

GENERAL SUBJECTS SECTION  
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1948 - 1949

THE INVASION OF SICILY, 9 JULY - 17 AUGUST 1943

Type of operation described: AMPHIBOUS ATTACK AND  
INSULAR OPERATIONS OF AN ANGLO - AMERICAN ARMY GROUP

Major Robert L. Woolfolk III  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICER'S CLASS NO 1

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                               | <u>PAGE</u> |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| INDEX .....                   | i           |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY .....            | ii          |
| INTRODUCTION .....            | 1           |
| PLANNING THE OPERATION .....  | 2           |
| THE AIR OFFENSIVE .....       | 7           |
| THE LANDING .....             | 8           |
| EXPANDING THE BEACHHEAD ..... | 11          |
| SPLITTING THE ISLAND .....    | 13          |
| THE PUSH TOWARD MESSINA ..... | 17          |
| ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM .....  | 23          |
| LESSONS LEARNED .....         | 26          |

---

### MAPS

---

- Map A Invasion of Sicily, Strategic Location July 1943
- Map B Invasion of Sicily, Allied Operations, 10 - 15 July
- Map C Invasion of Sicily, Splitting the Island, 16 - 23 July
- Map D Invasion of Sicily, Advance to Messina, 23 July to  
17 August

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 "Operations in Sicily and Italy," Department of Military Art and Engineering, USMA, West Point, N. Y. 1947 (TIS Library)
- A-2 "Report of Operations of the U. S. Seventh Army in the Sicilian Campaign," Hq 7th Army 1943 (TIS Library)
- A-3 Personal experience and knowledge gained as Assistant G-2, Hq 7th Army 1 July to 2 September 1943
- A-4 "The Fighting Forty-Fifth, The Combat Report of an Infantry Division", Hq 9th Inf Div 1946 (TIS Library)
- A-5 "History of the Third Infantry Division in World War II", Hq 3rd Inf Div 1947 (TIS Library)
- A-6 "Report of Operations in Sicily," Hq 9th Inf Div 1943 (TIS Library)
- A-7 "Sicilian Campaign" (10-22 July '43) by Col. Conrad H. Lanza, Field Artillery Journal, Sept 1943 (TIS Library)
- A-8 Encyclopedia Brittanica (TIS Library)
- A-9 The July and August files of "Newsweek"(Columbus Public Library)
- A-10 "Amphibious Operations Against Sicily", 31 Jan 1944 Army War College, Washington, D. C. (TIS Library)
- A-11 July and August 1943 files of "Time Magazine" (Columbus Public Library)
- A-12 Personal reflections on the operations of the 3rd Infantry Division in Sicily, 10 July to 17 August 1943 by Lt. Col. Lyle W. Bernard, formerly CO 2nd Bn. 30th Inf. Regt. (By Interview)

## THE INVASION OF SICILY, 9 JULY - 17 AUGUST 1943

### INTRODUCTION

Capture of the island of Sicily by combined arms of the Allied Forces 9 July to 17 August, 1943 is outlined in the following pages.

After May 1943 all of North Africa was free of the German invader. The Wehrmacht was on the defensive even in Russia. Having assumed the offensive our leaders had no intention of relinquishing the role. By the invasion of North Africa the Allied High Command was confined to action within the Mediterranean area. Italy was weary of war. She was torn by internal political strife resulting from the severe punishment she had absorbed from defeats at sea by the British Navy, land actions lost in the near east, and the continued mistreatment by her arrogant ally. <sup>who?</sup> Shelving plans for a strike at Southern France as premature, our Combined Chiefs of Staff decided upon Italy as the next major objective. (1)

To attack Italy it was necessary to clear the Mediterranean of axis outposts. To have followed the bolder Napoleonic theory that the proper way to conquer Italy was from the boot and not the toe, would have meant by-passing Sicily and taking Sardinia and Corsica for springboards to the mainland. (2) However to do this would have left our supply lines vulnerable to attack from enemy air and submarine operation from Sicily. Serious damage to these lines had been and was being done at the time. Thus the more conservative of the two plans was

(1) A-1 p. 2 (2) A-1 p. 2

decided to be the more sound. (3)

It must be remembered that the decision to invade Sicily was reached at the Casablanca Conference of Prime Minister Churchill and President Roosevelt in January, 1943, with the result of the Tunisian campaign still in doubt and a time table of August, 1943, set for its conclusion. It was here that operation Husky was born based on the following: (4)

1. Political pressure from Russia demanded a second front. Sicily was a conservative choice to open such a front. (5)

2. Italy must be knocked out of the war. The invasion of Sicily would intensify pressure on this weakening foe. (5)

3. Shipping lanes in the Mediterranean needed greater protection from enemy air and submarines. Loss of Sicily as a naval and air base would render the Axis almost impotent as a raider.

