

Thursday, 29 June 44.

Had meeting of officers and assigned as follows:

Col. MacNicol and Col. Hofner survey Arsenal Area.  
Major VonRoeder and Swab survey basins.  
Captains McCleary and Hess study road nets.  
Lt. Emmett at office.  
At the Arsenal Col. Hofner report.  
Sent detail from Adv Sec back except Hess.  
General Burpee, Col. Caldwell and Col. Beeler Called.  
Papers on ships arrived. Sgt Hayes arranging.

#### SEAPLANE BASE

Garages south of hangers for towmotors, tractors, trailers, etc., including stevedoring gear. Concrete landing field to be used as parking space for tractors and other heavy equipment until debris is cleaned. Seaplane ramp to be used after survey for LST landing. Partly demolished hanger (North) to be removed to make a coaster berth at De l'Onklet.

#### PORT DE L'ONGLET

Upon removal of hanger one coaster can be berthed and one barge on opposite (North wall) after survey of bottom and debris removed.

#### BASSIN DES SUBSISTANCES

Large subsistence warehouse to QM Quay alongside has a number of sunken craft including floating crane. The quay can be then used for barging to warehouse. Transit cargo cannot be worked. Possible one coaster berth on east wall. Some harbor craft can be berthed in this basin. Two tracks along Quai Bastion X. No block across entrance.

#### NAVAL ARSENAL AVANT PORT

Entrance blocked by submarine lifting pontoon. No other sunken craft visible in basin. Possibilities of berths:

- 2 Liberty berths along west wall
- 2 coaster berths along north wall.

This will require removal of debris, buildings and raid shelters to permit flow of traffic. Rail can be laid.

#### BASSIN NAPOLEON III

Entrance blocked by demolished railroad bridge and sunken ship. One bridge remaining must be tested for lift.

Berth possibilities:

- 2 Liberties along Quai Duperré (East)
- 1 Coaster on Quai Suffren (South)

Balance of dock space broken with drydocks, pens, etc.

#### BASSIN CHARLES X

Entrance blocked by sunken ship and bridge destroyed. On East wall Quai Duperré - 1 Liberty also 1 Liberty East wall Quai des Mouvements.

- 2 Liberties on Quai De l'Artillerie (West Wall)
- 1 Coaster Quai Vanbani (North)
- 1 Coaster Quai Fourville
- 1 Coaster Quai Jean Bart (South Wall)
- 1 Coaster Quai Chabrol " "

Considerable debris to be removed and small sunken craft.

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Sunday, 9 July 44

First contingent 485th Port Battalion arrived and were sent to St. Vaast to operate.

1st Truck Company for Port operations arrived.

The first contingent of the 485th Port Battalion arrived and was billeted at nearby Port Headquarters as previously planned. This unit was debarked from one of 12 Liberty ships loaded at Birkenhead and ultimate discharge upon the opening of this Port. The 12 ships scheduled for this Port were ordered to Utah Beach where the vehicles were discharged. This discharge was interrupted due to priorities. Some of the personnel were put ashore and some remained on board the ships.

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10 July 44

Conference with Admiral Wilkes, Commodore Sullivan, Captain Ives, and General Plank, Colonel Sibley and Colonel MacNicol with reference to anchoring liberty ships inside outer break-water.

1. The Admiral stated that three liberty ships could be anchored in present cleared anchorages. All cargo must be worked by dukws over Querquerville ramp.

2. Superintendent of Water Division instructed Contact Engineers to clear ramp and to survey ramp and nearby airport for the use of dukws and construction transfer point.

3. General Plank requested Colonel Sibley report type of ships that could be best worked in anchorages. Colonel Sibley accompanied by Colonel MacNicol proceeded to ASCZ Headquarters. Consult with Transportation Section with reference to type of ships. It was decided type loaded Liberty from Ex-US were best suited if the vehicles were removed prior to arrival.

4. It was estimated that working six dukws per hatch we could move approximately 250 ton per ship per day. This would require two Dukw Companies for three vessels. A survey of the Querquerville (2100 hrs) break-water was made by Colonel Sibley, Colonel MacNicol and Colonel Hofner for the possibility of using barges. It was estimated that three barges could be worked near the base of break-water if the bottom was cleared to permit barges to ground out. The decision as to bringing in the vessels will be made by General Plank, Admiral Wilkes and the Port Commander.

