

Air Ministry News Service.

OPERATIONS IN GREECE FROM NOVEMBER 7TH - DECEMBER 21ST  
INCLUSIVE.

The following is a summary of R.A.F. operations carried out in support of the Greek Army and Air Force from the night of November 7th/8th to December 21st.

It should be observed that all these operations took place in mountainous country somewhat resembling in climate and topography the North-West Frontier of India.

The operations were of two kinds, bombing attacks on Italian ports, aerodromes, troop concentrations and mechanised transport, and offensive and defensive patrols carried out by fighter aircraft.

The main feature of the offensive operations carried out by R.A.F. bombers were attacks on Valona, Durazzo and Santi Quaranta.

Valona was bombed on the night of November 7th/8th, on the 11th, 12th, 13th, 17th of that month and on December 7th, 9th, 10th, 14th, 18th and 19th. The main damage inflicted in these attacks was the explosion of a munition dump on November 11th, the setting on fire of 2 large ships on the 2nd December, the blowing up of a munition dump on December 6th, the damaging of a large ship on December 7th and of another on December 10th, the burning of the barracks on the 14th, of a warehouse on the 18th, and of petrol dumps on the 19th. On the 7th when a large ship was hit, Valona was attacked three times despite extremely bad weather,

Durazzo was attacked on November 11th, 17th, 19th, 24th and 28th, and on the night of December 15/16. The principal damage caused was on November 11th when the petrol depot was set on fire, completely gutted, and a wooden jetty burnt; and on the 24th, when a 10,000 ton ship was hit and a small ship nearby set ablaze. Large explosions were also caused in the docks on the night 15/16th December.

The port of Santi Quaranta was attacked on November 10th and 28th. The docks suffered damage and two destroyers shelling Corfu were bombed.

In addition to these three ports other objectives included a convoy of motor transport attacked on November 14th between Lake Okrida and the town of Koritza which resulted in the destruction of an important bridge; a jetty and road junction damaged at Konispol on November 10th; attacks on the Tirana aerodrome on November 19th, when the hangars were set on fire; a bridge north of Santi Quaranta on December 1st, a troop concentration and an important bridge at Keloyre on December 4th, when the bridge was destroyed; the town of Tepeleni on November 21st, when aircraft attacked through cloud and snow-storms; and the same town on November 25th, and on the 4th December.

Tepeleni is an important road junction.

(Cont'd)



In addition, Argyrokastro was attacked on November 22nd and 25th. Pogradets was attacked on November 22nd, when fires and explosions were caused. Attacks were made on El Basan on November 17th and 28th and on Krionero in Valona Bay on December 19th, when buildings were fired.

The activity of R.A.F. fighter aircraft began on November 18th, the day on which Gladiators arrived in Greece. That same day they went into action and destroyed nine Italian aircraft.

From that day they were constantly in action. On November 24th they attacked three columns of infantry and mules near El Basan, causing heavy casualties. Many mules were killed. The rest stampeded and great panic and confusion ensued.

On November 28th, they shot down seven out of twenty Italian aircraft. On that day one British fighter collided with an Italian. Both were destroyed, but the British pilot baled out.

On December 2nd, fighters destroyed three Italian aircraft; on the 4th eight more, on the 6th Italian troops were machine-gunned on the coastal road near Santi Quaranta, and on the 17th motor transport were machine-gunned on the same road.

On the 20th, two Italian aircraft were destroyed - one crashed on landing - and on December 21st, in a battle over Argyrokastro, eight enemy aircraft were destroyed.

Throughout this period both R.A.F. bomber and fighter aircraft maintained close co-operation with the Greek Air Force. That Air Force has displayed very great skill and courage which has evoked the admiration of their British comrades.

During the period under review the A.O.C. in Greece states that the enemy lost 39 aircraft for certain in addition to a number of others probably destroyed. Nine of our aircraft were reported missing.

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AIR MINISTRY No. 2614.

26/12/40 - No. 3.

AIR MINISTRY AND MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY COMMUNIQUE.

There is nothing to report since our last communique was issued.

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NOT TO BE PUBLISHED BEFORE THE MORNING PAPERS OF FRIDAY  
DECEMBER 27th OR BROADCAST BEFORE 7 a.m. ON THAT DATE.

NEW COMMISSIONER FOR NEWFOUNDLAND.

The appointment of Mr. J.H. Benson, M.C., as Commissioner for Finance in Newfoundland has been extended to the end of next June, when, at the request of His Majesty's Government, he will return to the United Kingdom to resume his duties in the Home Civil Service.

