

The World Observer

April 30th, 1940

20 cents

Italy declares war on Britain

Pronged assault on Egypt

In a combined naval, air and land assault on the British controlled kingdom of Egypt, Italy delivered a hard blow to the Commonwealth. While Italy's land offensive along the Mediterranean coast towards Alexandria could be contained by a delaying action fight by the British 8th Army, the amphibious landing of 3 Italian corps at Port Said could not be prevented.



Italian troops on the advance

British caught by surprise

Tensions between the two European powers increased with the strict search policy of Italian merchant ships at Suez canal en Britain declared closing of the waterway for Italian arms and warships.



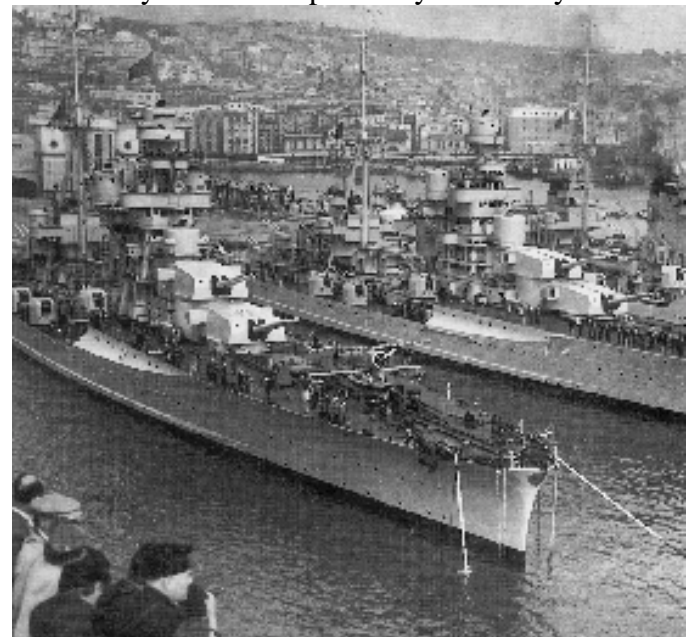
Port Said after it was captured by Italian troops

Italian dictator Benito Mussolini, who made his inclination towards Britain's war opponent Adolf Hitler all too obvious last month, tried to convince the world that his action is not to be seen as taking side for Germany but purely an Italo-British dispute over Egypt and the channel rights.



HMS Ark Royal, the star of Britain's carrier fleet, fell victim to the Italian surprise strike

A strategy occurred to the British task force at Port Said. After an aerial strike at the port, the battleship Valiant and other warships took hits, preventing a fast sortie against the coming Italian fleet. When the Italian troops appeared before the almost undefended harbor, the British garrison could only surrender. The British then self-destructed their ships before they could be captured by the enemy.



Italian Cruiser Zara at Taranto

Britain strikes back at Matapan

After their successful strike on Port Said, the Italian Fleet was chased by the larger British fleet stationed at Alexandria. Only 36 hours after their strategic retreat to protect their supply lines to the landed troops, British cruisers spotted the main fleet near Cape Matapan. After several day and night battles, the British sank two Italian battleships, the Leonardo da Vinci and Conte di Cavour plus more than eight cruisers of the national hero Guiseppe Garibaldi Class.



Conte diCavour on her last mission

The Royal Navy reported the loss of several light cruisers and some light damage on their ships. "The British are never lame to retaliate", read a note from the British ambassador Sir Lionel Porridge to the Italian authorities at Rome before he took a plane to London. The British have retracted their embassy personnel from Italy and ejected Italian diplomats, arrested all Italian citizens in Commonwealth territories.



British battleships succeed at Cape Matapan

Asia goes up in flames

Japan launches massed assault on Chinese positions in Kwantung. Canton conquered.

Japan sought a decision in her most striving effort to achieve dominance over the Southern Asian sphere. Almost the entire Japanese Kwantung army was in movement this month, fighting more than 10 individual battles in a number of Chinese provinces from Tsinan to Canton. Chinese resistance only held a centrsal position near Wuhan, where the Japanese are already extending deeply into Chinese territory. Military observers predict low chances for the Chinese without foreign aid if Japan is able to continue the pressure.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE JAPANESE INVASION OF ASIA, 1894-1938

1894-5: First Sino-Japanese war -- fledging Japanese navy defeats powerful Chinese fleet off Yalu River. Fortress of Port Arthur stormed. After the war, Japan seized Taiwan and S. Manchuria.

1910: Annexation of Korea.

1926: Hirohito becomes Emperor.

1931: Sept. 18 "The Mukden Incident" -- Bomb explosion under Japanese-owned express train in Manchuria. An excuse created by Japanese secret agent for Japanese troops to occupy Manchuria.

1932: Chinese boycott of Japanese goods leads to "battle of Shanghai"; Japanese aircraft carriers in action for the first time. League of Nations condemns Japanese aggression in Manchuria.

1933: Japan withdraws from League of Nations.

1934: Pu Yi -- former emperor of China -- becomes puppet emperor of Manchukuo (Manchuria).

1937: July. "The China Incident" -- a skirmish between Japan and Chinese troops at the Marco Polo Bridge (Lugouqiao), near Peking, sparks off a full scale invasion of China.

August. Japanese bombers make the first trans-oceanic raids in history -- from Taiwan and Kyushu to Nanking and Shanghai.

November. Imperial General Headquarters established in Tokyo (the Emperor, the Chiefs of the Army, and Naval General Staffs).

