

935 4.15.P.M. Ph. S. ...
18/12/42.
NORTH AFRICAN FRONT --- OPERATIONS IN TUNISIA.

Safe arrival of supplies and reinforcements in French North Africa; Algiers --- and the harbour at Bone, near the border of Tunisia. After the first flush of success in the occupation of French Morocco and Algeria the British First Army has had hard going on the last lap towards Tunis and Bizerta, --- a reminder that the soldiers have plenty of work to do yet before victory is won. But it has been a wonderful achievement to land a complete army, with air support and armour and all its complicated needs, in a strange land so many miles from home. (X)

Some of the cameramen who filmed this record ~~had~~ had an al fresco lunch by the roadside between jobs at Tebourba; they met some French Commandos clearing up and comparing notes on their various weapons; ~~other~~ other French troops nearby are digging defence positions. The (cont) Luftwaffe has been very active in this area; airfields had to be built before our fighters could operate so far forward and the First Army had to hold on through some tough dive bombing.

German planes bombed this small town of Tebourba for three days almost without a pause: causing damage to the church and the war memorial, and to houses and cafes.

We suffered some casualties here; but as so often happens amid all the beastliness of war a heart of gold turned up in an unexpected place --- an aged Arab who worked untiringly with the R.A.M.C.

All civilians were evacuated as the town was left in ruins; it became a military centre.

NORTH AFRICAN FRONT.

Some prisoners were taken - 2 - thought not, but in large numbers:

One Italian and two German paratroops were captured here; but most of the paratroop action in this campaign has been carried out by ours: a grand change from the days of Holland and Crete. It's a strange world --- peaceful scenes sandwiched in between furious dive-bombing attacks --- and the inevitable joke about living quarters.

This padre escaped under mortar fire from a wood near Medjez el Bab: ~~and here a dog-fight overhead disturbed the peace.~~

One of our Spitfires is shot down. ~~This is the River Medjerba at Medjez el Bab; on the bank a Bofors Light ack-ack crew is on guard against the enemy's air attacks.~~

And then again the life of the town resumes its interrupted course.

These are the hills near Mateur in which the Nazis had dug in strong positions; this sector has been the scene of heavy fighting.

In the streets of Sedjenane an ~~important~~ impromptu quartermaster's stores was issuing replacements of kit to Commando troops before they went back into action near Bizerta. ~~And a mobile patrol passing a signpost ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ was reconnoitring for suitable artillery positions. These trenches were about a mile and a half from forward enemy machine-gun posts.~~

More aerial activity: but in this later stage we had been building up our own air striking power. Twin-body Lightning fighters are taking a hand overhead, while the armour rumbles up into position. ~~Boston's ~~are~~ are bombing enemy communications; the going is ~~hard~~ and we may still have setbacks; ~~but in the main we're hitting the enemy head instead of just being hit.~~~~

but ~~we~~ at least we're turning the Nazis out of places - & after 3 years of the other thing that's good news!