His Majesty the King has been pleased to approve the appointment of Mr. I. Wild, O.B.E., to be a member of the Commission of Government of Newfoundland in succession to Mr. Benson.

DOMINIONS OFFICE PRESS SECTION.

NOTE:- Mr. Wild served as Comptroller and Auditor General in Newfoundland from 1934 to 1938. He is at present serving with the Ministry of Home Security.

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26/12/40 - No.5.

PRESS NOTICE.

The First Lord of the Admiralty has received from Colonel Frank Knox, the United States Secretary of the Navy, two pictures of Abraham Lincoln. One of these will hang in the Ward Room of H.M.S. LINCOLN, a destroyer recently transferred to the Royal Navy from the United States Navy, and the other will hang in the First Lord's room in the Admiralty.

With the pictures the First Lord of the Admiralty received the following letter from the Secretary of the Navy:-

"My dear Mr. Alexander,

I learned with great satisfaction that you had named one of the former American Destroyers, and now a part of the British Navy, the LINCOLN. Surely in a war being fought for the preservation of human liberty no more significantly appropriate name could have been chosen.

I am sending you, by the hand of the 1st Naval Officer who may be assigned to London as an observer, two pictures of Abraham Lincoln, one of which I hope may be hung on the walls of the Wardroom of the LINCOLN, and the other for your good self.

With sincere and heartfelt wishes,

I am,

Yours cordially,

FRANK KNOX."

The First Lord of the Admiralty has replied as follows:-

"My dear Colonel Knox,

It gave me very great pleasure to receive from the hand of Commander Hitchcock your very kind gift of the two pictures of Abraham Lincoln. I shall treasure mine most deeply, and I know that the officers and men of H.M.S. LINCOLN will give theirs pride of place on the walls of their Wardroom. No gift from you could have been more happily chosen, expressing as it does your sympathy in the struggle for the preservation of human liberty, the cause to which Abraham Lincoln devoted his life.

I hope you will do me the honour of accepting the old and rare coloured naval print which I am forwarding under separate cover by the bearer of this letter.

With my best thanks and cordial greetings.

Yours very sincerely,

A.V. ALEXANDER."

ADMIRALTY, S.W.1.



26/12/40 - No.6.

CHRISTMAS DAY WORK IN ARMS FACTORIES.

Though arms workers were officially on holiday on Christmas Day, key men in some factories worked long hours to do vital repair and maintenance work.

Machines that had hardly stopped since the speed-up following Dunkirk were overhauled. Important replacement work was tuning them up for further efforts in the New Year.

In the Royal Ordnance factories everything had been planned in advance to ensure that work could begin again early in the morning of Boxing Day.

Here and there other factories closed down for an additional day - generally because necessary maintenance work could not be completed in the 24 hours of Christmas Day.

One manager said "We knew we should have to stop production to make urgent repairs. We thought this was the most appropriate time of the year to do it."

Christmas postscript from a Ministry of Supply arms factory which Hitler says he has bombed to bits:

One bomb blew every pane of glass from the roof of a workshop where men and women have been working alongside each other producing arms for Britain.

They swept up the glass - and went on working without a roof over their heads. Before the boarding in of the roof was completed it started to rain. They still went on working. The women workers would not stop. They just tied umbrellas above their machines - and kept at it.

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MINISTRY OF SUPPLY.



JANUARY MILK PRICES

The Ministry of Food announces that during January 1941 the maximum prices to be charged for milk sold by retail will continue to be 1d per pint more than the price charged at the corresponding date in 1939.

As in December 1940, the maximum retail price in January will ordinarily be  $4\frac{1}{2}$ d per pint throughout England & Wales and in Angus, Perth, part of Argyle, and all Scottish counties further south. In the counties of Aberdeen, Kincardine, Inverness, Nairn, Ross and Cromarty, Sutherland and Caithness, the maximum price will ordinarily be 4d per pint, that is,  $\frac{1}{2}$ d less than in December. In certain other parts of Scotland a higher retail price than in December will be permissible.

From numerous inquiries received by the Ministry it is clear that there has been some uncertainty among consumers and distributors about the retail price chargeable in the country districts and small towns under the provisions of the Milk(Retail Prices) Order 1940.

From December 1st 1940, no-one is permitted in any circumstances to charge for milk sold for consumption off the premises, in any part of England & Wales, the mainland of Scotland or Bute, a price exceeding by more than 1d per pint the price which he (or his predecessor in business) charged in the same district on the corresponding date in 1939 for milk of a similar description sold under the same conditions.

Consumers or distributors who are still uncertain about the correct price for milk sold by retail should communicate directly with the Food Executive Officer of their district who is the local representative of the Ministry of Food.

