the same day, also, heavy damage was done to artillery emplacements and casualties were inflicted on troops by an U.S. A.36 attack east of *Fratello*. Further south other A.36s softened resistance to the advance on *Cesaro* by attacks on roads and enemy transport vehicles.

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During the night of 11th August, U.S. Army troops made another surprise landing east of *Cape Orlando*. By the following evening contact was established with the land forces at *Naso*. Air attacks in support of the Seventh Army's advance along the northern coast road were particularly heavy against *Patti*, to the east of *Naso*. From 8th to 12th August a total of ten medium, twelve light, and 126 fighter-bomber sorties were flown in attacks on gun positions, the cross roads, a bridge, railway junction, a suspected headquarters and the town itself. The medium and light bomber sorties mentioned above were all flown on 11th and 12th August and during those two days, also, U.S. A36 attacks were particularly devastating. Further east, from 8th to 12th August, a total of twelve medium, twelve light and 41 fighter-bombers attacked the town of *Barcellona* and roads and railway in the vicinity.

The Allied line now ran from *Naso* to within two miles of *Randazzo*, round *Mount Etna* and north-eastwards to *Riposto*, on the east coast. It was clear that the reduction of the island would now be accomplished in a few days.

Enemy Resistance Broken

A two-pronged attack, meanwhile, had been developed against the key position of *Randazzo*, units of the Eighth Army approaching the town from *Bronte* and units of the Seventh Army from *Cesaro*. The enemy resisted both of the assaults with the utmost obstinacy, but the strain of battle and our intensive air attacks coupled with the absence of reinforcements and air support forced him to give ground and *Randazzo* was occupied on 13th August.

The peak air effort against *Randazzo* on 7th August, mentioned on page 35, was never approached again, but the attacks were continued at high intensity. From 8th August to the time of its fall U.S. Mitchells flew a total of 190 effective sorties against the positions, and the Allied light bombers and fighter-bombers flew 86 and 44 sorties respectively. Except for a few S.A.A.F. Boston sorties on the night 9/10th August all the attacks were delivered by day and proved most successful.

In all, from the beginning of the Sicilian campaign to the final reduction of *Randazzo* 561 medium, 324 light and 321 fighter-bomber effective sorties were flown against this position. During July the town and roads in the vicinity were treated primarily as a fighter-bomber target, but in the first fortnight of August, when resistance stiffened in this area, more weight was given to the air attacks by medium and light bombers, which flew nearly 700 effective sorties.

Amongst other attacks in the vicinity of *Randazzo* may be mentioned the attacks by 36 U.S. Warhawks on *Franca Villa*, to the north-west, on the 12th which resulted in hits on the road junction and a bridge, thus helping to cut the enemy's retreat northwards.

Simultaneously with the attack on *Randazzo*, Eighth Army troops in the east coast sector, although hindered by mines and demolitions, succeeded in reaching *Gioeni* and *Riposto* by the 12th and were advancing beyond *Fiumefreddo* on the following day.

The main bombing support at this stage for the advance along the east coast road was provided on 11th August by 36 U.S. Mitchell sorties in attacks on the railway and road near *Fiumefreddo* and 36 R.A.F. Baltimore and U.S. Boston sorties on troop and vehicle concentrations in the same area. Further south on the 12th 23 U.S. Bostons attacked the town of *Nunziata*. In addition, the rear areas at *Scaletta* and *Gesso* were successfully attacked by Allied light and medium bombers.

Second Attack on Rome

On 13th August, following the dropping of warning leaflets on the city during the previous night by Wellingtons, heavy and medium bombers of the Strategic Air Force revisited the Italian capital. Once again marshalling yards were the main objectives attacked in order to ensure the paralysis of rail communications in *Southern* and *Central Italy*.

In all, effective sorties were flown by 91 U.S. Fortresses, 66 U.S. Mitchells and 202 U.S. Marauders, which dropped a bomb-load of approximately 500 tons. Escort was provided by 145 U.S. Lightnings.

Photographs revealed that the following damage was inflicted in the course of this large-scale raid. At the *Lorenzo* marshalling yards a large crater was made in the centre of the tracks on the *Naples* line and much rolling stock was damaged and burnt out. On the eastern perimeter many repair shops and industrial buildings were hit and the sidings were put temporarily out of use. Heavy damage, also, was again inflicted on the *Tabonelli* manufacturing plant. Damage at the *Littorio* yards included the blocking of the through lines, the destruction of rolling stock in the reception sidings, and hits on railway buildings and repair shops. At the *Rome Littorio* airfield, the buildings hit included the airframe and engine repair shops, five hangars and the administrative buildings; fresh craters were made in the eastern part of the landing area and grounded aircraft were destroyed and damaged.

Damage to non-industrial and historic buildings was again negligible.

Four formations of our bombers were engaged by approximately 75 enemy fighters, but few were aggressive in their attacks, concentrating on the medium bombers and leaving the heavies alone. The American bombers claimed the destruction of two enemy fighters and three "probables" and the escorting U.S. Lightnings reported the shooting down of three more and two "probables". Two U.S. Marauders failed to return from this mission.

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The other attacks on Italian communications during the last stage of the campaign in *Sicily* are mentioned below.

The Last Phase

As a result of the fall of *Randazzo* on 13th August the enemy was left with only one lateral communication road, that running from *Taormina* through *Francavilla* and *Novara* to the north coast west of *Barcellona*. Some attempt was now made to hold the road while the tempo of the enemy's evacuation was quickened.

On the 15th, however, the enemy withdrew after a token resistance and our troops entered *Taormina*, *Castiglione*, *Novara* and *Mazarrà*. In the coastal sector the enemy's retreat was accelerated by the threat of an amphibious landing in the vicinity of *Scaletta*. On the same day elements of the Seventh Army, profiting by the speedy retreat in the north and helped by their third leapfrog landing on the previous night, reached *Spadaforo*, twelve miles west of *Messina*.

On the evening of 16th August advanced elements of the Seventh Army entered *Messina* and in the early morning of the following day forward units of the Eighth Army, moving up from *Scaletta*, also reached the town.

An extraordinary feature of the last days of the enemy's withdrawal was the screening of the crack German units by second-class Italian coastal regiments so that the Germans could make good their escape.

Organized resistance ceased on 17th August and *Sicily* was in Allied hands. It was estimated that enemy casualties, killed and wounded, amounted to approximately 32,000 men, of whom 25,000 were Germans. At least 132,000 prisoners were taken (including 125,000 Italians) and many Sicilian troops had donned civilian clothes and returned to their homes.

During the last four days of the Sicilian campaign practically the entire air effort, as indicated below, was directed against the enemy's evacuation beaches on either side of the *Messina* Straits and communication targets in *Southern Italy*. *Milazzo* was attacked by fighter-bombers, however, until its occupation on the 15th and a total bomb load of 90 tons was dropped on the few remaining roads in *Sicily* in enemy hands and on targets of opportunity generally.

The "Milk Run" to Messina

Mention was made on page 34 of the bombing of *Messina* and attacks on evacuation shipping in the first week of August. During the last ten days of the campaign the attacks on the enemy's Sicilian evacuation beaches and shipping were continued at high intensity. In all, attacks were delivered by 21 heavy, 404 medium, 20 light and 273 fighter-bombers.

The heavy bomber sorties were all flown on the 9th when the cross-roads at *Messina* were bombed; poor visibility, however, prevented the

complete observation of the results achieved. Apart from 35 U.S. Mitchell sorties flown on the 16th August against harbour installations at *Messina* and troop concentrations at *Cape Pelora*, all the medium bomber attacks were carried out at night by Wellingtons. Night after night the R.A.F. medium bombers continued to pound the evacuation beaches from south of *Messina* to west of *Cape Pelora* and these nightly trips inevitably became known as the "milk run". Innumerable fires among transport vehicles on the roads and beaches and in the villages and camps were started and the widespread havoc and confusion caused greatly hampered the enemy's night evacuation moves. In addition, the Wellingtons dropped considerable numbers of leaflets in the target area. During the last few days of the evacuation the Wellington attacks were switched to the beaches across the *Messina* Straits. These attacks are considered in the following sub-section.

The fighter-bomber attacks in the *Messina* area, apart from the attacks on evacuation shipping considered later, were carried out mainly by U.S. Warhawks and Kittyhawks and included the bombing and strafing of the railway, bridges, supply dumps, storage buildings and harbour facilities. In particular, from 15th to 17th August, inclusive, the fighter-bombers flew a total of 222 sorties against these targets.

Attacks on Italian Communications and Beaches

Meanwhile, heavy air attacks were continued against Italian rail and road communication and the reception beaches across the *Messina* Straits.

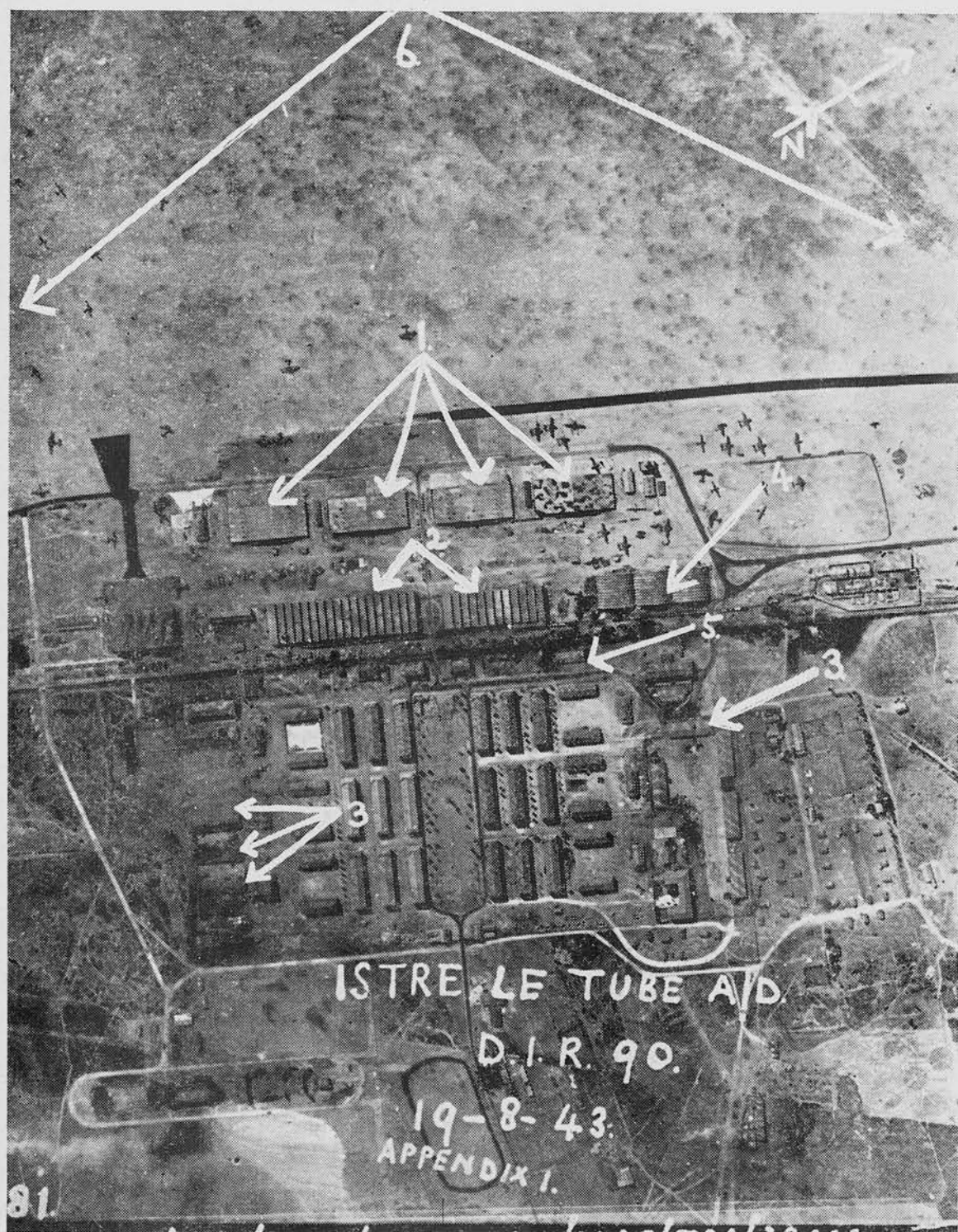
During the last ten days of the campaign, apart from the devastating attack on the *Rome* marshalling yards on 13th August, already considered, the main attacks specifically aimed at railway yards were delivered against those at *Terni*, north of *Rome*, *Lamezia*, in the foot of *Italy*, *Viterbo*, north-north-west of *Rome*, *Battipaglia*, south-east of *Salerno*, *Sapri* in the foot of *Italy*, and *San Giovanni* on the Italian side of the *Messina* Straits.

Terni railways yards and industrial area were attacked by 72 U.S. Fortresses on 11th August and considerable destruction of rail traffic and damage to jute and wool mills, steel works and barracks was caused.

The marshalling yards at *Lamezia* were most successfully attacked on the nights 13/14th and 14/15th by a total of 42 Wellingtons, which left the whole target area ablaze. On the following two nights the Wellingtons struck further north at the *Viterbo* marshalling yards, carrying out 76 effective sorties; on each occasion mist rendered the target difficult to locate but the area was well covered with bombs. The attack on *Battipaglia* marshalling yards was delivered by 36 U.S. Marauders on 17th August and the target area was reported to be "completely blanketed". The marshalling yards at *Sapri* were effectively bombed on the 15th by 24 U.S. Marauders; many of the 245 coaches present were believed to be

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Photograph taken a few hours after the attack on Istres Le Tube airfield, 17th August, 1943.

- (1) Roofs of four large hangars slightly damaged.
- (2) Roofs of two large workshops slightly damaged.
- (3) Roofs of barracks damaged.
- (4) Roof of large hangar damaged.
- (5) Shed to north-east of workshops damaged by fire.
- (6) Extensive area covered by fragmentation bomb craters.

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destroyed and two oil fires were started with smoke rising to 5,000 feet. Meanwhile, Cyrenai-can-based R.A.F. heavy bombers carried out three night attacks on the railway siding at *San Giovanni*, flying 39 effective sorties.

