



**SUPPLEMENT**

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## OPERATIONS IN NORTH WEST AFRICA FROM 8th NOVEMBER 1942 TO 13th MAY 1943.

### PREFACE BY THE WAR OFFICE.

The Anglo-American expedition to French North Africa, discussed from the time of the United States entry into the war and finally approved in July, 1942, had as its main objects the securing of French Morocco and Algeria with a view to the earliest possible occupation of Tunisia. It was also hoped to secure communications through the Mediterranean. For its success it depended partly on surprise and partly upon the degree of opposition or assistance which might be offered by the French forces in North Africa.

The forces available for this operation were partly British and it was advisable that these, with their more recent operational experience, should play a leading part in the early stages of the campaign. On the other hand, the United States had maintained relations with the Vichy Government, whereas the British Government had recognised the movement headed by General De Gaulle. It was thought that, for this and other reasons, a United States expedition would find more local support in North Africa than an expedition in which British troops were foremost. Accordingly, an American officer, Lieutenant-General Eisenhower, was appointed Commander-in-Chief, with a British officer, Lieutenant-General Anderson, as Commander of the Eastern Task Force on which the burden of the initial fighting was likely to fall. It was planned, furthermore, that American troops should participate largely in the assault phase including the eastern landing, and that Lieutenant-General Anderson should not assume command until after that phase should be ended. His despatch commences, therefore, some two days after the operation began.

The landings in North Africa extended over a wide front from Casablanca to Algiers. The Western and Central Task Forces met little sustained opposition, but the move of the

Eastern Task Force into Tunisia was countered by the simultaneous, and practically unopposed, arrival of German troops, many of whom came by air. General Anderson's force, after initial failure to reach Tunis and Bizerta, was then reinforced, partly by sea and partly by troops moving overland from Casablanca and Oran. By this process First British Army was formed together with 2 U.S. Corps.

Eighth Army, meanwhile, was making progress in Tripolitania, and it was decided, at a Conference held in Casablanca in January, 1943, that this Army would come under General Eisenhower's command when it crossed the border into Tunisia. This actually occurred in February, the forces then uniting to form 18 Army Group, immediately under the control of General Alexander as Deputy Commander-in-Chief.

This despatch covers, therefore, the operations of First Army up to the conclusion of the campaign. It also covers the operations of 2 U.S. Corps and 19 French Corps during a period (ending 18th February, 1943), in which they were co-ordinated, and finally commanded, by General Anderson.

*The following despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for War on 7th June, 1943, by* **LIEUTENANT GENERAL K. A. N. ANDERSON, C.B., M.C., GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING-IN-CHIEF, FIRST ARMY.**

8th November, 1942-13th May, 1943.

### INTRODUCTION.

The initial assault landings in North Africa on night 7th/8th November, 1942, were undertaken entirely by United States troops, except at Algiers. There, the British 11 Infantry Brigade Group and two Commandos (all on assault scale) landed simultaneously with the troops of United States 34 Infantry Division, while a

second Brigade Group of 78 Division was in floating reserve. The whole operation was under command of Major-General Ryder, United States 34 Infantry Division.

Although nominal opposition was offered in some quarters the landing was on the whole unopposed, and by 1600 hours envoys were received to discuss terms: after that time only sporadic fighting continued. On 9th November Algiers harbour was opened and the unloading of ships began.

Once this landing had been completed under American auspices, the rôle allotted to First Army was to establish a base at Algiers and to occupy Eastern Algeria and Tunisia as speedily as possible.

So, on 9th November, I left Gibraltar by air, landed at Maison Blanche airfield with a very small skeleton staff and took over command, immediately directing Major-General Eveleigh (Commander British 78 Division) to carry out the prearranged plan for the capture of Bougie port and Djidjelli airfield with 36 Infantry Brigade Group, assisted by naval forces under command of Captain N. V. Dickinson, D.S.C., R.N.

And, on the final cessation of French opposition on 10th November, it became possible to redistribute the forces available for the advance east. Orders were therefore given for all troops of 78 Division and the two Commandos to revert to command of 78 Division, while all other British troops were placed temporarily under command of 34 United States Division, which was charged with the security of the port of Algiers and the vital airfields at Maison Blanche and Blida.

If I was to forestall the Axis in Tunis and Bizerta, speed was quite vital.

Previous to leaving the United Kingdom I had prepared three alternative plans to meet the case of:—

- (a) French resistance on a considerable scale.
- (b) Short-lived resistance followed by non-co-operation or at least a period of confusion, or
- (c) Active collaboration.

The same governing principles held good in each case—namely, seizure of coastal airfields and immediate installation of fighters, as a preliminary to the successive capture of the ports of Bougie, Philippeville, Bone and La Calle; together with the most rapid advance of my land forces by motor transport, landing craft and troop-carrying aircraft.

I must state here that when in the planning stage it was decided that no assault landing should be made East of Algiers, then, in my opinion, my chance disappeared of reaching Tunis before the Germans, unless the French put up a stout resistance to Axis entry into Tunisia.\* In actual fact, the French resisted

us in Algiers (feeble though their resistance was, yet its consequent repercussions caused delay and doubt) and did not resist the Axis in Tunisia. The first German landings at El Aouana airport on 9th November were not opposed.

36 Brigade landed unopposed at Bougie on 11th November and took over the port. The battalion destined to seize the airfield at Djidjelli and stock it with petrol was, however, unable to land by sea owing to the swell and went on by road from Bougie, not reaching Djidjelli until 13th November. This delay unfortunately prevented our fighters operating from the airfield and, as a result, the enemy bombers sank several ships in Bougie harbour before air cover could be provided. Losses in personnel were not high but in equipment were considerable, and the infantry were, for some time to come, operating only with what they could carry and in the clothes they wore when they left their ships.

The distances covered and the feats achieved by the brigades of 78 Division (in particular 36 Brigade) operating with a very reduced scale of first and second line transport, and with no third line, were one of the features of the early stages of the campaign. Similarly, owing to convoy limitations, aggravated by losses at sea, it was not possible to provide adequate transport for port clearance and other line of communication duties. This had serious repercussion on maintenance; ships could not be cleared, congestion occurred on the quays, and depots could not be kept filled to meet demands. Furthermore, an immensely long line of communication was created by the rapid advance eastwards, with very meagre railway resources that could not be properly co-ordinated or developed owing to limitations of staff. All these factors contributed to a situation that gave rise to great anxiety for some time.

The campaign can henceforth be divided into three main phases:—

- (a) A race for Tunis and Bizerta, undertaken by a small force on assault or light scales and consequently much understrength in men and equipment.

We just failed to win this race, after some bitter fighting in bad weather which gave us our first experience of Tunisian mud. This phase ended soon after Christmas, 1942.

- (b) The period 28th December, 1942, to 27th March, 1943, during which both sides were building up their forces and attempting to hold on to or seize ground important for the future, while we also struggled incessantly to improve our immensely long communications. We were mainly on the defensive, suffered from an acute shortage of infantry, and were often very hard pressed in the mountainous country. I was forced to use the infantry battalions of 6 Armoured Division on ordinary infantry tasks of holding a sector of the front, away from the armoured brigade; and this misuse of the armoured divisional infantry continued up to the end of February, 1943. It is some consolation to know that the Germans had to do exactly the same with the infantry of 10 Panzer Division. Our greatest asset was our preponderance in artillery, and the front seemed at times largely held by artillery fire alone. The term "front" is deceptive. We

\* General Anderson refers, in this passage, to plans which were discussed, but eventually abandoned, for landings at Bone and Philippeville in addition to that at Algiers. The principal arguments against landing so far to the eastwards were based upon—

- (a) The need to concentrate the relatively small forces which could be landed; and
- (b) The danger of venturing without air cover into ports which the German bombers could reach. The reality of the bombing danger was proved by the shipping losses incurred at Bougie. Further to the east still heavier losses might have been expected, with proportionately serious results.

covered the main passes through the mountains with small forces of up to a brigade group; the gaps between these defended areas varied from 10-18 miles as the crow flies. These spaces were inadequately patrolled by both sides.

(c) An offensive period, starting with our counter-attack at Djebel Abiod on 28th March, and ending with the final destruction of the Axis forces in Africa on 13th May, 1943.

But before narrating the march of events, I must refer to certain factors which intimately affected my decisions and actions on many occasions. They form the background to the adventure on which First Army was embarked.

(a) First and foremost was the matter of *Command*.\* In the early days, when my forces were weak, General Eisenhower gave me every atom of help in his power by ordering up units of the United States Forces from Oran and Casablanca to help my advanced troops in their forward rush. These United States units arrived piecemeal, as fast as the very limited road and rail facilities could carry them, and had perforce to be employed as part and parcel of the British forces under British brigade or divisional commanders, and not independently as all of us would have wished. That the resulting friction was so small speaks volumes for the real desire to pull together which animated all parties. As soon as possible, United States units were concentrated under United States formation commanders, and continued for many weeks to co-operate closely and happily with our officers and men under command of 78 Division and 5 Corps. But it was long before our total Allied strength reached a point at which each nation could be made entirely responsible for its own particular sector.

The advent of the French as our active allies produced fresh complications in command which grew as the front increased. In the north were six battalions under General Barre, operating with, but not at first under command of, 5 Corps; in the centre the main French forces were concentrating in the Le Kef-Teboursouk area; in the south another force of about eight battalions was in the area Gafsa-Tebessa working with the small mobile United States force operating there, who were nominally under command of the French.

British mobile units were also, later, in the south under United States command for reconnaissance duties, while for several months First Army had to co-ordinate, and in most cases provide, the entire movement and supply organisation and most of the signal communications for all three nationalities.

The more the campaign progressed the more obvious it became that unified command was quite essential to avoid a chaotic muddle. But General Giraud would not agree to placing French troops under British command, while his manifold other responsibilities prevented General Eisenhower personally exercising the command himself from a forward headquarters.