Under the National Milk Scheme a daily allowance of one pint of milk will continue to be available to expectant and nursing mothers and to children under five years of age at the reduced price of 2d per pint, or entirely free, according to their circumstances. These arrangements are not affected by the rise in the ordinary retail price of milk on 1st December. Any permit holders under the Scheme who have not yet applied to their Milk Officer for the renewal of their permits for the first quarter of 1941 should do so at once to avoid losing their supplies on 1st January.

Children of school age may obtain one-third of a pint daily at the cost of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d under the Milk-in-Schools Scheme.



26/12/40 - NO: 8.

SALVAGE OF FOOD FROM BOMBED BUILDINGS

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PRIVATE OWNERS

Owners of foodstuffs insured under the War Risks (Commodity) Insurance Scheme and stored in buildings which have been damaged by enemy action are reminded by the Ministry of Food that they should begin salvage work without waiting for their claims to be assessed by the Board of Trade. Their claims will in no way be prejudiced by bona fide action taken to remove goods from damaged premises to a place of safety or to protect from the weather those goods which cannot be removed. Owners are warned that where, through negligence on their part to effect salvage, further loss or damage to the insured property is incurred they will not be entitled to include this loss or damage in their claim under the commodity Insurance Scheme.

In view of the vital importance in the national interest of the salvage of food and feedingstuffs, the Minister of Food has set up an organisation to deal with the problem. There will shortly be appointed in each Food Division a Food Salvage and Disposal Officer with area assistants. These officers will be given a substantial measure of discretion to deal with difficulties as they arise and owners of foodstuffs in premises which have suffered damage from enemy action are asked to notify the Food Salvage Officer at the Divisional Food Office immediately of the fact of damage and its effect, should they require assistance.

The Ministry of Food will shortly be issuing a circular letter to warehousekeepers and others engaged in the storage of food and feedingstuffs on Ministry and private account giving instructions with regard to the steps which should be taken in the event of damage to warehouses resulting from enemy action.

MINISTRY OF FOOD



YOUR NEW RATION BOOK

Local food offices are making every possible effort to speed up the despatch of <sup>the</sup> new ration books, and there is no need to worry if you do not receive yours until January 6th. If you have not received your new book by that date, however, you should get into touch with your local Food Office.

When you receive the new ration book this is what you should do -

1. Make sure that your name, address and National Registration particulars have been correctly entered on it. Any errors should be reported to your Food Office.
2. Write your name and address and National Registration letters and number on the top part of the reference leaf (page 17 in the adult's book and page 16 in the child's book).
3. Write the names and addresses of the retailers with whom you are at present registered on page 2 of the book. The counterfoils at the top of the coupon pages must be left untouched.
4. If you do not wish to change your retailer you do not have to re-register. But if you wish to change your retailer you must apply to your Food Office between January 20th and February 3rd for an application form. You will remain registered with your present retailers until the week beginning, February 16th.
5. If you wish to deposit pages with retailers you must write your name and address in the square panel in the middle of the coupon pages. You must not deposit the whole book.
6. The instructions on pages 3 and 4 should be read carefully and paragraphs 5 and 6 on page 3, which have been cancelled, should be crossed out.

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MINISTRY OF FOOD.



26/12/40 - NO: 11.

The Minister of Aircraft Production acknowledges with gratitude the following gifts towards the purchase of aircraft:-

Miss Dorothy & Masters John & Peter Smith, Withnell, Lancs. (towards a Spitfire from the sale of rabbits caught on their father's farm).....£	.15. Od.
The Girls of a Dressmaking Workroom in Harrogate (instead of purchasing Christmas presents they give the money towards the cost of a bomber).....£	2. 5. Od.
Pauline and David Lakin, and Marion & Kathleen Pearce, Wylde Green, Sutton Coldfield (two sets of twins).....£	3.10. Od.
The people of Framingham Pigot (to buy a bomb for a bomber).....£	7. 0. Od.
Leominster, Kington and district.....£	2,000. 0. Od.
Robert Peel Spitfire Fund (subscribed for by the regulars and auxiliaries of 160 police forces in England, Scotland and Wales towards a Spitfire to be called "Robert Peel").....£	7,665. 0. Od.

MINISTRY OF AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION



26/12/40 - No.12.

The attention of the Ministry of Home Security has been drawn to the fact that many persons are still neglecting to carry their identity cards and the name and address of their next of kin.

This neglect has, in many cases, resulted in considerable and unnecessary delay in the work of identifying air raid casualties.