4. Our troops had to remain on the offensive if we were to choose the place and time we wanted to fight.

#### PLANNING THE OPERATION

With a target date of 10 July, 1943, the leaders and allocation of forces for operation Husky were determined:

|                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Gen. Eisenhower          | Commander-in-Chief            |
| Air Chief Marshal Tedder | Allied Air Forces             |
| Admiral Cunningham       | Allied Naval Forces           |
| Gen. Alexander           | Combined Allied Ground Forces |
| Gen. Montgomery          | One British Field Army        |

(3) A-1 p. 3 (4) A-2 p. a-2,3 (5) A-1 p. 2

Lt. Gen. Patton

U. S. Task Force (6)

General Alexander, whose command will be hereinafter referred to as the Fifteenth Army Group, opened his planning headquarters on 12 February, 1943, in Algiers. The U. S. I Armored Corps, commanded by Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, began its planning phase in Rabat, Morocco eleven days later. (7)

What sort of a place was this island that the planning staffs had to investigate and fit their plans to implement its capture?

Approximately ninety miles northeast of Cape Bon, Tunisia and the same distance north of Malta lies the island of Sicily. Slightly larger than the state of Vermont, measuring approximately 150 miles across its major axis, with 480 miles of coast line, Sicily is almost entirely mountainous and boasts one active volcano, Mt. Etna, which rises to a height of 10,740 feet and dominates the one major plain of Catania. By European standards the island had good railroads and an adequate road net. Because of the rocky terrain both road and rail traffic were highly vulnerable to demolitions and favored the defender. Rainfall in the summer is light to non-existent and the climate mild except at high altitude. Because of the seasonal rainfall, rivers and streams offered no obstacle to military operations until winter. A polyglot population of 4,000,000 plus was mainly agricultural, and because of heavy emigration to the United States was generally sympathetic to the U. S. cause. (8)

Realizing that the island was a tempting target to  
(6) A-2 p. a-2 (7) A-2 p. a-2 (8) A-3, A-8

the Allies it was defended by a considerable force of some 200,000 troops comprising nine Italian Divisions, (four weak coastal units and five infantry divisions) and two German Panzer Divisions later to be reinforced by the 29th Panzer Grenadier Division from Italy. (9) Air photography revealed hundreds of miles of wire, numerous coastal fortifications and many prepared defensive positions, which had they been defended to the utmost, might well have made the operation expensive and lengthy. There were thirty air fields on the island, and enemy air strength in the area was estimated at 1600 combat planes, over half being German. Early in 1943 the German airforce was yet potent, capable of terrific damage by seasoned veterans who had ruled the skies until challenged only short months before. (10) (See Map "B")

Long arduous studies by the planning staffs began to evolve in definite recommendations. By the third of May, decision to assault the southeastern portion of the island was firm. The ending of the Tunisian campaign allowed the inclusion of the battle proven 1st Infantry Division and the II Corps as members of the task force. British planners were abreast of their allies. The British assault beaches had been determined and troops allocated for the assignment. (11)

As approved, the final plan called for an invasion force of 160,000 men carried in 3,000 ships, supported by over 3,000 planes with a build up of almost 100 percent, in Army Ground Forces strength. Gen. Eisenhower remained Commander-in-Chief; Air Marshal Tedder in command of all (9) A-3, A-2 p. b-5 (10) A-3 (11) A-3

Allied air; Gen. Alexander was designated Commander of the Fifteenth Army Group consisting of the British Eighth and the U. S. Seventh Field Armies, commanded by Generals Montgomery and Patton respectively. (12)

Montgomery's Eighth Army was to land with two corps abreast with the Thirtieth Corps on the west adjacent to the Seventh Army. The British XXX Corps, composed of the 1st Canadian Division (which had to come from England), (13) the 51st Division, and the 23rd Brigade, was to land over twenty miles of Sicilian coast extending from the western side of Cape Passero (see map) to the town of Noto, not inclusive. Northeast of the "Bark Force" or XXX Corps, the "Acid Force" or XIII Corps was to attack from Noto to Syracuse using one regiment of the 1st Airborne Division, the 5th and 50th British Divisions. The 78th Division was to be army reserve. (14) (See Map "B")

Missions of the Eighth Army were to take the enemy airfields in its area, to secure the ports of Syracuse, Augusta, and Catania, and to make contact with the Seventh Army at Ragusa, which was approximately twenty miles inland and inclusive to the Eighth Army. (15) (See Map "B")

General Patton had been allotted four infantry divisions, one armored and one airborne division, plus novelty troops, such as three Ranger Battalions, to accomplish the following missions:

1. Secure a beach head extending from Licata through Gela to the mouth of the Irminio River. (16)
2. Capture the port of Licata and all airfields in its zone. (16)