\* The difficulties about command which General Anderson describes arose, in part, from political considerations, and especially from the need to conciliate the French Command. At this stage in the war, however, much had still to be learnt about the command of allied armies in the field. It was as a result of the lessons learnt in this campaign that later organisation was so greatly improved.

So a series of compromises and makeshifts was adopted in the course of which I, gradually and as commander of the only formation equipped and able to undertake the task, became in turn adviser, co-ordinator and, finally, commander of the whole Tunisian front. None of these steps was satisfactory, and even as commander I lacked the physical means to control efficiently so large a front of well over 200 miles.

The situation was not righted until 18 Army Group was formed later under General Alexander, who then took 2 United States Corps directly under his own control, leaving me with the British and French forces only—covering at the time a front of 120 miles.

(b) Another constant hindrance, already referred to, was closely related to the problem of command—the *inter-mingling of units of the three Allied Armies*. Obviously it is hopelessly unsound both for tactical and administrative reasons to mix troops in this way, but the chain of events as the campaign unfolded forced it upon me. It was my constant pre-occupation to tidy up the mess and give each nation its own sector, but this was not finally accomplished until mid-March when the steadily increasing Allied strength at last enabled the final transfers to be arranged—always excepting the retention of a considerable amount of British artillery with French 19 Corps right up to the end of hostilities and the use anywhere on the front, in the mountains, of the specialised Goums from Morocco.\*

(c) *The state of the French Army and feeling throughout the country*.—I have no intention of touching on politics except in so far as they influenced operations. But in the early days of this campaign, politics intruded everywhere. The loyalties of all French officers were sharply divided, and many, even of those who had taken the plunge and sided with the Allies, were still openly expressing loyalty to the Marshal. Even while I was pressing forward with all vigour General Barre was still negotiating with General von Arnim in Tunis. This may have been a clever move to gain time, and I am now inclined to this view; but at the moment it did not inspire me with confidence. Many mayors, station- and post-masters and other key officials with whom we had dealings as we advanced (for instance, the civil telephone was, at first, my chief means of communicating with my forward units and with Allied Force Headquarters) were lukewarm in their sympathies and hesitant to commit themselves openly, while a few were hostile. I can safely generalise by saying that at first, in the Army, the senior officers were hesitant and afraid to commit themselves, the junior officers were mainly in favour of aiding the Allies, the men would obey orders; amongst the people, the Arabs were indifferent or inclined to be hostile, the French were in our favour but apathetic, the civil authorities were antagonistic as a whole. The resulting impression on my mind was not one of much confidence as to the safety of my small isolated force should I suffer a severe set-back.

But from the moment General Barre refused the final German ultimatum on 19th November, the situation began to change. We met henceforth with increasing assistance and courtesy

\* Goums are Moroccan troops trained in Mountain Warfare.

and our relations with the Army and civilians have grown closer and better every day. A French Army, under General Juin, amounting to a nominal thirty-two battalions of infantry and some hundred and twenty guns (when all was assembled), was ordered to mobilise. Its mission in November 1942 was to cover the right flank of the Allied Forces while they deployed. Later, the main body gradually moved eastward, with only minor contact with Italian patrols, to the line of the Eastern Dorsale by early January 1943. While six battalions remained in the British area around Oued Zarga-Medjez and several battalions continued to work with the Americans in the south.

The French mobilisation plan was prepared only for a campaign of 6-8 weeks. The equipment of the Army was lamentable; no anti-aircraft or anti-tank weapons, rifles and guns dating back to the period 1880-1914, no signal equipment or motor transport, no boots or proper clothing, staffs inadequate and not up to date, et cetera. Only in spirit was the Army formidable, and this spirit was carefully fostered by Generals Juin and Koeltz and a fine body of junior commanders. Co-operation and mutual trust between British and French reached a high level by the end of the campaign, but, even to the end, French units were not capable of offensive action against German troops, and could only operate safely in the mountainous sectors of the front.

It must be remembered that the French Army in Africa is largely a native army.

(d) *The Line of Communication Administrative difficulties and the build-up of First Army.*—Administrative matters are dealt with separately, but to understand correctly the background of this campaign it is essential to bear the following major facts in mind:—

- (i) The huge distances. From Algiers to Tunis by road is over 560 miles.
- (ii) The extremely mountainous nature of the country, and that at first only two roads and an inefficient railway were available eastwards.
- (iii) That the Army was entirely dependent on what it brought overseas with it, in the way of transport, fuel, supplies, &c. Nothing whatever was available locally; indeed, we had to supply the railway with coal, and our Allies, out of our none too plentiful stocks, with rations, petrol and other supplies.

First Army did not spring from the sea full-formed like Aphrodite, but grew in stature painfully slowly as convoys arrived at fortnightly intervals. The initial rush on Tunis was made by a force, at its strongest, equivalent only to one infantry division and one tank regiment on light scales. The leading infantry division (78th) was not complete until 1st December; the next division (6 Armoured) was not complete until 15th December; 46 Division reached the front by the first week of February 1943, 1 Division by 22nd March and 4 Division was not fully assembled until the end of the second week of April 1943.

For me it was an exasperating period in which I saw chance after chance disappear for lack of sufficient strength to seize them, and when reinforcements did arrive the enemy in his turn had also increased his strength. Always the need was for more infantry.

(e) *Air Support.*—In the early stages this was bad for obvious and I think mainly unavoidable reasons. All aircraft had to be flown in from Gibraltar or the United Kingdom; all stores, services, bombs, &c., came by convoy; airfields were few and far between—the nearest serviceable airfield to the forward troops at Tebourba in December 1942 being at Bone, 114 miles away; the Air Officer Commanding had to meet naval demands for protection and had other calls, in addition to supporting the Army, which tied him to Algiers while I was going ever further eastwards. As the situation stabilised so did our co-operation grow closer; but it was a slow growth and did not reach maturity until the reorganisation carried out in March 1943.\* Again, in the early days, the great distances, poor means of intercommunication, and the inevitable early troubles which arise when the forces of two nations are beginning to work together all contributed to the undoubted lack of efficient co-operation between Army and Air Forces.

Goodwill there was in plenty, and with increasing experience and, above all, improved means of inter-communication the situation improved. By mid-March 1943, liaison was excellent; we were working as one team and, under Air Commodore Cross, the air support given to First Army in the last stages was intimate, immediate and intensely powerful.

(f) *Weather and the country.*—Before arrival I had imagined North Africa was a dry country. Although I knew that the winter was the wet season in North Africa, none the less, the extent of the rains in the Coastal belt and their effect on the roads, on cross-country movement, and on the airfields, came as a very unpleasant surprise. In the northern zone, in which First Army operated, the rains began in early December and continued until early April. March was the wettest month. Rain, mist and a peculiarly glutinous mud formed the background to all our operations during this period.

Northern Tunisia is a country of high mountains, narrow plains between the ranges, and few roads, with very limited scope for armoured action. In the south it becomes much more open and desert-like, but rocky hills occur everywhere.

#### FIRST PHASE.—THE RACE FOR TUNIS.

As I have already stated, on 9th November the first Germans landed at El Aouana airport, Tunis. By 13th November I had occupied Bougie and Djidjelli.

Every effort was now directed towards getting troops east as fast as possible, and an earlier proposal (which was not put into effect) was repeated for a landing at Sousse by a force from Malta.

The first troops to occupy Bone were two companies of 3 Parachute Battalion dropped by air to hold the airfield and 6 Commando, landed by sea on 12th November to seize the port. On 11th November a small column of all arms from 11 Infantry Brigade Group (known as Hart Force and made mobile by

\* Additional factors which reduced the efficiency of air support were:—

(a) Lack of all-weather airfields, which could not be constructed during the first few months of the campaign; and

(b) Lack of line communications during a period when headquarters were frequently moved.

pooling all the available Brigade transport) left Algiers by road for Bone, where it arrived on 15th November. By 13th November the move of 36 Brigade main body had started, and one battalion had arrived at Sétif by rail and another battalion by sea at Bone, where it was joined by some artillery and servicing units. The carriers and motor transport of this brigade, however, were at this stage still unable to land.

36 Brigade, still on assault scales, lost no time in getting forward. By 15th November their advance guard had occupied Tabarka, and on 18th November their leading battalion repulsed an enemy attack at Djebel Abiod, destroying 11 tanks and armoured cars. The other battalions of this Brigade were following up quickly, and Hart Force, which had led the advance all the way, was operating to the east of Djebel Abiod. 78 Division had established their Headquarters at Bone.

On 15th November 1 Parachute Battalion attempted to drop at Souk el Arba landing ground, but was unable to do so until the following day owing to weather conditions. The appearance of this battalion had a stimulating effect on the local French troops. The battalion lost no time in getting forward (on foot and using local transport), and, by 17th November, was operating north-east from Béja and in contact with German troops.

While this general move forward was in progress, the follow-up convoy arrived on 13th November bringing the 17/21 Lancers Regimental Group (later known as Blade Force), 1 Parachute Brigade (less one battalion) and the balance to light scales of the transport of 78 Division (less one brigade group). Units and sub-units of 78 Division and Blade Force were moved east as fast as transport was unloaded, 11 Brigade Group being finally concentrated in the Béja area by 22nd November and Blade Force in the Souk el Arba area by 20th November. Advance Headquarters, First Army, also arrived by the follow-up convoy and, on 13th November, opened up at Hotel Albert, Algiers.

Simultaneously with the advance in the north, steps were taken to secure the early occupation of important airfields further south. On 15th November 503 United States Parachute Battalion dropped at Youks-les-Bains without opposition, with a view to making the airfield available for our use. This battalion, under the command of Colonel Raff, operated most energetically from its base at Youks. On 17th November detachments occupied Gafsa airfield, and mobile patrols in requisitioned transport roamed widely over the whole of the southern area, meeting small Italian forces. Contact was also made and good relations established with the French garrison at Tebessa, who co-operated in many patrols.