The Ministry, therefore, repeats its previous advice to members of the public to take this simple precaution and suggests that the name and address of the next of kin should be written on a piece of paper and carried inside the individual's identity card.

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MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY



26/12/40 - No. 13.

EXPORTS TO EIRE.

Licence Necessary for Certain Commodities.

The Board of Trade have made the Export of Goods (Control) (No. 43) Order 1940 (S.R. & O. 1940 No. 2176) which comes into force on January 1st, 1941. Under the terms of this Order it is prohibited to export to Eire without licence from the Board of Trade the following classes of goods:-

- Feeding stuffs for animals.
- Fresh oranges and lemons.
- Fertilisers, simple or compound, including mixed fertilisers and compound manures and fertilisers consisting of ammonium nitrate with other materials.
- Jute sheets, wrappers, gunnies, sacks and bags, including those made with other materials.
- Unmanufactured tobacco, whether stripped or not, including shorts and smalls, not denatured, and stalks.
- Dies (whether mounted or not) of diamond or metallic carbide.
- Tools and tool parts of which the cutting edge is tipped with diamond or metallic carbide.

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BOARD OF TRADE.



AUSTRALIA AND HER TROOPS.Mr. Menzies' Christmas Message.

The Prime Minister of Australia, Mr. R. G. Menzies, has sent the following Christmas message to Australians serving overseas:

"On behalf of the people of Australia I extend warm good wishes for Christmas to all ranks of the Australian Forces. Your welfare is of the greatest interest and concern to all of us at home. Australia is confident that you are worthily upholding the traditions established by her sons at Gallipoli and in France. What they fought for, the right of civilised peoples to live peacefully, free of tyranny, is the ideal for which you are fighting."

"We have no doubt about the result. Nothing is being left undone in Australia not only to ensure that we all play our part with you in the achievement of victory, but also to prepare for your homecoming."

Mr. A.G.J. Forster, of Melbourne, has been appointed new business manager to the Australian Army in succession to Mr. Allen Lewis, who has retired owing to ill-health.

War Loan of £28,000,000

There were 21,000 applications for bonds in the War Loan of £28,000,000, which has been fully subscribed.

Shipbuilding as National Industry

When Mr. Hughes launched the "Corvette," designed for patrol, mine-sweeping, and anti-submarine work, at Mort's Dock, Sydney, he declared, as Minister for the Navy, that ship-building must become one of the great national industries of Australia.

At the launching of the "Ballarat" at Melbourne, the Chairman of the Harbour Trust said that a vessel would leave the Williamstown Dockyard every three months.

Australian shipbuilding is undergoing a marked revival, and the building of 10,000 ton merchant vessels is contemplated. Orders amounting to £250,000 for engines and machinery have been placed in Queensland, and work is proceeding on additional naval vessels.

The Queensland Government is also surveying sites for a munitions factory to be erected in Brisbane at a cost of £1,000,000. by the Federal Government. The State Government will provide the workers with water, electricity, gas and transport.

Evacuees Entertained.

Four hundred children, including 147 evacuees from Great Britain, were entertained at a Christmas Party at Government House by the Governor, Sir Winston Dugan and Lady Dugan.

Weddings Numerous.

A record number of weddings, notably those of members of the Australian Imperial Force and the Royal Australian Air Force were celebrated in Melbourne at Christmas-time. Owing to the demand, taxis were unobtainable, and many couples failed to secure transport.

Munitions.

Every munition factory in New South Wales, except one, is working at full capacity. All are employing double shifts and sometimes three. This has led to an enormous increase in production, which has gone up fourfold and fivefold for both shells and fuses. The New South Wales output is a barometer for the greater output in the other States.

(Over)



Jews Equip Ambulance.

Jews who have sought refuge in New South Wales from Nazi oppression in Europe have raised funds to buy and equip an ambulance for the Australian Imperial Force.

Wheat.

It is estimated that the South Australian wheat harvest will be 18 million bushels from 2,500,000 acres - an average of nearly seven bushels an acre.

ISSUED BY THE DOMINIONS OFFICE PRESS SECTION.



26/12/40 - No. 19

RECRUITS WANTED FOR AUXILIARY FIRE SERVICE

The Ministry of Home Security, Mr. Herbert Morrison, in a statement today, calls attention to the urgent need for auxiliary firemen to swell the ranks of those who are doing such magnificent work in fighting fires caused by enemy air raids.

Any man of thirty or over whether he is registered under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act 1939 or not may volunteer to join the Auxiliary Fire Service for whole-time duty instead of the Armed Forces, so long as he has not yet been medically examined and is not in a reserved occupation.

