

Following is text of 1 o'clock postscript in 1 o'clock Home News today of an A.I. Colonel from Malta.

The trouble with Malta is that it's so small. In a country the size of England when an aircraft comes over you can tell roughly by its course where it's aiming at. But Malta's not as big as the Isle of Wight. A bomber's no sooner there than it's reached its target. And if you decide it's going for the Grand Harbour and put a barrage up there, it can so easily change its course in a second or two and be over one of the aerodromes instead. And now they've started attacking villages, too. Against that, however, there is one advantage you can set. Just because of the smallness of the place you can bring all your guns to bear on one target and the result's terrific. A tremendous concentration of fire. You'll notice what a lot of the enemy are brought down by Ack-Ack.

When I first went to Malta and an alarm went, the people used to be windy - just as they were in, say, London at first. Now they don't worry. Maltese air raid shelters, tunnelled into the limestone, must be the strongest in the world. A lot of people go into them when the Germans are raiding, but they have the utmost contempt for the Italians and a number refuse to take shelter for them. I remember one devout old lady sitting in a shelter during a German raid and telling her beads quickly and praying, "O Please send the Italians".

Valetta houses are made of limestone and painted different colours. If you happen to be on a hill over-looking the town when there's an air scrap on or bombing, you can see the blue water of the Grand Harbour, very deep, and then the houses, pink and green and yellow in the sun clustered up the steep harbour-side with little narrow streets between them and flights of steps, and on the flat roofs of these houses people watching the fun. And people walking in the streets, and the milk-sellers going round with their goats and selling milk at so much a squirt into your basin. The trouble is, half the time they can't remember whether the last siren was an alarm or an All-Clear. Just as it was in London.

The Maltese soldiers are as good as the civilians. There are plenty of them manning guns and also working as cooks and waiters. I remember one morning just before I left a Boche came through the clouds and dropped two bombs. One of them went through the barrack roof, within six yards of where two Maltese waiters were sleeping. I went down to see how things were. They said they were all right. Things were in a pretty bad state. That was at six. At seven they'd breakfast on the table as if nothing had happened.

And our troops stand it wonderfully. I've seen them playing cricket - in flannels, without steel helmets - when splinters from the barrage were coming down. And I remember once having a laugh when they were playing football. A shower of splinters came down pitting in the sand just when they were taking a corner, and you could see them all trying to take cover under the cross-bar.

Malta's a beautiful place, very hilly, and the hills terraced with millions of dry stone walls; you seldom see a field a hundred yards long. And there are pink oleanders and hibiscus; oranges protected by very high stone walls, and figs and tomatoes and potatoes and wonderful cauliflowers. And grapes which make a very potent wine called *Ambit*. The people are brownish, of course; the men wear trousers, shirt and waistcoat; the women more or less English-looking dresses, but all the old women and many of the young ones wear the *Faldetta*, a very wide high black-silk thing on wires. To keep the sun off, I suppose. They're rather a stolid people; not lively, except when they're working on the guns and there's something doing. Then they get excited. They can stand up to bombing all right, as they've shown.