

8/9/41 - No. 3

Air Ministry News Service

Air Ministry Bulletin No. 4992

NIGHT FIGHTERS RAID ENEMY AERODROMES

R.A.F. night fighters were active over enemy air bases during the night. American-built Havocs attacked aerodromes from Holland in the East down to Brittany in the South-West.

A Havoc crew which went to Holland saw a raider in the act of taking off from its base. The pilot was able to drop small bombs and incendiaries right in front of the German plane as it taxied along the runway.

The explosions threw the German machine into the air and then set it on fire. Other incendiaries started a blaze at one side of the aerodrome.

An all-Polish crew started another big fire on an important aerodrome in Brittany.

On another French aerodrome bombs started seven bright fires which were visible for 25 miles.

Two Havocs went to an aerodrome near Abbeville. The first to arrive started several fires which were still burning when the second British crew came in to attack and dropped more bombs on the aerodrome.

3/9/41 - No. 7.

FULL KIT SWIM FOR A.A. OFFICERS

In steel helmets and battle-dress and with rifles slung and boots around their necks, a dozen officers of a Midland A.A. Division swam sixty yards during an intensive hardening up course which they are now undergoing.

The physical training officer showed them how to swim with a rifle and boots slung, how experienced, strong swimmers can help along colleagues who are not so experienced in the water, and how an officer's full kit can be propelled through the water when wrapped in ground sheet and anti-gas cape. None of the officers found the unusual swim in the baths too much for them.

"It is necessary to take it steadily", one said, "but I found the steel helmet and boots around my neck to be unexpectedly light. I was expecting great inconvenience but had a pleasant surprise."

The hardening course was officially for officers under forty but several over that age took part.

The hardening course includes route-marches in respirators, rope climbing in full equipment, bomb throwing, complicated obstacle racing, tugs-o'-war and unarmed combat, apart from the normal daily physical training.

WAR OFFICE

8/9/41 - No.15

MIDDLE EAST WAR COMMUNIQUE

The following official communique was issued today from British G.H.Q. in Cairo:-

LIBYA - In the Tobruk area enemy shellfire showed some increase. Six enemy bombing attacks during the day resulted in negligible damage.

In the frontier area our patrols were active.

WAR OFFICE

8/9/41 - No.18

REFRESHMENTS IN PUBLIC AIR RAID SHELTERS

The Minister of Food has made an Order authorising the Councils of the Borough of Pembroke and the Urban Districts of Milford Haven and Neyland to provide refreshments in public air raid shelters within their areas, and regulating conditions under which refreshments may be supplied. The Order is on the same lines as those already issued for London, Liverpool, Coventry and other towns.

Persons or firms appointed as caterers for the shelters will be specially licensed and will work under the general directions of the Councils concerned.

MINISTRY OF FOOD

PAGEANT OF THE ALLIES AT BIRMINGHAM -
WEDNESDAY, 10th SEPTEMBER.

As part of the campaign in Birmingham to recruit women for the munitions factories, a Town Hall Meeting has been arranged for Wednesday of this week, 5.30 for 6, lasting until 8 o'clock, under the title "Pageant of the Allies".

Speakers will be:-

- | | | |
|----------------|---|---|
| Great Britain | - | Mr. Arthur Greenwood, Minister without Portfolio. |
| Czechoslovakia | - | Dr. Feierabend, Minister of State. |
| Poland | - | Count Balinski-Jundzill - Official in Government. |
| Norway | - | M. Wold, Minister of Justice. |
| Free France | - | Commandant Simon, Free French Forces. |
| Belgium | - | Baron Beyens, Press Attaché at Embassy. |
| Greece | - | M. Simopoulos, Minister. |

Messages from the other Allies will be read. The Birmingham City Orchestra is playing, and there will be something like 400 girls chosen from munition factories on the platform. The last speaker will be a girl munition worker from one of Birmingham's factories.

