

obtained the agreement of Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean to this some hours earlier, and warning signals were at once sent by the latter to all ships and forces concerned. It is not certain that they did in fact reach all the merchantmen, and by unfortunate chance a small number of enemy aircraft was in the vicinity at the time our aircraft were approaching. As might be expected, firing which started spasmodically soon became general, and it is hard to blame ships for engaging low-flying aircraft which appeared to be menacing them during an air raid. It is considered that in only very exceptional circumstances should ships be deprived of their right to open fire at low-flying aircraft approaching them. The solution must be always to route transport aircraft clear of our shipping.

27. I cannot close this letter without paying tribute to the magnificent work throughout all stages of "Husky" of my Task Group Commanders, Rear-Admirals R. R. McGrigor, C.B., Sir Philip L. Vian, K.B.E., D.S.O., and T. H. Troubridge, D.S.O.—as well as that of Captain Lord Ashbourne. I could not have been more efficiently and loyally supported by them nor by my staff under Commodore C. E. Douglas-Pennant, D.S.C.

28. Although the enemy did not make a determined attempt to prevent our assaults, conditions were not always easy, and it is considered that in general a very high standard of seamanship and devotion to duty was shown by officers and men of the Eastern Naval Task Force.

(Signed) B. H. RAMSAY,
Vice-Admiral,
Naval Commander,
Eastern Task Force.

Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.

NARRATIVE OF THE OPERATION.

D-1 DAY.

Friday, 9th July, 1943.

Naval Commander Eastern Task Force assumed operational control of all his ships and craft at noon. Leaving Malta in his Headquarters ship, H.M.S. ANTWERP, at 0630, he proceeded to the southward to sight first the L.C.T. groups approaching from Sousse and Tripoli, carrying the supporting arms for the assault, and later the fast and slow assault convoys from the Middle East and United Kingdom, all of which were in their assigned positions and proceeding according to plan. The forces and landing craft starting from, or staging through, Malta sailed as arranged throughout the day to join their respective group or convoy. H.M.S. ANTWERP returned to Calafrana in the evening to land the Chief of Combined Operations, and sailed again after dark for the scene of the landings south of Syracuse.

Weather.—The weather which in the early morning was good deteriorated throughout the day until in the evening the wind was force 6 from the north-westward. A short steep sea resulted which, while it did not interfere with the timing of the ship convoys, had the effect of slowing down the craft convoys and driving them off their course to the eastward. The state

of the weather caused a certain amount of anxiety regarding the suitability of conditions off the beaches for carrying out the assault, but the question of suggesting a postponement did not come to be seriously considered.

Enemy reports.—No reports of enemy aircraft were received during the day.

D DAY.

Saturday, 10th July.

Weather.—After midnight the wind commenced to decrease in strength and the dawn ushered in a perfect blue Mediterranean day.

The Assaults.

The detailed accounts of the various assaults are given in the reports of the respective Task Group Commanders, etc., and only a general outline will be found in this narrative.

A. BARK WEST.

The fast assault convoy (K.M.F. 18) under Naval Commander Force "V" anchored about half-an-hour late, in a position subsequently found to be two miles to the eastward of the planned release position.

(i) SUGAR Sector.

Considerable swell was still running in this sector, but the first assault flight were quickly and successfully lowered, and moved off not more than ten minutes behind schedule. The second flight were at once lowered and were got away only fifteen minutes late (*i.e.*, 0155). The two flights beached on their correct beaches five and eighteen minutes late respectively. A runnel with nine feet of water inside a bank off the beaches, of which warning had been received while on passage from U.K., was encountered but all craft were carried over it by the surf.

The loading of serials* was put under way immediately the other craft had departed, but was slow on account of the swell.

Shortly after 0330 success signals were observed and about 0415 a signal was received that the shore was ready to take serials.

The Royal Marine Commandos also successfully landed and reported about 0330. The batteries which formed their objective proved to be dummies, and they suffered only a few casualties.

These landings were made without surprise being lost and there was little opposition at the beaches; in fact it was not until the first flight was leaving the shore that machine-gun fire was opened.

The first L.C.A. reported back to their parent ship about 0430. Naval casualties amounted to two wounded.

(ii) ROGER Sector.

Having regard to the runnel mentioned above an alternative plan was devised and ordered whereby the troops would embark in L.C.T. instead of L.C.A. at the release position and then be launched in D.U.K.W. on reaching the runnel.

The L.C.T. duly arrived and loaded from S.S. MARNIX VAN SAINT ALDEGONDE, but none reached H.M.S. GLENGYLE and

Admiralty footnote:

* Serials—convoys of ships or groups of landing craft when employed on regular ferry service between ports or from ship to shore, were organised as a "series" and each passage or trip was given a "serial" number.