

RAF DEALS HAVOC IN BERLIN; GREEKS PERIL ITALIAN BASE

R. A. F. Also Strikes at
Hamburg; Await Axis
Mediterranean Blow.

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early Axis attempt to strike in the Mediterranean.

Nazi sources in the past have suggested that Gibraltar or Suez or probably both would be the goals of the impending Axis offensive, but the Greek counter-attack into Albania and the British aerial blast against the Italian fleet at Taranto may have forced readjustment of the program.

The British Admiralty said that three of Italy's battleships had been crippled in the Taranto attack and Greek messages reported that Fascist transports plying from Italy to Albania had been drastically reduced by British and Greek aerial and naval action.

French Fleet Watched

Wide attention centered also on the French fleet, although the Vichy Government denied reports that it had left Toulon for the Far East or that France had received an ultimatum demanding that the Axis be permitted to defend French colonial territory from attack.

The French naval forces could play an important role in the western Mediterranean if the Vichy Government decided to co-operate closely with the Axis in naval affairs, regardless of whether French units actually opposed the British.

The strong fight put up by Greek armies against the Italians aroused speculation on whether Germany might strike in other southeastern areas in order to support the Fascist war machine or might yet join in the invasion of Greece. But for the time being the fury of the German air attack on Coventry overshadowed other military developments. It was perhaps the greatest assault in aerial warfare, Nazis reported.

Indicating the extent of the British attacks the Air Ministry admitted that 10 British planes were missing.

Rail Station Is Target

The Air Ministry announced that high explosive bombs fell on and around the Schlesischer railway station and Goodyards, which had been raided heavily the previous night before departure from Berlin of Soviet Premier-Foreign Commissar V. M. Molotov.

Also raided last night were the Fuldastrasse railway yards, the Lehrter station on the northern fringe of the center of the city and the Anhalter railway station southeast of the center of the German capital, it was claimed.

Invasion Ports Fired

In addition to heavy damage at Berlin, great fires and explosions were caused in German "invasion" ports and the submarine base at Lorient, which the British have been trying to render useless to U-boats operating against British shipping in the Atlantic, London said.

Coventry was not the only British city attacked by the Germans last night but other bombing was scattered and light. London had a fairly quiet night but considerable activity developed today and a long-distance gun duel was fought by British and German cannon across the sun-sparkling Straits of Dover.

Twisting, circling airplane exhaust trails streaked the sky over London, indicating that the battle was in progress during the city's second daylight alarm.

Bombs Strike Hospitals

It was revealed that a bomb exploded on the ground at Buckingham Palace recently. The bomb damaged a flat normally occupied by stableman and chipped the face of the clock in the tower overlooking Buckingham Palace Road. All palace staff members were in shelters at the time and the King and Queen were absent.

Two hospitals were bombed in the London area yesterday and at one of them, doctors, nurses and porters worked all night beside rescue crews to move brick and fallen masonry to get into a section where a number of bed-ridden patients were trapped. A number of patients were killed instantly.

The staff from the undamaged section of the hospital rushed through clouds of dust to start rescuing the trapped patients, whose cries could be heard plainly. The rescuers worked under shielded flashlights while raiders were still overhead. Houses near the hospital also saved in, trapping their occupants.

The other hospital damaged was a maternity home in the London outskirts. Ground floor windows and doors were blown in, but the upper floors escaped serious damage. The matron said 18 mothers and 14 children escaped injury. They were in an especially protected ground floor ward.

A London school used as a fire and ambulance station was hit directly by a bomb, with some casualties. The Germans said that eight

War Moves Today

By J. W. T. MASON

United Press War Expert



Mr. Mason

German disquietude over the initial failure of Italy's offensive in Greece is indicated by Berlin's announcement today that Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel, Chief of the German High Command, and Marshal Pietro Badoglio, chief of the Italian General Staff, have met at Innsbruck for a conference. The fact that each commander is accompanied by a number of officers suggests plans of military significance are being discussed.

Marshal Badoglio is reported to have flown to the Albanian front a few days ago for personal inquiry into the reasons why his troops have shown such ineptitude for mountain warfare. His investigation seemingly has revealed difficulties so perplexing for the Italian High Command that German advice on disentangling the strategic snarl has become necessary.

Keitel, however, is faced with a difficult situation in trying to devise a way to help the Italians out of their trouble. If German troops were to be sent to the Albanian frontier to take over the offensive from that direction, the effect on Italian morale would be bad, since it would involve humiliating acknowledgment of Mussolini's failure.

Too, it is by no means certain that the Germans could accomplish the task of overwhelming the Greeks, now heavily entrenched in the mountains and with the Italian advance bases reported to have been made useless. If German troops are to be used to aid the Italians, the natural strategic way into Greece would be through Yugoslavia.

The eastern border between Yugoslavia and Greece is free of mountain barriers. A plain runs from the frontier to the Gulf of Salonica, about 50 miles away, following the course of the Vardar River. A railway from Yugoslavia also moves through the plain, terminating at Salonica. The first important Greek city near the border that would receive the brunt of such an offensive is Magadar.

But it is not certain whether Yugoslavia would give a German Army free passage to attack Greece. The Yugoslav Government has announced several times it would resist invasion by force. If Yugoslavia were pliant under German pressure, the Greeks would be hard pressed to defend the Salonica plain against a mechan-

ized German force. An alternative to this plan would be to incite Bulgaria to attack Greece, with the promise of a port on the Aegean Sea as a reward.

The Balkan-Greek frontier, however, is largely mountainous and offers serious initial difficulties. At the same time the Turks have intimated that they will fight if Bulgaria becomes a belligerent.