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8/9/41 - No. 22.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR USE ON CLUB TAPES BEFORE 0030 ON TUESDAY,
SEPTEMBER 9. NOT TO BE CABLED ABROAD OR BROADCAST BEFORE 0030 ON
THAT DATE.

The Royal Norwegian Government INFORMATION OFFICE



KINGSTON HOUSE,
PRINCES GATE,
LONDON, S.W.7

KENSington 9441

PRESS BULLETIN (NORWAY)

(No permission is required for reprinting this material)

~~Not to be published
or broadcast before
0.20 bst on Tuesday,
9th September, 1941~~

SVALBARD (SPITSBERGEN) DURING THE WAR

BACKGROUND OF THE ALLIED ACTION IN SVALBARD

Svalbard Enters the War Zone

Svalbard (Spitsbergen) is situated so far north that none of the belligerent nations, during the first year after the occupation of Norway, seems to have paid any attention to this group of Norwegian islands. While the rest of Norway was filled with German troops, the Gestapo and all the other organs of the occupying power, nothing was done with regard to Svalbard. The Norwegian civil administration there remained practically independent. Ample supplies had already been sent to this group of Arctic islands during the war, while the Norwegian Government was still in residence in Northern Norway. Some time after the occupation of Norway had been completed, a small German military delegation, consisting of three officers or mining experts, arrived at Svalbard. They limited their activities, however, to an inspection of the mines in order to obtain the necessary information about the Norwegian coal mines in the Long-year Settlement. They soon departed and the population was left in peace, and their activities were allowed to continue undisturbed during the arctic winter. When Germany, on 22nd June this year, attacked Russia, Svalbard immediately entered into the zone of war operations. The Russian coal mines in Svalbard had, until then, been allowed to continue their work unimpaired, employing a considerable number of miners. It is possible that the fact that the Russians possessed a mining concession on the largest of the islands contributed to the German hesitation about occupying Svalbard. The situation was, however, completely changed when these Arctic islands

became actually included in the sphere of war activities. Svalbard itself then assumed strategic importance, and the coal mines made it doubly important. Reports received from Germany reveal that the Germans, while preparing the campaign against the Soviet Union, have laid hands on all supplies of fuel they could find in Norway, including the coal from Svalbard, which are specially needed for their large transports of war supplies along the Norwegian coast. It was, therefore, necessary, during the further war operations in the Arctic regions, to reckon with the possibility of the Germans taking steps to complete the occupation of both the Norwegian and the Russian mines in Svalbard, and at the same time trying to force the miners to increase the production for the benefit of the German war effort.

Germans Seek Svalbard Coal

For the greater part of the year Svalbard is blockaded by ice and it is only during the summer and the early autumn months that it is possible to reach the ports in the fjords by steamer. The export of coal from the Longyear Settlement on the Ice Fjord usually begins about May 1st and goes on until some time in October if the winter does not set in unusually early. This is also the case with the Russian mines in Barentsburg, although efforts have been made to keep the sea approach open with strong ice-breakers.

The miners who have now arrived in Britain report that the export season this year started about a month later than usual, because the ice made sea transport impossible during the whole month of May. In June and July a few small cargoes were exported; these, however, were so small that they made practically no inroad on the large store that had been accumulated during the long winter when Svalbard was cut off from the rest of the world. When the war against Soviet Russia began, some changes were made in the original export scheme, according to which nineteen ships should have been regularly employed in carrying coal from Svalbard to the ports in

Northern Norway. As a matter of fact, after June 22nd an entirely new transport scheme was worked out. Only two ships were sent at a time from the northern ports in Norway to Svalbard, and new ships were not sent north until the previous pair had returned. The Germans, apparently, feared an Allied action, which also proves that it was their intention to use this Norwegian coal for their own purposes only. It also seems to prove that they were not able to spare any naval forces to protect the connection between Norway and Svalbard, in spite of the fact that the Svalbard mines are known to supply the best quality of bunker coal, as well as coal for oil production, and therefore, from the German point of view, should be of the greatest value to them in their extended war activity.