The most striking attacks on bridges were those delivered against the important railway and road bridges across the *Angitola* river, which flows into the *Gulf of Eufemia*. From 7th to 17th August day attacks on these bridges and targets in the area generally were made by a total of 319 U.S. medium bombers. When temporary bridges were constructed to take the place of those destroyed attacks were continued against these also by U.S. and R.A.F. medium bombers operating by day and night, respectively. Traffic across the *Angitola* river was seriously impeded by these determined attacks and at times was brought to a standstill.

An intense air effort, meanwhile, was directed against the many landing points on the western seaboard to which the enemy's small evacuation craft made their perilous trip. By day the beaches and harbours were attacked continuously by Allied fighter-bombers and where necessary weight was given to the attacks by U.S. medium and R.A.F., S.A.A.F. and U.S. light bomber sorties. During the last few nights of the campaign, also, the Wellingtons switched their attacks from the *Messina-Cape Pelora* beaches to landing points across the Straits.

Some idea of the day effort may be given by considering the attacks on *Palmi*. From 9th to 14th a total of 71 effective U.S. Warhawk-bomber sorties were flown against this landing point and barges and warehouses were bombed and straffed. On the 14th 47 U.S. Mitchells and twelve R.A.F. Baltimores continued the attacks somewhat inland, concentrating particularly on the road junction to the north-west of the town in order to harass and hinder troop movements.

Similar attacks, meanwhile, were going on against landing craft, supply dumps, warehouses and roads at *Pizzo*, *Reggio di Calabria*, *Scilla*, *Nicastro*, and numerous other points in the foot of *Italy*.

Amongst the attacks delivered specifically against roads, vehicles, bridges and railway communications, as distinct from beaches, may be mentioned 88 U.S. A.36 sorties against "targets of opportunity" in the *Gioia Tauro* area on the 13th, 14th and 15th; the bombing of roads and vehicles at *Piedimonte*, north of *Naples*, by 21 U.S. medium and twelve U.S. Bostons on the 13th; and attacks by 42 Kittyhawks and U.S. Warhawks aimed at supply dumps and railway communications on the Italian south-east and south-west coasts on the 14th.

The fighter-bomber effort directed solely against "evacuation shipping" is considered later.

The night effort against the Italian beaches was carried out by the Wellington force which switched its effort against the *Messina* beaches

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to those across the Straits on the night 13/14th August.

On that night 23 aircraft found the beaches from *San Giovanni* to *Palmi* clearly identifiable in the moonlight and accurate bombing was reported. Twenty-three more Wellingtons concentrated on the beaches in the *Pizzo* area, further north, dropping bombs around *Marina di Valentia* harbour and village and on vehicles three miles north-east of *Pizzo*. The following night the same beaches were attacked; sixteen Wellingtons attacked the *San Giovanni* to *Palmi* beaches, 34 bombed the beaches, roads and towns of *Palmi*, *Bagnara* and *Scilla* and nineteen bombed barges at *Pizzo* and villages to the south. On the night 15/16th 40 Wellingtons successfully attacked the landing points, barges and marshalling yards at *Paola*, *Scalea*, *Sapri* and *Cetraro*. The following night 40 Wellingtons attacked the beaches from *Palmi* to *Maratea*, with railway communications as secondary targets. The weather and visibility were excellent and specific objectives could be selected for attack; eighteen fires were caused over the whole area, including four in the *Pizzo* marshalling yards. On the night 17/18th attacks on barges, railway communications and bridges were made in the *Cape Suvero-Briatico* area by 47 Wellingtons and good visibility again greatly aided the selection of targets.

Meanwhile, intruder Mosquitoes from *Malta* carried out night bombing attacks on enemy ports, bases and lines of communications in *South* and *Central Italy*, flying 27 effective sorties from 8th to 17th August, inclusive.

The Wellington Effort

During the closing phase of the Sicilian campaign No. 205 Group's effort had been stepped-up to the maximum intensity so that the beaten enemy was subjected to unslackening round-the-clock air attacks. In addition to the magnificent bombing record an interesting feature of the Wellingtons' activity was the dropping of great quantities of "nickels" (leaflets) over a tremendous stretch of enemy territory from *Messina* in *Sicily* to *Modena*, *Northern Italy*.

Owing to the hazardous nature of the medium bombers' attacks, and, in particular, the danger from concentrated flak casualties were inevitable, but considering the scale of the attacks and the damage inflicted these were comparatively slight.

Attacks on Evacuation Shipping

In addition to the fighter-bomber effort against the enemy's principal evacuation points intensive attacks were delivered against the enemy's evacuation shipping in transit and off the beaches. From 8th to 17th August, inclusive, a total of 1,170 effective sorties were flown in this activity, almost entirely by Kittyhawks and U.S. Warhawks. In particular, over half of the above total was flown on the 15th, 16th and 17th.

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The majority of the attacks was made on vessels in the *Messina Straits*, but an appreciable number were carried out on craft along the south-west Italian seaboard.

It is impossible to give an accurate estimate of the damage and casualties inflicted on the enemy's evacuation craft in the course of these attacks: in many cases results were not fully observed and the harm caused by near misses varied according to circumstance.

The peak effort was reached on 16th August, when twelve light and 191 fighter-bomber effective sorties were flown against shipping crossing the *Messina Straits* and nineteen fighter-bomber sorties against craft off the Italian south-west coast. The following typical reports indicate the nature of the attacks and results achieved. The light bomber sorties mentioned were flown by twelve Baltimores against two 7,000 ton vessels off *Messina*; the brief report on the bombing stated, "No direct hits but one near miss". The reports of Kittyhawk-bombers included the following:—"All bombs fell within 30 yards of Siebel ferry; vessel stopped". "Two large 200 foot barges attacked on *Palmi* beach; direct hit on each". "Direct hits scored on two 100 foot barges, both were destroyed." The following are typical of the U.S. Warhawks' reports:—"Nine near misses scored on two merchant vessels in *Messina Straits*". "One hit and one near miss scored on large Siebel ferry with troops aboard. Another Siebel ferry boxed by four misses. Four bombs dropped astern barge, which seemed to stop". "Three near misses on 'F'-boat, believed damaged". "Two hits seen among barges; large clouds of smoke only results observed".

Headquarters North-west African Air Forces' conservative estimate of casualties inflicted on enemy shipping in the *Straits of Messina* and off the western Italian seaboard from 8th to 17th August, inclusive, was as follows:— four landing craft, three barges, one Siebel ferry and one "E"-boat sunk; five landing craft, two barges and one "E"-boat probably sunk; and eight barges, seven Siebel ferries, five landing craft, three merchant vessels, two "E"-boats, two "F"-boats and one tug damaged.

Partial Success of Enemy's Evacuation

In spite of the rigorous Naval and air action against the enemy's evacuation points and shipping, and the bombing of the enemy's southern Italian rail and road communications, the Germans had considerable success in withdrawing personnel and equipment to the Italian mainland.

This was due to many factors. The evacuation was not a last-minute rush job but had been methodically carried out during the last days of July and on a larger scale from 8th August onward. The narrowness of the *Messina Straits* and the heavy concentration of enemy anti-aircraft and coastal guns made our Naval and air operations hazardous undertakings, and the ap-

proach of our armies to the final Sicilian bridgehead was rendered difficult by the obstacles of the terrain and expert mining and demolitions. Not an inconsiderable factor, also, was the good morale and discipline of the German units concerned.

On the other hand, the Germans' ruthless disregard for the safety of those Italian formations which had continued to help them in the struggle fanned into flame the fires of resentment long smouldering against an overbearing and now hated "ally".

Offensive Against Enemy Air Bases

During the last eleven days of the campaign a heavy offensive was again launched on some of the enemy's key airfields.

On the 7th, 8th and 12th August U.S. Mitchells flew a total of 116 effective sorties in attacks on *Crotone* airfield, at this stage the enemy's most important air base in the toe of *Italy*. Barracks and the runways were hit and at least twelve grounded fighters were reported as destroyed or damaged.

Further north the single-engined fighter base at *Grazzanise* (near *Naples*) was attacked on 12th August by 48 U.S. Marauders. An analysis of photographs showed that twelve aircraft were put out of action on the ground and of the landing area only a strip in the centre and to the south-east remained free of bomb craters. A feature of the attack was the opposition put up by 24 to 30 enemy fighters which took off from *Capua* airfield and made their attacks prior to the bomb run. Some "air to air" bombing was unsuccessfully attempted and seven of the attacking aircraft were destroyed.

On the 16th came *Foggia's* turn for another full-scale attack; this time the blow was delivered from *Cyrenaica* by 85 Ninth U.S. Air Force Liberators. The whole surface of the landing ground at *San Nicola* was well covered with bursts and at *Tortorella* oil fires were started and bursts were observed in the dispersal areas. Enemy fighters, estimated at 75 to 100 strong, attacked the Liberators which claimed to have destroyed 45 aircraft (including 29 M.E.109s) and probably destroyed seven others. Eight of the heavy bombers failed to return.

First Attacks on Airfields in Southern France

The following day, 17th August, U.S. Fortresses of the Strategic Air Force made their first attack on the enemy's main *South of France* airfields, where long-range bombers and torpedo-bombers were based. In addition, the airfields were packed with transport aircraft and gliders as this area was a base for paratroop formations. One hundred and forty-four sorties were flown against the *Istres* airfields (comprising 92 sorties against *Le Tube* airfield and 52 against the *Les Patis* and Group I airfields) and 38 sorties against the nearby *Salon* airfield. Strike photographs showed that a total of at least 94 air-

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craft were destroyed on the ground and about 28 others damaged. Reconnaissance photographs taken after the attacks revealed that all the hangars in the north group of landing grounds at *Istres* were damaged and two hangars and fourteen large workshops in the south group were severely damaged and administrative buildings were hit at *Salon*. At both the *Istres* and *Salon* airfields the landing areas were well covered with craters caused by fragmentation bombs.

Enemy Air Attacks

During the last week of the campaign enemy air attacks on our Central Mediterranean shipping were on an increased scale and four of our merchant ships were damaged.

Bizerta was raided on four nights, including a large-scale attack on the night 17/18th when 75 long-range bombers operated over the port. Beaufighters of the Coastal Air Force intercepted the bombers and destroyed two JU.88s and one H.E.111. On the following night the attack was renewed by over 60 bombers; on this occasion the Beaufighters shot down two H.E.111s and damaged another.

The long-range bombers which made the attack on *Bizerta* were apparently based at airfields in the *South of France*. Accordingly, as mentioned in the preceding sub-section, attacks were delivered on the landing grounds concerned at *Istres* and *Salon*.

Protection of Shipping and Harbours

Reference has already been made on page 9 to the intensive air effort directed to the protection of Allied convoys and harbours in the nine days immediately before the invasion of *Sicily*. During the campaign itself the effort required for carrying out these tasks was still on a necessarily high scale.

From 10th July to 17th August, inclusive, fighter aircraft of the North-west African Air Forces flew a total of 6,572 sorties on the protection of shipping in the Central Mediterranean and Middle East fighters during the same period flew 2,613 sorties over convoys in the Eastern Mediterranean. This air cover ensured practically complete immunity from enemy air attacks on our shipping in transit.

Full fighter defence was also provided for our harbours and land lines of communication. The enemy's effort against the Middle East harbours continued to be negligible, but, as already mentioned, attacks were periodically made on the Central Mediterranean harbours in Allied hands. Some of the high lights of the North-west African and *Malta*-based night-fighters' activity in countering the threat of the enemy's long-range bombers have already been indicated.

The submarine menace was most effectively kept in check, the Allied Naval co-operation aircraft helping and supplementing the work of our sea forces. From 10th July to 17th August the

Middle East Naval co-operation squadrons (including *Malta*) flew a total of 1,421 sorties on close cover anti-submarine protection and area patrols and those of the Coastal Air Force carried out 1,238 sorties on these activities. *Malta*-based Wellingtons damaged two submarines at night east of *Catania* in the middle of July and by day two Hurricanes of No. 336 (Hellenic) Squadron scored strikes on a surfaced submarine off *Sidi Barrani*. In Central Mediterranean waters aircraft of the Coastal Air Force during the first half of August sank one submarine and probably sank another.

A number of other submarines were attacked during the period under review but as is most often the case in submarine attacks definite results were not observed. The lack of success attending the enemy's U-boat warfare during this period is shown by the fact that only seven merchant ships of an appreciable size were sunk in the whole of the Mediterranean during the months of July and August by submarine action.

The air/sea rescue effort is indicated in the table on page 53. In previous issues of the Review accounts have been given of the Middle East's activity in this interesting and most valuable work and the Coastal Air Force's air/sea rescue effort will be considered in a subsequent number.

Air Reconnaissance

The success of our air attacks in the Central Mediterranean theatre of war could not have been achieved without the necessary "spade work" of the reconnaissance squadrons based in *North-west Africa* and *Malta*. Tactical reconnaissance Spitfires and strategic reconnaissance U.S. Mustangs, photographic reconnaissance aircraft and sea reconnaissance Wellingtons, Baltimores and Marauders all played a vital part in spot-lighting every aspect of enemy activity.

Tables indicating the scale of the reconnaissance effort are given on page 45.

Comparative Aircraft Casualties

In the course of the operations 1st July to 17th August, inclusive, the Allied air forces destroyed over 740 enemy aircraft in combat. The total Allied losses through enemy action, in spite of an immeasurably greater effort, were roughly 50% of the enemy total.

In addition, the havoc caused by our air attacks on the enemy's Sicilian airfields is indicated by the fact that enemy aircraft of operational types left abandoned in varying degrees of unserviceability exceeded the 1,100 mark. A breakdown by types showed that German casualties amounted to 57% of this total. The most prevalent types found abandoned were ME.109s (280 aircraft), MC.202s (100), MC.200s (85), JU.88s (80), FW. 190s (70), and S.79s (44). The types abandoned also pointed to the increased use of the ME.210 and a lesser employment of the ME.110; 29 of the former were found and only fourteen of the lat-

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ter. The limited use of the HE.129 "tank buster", pointing to its ineffectiveness, was illustrated by the fact that only one specimen was found in the whole of the island, and the decline of the JU.87 dive-bomber, the scourge of the skies in the early German campaigns, was shown by the paltry figure of eight only left abandoned.

