

# SICILY BATTLE COMES TO END AFTER 38 DAYS

## Resistance by Axis Stops When Messina Falls to Americans

By DANIEL DE LUCE

**Algiers, Aug. 17 (AP).—**The 38-day battle for Sicily ended today with the fall of Messina to American troops who stormed through the hillside streets of the ancient city and then established contact with the British 8th Army coming up from the south, Allied headquarters announced tonight.

Axis resistance ceased. The stirring finish, however, only appeared to have set the stage for the next operations against Europe.

Almost simultaneously with the announcement of the end of the Sicilian campaign, a large formation of four-motored bombers reached across the Mediterranean from recently established bases and gave Southern France its first bombing.

Istres Le Tube and Salon, the latter northwest of Marseille, were blasted in a round trip which involved at least 1,000 miles.

A special headquarters communique announcing Messina's capture said simply:

"American troops captured Messina early this morning. Some artillery fire is being directed on the city from the Italian mainland."

### Fire From Mainland.

The Germans, nervously blowing up installations on the exposed toe of Italy in apparent fear of an extension of Allied amphibious operations, began pouring fire into Messina from 15-inch and other batteries stationed on the mainland across the two-mile wide Straits not long after Messina fell this morning.

The Americans rushed up the heaviest artillery in their field batteries and duelled with the Germans.

Among Allied soldiers, airmen and seamen who were smashing deep into Italy's defenses, the question was "where do we go from here?"

From the Sicilian springboard

Gen Dwight D. Eisenhower had a choice of numerous objectives, ranging from the shores of Southern France to the shores of Greece, with vulnerable Italy squarely in the middle.

The entire Sicilian campaign had hardly cost more Allied lives than the final three weeks of the operations in North Africa, and each of the outfits engaged had emerged ready for new and harder tests.

There was no announcement on the number of prisoners taken.

(The Canadian forces did not take part in the final phase of the Sicilian campaign.)

### Claim All Evacuated.

The Germans conceded that the battle for Sicily was over and declared in their broadcast communique that all their forces had been evacuated even while Allied headquarters waited for word that the last disorganized and dejected enemy bands had been mopped up.

The latest reports said soldiers of Maj.-Gen. Lucian K. Truscott's American 3rd Division were crushing the last flickering resistance in hand-to-hand battle with trapped enemy nests in the city of 192,000 while the Germans in the fading hours of dawn were desperately striving to evacuate remaining troops.

In this task the enemy had got a break Sunday night because an almost complete eclipse of the moon permitted many to get away on the 15-minute motor boat ride across two miles of water to Italy even though Allied warships swarmed at the northern entrance to the channel and swept through in repeated efforts to break up the movement.

Already 155-millimetre artillery—the American "long toms"—duelled with 15-inch enemy batteries across the strait, while British destroyers had sighted the flame and smoke of German demolitions on the south coast of the Italian toe.

### Four Landings Made.

In the last 10 days the Americans and British had executed four amphibious landings behind the Axis lines on both Sicilian coasts. These demolitions were the first indication that the Germans were making preparations to withdraw farther north up the Italian peninsula in case the Allies' sea-borne operations are extended to the mainland in pursuit of the escaped foe.

(Rome radio, in a broadcast recorded by the CBC in Ottawa, said a large Allied invasion fleet of barges, laden with troops and tanks, had been sighted off Catania, East Sicilian port.

Capt. Ludwig Sertorius, German radio commentator, said Allied ships, hitherto employed in the Eastern Mediterranean, had been observed concentrated in several North African and Sicilian ports, leading to the assumption that "new landing operations are to be started again in the Western Mediterranean.")

British and American naval concentrations in the Mediterranean were the most impressive of the war, and they had laid firm hold of

the Italian toe with bombardments, patrols and submarine raids which

reached from Cape Rizzuto to the heel of the boot to the Gulf of Policastro, 100 miles south of Naples.

### Full Air Power.

The full strength of the 1st West African and Middle East forces was thrown into the struggle of roads, bridges, railway airdromes in Southern Italy effort to pin the enemy's Sicilian garrison into helples on exposed beaches. These al powerful air fleets were steadily increased by new planes

When the next operation against Europe is undertaken it is to be backed up by even more powerful land, sea and air forces ever before, and with the key Sicily in their hands the Allies strike anywhere from Southern France to the Balkans.

The vanguard of Gen. Truscott's division reached the outskirts of Messina at 8 p.m. Monday fought its way into the streets hours later.

### Last Rearguard Wiped Out.

The last brief rearguard resistance before Messina was reached stamped out at Spadafora Santino, eight miles to the west.

It was an almost bloodless mile sprint from Milazzo, where Americans were reported yesterday to the goal. The Germans were given opportunity to scatter usual minefields or carry out demolitions. A German truck was captured enroute.

A third amphibious operation—the American 7th Army in readiness, the landing of sea-borne forces at Milazzo yesterday morning, cleared the way for this spectacular dash.

Meanwhile, the stage was set for the approach of the British 8th Army of Gen. Sir Bernard Montgomery from the south by a fourth landing, a Commando operation, which set the British vanguard down at Scalpta, only eight miles south of Messina.

Italian forces reported detailed to hold off Gen. Montgomery thus were caught in a narrow bit of seashore.

The main British force was at Santa Teresa di Riva, about 20 miles south of Messina, after repulsing a counter-attack.

### Port Shelled, Vessels Sunk.

The feverish activity of Allied naval forces, announced in today's communique, included a bombardment of Scalea on the Gulf of Policastro in which 1,000 shells were sent screaming into the targets in 20 minutes, the sinking of a heavily armored lighter and two escort craft off Cape Bonifati, to the south, and another blasting of Vibo Valentia Marina, still further south.

British warships put to flight a

formation of enemy torpedo boats units carried out a similar mission at the northern entrance to Messina Strait.

One of the heaviest single air operations was that by Middle East American heavy bombers, large formations of which dropped 150 tons of bombs on the big air base of Foggia, the airdromes of Tortorella and San Nicola, and satellite fields in Southern Italy.

### 43 Planes Shot Down.

The bombers stirred up a hornet's nest of experienced Axis fighters, nearly 100 of them, but shot down at least 43. The raid cost eight bombers.

Viterbo airdrome, 45 miles north of Rome, also was hit hard by Northwest African bombers.

But the main effort was against Axis communications. At least 10 evacuation barges were smashed to bits and 16 others damaged. Four merchant ships were torpedoed, some so badly as to be considered sunk, in forays which reached from near Imperia on the west side of the Gulf of Genoa, past the mouth of the Tiber, to 35 miles north of Naples.

(The Admiralty in London also announced the sinking of nine ships by submarines, operating in waters around Italy.)

Air commanders said the Germans and Italians had lost nearly 2,000 airplanes in the effort to defend Sicily since July 1—1,100 of the aircraft captured on airdromes since the invasion began at dawn July 10.

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