Conditions in the Svalbard Coal Mines

Altogether between seven and eight hundred Norwegians - miners and their families - were living in the Longyear Settlement last winter. Of these seventy were women, and there were the same number of children. The miners are usually taken from all parts of Norway, but the majority of them come from Northern Norway. The Svalbard miners have always been well paid, and many young Norwegians take jobs in the Svalbard mines to make enough money to build up a livelihood for themselves. There is a Norwegian church in the Longyear Settlement, and also a school at which the Minister is the teacher: a schoolmistress was also employed.

The miners who have now arrived from Svalbard report that some time after the German occupation of Norway their wages were reduced. The Trade Union then sent representatives to Oslo to negotiate, but they had to return home without having obtained any result. Their Trade Union was entirely overlooked and was not allowed to have anything to do with the wages or the working conditions. The miners were paid according to their output, and those miners who now tried to keep their wages up to the previous level by increasing their output were forced to abandon the attempt, as

it was quite impossible to exceed the high output they had already achieved before. Even those who worked hardest at hewing the coal could not reach a higher daily wage than 16 crowns (about 18s. at the pre-war exchange rate), against 20 crowns previously. Those who were employed in carrying the coal to the surface were in a better position, but they also had to work very hard to reach their old wage level.

The miners now understood that they had no rights to protect them from German exploitation, and dissatisfaction among them grew rapidly. This dissatisfaction resulted in an increasing number of absentees from work, and in spite of the instructions received to resume work in the pits in the Sverdrupbyen settlements, which had been idle, and in the former Swedish concession, the Svea Mine, the total production was not increased to any considerable extent. Also, scarcity of tools and machine parts began to make itself felt. For some time it was possible, thanks to the efficient Norwegian mechanics, to overcome this difficulty by making good the equipment in their own repair shops. But soon the lack of spare parts became more and more critical. Instructions to handle the engines and tools with the greatest care were posted up everywhere, but it was of little avail. Last winter it was found necessary to ration such an important tool as the pick (for cutting the coal).

Contact with the Outside World

During last summer and autumn quite a number of Norwegian miners arrived at Svalbard from Northern Norway. Most of them had fled from work - mostly military - which they had been forced to do for the Germans. Svalbard, in spite of everything, was considered more of a free country because there were no Germans there. Also, the food was better than in occupied Norway because of the large supplies which the Norwegian authorities had stored in the Islands.

The miners also report that a great event in their daily lives was listening in to the Norwegian news broadcasts from London;

they listened to London day and night, and in addition they got the underground Norwegian Freedom Station and the Norwegian news from Boston. "The broadcasts from abroad were vitamins for us during the long, dark winter" said one of them. From occupied Norway they received German films, but the showing of these films had to be stopped because of the angry demonstrations against them. There was no Nazi propaganda. On the whole Island there was not one supporter of Quisling.

May 1st and May 17th - Norway's Independence Day - were celebrated by the miners in their barracks all over the Island; and on April 9th, the anniversary of the German invasion of Norway, the absentees from the mines were more numerous than ever.

During a fire in one of the mines five men were killed. The fire raged for several weeks, and although firemen eventually arrived from Norway in airplanes with implements, gas masks, etc., some 40,000 tons of coal were destroyed. Telegraphic correspondence with relatives and friends in Norway, which was extensively used before, thanks to the facilities afforded by the Norwegian authorities, was soon limited, and most people were only allowed to send a short greeting: "All well".

During the winter, the Norwegians had only slight contact with the two thousand Russians in Green Harbour and the three hundred Russians in Coal Bay, but after Russia had also been attacked by the common enemy a very warm contact was established between the two nationalities.

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A SVALBARD "NATIVE" DESCRIBES LIFE ON SVALBARD

There are only five or six youths who were born in the Norwegian colony, Svalbard, and who can therefore call themselves real "natives". One of them has now arrived in Great Britain. He says that so far there has not been any want on the Islands, but that it was necessary to use more and more tinned foods and the food was lacking in vitamins. All of them were very concerned about how the food situation would have developed if they had not been assisted in getting away.