The Air Factor

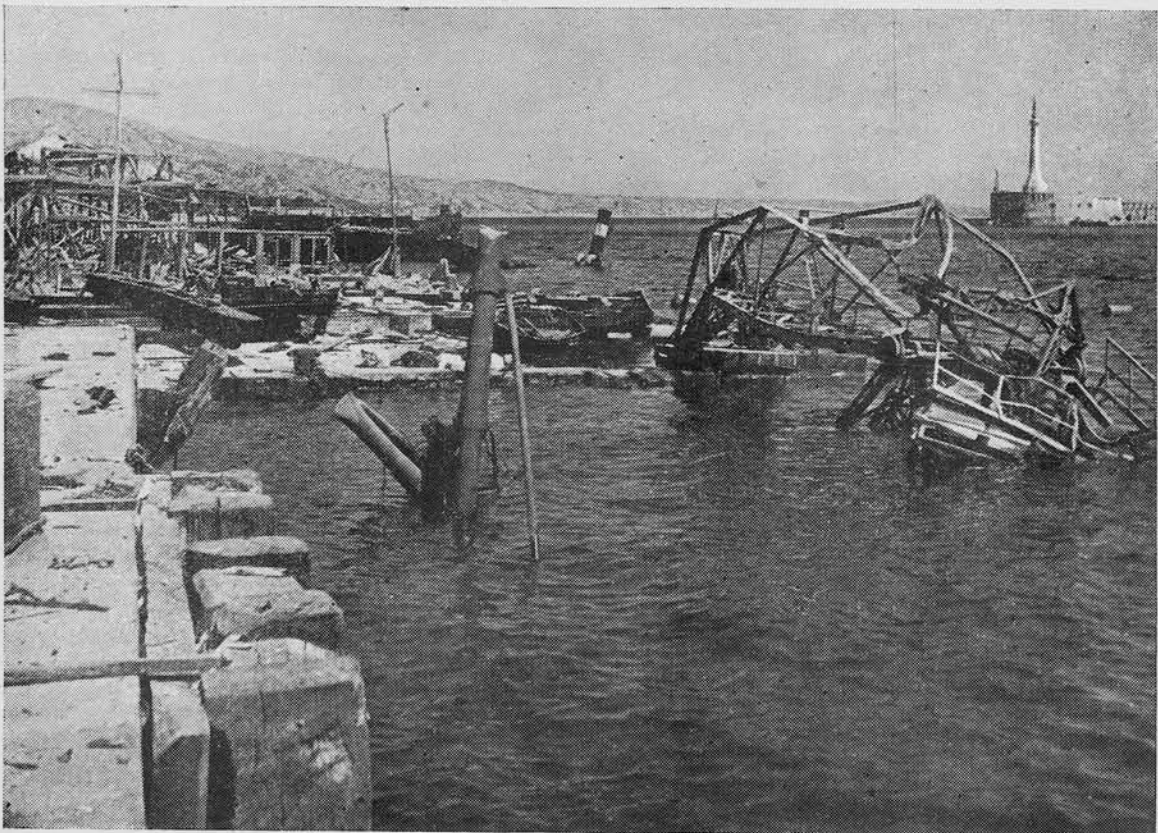
The Sicilian campaign was in many respects a model one—a strongly held island was completely occupied in the space of five and a half weeks, due to the successful combined operations of sea, land and air forces.

The pattern of the Allied air activity in connection with the Sicilian campaign may be summarised as follows:—

- (1) The reduction of enemy air resistance prior to the assault by the methodical bombardment of his airfields.
- (2) The limiting of supplies reaching the enemy's land and air forces by constant attacks on his supply lines and shipping.

- (3) The protection of our shipping before, during and after the assault.
- (4) The transportation of airborne assault troops.
- (5) A concentrated effort against the enemy's lines of communication to prevent the speedy transfer of reinforcements to threatened areas.
- (6) The isolation of centres of enemy resistance by tactical bombing and strafing before the advance of our land forces.
- (7) The effort against the enemy's evacuation movements.
- (8) The switching of the strategic bombing effort to the enemy's next series of airfields, bases, and supply lines in preparation for the subsequent advance into Italy.

A well-thought-out plan had been ably executed: the battle could now be carried still further into Hitler's *Europe*.



Messina wharves at conclusion of the campaign.

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DIARY OF THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN

Page

I. Preparatory Measures, etc.

- 5 Reduction of *Pantelleria* and smaller islands.
- „ Strategic bombing programme against the enemy's Central Mediterranean "build up" mid May to end of June, 1943.
- 6 Preparation of *Malta* as offensive base.
- „ Main features of Air Plan.
- 7 Air reconnaissance arrangements.
- „ Rôle of air transport.
- „ Relative air strengths.
- 8 The opposing land forces.
- „ Pre-invasion blitz on Sicilian airfields.
- 9 Reduced effort against enemy bases and communications.
- „ Pre-invasion shipping protection.

II. The Assault

- 10 The airborne assaults night 9/10th July.
- „ Bombing on the night 9/10th July.
- „ The landings 10th July.
- 12 Beach fighter patrols 10th July.
- 13 Air attacks on enemy's Sicilian airfields, positions and lines of communications, 10th and night 10/11th July.
- 15 The Eighth and Seventh Armies' initial advance.
- „ Allied air activity on 11th and night 11/12th July.
- „ Seventh Army capture *Comiso* airfield night 11/12th July.
- „ Second paratroop assault night 11/12th July.
- „ Naval units enter *Augusta* 12th July.
- „ Air attacks on *Messina* communications, 12th July.
- „ Air attacks on enemy communications and positions in southern and central *Sicily* 12th July.
- „ *Malta*-based aircraft successes against enemy air forces over the beaches 12th July.
- 17 Air effort against *Termini* docks and concentrations at *Enna* and *Caltanissetta* night 12/13th July.
- „ Success of *Malta*-based Mosquitoes and Beaufighters night 12/13th July.
- „ Third airborne mission night 12/13th July.
- „ Early establishment of Task Air Forces in *Sicily*.
- 18 Reduced enemy air resistance in *Sicily* 13th July.
- „ Success of *Malta*-based fighters on beach patrols 13th July.
- „ Air attacks on *Catania* and *Milo/Trapani* airfields and enemy positions, etc. at *Enna* 13th July.
- „ Beaufighters' success against enemy shipping off *Palermo* 13th July.
- „ Fourth paratroop mission night 13th July.

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- 18 Air attacks continued against *Enna*, *Catania* and *Palermo* night 13/14th July.
- „ Eighth Army patrols in contact with enemy rear guards in *Chiaramonte-Monteroso* area 14th July.
- „ German counter-attack in *Augusta* area repulsed 14th July.
- „ German forces complete move from western *Sicily* to south-east of the island 14th July.
- 19 Air attacks on *Enna* continued 14th and night 14/15th July.
- „ Air attacks on *Palermo* 14/15th July.
- „ Success of *Malta*-based Mosquitoes and Beaufighters night 14/15th July.
- „ Eighth Army recapture *Primosole* bridge 15th July.
- „ Allied armies' line on evening of 15th July ran:— *Primosole* — *Scordia* — *Grammichele* — *Mazzarino* — *Riese* — *Canicatti* — *Favara* — *Palma*.
- „ Enemy air resistance in *Sicily* broken 15th July.
- „ Fighter-bomber attacks continued on enemy's central Sicilian communications and *Catania* position 15th July.
- „ N.A.A.F. successes against enemy shipping during first week of Sicilian campaign.
- „ Air offensive against Southern Italian rail communications and supply and air bases night 14/15th July to 17th July, inclusive.
- 21 Elements of Eighth Army infiltrate across the river *Gornalunga* 16th July.
- „ German counter-attack against Eighth Army's positions at *Primosole* bridge fails 16th July.
- „ Canadians capture *Caltagirone* 16th July.
- „ Canadians occupy *Rammacca* and *Piazza Armerina* 17th July.
- „ Seventh Army capture *Pietraperzia*, *Serra di Falco*, *Agrigento* and *Porto Empedocle* 17th July.
- „ Spitfire sweeps over *Gerbini* and *Catania* area 16th and 17th July.
- „ Beaufighters and Mosquitoes shoot down sixteen enemy aircraft over eastern *Sicily* on the nights 16/17th and 17/18th July.
- „ Air attacks on *Randazzo*, *Paterno*, *Valguarnera* and *Catania* 16th to night 17/18th July, inclusive.
- „ Air attacks on air bases in *Naples* and *Salerno* areas 17/18th July.
- „ Capture of *Raddusa* 18th July.
- 22 Air attacks on *Adrano* 18th July.
- „ Seventh Army capture *Caltanissetta*, *Caterina* and *Aragona* 18th July.
- „ German counter-attack against *Primosole* bridge position beaten off 19th July.
- „ Eighth Army establish bridgeheads across the *Dittaino* river 19th July.

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- 22 American airborne troops reach area north-west of *Montallegro*.
- " Spitfire patrols 18th and 19th July over battle area.
- " Intensive U.S. A36 attacks on battlefield targets 18th and 19th July.
- " Air attacks on *Randazzo* 18th and 19th July.
- 26 First air attack on *Rome* 19th July.
- " Enemy's Sicilian airfields virtually liquidated by 19th July.

III. The Enemy's Stand at Catania

- 26 Northern advance of Seventh Army resulted in capture of *Enna* on 20th July.
- " Summary of air effort against *Enna*.
- " Western advance of Seventh Army reached *Castelvetrano* on 21st July.
- " Seventh Army reach *Palermo* 22nd July.
- " Canadians capture *Assoro* 22nd July.
- 29 Heavy air attacks on railway junctions at *Foggia*, *Salerno* and *Battipaglia* 22nd July.
- 26 Seventh Army's westward drive resulted in capture of *Marsala* on 23rd and *Trapani* on 24th July.
- " Canadians capture *Leonforte* 23rd July.
- 29 Heavy air attack on *Bologna* marshalling yards.
- " Spitfires destroy 21 JU.52s south of *Catania* 25th July.
- 27 Canadians capture *Agira* 29th July.
- " Eighth Army capture *Catenanuova* 29th July.
- " Fullest air support which aimed at isolation of the *Catania* position night 19/20th to 31st July.
- 29 Heavy air attacks on Italian airfields night 19/20th July to 30th July.
- 27 Air attacks on enemy's Sicilian harbours 19th to 31st July.
- 29 Successful air attacks on enemy shipping during last week in July.
- 30 Air attacks on limited evacuation shipping during last week in July.
- " Enemy evacuates *Catania* 5th August.
- 32 Air attacks on *Troina-Randazzo-Paterno* triangle 1st to 4th August.

IV. Reduction of the Island

- 34 Seventh Army capture *Troina* 6th August.
- " Air effort against *Troina*.
- " Eighth Army occupy *Adrano* 6th August.
- " Air effort against *Adrano*.
- " Enemy's line on 6th August ran south-east from foothills of *Mount Etna* through *Nicolosi* to the coast between *Catania* and *Acireale*; to the north-west from *Mount Etna* the line ran through *Bronte* and *Cesaro* to *San Fratello*.
- " Air attacks on *Messina*, *Cape Peloro* and *Milazzo* during first week in August.

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- 34 Heavy air attacks on Italian bases and communications during first week in August.
- 35 Eighth Army in east coast sector capture *Acic Castello* on 7th and *Acireale* on 8th August.
- " Eighth Army advance along *Adrano-Bronte-Randazzo* road.
- " Heavy air attack on *Randazzo* 7th August.
- " Eighth Army capture *Bronte* 8th August.
- " Units of Seventh Army's leapfrog landing behind enemy's lines south-west of *Cape Orlando* before dawn on 8th August.
- " Main forces of Seventh Army capture *San Fratello*, *Sant' Agata* on north coast and advancing from *Troina* occupy *Cesaro* on 8th August.
- 36 Units of Seventh Army make another surprise landing east of *Cape Orlando* on night 11/12th August.
- " Air attacks on *Patti* and *Barcellona* 8th to 12th August.
- " Allied line on 12th August ran from *Naso* to within two miles of *Randazzo*, round *Mount Etna* and north-eastwards to *Riposto* on the east coast. Eighth Army troops in east coast sector capture *Gioine* and *Gesso* on 12th August.
- " Two-pronged attack on *Randazzo* by units of Eighth Army approaching from *Bronte* and units of Seventh Army from *Cesaro* led to fall of the position on 13th August.
- " Air effort against *Randazzo*.
- " Second air attack on *Rome*.
- 37 Third leapfrog landing by Seventh Army troops on north coast night 14/15th August. Fall of *Taormina*, *Castiglione*, *Novara* and *Mazzara* 15th August.
- " Commando landing in the *Scaletta* area on night 15/16th August.
- " On the evening of 16th August advanced elements of Seventh Army reached *Messina*.
- " On 17th August forward units of Eighth Army entered *Messina*.
- " Air effort against the Sicilian evacuation beaches during the last ten days of the campaign.
- " Air effort against the Italian reception beaches and lines of communication during the last ten days of the campaign.
- 39 Air attacks on enemy's evacuation craft during last ten days of the campaign.
- 40 Air offensive against enemy's air bases in *Italy* during last eleven days of campaign.
- " Attacks on airfields in south of *France* 17th August.
- 41 Air protection of shipping and harbours during the campaign.
- " Importance of air reconnaissance during the campaign.
- " Pattern of Allied air activity during the campaign.

