

British, Nazi Artillery Clash Inside Tunisia

LONDON, Feb. 11 (U. P.)—The British eighth army, apparently in force, hammered the Afrika Korps well inside Tunisia with artillery and armored cars today.

The middle eastern command announced that the British eighth army yesterday was in contact with the Afrika Korps east of Bengardane, which is 20 miles inside Tunisia and 50 miles from the Mareth line.

The Afrika Korps was resisting, at least along the coastal sector, because there the middle eastern command reported artillery duels.

The allied headquarters command said today that the situa-

tion on the north Tunisian front was generally quiet.

Weather conditions restricted air activity over the battle area.

Tuesday night, medium bombers attacked the airdromes at Heraklion, Kastelli and Pedada, in German-held Crete, had previously attacked by American Mitchell bombers on Tuesday evening.

Fighter-bombers from Malta blasted railway targets in southern Sicily, and heavy bombers bombed shipping in Palermo harbor during the day yesterday.

Probably the bombers that attacked Palermo harbor were American flying fortresses or Liberators.

A German broadcast said American forces had made another effort to capture strategic Taid pass, in Tunisia but claimed that the Americans were thrown back by a counter-attack.

"Whether this action was meant to be the beginning of an offensive by the American fifth army remains to be seen," the dispatch said.

The same dispatch claimed the Afrika Korps had repulsed two attempts by the British eighth army to drive around the southern end of the Mareth line, an admission that considerable forces of the eighth army were 70 miles into Tunisia.

SEE END OF ALL HITLER ATTACKS

Military Men Believe That Nazis Hope to Defend Planned Line.

By WILLIAM PHILIP SIMMS
Scripps-Howard Foreign Editor

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11.—Military men here are inclined to believe that Hitler may already have undertaken his last real land offensive in Europe and that he is now retreating to a line which he hopes he can defend.

The quick fall of Kursk, the imminent peril to Rostov and the deadly onward march of the Russians, coupled with the blows almost certain to come from the meetings at Casablanca and Adana, suggest that this line will be the shortest possible one between the Black sea and the Baltic — say from Odessa to Riga via the helpful Pripiet marshes.

According to reports, the Nazis have already prepared a defensive "east wall" in that general region. Nothing frightens the Germans more than the thought of a Red invasion of central Europe.

Offensively, Hitler has had two tries at the Russians and failed in both. In neither did he have to fear a second front at his rear. He could and did throw his whole weight against the Red armies. And both times he had the maximum aid he can expect from his pal, Mussolini, and from his unwilling associates—Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria and Finland.

A Third Try?

A third try next summer would seem to be out of the question. Of necessity it would be much weaker than the other two. His stooges are all but ready to drop out of the picture. He and his Nazis would have to conduct the offensive practically alone. Not only that, but in 1943 he faces the certainty of at least one major second front in western or southern Europe, and the possibility of still other fronts in widely separated areas. To be able to defend himself at any and all points simultaneously, and carry out a third real offensive against Russia at the same time, is scarcely within reason.

Into this picture Turkey would seem to fit like a hand in a glove. A glance at the map will show why. Turkey already has a bridgehead on the European side of the Bosphorus. From there the allies could hit the axis via the Balkans, the tenderest spot of all.

Military Secret

What President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill decided at Casablanca will remain a military secret until the clash of arms somewhere in Europe announces it to the world. And the same may be said of the parley between Mr. Churchill and president Inonu of Turkey at Adana. But Stalin, of course, knows all about it and is in entire agreement. Hence, Hitler must be on the lookout for something like this:

First, a smashing blow from the east, by Russia, with everything the Red army has got and everything America and Britain can provide in the way of equipment. Second, a united nations drive somewhere in Norway. Third, an allied offensive via the Balkans, perhaps with Turkey as the spearhead. Fourth, the annihilation of all axis troops in North Africa and the opening of the Mediterranean to allied traffic carrying supplies to Turkey and Russia via the Dardanelles and the Black sea. Fifth, an invasion of France or the low countries from England. Sixth, an invasion of Italy or Southern Europe from North Africa.

Must Meet Them All

Hitler cannot ignore any of these but must make ready as best he can to meet them all. Not to do so would brand him an even bigger fool than he has yet been taken to be. On the other hand, to do so would mean spreading his forces mighty thin, necessitating defensive rather than offensive action.

But all this does not mean that Hitler is licked. There is a decidedly dangerous corollary. If he can't wage another land offensive, he must and can continue his offensive operations in the Atlantic.

The bigger the allied armies in Europe and Africa, the more manpower and materiel will have to be kept flowing in their direction. To stop the shipment of men and supplies after our own offensives get going, might spell disaster. That Hitler will try to do just that is regarded as certain.

He may concentrate on these two things: Holding the land bastion of Europe defensively, while his U-boats, warships and aircraft hammer away at our sea lanes. And the indications are that he is rushing the construction of new submarines almost to the exclusion of other tonnage. In fact, they are said to have priority over virtually all else.

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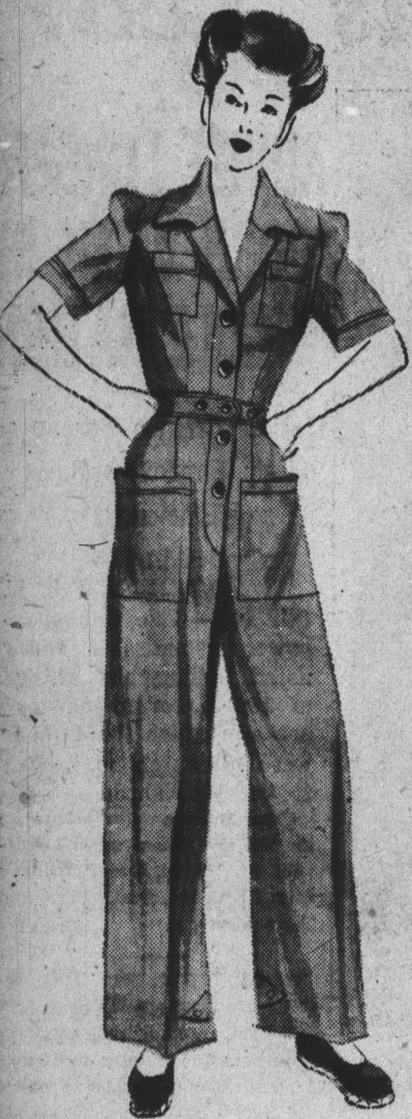
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