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Malta.

From Bewsher Representing Combined British Press

A Naval officer on board the British battleship - King George Fifth - patrolling off the southern shores of the toe of Italy described how he saw the Italian Fleet steaming out shortly after sunset.

He said; "everyone was at action stations as we had been shadowed by reconnaissance craft all day and we never knew when the Germans might not launch an air attack against us. Before dark we had gone close into the Gulf of Taranto and could see the shores clearly. From the bridge of the battleship I could see Taranto harbour in distance with Italian fleet lying there with steam up.

"Shortly after darkness fell we spotted five warships, two of them battleships astern of us. We did not know who they were and we challenged, them with signals flashed from our Aldis signalling lamp - in morse code. Their signal light flashed back. It spelt our letters G.A. That was signal which Admiral Cunningham requested the surrendering ships to use to identify themselves. We knew then it was the Italian fleet steaming out to surrender.

After we had established their identity they followed us for awhile. It was a queer sensation steaming along there in moonlight so close to the Italian coast which was not occupied by the Allies, with this Italian fleet steaming close behind us. Then we turned and they passed us and sailed off on their own - completely unescorted - towards Malta.

After a while we turned with our accompanying ships and set off for Malta ourselves. During the night aircraft flew round us and dropped flares. We had been expecting a very heavy attack by the Germans and imagined this was a preliminary to a torpedo bombing attempt. Our big anti-aircraft guns opened fire and maintained it for ten minutes. The aircraft left and there was no attack.

"After dawn we came up with the Italian battle fleet. It was steaming in line ahead with the battleship. Andrea Doria in front and the battleship Giulio behind it. Then came two cruisers and a destroyer. All were flying the Italian flag and a blue flag to denote they were surrendering - in accordance with Admiral Cunningham's instructions.

"They looked spick and span and were a really fine sight and the crews looked smart. As we approached Valetta we steamed through them to go into harbour. When we passed them the crews of each ship stood to attention along the decks. It was a nice gesture and they are evidently behaving with great dignity and admirable discipline.

"I noticed that one cruiser even had its aeroplane in position on its launching gear.

"The attitude of the sailors on board our ship was that it was a really tragic sight though they respected Italian sailors for the way they had carried out the terms of the armistice. As we steamed into the harbour I saw these magnificent ships, with guns pointing from turrets and crews lined up on decks, all silhouetted jet black against the wide red path of quivering light thrown into the Mediterranean from the setting sun. There was a touch of pathos in the sight".

The fleet from Spezia which came in yesterday morning was escorted by the 15 inch gun battleships Warspite and Valiant, veterans of the last war which have done excellent work in this.

Together with other naval vessels the Warspite and Valiant steamed along the North African coast till they met the Italian battleship Italia and Vittorio Veneto. Their flagship Roma was missing. She lay at the bottom of the Mediterranean sunk by their former German allies in a surprise air attack.

British signalmen and navigators were placed on the Italian ships to facilitate communications and navigation through the mine fields.

The Signalman I saw on the cruiser Eugenia Di Savoia - Signalman Steve McArd of
 Liverpool/

SECRET
No. 11

(Classification No. 1)

Notes

From the Italian Press

A New York Times correspondent on board the Italian battleship - King George V - reported off the coast of Sicily that the crew of the Italian battleship King George V saw the Italian fleet steaming out shortly after sunset. He said: "everyone was at their posts as we had been alerted by reconnaissance craft all day and we now know that the Germans might not launch an air attack against us. But we had no close view of the Italian fleet and could see the ships only through the haze of the battleship's searchlight. The Italian fleet steamed out in distance with lights flashing and steam up."

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Liverpool - was one of these.

The latest official list of the Italian fleet at Malta issued at noon on Sunday is as follows:-

From Taranto:-

Battleships; Guilio and Andrea Doria. Cruisers; Luigi Cardona and Pompeo Magno. Destroyer; Darecco.

From Spezia:

Battleships Italia and Vittorio Veneto. Cruisers; Eugenia Di Savoia and Guiseppe Garibaldi and Emmanuel Ilberto and Duca D'Osta and Raymando Monte Cuggia. Destroyers; Oriani, Velite, Artiglieri, Fucilieri, Gregale and Legionario.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

"After dawn we came up with the Italian fleet. The battleship Guilio and the battleship Guilio were in front and the battleship Guilio behind it. Then came two cruisers and a destroyer. They were flying the Italian flag and a blue flag to denote they were surrendering - in accordance with Admiral Cunningham's instructions. They looked stark and span and were a really fine sight and the crews looked smart. As we approached Valletta we steamed through them and go into harbour. When we passed them the crews of each side stood at attention along the decks. It was a nice gesture and they are evidently handling with great dignity and discipline."

"I noticed that one cruiser even had its searchlight in position on its foremast gear. The attitude of the sailors on board Guilio was that it was a really brave sight though they respected Italian sailors for the way they had carried out the terms of the armistice. As we steamed into the harbour I saw these magnificent ships with guns pointing from turrets and crews lined up on decks, all illuminated jet black against the wide red path of quivering light thrown into the Mediterranean from the setting sun. There was a touch of pathos in the sight."

The fleet from Spezia which came in yesterday morning was escorted by the 15 inch gun battleships Wrayite and Valiant, veterans of the last war which have done excellent work in this. Together with other naval vessels the Wrayite and Valiant steamed along the North African coast till they met the Italian battleship Italia and Vittorio Veneto. Their flagships Roma was missing. She lay at the bottom of the Mediterranean sunk by their former German allies in a surprise air attack.

British signaller and navigator were placed on the Italian ships to facilitate communications and navigation through the mine fields. The signaller I saw on the cruiser Duca D'Osta - Signaller Steve Mory.