(12) A-1 p. 4-7 (13) A-1 p. 5 (14) A-2 p. a-5 (15) A-3  
(16) A-2 p. a-5-8



3. To operate west of a line Pozzallo - Ragusa -  
Vizzini and to secure a line Nara - Mazzarino - Caltagirone.  
(16)

The U. S. II Corps, commanded by Lt. General Omar N. Bradley, was to land on the right (east) side of the Army zone. This corps, designated "Shark Force", would attack with the 1st Infantry Division less one RCT, plus the 1st and 4th Ranger Battalions in the Gela area and the 45th Division, fresh from the states, with one medium tank battalion on the east flank from Scoglitti to Ponte Secca. In addition, the 505th Parachute Regiment with the 3rd Battalion of the 504th Parachute Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, were to drop and take the Ponte Olive airport six miles northeast of Gela. (See Map "B") (17)

On the open northwest flank of the Army, General Patton placed the "Joss Force" consisting of the 3rd Infantry Division, Combat Command A, 2nd Armored Division and the 3rd Ranger Battalion. The "Joss Force" Commander, Maj. General Lucian K. Truscott, had the port of Licata as his primary objective. (17)

Reserves afloat were the 2nd Armored Division, less one combat command, and the 18th RCT of the 1st Division, while back in Africa was the remainder of the 82nd Airborne and the 9th Infantry Division. (17) (See Map "B")

D-Day was set as 10 July, 1943. Landings were to start at 0245 hours. Men, materials, and supplies were ready. Morale was high and leaders confident as expressed by General Patton\* in his message to the troops: (18)

"Soldiers of the 7th American Army:"

(16) A-2 p. a-5-8 (17) A-2 p. a-5, A-3 (18) A-3

"The glory of American arms, the honor of our country, the future of the whole world rests in your individual hands. See to it that you are worthy of this great trust."

"God is with us. We shall win." (19)

Cover plans entailed naval diversionary attacks against western Greece and western Sicily in the Marsala area. The latter attack was very effective, causing the enemy to retain large forces in that area and confusing him as to direction and place of the main effort. (20) (See Map "A")

#### THE AIR OFFENSIVE

For a month prior to D-Day Allied planes struck with increasing vigor at enemy airfields, the ports of Palermo, Syracuse, and Catania. Particular attention was paid to the train ferries operating across the Messina Straits to the Italian mainland. Destruction of enemy air and isolation of the battlefield were accomplished together. Our bombers from North Africa swept the island with fire, while accompanying fighters either shot the enemy out of the sky or when he refused the challenge, destroyed his planes on the ground. (21)

Looking at the Palermo harbor on D-Day plus 16 this observer was impressed with its destruction: The port facilities were completely demolished, the harbor filled with sunken, capsized craft of all sizes, and in many

(19) A-2 p. b-2 (20) A-1 and General Map 1 (21) A-3

*(General Patton)*  
\*Ascribed to Patton and repeated by staff officers at 7th Army as fact was a conversation with his Meteorological Officer at 7th Army Hqs. in which the General asked, "How long will the storm last?"

"Oh, it will calm down by D-Day," replied the officer.

"It had damn well better!", threatened the General giving the elements and his staff officer no alternative.

cases large craft had been completely blown out of the water up onto the docks. From the harbor a ten block semi-circle of razed buildings and rubble extended. It seemed as though some giant with a burning rake had decided to crush the port area. Citizens of the city estimated that over 7,000 people were killed in the raids. It was raids of this caliber that convinced an already wavering Sicilian population that resistance was foolish. Life under allied rule appeared far more pleasant than death if they remained loyal to Mussolini. (21)

The Germans tried to strike back: Their reconnaissance revealed heavy concentrations of ships at Bizerte and Algiers. They also knew that British and American battleships and heavy cruisers were not sailing the Mediterranean just to train their crews. Bizerte harbor was hit by approximately 150 bombers in several raids, but the enemy was confined to night attacks and kept high by voluminous if inaccurate anti-aircraft fire. British night-fighter veterans took a heavy toll of strays and bombers out of formation. Damage from these attacks did not exceed the <sup>at</sup> expected, hence little time was lost in going ahead with the invasion. (21)

#### THE LANDING

General Patton's directive was not followed by Neptune. 9 July found the invasion armada steaming through heavy seas with waves running far too high for small boats to live in the furious surf. Consternation reigned in the floating command posts as the fleet left Malta astern and turned toward Sicily only ninety miles to the north. (21) A-3

High winds causing heavy seas were directly responsible for the failure of our first airborne effort. C-47 transports carrying the 505th Parachute Regiment and the 3rd Battalion of the 504th failed to arrive at their drop zones on the appointed hour. Some never arrived. Paratroops were scattered all over the southeastern part of the island and no group of any size was able to participate in the initial landing operation. (22)

Down the nets into the assault craft went the combat infantrymen. Beginning at midnight 9 July, with H-Hour 2 hours and 45 minutes away the landing began. The sea was still running high, men were seasick, but determined. At H-Hour the 1st Division and Ranger Force landed. All landings were accomplished by 0600 hours on the 10th of July. (23)

Enemy reaction was slow. Coastal batteries had been silenced by naval gun fire. Most units landed under sporadic ground fire. Regimental cannon companies quickly reduced pill boxes further inland. The Third Division, landing with four battalions abreast, captured Licata, brought artillery ashore and by evening had established a beachhead five miles deep and twenty miles wide along the coast. II Corps with the Ranger Force in Gela and the 45th Division occupying both Scoglitti and Vittoria had achieved its D-Day objectives through-out its 57 miles of beach. (23) (See Map "B")