Transportation Section, ASCZ, ordered us to send any port battalion labor here to St. Vaast where two of our ships were being discharged. The 111 men of the 225 Port Company were dispatched at 6 AM to St. Vaast and a detail from the Port sent to identify any cargo belonging to us. We were also requested to make up an operational plan illustrated by graphs for ASCZ and a similar plan for the Port Commander.

Tuesday, 11 July 44

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The day was mostly occupied by visiting firemen who asked the same questions that everyone else has asked, from Balisted Men to Major General. When will the Port be ready?

The party today comprised of Major General Crawford, G4, SHABF, and staff of four officers. He was shown the entire dock area and brought to the Querqueville breakwater so that he could visit Admiral Wilkes on board the Admiral's flagship. Upon returning to the office there was a conference between Major General Ross, General Flank, General Burpee, General Stratton, Colonel Merrill and several others regarding the Port reconstruction program. This conference broke up after 10 PM, we being ordered to submit transportation plan within two weeks to move 20,000 tons per day.

On this date the statistical section was placed into operation making out daily situation reports and graphical sheets covering all phases of operation called for in these reports. In addition the Transportation Section was instructed as to passenger procedure and to make a survey of all possible passenger landing places. A survey was made by the Rail Section as to possible freight platforms for truck discharge.

At the big conference the following estimates were computed by General Ross:

Terreplein barges 5600 ton  
Liberty Berth 8000 ton  
Avant Port and Basin bargen 2000 ton  
Basin Subsistence 1000 ton  
Beach Docks 2000 ton  
Others 1400 ton

There was considerable discussion regarding the rail lines, sidings, and marshalling areas. In order to move the cargo out promptly it was decided to bring rail into beach. A letter was received from Captain Ivers, U. S. Navy, O.I.C. Captured Ports that mooring for Liberty ships were nearby and that in the outer basin there was possibly 13 berths over 24 feet and 7 under 24 with a number of lighter draft berths available. This makes a total of 29 Liberty berths adding 13 possible places to dock.

The first unit to arrive by water this Port was six Jay Boats under command of Ensign John Baker Saunders and Ensign Howard O. Walker and 38 seamen. Arrived at 0600 hours 11 July. They reported to Headquarters and on instructions from CWS Officer, ASCZ, they reported to Port Chemical Officer. The boats were anchored inside near the base of Querqueville breakwater. Boat numbers are: J-1310, J-1228, J-1223, J-1220, J-1174, and J-1175.

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Sunday, 16 July 1944.

MT's 295, 297, 298 and 303 arrived in the Grande Rade. Barges BCL 2931 and DPC both loaded with engineering equipment also arrived. Later in the day 30 small wooden barges entered the Port and were immediately placed alongside above mentioned Liberty ships. Discharging commenced at once. The barges were brought into the Basin A Flet for discharge the next day. The one Company of DUKWS was immediately placed into operation. The 60 Ton Crane was placed at the entrance of the Arsenal for Navy salvage work. One 30 Ton Crane was placed in the Bassin Des Subsistances and the other alongside other sunken vessels at the entrance of the Aven Port Du Commerce.

Monday, 17 July 1944.

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The MT's 299, 300, 301 and 302 arrived and commenced discharging immediately.

The 30 small barges are totally inadequate for discharging eight vessels. One Company of DUKWs is insufficient, however as there was little DUKW cargo on any of the eight vessels no great loss of cargo was experienced. The DUKW Transfer Point worked very and the barges were discharged promptly from the Bassin A Flet.

A contract was made with two local stevedores to furnish French labor. Approximately 300 French labor were hired and worked very well.

We have been experiencing the arrival of a great many unidentified vessels, that is, vessels that were not supposed to enter this Port. There are a great many Naval craft of various types anchored in the outer basin and we are experiencing difficulty obtaining prompt and accurate information from the Navy. Obviously they are not prepared for such an operation. We have cooperated with them closely and finally were forced to make a personal check on the vessels. Definite information as to the cleared areas has been requested and it was not furnished in detail. So far we have had no trouble but would prefer as requested to have a Navy patrol boat along the cleared routes to keep DUKWs and small craft from drifting away.

We serviced our cranes using our own personnel from the service section and placed them in operation at the Bassin A Flet picking crane drivers from the Port Battalions. Very few of them have had much experience, the result of which was that one crane toppled into the Bassin and the others worked slow.