On 16th November arrangements were made for my force to be supplemented by the addition of two American tank battalions (one medium, one light), some armoured infantry and supporting arms, and steps were taken to get these troops up to the forward areas as soon as possible.

By 17th November the enemy strength was estimated at 500-1,000 fighting personnel in the area of Tunis and 4,000 at Bizerta, with some tanks in each case; in addition, a considerable

number of aircraft had been flown in. The enemy had occupied Mateur and had pushed out west and south-west, in contact with 36 Infantry Brigade's advanced troops west of Djebel Abiod and with the French at Sidi Nsir and Medjez.

On 17th November orders were issued for 78 Division (still less one brigade group), after completing its forward concentration in the area Tabarka-Souk el Arba-Ghardimaou, to advance on Tunis and destroy the Axis forces. The French Command had agreed that they would, to the best of their ability, cover the concentration of 78 Division and the right flank of their subsequent advance, and it seemed possible that French troops would also actively assist in the northern sector. Further south the attitude of the French forces was very uncertain.

Subsequent operations took place on three clearly defined axes. These were:—

- (a) The main road Béja-Medjez-Tebourba-Tunis.
- (b) The road Béja-Sidi Nsir.
- (c) The road Tabarka - Djebel Abiod-Mateur.

#### OPERATIONS DURING PERIOD 17TH NOVEMBER-25TH DECEMBER, 1942.

##### *Northern Sector.*

36 Brigade was in contact with the enemy positions at Djebel Abiod. The carriers and reconnaissance cars of Hart Force, which had been pushed far forward and were then cut off by the German advance, made their way back to 36 Brigade by 19th November, but the infantry transport was lost. The infantry company took to the hills and did not rejoin 36 Brigade until 21st November, having conducted a successful guerilla campaign against the enemy's rear. The brigade advanced slowly against slight opposition and many mines and booby traps to Jefna, where the enemy occupied a very strong position on commanding ground. Several attempts to dislodge him from these heights failed. Losses were heavy. 1 Commando landed 14 miles west of Bizerta and worked south in an endeavour to get behind and dislodge the enemy at Jefna. They did considerable damage but failed in their object and rejoined 36 Brigade on 3rd December.

##### *Southern Sector.*

On 19th November French troops under command General Barre rejected the German ultimatum at Medjez. The two German attacks which followed were repulsed. Persistent demands for air and tank support were made by the French and it was evident that they would not long be able to resist. In fact they withdrew from Medjez during the following night, leaving forward elements of Blade Force holding Oued Zarga and 1 Parachute Battalion holding Béja. At this time 11 Brigade and the remainder of Blade Force were completing concentration at Béja and Souk el Arba respectively.

On 21st November the enemy withdrew to the east bank of the river at Medjez. It was, however, evident that 78 Division were not yet strong enough to press the advance and orders were issued for it to delay any move forward temporarily until the build-up of forces and supplies was sufficient to give it a reasonable chance in the assault on Tunis.

Time was also required to clarify the confused situation existing with the French. The intention was that all French troops in 78 Division area should be relieved as soon as possible so that, under the command of General Barre, all the French forces could concentrate on the protection of the right flank on the line Le Kef-Teboursouk-Testour.

By 23rd November a preliminary verbal agreement had been reached that all troops of whatever nationality north of the line Le Kef-Zaghouan should be under command First Army and that all troops south of this line should be under French command.

By 24th November the forward concentration of 78 Division and Blade Force, reinforced by light tanks from the United States 1 Armoured Division, was completed and orders were issued for the immediate resumption of the advance with, as a first objective, the line Tebourba-Mateur.

On 25th November the advance was resumed and 11 Brigade attacked the enemy at Medjez, seizing the village and establishing crossings over the river.

On 27th November 11 Brigade occupied Tebourba and repulsed enemy counter-attacks supported by tanks and dive-bombers, destroying several tanks. On 28th November 11 Brigade and 2/13 Armoured Regiment were on the outskirts of Djedeida.

We had attained the nearest point to Tunis that was reached until the final stage of the campaign.

At the same time that 11 Brigade was operating up the Medjerda Valley, Blade Force with 1 Parachute Battalion and the 1 Battalion of the 1 Armoured Regiment, United States 1 Armoured Division, moved into the plain south of Mateur, not without considerable supply difficulties enhanced by the beginning of the rains. Here Blade Force was involved in its first successful armoured engagement on 26th November, an action which continued on and off for several days. A successful raid by the United States light tank battalion resulted in the destruction of approximately 40 Stukas on the ground at Djedeida airfield.

It was now evident that the enemy intended to stand and fight along the entire front and was present in considerable strength—see Appendix "C."

The following week saw hard fighting followed by the start of our withdrawal. This week was notable for the heavy scale of enemy air attack, particularly by dive-bombers, to which the leading troops were subjected, and which our own air forces were at this stage unable to prevent.\* They were still operating from Bone aerodrome, with an unreliable (owing to the mud) advanced landing ground at Souk el Arba.

11 Brigade were never able to occupy Djedeida, but remained in contact with the enemy on 29th and 30th November, with Blade Force concentrated in the area of Chouigui.

By 30th November Combat Command "B," United States 1 Armoured Division, was concentrated forward, and an attack on Tunis, with Combat Command "B" and Blade Force working to the east of the Med-

jerda, was ordered for 2nd December, and in conjunction with this 1 Parachute Battalion was to drop at Depienne and threaten Tunis from the south. The drop was successfully made and the parachutists reached Oudna, but the main attack did not take place, for on 1st and 2nd December the enemy counter-attacked with tanks and infantry towards Tebourba from the north and Blade Force was heavily engaged, suffering considerable casualties in tanks.

By the evening of 2nd December Blade Force was withdrawn west and the defence of the forward areas was left to 11 Brigade and the armoured infantry of Combat Command "B" who had to be ordered forward in a defensive rôle. Our tank losses up to date amounted to approximately 40. Many enemy tanks were destroyed, but as he was left in possession of the battlefield most of these were no doubt recovered. The survivors of 1 Parachute Battalion rejoined 78 Division on 3rd December.

On this date the enemy again attacked 11 Brigade in strength at Tebourba and penetrated their positions at several places. The Brigade was cut off and had difficulty in withdrawing during the night; 2 Hampshires, who failed to get the order to withdraw, suffered heavily but fought magnificently. Losses of equipment were considerable and enemy dive-bombing all day was on a heavy scale.

On 3rd December a series of enemy attacks on our positions at El Guessa developed from the south-east and tank and infantry battles took place all day between Combat Command "B" and the enemy, while 11 Brigade withdrew to more favourable positions north of Medjez.

During the period of the actions described, the administrative situation was precarious in the extreme. Dispatches of stores from Bone, which was intended as the main supply base for the forward area, were seriously affected by enemy bombing. An acute shortage of locomotives and rolling-stock, coupled with demands arising from the French mobilisation and the transfer of United States formations from the west, made compensating stores lifts from Algiers by rail impossible. There was no reserve pool of motor transport to fall back on. All resources were strained to the utmost.

It was clear to me that the offensive against Tunis would have to be postponed to give time to build up resources and to refit the troops who had been engaged for the past month. Several battalions of 78 Division were under three hundred and fifty strong and the strain of persistent dive-bombing was beginning to tell. The heavy rain had also put all my airfields out of action and movement off the main roads was becoming impossible. I did not consider that a further offensive could in any case be undertaken until at least one week's reserves of supplies of all kinds had been accumulated at railhead.

Meanwhile my Tactical Headquarters had moved in succession to Jemmapes, Constantine and Ain Seynour, while Main Army Headquarters opened at Constantine on 29th November.

By 10th December the garrison at Medjez, which included four French battalions, has been reinforced by 1 Guards Brigade less a battalion, preparatory to the temporary withdrawal of 11 Brigade and Combat Command "B"

\* By the standards of later campaigns this enemy air activity was not on a serious scale. Its moral effect at the time, however, was increased by the inexperience of the troops and by the scarcity of light A.A. weapons.

for refit. Enemy attacks on Medjez with infantry and tanks on 10th and 11th December were repulsed.

Although the withdrawal of 11 Brigade was carried out according to plan, that of Combat Command "B" was only accomplished at the expense of the majority of their vehicles. Owing to a mistaken order by a battalion commander of Combat Command "B," the route which had been ordered was not followed, with the result that all units were bogged and forced to abandon in the mud a very large number of tanks and transport vehicles. It was indeed a crippling loss. Combat Command "B" reverted to command 5 Corps and later the personnel who could not be re-equipped were ordered back to Guelma.

6 Armoured Division who had been ordered to operate offensively from Teboursouk were in contact with light enemy forces east and south-east of Medjez. The components of Blade Force returned to their parent formations on 12th December.

On 13th December I issued to 5 Corps a warning order to prepare to resume the advance on Tunis. The plan adopted by 5 Corps was as follows:—

As a preliminary, to capture Djebel el Ahmera (afterwards known as Longstop), a hill which completely dominated the exits from Medjez. Thereafter, 78 Division with 18 Regimental Combat Team, United States 1 Infantry Division were to advance north-east to Tebourba-El Bathar either side of the river Medjerda, while 6 Armoured Division moved direct on to the high ground at Massicault. Thence, both 78 and 6 Armoured Divisions were to drive straight on to Tunis. Combat Command "B" to be in Corps reserve. Four-fifths of my strength was allotted to this concentrated attack, which I consider had a very good chance of success.

While this major operation was in progress 36 Brigade were to attempt to get behind the rear of the German position at Jefna and advance on Mateur. Four French battalions and one Commando were to hold the enemy in the area north-east of Béja.

Apart from planning and the regrouping of forces for the attack, the period from 13th-22nd December was one of patrol activity only, contact with the enemy being made all along the front. Enemy reinforcements were arriving fast.