- "And what was the feeling in Svalbard?"

- "We were all as good Norwegians as one can be, although some were a little depressed because they could not maintain contact with their families in Norway, and we were all extremely proud that there was not one single Nazi amongst us. Last year we had one German, but he was returned on a Norwegian warship before the Norwegian Navy was evacuated. Everyone of us now wanted to get away to fight for the liberation of Norway."

- "Do you like your native land, so near the North Pole?"

- "It is a bare country, but it is grandiose and beautiful, especially during the summer when we have the midnight sun, and daylight during twenty-four hours, for several months. Also we have so many beautiful birds."

- "And what about the hunters living as hermits, in the different parts of the Isles?"

- "There are not many of them now. They lived completely isolated, far away from us. There are many foxes, but it is difficult to catch them, because they are very shy and it is therefore seldom that a hunter catches more than fifteen or twenty foxes during the season. But there are a colossal number of reindeer, and it is possible to meet herds of them, numbering two to three hundred animals. It is forbidden to kill them, but if the food difficulty had become too great we would have forgotten the law. The reindeer were, so to speak, our "reserve supply".

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SOME FACTS ABOUT SVALBARD.

Svalbard was recognised as a Norwegian possession by the allied and associated powers in 1920 and, subsequently, by Russia in 1924 and Germany in 1925.

The Norwegian mines are in the neighbourhood of Longyear City on the Icefjord. In normal times they employ up to one thousand workers. The Russians also exploit mines at Barentsburg, which is also on the Icefjord, only twenty-five miles away from Longyear City. The Russian mines employ about 2,300 workers.

In 1936 the output of the Norwegian mines was 300,947 metric tons, and of the Russian mines 406,170 tons. The output has been increased considerably during recent years.

Svalbard consists of a group of islands, two large ones - West Spitsbergen (37,900 square kilometres) and North East Land (14,375 square kilometres) - and a number of smaller ones. It is situated between 74 degrees and 81 degrees north latitude. The distance from North Norway to South Cape on Svalbard is 360 miles. In the winter of 1936-7, the inhabitants numbered 2,466, of which 654 were Norwegians, the rest being Russians. Work in the mines goes on all the year round, as the west/coast is warmed by the Gulf Stream. Export of coal has hitherto only taken place during the summer months owing to drift ice and the freezing of the fjords. For the same reason, the many natural harbours of Spitsbergen are of very little value, especially during the long winter season, when the whole island group is totally surrounded by unbreakable ice.

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8.9.41 - No. 23

Air Ministry No. 4999

MIDDLE EAST COMMUNIQUE

H.Q., R.A.F.,
Middle East,
Monday, September 8, 1941

MEDITERRANEAN:

Aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm made a successful attack on a convoy of three medium sized merchant vessels protected by three destroyers in the Mediterranean on the night of September 6/7. One merchant ship was hit three times, causing violent explosions and much black smoke. The vessel was compelled to stop and listed heavily to port. Another ship, a tanker, was hit with two torpedoes and severely damaged.

LIBYA:

On the same night, a heavy raid by Royal Air Force bombers on Benghazi resulted in a number of direct hits on military stores and adjacent buildings. Barce and Berka were also attacked, and buildings on the road south of Cyrene were machine-gunned.

While this raid was being carried out, aircraft of the Fleet Air Arm made a series of attacks on landing grounds at El Tmimi, El Gazala, Martuba and El Adem. Five enemy aircraft were destroyed at El Tmimi and a number of others severely damaged. One enemy aircraft was destroyed at El Gazala and another at Martuba, and considerable damage was caused to a number of other enemy machines.

Fires were caused at El Adem, and damage was done to buildings at the majority of these aerodromes. Enemy gun positions east of the Tobruk defences came in for severe bombardment from aircraft of the South African Air Force.

SICILY:

In Sicily on the night of September 6/7, Fleet Air Arm aircraft attacked buildings on Comiso aerodrome and also raided Catania and Gerbini aerodromes. Enemy aircraft on the ground, in addition to being bombed, were machine-gunned and a number were made unserviceable if not completely destroyed.