Mr. Morrison declares that it must be clear that the work of auxiliary firemen calls for courage and endurance. The pay is £3.5s a week and uniform is provided. Men who are accepted will not be called up for military service.

Those wishing to enrol should apply at once to the local fire station.

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MINISTRY OF HOME SECURITY



CHRISTMAS AT THE POST OFFICE

By morning of Christmas Day practically the whole of the Christmas mail had been cleared from the Post Offices throughout the country and delivered. A number of times were posted on Christmas eve but generally the public responded warmly to the appeal to post early with the result that postings were two days earlier this Christmas as compared with last Christmas.

As an example of how people posted earlier there were only 109,000 postings at Newcastle-on-Tyne on December 22nd as compared with 712,000 on the same date last year.

At eleven provincial sorting depots, between December 16th and the 24th, eighty-eight millions letters and cards were posted. In one or two places slight delays were caused by air raids, but the determination of the Post Office staff enabled quick clearances to be effected.

Greetings telegrams proved a very popular feature. Last Christmas 175,000 were sent, and this number may be exceeded this year.

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GENERAL POST OFFICE.



MORE GIFTS FROM THE COLONIES

The Government continues to receive generous gifts towards the war effort from various parts of the Colonial Empire.

From Jamaica has come £5,250 as a special Christmas donation to the Mobile Canteen Fund. Of this amount £1,000 was contributed by the Jamaica Mutual Life Association Society, £275 by the Jamaica Women's Club, £250 by the people of the parish of Trelawny, and £1,350 by the people of the parish of St. Catherine. These names will, no doubt, be inscribed on a canteen.

£2,000 has been received by the Governor of Northern Rhodesia from Peter Hay, a farmer, of Pemba, as a loan without interest for the duration of the war and for three months after.

Two further sums have been received for the British Red Cross - £1,000 from the British Guiana local Red Cross Committee, and £115 from the Seychelles local War Charities Fund.

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COLONIAL OFFICE PRESS SECTION



26/12/40 - No. 22.

CHILDREN'S SACRIFICE FOR BOMBED CHILDREN

By forgoing their own Christmas presents the children of Nchang, Northern Rhodesia, contributed no less a sum than £140 for British children in bombed areas. Lord Lloyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies has, through the Governor, sent them the following message:-

"I have been most deeply touched by the true generosity which has prompted this kind Christmas gift to our children who have suffered from air raids and on behalf of His Majesty's Government I send our warmest thanks to all who have contributed towards the gift.

"It will bring happiness to many children who are homeless, and I wish the children of Nchang to know that their unselfish surrender of their own presents will earn them the special gratitude of these children and their parents".

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COLONIAL OFFICE PRESS SECTION.



26/12/40. - No. 23.

CAIRO COMMUNIQUE.

The official communique issued in Cairo today states:-

LIBYA:        No Change in the situation.

On the SUDAN frontier one of our fighting patrols carried out a successful raid east of Kassala, inflicting a number of casualties on the enemy, and returning with a prisoner and some equipment.

On other fronts nothing of importance to report.

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.



26/12/40 - No.24.

CONTROL OF CEREAL BREAKFAST FOODS.

The Cereal Breakfast Foods (Control and Provisional Prices) Order, 1940 made by the Minister of Food on December 24th, 1940 controls the trade in the articles commonly known as "cereal breakfast foods", and fixes provisional maximum prices for them.

On and after December 30th, 1940, no person will be permitted to sell a cereal breakfast food at a price exceeding that at which he sold it, subject to similar conditions of sale, on December 2nd 1940.

On and after January 24th, 1941, no person will be permitted to manufacture, produce, or packet cereal breakfast foods except under and in accordance with the terms of a licence granted by or on behalf of the Minister of Food. Applications for licences should be addressed to the Ministry of Food, Cereals Division, Mount Stewart Hotel, Colwyn Bay, North Wales.

The Order does not apply to oat products.

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MINISTRY OF FOOD.



26/12/40 - No. 30.

The press department of Free France has issued the following statement:-

Vichy announces that all or part of the French officers and N.C.O's caught at the end of September at Dakar in the trap laid for their comrades, have now been released.

The Vichy communique adds that those officers and N.C.O's have requested to be allowed to serve again with the French Army.

General de Gaulle welcomes the fact that French public opinion, now wide awake, has finally compelled the men who collaborate with the enemy to release these brave officers and N.C.O's. It will be noted that until lately Vichy intended to bring before a court martial these very same men, guilty only of having tried to prevent at Dakar a pitched battle between Frenchmen, a calamity which, due partly to them, has been happily avoided. The leader of Free Frenchmen highly approves of their decision to take up again their duties with that part of the Army which, having not yet engaged the enemy, will beyond doubt do so sooner or later.