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**RECONNAISSANCE BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH-WEST
AFRICAN AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Tactical and Strategical

Key : { N.A.A.F. and MALTA
MIDDLE EAST

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Tac/R.	Strat/R.	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	167	264	431
	—	47	47
17/18 — 31 July	370	1281	1651
	—	67	67
31 July/1 Aug — 14 Aug.	262	1488	1750
	—	75	75
14/15 — 28 Aug.	180	352	532
	—	85	85
GRAND TOTALS	979	3385	4364
	—	274	274

Mediterranean

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Anti-shipping	Submarine (area and close cover searches)	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	191	509	700
	37	514	551
17/18 — 31 July	329	509	838
	10	487	497
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	199	383	582
	11	372	383
14/15 — 28 Aug.	175	393	568
	17	426	443
GRAND TOTALS	894	1794	2688
	75	1799	1874

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**ATTACKS ON LAND TARGETS BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED BOMBER AND MINELAYING AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH-WEST AFRICAN
AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : { N.A.A.F. & MALTA
 { MIDDLE EAST

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	PORTS, BASES and LINES OF COMMUNICATION (including minelaying)					AIRFIELDS and LANDING GROUNDS					ENEMY CAMPS and POSITIONS					FORT-NIGHTLY TOTALS
	Heavy	Medium	Light	F/Bomber	TOTALS	Heavy	Medium	Light	F/Bomber	TOTALS	Heavy	Medium	Light	F/Bomber	TOTALS	
3/4 — 17 July	514	748	10	541	1813	521	1817	390	3	2731	—	783	292	1348	2403	6947
	459	—	—	3	462	454	—	—	3	457	3	—	—	—	3	922
18 — 31 July	277	456	174	394	1301	256	983	—	17	1256	—	194	977	2007	3178	5735
	145	—	3	25	173	28	—	—	4	32	—	—	—	1	1	206
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	436	876	23	1543	2878	47	212	—	—	259	—	1989	1117	2040	5146	8283
	250	7	—	39	296	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	296
14/15 — 28 Aug.	340	1542	88	1009	2979	396	154	—	—	550	—	427	230	985	1642	5171
	294	5	—	20	319	101	—	—	1	102	—	1	—	—	1	422
GRAND TOTALS	1567	3622	295	3487	8971	1220	3166	390	20	4796	—	3373	2616	6380	12369	26136
	1148	12	3	87	1250	583	—	—	8	591	3	1	—	1	5	1846

**OPERATIONS OVER LAND AND SEA BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED FIGHTER AND FIGHTER-BOMBER AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH-WEST
AFRICAN AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4th July — 28th August, 1943)

Key: { *N.A.A.F. and MALTA*
MIDDLE EAST

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Offensive Sweep		Ground Attack— S. & T.E. (including cannon)	Ground Attack— Fighter-bomber	Intruder Patrol (from Malta only)	Bomber and Recon- naissance Escort	Local Defence (including Harbour)	Anti-shipping	Shipping Protection	TOTALS
	Land	Land & Sea (from Malta only)								
3/4 — 17 July	1574	712	522	1867	53	3298	1284	49	4503	13867
	6	—	3	6	—	—	263	—	1592	1870
17/18 — 31 July	1126	193	313	2444	32	2391	2014	9	1977	10587
	27	—	88	16	—	10	354	13	1083	1591
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug. ...	1161	35	1120	3607	14	3411	2043	164	1807	13862
	—	—	4	1970	—	—	334	32	821	1205
14/15 — 28 Aug.	141	10	263	14	27	2120	1738	91	2475	8835
	60	—	5	21	—	—	307	91	886	1370
GRAND TOTALS	4502	950	2218	9888	126	11220	7079	401	10767	47151
	93	—	100	57	—	10	1258	136	4382	6036

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**RECONNAISSANCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED AIRCRAFT OF THE
NORTH-WEST AFRICAN AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : { *N.A.A.F. and MALTA*
MIDDLE EAST

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Anti-shipping	Submarine (area and close cover)	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	191	509	700
	37	514	551
17/18 — 31 July	329	509	838
	10	487	497
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 August	199	383	582
	11	372	383
14/15 — 28 Aug.	175	393	568
	17	426	443
GRAND TOTALS	894	1794	2688
	75	1799	1874

**SORTIES FLOWN BY AIRCRAFT ON PROTECTION OF FRIENDLY SHIPPING
IN THE MEDITERRANEAN**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

By aircraft of the N.A.A.F. and MALTA 10,767

By aircraft of the MIDDLE EAST COMMAND 4,382

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**EFFECTIVE SORTIES AGAINST SHIPPING AND SUBMARINES AT SEA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED
AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH-WEST AFRICAN AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : { *Attacks on Shipping*
 Attacks on Submarines

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FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	NUMBERS OF EFFECTIVE SORTIES										FORTNIGHTLY TOTALS
	HEAVY		MEDIUM		LIGHT		F/BOMBER and CANNON		TOTALS		
	N.A.A.F. and Malta	Middle East	N.A.A.F. and Malta	Middle East	N.A.A.F. and Malta	Middle East	N.A.A.F. and Malta	Middle East	N.A.A.F. and Malta	Middle East	
3/4 — 17 July	—	—	91	2	—	—	117	—	208	2	210
	—	—	1	—	9	1	—	—	10	1	11
17/18 — 31 July	—	—	3	6	—	1	154	13	157	20	177
	—	—	3	—	3	1	—	—	6	1	7
31 July/1 August — 14 August	—	—	2	4	—	1	102	5	104	10	114
	—	—	—	—	8	—	3	2	11	2	13
14/15 — 28 August	—	—	19	8	—	—	67	6	86	14	100
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
GRAND TOTALS	—	—	115	20	—	2	440	24	555	46	601
	—	—	4	—	20	2	3	2	27	4	31

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**RESULTS OF ATTACKS (BY EFFECTIVE SORTIES) AGAINST SHIPPING AND SUBMARINES AT SEA IN THE MEDITERRANEAN
BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH AFRICAN AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : { Shipping
 { Submarines

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	EFFECTIVE SORTIES		RESULTS OF ATTACKS FROM N.AFRICA/LEVANT/MALTA										COMBINED TOTALS
			SUNK OR BEACHED		PROBABLY SUNK		DAMAGED		RESULTS UNKNOWN		TOTALS		
	NAAF and Malta	Middle East	NAAF and Malta	Middle East	NAAF and Malta	Middle East	NAAF and Malta	Middle East	NAAF and Malta	Middle East	NAAF and Malta	Middle East	
3/4 — 17 July	208	2	3	—	4	—	19	—	24	—	50	—	50
	10	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	—	5	—	5
17/18 — 31 July	157	20	—	—	—	1	11	8	11	5	22	14	36
	6	1	—	—	—	—	2	—	2	—	4	—	4
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	104	10	1	1	2	1	13	1	25	3	41	6	47
	11	2	1	—	1	—	—	1	2	—	4	1	5
14/15 — 28 Aug.	86	14	—	—	2	—	12	5	38	11	52	16	68
	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
GRAND TOTAL	555	46	4	1	8	2	55	14	98	19	165	36	201
	27	4	1	—	1	—	2	1	9	—	13	1	14

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**RESULTS OF ATTACKS ON SHIPPING (BY TYPES OF VESSEL) AND SUBMARINES AT SEA
BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH-WEST AFRICAN AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE
EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : { N.A.A.F. and MALTA
MIDDLE EAST

TYPE OF VESSEL	Sunk	Probably Sunk	Damaged	Results Unknown	TOTALS
CARGO VESSELS					
Merchant Vessels	2 —	3 1	13 2	21 12	39 15
Tankers	1 —	— —	2 —	3 2	6 2
Trawlers	— —	— —	3 2	— —	3 2
Coasters and Freighters	— —	— —	2 2	1 —	3 2
"F"-Boats	— —	— —	1 —	4 2	5 2
Siebel Ferries and T.L.C.	— —	— —	3 —	10 —	13 —
Barges and Tugs	— —	— —	4 1	9 1	13 2
Schooners and Sailing Vessels	1 1	2 1	7 4	4 —	14 6
NAVAL VESSELS					
Battleships	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
Cruisers	— —	— —	1 —	1 —	2 —
Destroyers	— —	1 —	11 —	21 1	33 1
Submarines	1 —	1 —	2 1	9 —	13 1
Minelayers and M.T.Bs	— —	— —	1 2	5 —	6 2
"E"-Boats	— —	1 —	— —	4 1	5 1
Escort Vessels, etc.	— —	1 —	7 1	15 —	23 1
TOTALS	5 1	9 2	57 15	107 19	178 37

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RESULTS OF ATTACKS ON SHIPPING (BY TYPES OF VESSEL) IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH-WEST AFRICAN AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : } N.A.A.F. and MALTA
MIDDLE EAST

TYPE OF VESSEL	Sunk	Probably Sunk	Damaged	Results Unknown	TOTALS
CARGO VESSELS					
Merchant Vessels	3 —	— 1	24 7	33 6	60 14
Tankers	— —	— —	— 1	1 —	1 1
Trawlers	— —	— —	1 1	1 —	2 1
Coasters and Freighters	1 —	1 —	9 1	5 —	16 1
"F"-Boats	1 —	2 —	7 —	5 —	15 —
Siebel Ferries and T.L.C.	9 —	4 —	16 —	36 —	65 —
Barges and Tugs	26 —	12 —	40 1	53 —	131 1
Schooners and Sailing Vessels	— 5	1 2	1 24	12 9	14 40
Miscellaneous and Unidentified	— —	9 —	19 6	19 2	47 8
NAVAL VESSELS					
Battleships	— —	— —	— —	— —	— 5
Cruisers	— —	— —	1 1	— —	1 1
Destroyers	— —	— —	3 —	1 —	4 —
Submarines	— —	— —	— —	— —	— —
Minelayers and M.T.Bs	— —	— —	2 —	— —	2 —
"E"-Boats	1 —	— —	2 1	2 —	5 1
Escort Vessels, etc.	— —	— —	2 2	8 —	10 2
TOTALS	41	29 3	127 45	176 17	373 70

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**AIR/SEA RESCUE OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BY R.A.F. AND ALLIED AIRCRAFT OF THE NORTH-WEST AFRICAN
AIR FORCES, THE MIDDLE EAST COMMAND AND MALTA**

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Total number of personnel rescued during this period:— 143.

Key : { *N.A.A.F. and MALTA*
MIDDLE EAST

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Number of Sorties			Effective location of aircrew or wreckage		
	Bomber	Fighter	TOTALS	Rescues (1 or more persons)	Wreckage, empty dinghy, etc.	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	57	230	287	6 *	11	17
	23	—	23	—	3	3
17/18 — 31 July	60	187	247	5 *	17	22
	61	17	78	—	8	8
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	47	107	154	11	10	21
	37	22	59	2	3	5
14/15 — 28 August	98	226	324	22 *	15	37
	20	2	22	2 *	2	4
GRAND TOTALS	262	750	1012	44 *	53	97
	141	41	182	4 *	16	20

* Includes co-operation with H.S.L. in certain cases. In addition certain of these rescues were effected by Naval vessels directed to scene by aircraft on search.

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RECONNAISSANCE BY R.A.F. GARRISON AIRCRAFT BASED ON MALTA

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

LAND AND HARBOUR

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	LAND	HARBOUR	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	49	59	108
17/18 — 31 July	45	56	101
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	43	53	96
14/15 — 28 Aug.	44	42	86
GRAND TOTALS	181	210	391

In addition to the above, 93 sorties were flown on Special Tasks.

EASTERN AND CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Anti-shipping	Submarine (area and close cover searches)	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	48	17	65
17/18 — 31 July	39	96	135
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	23	83	106
14/15 — 28 Aug.	28	74	102
GRAND TOTALS	138	270	408

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ATTACKS ON LAND TARGETS BY R.A.F. BOMBER AND MINE-LAYING AIRCRAFT GARRISONING MALTA

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	PORTS, BASES AND LINES OF COMMUNICATION (including Mine-laying)					AIRFIELDS and LANDING GROUNDS					ENEMY CAMPS and POSITIONS					FORT-NIGHTLY TOTALS
	Heavy	Medium	Light	Fighter-Bomber	TOTALS	Heavy	Medium	Light	Fighter-Bomber	TOTALS	Heavy	Medium	Light	Fighter-Bomber	TOTALS	
3/4 — 17 July	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
17/18 — 31 July	—	—	—	14	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	—	4	—	25	29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29
14/15 — 28 Aug.	—	3	—	26	29	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	29
GRAND TOTALS	—	7	—	62	72	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	72

OPERATIONS OVER LAND AND SEA BY R.A.F. FIGHTER AND FIGHTER-BOMBER GARRISON AIRCRAFT BASED ON MALTA

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Local-Defence (including Night Fighters and cover to retn offensive Recce.)	Ground attack— S & T/E (including Cannon)	Ground Attack— F/Bomber	Offensive Recce. Land and Sea	Intruder Patrol	Bomber and Recce. Escort	Anti-Shipping	Shipping Protection	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	90	45	—	712	53	481	1	180	1562
17/18 — 31 July	213	19	14	193	32	21	9	65	566
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 August ...	181	15	25	35	14	—	3	80	358
14/15 — 28 August	194	5	26	10	27	—	1	97	360
GRAND TOTALS	678	84	65	950	126	502	19	422	2846

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EFFECTIVE SORTIES AGAINST SHIPPING AND SUBMARINES AT SEA IN THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN BY R.A.F. GARRISON AIRCRAFT BASED ON MALTA

(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : { Attacks on Submarines
 { Attacks on Shipping

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	NUMBER OF EFFECTIVE SORTIES				TOTALS
	Heavy	Medium	Light	F/Bomber and Cannon	
3/4 — 17 July	—	1	—	1	2
	—	—	—	—	—
17/18 — 31 July	—	1	—	8	9
	—	3	2	—	5
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	—	2	—	8	10
	—	—	1	—	1
14/15 — 28 Aug.	—	4	—	1	5
	—	—	—	—	—
GRAND TOTALS	—	8	—	18	26
	—	3	3	—	6

For results of attacks on enemy shipping and submarines see TABLE on page 57.

