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THE ITALIAN ADMIRAL SURRENDERS

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The Commander-in-Chief of the Italian Navy, a sombre, grey-haired admiral came ashore at Malta at sixteenthirty hours September 11 to formally surrender the fleet and was immediately received by Admiral Cunningham, who was largely responsible for immobilising the Italian navy since the start of the Mediterranean war.

The Admiral, slight and blue-eyed was brought ashore from his flagship in a spotless Royal Navy pinnace with shining brass funnel which moved through the placid waters of Valletta harbour to a landing at the battered Customs House, while sailors of all Naval ships in the harbour stood silently at attention. The Admiral stepped briskly ashore while a bugler sounded "still".

Wearing a peaked naval cap with a white jacket bearing two rows of ribbons, and in black trousers he stood at attention at the foot of the landing and saluted the Guard of Honour drawn up on parade in the square in front of the Customs House. The crack Naval guard, in white uniforms presented arms and the General Salute was sounded.

The Admiral did not seem unhappy. He almost ran up the three steps to the parade square and smiled as he shook hands with Commodore Royer Dicks Admiral Cunningham's Chief of Staff.

It was an historic scene, witnessed by only a handful of civilians. Sailors looked down from the top of a two storey building with shattered shutters and broken walls. The only civilians to witness the ceremony lined a road high up the hill overlooking the harbour.

It must have been a memorable sight for the Maltese who not so long ago awaited the arrival of the Italian Fleet to ask them to surrender when the weight of the Axis bombing blasting the island at its peak. Instead, they saw the leader of the powerful navy step ashore in surrender.

While the Admiral moved quickly through the lines inspecting the Guard of Honour a few "Dghaisas" - queer Maltese craft about the size of a canoe but with ends extending upward about three feet - rolled slowly offshore while their passengers, men, women and children, watched the proceedings.

When the Admiral concluded the inspections he walked towards a black limousine, turned, saluted the swordbearing Commander of the Guard and said in English "Thank you".

He was whisked up the hill behind the Customs House, where <sup>he</sup> stepped out of the car and walked to the door of Admiral Cunningham's office. He paused at the door to salute the sparse-haired Cunningham, who was awaiting his arrival. They shook hands, then entered the office where they were closeted about an hour. Cunningham in greeting the Italian naval chief said "how do you do, Admiral?"

At the conclusion of the meeting the Italian Admiral with Cunningham posed for the newsreels on the balcony outside the office. The Italian Admiral returned to his flagship, Eugenio Di Savoia, which was lying a mile or so offshore.