One aircraft is missing from all the operations reviewed in this communique.

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Air Ministry News ServiceAir Ministry Bulletin No. 4995

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST OR USE ON CLUB TAPES BEFORE
0030 HOURS ON TUESDAY, 9th SEPTEMBER, 1941.

R.A.F. HUDSON CAPTURES U-BOAT

An aircraft of the R.A.F. Coastal Command has captured a German U-boat - the first time a land aeroplane has forced a submarine to surrender outright.

They fought out one of the strangest duels in history, with one adversary in the sky, the other beneath the sea.

The sky won. After the aircraft, a Lockheed Hudson bomber, had attacked the U-boat, the crew of the submarine came tumbling out of their conning tower, waving a white shirt as token of surrender.

The Hudson, completely unaided, held the U-boat prisoner for nearly four hours. A Catalina flying boat of the Coastal Command then arrived, to relieve the Hudson. The Catalina acted as gaoler, assisted by other Hudsons and Catalinas of the Coastal Command, for nearly ten hours more.

One of H.M. ships was able to arrive, just as daylight was fading, to take over from the aircraft. By then, the U-boat had been held prisoner from the air, without any actual contact except the threat of machine-guns, for nearly thirteen hours.

The Hudson, which carried out the attack and caused the U-boat to surrender, was piloted by a 32-year-old Yorkshireman from Hull, who, before the war, was a car and truck distributor. The second pilot and navigator is aged 28 and comes from Berkhamstead, in Hertfordshire.

The rear-gunner was a 20-year-old agricultural student from Oxford, and the wireless operator is aged 21, and belongs to Wimbledon, London. He was gunner in twin-engined fighters earlier in the war.

This crew took off in their Hudson early in the morning, and headed out over the Atlantic. Visibility was poor, frequent rainstorms swept across the sea. The water below was angry and rough, covered with white caps.

They were "toddling along with George (the automatic pilot) doing most of the work," when suddenly there was a shout from the navigator's cabin in the nose of the aircraft.

"There's one just in front of you," shouted the navigator. The pilot gazed out where the navigator was pointing, at the same time pulling out the automatic pilot and taking control. And there, about 1,200 yards away on the port bow, was a U-boat.

The pilot thrust the nose of the aircraft down, and dived. The navigator stood with his face pressed to the cockpit window, keeping the submarine in sight.

/Let me

"Let me know when it's time to drop, Jack," called the pilot quickly.

The navigator nodded, and a few seconds later yelled "Now!"

The rear gunner, who had been hastily winding in the aerial, popped his head into the astrodome just in time to see a column of water shooting high into the air.

Then the pilot turned the Hudson steeply, and climbed. Below him he could see the wide area of churned waves. And as he watched, there was another shout from everybody in the aircraft. The U-boat had come to the surface. The gunner, who had rushed into the rear-turret, had the best view. He saw the U-boat surface rapidly, on an almost even keel. She came surging up through a mass of foaming water.

The navigator reached for his camera, and called to the rest of the crew. "Machine-gun them, let's machine-gun them." The wireless operator dropped to the floor, and rapidly wound down the belly-gun. Then the aircraft dived across the U-boat, all guns blazing tracer bullets - front guns, rear-turret and belly-gun.

As the Hudson dived, the U-boat's conning tower hatch was thrown open, and about a dozen of the crew tumbled out and dropped on to the deck. The Hudson crew thought they were manning the guns so they kept their own guns firing hard. The red streaks of the tracer were peppering into the conning tower, and kicking up little spurts of water all round the U-boat.

This was too much for the Germans. Those who were already on the deck turned and ran back into the conning tower, those who were coming up from below still tried to push outwards. For a few moments there was "an awful shambles" in the conning tower; as the Hudson pilot afterwards described it. The U-boat crew were all mixed up together, some struggling to get in, others to get out. All the figures seemed to be capless, and they were distinctly visible from above, for they were all wearing bright yellow life-saving jackets.

