



WAR IN THE AIR (Continued)

FRONT TO BACK: Italian generals deplaning from an R.A.F. Bombay after capture in the Battle of Sidi Barrani.

now going slow. The brilliant Generals of the Army of the Nile are not going to waste their men in difficult assaults on a position which they hold in the hollow of their hands. Reinforcements have been streaming up from Egypt to strengthen the investing force, and the guns are methodically pounding the defences which the Italians had erected round their camp. The Italian military engineers are very good, but the British bombardment is increasing in weight, and the end is certain. Mobile troops have moved round to

the west of the place, and it is now virtually surrounded. The R.A.F. is joining wholeheartedly in the operation, but as the number of guns increases it is better to leave Bardia to them and to use the bombers on distant objectives.

The chief reply which the Italians are making is to send formations of half a dozen bombers with escorts of as many as 40 fighters to raid Sollum, with the object of damaging the jetties and so preventing the British from landing supplies there. The Hurricanes and Gladiators have been regularly tackling these raiders, and have shot down perhaps a dozen of them without loss to themselves.

The South Africans, Rhodesians, and others have continued to harass Italian positions in East Africa, often destroying enemy aircraft on the ground. The numbers seen in that position have not been large, but probably there are by now not a great number of Italian machines left in that part of the war area.

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Longmore, Commander-in-Chief of the R.A.F. in the Middle East, has received the following telegram from General Metaxas, the Greek Prime Minister: "I send you my warmest wishes for the New Year and desire to express the hope that all concerned with the glorious British Royal Air Force in the Middle East will continue their victories until the complete eclipse of our mutual enemy." In reply the Air Chief Marshal cabled: "I am most grateful for the good wishes which you sent to me and to our airmen of the Middle East, which we cordially reciprocate. We are proud to be the allies of Greece. The fortitude of her

schmitt 109s were coming up from below and astern, but our aircraft climbed into the clouds and left the enemy behind. Other targets attacked in the Low Countries were the German oil store at Rotterdam and docks at Ijmuiden. Throughout the raids our bombers were constantly fired on by anti-aircraft guns from both land and sea.

At Flushing a *Flak* (anti-aircraft) ship was bombed from under 500ft. After a stick of bombs had fallen the ship was seen to be down by the stern and listing to port.

Ceaseless activity by our reconnaissance machines, to be followed by prompt and heavy bombing raids, is now the order of the day, for the suspicion is general that Hitler may perhaps attempt an invasion of Great Britain in the near future. It may or may not be significant that on January 1 an unidentified machine dropped bombs in various parts of eastern Eire. Three persons were killed and two badly hurt. An incendiary picked up near the Curragh was found to be German.

The Southern Theatre of War

BOTH the Allied advances against the Italians are now moving slowly. The weather in Albania has been very severe, and both Italians and Greeks have suffered hardships. The latter are now a long way from their base, and it must be terribly difficult to get supplies up to them. The Italians are finding their seaport bases less useful than they were a time ago, because of the attentions of the R.A.F. and the Greek bombers. On New Year's Eve the port of Valona was raided by the R.A.F. for the twenty-third time. Weather conditions were bad, but all bombs were observed to fall in the target area, and considerable damage was caused. Enemy fighters intercepted our aircraft, and in the ensuing engagement one of the former was badly damaged. One of our aircraft failed to return to its base.

On the preceding night R.A.F. bombers visited Taranto, Naples, and the harbour of Palermo in Sicily. The Middle East Communique said that at Taranto naval units were the objective. Everyone knows what Italian naval units are now undergoing repair at Taranto, and it is obvious tactics to interfere with the repairs as much as possible. On that night 11 bombs were seen to fall round the targets.

Round Bardia likewise things are



PASTORAL SETTING: An R.A.F. armourer setting bomb fuses in Greece.