To the east the British Eighth Army was equally successful: The 1st Canadian Division was moving north up the west side of Cape Passero to contact our 45th

(22) A-2 p. b-2, A-3 (23) A-2 p. b-4, 5

Division. Noto and Avola were in the hands of the British 50th Division. To the north the British 5th Division had moved through Syracuse and was advancing on Augusta against light resistance. (24) (See Map "B")

Despite normal confusion, every where the Allies were successful on D-Day. Night fall on 10 July, found all major units consolidating and pushing the attack. Licata, Gela, Vittoria, and Syracuse were Allied towns. Artillery and the floating reserve had been landed. Divisions regained unity. The Italian coastal Divisions 206 and 207 had ceased to exist. 4,265 prisoners of war had been taken with probably half that many killed. American casualties: killed, wounded and missing were under 900. (25)

One of the tragic events of the war occurred during the night of 11-12 July. An airlift of 170 aircraft was to bring in 2500 men of the 82nd Airborne Division from their bivouac in North Africa. An enemy air strike had just ended as the fleet of C-47's appeared. The recognition code was "red-red" easily confused with the streams of tracer. Green, ambitious gunners of the Navy and Army units ashore opened fire. The slow C-47's were helpless. Pilots flew as low as 50 feet to avoid fire. Twenty-three planes were shot down. 410 men were lost. Many planes turned back to Africa. (26)

Increasing his air attacks the enemy struck repeatedly at the LST's carrying troops and the supplies on the beaches. Believing he had fixed the main effort of our thrust, German Armor in strength hit the center of II Corps. With 20 Mark IV tanks leading, German and Italian (24) A-1 p. 10 (25) A-2 p. b-4 (26) A-1 p. 10, A-3, A-2 p. b-4, 5

units counter attacked the 1st Infantry Division near Gela. The first enemy effort was stopped by 1200 on the 11th of July after piercing the 26th Infantry lines and moving within 2000 yards of Gela. With Infantry following, an even larger force of 40 Mark IV and 10 Italian tanks moved across the front of the 16th Infantry. Enemy infantry was repulsed, however 9 tanks entered Gela causing much confusion, but were finally driven off by use of rocket launchers, ground and naval artillery. A third counter attack in the afternoon was repulsed mainly by effective naval gunfire, which was a potent factor in defeating all of the attacks. (27)

On the right of the II Corps, the 45th Division repulsed lighter counter attacks and pushed on to take Comiso Airfield and 125 planes, then moved north to Ragusa. (27)

The 3rd Division against light resistance extended its beachhead to the line Naro - Campobello - Rusi. (28)

11 July saw the heaviest fighting of the campaign for U. S. Forces. Our casualties totaled over 2300 for the day's work. The enemy effort failed. Our advance continued. (29)

#### EXPANDING THE BEACHHEAD

The next three days were to see the end of organized local Italian resistance. Italian prisoners were very bitter toward their German Allies, whom the PW's accused of leaving Italian troops as covering forces, then blowing bridges and mining roads behind them as they pulled out leaving the Italians to cover German withdrawals, and to (27) A-2 p. b-4, 5 (28) A-5 p. 56 (29) A-2 p. b-6

surrender or die for their efforts. Italians avoided death by the thousands.

Capture of the Biscari Airfield by the 45th Division was the major accomplishment of the Seventh Army during the expansion phase. This important airfield was defended by a reinforced battalion and a platoon of Mark IV tanks. The 180th Infantry took the airfield on the 14th day of July after two days of hard fighting. On the right of the Division the 157th Infantry had fought their way to the heights above Vizzini. From this vantage point volumes of well observed artillery <sup>fire</sup> were placed on the town allowing the 1st Canadian Division to move in and mop up. (30)

The only French unit to take part in the campaign, the 4th Tabor (Battalion) of Goums had been landed on 14 July and attached to the Third Division. One unique feature of this French Colonial unit was the bounty offered to each fighting man for the number of enemy killed. Proof of the act was demanded before payment. The Goums would take the ears of their slain foes. Naturally, the Italians did not relish the idea of close combat with such a fierce outfit. Throughout the campaign the Goums were used in very mountainous areas and were good fighters. The G-3 section at Army had to include the location and daily summary of this battalion's operations in the G-3 periodic report to Allied Hqs. in Algiers. Some of the reports were rather vague, but the French were informed daily as to the Tabor's exploits real or fictional. (31)

Seventh Army had taken all of its assigned objectives by 15 July and held a line Naro - Mazzarino - Caltagirone -  
(30) A-4 p. 22 (31) A-3

Vizzini. The British front lines extended from Vizzini to the east coast 10 miles above Augusta, which fell to the British 5th Division on 13 July. Over one fifth of the island had been liberated. (32)

Two German Divisions on the island had been identified as the 15th Armored and the Herman Goering Division. The units of the Italian Sixth Army, commanded by General Guzzoni, (33) were fast losing their combat effectiveness. Movement of German units from the west toward the center and east indicated that the Germans, at least, considered a general withdrawal toward Messina and into Italy.

