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Preparations for the Capture of
Malta

MANUSCRIPT DATA SHEET

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Preparations for the Capture of Malta in June 1942

At the beginning of June 1942 some of the officers of the XI Air Force Corps Hq. were informed that by order of OKW [Supreme Headquarters of the Wehracht] the preliminary measures were to be initiated for the capture of Malta.

This operation was to be carried out by the Hq. of the XI Air Force Corps with units of the Corps.

The following troops were available:

- 5 German parachute regiments
- 1 parachute artillery regiment
- 1 light parachute Flak regiment
- 1 armored parachute detachment
- 1 parachute machine gun battalion
- 1-2 heavy parachute mortar batteries
- 1 parachute engineer battalion

The following airborne units were to be placed in readiness:

- 2-3 transport groups with He 111s [originally bombers]
- 7-8 airborne groups with Ju 52's [three engine, low-wing monoplanes, the standard freight and troop-carrying transports]

Part of these were intended for the towing of troop-carrying gliders, DFS 232's and Go 241's. For supply a few heavy cargo gliders, Me 321's, were to be used.

It was further intended that the Italian parachute brigade should participate in this operation with its own Savoya transport groups.

The region of Naples and of south Calabria was to be reconnoitered as a concentration area for them and the eastern part of Sicily for German units.

Air Corps Lieutenant General [General der Flieger] Student charged the G-4 [Quartermaster] of his headquarters with the following recon-
naissances for the concentration:

1. The transportation of German units to southern Italy and Sicily and the facilities for unloading them,
2. The air transport units:
 - a. in the vicinity of Naples and souther Calabria,
 - b. in southern Calabria and Sicily;

3. The bringing up and assembling of supplies on the basis of 10 days of fighting.

The greatest secrecy was naturally to be observed. Pertinent questions were to be discussed with only a very few officers of the staff of Ob. Süd.

The reconnaissances disclosed the following picture:

1. The concentration by rail would be effected relatively quickly as far as the Naples area. Difficulties would not arise until southern Calabria - only a single-track railroad with 12 trains daily. Difficulties would increase at the strait of Messina. The railroad ferries had a capacity of only 400 cars daily.

Along with the concentration of transportation for the parachute troops, the bomber and fighter formations of the II Air Force Corps located in Sicily, and the civil population had to be kept supplied with grain and coal. Supplies would also have to be provided for a portion of the naval fighting forces. Considering these factors and the number of trains needed for the rail movement, 32-35 days would have to be reckoned on for the concentration.

Unloading facilities would have to be expanded, as hardly any railroad station possessed the necessary ramps.

2. a. There were many airfields available in the Naples area so that only work involving minor expansion and improvement needed to be considered.

b. In Calabria there were only 2 airfields available. One of them, Crontone, was comparatively easy to enlarge and put in shape for the intended purpose (employment of gliders). But in Vibo Valencia - situated on a rounded hilltop - there was no way of effecting any expansion.

Other fields which could be made ready in a comparatively short time were not to be found because of the mountainous and precipitous character of Calabria. The Reggio airfield, though still available, did

not enter into the calculations as it was intended for other purposes.

c. Sicily offered a rather large number of airfields, but these were urgently needed for the bomber and fighter formations. Only 2-3 fields could also take He-111 groups.

We were therefore compelled to reconnoiter new terrain for so-called emergency or seasonal fields. The Catania plain, south and southwest of Etna offered adequate possibilities for the temporary installation of fields. It was an advantage that the wheat harvest was at hand and the farmers had only to be asked to put off temporarily the ploughing of the fields.

3. Because experience has shown that on the second day of combat there is already a considerable need of supplies among the fighting troops and the command at that point of parachute action requires the major portion of the transport units for getting additional supplies to the troops, the logistics section had to endeavor to place the supply dumps as near as possible to the objective, so as to be able to fly several sorties during daytime. Hence the necessity of flying supplies out of the Catania plain.

In the second half of June it was possible to report the completion of the reconnaissances to the corps commander. At the same time the statement was submitted to the effect that the concentration would require 5 weeks.

[Signed:] Seibt

Translated by Mrs. J. S. Smith
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