December The Nanking Massacre (Rape of Nanking) -- the Chinese capital sacked by Japanese troops. U.S. river gunboat Panay bombed and sunk near Nanking.

1938 December. Japan proclaims a "New Order in East Asia".

Bear conquers Wyborg

City decimated to rubbles. Populace fled.

The Russian main force in Karelia, consisting of the 1st Red Tank army with over 2,000 tanks and six infantry corps attacked the two Finnish corps defending the city since January. Russia prepared her offensive with a massive aerial bombardment and a two-day artillery barrage. Intense fighting also occurred in the air, where the Russians managed to achieve air superiority over the new Combined Scandinavian Airforce. A heated battle was also reported in the Baltic between Russian and Swedish warships.



Russian troops advance on Wyborg

Finnish morale unshakeable

Helsinki. Russian offers to settle the conflict on their terms were met with a firm rebuke by Scandinavian supreme commander Field Marshal Mannerheim.



Part of his letter to Stalin became official on his daily speech before soldiers. "Do you really believe that Finland will meekly accept your offers in light of your unprovoked and unannounced invasion of our country."

Finnish Ski corps retreats across the frozen lakes

Mannerheim, bold as ever, faced the Russians with justified demands for reparations. "We will negotiate with you no more until the last bolshevik soldier has left Scandinavian soil and the Soviet Republic

has paid reparations not less than \$40 000 000 to the Republic of Finland and \$10 000 000 to the Republic of Latvia."

Analysts wonder where the field marshal takes his confidence from, after the recent defeat. However until now the Swedish army has not stepped in, and the British volunteer corps is prepared for the defense of Helsinki.

Russians in Reval, Estonia

Despite a great deal of air support provided by Scandinavian planes for their hard-pressed Estonian brothers, Russian marshal Timoshenko's plan to single-handedly lash out against the Baltic States while at the same time restarting the offensive on Finland made firm progress.

Carl Gustaf von Mannerheim, Finnish CinC, patted his neighbors with a hearted speech, offering unidirectional military aid. "You also are the victim of unprovoked bolshevik aggression, although you are not a ratified member the UISS is pleased to offer you military and political assistance in the spirit of Scandinavian unity."

But the deal was made without the boss. Despite unexpected hardship due to the fierce resistance and air support of the Estonians, that hit the Russians rather unprepared, the sheer mass of the Russian soldiers won the day.

Italy joins in merchant war against Britain

Italian battleship Andrea Doria reportedly steamed up and down the Indian ocean, unhindered by the Royal Navy and wreaked havoc upon British cargoes bound for Europe. The Andrea Doria was officially on a people's friendship visit mission to Japan before war broke out.



Andrea Doria (archive picture)

Gneisenau sinks French convoy

German battlecruiser Gneisenau destroyed a French convoy near Dakar. The escort provided by three French cruisers soon collapsed after the Marseillaise took a direct hit from the German heavy artillery. French cruiser Georges Leygues escaped undamaged.



Gneisenau following sister ship Scharnhorst on Atlantic breakthrough before splitting course

The sinking of Battlecruiser Scharnhorst

The British admiralty has released a detailed report on the sinking of the Scharnhorst, the German battlecruiser that broke through the the Denmark Straits last month, together with sister ship Gneisenau and three German 'pocket battleships' of the Graf Spee class.



Scharnhorst was the queen of Kriegsmarine's ocean fleet

The Scharnhorst was spotted near the Bermudas by HMS Kent. A group of six British heavy cruisers began to chase Scharnhorst and forced her to battle. During the intense exchange of rounds, Scharnhorst sold its skin not cheap, damaging several Royal Navy ships severely. When the cruisers closed in for a torpedo run, HMS Cornwall took so much damage that it capsized and sunk very fast. But Scharnhorst could not avoid the same fate, taking several torpedo hits after much superficial damage by the cruisers' main artillery.

Italian note declaring war against the UK

Declaration of War

Considering the recent unilateral closing of the Suez Canal by the United Kingdom to Italian ships, which is in blatant disregard to international law and specifically to the Suez Canal Treaty, and which is causing a deep economic and strategic prejudice to Italy,

Considering the massive military build-up by the United Kingdom in Egypt and the recent advance of elite British tank corps to the Lybian border, destabilising the power structure in the region,

I, Benitto Mussolini, supreme leader of Italy and the Italian people, declare war on the United Kingdom in order to defend my nation's interests.

Italy will remain at war with the United Kingdom until the following conditions are met :

1. The U.K. formally recognises Italy's right to use the Suez Canal
2. The U.K. reduces its military presence in Egypt to a defensive nature.
3. A Council of Nations is called in which Italy can present its cause to the international community and a method is found to enforce the Suez Canal Treaty and free passage therein.
4. The U.K. pays reparations to Italy for the economic damage caused by its actions (amount to be determined by a neutral third party).

While Italy is acutely aware of the *delicate* situation in which most world powers are presently locked into, we do not wish our liberty nor our prosperity put into jeopardy by unilateral actions taken by a belligerent, haughty, arrogant super power.

While our forces do not span the globe like Britain's, while our nation is younger and has much to accomplish in terms of economic and technological development, I have every confidence in the Italian fighting man. Our cause is just.

I wish to restate that in no way are our actions directed or intended towards any other countries other than Great Britain. We hope that other nations, notably France, will understand our actions and support us.

Viva Italia !

Il Duce