The rain and the state of the ground gave me much cause for anxiety, and repeated trials showed that cross-country movement for any type of vehicle was becoming more and more difficult.

However, I decided to take the risk and ordered 5 Corps to proceed with the opening attack on Longstop on night 22nd-23rd December. This was carried out successfully by 2 Coldstream Guards, after severe and confused fighting: the Battalion was, on 23rd December, relieved by 1 Battalion, 18 Regimental Combat Team, United States 1 Infantry Division. With the dawn on 23rd December came torrential rain which went on for three days: the ground became a quagmire.

The attack on Tunis had to be postponed.

Meanwhile 18 Combat Team had been heavily counter-attacked on 23rd December on

Longstop and, mistaking their orders, withdrew from the crest: it was cleared again by 1 Guards Brigade on 24th December, lost again on Christmas Day and, owing to the mud, was then left in enemy hands. The fighting was bitter.

Our troops returned to their original positions around Medjez, and there decisively repelled an enemy attack on the 27th.

Owing to failure of communications, the order cancelling the operation did not reach 5 Northants of 11 Infantry Brigade, who had been detailed to work through the hills to seize the pass west of Tebourba. The battalion pushed through the very difficult country in dense fog right up to the Djebel Lanserine before the commander, realising what had happened, halted his battalion and brought it back after some minor clashes with the enemy. This exploit was accomplished with only mule transport on a limited scale borrowed from the French.

At a conference held at 5 Corps Headquarters on Christmas Eve between General Eisenhower, General Allfrey and myself, it was finally decided to abandon any hope of a major attack on Tunis until the rainy season had ended. The Commander-in-Chief decided, in its place, to stage an attack in the south against Sfax by United States 2 Corps (which was now forming in the Tebessa area). This entailed the immediate removal from 5 Corps front of Combat Command "B" as well as other United States elements, leaving temporarily only 18 Combat Team in the Medjez area.

Thus ended my hopes of capturing Tunis by storm, and it now was clear that when the time came later to launch a new attack it would have to be on a much heavier scale against greatly-increased opposition.

It was a sad decision, but inevitable owing to the weather. And so began the next phase of the campaign, in which the battle front extended right down to Gafsa.

At about this time General Eisenhower again attempted to get the French to agree to unified command under myself as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, First Army. But although General Juin agreed to this, General Giraud refused—on the ground that the state of feeling amongst his troops was still too delicate to permit him placing them under a British General. So the United States troops in the southern sector as well as the French in the centre sector remained direct under Allied Force Headquarters.

The boundary between First Army and the French Sector was to be (all inclusive to First Army) Souk Ahras—thence road to Le Kef—thence railway to Pont du Fahs—Zaghuan. All troops of any nationality north of this line were to be under my command.

At about this time certain officers of pro-Axis sympathies were removed from the Staff of General Barre, thus easing a delicate situation.

At frequent intervals during the whole of this period I met Air Marshal Sir William Welsh in constant and mutual endeavour to improve the air support. Work was pressed on new airfields at Souk El Arba and Souk El Khemis, that at Bone was improved. Air Commodore Lawson was appointed as commander of all aircraft available to support 5 Corps and he placed his Headquarters next to Corps Headquarters.

SECOND PHASE.—PERIOD 26TH DECEMBER, 1942—27TH MARCH, 1943.

On 1st January, 1943, I outlined to 5 Corps its future policy as under:—

(a) To contain the enemy by constant pressure and, by limited attacks, to seize ground required to facilitate a later offensive; plans for which were to be prepared. All attacks to have maximum artillery support. To be ready to advance, even without armour, if the enemy moved troops away southwards.

(b) To help the French as far south as Pont du Fahs in every way possible.

(c) To push on with the construction of airfields.

Widespread enemy parachute activities against my lines of communication during December accomplished little damage. On 1st January, 1943, Allied Force Headquarters assumed control of the lines of communication up to inclusive Bone—exclusive Constantine, thereby affording much needed relief to my administrative staff.

In the early stages of preparation for the United States 2 Corps operation against Sfax I took no active part, though First Army had to assume full responsibility for all maintenance arrangements, dumping programmes, &c. The attack was, however, eventually cancelled by the Commander-in-Chief, about the middle of January.

Meanwhile, on 3rd January, an attack by 36 Infantry Brigade to capture the dominating enemy positions on Djebel Azzag and Djebel Ajred was not very successful and by 5th January after severe fighting in heavy rain, we withdrew to our original front. Losses on both sides were relatively heavy. Again on 3rd January 6 Armoured Division made a reconnaissance in force in the Goubellat plain; and on 11th January followed this by a successful local attack north of Bou Arada.

On 18th January a strong German attack was launched against 6 Armoured Division down the Bou Arada Valley by infantry and at least fifty tanks of 10 Panzer Division, followed the same afternoon by an attack against the French 19 Corps. This was made by newly-landed mountain troops supported by 501 Panzer Abteilung, in which the new Mark VI "Tiger" tank made its début. The attack was directed against the mountain area at the northern hinge of the two Dorsale ranges.

The attack against 6 Armoured Division was stopped dead after heavy fighting, with considerable enemy tank losses. 38 (Irish) Brigade particularly distinguished itself. But French resistance was overwhelmed; the enemy reached Robaa and Ousseltia on the 20th and the equivalent of seven battalions of infantry were cut off in the mountains; also many field guns together with nearly all their few anti-tank guns were lost. I went to see General Juin and found him personally courageous, but tired and not hopeful. I had in the meantime ordered 5 Corps to send 36 Infantry Brigade Group to the Robaa Valley and requested 2 United States Corps to send a Combat Command of United States 1 Armoured Division to the Ousseltia area—both to come under General Juin's orders on arrival. These reinforcements stabilised the situation on the general line Bou Arada—Djebel Bargou—Djebel Bou Dabouss, after fighting lasting until 23rd January.

Meanwhile, as a result of the obvious lack of co-operation and control between the British, French and American commanders, I was appointed by General Eisenhower, at a meeting with him on 21st January at Constantine, to "co-ordinate" the whole front in future, with one executive air commander (General Kuter, United States Air Corps) for the whole front. This, especially the appointment of General Kuter, was a big step forward but that it did not go far enough soon became evident, and at a further meeting at Thelergma airfield on 24th January, the Commander-in-Chief made me "responsible for the employment of American troops," though not yet in control of the French Corps. After a long conference with me that night General Juin agreed to place his Corps under my command, and next day this decision was confirmed by General Giraud.

If chaos were to be avoided, some one person had to command the whole front. As an example of the difficulties experienced at this time, I had to motor over 1,000 miles in four days to visit the various corps commanders. Distances were too great for radio telephony, ordinary telephone was most unreliable, air travel was impossible owing to weather. "Co-ordination" demanded discussion and often compromise and this could only be done by personal visits.

At the end of this period the French were beginning to feel the strain. The campaign did not look too rosy to them, supplies and equipment were nearly exhausted, motor transport was worn out and scarce and the troops were unable to face the German tanks owing to entire lack of anti-tank weapons.

At the end of January the enemy attack on Robaa was renewed, "Tigers" again being used, this time against 36 Infantry Brigade. The 5 Buffs stood their ground, five tanks (including two "Tigers") being destroyed, and the enemy withdrew with heavy loss. This local but successful action had an electric effect on the Tirailleurs, who were also deeply impressed by the efficiency of the British artillery. From this time on to the end of the campaign I gave French 19 Corps strong artillery support under a Commander Army Group, Royal Artillery, loaned, and also gave them 6-pounders and other equipment, which, with other American help, greatly raised morale. Thereafter they withstood remarkably well the effects of the Kasserine battle and the consequent withdrawal to the Western Dorsale, under the energetic leadership of General Koeltz.

Having been made responsible for the employment of all Allied Forces in Tunisia on 25th January, I spent the next week visiting the French and American sectors, meeting commanders and generally getting into the wider picture.

Two things seemed obvious to me: first, the mixture of nationalities had again become worse as a result of the recent fighting and must urgently be straightened out; second, our dispositions were too widely stretched in the south. In the early days, when forces on both sides were weak, it had been right to seize all we could in the attempt to hem the enemy into a narrow corridor. But a new situation had arisen. Apart from the large enemy reinforcements brought overseas into Tunisia, a fresh flow was now arriving from Tripolitania. The approach of Rommel's Army was beginning to be felt; many uninvited guests from opposite



Eighth Army were entering my southern parLOUR, and it was clear that several weeks would elapse before Eighth Army was in a position to help to entertain them or sufficient United States reinforcements could arrive.

In addition, the French had seriously overstrained themselves and were insistently demanding relief of their tired troops; though at the same time General Giraud strongly urged that it was essential to preserve under French command a definite sector of the front, even though this sector contained American and British troops. So in the centre I formed a French Corps (19 Corps) under a commander to be appointed by General Juin (General Koeltz was selected) to hold a firm central pivot in the mountain area on the flanks of which the American 2 Corps and British 5 Corps could operate.

Owing to the peculiar circumstances prevailing in the French Corps area, I arranged for it to be divided into two divisional sectors, that on the right under command of United States 1 Division and that on the left under command of a French divisional commander to be appointed. Under command of the French division were to be 1 Parachute Brigade in the area of Djebel Mansour and, until relieved by re-equipped French units, 36 Infantry Brigade in the Robaa area. Combat Command "B," United States 1 Armoured Division, were to remain in the Ousseltia Valley under the command of General Koeltz until the situation stabilised, as a reserve.

It was decided in principle to withdraw French units from the line for re-equipment, and that, as soon as possible, they would return to relieve the British and United States units in the French Corps area. And all French troops still in the American and British sectors were to be returned to French 19 Corps.

On 30th/31st January the enemy attacked Faïd and destroyed the French garrison before help from United States 1 Armoured Division at Sbeitla reached them. This defeat again seriously upset the French and they repeated their requests for early relief of tired troops.

