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TUESDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER.

FOR COMBINED PRESS

FURTHER EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT LEROS BATTLE

From Marsland Gander, Press Eyewitness,

Leros,

Friday.

German Junkers in groups of four to seven attacked at intervals of a quarter of an hour or so in an effort to crack the defences by bombing. They did not succeed, as was shown by their reception.

I had to make hops in eight separate vessels. Twice we ran aground.

After a night of alarms, I was finally awakened at four o'clock by an orderly saying tensely, "an invasion fleet reported near the island, sir." I climbed to the top of a hill and watched seven invasion craft behind a smokescreen creeping southward past Alinda Bay. On being shelled by our shore guns, they sheered off and circled the island. One enemy vessel which sneaked audaciously into Alinda Bay was smothered by our fire and put out of action. Five landing craft attempted to enter Dellapalma, but three were hit by shells and one sank.

Another enemy group which got ashore near Appelici was pushed back to the beach again. Near my vantage point was an Italian light A-A gun which gave one group of dive-bombers a nasty surprise by putting a good burst straight into the leading Ju.87 and thus diverted the bomber's attention to itself.

A most determined attempt by enemy invaders came on Friday afternoon, when a couple of dozen troop-carriers swooped through a hail of machine-gun fire to drop parachutists on the island. As I write, Stukas are beginning their customary contest with our land batteries. Hungry for prestige, the Germans are making every effort to capture the island. The Huns are not bothering about losses.

These days remind me of the siege of Tobruk - holes in the ground, tunnels between rocks are our homes. Everyone in the garrison is in strangely high spirits, but all wish we had fighters. Despite the tough time they are having, they are cheerful and giving a good account of themselves.

In an order of the day, the Officer commanding the troops has told the garrison that the world is watching them, and that after their hardships will come victory.

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MINISTRY OF INFORMATION