Four times the Hudson roared over the U-boat, guns streaming, banking steeply each time to swing round into the attack again while the rear-guns and the belly-gun kept up the fire. The rear-turret was firing practically all the time. All the pilot remembers hearing, besides the din of the firing, was the navigator muttering, "I've lived all my life to see those baskets scrambling out of a conning tower".

As the Hudson was coming round for the fifth attack, the U-boat surrendered. One of its crew held a white shirt up from the conning tower, waving it violently. The airmen jerked their fingers from the triggers, ceased fire, but continued to circle with guns trained, watching suspiciously. The Germans followed them anxiously round with the shirt, and then, to make their intentions quite clear, held up what appeared to be some sort of white board.

"They've shoved a white flag up," called the wireless operator triumphantly.

The Hudson then flew right over the U-boat at about 50 feet, to see what it was all about. By then the entire U-boat crew had crowded into the conning tower, some thirty to forty of them. They were packed so tightly they could scarcely move.

/And a

"And a very glum lot they looked," the pilot said afterwards, "we were quite close enough to see their faces, and not a smile anywhere!"

The U-boat now lay stopped in the water, slightly down by the bows, with the waves breaking over her decks, and sometimes right over the conning tower, drenching the crew.

Then, for the first time, the Hudson crew realised with jubilation that the U-boat really had surrendered to them. The problem remained, how to hold them prisoner, and get them taken into custody.

The navigator prepared a message for base, and the wireless operator's hand rattled up and down on the key.

All this time the pilot was circling the U-boat, keeping his eyes glued to it. He did that for three and a half hours. Had he lost sight of it for one second, he might easily have lost it altogether. When at last he stepped on to his home aerodrome, his neck was so stiff he could not turn his head.

All this while, too, as the navigator and wireless operator were working away at their signals, the rear-gunner kept his guns trained ceaselessly on the U-boat crew huddled into the conning tower.

The message reached base, and it was determined to bring that U-boat and its crew to shore if it were humanly possible. Never before in history had an underwater craft surrendered to a land aircraft. It was determined not to let the U-boat get away. A Catalina was at once sent off to relieve the Hudson, and all the other aircraft in the vicinity were diverted over the U-boat from time to time, to demonstrate to the crew that there was a big striking force ready if they tried to escape. Hudsons, Catalinas, on patrol - they all flew over the U-boat from time to time.

The relief Catalina arrived in the early afternoon.

When the Hudson crew saw the Catalina approaching, they were afraid it might bomb and sink the U-boat. So they signalled anxiously to it:

"Look after our, repeat O U R, submarine which has shown the white flag."

"O.K." signalled back the Catalina. Then the Hudson crew, satisfied, dived twice more over, "their" U-boat to have a last look at it. One or two of the Germans, who had got down on the deck, waved mournfully to them. The pilot waved cheerfully back, and set course for home."

Then it was the Catalina's turn to circle endlessly, the blister guns trained on the U-boat crew. They kept it up for eight hours, without having to fire a single shot. Surface craft were steaming towards the spot as quickly as possible, but they were a long way off yet. The question was, could they get there before nightfall?

The hours dragged by, in those interminable circles. Some of the U-boat crew, now and then, walked out on to the deck from the conning tower, in spite of the waves - they were all drenched as it was, so what did the waves matter? The Catalina took the precaution of frequent dives over the U-boat to ensure that the hatch was still closed. Other aircraft came periodically to add to the threat - but still no surface craft.

/The

The weather was growing worse, daylight was fading. There was every chance of losing the U-boat during the night, and the Catalina crew were growing desperate.

But at the last moment they sighted one of H.M. Ships, which steamed up, and started to signal orders to the U-boat crew.

Then came darkness, the Catalina lost touch, and had to go home.

Long before daylight next day, however, another Coastal Command Catalina was in the area, continuing the vigil. By now a gale was blowing. The night was jet black, and rain storms were lashing everywhere.

Once, in the darkness, they picked up a glow of light from the submarine, but so fierce was the gale that, as they circled, they were blown off their course and lost her again.