Though there is some uncertainty regarding Turkey, yet a Bulgarian declaration of war against Greece would entail risks of embroiling all the Balkans. The same chance would be associated with a German thrust through Yugoslavia.

The Innsbruck conference, therefore, is fraught with the most serious possibilities for all of southeastern Europe. If Marshal Badoglio believes the Albanian front is too difficult or too costly for continuation of major operations, the Axis powers will have to decide whether to attack Greece elsewhere at the possible expense of pan-Balkan peace.

Whether Russian Foreign Commissar Molotov's conversations with Hitler may apply to any change in the Balkan situation is uncertain. Russia may hold the key through her power over Turkey; but that too can be known only by future results.

The first result of the new Russo-German entente points primarily to some solution of the armed frontier situation. This is shown by today's report that German troops are being withdrawn from western Finland, where they were recently concentrated as a counter-measure following Russian military concentrations in northwestern areas.

British planes were shot down over Berlin. They admitted that four persons had been killed and one wounded and that the attack had been made in greater force than previously had been employed by the British against the German Capital.

The Italians admitted that the British had attacked Bari, transshipment port for Italian supplies going to Albania, and Monopole, near Bari. The Italian communiqué mentioned air fighting over Greece but was silent on land operations in which the Greeks reported continuing advances into a fringe of Albanian territory just north of the Greek frontier.

Of possible significance in the Axis Mediterranean drive was a conference at Innsbruck near Brenner Pass of Wilhelm Keitel, chief of the German Supreme Command and Marshal Pietro Badoglio, top Italian commander.

Suner and Laval Confer
At the same time Ramon Serrano Suner, Spain's Foreign Minister, and Vice Premier Pierre Laval of France, went to Paris.

Suner soon will visit Berlin on invitation of the German Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, the official news agency D. N. B. reported.

The British Admiralty reported that it had been confirmed with "certainty" that three Italian battleships were damaged in the attack on Taranto and it was revealed that the British Mediterranean fleet stood off Taranto during the attack in the hope the Italians would come out and give battle.

Stockholm reported that German troops were leaving Finland, possibly in response to suggestions by Molotov, and the Domei Japanese news agency alleged that the French in Indo-China had repulsed an Armistic Day incursion by well-armed and equipped Chinese troops.

The War Ministry in Athens said that Greek forces still held the offensive in infantry, artillery and aerial battles raging along the whole 125-mile length of the Greek-Albanian frontier.

Greek naval sources reported that Italy was encountering great difficulty in transporting men and material across the Otranto Straits from Italy to Albania because of the British and Greek naval and aerial attacks.

Fewer Italian Transports
The number of Italian transports recently has been drastically reduced, it was reported. These sources said also that the entire Aegean Sea was free of Italian naval craft except for a few submarines and that the Greek naval vessels were patrolling the coast unmolested.

destroyers churning the ocean until it seemed to boil. On both sides of us cruisers, light and heavy, loomed out as far as I could see. Our cruiser knifed the turquoise waters and hooded men moved around the guns. They worked silently. Some of them wore lamb wool coats with hoods like those of the Arabian burnous; others wore white anti-flash gear resembling asbestos diving suits to protect their skin from cannon flashes. Slinking about the guns, they seemed like creatures from another planet.

Suddenly pom-pom fire lit the sky. A false alarm had been given. In the distance there was a thunder of heavy guns as the advance force in the Taranto Straits encountered an Italian convoy bound for Albania. Simultaneously the air was filled with S O S calls from sinking Italian ships.

(In reporting on this incident, the Admiralty in London said British units had sunk two and damaged the third ship of an Italian convoy and had driven off two escorting Italian destroyers, one of which was

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Reporter Describes How British Trapped Snug Italian Fleet in Taranto Harbor

(Continued from Page One)

way, and was shown beyond doubt that the British control the sea.

After steaming to every corner of the Mediterranean, and loitering in the narrow Straits of Pantellaria off Sicily in a vain effort to lure the Italian fleet from port, it was decided that the only chance to get a decisive battle would be to make a rousing blow on Taranto, where the main body of Italy's Navy was known to be.

We approached the Greek islands at night at 30-knot speed, all crews at battle stations. Against the skyline I could see big battleships outlined against the moonbeams, like heavy gun turrets looming like floating fortresses on the shimmering waters. In the lead were a dozen

destroyers churning the ocean until it seemed to boil. On both sides of us cruisers, light and heavy, loomed out as far as I could see.

Our cruiser knifed the turquoise waters and hooded men moved around the guns. They worked silently. Some of them wore lamb wool coats with hoods like those of the Arabian burnous; others wore white anti-flash gear resembling asbestos diving suits to protect their skin from cannon flashes. Slinking about the guns, they seemed like creatures from another planet.

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believed damaged.)

Then the British airplanes took off. I saw them disappear over the Italian coast line, then sweep down upon the harbor. I could hear heavy explosions inside the bay. Back and forth, all night long, the planes operated.

Toward dawn the fleet began another sweep that lasted well into the afternoon. Not even so much as an Italian plane was sighted.

Meanwhile, scout planes from the aircraft carrier Illustrious went back to Taranto in daylight. They saw a smashed, derelict warship on the bottom of the bay, the waves lapping over her funnels, and other ships lying nearby, damaged.

The fleet started home (Alexandria is the base) from Taranto, despairing of a battle with the Italians. The spirit of the men, especially those of the air men, was high. On the decks, sailors sang the Navy's newest ditty, "The Man Who Invented Beer," whose hero is a man named "Mops," the originator of hops.

Overhead, fighting and scouting planes were doing the victory roll.

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