Italian and Sicilian soldiers were surrendering in units. The prisoner problem had become so acute that many Sicilians were paroled to their homes. It was a common joke that a PW work party usually returned with more prisoners than it had at the morning check.

#### SPLITTING THE ISLAND

To exploit the deteriorating enemy General Patton revised his plan. He organized from army units a Provisional Corps with tactical control of the 3rd Division, the 82nd Airborne Division reinforced with the 39th RCT of the 9th Division, the 5th Armored Field Artillery Group, the 3rd Ranger Battalion and other supporting troops. The initial mission given General Keys, Provisional Corps Commanding General, was to assemble and secure the highway from Canicatti - San Cataldo and be prepared to continue the advance to the west and northwest. (34)

Boundary between the two corps was extended northwest to the coast giving Palermo to the Provisional Corps.

(32) A-2 p. b-8 (33) A-1 p. 7 (34) A-2 p. b-8, 9



Army boundaries were extended to the north coast through Enna to the Seventh and San Stefano to the Eighth Army.

II Corps with the 1st and 45th Divisions was ordered to capture Caltanissetta and be prepared to continue <sup>advance</sup> after dark on 19 July.

The 2nd Armored Division was to revert to Army control in Campobella and await orders. (34)

All objectives were taken. Based on a directive from General Alexander the Seventh Army called for the push to the north coast and the capture of Palermo. From the 18th until the 22nd of July the Seventh Army moved in four columns with wide divisional zones of action. (34)

The 82nd Airborne Division moved quickly along the west coast toward Massala and Trapani. Following the 82nd was the 2nd Armored Division awaiting orders from Army. Further east operating on a thirty mile front moved the 3rd Division. East of the 3rd was the 45th Division and only the 1st Division was encountering much resistance as the general advance continued. (35) (See Map "C")

Patton ordered the Provisional Corps to take Palermo. The 2nd Armored jumped off from Castel Vetrano sweeping northeast in an end run through Camporeale, San Ginseppe and past the beautiful mountains overlooking Palermo Harbor. Advance units entered the city at 2000 hours on 22 July against practically no resistance. (36)

In the meantime the 3rd Division marched and fought over 100 miles in five days to reach the outskirts of the city on the northeast. The 1st Battalion of the 30th Infantry moved 54 miles across country in 33 hours to (34) A-2 p. b-8, 9 (35) A-2 p. b-9, 10 (36) A-3

reach a phase line during this advance. Credit must be given here to the 3rd Division. Its advance units would have been capable of entering the city of Palermo at will after 1400 hours on the 22nd. Brig. Gen. Eagles had been visited by a group of prominent citizens who wished to surrender the city. (37) All of the enthusiasm shown by these competing <sup>units</sup> was a tribute to the leadership of their own leaders and especially to the Seventh Army commander, who fully enjoyed the race. (See Map "C")

With the Sicilian capital in our hands, mopping up in the west continued. The 82nd Airborne Division did a businesslike job in clearing the Marsala - Trapani area. The 45th Division had also been in the race on Palermo and was now in a position to turn east along the north coast. Accordingly it took the coastal city of Cefalu on 23 July kicking out weak Italian coastal units. To the south the 1st Division had turned east from Petralia toward Nicosia and was the only division meeting German resistance. (38)

The break through to the coast split the island giving all of Sicily west of Cefalu - Augusta to the Allies. It was decided that the British would first reduce Catania, which was being stubbornly defended, and then advance along the southern coast to Messina while the Americans moved along the north coast. General Alexander's decision originated from the premise that the enemy had resigned himself to the loss of the island, but intended to evacuate his troops with as much heavy equipment as possible to Italy over the straits of Messina. To accomplish the

(37) A-5 p. 60 (38) A-2 p. b-9, 10

evacuation the German commander had made a sound terrain estimate and had begun a rear guard action well within his capabilities. (39)

Realizing the futility of saving Italian insular real estate, knowing the doubtful fighting ability of Sicilians and Italians remaining on the island, and intent on salvaging some German honors, the German Commander, of 20 July, General Hulbe, began to react. He anchored his defenses on the east coast at the estuary of the Simeto River, which flows approximately eight miles south of Catania. Here he placed the Herman Goering Division, a unit which had successfully repelled repeated attacks by the 5th and 50th British Divisions. Extending inland first along the Simeto River then bending west along the Dittaino River, thence northwest over foot hills of Mt. Etna to include Troina, and on toward the coast at Cefalu ran the German defense line. General Hulbe defended strongly all along the Eighth Army front. In addition to the Herman Goering Division he had about half of the 1st German Parachute Division plus a battle group of RCT size aligned in front of the 51st and 78th British Divisions. Against the 1st Canadian Division on the northwest flank of the Eighth Army Hulbe put the remnants of the 4th Italian Division and flanked it with the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, which was also fighting the 1st U. S. Division. Continuing to the sea he had elements of the Italian 26th Division. In the north he played his last trump: The 29th Panzer Grenadier Division, a division brought to the island after the landing, and first identified on the 18th

