

BISMARCK

P.I. - Lunoco. Tuesday, May 27, 1941.

This was the biggest day ^{of} with news of naval warfare since the Battle of Jutland a quarter of a century ago. There was no radio when that clash occurred between the fleets of Great Britain and the Kaiser's Germany. So today ranks as the greatest of all for radio news about battle at sea. There are two phases of this - the sinking of the BISMARCK and the naval and air battle off Crete.


The sinking of the BISMARCK takes precedence - with a turn of startling drama. The story was breathtaking when the news first flashed this morning. But that was only the half of it - only a fraction of what the full account brings us tonight. It often happens that way - early brief reports giving us merely the central event and little hint of the fullness of the drama. That develops later. Today it came with the complete and official report by the British Admiralty.

It turns out now that the BISMARCK was spotted days before the action began - was sighted by British scout planes in the fjords of Norway. ~~The scouts of the air reported the presence of the great new Nazi battleship so far north. The London Admiralty suspected~~ ^{It was easy} ~~to guess~~ that the BISMARCK was bent on a dash in the North Atlantic to attack

convoy carrying United States war supplies, ^{and} ~~across, and the British~~
~~sea giant went steaming in~~ a concerted ~~ix~~ attempt ^{was made} to intercept the
raider. R.A.F. planes, having spotted the BISMARCK off the Norwegian
shore, did not desist in their task of scouting. ^{It} Here's a surprising
thing revealed in the late admiralty account. The scout planes
shadowed the great Nazi battleship all the way from Norway to the
waters between Iceland and Greenland - the scene of action where the
BISMARCK sank the ~~hm~~ HOOD, in one of the most startling episodes of
war.

Today's Admiralty account gives us the full story of that
episode. The naval action began last Friday - the day before the
BISMARCK sank the HOOD. Two British cruisers, engaged in the hunt
for the Nazi battleship, spotted their quarry. A blizzard was raging
in that northern latitude of Iceland and Greenland. The ~~British~~
cruisers, ~~the~~ NORFOLK and SUFFOLK, ^{spied} spotted the giant BISMARCK at a
range of six miles. There were squalls of sleet and snow and mist,
and the visibility was bad - sometimes only a mile. But the
NORFOLK and SUFFOLK shadowed the BISMARCK. They couldn't venture
to exchange shots with the pride of the German Navy - would have been

sunk by heavier guns. So they merely kept the battleship located -
all Friday night. And they sent wireless messages calling bigger
ships to the scene. ^{TR} On Saturday bigger ships arrived, one ~~of~~ the
biggest in the world, the forty-two thousand ton battle cruiser
HOOD. With the HOOD was the PRINCE OF WALES, a sister ship of the
KING GEORGE, [^] ~~the~~ *the Prince of Wales is* a thirty-five thousand ton battleship recently
commissioned, the latest thing in naval power, as modern as the
BISMARCK [^] itself.

Late^r on Saturday, the HOOD and the PRINCE OF WALES came
within gunfire range of their enemy, and the naval action immediately
began - brief and astounding. The Admiralty story says that as the
salvos of giant shells were exchanged, the BISMARCK was seen to be
on fire. But then, however, came that devastating blow, what
London calls - an unlucky hit. ^Q ~~The~~ shell from the BISMARCK exploded
the powder magazine of the HOOD, and the greatest warship on earth
was blown to bits. The PRINCE OF WALES too was struck by a German
shell, and slightly damaged. The BISMARCK thereupon broke off the
action and fled. ^{TR} ~~But~~ still the battleship was shadowed - by those
same cruisers, the NORFOLK and SUFFOLK. 

→ Presently, they saw that the BISMARCK was joined by another German warship, the armored cruiser PRINCE EUGEN. The BISMARCK appeared to have slowed down - probably because of having been hit by a shell in the fight. The battleship PRINCE OF WALES was in pursuit, and caught up. There was a brief action, an exchange of shell fire, but the BISMARCK and PRINCE EUGEN got away - it was night, Saturday night. The visibility was poor, and the BISMARCK seemed to have escaped.

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Meanwhile, the sinking of the HOOD had startled the world and shocked the British Empire. The extent to which Britain was dismayed is illustrated by the supreme effort made to catch the German battleship and avenge the HOOD. From all quarters of the ocean, British warships came at full steam. ^{It} It was probable that the BISMARCK would try to escape across to the coast of France, ^{now} held by the Nazis. The naval might of Britain converged toward that area. The home fleet went speeding, headed by the new battleship GEORGE THE FIFTH - its flagship. The Western Mediterranean fleet left Gibraltar at full steam. Leading it - the thirty-two thousand ton battle cruiser RENOWN. And the vessels in the chase included the

monster battleships RODNEY and ~~RODNEY~~ RAMILLES, which were on Atlantic
convoy duty but abandoned their convoy to take part in the hunt
for the BISMARCK. ~~It was~~ the greatest hunt ever staged on this
earth. Relentless quest for vengeance by the preponderant part
of the British Navy.