It is, however, clearly understood that the step taken by Vichy will in no way modify the safety measures taken as regards certain generals and senior officers arrested by the Free French Forces in the course of recent police operations in Gabon. Those officers have, in fact, been misled by propaganda emanating from the enemy and his collaborators up to a point where they opened fire on French forces.

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MINISTRY OF INFORMATION



To be checked against  
Actual Broadcast

26/12/40. - No. 31.

W A R   C O M M E N T A R Y

- by -

Lieutenant-Commander A.M. Kimmins, R.N.,

B.B.C. HOME SERVICE: THURSDAY, 26th DECEMBER, 1940: 9.20 - 9.35 p.m.

I wonder if you find it as difficult as I do to realise what is going on in the world beyond one's own immediate surroundings? If I'm in a room, for instance, I find it difficult to think outside its four walls. I forget that other things are going on in other rooms - in millions of other rooms all over the world and I find myself completely obsessed by what I am doing; by the people I am talking to.

Now, I've been particularly conscious of that fact during the last few weeks because I've been lucky enough to get outside my four walls and travel thousands of miles through the Mediterranean.

Quite honestly - having so far been mainly concerned with the Home Fleet - I had completely failed to appreciate the size and extent of what was going on out there. Now that I have seen it I find myself - at the end of a somewhat exhausting 1940 - suddenly rejuvenated, I've got a new lease of life. It's like the feeling at the end of a long tiring day when someone gives you a much-needed pint of beer. As you smack your lips you feel suddenly refreshed and ready to take on all comers.

My first port of call was Gibraltar - the famous rock fortress which guards the narrow entrance to the Western end of the Mediterranean.

As we approached I began to wonder - so I am sure many of you have - what it must feel like to be stationed on a tiny and very isolated promontory - which is what Gib. is.

I know the saying "as safe as the Rock of Gibraltar" has become a sort of trade mark of security throughout the world. It was coined, though, in the days of cutlasses and cannon balls. Not under modern conditions of long-range armour-piercing shells, aircraft bombing, and all the rest of it. Frankly, I expected to find everyone digging deeper and deeper holes inside the Rock as a refuge from these new methods of onslaught. But did I? Most certainly not. Admittedly, squads of men - white from head to foot from the dust and muck shooting out from their pneumatic drills were working day and night building new galleries and so on. But these were not to take cover in. They were to feed the new gun positions, the new observation posts, and so on. In fact although preparing for siege - an essentially defensive operation - offensive tactics were being employed.

There was no question of locking the doors, cutting down the rations, and seeing how long they would be able to last out. It was much more a question of locking the doors, than rolling up the sleeves and seeing how many of the enemy they would be able to wipe out before being eventually relieved.

Down below in the harbour - under the shadow of the Rock - fresh from their recent successes against the Italians - lay the units of our Western Mediterranean Fleet. Wherever I went I found nothing but unbounded optimism and terrific enthusiasm. Hardly surprising really, because these ships and aircraft have already had a crack at the enemy, and their one ambition now is to have more and more. I only wish you could have shared with me - dropping suddenly out of the skies as I did, into this hive of activity and enthusiasm - something of that glow of confidence and pride which radiated on all sides. Believe me, it was a tonic.

In the Admiral's cabin in the flag-ship I had a long talk with a great friend of yours - Admiral Sir James Somerville. At the moment he is far too busy chasing Italians to get near a microphone but - in the meantime - he asked me to give you this message.

/ "We,



"We, in the Force I command, are proud of you at home, proud of your courage, proud of your determination. A determination we share, a determination that we shall achieve victory, that we who have been a free people for hundreds of years shall remain a free people.

"It is noteworthy, but curious", he went on to say, "that when we meet the enemy fleet at sea in the Mediterranean, it declines battle. Why is this? Well, in my opinion, it is because our enemies know in their hearts full well that theirs is not a just cause. That they have been wrongly led. I feel sure of this", said the Admiral. And then he went on: "The facts are simple, and since they are simple they appeal to us sailors. We know what we are fighting for; the enemy does not. And that knowledge coupled with the knowledge that our people at home are resisting so magnificently justifies us in the belief that 1941 will be a red letter year in our history."

That was Admiral Somerville's message. Perhaps at this very moment he and his ships are slipping out of harbour in the light of the half moon.

