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LANDING ON PANTELLERIA.

Pantelleria was occupied within twenty-two minutes of the time that the white flags of surrender were seen.

Everything lay in twisted chaos, torn and rent beyond belief; the first instance where an enemy bastion has been conquered from sea and air. As one correspondent put it, "it was as though someone had stirred the whole place up with a gigantic spoon". Our occupation met with very little resistance. As the assault landing craft drew in they pushed right up to the jetty, and within a few minutes our forces were establishing themselves. Feeble opposition was encountered in the hills, but near the port everything had been utterly crushed.

British soldiers began moving among deserted Italian positions, picking their way through tumbled piles of rubble. Our tremendous bombardment had made the conquest of Pantelleria a swift one.

Headed by a large white flag, a column of Italian Garrison troops threaded its way towards the beach. Over mountains of brick and plaster, groups of dusty, shabby men began popping out of hiding places carrying their emblems of surrender. Some ten thousand bewildered troops, their nerves tormented by days of bombing; hungry, thirsty and lacking fighting spirit, were obviously glad when the end came.

A pathetic attempt to win favour. The formless heaps of metal must once have been ships. Over all hangs the black smoke of a burning petrol dump. Casualties among the civilian population were fortunately light. This island, like Malta, is made of

volcanic rock, which is honeycombed with galleries and air raid shelters. Their underground nightmare at an end, the people of Pantelleria are shepherded away from the shambles to places of rest and meagre comfort in the hills. These dazed and white-faced people share the food and water our men had brought along.

This may, of course, be the donkey which caused our only casualty. The evacuation of enemy prisoners was soon entered upon. Rounding up proceeded without interruption as the island was methodically cleared of Axis forces.

Mussolini didn't count on that happening so soon.

Swift on the heels of destruction came the work of clearing up the damage. Those indispensable giants, the Bulldozers, pushing small mountains of rubble out of the way as roads are opened up for our transport vehicles. The whole face of Pantelleria has been obliterated. Already Sicily is receiving like treatment. To halt it the Italians must accept unconditional surrender.

All praise to the men who have planted themselves on this stepping stone to Italy.

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