The fleeing BISMARCK evaded that enormous dragnet
throughout Sunday, but then on Monday morning the craft was spotted
by a British scout plane - an American-built aircraft, a Catalina
flying boat, a unit of the Canadian air force. There was swift
action in the air. Fighter planes from the BISMARCK took off to
attack, but the Catalina flying boat got away - lost contact with
the BISMARCK. ~~But~~ meanwhile the scout plane had wirelessly the
position of the fugitive battleship. The result was that a few hours
later the BISMARCK was spotted by planes operating from the British
aircraft carrier ARK ROYAL - the one so often reported sunk by the
Germans. The plane^s shadowed the battleship and the British cruiser
SHEFFIELD came upon the scene - and continued the shadowing. ~~the~~ *Dogged dogged*

Pursuit. Then
~~BISMARCK~~ ~~xxxxx~~ And the ~~ROYAL~~ ARK ROYAL launched an attack by its
torpedo carrying planes. The BISMARCK was seen to be hit by two

torpedoes. One struck the steering gear and blasted it. The ^{ship} ~~BISMARCK~~ ^{became} ~~was~~ unmanageable, ^{and was seen} ~~seemed~~ to make two complete circles.

^{By} ~~And~~ now swarms of the British fleet were descending ~~‡~~ upon the helpless giant, unmanageable ^{-- going} ~~- going~~ around in circles. British

destroyers dashed to the attack, hit the BISMARCK with more

^{HP} torpedoes. Then heavy British warships came onto the scene and

opened with salvos of shell fire. The BISMARCK was ^{ered} ~~battered~~ by a

rain of explosive missiles, and turned into a shattered hulk

of steel. But still the Nazi battleship did not sink -

magnificently built was the BISMARCK. ^{HP} ^{came} At last the final blow -

the cruiser DORCHESTER was ordered to administer the ^{coup de grace} ~~final stroke~~.

The DORCHESTER sank the BISMARCK with torpedoes. ^{She went down at} ~~in~~ one minute

past eleven o'clock this morning - four hundred miles west of ~~the~~

~~port~~ of Brest.

Thus ended the most intense sea drama of the present war -

far more spectacular than the sinking of the GRAF SPEE. Britain

has lost the greatest warship on earth - the HOOD. Germany loses

a far more important naval unit - more modern, more formidable.

In relative misfortune, Germany has much the worse of it. Britain

loses one of fifteen capital ships. Germany loses one of three major craft, not counting two ^{rocket} battleships. Moreover, Admiral Luetjens, Commander of the BISMARCK, was Germany's Number One sea fighter - best known of Nazi naval commanders. Whether he survived the battle as a prisoner is not known, but probably he went down with his ship. No stories have yet come in about possible survivors of the BISMARCK - though some of the crew may have got off the sinking boat, and may have been rescued.

One may ask - why did the BISMARCK undertake so hazardous a gamble as to venture so far across the Atlantic - that realm of the British fleet? Possibly the answer is, those aboard the battleship never guessed that they were being shadowed by British scouting planes from the moment they left the fjords of Norway.

CRETE

The naval and air battle off Crete is still continuing -- and today brought more news of that incredible action.

The day's tidings began with a report by the London Admiralty, an announcement of losses sustained in previous fighting. London concedes the sinking of two cruisers and four destroyers by air attack, and the bombing of two battleships and several other cruisers -- these not damaged seriously. The losses are severe, but not as great as the Nazis claim.

Berlin has reported the sinking of eleven British cruisers, eight destroyers and a half dozen other craft. Twenty-five British warships sunk in the Battle of Crete -- says Berlin. The Nazi figures are several times as large as those announced by London.

The two cruisers that were lost are the GLOUCESTER ~~XX~~ and FIJI, ships of nine thousand eight thousand tons respectively.

The destroyers are the JUNO, GREYHOUDN, KASHMIR and KELLY.

The destroyer KELLY was a flotilla leader, and was commanded by one of the top-ranking personalities of England -- Lord Louis Mountbatten, cousin of King George the Sixth.