On their starboard side are the gay bright lights of Algeciras in neutral Spain - a reminder of the days of peace we are fighting for. Astern of them, as they turn out of the narrow harbour entrance, is the vast towering silhouette of the Rock. The ships are steaming out hoping for the chance to attack. From inside the Rock there comes at intervals the sound of muffled explosions. Another gallery has been blasted. Another gun is being put into position so that should their turn come, they'll be able to hit out, mighty hard too.

From Gibraltar I flew on east to Malta, our island stronghold in the middle of the Mediterranean. As we passed over the blue waters I saw many British warships patrolling and searching for the enemy. But I never saw an Italian.

Now Malta - like Gib - is so small that on the average political map of the world - where the British Empire is shown in red - neither of them present a sufficient area to allow for even the smallest red splodge - they have to be content with red lines under their names. And like Gib Malta lies nearly a thousand miles from its nearest British neighbour.

What's more Malta with Sicily to the north, Libya to the south and various Italian islands dotted around, is surrounded by the enemy on all sides.

Not a particularly healthy place one would imagine, but in Malta - to my surprise - I found everything going on much as usual.

Everyone, Navy, Army, Air Force and Civilians were, of course, working overtime, but - for their moments of relaxation - the cinemas, Bars and so on were open as before.

In Malta, when the British warships return, the inhabitants crowd the Barracca - the high ground overlooking the Grand Harbour - and cheer like mad.

When they see an Italian aircraft shot down, they yell themselves hoarse.

Before this trip I hadn't been in Malta for some years and so - in all innocence - I approached a cheerful looking Karozzi driver - Karozzis are the local cabs - and asked him to take me to the main street, the Strada Reale. In a flash his expression changed and he stared down at me with stinking contempt. I repeated my request but he only eyed me with greater suspicion and asked me who I was and where I came from.

/By now



By now somewhat peeved, I replied haughtily that I should have thought that my uniform was sufficient evidence that I was a naval officer and - if he must know - I had arrived that afternoon.

At this news he wilted completely, bowed me into his cab and then said with terrific pride: "In Malta we no longer have Italian names for our streets. The Strada Reale is now The Kingsway."

When we reached our destination, I asked him what he thought about the Italian air raids. He didn't accept the question for himself but turned proudly and patted his best friend, his horse.

"Charlie," he said, "not like the sirens, but Charlie not give a damn for the Italian bombs."

In Malta, you see, the whole civil population are just as much a part of the defence organisation of the islands as they are here at home.

I only wish I had time to pass on some of the stories told me by His Excellency the Governor and the Vice-Admiral Commanding the Dockyard - Admiral Ford.

These two senior officers were lost in admiration for the way the Maltese had faced up to the air raids and all the rest of it.

The last thing Admiral Ford said to me was, "You can tell all at home that as far as Malta is concerned it's 'Thumbs up'."

From Malta I flew on, East to Alexandria, the naval base in Egypt from which the main portion of the Mediterranean Fleet has been operating.

On the way I looked down upon British warships heading for Greece. Others were steaming at full speed to bombard the Libyan coastline. Again I never saw one single Italian. Just as in the Western Mediterranean the control of the seas was completely ours.

At Gib and Malta I think the thing that had impressed me more than anything else was the spirit of the individuals. Now as we glided down into the harbour of Alexandria I felt a new sensation. A feeling of bursting pride in the strength and might of the British and Allied Navies lying there below.

Powerful ships of all classes were grouped in one of the most formidable arrays I have ever seen. But they weren't ships just shultering at their base. The traffic problem at the harbour entrance was acute. This was only ten days ago at the time when our Armies in the Middle East were well into their stride in their brilliantly successful offensive in Libya.

Ships were steaming out now to play their part alongside the land forces in bombarding the retreating Italians and their coastal positions. Others were returning for more and yet more ammunition. Even from the air one could tell that those at anchor in the harbour were by no means idle. The numbers of small craft, ammunition lighters, oilers and so on hurrying from warship to warship told all too clearly that the men o' war were not in harbour for a rest or shelter. They were here for one reason only, to replenish with stores and ammunition and get back to sea on the job.

Later when talking to the individuals, the sailors who had chased and harried the Italian Fleet on so many occasions, the Fleet Air Arm pilots who had carried out that amazing raid on Taranto, in fact all those who had played their part in gaining control of the Mediterranean, I found one very noticeable thing. Except from a purely technical point of view they had little to say of what had happened in the past. Their whole conversation hinged on two factors. Where and how often could they strike in the future? And what news could I give them of their folks at home?

That's the only real snag in their lives. Mails in war time must always be a problem and it is sometimes weeks before they reach their destination. All that time - particularly in present conditions of air attacks at home - those men out there have hardly been able to contain themselves for news of their own families. When a mail eventually does arrive it's a scene not easily forgotten. ....