I ordered the following steps to be taken during the first ten days of February:—

United States 18 Regimental Combat Team to return from 5 Corps and rejoin United States 1 Division, to strengthen French 19 Corps and relieve the most tired French units in the Pichon area.

United States 2 Corps to complete the raid being planned against Sened; to postpone the attack to retake Faïd until stronger forces were available; to hold on to the Sidi Bou Zid position and form a strong mobile reserve in the Sbeitla area; to continue to hold Gafsa unless strongly threatened, when the garrison would be withdrawn on my order; the general task given to United States 2 Corps still being to protect the right flank of the Allies.

In addition, I formed for the first time an Army Reserve in the Kesra area, consisting at first of a reinforced Combat Command of two tank battalions from United States 1 Armoured Division. This to be reduced to one battalion as soon as the leading Combat Team of United States 34 Division (now coming up from the lines of communication) had taken over the Pichon area from French 19 Corps.

I warned General Koeltz to be ready at short notice to evacuate the Eastern Dorsale, as there

were signs that a German attack was pending in the Pichon-Faïd area.

Early on 14th February the enemy attacked strongly at Sidi Bou Zid and, after three days of heavy fighting during which it was most difficult to get a clear picture of the situation, broke through and captured Sbeitla on night 17th/18th February. During this period I released the Army Reserve to revert under orders of United States 2 Corps.

As a result of the loss of Sbeitla, United States 2 Corps fell back to the line Dernaia-Kasserine Gap-Sbiba, French 19 Corps conforming on the North and withdrawing from the Eastern Dorsale without loss. I sent up 1 Guards Brigade from 5 Corps to reinforce United States 34 Division at Sbiba.

After a short pause the enemy renewed his attacks. He was held at Sbiba but broke through the Kasserine Pass on 20th February and sent his armoured forces (15, 21 and parts of 10 Panzer Divisions were all identified) northwards towards Thala and westwards towards Tebessa. I ordered U.S. 2 Corps to move their only remaining reserve (Combat Command "B") to meet the westward threat, and at the same time despatched a composite force from 6 Armoured Division in the Kesra area, consisting of 26 Armoured Brigade Group, 2/5 Leicesters and some extra field and anti-aircraft artillery, all under Brigadier C. G. G. Nicholson, D.S.O., M.C., and known as "Nickforce," to Thala. This force was augmented on 21st February by two field artillery battalions of United States 9 Division and by 2 Hampshires. Combat Command "B" and "Nickforce" both were placed under orders of U.S. 2 Corps. During 21st/22nd February "Nickforce" only just managed to hold on, but the German attack was halted finally by 1400 hours 23rd February. It had been a close shave. I then ordered 1 Guards Brigade across from Sbiba to Thala, but by the time it arrived the enemy had begun to withdraw.

I think the enemy took advantage of his initial easy success and decided to exploit it by a raid to cut our lines of communication at Le Kef, where he could have done much damage. I do not believe he intended at the outset to do more than hit U.S. 2 Corps a severe blow, in order to gain time and space for Rommel, who was himself in command of this operation.

British and American units pressed the enemy and followed his withdrawal back through Kasserine slowly, owing to the huge quantity of mines.

This was the last enemy attack against U.S. 2 Corps in the south: henceforth he was on the defensive.

A decision to re-equip 6 Armoured Division was taken at the end of December, and the convoy arriving on 20th January brought two hundred and forty-one Shermans. Courses of instruction were organised and the first regiment was due to take over its new tanks on 15th February. Operations in the Kasserine Gap, however, retarded the programme, and it was not until 25th February that re-equipment started. The whole Armoured Brigade was re-equipped by 20th March, and after two weeks' training went into action for the first time with Sherman tanks in the Pichon-Kairouan area on 8th April. The Valentine tanks thus released were handed over to the French, who received them with much satisfaction.

18 Army Group shortly afterwards took over command of all forces in Tunisia, taking United States 2 Corps directly under their orders, and leaving me in command of the British and French corps. Once again the various nationalities had perforce become very badly mixed.

By the end of February, 5 Corps consisted of 78, 46 and 6 Armoured Divisions; Headquarters 9 Corps had come out, and 1 Division was beginning to arrive at the ports.

I had got the greater part of 6 Armoured Division at last into Army Reserve, but General Alexander ordered it, with 9 Corps Headquarters and the Corps Troops, into Army Group Reserve almost immediately, though events delayed the completion of this move as the infantry brigade of 6 Armoured Division could not be spared at once.

For on 26th February von Arnim started an attack against 5 Corps on a wide front at Goubellat, at Medjez, at Sidi Nsir and at Jefna.

At Medjez it was defeated with heavy loss within a few hours, although German infantry penetrated deep into our gun lines in places. Further south a strong party of infantry and tanks also penetrated several miles behind our front through the wide gap at Tally Ho Corner and was only smashed just north of El Aroussa by Churchill tanks, which arrived in the nick of time to save a divisional headquarters. Meanwhile 38 Infantry Brigade had heavily defeated an attack north of Bou Arada, and stood firm despite the threat far to their rear.

At Sidi Nsir an isolated detachment, of 5 Hampshires with 155/170 Field Battery, Royal Artillery, placed out as a delaying force, was overwhelmed by a heavy attack supported by tanks; but its very gallant fight gained a precious 24 hours, and enabled 46 Division to occupy the Hunt's Gap position, covering Béja, with 128 Infantry Brigade Group. The enemy abandoned his attack in the south, but continued to press strongly at Hunt's Gap, where heavy fighting in terrible weather continued for a week. 46 Division fought splendidly, but suffered very heavy losses in infantry. However, over 30 enemy tanks, including five "Tigers," were blown up by our sappers, many more were damaged, and heavy casualties were inflicted. By 3rd March the situation was in hand, though spasmodic fighting continued for several days.

Despite his first failure, the enemy on 2nd March renewed his attack near Jefna and gained a considerable local success, forcing 139 Brigade to fall back to Sedjenane. To strengthen the front there, I moved up the Parachute Brigade from the Robaa area, replacing them temporarily by the 26 Regimental Combat Team, United States 1 Infantry Division, which Army Group sent up to me.

Between 2nd and 24th March, the enemy persistently pressed his attacks in the northern sector, slowly driving 46 Division back to Cap Negro-Djebel Abiod line, and dominating the essential lateral road Djebel Abiod-Béja. It was not a happy period; things went wrong too often and we lost some most important ground. But this was the limit of his gains.

Meanwhile, owing to the final withdrawal of four French battalions from the Medjez area to rejoin French 19 Corps, the enemy had with little opposition been able to move forward and occupy all the high ground overlooking the Oued Zarga-Medjez road, including the villages

of Toukabeur and Chaouach. They thus completely dominated Medjez, which was left in a dangerous salient.

The rain fell unceasingly in the north throughout this period.

The German objectives were Medjez and Béja, both of which they failed to attain. During their attacks they lost 2,200 German prisoners between 26th February and 24th March. But they had put 5 Corps into a difficult position, which demanded early righting.

### THIRD PHASE.—THE OFFENSIVE PERIOD.

With the enemy at Djebel Abiod, on 18th March I ordered 5 Corps that there must be no further withdrawal whatever: that immediate preparations must be made to use 46 Division to drive back the enemy at least to Sedjenane-Cap Serrat in the north, and if possible to restore in its entirety our former position there, east of El Aouana: thereafter that the road Béja-Medjez and Medjez area itself must be completely freed from enemy domination by the recapture of the hilly country up to the Djebel el Ang and Heidous: and that plans were to be prepared at once for the capture of the high ground west of the Sebkrét el Koutzia north of Bou Arada. These were all essential preliminaries to the launching of a major assault towards Tunis and Bizerta. To help 5 Corps I placed 1 Parachute Brigade, the Corps Franc and one Tabor of French Goumiers under their orders.

The country in the region Djebel Abiod-Sedjenane-Cap Serrat is extremely difficult; mountains strewn with boulders and covered with a dense scrub up to eight feet high, limiting visibility often to a few feet and often requiring axes and knives to cut a path through country where tracks are few and bad.

The attack of 46 Division and attached troops under Major-General H. Freeman-Attwood was begun in the darkness early on 28th March, with heavy artillery support from the artillery of two divisions plus army resources. At the same time the rain began again with redoubled violence and continued almost without pause for a week. Despite this 36 Brigade, 138 Brigade, 1 Parachute Brigade, the Corps Franc and the Tabor all reached their first objectives, taking over 750 prisoners. By a double flanking movement directed towards the rear of the enemy positions Sedjenane was retaken on the 30th March; Cap Serrat, El Aouana and the hills to north and south on the 31st. Pack-mule transport had to be employed on a large scale. An advance of some eighteen miles was made in four days, with a total of over 850 prisoners, half German, half Italian.

The Germans had taken three weeks to capture the same area, and a captured order of the day, issued by Major-General Manteuffel after reaching Abiod, showed that he was highly pleased with that result.

46 Division had now been continuously in heavy fighting since 26th February, had suffered much, absorbed large replacement drafts while still in close contact with the enemy and had then made this successful and swift counter-attack.

As all objectives had been reached a halt was called, and 5 Corps at once began preparations for the attack to clear the Béja-Medjez road.

78 Division, under Major-General V. Eveleigh, undertook the task, again supported by heavy artillery concentrations throughout the whole operation.

This mountain land is a vast tract of country, every hill in which is large enough to swallow up a brigade of infantry, where consolidation on the rocky slopes is very difficult, in which tanks can only operate in small numbers, where movement of guns and vehicles is very restricted, and where the division had to rely on pack mules for its supplies and to carry wireless telegraphy sets, tools and mortars.

The general impression is one of wide spaciousness—a kind of Dartmoor or Central Sutherlandshire, but with deeper valleys and steeper hills.