(39) A-3

of July. As a fresh unit it was able to slow the Seventh Army push along the north coast. (40) (See Map "C")

#### THE PUSH TOWARD MESSINA

To recapitulate, after the liberation of Palermo, the 15th Army Group had three U. S. Divisions in the north opposing two German Divisions. It also had five British Divisions against a force of approximately two German Divisions with elements of three Italian Divisions included as part of the German defense, two of which were in Seventh and one in the Eighth Army sector. Allied plans for the capture of Messina placed the boundary between Armies along the line Nicosia and Troina inclusive to the Seventh through Randazzo to the Eighth into Messina, the Army Group objective.

During the ten day period following Patton's arrival in Palermo our effort seemed to improve as one reviews the Army Group from south to north. The frontal assault on Catania was stalled. Montgomery began to pivot on his right flank. The 5th Division in an "end-around" play captured Gerbini, crossed the Simeto River, and began on the 2nd of August the flanking movement that was to mean the end of German possession of Catania. North of the 5th, the 51st Division forced a bridge head over the Dittaino River in a methodical three day operation that drove through the first phase line of the German Mt. Etna defense position. (41) Outflanked by the aggressive action at Gerbini and Sferro, the Germans abandoned their Dittaino River Line allowing the 78th Division to move through Catenanuova and Centruipe against rear guard delaying (40) A-2 p. b-11, A-3 (41) A-1 p. 15

forces. With about the same amount of opposition the 1st Canadian Division was able to occupy Agira and move on to the higher ground to the east, with no delay at the Simeto River, as the river begins its flow to the sea in this area. (41)

Astride the Nicosia - Troina - Randazzo road, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division faced the 1st Division. Their mission was to hold Troina, the center bastion of the German defense line. The 1st Division with the 39th RCT of the 9th Division and the 4th Tabor of Goums (French) attached, forced the evacuation of Nicosia and moved through the town on the 29th of July against steadily increasing resistance. The 91st Reconnaissance Squadron was protecting the right flank of the division and maintaining contact with the 1st Canadian Division to the south. (42)

Giving the enemy no respite, along the north coast, the 45th Division under Maj. Gen. Troy Middleton pushed westward from Cefalu toward San Stefano. Progress was hampered by numerous mines, booby traps, blown bridges, and road blocks. Literally thousands of tons of explosives were encountered. Every main road and possible detour was a death trap until deactivated by our engineers. It was truly an engineer's war with the Germans "putting 'em down" and our engineers "taking 'em up." Every major obstacle was defended, forcing American soldiers off the roads into the extremely rough mountains. By the time a battalion could deploy to flank an obstacle, hours would elapse, allowing the enemy to fall back to yet another defile. In this fashion the 45th came to San Stefano.

(41) A-1 p. 15 (42) A-2 p. 14

Here they had to dislodge a reinforced battalion of the 29th German Division who retreated only after hand to hand combat with the 157th Infantry. Accurate artillery support from a U. S. Destroyer was of material assistance to the Division in the capture of San Stefano. At San Stefano the 3rd Division passed through the 45th which reverted to the Provisional Corps at Cefalu for regrouping.

(43) (See Map "D")

Palermo Harbor opened for shipping four days prior to the relief of the 45th Division. On the 27th of July the first LCT's from Africa discharged troops at the port. Later the remainder of the 9th Infantry Division was disembarked and moved to the Troina area. German bombers attacked the harbor and city on three successive nights\* causing little damage, but receiving practically no opposition. German pilots flew at will over the city and scored several hits in the area where 7th Army staff officers were sleeping.

The writer was sleeping in a partially destroyed apartment house on the night of 27-28 July. One stick of bombs bracketed the place blowing out all the windows and the large front doors. It is recalled that the blast of one close miss blew in the front door and deposited a Sicilian Signora of some 200 pounds on her back amid the agonizing screams of her husband and ten bambini. I am happy to report that her wounds were mainly to her dignity.

(43) A-4 p. 27-30 \*That evening Bob Hope, popular, nationally famous radio and motion picture comedian, with his troupe which included Frances Langford, motion picture actress and vocal star (wearing a sweater bra and shorts) had entertained over 30,000 troops in the outskirts of Palermo. Whether the number of troops or the intensity of "wolf" whistles attracted the German airforce is a matter of conjecture and a research problem for future historians.