But soon they saw her reflected in the dim light through the storm, with the white foam of the waves breaking across her bows.

Throughout the remaining hours of darkness, the Catalina continued to circle, sometimes losing the U-boat's light for as much as fifteen minutes at a time, but always finding her again.

At last light began to break, and the crew could just see the thin outline of the submarine. As the light strengthened, they could make out one ship lying near by, and soon they saw other ships approaching. The Catalina crew watched the beginning of the long task of getting the U-boat and her crew to harbour.

From the time when the first ship arrived, the U-boat was covered from the air by Coastal Command aircraft for particularly the whole of the next 40 hours.

And throughout all this tremendous patrol, through storm and darkness, there was one fantastic touch. Although the Catalina crews were battling with the weather, and being blown miles off their course by the blackness of the Atlantic gale, they fed as well as if they were in a first class restaurant. For in each of their hulls is a tiny kitchen, with an electric hot plate and two paraffin stoves. And on these the cooks produced remarkable meals.

"Why, we ate very well," mused one of the pilots of the Catalina that searched and contacted in that night of gale, when he was seated once more comfortably in his mess, "All through the night the cook served us with piping hot coffee. And soon after we had found the U-boat again, we had bacon and eggs and beans for breakfast. Then some more coffee. And, later on, a really excellent lunch - steak, and mashed potatoes, and peas, followed by prunes and custard, and some coffee."

PHOTOGRAPHS OBTAINABLE FROM
B.I.P.P.A., 132, FLEET STREET, and
P.N.A., 30, FLEET STREET, E.C. 4.

FLEET AIR ARM ATTACK ON CONVOY

The Fleet Air Arm crippled yet another enemy convoy in the early hours of yesterday morning.

Three merchant vessels, strongly supported by destroyers, were attacked in the narrow gap between Pantellaria and Sicily. One six thousand ton vessel was left listing heavily and sinking with a destroyer standing by, while other destroyers were slowly shepherding the remaining two ships, including one badly damaged six thousand ton tanker, along another course.

Great confusion was caused to the enemy by the attack. A young Sub-Lieut. from Harrow, describing the scene to a Press officer, said: "the weather was not quite so good as on our last outing. Some low haze harrowed down the moon's path so that we could only see one ship at a time. But we spotted the convoy all right, with destroyers in diamond formation around it. We flew in through a gap between two destroyers. Another aircraft picked out the first ship in the line and I took the second, a six thousand tonner. Dropping my torpedo from close in, I pulled away just in time to miss hitting the ship myself. I could see the splash where the torpedo hit the water and the wake going towards the ship. There was a terrific thud, and from the port side we saw the torpedo hit the vessel amidships. There was a violent explosion, and the ship stopped, listing heavily and pouring out black smoke. Meanwhile, the destroyers were circling frantically trying to cover their charges with a smoke screen. The one ahead swung to starboard, and the one to the port side followed the leader round, firing a low barrage at us as it went. None of us was hit, but the confusion was such that shells from one destroyer were seen bursting on the deck of the other, which in turn was firing back, dropping shells just short of the other ship. The last vessel in the convoy opened up on us with a couple of light flak guns aft, but we were climbing out of range, and as we went we could see the leading ship in the convoy sneaking away on its own out of the smoke screen."

The attack was led by a Lieutenant who torpedoed a destroyer off Tripoli four nights ago, and who also took part in a recent attack on a convoy off Cape Spartivento.

About the same time as the convoy was being attacked, another Fleet Air Arm aircraft was near the end of a brisk night's work. This aircraft took off before midnight for Sicily, but developed symptoms of engine trouble, so dropped its bombs on Comiso and returned to base. The crew stepped into another aircraft, flew back to Sicily, dived on and machine-gunned three enemy aircraft and a machine-gun post at Catania, flew to Gerbini, machine-gunned and bagged three more aircraft on the ground there, dropped bombs, started fires, and then returned home to make their report, and went to bed.