In the early darkness of 7th April 78 Division started its attack north of Oued Zarga, gaining all objectives and taking over 400 prisoners, all German. For the next nine days, until 16th April, 78 Division methodically advanced on a front of about 10 miles to an ultimate depth of 10 miles, taking in turn each key position—the Mahdi, Hills 512, 667, Djebel el Ang, Tanngoucha and the mountain villages of Toukabeur, Chaouach and Heidous—with concentrated artillery fire and splendidly helped by the Royal Air Force with close support bombing. But it was chiefly an infantry battle, fought by units who had been in continuous contact with the enemy without a break since November, 1942. In all, during these nine days 1,080 German prisoners were captured in a series of extremely fierce hand to hand fights, including much night work:

The performance of the Churchill tanks of 25 Army Tank Brigade under Brigadier R. H. Maxwell was very good: mechanically they stood well up to very heavy strain, while the courage and initiative shown by the crews were admirable. Though the tactical handling in close co-operation with infantry was at times at fault.

I consider the 78 Division deserves high praise for as tough and prolonged a bit of fighting as has ever been undertaken by the British soldier.

In close conjunction with 78 Division, 4 Division pressed the enemy hard to the north of Hunt's Gap, and by 14th April had reached the hills just south-west of Sidi Nsir after much hard fighting and against many counter-attacks. This was the first appearance of 4 Division in action.

5 Corps had now secured positions which completely freed Medjez and enabled me to begin dumping and other preparations for a large-scale attack in that area, while in the north I had cleared the vital lateral road and had re-established my advanced troops in positions suitable as bases for a further advance, and in time to hand these positions over to United States 2 Corps, which now started arriving from the far south—being transferred from the Gafsa-Maknassy area by order of 18 Army Group.

On 18th April United States 2 Corps (under Lieutenant-General O. N. Bradley) relieved 4 and 46 Divisions of 5 Corps and assumed command of the area north of the line Oued Zarga - Djebel Lanserine - Tebourba, having under command United States 1 and 9 Infantry Divisions, with a few days later United States 34 Infantry Division and 1 Armoured Division.

On 20th April I moved Main First Army Headquarters to near Thibar.

Meanwhile, further south, 9 Corps (consisting of 6 Armoured Division, 34 U.S. Division, 128 Infantry Brigade Group from 46 Division and Corps Artillery, &c., under Lieutenant-General J. T. Crocker, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C.), had on 8th April started an attack under orders of 18 Army Group to break through the German flank defences at Pichon-Fondouk, capture Kairouan and strike the Axis forces retreating in front of Eighth Army.

I ordered French 19 Corps to aid this attack on the north by seizing the Djebel Ousselat and the ridge of the Eastern Dorsale. This they did with the greatest élan, taking several hundred prisoners. By 18th April the enemy had withdrawn northwards, and French 19 Corps was holding the line Karachoum-Djebel Edjehaf-west of Djebel Mansour, in touch with patrols of Eighth Army on the right. During this fighting General Welwert, commanding the French Constantine Division was killed.

#### THE FINAL OFFENSIVE, 22ND APRIL-13TH MAY.

On 12th April I was ordered by General Alexander to prepare a large-scale offensive to capture Tunis and also to co-operate with United States 2 Corps in the capture of Bizerta, the target date being 22nd April. For this attack 9 Corps was placed under my orders, together with 1 British Armoured Division from Eighth Army.

United States 2 Corps remained under 18 Army Group, but I was made responsible for co-ordinating its action in the attack with that of First Army, and for issuing all the necessary orders and instructions direct. Eighth Army was also to attack on 20th April at Enfidaville, in order to draw enemy forces off First Army.

Enemy resistance was still formidable and he held strong positions. These had to be overcome and his strength exhausted before a real break through could be effected.

Although I had a big total superiority in numbers and material, a limiting factor was the division of my army (including 2 U.S. Corps) into three national sectors; this naturally restricted the full freedom of movement of reserves which otherwise I would have enjoyed with a homogeneous army.

There are three entrances into the Tunis plain:—

In the south—the Bou Arada gap. This was blocked by the strongly held Pont du Fahs defile and the hills on the southern edge of the Bou Arada valley were in enemy hands.

In the centre—across the Goubellat plain. There is a belt of broken country from north-east of the Sebket el Kourzia to Ksar Tyr which blocks the eastern exits from the plain and is easily defended against tanks. But this area was weakly held by the enemy.

An essential preliminary to the use of either of the above passages is to capture the high ground west of the Sebket el Kourzia.

In the north—along the axis Medjez-Massicault. This is the most direct way and the best tank country. But it was protected by very strong enemy positions which barred the way and prevented deployment of large forces across the River Medjerda. I expected very heavy fighting here before I could break through.

None the less, I decided my plan as follows:—

5 Corps to make the main attack from Medjez and to break into the enemy's main defensive system between Peter's Corner and Longstop.

9 Corps to capture the high ground west of Sebket and then to push its armoured divisions across the Goubellat plain, in the hope that by speed of movement they might get through the hills to the east, swing north towards Massicault and in that area engage and destroy the enemy's armoured reserves and act against the rear of the defenders opposite 5 Corps. If the armour did not progress quickly north of the Sebket I was not prepared to press home this attack; but instead to keep the armour to break through on 5 Corps front, after the enemy there had been fought to exhaustion. 46 Division to revert, in any case, to Army Reserve after the initial attack.

United States 2 Corps to make its main effort eastwards, to seize the high ground east and west of Chougui and cover the left flank of 5 Corps. United States 2 Corps also to advance on Bizerta via the Sedjenane-Jefna and the Oued Sedjenane Valleys.

French 19 Corps to advance on the axis Robaa-Pont du Fahs. But this was not to start until I considered the attacks by 9 Corps (and by Eighth Army near Enfidaville) had softened the resistance opposite French 19 Corps.

My attack to be supported by 242 Group Royal Air Force, 12 Air Support Command and the Tactical Bomber Force, all working under Air Commodore K. B. Cross, D.S.O., D.F.C. Western Desert Air Force was also available by mutual arrangement.

The composition of the Army and United States 2 Corps is given in Appendix "A."

The attacks were timed to start as under:—

0400 hrs. 22nd April	... 9 Corps.
2000 hrs. 22nd April	... 5 Corps.
0400 hrs. 23rd April	... 2 U.S. Corps.

Not surprisingly, the enemy apparently was aware that trouble was brewing and on night 20th-21st April he launched a strong spoiling attack between Medjez and Goubellat and also against 9 Corps, using his Hermann Goering Division with tanks of 10 Panzer Division. He lost heavily, including 33 tanks destroyed by us and over 450 prisoners. That he did not succeed in seriously disorganising our final deployment for the big attack was a tribute to all units concerned, as naturally the confusion at one time was considerable when enemy tanks appeared in the dark amid our batteries, being deployed ahead even of our Forward Defended Localities. But the fighting against 46 Division on 9 Corps front did delay the launching of the attack there for four hours and created some confusion and fatigue amongst the troops of 138 Infantry Brigade forming up for the assault.

Without going into details of the very fierce fighting which developed all along the front from 22nd to 30th April, I can summarise the story as follows:—

9 Corps.

46 Division attack north of Bou Arada failed on the right, but on the left succeeded sufficiently to allow 6 Armoured Division to pass through by nightfall, 22nd April. During 23rd-24th April, 6 Armoured Division was followed by 1 Armoured Division, and both

moved eastwards, meeting opposition but destroying many enemy tanks. However, we were not quick enough, and a strong enemy anti-tank gun screen in the broken country north-east and north of the Sebket el Kourzia and near Djebel Kourmine prevented eventually all further advance, despite many attempts. The enemy withdrew from the Seba Argout position opposite the right of 46 Division. Seeing that no further progress was likely, on 26th April I ordered 9 Corps to stand fast and to return 6 Armoured Division and 46 Division (less one Infantry Brigade Group) to Army Reserve. This attack by 9 Corps only just failed to achieve its object. It did, however, inflict severe tank losses on the enemy, drew his armoured reserves to the south and (based on subsequent statements by captured senior officers) seriously frightened him. It also had the effect of leaving the enemy opposite 19 Corps in a pronounced salient, from which they hurriedly withdrew on 25th April. Our losses were not severe.

19 Corps.

The enemy withdrawal just forestalled an attack by 19 Corps, which therefore followed up rapidly, and by 28th April had again come up against stiff resistance and strong artillery fire on the general line Djebel Derhalfa-road Enfidaville to Pont du Fahs-Station de Thibica. An advance of 18 miles.

5 Corps.

In a series of grim hand-to-hand attacks and counter-attacks against the Hermann Goering, 334 and 15 Panzer Divisions, the British 1, 4 and 78 Divisions with Army tank support advanced between 22nd and 30th April to a depth of about six miles and captured most of the enemy's main defensive positions facing Medjez in a semi-circle from Peter's Corner to Longstop. Every attack was given very heavy and concentrated artillery support. Losses were heavy, especially in commanding officers, but by the end of April I felt the enemy was nearly ripe for the break through. Almost the fiercest fighting of all took place on 29th April. On 1st May, Hermann Goering Division asked for an armistice to bury its dead. This was refused.

For the break-through I had then in Army Reserve 6 Armoured Division and 46 Division (less one brigade group), while 5 Corps had still in hand one infantry brigade of 4 Division and the best part of an Army Tank Brigade. And at last I had room to deploy armoured forces east of the river Medjerda, over which two more bridges were built.

2 U.S. Corps.

As the result of constant pressure and proper use of the big numerical preponderance they enjoyed to outflank the enemy defences, 2 U.S. Corps by 2nd May had cleared the enemy from Hills 609 and 612 north and east of Sidi Nsir and from the strong Djebel Ajred and Azag positions: Goums and the Corps Franc had reached the hills north of Lake Garaet Achkel. The capture of Point 609 by United States 34 Division was a particularly fine piece of work, against fierce opposition from the formidable Barenthin Regiment.