On this date 1455 tons were discharged and dispatched including 105 vehicles.

Tuesday, 18 July 1944.

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This date 1500 tons were discharged. As practically all the barges were loaded at shipside in the beginning, there was no reserve to place along side while these barges were being discharged. One of the Engineer barges was discharged and immediately sent out to a ship.

The DUKWs continued to work and increased their tonnage considerably, however there is little straight DUKW work.

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Wednesday, 19 July 1944.

Again a number of ships, both coasters and Liberty ships entered the Port and were ordered out. Obviously there is some error in the Naval control. The NY-680 was one of these vessels. When we contacted ASCZ they advised us that it was due here with high priority.

Additional Harbor Craft arrived in a convoy from England. They ran into fog and were separated.



Thursday, 20 July 1944.

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NY-665 of the same class as NY-680 also arrived for priority discharge. With the assistance of the extra barges more cargo was moved.

Some of the smaller craft that left England turned back and others were lost, two being sunk by enemy fire near Guernsey. They came in during the day as they were picked up by Naval craft.

First Phase, Rehabilitation of the Port of Palermo, July 22 - Aug. 3

I. Introduction - General Supply Problem:

Original plans for the invasion of Sicily had included proposed landings in the west, with almost immediate use of Palermo (and other smaller harbors) in the northwest, for the docking and unloading of large cargo vessels. Final arrangements called for initial landings on the southern beaches in an area with no important ports, and for continued beachhead maintenance to last over a period of approximately thirty days.

Palermo was not finally occupied until twelve days <sup>the invasion began.</sup> afterward. Then, units of the Provisional Corps entered without opposition from the landward side. Five days later, on July 27, large-scale landing of supplies had begun there, but the principal of beachhead operation continued to be carried out <sup>in support of</sup> along the northern coast of Sicily <sup>to</sup> at points east of Palermo, supplementing <sup>the</sup> overland <sup>movement of</sup> rail and roadway supply from the port. In many cases, LCTs dispatched to Palermo picked up men from port battalions there, and moved forward to be unloaded at Termini Imerese and other <sup>supply</sup> points east.

Operation of the Port of Palermo breaks down roughly into three <sup>phases.</sup> periods. First, the crucial ~~and~~ period between July 24 and August 3, when the 20th Engineer Combat Regiment and the 540 Engineer Shore Regiment worked frantically to clear up the wreckage of piers and harbor facilities created by earlier American bombing. <sup>and to clear supply routes through the town.</sup> There was little demolition on the part of the enemy, and as a matter of fact, the port had been little used ~~by~~ ~~the enemy~~ since sometime before the end of the North African

campaign.

In the second phase of operation of the port, the 10th Port of Embarkation took over, on August 1, and the main axis of supply for the Seventh Army was shifted over in the next few days from the beachheads of southern Sicily to Palermo, with the mission of immediately supplying troops in the area ~~and~~ in the west of the island, of moving supplies up for immediate use of II Corps advancing along the northern coast, ~~to advance supply points~~, and third, of gradually taking over all supply in the south with the exception of Army Air Force supply, which was still to be brought in by way of Licata in the south.

The third phase of operations, bringing about a shift of control from combat supply to base supply, came on August 31, when the 6625th Base Area Group was inactivated and reconstituted as the Island Base Section, Headquarters Palermo. The fall of Messina on August 17 had brought the invasion to a close with the final defeat of enemy forces, and an administrative order of August 23 immediately named Palermo as the base for the development of a reserve base for all surplus stocks, etc.

As early as August 3, the Navy had already begun to ask for the return of LCTs and LSTs, for repair and overhaul before being used in "future scheduled operations". Coordination of Army-Navy in the area was undoubtedly simplified by the fact that this was not a jointly occupied British-American base, that supply was for Seventh Army units only. In the next few weeks, the Palermo area was developed into one of the four major base supply headquarters of the Mediterranean theater of operations.

## II. First Supply Phase, Palermo, July 22 - August 3.

On the same day that 45th Division troops occupied Palermo, G-4 7th Army began the task of organizing the area, planning for port troops to operate the landing of supplies, the servicing of the Provisional Corps (45th Division, 2nd Armored Division, 82nd Airborne) which ~~was~~ was to complete taking over western Sicily, while at the same time protecting Palermo and the rear of the ~~II~~ II Corps operations area. ~~At~~ ~~the same time,~~ <sup>meanwhile</sup> Tactical supplies had to be rushed through to II Corps.