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RESULTS OF ATTACKS (BY EFFECTIVE SORTIES) AGAINST SHIPPING AND SUBMARINES AT SEA IN THE EASTERN AND CENTRAL MEDITERRANEAN BY R.A.F. GARRISON AIRCRAFT BASED ON MALTA

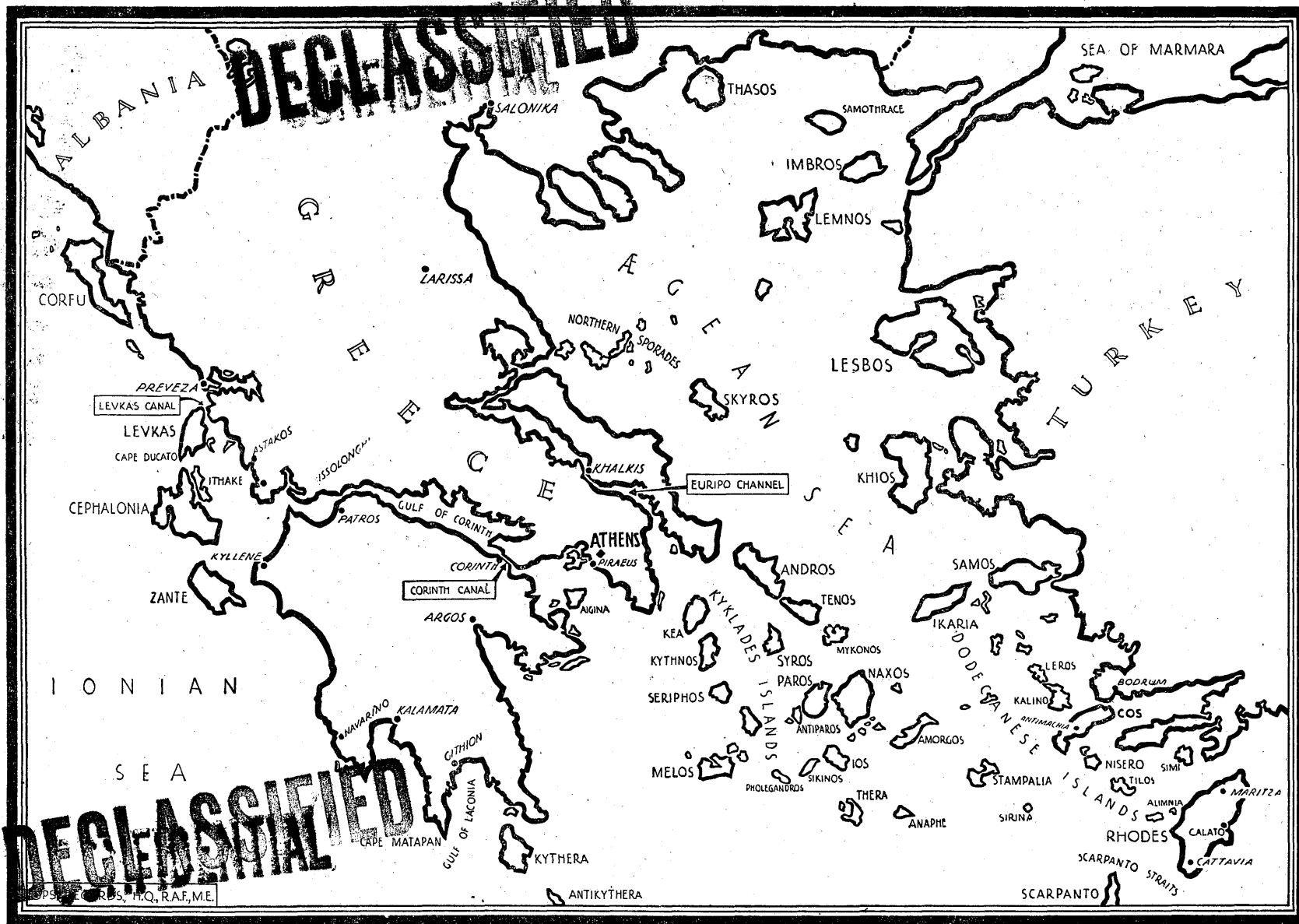
(3/4 July — 28 August, 1943)

Key : { Attacks on Submarines
 { Attacks on Shipping

FORTNIGHTLY PERIODS	Effective Sorties	RESULTS OF ATTACKS				
		Sunk or Beached	Probably Sunk	Damaged	Results Unknown	TOTALS
3/4 — 17 July	2	—	—	2	—	2
	—	—	—	—	—	—
17/18 — 31 July	9	—	—	2	8	10
	5	—	—	2	1	3
31 July/1 Aug. — 14 Aug.	10	1	—	5	1	7
	1	—	—	—	—	—
14/15 — 28 August ...	5	—	—	1	—	1
	—	—	—	—	—	—
GRAND TOTALS	26	1	—	10	9	20
	6	—	—	2	1	3

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TOP SECRET, H.Q. R.A.F. M.E.

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Air Operations In The Aegean

JANUARY TO SEPTEMBER, 1943

COMPARED WITH MORE portentous events further west, the operations carried out this year by the Middle East Command in the Aegean and Ionian Seas seem relatively insignificant. Yet, when the reason for them is understood, they have an important bearing on the war in the Mediterranean area as a whole.

As the enemy lost the initiative after the VIIIth Army's advance from *Alamein* in October, 1942, retention of some foothold on the northern side of the Mediterranean became increasingly necessary to him if he were to keep the back-door to Nazi Europe — *Greece* and the *Balkans* — shut. German strategy in the Eastern Mediterranean was accordingly based on a strong "outer ring" of defence consisting of *Crete*, *Scarpanto* and *Rhodes*. Retention of these strategically vital islands, with their air and sea bases, denied us the possibility of single-engined fighter cover over the Aegean and thus rendered a landing on the mainland behind them impracticable. Behind this "outer ring", in order to keep the lines of communication open, the enemy maintained a number of smaller island outposts in the Aegean.

Garrison duty was, until the collapse of *Italy*, largely in the hands of the Italians. Nevertheless, by September, 1943, the Germans had some 35,000 troops in *Crete*, 7,000 in *Rhodes* and 4 - 5,000 scattered around the other islands — and were strong enough to seize complete control within a few days after *Italy* had signed the Armistice.

This, however, is anticipating events, but it is necessary to indicate the importance placed by *Germany* on the Aegean situation and the preparations that had been made to meet trouble in that quarter.

Even towards the end of 1942 the increase in shipping around *Greece*, bringing extra stocks of food, fuel and ammunition from *Italy*, showed that action by us was anticipated. The ships used were mainly small — seldom more than three or four thousand tons — and for plying between *Greece* and the island outposts the enemy still had a large fleet of caiques, schooners, trawlers and barges.

First Patrols by Marauders

Our policy was to cause the maximum dislocation of this sea-borne traffic as a preliminary to possible future offensive activity against the "outer ring." Plans were accordingly laid by

No. 201 (Naval Co-operation) Group. By the end of 1942, as the tide of war had receded from *Egypt*, many of the Group's units had been transferred to *Malta*, where they could operate more easily against Axis convoys bound for *North-west Africa*. Since our own convoys, however, had to be protected, certain units or detachments — reconnaissance, twin-engined fighters and torpedo-bombers — continued to be based in *Egypt*. Among them was a recently arrived Marauder squadron and these aircraft flew the first few tentative offensive reconnaissance patrols in the Aegean.

A single Marauder, armed with a torpedo, made the actual debut three days after Christmas, but bad weather forced it to return before any sightings were made. The next patrol was on the last day of the year, when two Marauders saw a few small craft south of *Antikythera* Island.

No attacks materialised, however, until New Year's Day. Two Marauders, on an offensive sweep, made a machine-gun attack on a stationary three-masted sailing vessel west of *Lesbos*, with unobserved results, and later scored hits on a trawler or drifter of 3/400 tons further to the south.

Altogether during January Marauders flew 31 sorties — 29 in the Aegean and two in the Ionian Sea. Twenty sightings were made, normally of small craft. Seven torpedo attacks followed, but only one vessel — of 750 tons — was claimed as sunk. Mines were also laid on three occasions by Marauders and Wellingtons in the *Euripo* Channel, between *Euboea* and the mainland.

Enemy Counter-Measures

The effect of these attacks went beyond the damage done to actual shipping. The possibility of attack at any moment and in any quarter forced the enemy to give his ships more protection, both by air and surface craft, and the threat to the island outposts themselves necessitated additional defensive fighter effort.

No. 201 Group continued its activity throughout February, and by now various sections of the Aegean area had been selected and numbered for future reference when briefing armed reconnaissances. Suitable prey, however, was still hard to find. In sixteen sorties Marauders made five sightings, but in no case was the vessel large enough to warrant a torpedo.

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More substantial results came from a daylight attack on the harbour at *Melos* Island by six bomber and three torpedo *Marauders* on 21st February. Two vessels of 1,500 tons each were hit by torpedoes, one sinking and the other being left ablaze. Other activity in February consisted of further mine-laying in the *Euripo* Channel and the taking of many valuable photographs.

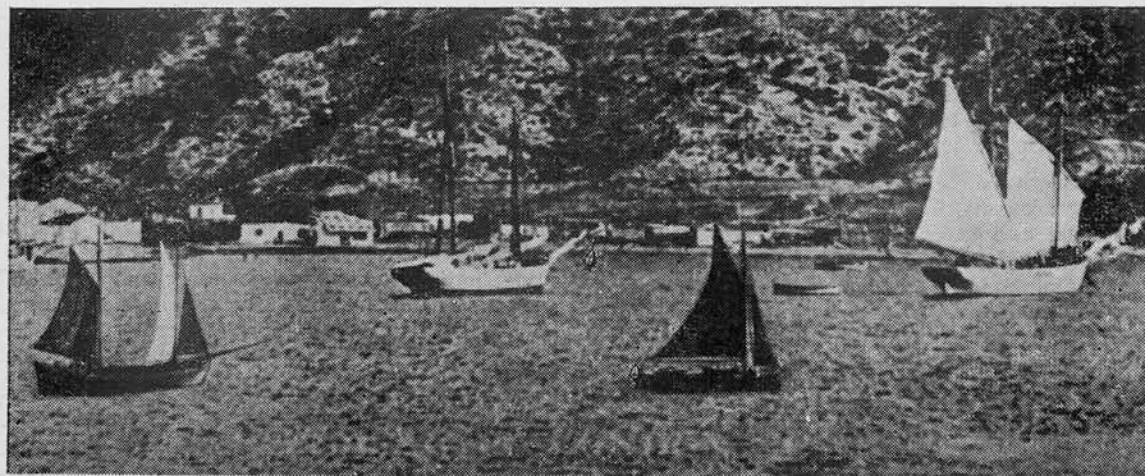
At the end of February the *Marauder* squadron was transferred to *North-west Africa*, so was no longer available for strikes in the Aegean. In March, although striking forces of *Beaufighters* were at readiness, no suitable targets were found by reconnaissance.

Successful Beaufighter Strikes

In April, in spite of the increasing number of friendly convoys moving through the Eastern Mediterranean — 122 convoys were given protection as against 94 during March — offensive activity was resumed in the Aegean and along the west coast of *Greece*.

The transfer of the *Marauders* was balanced by the arrival of an extra *Beaufighter* squadron. These aircraft and, occasionally, *Baltimores* operated by day, and torpedo *Wellingtons* joined in the hunt by night. The *Wellingtons* and the *Baltimores* were unlucky, but the *Beaufighters* carried out cannon and machine-gun attacks on five occasions. On the 24th they set a 120 tons schooner on fire; on the 26th one caïque was seen to go down and another was left on fire and sinking; and next day a 125 tons caïque was left smoking and abandoned by its crew.

These successes, however, were insignificant compared with the records of May and June. In May there was again an increase in the number of convoys that had to be given protection — a total of 133 — but as many aircraft as possible were spared for harassing the enemy in the Aegean. Under the threat of invasion, the enemy naturally strove to reinforce and supply his garrisons at all vulnerable points and, consequently, sea traffic increased by leaps and bounds all round *Greece*.



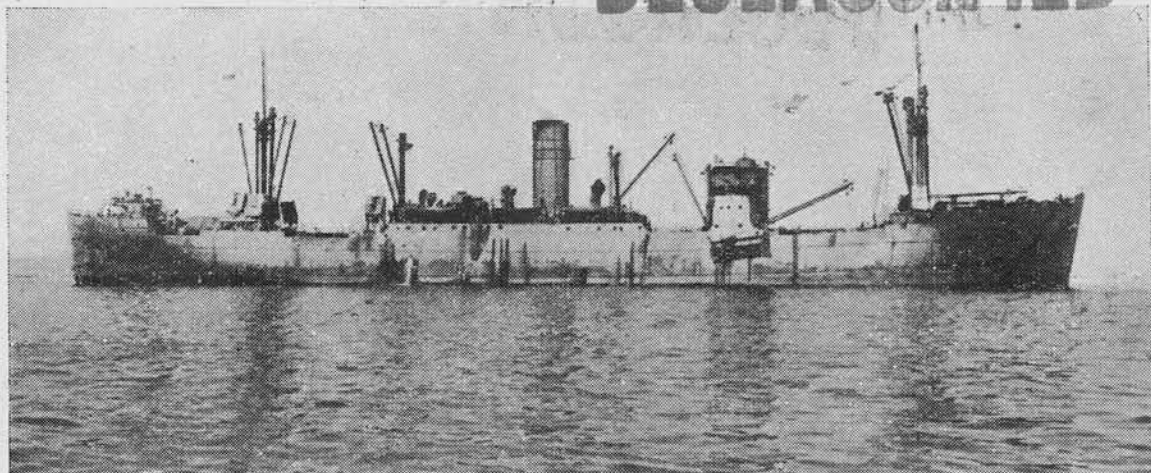
CAIQUES

40-200 FT — 40-200 TONS

Typical types of Aegean sailing craft

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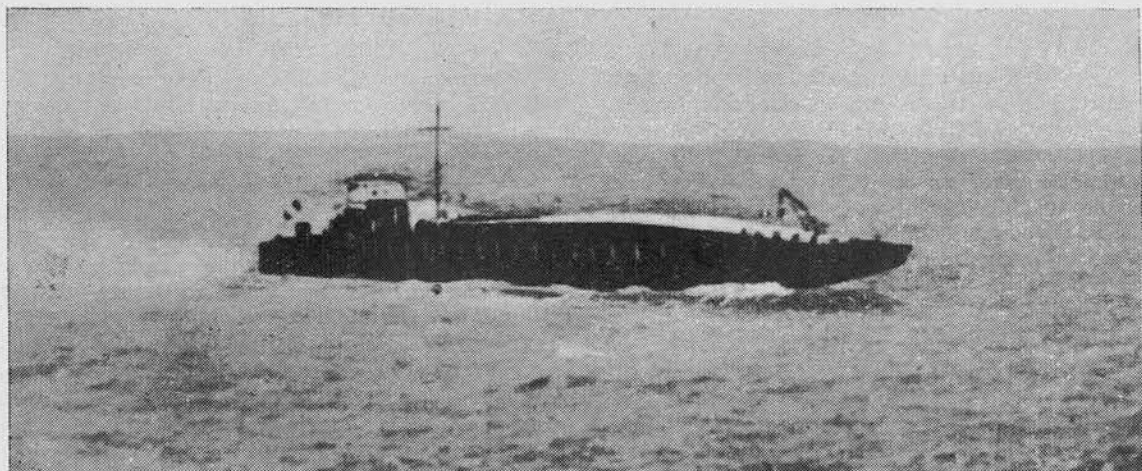
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LARGE MERCHANT VESSEL