On 3rd and 4th May the enemy withdrew all along the front under heavy pressure to the line of hills west of Bizerta-east of Mateur-east of Oued Tine valley. Mateur was occupied by United States 1 Armoured Division.

The very big movement of United States 2 Corps from Gafsa area to the north, right across the lines of supply of First Army, the provision of all the necessary American types of ammunition, supplies and rations, and the dumping of huge quantities of ammunition for the guns of 2, 5 and 9 Corps within such a short period were great feats which the Staffs concerned have every right to be proud.

Meanwhile, on 30th April, General Alexander told me that in view of the difficult country opposite Eighth Army he had decided to transfer formations across to strengthen First Army for the final blow.

My first task was still to capture Tunis; thereafter to exploit eastwards to prevent the enemy establishing himself in the Cap Bon area. Eighth Army to co-operate in this phase as best it could. 7 Armoured Division, 4 Indian Division, 201 Guards Brigade, with the necessary divisional and administrative troops, were to be transferred at once to my command, with Lieutenant-General B. G. Horrocks, M.C., from 10 Corps (to succeed Lieutenant-General J. T. Crocker, C.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., 9 Corps, who had been wounded).

This, of course, was a big reinforcement to the forces I already had in hand for my breakthrough.

The transfer and regrouping of formations began immediately, as did also the dumping of 450 rounds a gun for over 400 guns. Again an enormous task was accomplished by my Staff without a hitch, and by nightfall of 5th May all was completed and the Army regrouped ready for the assault. The composition of the various Corps is given in Appendix "B."

My orders in outline were as under:—

5 Corps to hold a firm base on their present line and, as a preliminary operation, to capture the dominating Djebel Bou Aoukaz on afternoon 5th May, so as to cover the left flank of 9 Corps in its subsequent attack.

9 Corps during night 5th-6th May to break into the enemy's position on a very narrow front with 4 British and 4 Indian Divisions. This to be followed up immediately by breaking out through the breach with 6 and 7 Armoured Divisions, with the object of seizing and holding the high ground 6 miles due west of Tunis and so breaching the inner defences of Tunis, before the enemy had time to man these defences.

5 Corps thereafter to keep open the corridor and to be ready to use one or more infantry divisions to sustain the attack of 9 Corps.

I emphasised that speed was vital.

United States 2 Corps to continue their attacks on Chouigui (and then to exploit towards Djedeida) and Bizerta.

French 19 Corps to attack on 4th May to capture the Djebel Zaghouan—a most formidable mountain massif.

1 British Armoured Division to be in Army Reserve in area Sebket el Kourzia.

In the hope of confusing the enemy, from whom I could scarcely hope to conceal the colossal traffic movement (reminiscent of Derby Day) and the dust around Medjez, I arranged for a large dummy concentration of tanks and transport (with the usual movement) to be installed near Bou Arada. While making no attempt to conceal 1 Armoured Division near the Sebket I hoped to make the enemy think I had moved 6 Armoured Division to the Bou

Arada area, and to conceal altogether the arrival of 7 Armoured Division west of Medjez.

Subsequent events proved that this stratagem had a considerable measure of success, as the enemy did not suspect the heavy concentration of armour at Medjez and kept his 21 Panzer Division near Zaghouan to cover the imagined threat to Pont du Fahs. Captured staff officers from German General Headquarters later stated that although they had, in fact, seen tanks in laager south-west of Medjez yet they thought they were only a portion of 1 Armoured Division, and they placed 6 Armoured Division at Bou Arada. Thus, thinking that I had split my armour, they were under no particular apprehension of an immediate attack. I rather stress this point, as it emphasises first, the ease with which one can deceive the air reconnaissance: second, perhaps it explains in some way the later complete surprise which otherwise is almost incomprehensible. But, of course, the primary reason for the enemy's failure to detect our concentration was our overwhelming air superiority which practically kept the enemy out of the air except for a few isolated sorties. In the same connection, it is interesting to recall that I had usually failed to find warning signs of German attacks against me throughout the campaign, despite most active air reconnaissance.

Of the final assault there is little to narrate.

5 Corps' attack on the Bou was successful and it was held against counter-attack.

The attack by 4 British and 4 Indian Divisions in the dark at 0330 hours on 6th May on a front of 3,000 yards went smoothly. Scorpions and four battalions of Churchill tanks came up at dawn on 6th May. The final objectives, to a depth of 5,000 yards, were all taken by 1100 hours with very small losses, under a terrific artillery concentration—deepened by an unprecedentedly intense air bombardment. In the later stages German infantrymen broke and ran, throwing away their rifles. The prolonged and heavy fighting from 22nd April had well prepared the way for this hammer blow.

The two armoured divisions passed through the gap at once and after 6 Armoured Division had engaged enemy tanks (including "Tigers") south of the Tunis road, Furna was cleared and by nightfall Massicault was in our hands, pockets of resistance being by-passed.

On 7th May, at 1540 hours, the Derbyshire Yeomanry and 11 Hussars entered Tunis. On 8th May 7 Armoured Division moved northwards of Tunis and cleared the country towards Protville, while 6 Armoured Division moved south-east towards Hammam Lif—where it met fierce resistance in the strong and narrow pass. On 10th May 6 Armoured Division had broken through, captured Soliman and that night reached Hammamet and at once pushed south towards Bou Fichta.

Meanwhile I had moved up 4 British Division and placed it once more under orders of 9 Corps. This Division was moved rapidly up to Soliman and, in a lightning sweep, cleared the Cap Bon peninsula.

At the same time I also placed 1 British Armoured Division from Army Reserve under 9 Corps, ordering it to move northwards via Ain el Asker and Mohammedia. On 9th and 10th May it advanced via Creteville on Grombalia.

I also ordered 5 Corps to move eastwards with 4 Indian Division and 1 Division, and, in co-operation with the left wing of French 19 Corps, to complete the encirclement of the enemy.

The final attack of 6 Armoured Division was made southwards from Bou Fichta covered by heavy artillery fire and an air bombardment by Western Desert Air Force on 12th May, while 56 Division of Eighth Army shelled the trapped enemy from the south. The fire plan was mutually arranged by wireless. After the bombardment a sea of white flags marked the end of all organised resistance.

In all cases the pursuit was pressed ruthlessly and without pause by night or day by 6 Armoured Division and 4 British Division.

On the American front events moved with equal swiftness, Ferryville and Bizerta being entered on afternoon 7th May by United States 1 Armoured Division and at 1100 hours on 9th May the Commander United States 2 Corps accepted the unconditional surrender of his opponents.

French 19 Corps attacked on 6th May and entered Pont du Fahs on the 7th. During the 8th-11th, after an initial withdrawal, the enemy, on the whole, stood firm in the mountains and any attempt by the French to advance was very heavily shelled. But on the 11th, after a successful attack with tanks and infantry, German officers came in under a white flag and on the 12th resistance ceased, with many thousands of prisoners coming in. It must have been a moment of peculiar satisfaction for the French 19 Corps.

The scenes in the Cap Bon peninsula area and to the south-west during the last three days were amazing. The rout of the German army was complete; prisoners swamped their captors and drove in their own transport looking for the cages. Thousands surrendered without attempting to resist further, while others fired their remaining stocks of ammunition at any target before giving themselves up.

On 12th May Colonel-General J. von Arnim, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Army Group Afrika, surrendered with his staff to 4 Indian Division and was brought to me at Headquarters First Army.

The disaster was complete.

The total of prisoners eventually reached over a quarter of a million, if the 4,000 odd captured since 1st March are included; of these over half were Germans.

The booty was immense.

Dunkirk was amply revenged.

It was an amazing finish to a fascinating and unique campaign, which highly tested the qualities of the British soldier and proved him still to be as tough, resolute and good humoured as ever before in our long history.

In the later stages the co-operation between Army and Air Forces was excellent and frictionless, despite the difficulties always inherent in operations conducted with forces of different nations.

In the final phase the weight of air support played a very great part in ensuring the overwhelming victory; Army and Air Forces worked as one.

And no man in First Army ever forgot that we owed our daily life and being to the vigilance of the Royal Navy.

Right throughout the campaign we were all of us, in varying degree, thrown into intimate

touch with the armies of our American and French allies, usually under conditions of stress and danger demanding instant decision and the closest collaboration. I say without hesitation that the mutual goodwill, tolerance, understanding, and above all the confidence which each of us had in the other was quite remarkable. Not only senior officers but also all ranks of our three armies soon realised that despite differences of language, customs and processes of thought the other fellow was also giving his best without reservation and that he was to be trusted. Even between British and French the initial and very understandable doubts very soon disappeared in mutual open respect and admiration.

Herein lies much hope for the future.

It has been for me an exhilarating experience.

I count myself indeed fortunate to have had under my orders such loyal and gallant men as General Koeltz and his soldiers of the French 19 Corps: while always my relations with United States commanders and men have been entirely frank, cordial and understanding. I owe much to General Eisenhower for his valient wisdom and encouragement, and to those of his commanders who served under me or with me with such loyal friendship.

The total British losses of First Army throughout the whole campaign amounted to:—

	<i>Killed.</i>	<i>Wounded.</i>	<i>Missing.</i>	<i>Total.</i>
Officers...	382	833	307	1,522
Other				
Ranks ...	4,061	11,792	6,235	22,088
	<u>4,443</u>	<u>12,625</u>	<u>6,542</u>	<u>23,610</u>

Of the above, 13,240 occurred during the period 1st April to end of hostilities.

A feature of the campaign has been the highly successful results achieved by early forward surgery. Throughout, the work of the Medical Services, in the care and treatment of wounded and sick and in the prevention of disease, is deserving of the highest praise.

When all have done so much, it is perhaps invidious to select particular services for mention, but I must pay tribute to all ranks of the Royal Army Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, who, despite every difficulty of climate, terrain and enemy action, understaffed and overworked, nevertheless never failed to deliver the goods.