/Everyone



Everyone swarms round the mail office, and then there is a mad crazy scramble as the names are shouted out and the letters grabbed. As the last letter reaches its owner a sudden silence falls over the ship. In every corner, behind guns, torpedo tubes and so on, men tuck themselves away and greedily devour the precious news from home. Those mails mean such a lot when you are thousands of miles away. Letters are the one intimate link. Believe me you can't write too much.

While there I had a talk with the Commander in Chief, Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham. His is a name which has been on everyone's lips and yet in the street he wouldn't be recognised. He is a Scot and is known affectionately by those who serve under him as "A.B.C." his initials. He is short, rugged, and with rather close-cut graying hair above blue eyes which pierce right through you. For many months he has shouldered tremendous responsibilities and yet there is not one sign of fatigue. Like most Scots, once he gets an idea into his head, nothing will deter him from seeing it through. At present his one idea is to sink every enemy ship in the Mediterranean. Given the chance, he will.

This is what the Commander-in-Chief asked me to say:

"Perhaps the best news I can give those at home is the fact that the Mediterranean is in good heart and fettle for the reason that experience has shown that we can rely unquestionably on the vital support of the factories and munition works of the Home Front. Our anxieties for our friends and relatives have been rendered far less acute by the news which comes to us from all sides of the steadfastness and courage of our folk. As for the Mediterranean Fleet itself we shall strive our utmost to make our share worthy of that example. Out here, as at home, Navy, Army, and Air Force work as one, and it is our hope to be the first to open the breach in the dyke through which the power of Germany and Italy will be dispersed."

That was Admiral Cunningham's message.

I only wish I had time to pass on the countless other messages from friends of yours up and down the long waters of the Mediterranean.

Just as I was leaving I ran into a three-badge Able Seaman - a bit of a bird, and an old shipmate of mine. I asked after his family.

"The kids are overseas," he said, "The wife's making munitions, and I'm out here."

"That's a bit tough," I suggested, "all being spilt up like that."

"Oh, I dunno," he replied, "The kids are safe. All that worries the wife and me is to see that home should be a decent happy place for them to come back to. She's making the shells - I'm delivering them. That seems as good a way of helping as any."

And so in passing on their New Year's Greeting to you and - if I am - yours to them - I am sure we here will attack 1941 in the same spirit of confidence and enthusiasm which inspires all those grand people out there.



26/12/40 - No.32.

Air Vice Marshal L.S. Breadner, D.F.C., the Canadian Chief of Air Staff, and Air Vice Marshal E.W. Stadman, member of the Canadian Air Council for engineering and supply have arrived in this country.

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They will take part in/discussions now proceeding in official circles in London on Canada's war effort and particularly in regard to the air, an important factor in which is the expansion of the Empire Air Training Scheme.

Air Vice Marshal Breadner won the D.F.C., in the last war and since then has held a number of air executive positions.

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CANADA HOUSE



H.Q. Middle East, December 26th.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE R.A.F. IN GREECE AND THE WESTERN DESERT.

Christmas was spent in typical tradition by units of the R.A.F. in Greece. The Air Officer Commanding visited them and talked to the men as they sat down to their Christmas dinner - real Christmas dinner, complete with turkey and Christmas pudding. It was served, as in other years, by officers. The A.O.C. also visited air crews who were standing by.

Although trophies and souvenirs of the R.A.F. in the Western Desert cannot, of necessity, shew such infinite variety as those of some ground units, squadron messes have some very interesting displays of former Italian possessions.

One squadron leader is sleeping more cosily now than he can remember since he went into the Desert, for he has a beautifully sprung low bed, which, he says, must have belonged to an Italian general at least.

There is no doubt that some Italian officers did themselves proud in the Desert.

A Breda machine gun in excellent condition, an artillery man's hat, swords - one of very poor quality metal, - rifles, a bugle, a spur, and the emblem of one of the most famous Italian squadrons awarded for its services in Spain, adorned a British squadron's mess at Christmas, together with a brave display of bunting.

Although commanding officers and adjutants faced difficulties in arranging the cooking of turkey and pork, which were on the menus for both officers and airmen, cooks grappled with the situation well, and Christmas in the Desert among the R.A.F. was observed as merrily as the exigencies of the position permitted.

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26/12/40 - No. 34.

OFFICIAL ADMIRALTY COMMUNIQUE.

The Board of Admiralty regrets to announce that H.M. Destroyer  
ACHERON (Lieutenant J.R. WILSON, R.N.) has been sunk.

The next of kin of casualties have been informed.

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