

the beaches without doing serious damage and in less than an hour-and-a-half was virtually neutralised by the Dutch gunboats SOEMBA and FLORES.

At 0615 the slow assault convoy arrived at the release position and a searching sweep by M.M.S. (L.L.)* and fleet sweepers having revealed no mines, at 0640 all ships were ordered to the anchorage. It was reached by the leading ships about 0740. The ferry service then started and all personnel were ashore by noon with army baggage and light stores soon after.

By 1400 S.N.O.L. (N) had transferred to H.M.S. ALYNBANK, and H.M.S. KEREN and the personnel ships sailed for Malta.

D. ACID SOUTH and ACID NORTH.

The marking submarine was in the correct position and no difficulty was experienced in picking up her transmissions and the screened signal lamp. Swell caused some difficulty in embarking troops in L.C.I. (L), and wind and sea made some formations late in getting under way.

The assault waves touched down up to thirty minutes late, but with one exception the correct beaches were all found.

Although the wind had considerably decreased the big ships were quickly set down to leeward: *i.e.*, the south-eastward: and the follow-up flights had considerably more than the planned distance to cover.

There was little organised resistance to the landings and after a short period of heavy machine-gun fire the defenders withdrew. A few casualties were caused by mines on one beach before it was cleared. Success signals were received from all beaches by 0500 and ships were then ordered to close the shore without waiting for the anchorage to be swept for mines.

From first light onwards there was considerable shelling from batteries inshore, but these were silenced by supporting destroyers and gunboats by 0800.

The arrival of L.C.T. with supporting arms was rather disorganised, and none beached before daylight. Two of the beaches at ACID NORTH intended for use by L.C.T. were found to be composed of large boulders instead of the shingle indicated by the air photographs, a fact which did not make easier the task of beaching the craft and discharging them. The slow assault convoy arrived an hour-and-a-half late, but all had taken up their anchor berths by 0700.

The first large personnel ship completed discharging by 0900 and all, with one exception, had disembarked personnel and baggage and hoisted their craft by 1415. With four exceptions they were on passage to Malta at 1500.

The rate of discharge of L.C.T. was slow, but the unloading of the slow convoy proceeded satisfactorily in spite of being unable to discharge L.S.T. and L.C.T. at most of the beaches without pontoon bridging and difficulties with wheeled vehicles due to heavy shingle and soft sand.

Admiralty footnote:

* M.M.S. (L.L.)—motor minesweepers.

Gun Support.

The following details of gun support are available:—

A. BARK WEST.

Since the assaults met little opposition, fire from the destroyers in support was confined to a few rounds only and L.C.S. were able to furnish all the support needed on the beaches.

Between 0415 and 0542, when the battery was silenced, H.M.S. BLANKNEY at a range of 6,000 yards fired 80 rounds at P.4 battery in ROGER sector. At 0740 another 37 rounds were fired at the same battery, fire ceasing when our troops were seen in the vicinity.

H.M.S. ROBERTS carried out three shoots in the course of the day:

(i) at 0510. Impromptu from anchor at a range of 15,000 yards against the Casa Guiliano battery of five 149 mm. guns which had fired about a dozen rounds haphazard at landing craft without scoring a hit. After ten rounds from H.M.S. ROBERTS the battery was silenced.

(ii) 0540, another four rounds from 15,000 yards for the second time silenced the same battery which had again opened ineffective fire at craft on and close to the beach.

(iii) 1556, at the request of the army, fourteen rounds were fired at the southern outskirts of Spaccaforno and the area was observed to be well covered by the fall of shot.

H.M.S. BRISSENDEN also carried out several shoots:

(i) at 0645, at a range of 3,800 yards, six smoke shell to thicken the screen laid by L.C.S. on SUGAR RED beach. Result was good.

(ii) 1550 to 1600 at anchor, range 11,000 yards, with H.M.S. ROBERTS, at southern outskirts of Spaccaforno, 90 rounds in salvos seen to be spread with effect over the area.

(iii) 1825, on call from Forward Observation Officer 84 rounds fired at infantry at Casa Basile. Result very effective.

H.M.S. PUCKERIDGE.

(i) 0515, fire opened impromptu at flashes from four guns of 149 mm. of the Casa Chiusa battery which were firing irregularly and without success at landing craft. From anchor, range 9,200-8,800 yards, eight rounds. Result—battery ceased fire and was captured by troops soon after.

(ii) 0532, at gun flashes from Casa Guiliano battery when it opened fire again after H.M.S. ROBERTS' first shoot. Range 8,000 yards, eight rounds. Result—shot seen to fall in target area, and battery ceased fire.

(iii) 0600, the last mentioned battery again opened fire and H.M.S. PUCKERIDGE was ordered in to eliminate it. At ranges 6,000-4,200 yards, twenty rounds were fired under way and the battery which had constituted almost the only opposition to the landing was finally silenced.

Three of the four L.C.G. (L) in Force "V" engaged direct targets during the assault, and fired ten rounds H.E. full charge each. An ammunition dump was blown up by L.C.G. (L) 9 with her seventh round at 500 yards range.