His father is an Admiral of the fleet, the Marquis of Milford-Haven. His mother -- Princess Victoria, granddaughter of Queen

Victoria. Lord Louis Mountbatten, of royal rank, earned renown as a naval officer in the war. A year ago his boat, the KELLY, was torpedoed, and the Germans announced it as having been sunk. The KELLY, indeed, was nearly broken in two by the torpedo blast, but it got back to port in the teeth of heavy air bombings. For that exploit, Lord Louis was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for Gallantry in Action. His boat, the KELLY, so nearly destroyed, was repaired, put back into service and sent to the Mediterranean. Now it has been sunk in the Battle off Crete. There's no word of whether the cousin of King George was saved, but it is known that most of the crews of the lost British warships were rescued - picked up by comrade craft in the wild flurry of the battle of ships and planes.

Today's news brought the first eyewitness account of the giant clash of the fleets of the ocean and the air. A major phase of this was when a powerful squadron of British battleships, cruisers and destroyers, went into action. Aboard one of the British battleships was a correspondent of the United Press, Grattan-McGroarty. He went through the naval and air battle and now sends us his account.

"The three day naval engagement," he writes, "was undoubtedly the heaviest aerial attack on ships in history." He relates that the mission of the British squadron was to give aid to two cruisers which had been damaged by air bombs. The ships pushed through the strait between the western end of Crte and the Greek mainland. There they were bombed by the Nazi air force, bombed constantly for more than fourteen hours. Hundreds of enemy bombers of all description, says the American newspaperman, attacked incessantly from five thirty A.M. until eight fifteen P.M. For more than two hours the Junkers Eighty-Eights dogged the fleet every mile that it moved. "Then," he goes on, "a new and larger air fleet took up the fight. Thereafter more and more enemy planes filled the sky. The sky was murky," he explains, "and enemy planes could hide in the clouds until they dived at us."

He tells of a destroyer buckling in the middle and purging out great clouds of smoke, after a hit that apparently blew up a magazine. Nazi bombers, he says, raced in for the kill, and dumped bombs among seamen struggling in the water and then swooped down with machine guns going. "We saw a cruiser set afire by a rain of bombs, but her guns roared defiantly despite the flames - until the crew was

forced to abandon ship off Crete." "Another cruiser was hit," McGroarty writes, "and sank as her crew abandoned ship. We were advised that another British destroyer had been sunk."

Many enemy aircraft were destroyed by fleet guns, the account continues. The Nazi losses were heavy, but they pressed the attack. And the McGroarty account comes to a breathless climax - telling of a dive bomb attack against the battleship aboard which he was observing the action." Suddenly," he relates, "three Messerschmitt bomber-fighters flashed from the clouds with incredible speed, and dived within a few hundred yards of this battleship before the guns could be turned on them. They dropped their bombs - causing superficial damage and a small fire. "By this time," he summarizes, "every ship in the fleet was engaged with ten or more enemy planes, and twenty-four attacked our craft."

Cairo insists that the Germans have not been able to transport troops to Crete by sea -- save perhaps for a few small vessels that may have slipped through the naval blockade. A British naval officer puts it in these words:- "Our squadrons have chased down almost every enemy ship, and blown it to pieces or rammed it." There's another weird element - warships ramming vessels carrying troops

Our account of naval activity in the Battle off Crete concludes with a dispatch stating that today heavy guns of the British fleet shelled German forces operating near the shore of the island.

The invasion itself is progressing. Nazi forces brought by sky are pushing on. Berlin today claimed a general advance. Cairo tells us that the British and Greek defenders have fallen back. The Germans, based at the Malemi airdrome, launched an attack which carried them through fortified positions of the British and the Greeks. A counter-attack failed to dislodge them. They maintain their positions and capture still more ground, "necessitating", says Cairo, "the withdrawal of our troops to positions in the rear." The Nazi forces in Crete are growing larger all the time. The Cairo communique concludes with this statement. "German reinforcements continued to reach the island by air." Getting tanks too. The Nazis launched their assault on Crete by the sky route, and their aviation carried army is driving on with the support of aviation alone.

END

On this dramatic day of war at sea there's little time left to tell any other news. In Washington all political attention is focused on President Roosevelt's fireside chat tonight. There are all sorts of speculations -- and taut suspense. It's to be one of the most important of presidential pronouncements.

As a last minute move before the fireside chat a committee of non-interventionists in Congress sent a letter to the President. In this letter they state the following:- "We find that over eighty percent of the people are opposed to any course which will take this nation into the European war. "

On the other hand, the lawmakers championing Aid to Britain are urging the President to take a decisive course in the war crisis. All of which focuses attention on the hour of Half PastTen tonight

And now, as I leave for Canada, here's Hugh.