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STOCKPILING SUPPLIES
FOR SARDINIA AND SICILY (MAY AND JUNE 1943).

[1] After the first days of April it became evident to the German command that the loss of Africa had to be expected in the not too distant future. Consequential to this loss the possibility of an allied landing in southern France, Sardinia, Sicily or southern Italy had to be taken into account. In addition, a considerable increase in air attacks on the Italian railroad centers and harbors had to be expected.

In line with these considerations the German supreme command, among other measures, ordered that sufficient supplies for a three month period be stockpiled in Sicily and Sardinia. Considerable difficulties were experienced in the implementation of this order, nevertheless, the task was completed by the beginning of July.

I. Railroad Situation

During April and May the Allies intensified their air attacks to also cover Italian railroad lines in northern Italy. This resulted in considerable delays and bottlenecks extending as far as the Brenner Pass. Due to the fact that appropriate precautionary measures had been taken in advance by the German command it was possible to route supply trains to Sicily by displacing Italian civilian traffic.

The railroad ferry of MESSINA remained in operation. Although it was subjected to numerous attacks, it continued to ferry four hundred railroad

cars per day across the Straits. Enemy dive-bomber attacks on locomotives in Sicily had an extremely unpleasant effect. In this respect the German command did not succeed in procuring full replacements for damaged locomotives.

[2] Further disruptions in traffic were caused by surfaced submarines, occasionally firing on trains which were travelling the line along the coast of Sicily.

In order to compensate for a possible breakdown of the MESSINA railroad ferry, approximately eight ferrying points were set up in the Straits of Messina. Traffic was continued with use of Siebel ferries, naval barges, fishing boats, and ferrying equipment of the engineer assault battalion. In the course of subsequent months these assault engineers proved their great value by continuing ferrying operations under severely heavy enemy air attacks. Barrage balloons and reinforced anti-aircraft artillery, protected the ferrying points against high- and low-flying aircraft.

During June enemy air attacks increased in number and intensity. The railroad station at NAPLES suffered particularly heavy damage. By detouring rail traffic through FOGGIA and CANCELLO it was still possible to move the required trains to their destination since the railroad stations at SALERNO and BATTIPAGLIA were only rarely attacked during June and July. During these months damage caused by enemy action was repaired through employment of Italian railroad- and construction units. Only in August did the destruction reach such proportions that it impaired operations. Damage could be repaired only with the greatest difficulties.

Rail traffic on Sardinia could be fully maintained until well into August. When /^{ever} necessary freight cars were ferried there by naval barges.

II. Shipping Situation

[3] With an increase in the sinking of ships, supplies for Sicily had to be transported almost exclusively by railroad. Small craft became available only after the loss of Africa. A number of canal boats were also used in June.

Ships, not suitable for employment in Africa were used to carry supplies to Sardinia. In this operation canal boats were also employed. Supplies for Sardinia were routed through the ports of GENOA and LEGHORN.

III. Air Transport Situation

During April and the beginning of May all air transport units were completely occupied with movement of supply to Africa. Only after the loss of Africa and after a short period of rest could they be employed to supply the islands.

In early May enemy fighters inflicted deplorable losses^{on the Me 323-Group.} These losses could only be fully compensated for during June.

In conclusion, it may be stated that by the beginning of July, adequate supplies for a three-month period had been stock-piled, as ordered, despite numerous difficulties.

Signed: SEIBT