Roughly, in the same order of importance, supplies to II Corps had to be forwarded from the port as quickly as possible, materials for operation of the harbor facilities had to be brought in, and <sup>rescue</sup> general supplies already on the way (originally directed to Syracuse) were to be unloaded in the port and warehoused in the area to the east of the city.

On July 24, the 20 Engineer Combat Regiment began repair of the ravaged harbor area. Bomb craters had to be <sup>filled in</sup> ~~cleared away~~ debris cleared from the main supply routes, and, in the harbor, berths prepared for the landing of LCTs, LSTs, and coasters, with special ramps cut out for the use of DUKWs. Steps were cut in the solid masonry of the harbor piers to accommodate ramps of LSTs, and in the next few days ramps were constructed over the sunken vessels in the harbor, in many cases with their superstructures removed, to provide additional berthing space.<sup>1</sup>

The 540 Engineer Shore Regiment arrived on July 24, and

their exact role in rehabilitation work is not clear, as G-4 stated on July 30 that "The Commanding Officer, 540 Engineer Regiment, has been placed in charge of all unloading until the 10th Port of Embarkation is established in two or three days."; while the 7th Army Engineer's report remarks only in passing that the 540th ~~Engineer~~ Engineer Regiment (shore) "did some work

*in the area confined mainly to cutting ramps for LSTs". The fact would be indicated that this regiment filled in in the absence of port battalion troops.*

Officers and enlisted men of port organizations originally scheduled for use in a joint British-American use of the port of Siracusa, were sent instead to Palermo ~~for the purpose~~ to set up 7th Army supply points: a Port detachment, railhead company, gas supply company, QM Service Battalion, QM Depot Supply Company, Ordnance Ammunition Company (with certain other Ordnance units), a platoon of an Engineer Depot, detachment from Signal Service Port Battalion, and a detachment from a CWS Depot.

The 540th Engineer Regiment (less 1 Battalion) with Signal Section and other special units, was "available to clean up docks and unload any ships" on July 24. The 462nd Engineer Depot Company, arriving from Licata, opened a depot on an excellent site with rail sidings, 20 acres of open storage space, 75,000 square feet of brand new, camouflaged warehouse space, and additional motor vehicle sheds to accommodate the 469th Engineer Maintenance Company.<sup>1</sup>

After preliminary reconnaissance on July 24, the Army Engineer Section moved the following day into the area. In the following weeks, six railroad bridges were reconstructed, minefields cleared, enemy mine stocks destroyed, and miscellaneous construction accomplished in and around the city. The standard gauge railroad between Palermo and Messina was already in good condition as 1.7th Army Engineer Report, V, E "Operational Base Depot"

*to unloading operations*

far as Termini Imerese, with a considerable amount of rolling stock available.

A report to 7th Army from Provisional Corps on July 24 gave the facilities of the Port of Palermo as "Main port will accommodate six Liberty ships moored and worked from barges or ducks. With naval salvage and engineer shore work, six Liberties could be berthed at piers and ten others moored in the harbor." The same wire stated that thirty barges and two tugs, presumably salvaged, were available for work in the harbor.

on July 25

G-4 set up/a complete general plan for operation and evacuation of the 7th Army based on shifting the main axis of supply from the ports and beachheads of southern Sicily to Palermo. From the port, troops in the east were to be supplied by motor, rail, and by water (making maximum use of available small craft), in the west by motor and rail, in the south from existing depot stocks in that area, and by rail and motor out of Palermo. S&S.O.S. Palermo <sup>would</sup> ~~was to~~ be under direct supervision of HQ 7th Army, in coordination with the Commanding Officer, 1st Engineer Special Brigade (in charge of beachhead supply in the south). For the eventual transference of ~~the~~ Palermo <sup>operations</sup> ~~area~~ to a Base Area Group, personnel from Base Group 7th Army were to be attached to the 1st Engineer Special Brigade and to Headquarters 7th Army, taking over all base supply activities in the area. Advance supply points were to be established - for the west at Calatafini-Salemi, for north and east, at Palermo, and to the east in the direction of Enna ~~Cattani~~ Cattanisetta. Immediately, all services were to begin to keep daily inventory of all supplies in the area, with a reserve of one day to three days consumption.