500 FT—9,000 TONS

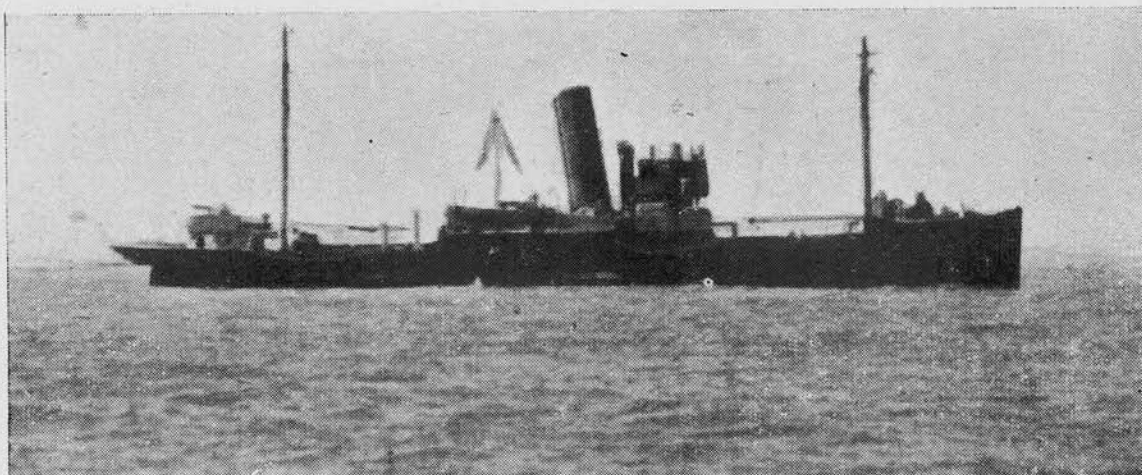
Note prominent derricks and several hatches



GERMAN "F" BOAT

156 FT—SPEED 8 KNOTS

Note parallel sides, downwards slope of topsides and wheelhouse aft



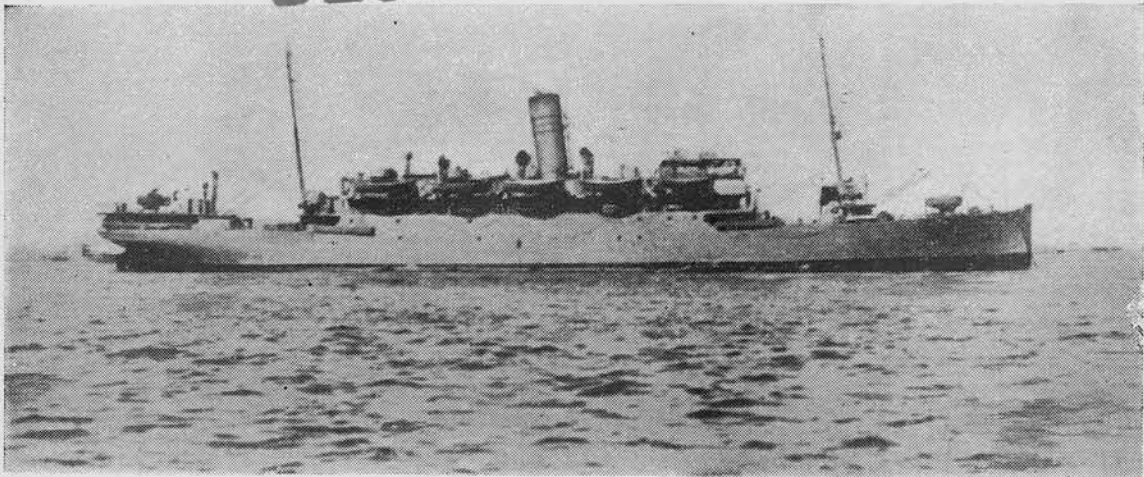
SMALL MERCHANT VESSEL

200-250 FT—1,000 TONS

Note reduced number of hatches and derricks

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LINER-TROOP TRANSPORT

450 FT—7,000 TONS

Note full superstructure and large number of boats carried

Taking full advantage of this, No. 201 Group's aircraft put up 183 sorties on offensive sweeps. The Wellingtons were unable to find suitable targets for torpedoes, but the Beaufighters and Baltimores made up for this by their successes. Of the steam ships sighted, five were attacked. One 800 tons merchant vessel was sunk; another of the same size was left with its deck cargo of hay on fire; a small steamer of 150 tons was sunk and another of 250 damaged with cannon shells; and finally a mine-sweeper was hit and set alight.

Of the smaller fry, 50 sailing vessels totalling 4,500 tons were attacked and hit with cannon or machine-gun fire; fourteen totalling 1,120 tons were sunk and 36 totalling 3,385 tons were damaged.

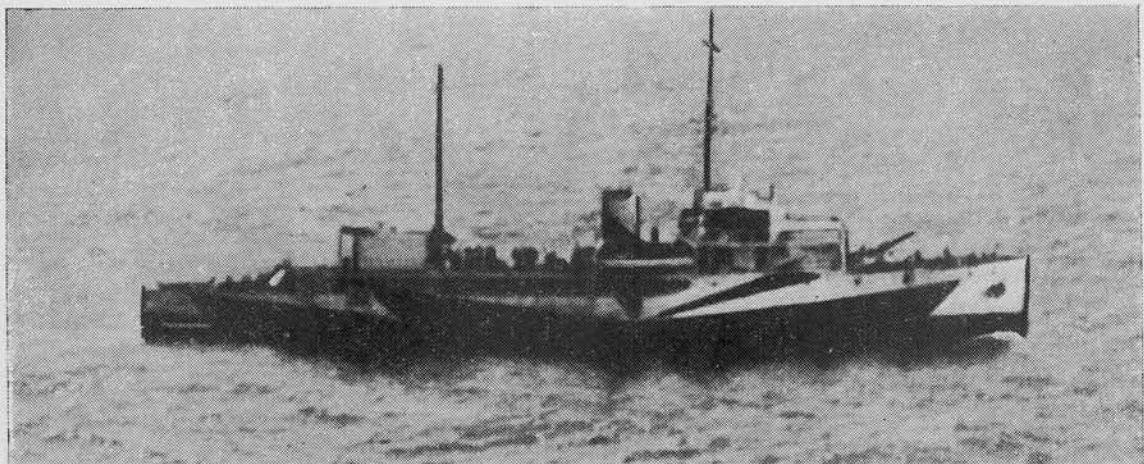
During these operations Beaufighters also shot down seven enemy aircraft that attempted to

interfere with them and damaged another. Two Beaufighters were lost and a third was damaged and had to land in Turkey.

Two Attacks on Submarines

Other operations in May included two attacks on submarines by aircraft returning from Aegean patrols and an attack on the seaplane base at Preveza, on the west coast of Greece between Corfu and Cephalonia.

The first submarine attack occurred on the 7th when one was sighted on the surface by three Baltimores. The submarine immediately crash-dived and only one Baltimore was able to bomb, dropping two x 250 pounders from 200 feet, which overshot by 50 yards as the periscope was submerging. On the 25th an Italian submarine was seen by two returning Beaufighters. Cannon hits



NAVAL AUXILIARY

200 FT—800 TONS

Note, different types vary considerably

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DESTROYER

350 FT—1,900 TONS

Note, older types often have two or three funnels

were scored before it could submerge and a second attack was made while it was at periscope depth. An oil patch observed next day in approximately the same position suggests that damage may have been done to oil tanks or pipes.

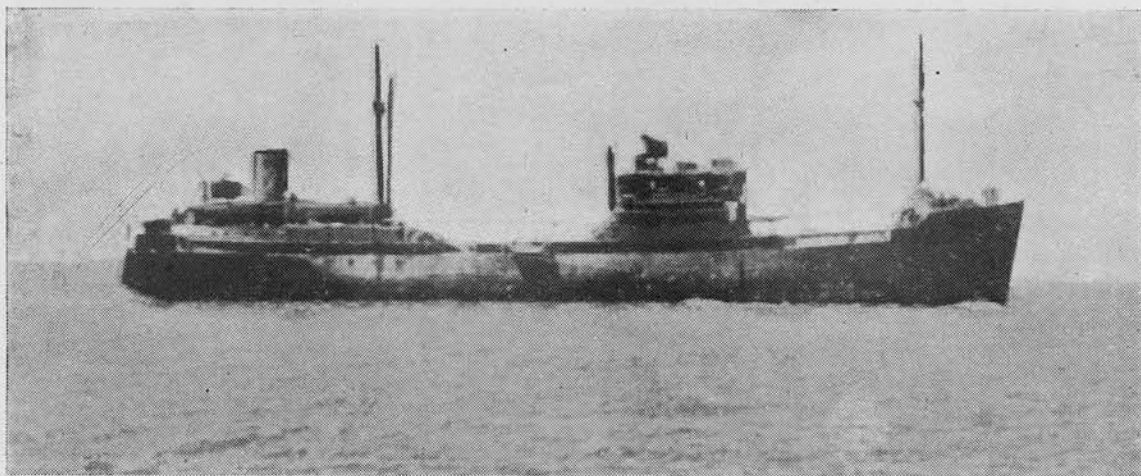
The first attack on the *Preveza* seaplane base was planned for the 16th after photographic reconnaissance had shown that normally some fifteen seaplanes were moored there or drawn up on the beach. Six Beaufighters were briefed, but were foiled by thick clouds. Nine days later, however, another six Beaufighters were more fortunate and found fourteen seaplanes and flying boats waiting for them. Their cannon fire destroyed a Cant.501 and two Cant.506s, set on fire and probably destroyed another Cant.506, and badly damaged five more. A fuel dump on shore was also hit and set alight. On the night of the

26/27th a Wellington, briefed to attack the seaplane base, was unable to locate, so dropped six x 100 lb. bombs on the slipways, with unobserved results.

The Levkas Canal Blocked

In June activity around *Greece* was again considerable — 144 sorties being flown — although successes were not up to the May standard. The Wellingtons at night once more drew a blank, but by day Beaufighters and Baltimores sank sixteen sailing vessels totalling 1,840 tons, probably sank two and claimed a further 29 damaged.

They made seven attacks on larger vessels, but had only one definite result — although this was a good one. On the 27th four Beaufighters caught a passenger-type vessel of 3,800 tons passing through the *Levkas Canal*, dividing the island of



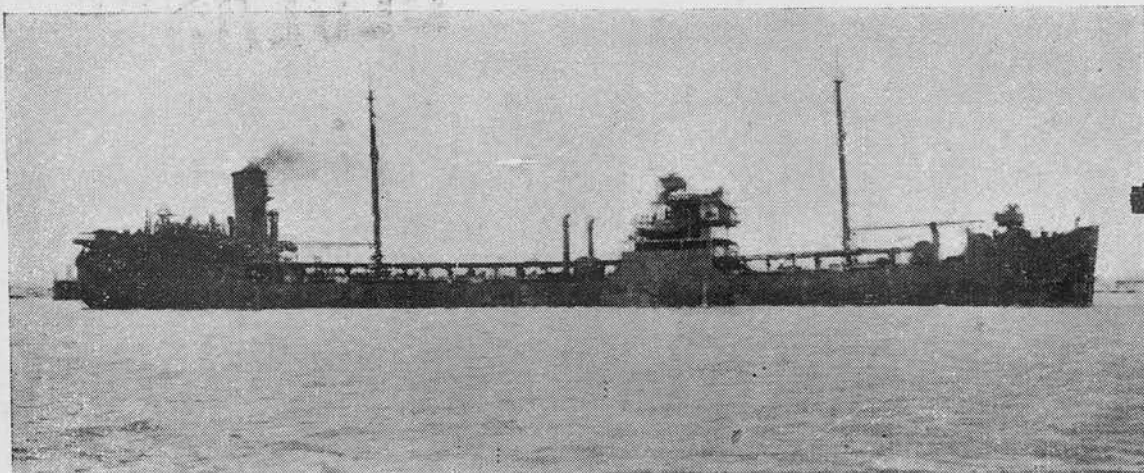
COASTER

200-250 FT—1,000 TONS

Note derricks and hatches, and bridge amidships or just forward of engine room casing

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LARGE TANKER

500 FT—10,000 TONS

Note, usually engines aft; no derricks or hatches, prominent catwalk and ventilation boxes

Levkas from the west coast of Greece. They scored two direct hits amidships with 250 lb. bombs as well as a number of near misses and also strafed the vessel with cannon fire. Smoke was seen to be rising from it as they left and subsequent reconnaissance showed it aground and listing 45 degrees to port, blocking the northern entrance to the canal. One Beaufighter struck the ship's aerial with its port bomb-rack and took nine feet of the wire back to base.