Air Ministry News Service

BERLIN HEAVILY BOMBED

Last night two and four-engined bombers attacked widely dispersed targets in Germany and occupied territories, the main force concentrating on Berlin.

One pilot described how he saw bombs burst in the middle of the city and begin fires; as one of them watched it burn, there were flashes all around and buildings were lit up or silhouetted against the flare. Here and there a combat between bomber and enemy fighter could be seen.

"We spotted", a rear-gunner said, "a twin-engined machine - one of ours - caught in searchlights. It was on its way back. Then we saw a fighter. Its tracer bullets were going into the cone of searchlights from the darkness outside. Then the fighter dived down in flames. We saw it hit the ground and blow up. The last we saw of the bomber it was going on with one engine on fire, flying straight and level. I hope the crew made it."

Crews coming in from the west saw first the chain of lakes bright in the moonlight and then the River Spree and the streets of Berlin. "You could see the streets and the street crossings," a gunner said. "You could easily indentify the bigger buildings. It was so bright that you could even make out traffic moving along some of the streets. I expect most of it was fire engines. Soon raging fires made even better landmarks as the bombers came in thick and fast. Buildings and streets away from the fires were glowing red in the light of the flames.

"We flew right over the centre of the city," an observer said. "The 'flak' was there but we have been shot at worse in other places. One of the new high explosive bombs went off as we were going in and another as we were coming out. Both of them went off with a terrific red flash which seemed to hang in the air for a few seconds."

A navigator said that when his own new bomb went off "everything went up. After that we came out very calmly and peacefully. Nobody took any notice of us at all."

Many crews asked whether the Russians were over Berlin as well. "We should like to meet them there," said one pilot. "I went in from the east so the Germans may have thought I was a Russian. I hope they did. Any way, Berlin was under such heavy fire that the Germans may well have thought that there were two air forces going for them."

/Reports

Reports from many other stations give a more general picture of the success of the attack. There was an immense fire near the Alexander Platz. The smoke from it stretched miles to the east. Bombs were seen to hit buildings, factories, warehouses and railway yards. One crew reported a group of 50 small fires sending up a column of smoke several thousand feet high. Another crew reported three large fires which they saw for 25 minutes after leaving the city, and even then they were only lost sight of because of cloud. There were fires in all parts of the city, in the industrial suburbs as well as in the centre.

Some idea of the defences of Berlin and of what some of our crews had to face, may be gained from the story of a crew of a Manchester. On the way to Berlin they avoided five enemy fighters and had no other trouble until they were over the city itself.

"Then we were hit by flak," the pilot said. "But I went on and bombed. The port engine, I found, was rapidly getting hotter and to prevent it seizing and probably catching fire I feathered the air screw and stopped the engine. There seemed to be little chance of getting such a long way back, but we set course for home and hoped for the best. Over much of the enemy country we were flying at about 5,000 feet and at this height we had to pass through a large belt of searchlights. We got through them all right, but later we had to come down even lower. When we reached the Dutch coast I decided to attempt the crossing, though I thought our chances of reaching the English coast were very slight. All the way back the rest of the crew were jettisoning everything we could spare. Eventually we landed at the first aerodrome after crossing the coast, with very little petrol to spare. Not one of us received a scratch, though the bomber was peppered with shrapnel holes throughout. On landing I found the dinghy had been shot away, and I got rather a shock when I thought how we might have had to come down in the sea."

The observer of a Wellington had a very different story to tell. He had been on 42 raids before, but this he described as "one of the best nights I have ever had."

"Everything went like clockwork," he added. "Navigation was O.K.. The searchlights didn't worry us unduly, 'flak' was not too bad; you could see everything perfectly, and we had no trouble with fighters. We went straight in, found what we were looking for and came straight out. You couldn't ask for anything better than that."

Another Wellington came home with 12 holes in the fuselage and wings. The rear-turret controls were cut by "flak", one turret door was shot off, and the rear-gunner's parachute harness, life-saving suit, tunic, and shirt were torn by a shell splinter.
