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THE 78TH DIVISION

It has been announced that the 78th Division are now fighting with the 8th Army.

Late in July the Division landed in Sicily to take part in the heavy fighting which was to break the German resistance around their bastion of Mount Etna and decide the fate of the island.

After bitter fighting on the line of the Dittano river, the 78th pressed forwards towards Etna's Western flank through difficult hill country, broken by deep narrow valleys. The enemy had prepared innumerable defensive fortresses on the crests of the precipitous rocky slopes. In the attack guns had to be man-handled up to seemingly inaccessible points of vantage, and the assaulting infantry were forced to make frontal assaults across long stretches of naked rock where it was vain to look for the least scrap of cover.

After several days of desperate struggle, the 78th cleared the Germans out of the mountain town of Centuripe, cutting off lateral communication of the German troops West of Etna with those who were still in the Eastern coastal region around Catania. From then onwards the enemy could do no more than postpone the inevitable end.

Before the Centuripe battles, the 78th Division, in preparation for its attack, built in 48 hours a road 7 miles long, wide enough to carry a double line of traffic, and solid enough for the passage of guns, tanks and motor transport. To this feat of their Engineers the Division gave no small part of the credit for their subsequent success.

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MILITARY AFFAIRS