Probably the most decisive battle of the last phase, for the possession of Troina, began on 1 August when the 1st Division's initial attack was repulsed. Attempts were made to envelop the town from the <sup>North</sup> mouth and coordinated attacks were launched on the 3rd and 4th of August. Limited gains from heavy artillery support and strong infantry action were the result. On the 5th, the 16th Infantry with close air support from the XII Air Support Command succeeded in capturing the heights overlooking Troina from the south. On the following day the 16th Infantry was able to fight their way into Troina and to end the six day battle. Two regiments, the 39th and the 60th of the 9th Division, had been a part of the attack and probably were responsible for its early conclusion. (44)

Concurrently with the capture of Troina was the fall of Catania in the south to the Eighth Army. Definite retrograde movements of the enemy toward Messina was observed by our airforce. The British began to force their way up the southeast coast. Only Randazzo on the northwest slopes of Mt. Etna remained for the 9th U. S. Division to reduce. After the fall of Troina, II Corps relieved the 1st Infantry Division and operated on a two division front with the 3rd on the coast and the 9th on the south. (45) (See Map "D")

Moving east from San Stefano the 3rd Division was halted in front of San Fratello. The town nestles on the south slope of Mt. San Fratello which rises to a height of 2200 feet on the east bank of the Furiano River (dry at this season) which flows between deep vertical banks south (44) A-2 p. b-14-16 (45) A-2 p. b-16-18

of the village. The mountain is joined by high terrain to the sea and to the south. The Germans, determined to hold, had mined the bed of the river, blown the bridge, and were strongly entrenched on the mountain. The 3rd Division was held up from the 2nd to 8th of August before overcoming German resistance. The 15th Infantry made repeated attacks to take the northern side of the mountain from the 2nd to the 6th of August. The 30th Infantry with the 3rd Bn. 15th Infantry attached during the same period had moved inland over ten miles and was more successful. This battalion stormed the southern heights above the village, turned south and fought their way house to house to link up with the 3rd Battalion of the 30th Infantry. For its actions, continuous attack with severe punishment 3-8 August, the 3rd Battalion, 15th Infantry was awarded the Distinguished Unit Citation. (46) (See Map "D")

Weary of the tactics of the Germans, General Patton mounted the first of his water borne envelopments on the same night that San Fratello was taken. The 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, with attached tanks and artillery, was landed east of San Agata. The battalion landed unopposed, quickly took positions across the coastal highway and stopped all movement to the rear and front by the Germans. As a result of this operation San Fratello could not be reinforced, San Agata fell easily, 350 Germans were killed or captured, and the 3rd Division was twelve miles closer to Messina. (47)

Two more amphibious envelopments were made. The same 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry moved by sea to the west of  
(46) A-5 p. 65-67 (47) A-5 p. 67-68



Brolo on the night of 10-11 August.\* The landing was successful, but was soon discovered by the Germans, who brought the battalion under heavy fire, forcing it to occupy the high ground just south of the coastal road. Here the battalion held until joined by the 7th Infantry the following day. The position was repeatedly counter-attacked by infantry and tanks and was under direct observed small arms fire throughout the day. All attacks were beaten off despite limited ammunition supplies and lack of water. (48) (See Map "D")

Thoroughly frightened by the two seaborne attacks the enemy fell swiftly back on Messina. Here he was more successful in his plan for evacuation. The bulk of the German troops and mobile equipment successfully crossed into Italy. Crossings were made mainly at night in small craft under the protection of Italian coastal batteries on both sides of the straits. (49)

Randazzo fell to the 9th Division on the night of 12 August causing the collapse of the Mt. Etna position. The enemy was in full retreat everywhere. Montgomery's Eighth Army had kept pace moving up the southern coast. (50)

As the 3rd Division advanced more easily along the northern coast, General Patton sought to exploit their pursuit by landing the 157th Infantry beyond Falcone, but the 3rd Division was moving so swiftly overland that the regiment landed behind friendly forces and followed the 3rd Division into Messina. (51) (See Map "D")

(48) A-5 p. 68-70 (49) A-3 (50) A-2 p. b-20 (51) A-2 p. b-22  
\* Commanded by Lt. Col. Lyle W. Bernard, presently an instructor at The Infantry School.

Messina fell at 1000 hours on 17 August, being jointly entered by U. S. and British forces just thirty-eight days after the landing. Its fall was the end of all organized resistance. The entire island was under our control. (52)

The enemy had been severely mauled in his effort to defend the island. He had suffered over 12,000 casualties, left approximately 100,000 prisoners of war in our hands, and had lost hundreds of tanks, planes, and artillery pieces. (53) It was truly a decisive victory for the Allies.

Congratulatory messages poured into Seventh Army from the President, the King of England, Churchill, and all major allied commanders. None were more vivid than General Patton's own message to his army. Excerpts follow: (54)

"Soldiers of the Seventh Army:"

"Born at sea, baptized in blood, and crowned with victory in the course of 38 days of incessant battle and unceasing labor, you have added a glorious chapter to the history of war."

"But your victory has a significance above and beyond its physical aspect---you have destroyed the prestige of the enemy."

