

CAPTURED PAPERS REVEAL GERMAN PREPARATIONS

By Basil Gingell representing the Combined British Press

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With the 5th Army, Sept 16.

Some explanation of the preparedness of German defences to resist the Allied landings in the Gulf of Salerno was forthcoming today by the capture of Italian documents which revealed that our invasion fleet was sighted when south of Sicily and was under observation for the rest of the way. Since there is no beach further south where landing was possible and further north it was impracticable, because of the limit of fighter cover, it was not difficult for the defences to assess where the blow was likely to be.

The Germans were also prepared for such a move, for the captured papers include plans of an exercise held two days before the landing which provided for such a contingency.

It has now been established that the Germans, when they learned of the presence of landing ships in Italian waters, sent troops from the east into the area. They have since then brought up further troops from the south which, while weakening the forces opposing the Eighth Army, has made the task of the Fifth Army tougher.

It has now been confirmed that in a number of places there was a clash between Italian and German troops when the news of the armistice was made known and the Italian Divisional Commander of the Coastal Division at Salerno, General Gonzago, was shot by the Germans.

More British reinforcements are now pouring in and a counter-attack to an infiltration movement by the Germans over the hills was carried out this afternoon. During last night Commandos took over 100 prisoners, including a Battalion Commander.

Yesterday at least five tanks were knocked out and a considerable number of casualties were inflicted.

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