#### APPENDIX "A."

##### OUTLINE ORDER OF BATTLE ON 20TH APRIL, 1943, OF FIRST ARMY AND 2 UNITED STATES CORPS.

##### 5 Corps—

1 (British) Infantry Division.

4 (British) Division.

78 Infantry Division.

25 Tank Brigade (less 51 Royal Tank Regiment).

##### 9 Corps—

1 (British) Armoured Division.

6 Armoured Division.

46 Infantry Division.

51 Royal Tank Regiment.

##### French 19 Corps—

Division d'Alger (Conne).

Division du Maroc (Mathenet).

Division d'Oran (Boisseau).

Tank Group (Le Coulteux).

1 Kings Dragoon Guards.

## United States 2 Corps—

- 1 United States Armoured Division (less one Armoured Regiment).
- 1 United States Infantry Division.
- 9 United States Infantry Division.
- 34 United States Infantry Division.
- Corps Franc d'Afrique (three battalions).
- One Tabor.

## APPENDIX " B. "

OUTLINE ORDER OF BATTLE ON 4TH MAY, 1943,  
OF FIRST ARMY AND 2 UNITED STATES CORPS.

## 5 Corps—

- 1 (British) Infantry Division.
- 46 Infantry Division (less 139 Infantry Brigade Group).
- 78 Infantry Division.
- 1 North Irish Horse.
- 1 Army Group Royal Artillery.
- 7 Régiment Tirailleurs Algériens (less one battalion).

## 9 Corps—

- 6 Armoured Division.
- 7 Armoured Division.
- 4 (British) Division.
- 4 (Indian) Division.
- 25 Tank Brigade (less two battalions).
- 201 Guards Brigade.
- 2 Army Group Royal Artillery.

## French 19 Corps—

- Division du Maroc.
- Division d'Alger.
- Division d'Oran.
- One Tank Battalion.

## Army Reserve—

- 1 British Armoured Division.
- 139 Infantry Brigade Group.
- 1 Kings Dragoon Guards.
- 51 Royal Tank Regiment.

## United States 2 Corps—

- 1 United States Armoured Division (less one Armoured Regiment).
- 1 United States Infantry Division.
- 9 United States Infantry Division.
- 34 United States Infantry Division.
- 13 United States Field Artillery Brigade.
- 2626 United States Coast Artillery Brigade (A.A.).
- Corps Franc d'Afrique.
- One Tabor.

## APPENDIX " C. "

## BUILD-UP OF AXIS FORCES.

When the Allied forces landed in Algeria, there were no Axis troops in French North Africa; in Tripolitania there was one Italian division (Spezia) and a substantial number of L of C troops. The German and Italian Armistice Commissions, however, were spread throughout French North Africa, and maintained a considerable measure of control over economic affairs and were very ready to interfere in other matters. The immediate reaction to our landing was the formation of a mainly German force to secure Tunis and Bizerta. This force was formed of units most readily available at that moment, and its impromptu formation is clearly shown in its composition. It began to arrive on the 10th November, personnel and light equipment being brought by air and heavy equipment by sea. The landing of this force was not opposed by the French, who were subsequently disarmed and their coastal and A.A. batteries taken over. Having seized the ports, and the important aerodromes

of El Aouina (Tunis) and Sidi Ahmed (Bizerta), this force moved out with the intention of securing the high and mountainous country on the Tunisian-Algerian frontier and preventing the Allies debouching into the Tunisian plains. It made contact with Allied forces to whom a proportion of the French troops in Tunisia had rallied, on the general line Djebel Abiod-Béja-Medjez on the 26th November, 1942. By this date the Axis forces in Tunisia consisted of the following units:—

*German—*

- Storm Regiment Koch (Air Force troops).
- Barenthin Regiment (Air Force troops).
- Marsch Battalions 17, 18, 20 and 21.
- Parachute Engineer Battalion Witzig.
- 190 Tank Battalion (69 tanks).
- Advance elements of 10 Armoured Division.
- Miscellaneous Artillery and Anti-tank units.

*Italian—*

- 10 Bersaglieri Regiment.
- Elements of Superga Division, including four infantry battalions.

Some of these units had been intended for Rommel's army; 190 Tank Battalion, for example, had been formed for 90 Light Division; one company of Witzig's Battalion had already joined the Ramcke Brigade, and the Marsch Battalions had been destined to be reinforcement drafts but were in fact sent to Tunisia and put into the line, where they fought as infantry battalions. Regiment Koch of the German Air Force was brought from France by air for which move it was readily available and trained, having been formed originally as 5 Parachute Regiment.

Barenthin Regiment was also formed of Air Force personnel, being chiefly composed of the staff and pupils of the Parachute School at Wistock and the Glider School at Posen.

Thus by the end of November, 1942, the Axis forces which had arrived in Tunisia, exclusive of Services, amounted to approximately 15,500 fighting troops, 130 tanks, 60 field guns and 30 anti-tank guns.

During the first half of December, the remainder of 10 Armoured Division and the Italian Superga Division were brought over, but in transit each division lost a substantial proportion of its heavy equipment transported by sea. As a result, 10 Armoured Division never could muster its full establishment of tanks, and both divisions were short of artillery. In addition to these two formations, further German Marsch battalions were brought over at regular intervals, some of which continued to be employed as independent infantry battalions, and were not broken up as reinforcements. These independent battalions were used either to bring up the original impromptu force to the strength of a division, which was originally called Division Broich and latterly Division Manteuffel after its commanders, or were used to reinforce the Italian Superga Division which had been stationed on the enemy's left flank in mountainous country south of Zaghouan. In addition, the Bafle and Grado Battalions of the Italian San Marco Marine Regiment and a Bersaglieri Battalion were also brought over. The most significant arrival at this time was 501 Heavy Tank Battalion with 43 tanks, of which 20 were the new Mark VII, which first went into action against the French 19 Corps on the 18th January, 1943.

In the second half of December, 1942, the German 334 Infantry Division began to make its appearance. This was a newly created formation of rather low quality. The division remained in northern Tunisia, and was completed by the arrival of its artillery in the second week in January.

On the 1st January, 1943, the estimated total of Axis troops in Tunisia, excluding air crews and ground staffs, was 55,900. The enemy tank strength was about 160 German tanks with in addition some Italian Medium and Light tanks, and by mid-January there were 14 12-gun batteries of artillery.

Enemy losses at sea in transports and cargo ships were very heavy, and it is reported that Hitler himself gave orders that personnel should travel only by destroyer or by air. The daily intake of reinforcements varied greatly, as the regular service of transport aeroplanes carried supplies as well as troops; at this period the daily average was between 700 and 1,000 men, some of whom were destined for Rommel's army.

In the last week of January, the Hermann Goering Flak Regiment—the original Hermann Goering unit—sent two of its batteries, the third remaining in Germany in its usual role as bodyguard to the Reichsmarschall. This proved to be the forerunner of the Hermann Goering Armoured Division which was built up in Tunisia on a most lavish establishment, though it was never completed to strength. It absorbed Parachute Regiment Koch which became Jaeger Regiment Hermann Goering and two Grenadier Regiments were formed in Germany and commenced to make their appearance in Tunisia in February.

Elements only of the Tank Reconnaissance, Artillery and Engineer units reached Tunisia by the end of the campaign, and a battalion of 2 Hermann Goering Grenadier Regiment arrived as late as the 24th April: but the Division was never completed.

On the 1st February the estimated total of troops had risen to 84,000, of whom 55,000 were Germans and 29,000 Italians. The tank state was about 380—280 German and 100 Italian, 21 Armoured Division having moved west into Tunisia with approximately 80 tanks; and there were 26 to 28 12-gun batteries.

During February Rommel's army had withdrawn to the Mareth area and became a potential—and later an actual—opponent of First Army. The German troops consisted of 15 Armoured Division, 90 and 164 Light Divisions, Panzer Grenadier Regiment Afrika, and the remnants of the Ramcke Brigade, with four reconnaissance units, six mobile batteries

of 88-mm. guns, and many supply and L. of C. troops.

The Italians were composed of Spezia, Pistoia and the Young Fascists Divisions, part of Centauro Division, and the remnants of Italian divisions from El Alamein grouped under Trieste Division, together with a considerable amount of corps and garrison artillery, and a large and miscellaneous collection of Carabinieri, Frontier Guards and L. of C. troops. The figure for the estimated total of enemy strength in Tunisia on the 1st March therefore includes this large addition from Tripolitania and is increased to 190,500, including 116,500 Germans and 74,000 Italians.

Only one more formation was sent to Africa. This was 999 Division, which began to arrive at the end of March. It consisted only of 961 and 962 Infantry Regiments each of two battalions with artillery support. Its morale was low, the rank and file being partly drawn from personnel serving sentences for political or military offences.

The flow of Marsch Battalions continued, the highest known number being 57, though some of the intervening numbers were never identified; but these battalions and all other reinforcements were absorbed into units already in the country. After reaching Mareth the original German Libyan Army began at last to receive its share, and it was a large one. After the New Year the intake of men apart from those belonging to the Hermann Goering and 999 Divisions, was in fact, mainly devoted to the replacement of battle casualties and the building up of the depleted formations from Libya.

The estimated enemy strength on the 1st April was 196,700—124,300 Germans and 72,400 Italians.

During the later stages of the campaign, efforts were made to raise volunteer battalions locally. Their fighting value was low, as the volunteer element was noticeably lacking, and many men with Allied sympathies only joined because of the opportunity thus offered of crossing to our lines. One such native Algerian unit was formed, and two Tunisian Italian Battalions, as well as the Phalange Française, a French unit into which only 150 men could be attracted.

Enemy reinforcements continued to arrive until the last week in April. The final estimate on the 1st May, 1943, showed 48,700 Axis infantry, 120 infantry guns, 402 field guns, 180 88 mm. guns and 443 anti-tank guns, with about 100 tank runners. The total strength, excluding the air component, was approximately 220,000.

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