"Your fame shall never die."

s/ G. S. Patton, Jr.  
Lieut. General, U. S. Army  
Commanding (54)

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

No analysis of the Sicilian operation would be factual if one did not consider that most of the material fruits of the campaign could have been achieved by bypassing the island and attacking Italy or the islands of Sardinia and Corsica. A bolder form of strategy was

(52) A-2 p. b-22 (53) A-2 p. b-25-26 (54) A-2 p. c-2-8

highly successful in the Pacific. In reality the conquest of Sicily was for real estate. It is true that it lowered the enemy potential to attack our shipping lanes, gave our planes airfields closer to the enemy, and helped force the Italian surrender, but it is also true that these results would have been achieved to a better degree had we attacked Italy. (See Map "A")

Possession of Sicily may or may not have been vital to our subsequent successful landings in Italy. But it did tentatively direct our attack toward the boot with the long, costly, indecisive fighting that followed. As an airbase it was short lived, operating mainly as a staging area for England after the battle of Salerno.

The above criticism of the decision does not apply to the conduct of the campaign, which was brilliantly planned down to the last man and ton of supplies. Reinforcements and resupply were more than adequate. At all times the operation was supported. Ports were taken, ships unloaded, turned about, and a constant stream of men and material fed to the fighting fronts.

Training prior to the operation was thorough and conclusive. Witness the outstanding performance of the 45th Infantry Division, its successful landing and 22 days of continuous action. The ability of this previously untried unit to defeat the best the Germans could put in the field was a tribute to our training program and to the American soldier.

Apparently the accepted limitations and capabilities of airborne troops was misunderstood or ignored. The vulnerability of airborne troops to weather is co-equal

with their transportation when moving to the battle zone. The ineffective drop prior to H-Hour resulted from lack of flexibility in the general plan, which failed to include alternate measures in case of bad weather. The decision to use the remainder of the 82nd Airborne Division as reinforcements is contrary to our present principles, that airborne troops are specialists and are exceptionally used as reinforcements; then usually to exploit the pursuit. Certainly airborne divisions should not be used to reinforce infantry divisions when normal means of transport are available and ground units are in reserve.

Lack of coordination with the navy was partly responsible for the destruction of the 23 of our troop carrier transport planes loaded with paratroops. Timing, poor direction of flight, and enemy action all combined to create this unfortunate incident. That the 82nd Airborne could and did fight as a division only seven days later is a tribute to the skill of its leaders and the courage and spirit of its men.

Throughout the operation, the aggressive spirit and determined efforts of the British and American Infantry were well supported by other arms. The importance of the "Queen of Battle" was reiterated in the proof of victory. But, on many instances it was proved that no arm alone can win battles.

In general one may reflect that the capture of Sicily was well planned and swiftly executed with minimum expenditure of force. Only the test of time can decide, but it is believed that it will be an example of brilliant tactics for future students of military history.

## LESSONS LEARNED (55)

Higher Organization: A field army should consist of a minimum of two corps, each corps to control at least three divisions. Thus the triangular principle of organization can be followed. Rarely can a corps operate with only two divisions and be able to rest its units or maneuver and exploit successes.

Engineers: In extremely mountainous terrain and in fighting over defended obstacles the ratio of engineers by infantry must be greatly increased by reinforcements from Corps and Army.

Replacements: Requirements should be anticipated long before an operation, and made available to the force commander before D-Day. Training battalions or companies are a necessary part of the T/O of each infantry division.

Air Reconnaissance: High performance aircraft have certain limitations and capabilities that must be clearly understood by ground officers if results are to be obtained. The need of control and liaison between ground and air is vital.

Night Combat: This type of combat should be stressed. It is, when well executed, almost certain of success and is intensely disliked by the Germans who have no adequate defense doctrine to oppose it.

Detection of Mines: All infantry units should be trained in the detection of mines. A mine detector for locating non-metallic mines is required. Mine detectors in quantity should be a part of the infantry's regular equipment or carried in mobile stocks by the division.

Anti-Tank Weapons: The 37mm and the 57mm anti-tank guns

organic to the infantry regiment are inadequate. Improvement in rocket launchers is required. Bazookas can and did destroy German Mark IV tanks. An anti-personnel shell would increase the value of this weapon.

Plans: Plans for landing on a hostile shore must be simple and understood by all levels if they are to succeed in spite of enemy effort and the normal confusion that is certain to occur.

Aggressive Attitude: Troops under fire must not be allowed to remain prone and passive. Officers and enlisted leaders must require their men to move forward and to fire at the enemy or his position while moving. The act of firing at the enemy reduces his fire power, and bolsters the confidence of the attacker. All men should be taught that a moving soldier is safer than a soldier motionless on the ground.

Defense Against Counter Attack: The immediate concern of every leader upon taking his objective should be to defend it. To accomplish this he should train his unit to expect the unfailing counter attack, and to be able to meet the test when it comes. Well trained troops after experience of battle, soon learn that in the defense against counter attacks they are able to inflict the maximum casualties on the enemy.

(55) A-2 p. c-2 to 8. All "lessons" are taken as learned in September, 1943.