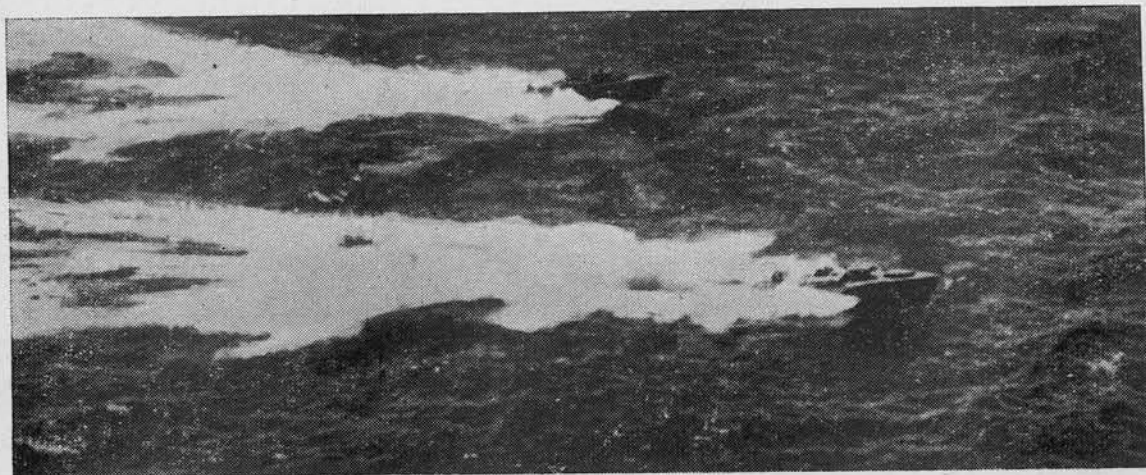
The first assignment in July — on the 1st — was to try to do more damage to the helpless vessel. Two Beaufighters were briefed and aimed four bombs at the target. They straddled it with two of them, while the others fell 25 - 30 yards short.

Later in the day four more Beaufighters carried out another offensive sweep over the canal, their

objective being a number of dredgers that were working there. All the aircraft attacked the largest dredger, of 250 - 300 tons, two bombs scoring very near misses and two overshooting by about ten yards. This dredger and a smaller one of some 125 tons were also strafed with cannon and machine-gun fire. One Beaufighter failed to return and another, hit by A.A. fire, made a belly-landing at base.

On the nights of 13/14th and 14/15th July three Wellingtons made further attempts to finish the vessel off. On the first occasion each dropped eleven x 250 lb. bombs, but results were unobserved. One crew reported coloured lights seen along the coast — possibly the work of patriots — as being a useful navigational aid.

On the following night one of the Wellingtons dropped its bombs from only 50 feet and explo-



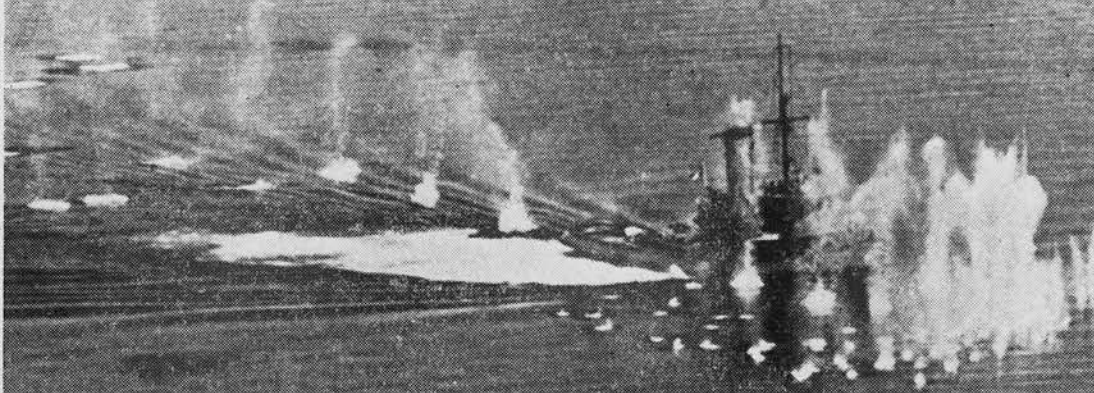
ITALIAN "E" BOAT

60 FT—SPEED 42 KNOTS

Note wide flared bows, square stern and torpedo tubes amidships

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A tug leaving Preveza harbour attacked by Beaufighters, 22nd August, 1943.

A coaster of 1/2,000 tons attacked by cannon fire, 22nd August, 1943.

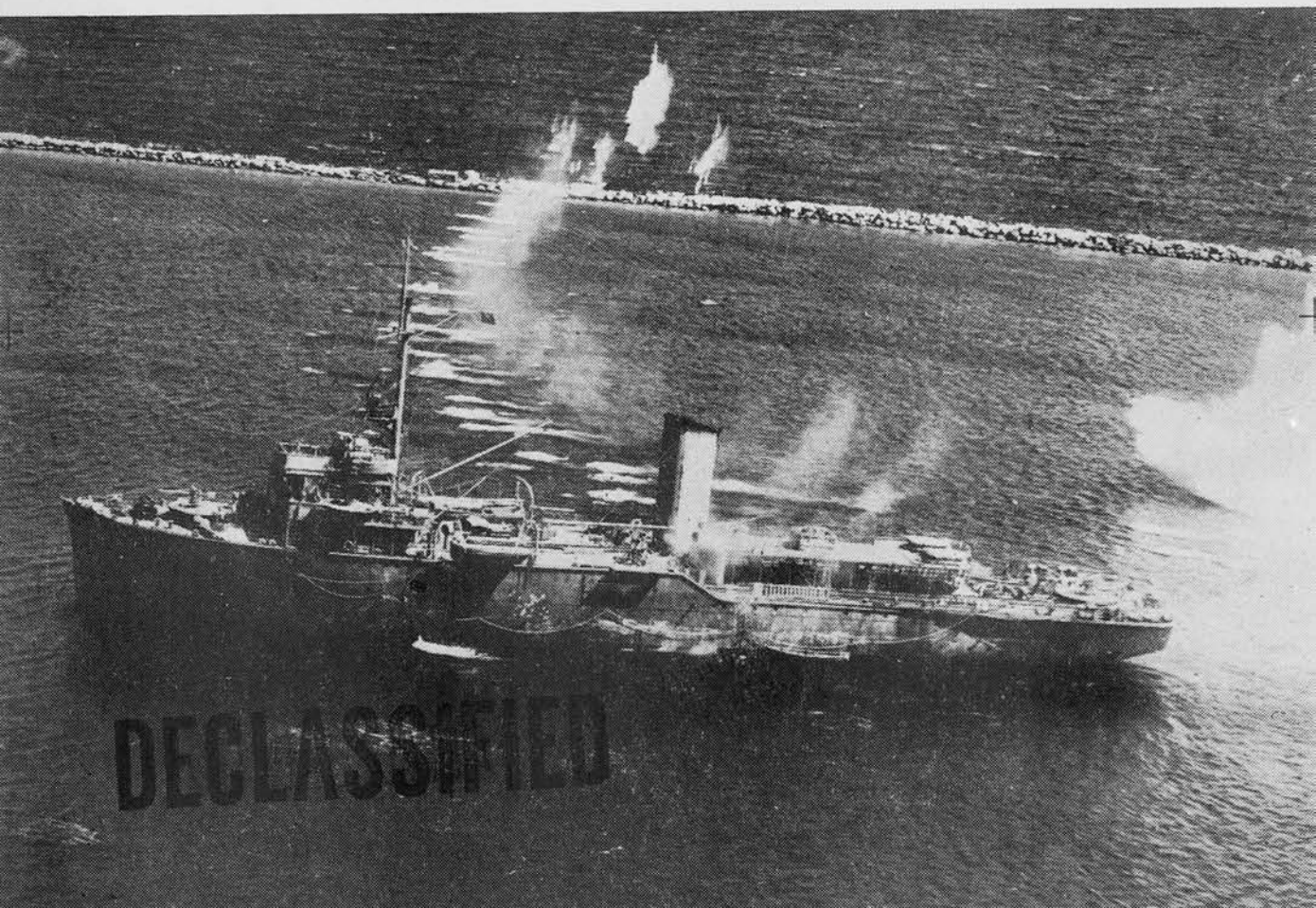


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A merchant vessel of 1/2,000 tons under attack by Beaufighters south of Preveza.

A minelayer or patrol vessel under attack in Syros (Kyklades) harbour.



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sions were seen in the target area, although the vessel was obscured by smoke. The other two aircraft bombed from 4,500 - 5,000 feet, with unknown results. At the end of the month salvage work appeared to have ceased — and the canal remained blocked.

Wellingtons Find Targets

In general in July Wellingtons, Baltimores and Beaufighters continued the aggressive policy in the Aegean, although commitments in connection with friendly convoys made it impossible to keep up the scale of the two previous months. In all, 86 sorties were put up on offensive reconnaissance.

In this month the Wellingtons came into their own at last. Apart from the *Levkas Canal* operations described above, they found suitable targets on three other occasions. On the night of 24/25th four Wellingtons sighted a single vessel on a northerly course east of the island of *Nisero*, between *Cos* and *Rhodes*. One aircraft dropped its torpedoes and a second attack was made with bombs, both with unknown results. At *Alimnia* anchorage, just off *Rhodes*, two merchant vessels of 1,000 and 2,000 tons were also attacked and near misses scored.

On the following night two Wellingtons, on a sweep in the *Rhodes - Leros* area, bombed a merchant vessel, escorted by three destroyers. The first stick of five bombs was aimed at the merchant vessel, with unobserved results, and the second stick of six scored near misses across the stern of one of the destroyers.

On the 28/29th three Wellingtons made a return visit to *Alimnia* harbour, where shipping had been attacked the previous day by four Beaufighters. Two merchant vessels, of 3,000 and 2,500 tons, were present, and two of the Beaufighters had scored direct hits with four bombs on the smaller vessel, leaving it listing and emitting smoke and flames, while the other two scored cannon and machine-gun strikes on the larger vessel. The first Wellington lit up the two ships with flares and then dropped six x 500 lb. bombs from 4,500 feet, causing a column of smoke to issue from the port side of the larger vessel. The other two aircraft each dropped eleven x 250 lb. bombs from 1,200 feet, straddling the targets.

The most successful Beaufighter strikes, apart from the attack on *Alimnia* mentioned above, were against the lesser craft. A Titano-type vessel was left listing to port and shrouded in smoke on the 27th; on the 29th four near misses were scored on a 250 tons schooner, which was also raked with cannon and machine-gun fire; and next day two Beaufighters, returning from a sweep in the *Alimnia* area—where they had seen the 2,500 tons vessel, attacked on the 28th, lying almost completely submerged in the anchorage—caught a 500 tons tug-type vessel and set it alight with cannon and machine-gun fire. In addition, during the month seven sailing vessels totalling 705 tons were claimed as sunk, one of

250 tons probably sunk, and fourteen totalling 1,100 tons damaged.

Apart from the shipping strikes in the Aegean and off the west coast of *Greece*, No. 201 Group's aircraft also turned their attention to a number of land targets. These included a train hidden in a clump of trees (one of the Beaufighters returned to base festooned with fir branches); a bridge carrying a railway track; A.A. and machine-gun posts; cars and trucks; and *Kalamata* airfield in the south of *Greece*. For the special operation carried out by A.H.Q., A.D.E.M., over *Crete* on 23rd July, No. 201 Group provided eight Baltimores and seven Beaufighters, of which six Baltimores failed to return to base.

Trouble with Bombs

Towards the end of July began the first of a series of claims of bombs failing to explode that grew into something of an epidemic in August. On the first occasion Beaufighters claimed a direct hit with a 250 lb. bomb on the bows of a 110 tons schooner anchored in *Kyllene*, on the west coast of *Greece* opposite the island of *Zante*. The bomb apparently did not explode, although others were seen to burst on the shore. Reports of other failures of both 250 and 500 pounders were brought back by Beaufighters and Wellingtons on 5th, 7th, 11th, 11/12th, 14/15th and 15th August.

These reports were investigated by the Armament Section of H.Q., R.A.F., M.E., and the failures were attributed mainly to the fact that in most cases direct hits had not been made on the ships attacked and that bombs had not exploded on hitting the sea owing to the low height from which they were dropped; or if they did strike the target, they had not had time to stabilise and consequently glanced off. The trouble practically ceased after the middle of the month.

In spite of these bomb troubles, Beaufighters and Wellingtons had a comparatively satisfactory month, flying, with occasional Baltimores, a total of 202 sorties. Wellingtons found only a few targets worthy of torpedoes, the most successful attack taking place on the night of the 12/13th. One aircraft of two engaged on an anti-shipping sweep aimed a torpedo at a 2,000 tons merchant vessel west-south-west of *Melos* Island. A hit was scored on the port side, causing a cloud of steam and smoke.

Beaufighters on the 5th scored numerous cannon hits on a 300 tons trawler anchored by the quayside at *Preveza*; near misses with bombs and hits with cannon on a corvette-type vessel near *Githion*, in the *Gulf of Laconia*, on the 8th; completely destroyed an 80 tons caique in *Paros Bay* on the 12th with a bomb that burst five yards away; bombed the landing ground and harbour at *Kalamata* on the 15th; claimed a bomb hit on the stern of a 500 tons coaster in *Vonitsa Bay*, *Preveza*, on the 18th; and on the 30th scored near misses with bombs and strikes with cannon on a 2,500 tons merchant vessel off *Levkas*.

