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BEFORE 0830 B.S.T. (i.e. FOR EVENING PAPERS) ON
MONDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1943
THIS EMBARGO SHOULD BE RESPECTED OVERSEAS BY PREFACING
ANY MESSAGES FILED WITH THE EMBARGO

R.A.F. ARRIVE IN AZORES

The landing of our forces in the Azores under Air Vice-Marshal Bromet was speedy and efficient, and within two days roads had been made and aircraft were operating from an airfield.

"Apart from gales during the early part of the voyage and heavy swell which made landing difficult, the whole affair went like clock-work", said an R.A.F. Transport Command officer who was with the landing convoy.

The spirit of co-operation shown by the Portuguese was evident immediately on landing. A site for Naval and R.A.F.H.Q. was chosen, and within two hours the combined staff moved in.

A party was dispatched to the airfield and within two days roads had been made, aircraft were operating, and other aircraft from Britain were flying in.

Local labour was organised for construction, the Portuguese working in two shifts, and by noon of the first day troops, equipment and stores were being landed.

Night made no difference. The work went on, but early the following morning the rains came. Work still went on in a tropical downpour, which soon reduced the ground to a sea of mud. Campkits, suitcases, kitbags and tenting were exposed until the tarpaulins arrived. Then the sun came out, the rain stopped suddenly and the camp was soon dried out.

What had been a sodden stretch of melancholy waste was, by evening an orderly little town, with the tents in neat rows and sign posts and notices telling everyone where everything was.

There was only one casualty in the landing, when a bollard snapped off its seating and severely wounded an airman.

Our own medical services had not been sufficiently established to deal with such a case and the airman was operated on at the Portuguese hospital by a famous Lisbon surgeon.

/Later a dispatch

Later a dispatch rider crushed his leg. The Portuguese surgeon again came to the rescue, performed another intricate operation, and saved the leg.

Off shore the convoy was screened throughout by destroyers, and by aircraft which operated from the airfield. Landing craft plied day and night between ship and shore.

Transport Command of the R.A.F. speedily organised signals and beacons, and within a short time the station was prepared for the reception and dispatch of aircraft flying from North America to North Africa as well as for those from the United Kingdom.

On October 26th Air Commodore Brackley, of H.Q. Transport Command, flew from the United Kingdom to meet Air Commodore Powell from Montreal, who flew direct to the Azores, making the first East to West and West to East contact.

The new staging post of Transport Command in the Azores forms a natural link across the Atlantic between the American and African continents and the United Kingdom.
