

Italian Prisoners Weep at Americans' Gifts of Food

Tunisia Front Newsmen Find Fascists Hungry, Spiritless

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WITH THE AEF ON THE TUNISIA FRONT, Mar. 21.—(Delayed)—I never have seen soldiers with less offensive spirit than the Italians who have been captured in the American push on this mid-Tunisia front. Although their losses are understood to have been light, more than 1000 prisoners have been counted as I write this.

Italians who were assigned to the defense of key hill positions surrendered in droves as the U. S. attack intensified. Through this spiritless Italian resistance, American armor and crack infantry have pushed two-pronged drives miles ahead toward the coast of the Gulf of Gabes.

Captive Tears

Many of the Italians had been without food for two days. Their water was exhausted. Some of the captives shamelessly wept as the Americans offered them food and cigarets.

It was astonishing to find that the soldiers, many of them from the Bersaglieri who have been desert fighting for years, were so dispirited. I learned that many Italian units on this front have unusually large military police elements—mainly composed of Germans.

Allied planes have been filling the sky all day.

The Germans, who have shown little air strength and little disposition to put their planes into the sky, finally are using fighters and dive-bombers in an effort to stem the American advance.

A Dogfight

But American fighters—besides their regular chore of escorting medium and heavy bombers, which relentlessly pound the enemy's positions and airfields—are taking on every Axis formation which appears.

One dogfight which I saw weaving and twisting in the sky overhead, resulted in U. S. fighter pilots downing most of a formation of 20 Nazi divebombers and escorting Messerschmitt fighters. Others were damaged and the Americans came out of the battle without a loss.

On the plains below, the scream of diving planes and the roar of aerial battle frightened herds of camels, which milled in panic in the fields.

Whenever the Germans had a chance, they come strafing down the roads trying to machinegun artillery and infantry posi-

Hungry Fascists

tions. But from what I have seen, they are running into a heavier fire most of the time than they can dish out.

Almost every hour, high-flying formations of our bombers have been drumming overhead.

The U. S. attacks—both armored and infantry—were under way before dawn. The tanks were slowed up by extensive mining, but the booby traps were cleared so quickly by special American equipment that their progress must have dumbfounded the Italians. Their guns in the heights, controlling the Gafsa-Maknassy road were silenced with no great difficulty.

Unless he is planning a counterattack, perhaps in the region of Faid Pass, the enemy now must realize that his only hope of stopping this powerful armored advance is to throw in his own tank forces.



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