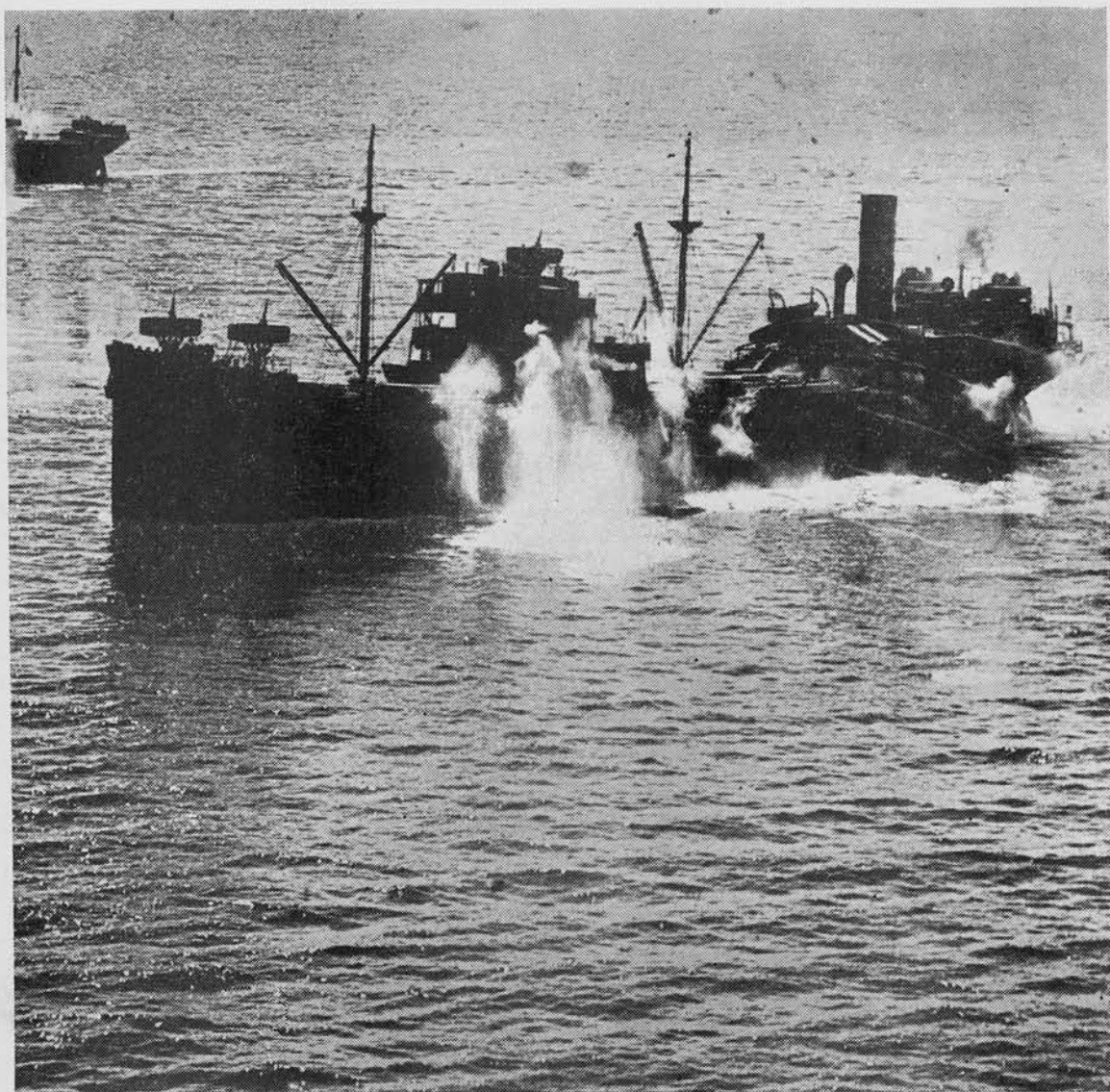
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During the *Prevezu* attack on the 5th, one Beaufighter's fuselage struck the forward mast of the trawler and snapped off several feet. The aircraft made base safely, but others were not so fortunate in the later part of the month. On the 19th a Beaufighter, believed hit by A.A., crash-landed near *Missolonghi*, on the west coast of Greece; two were missing from sweeps on the 22nd; one was shot down next day by intense A.A. fire during an attack on *Zante* harbour; on the 28th another, with engine trouble, came down in the sea off *Cyprus*, the crew being rescued; and, finally, in the *Levkas* attack on the 30th one Beaufighter was caught by A.A. fire and crashed in the sea.

Plans to Occupy Aegean Islands

In September came an elaboration of our aggressive policy in the Aegean. After the seizing of control at *Rhodes* by the Germans following the Allied Armistice with *Italy*, it was decided to occupy the Aegean islands of *Castelrosso*, *Cos*, *Leros* and *Samos*. *Cos*, with its landing ground, and *Leros*, with its harbour, could then be used as bases on which to build up a force capable of seriously threatening communications with *Rhodes* and other German-held outpost and, eventually, as possible springboards for more ambitious undertakings. *Castelrosso* would be a useful intermediate supply base and *Samos* a valuable



This photograph and that on the opposite page show an attack on two M/Vs in the *Kyklades*, 17th September, 1943...

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... Direct hits were scored from low level in face of strong anti-aircraft fire.

advanced outpost. The three services were to cooperate in these operations.

In the early part of the month R.A.F. activity in the Aegean and Ionian Seas continued normally. On the 2nd one of four Beaufighters, attacking shipping anchored off *Cos*, struck the mast of a caique and crashed into the sea. Four other Beaufighters on the same day caused explosions and fires among a group of 30 M.T., which they found parked on a road near *Preveza*, and also scored a bomb hit amidships on a 1,500 tons merchant vessel outside the harbour there. On the 7th three Baltimores seriously damaged an 80 tons caique with bombs and machine-gun fire off *Naxos* Island. On the 11th a single Baltimore, on reconnaissance for shipping off *Crete*,

claimed one hit and two near misses on a 300 tons vessel unloading its cargo off *Gavdos* Island, leaving it on fire and down at the stern.

Later on the same day, in connection with the invasion of *Cos* and *Leros*, a short series of diversionary bombing attacks began against *Rhodes* airfields. Shortly after dusk five Beaufighters visited *Maritza* airfield, but owing to the darkness no enemy aircraft could be seen and the Beaufighters had to be content with bombing and machine-gunning the hangars. Shortly afterwards four Wellingtons attacked *Calato* airfield, starting many fires in the dispersal area.

Next day a more shattering attack on the two airfields took place. Forty-three U.S.A.F. Liberators were briefed, of which five returned early.

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Fifteen, bombing *Calisto*, found the airfield partly obscured by smoke screens or smoke from forest fires, but bursts were seen in the dispersal area. Twenty-three bombed *Maritza*, which was well covered by bursts. Fires were started in the dispersal area and about six aircraft were reckoned to have been destroyed on the ground. In all, the Liberators dropped 340 x 500 lb. bombs between 10.16 and 10.25 hours.

On the 13th the first British troops landed in *Cos*. The operations that took place between then and 3rd October are, however, outside the scope of this article and will be dealt with in the next issue of the Mediterranean Review.

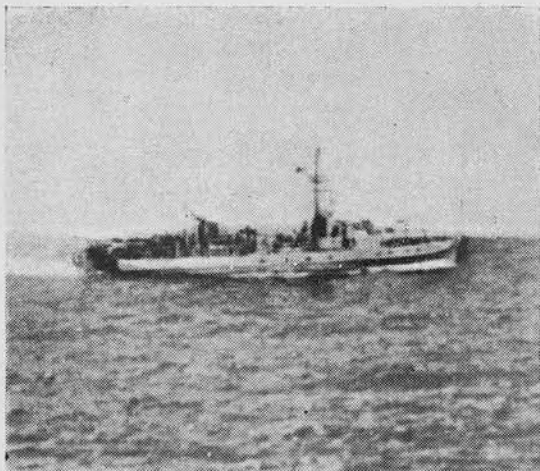
The Period in Retrospect

Roughly nine months had now passed since the beginning of our operations in the Aegean and Ionian Sea areas. What had been accomplished? Was the effort worth while?

On examination, it becomes clear from the record of those nine months that the effort was worth while. This is proved by the number and

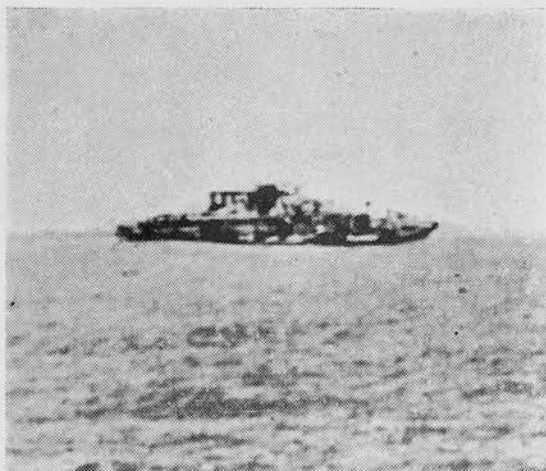
tonnage of ships sunk and damaged alone—163 ships with a tonnage of approximately 53,580 tons. But the value of the operations went beyond mere figures, taking in such subsidiary factors that the enemy had to maintain a large defensive air force in the Aegean, and, eventually, to augment it in face of the threat of our landings; that outlying garrisons had to be reinforced by troops that would have been useful in the main theatres of activity; and that a continuous state of tension was caused among the Germans forming the garrisons. The importance placed by *Germany* on our unwelcome intrusions is shown by the energetic measures taken to seize Italian-held islands when *Italy* signed the Armistice and when, a few day later, it was learned that our troops were in *Cos* and *Leros*.

At the end of September *Germany's* "outer ring" still stood intact. Nine months' effort by No. 201 Group's aircraft had not, however, made the position of the garrisons manning it any more enviable — and offensive operations in the Aegean still continued.



GERMAN "E" BOAT
90-110 FT SPEED 36 KNOTS

*Note straight sides, square stern
and torpedo tubes forward.*



GERMAN SIEBEL FERRY
75x54 FT.

*Note twin pontoons joined by flat platform,
with central deckhouse*

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PARTICULARS OF SHIPPING SUNK OR DAMAGED IN THE AEGEAN BY R.A.F. AIRCRAFT

1 Jan. — 30 Sept., 1943

Key: { Shipping at Sea
Shipping in Harbour

TYPE OF VESSEL	Sunk or Beached	Probably Sunk	Damaged	TOTALS
<i>CARGO VESSELS, etc.</i>				
M.Vs.	1 —	3 1	7 2	11 3
"F"-Boats and Barges	— —	— —	— 2	— 2
Schooners and Trawlers	9 15	19 2	31 58	59 75
Coasters	1 —	— —	— 2	1 2
Tugs	— —	— —	1 1	1 1
<i>NAVAL VESSELS.</i>				
Destroyers	— —	— —	1 1	1 1
M.T.Bs	— —	— —	1 —	1 —
"E"-Boats	— —	— —	— 1	— 1
Escort Vessels (unspecified)	— —	— 1	1 2	1 3
GRAND TOTALS	11 15	22 4	42 69	75 88

Approximative Tonnage

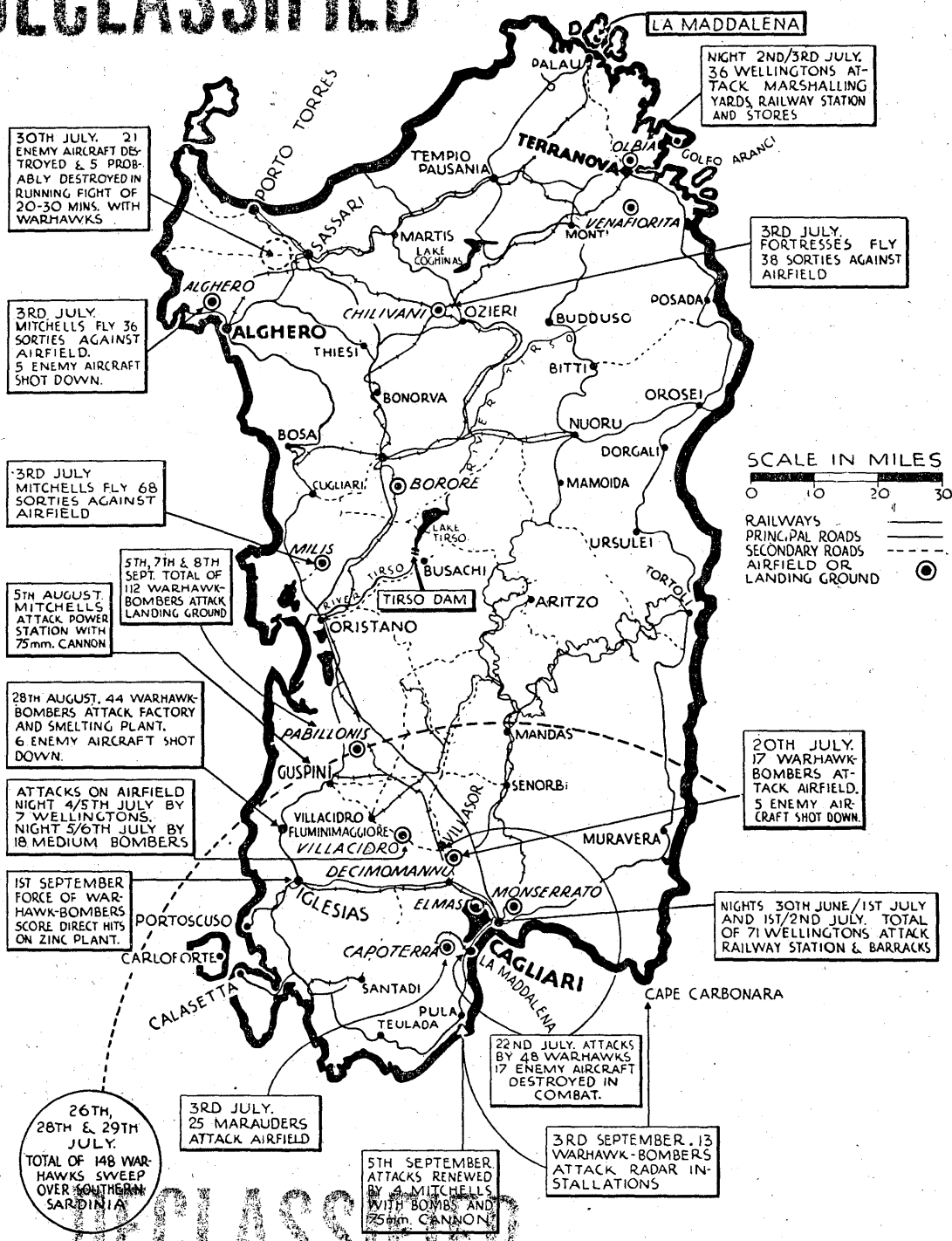
		Combined Totals
Sunk	3385 1185	4570
Probably Sunk	16800 3050	19850
Damaged	18120 11040	29160
GRAND TOTALS	38305 15275	53580

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AIR OPERATIONS AGAINST SARDINIA

SEPTEMBER, 1943



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OPS. RECORDS, H.Q., R.A.F., M.E.