

England Rushes Reinforcements To Middle East in Anticipation Of Winter Battles, Analyst Says

By KIRKE L. SIMPSON
Special to The Statesman

Implicit in utterly conflicting London and Rome accounts of recent sea-air battles in the Mediterranean is the obvious fact that heavy British reinforcements in men and fighting gear are being rushed eastward through those dangerous waters.

They may be destined to join battle with their Nazi foes, fighting beside Russian troops in defense of the Caucasus. Certainly they are designed to increase substantially the strength of British defense lines that now reach 2,000 miles or more, unbroken, from the Egyptian-Libyan frontier in the western desert.

Or they may be taking post for offensive action during the winter fighting season in the North African desert, providing events on the Russian-Nazi battle line warrant another British counter stroke against axis forces in Libya.

Prime Minister Churchill's recent intimation that his government had weighed unfavorably counter invasion proposals as a means of relieving pressure on Russia does not rule out that possibility.

Italian press comment indicates serious expectation of a new British attack in Libya. Hitler could not spare either the air power or the troops and tanks from his great adventure in Russia to prop his faltering axis mate anew in Africa, even if means of getting German reinforcements to the scene were available.

They are not, Churchill told parliament that while British sea losses had been cut during the last three months to a third of what they were in the preceding three months, British destruction of axis shipping had risen three-fold in the same period. And it was on Italian or Italian-used shipping in the Mediterranean that the axis tonnage losses fell most heavily.

Some British authorities claim that British sea and air power in the Mediterranean has been taking a steady 30 per cent toll or better of Italian craft employed in attempts to reinforce the axis army in Libya.

The fact that the British are still using the narrow Sicilian straits to pass important convoys eastward clearly indicates British naval control of the Mediterranean. The axis victory in Greece and taking of Crete has not worked out as Berlin and Rome hoped it would, apparently because of Hitler's plunge into the "crusade" against Russia.

At any rate, it seems clear that unless the Nazis carry the battle into the Caucasus soon and force the sending of powerful British imperial armies there to aid the Russians, the British soon will have forces available along the India-Egypt lifeline for offensive action.

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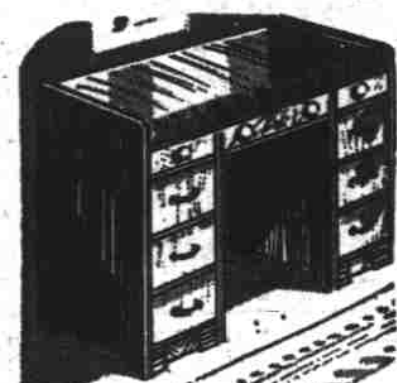
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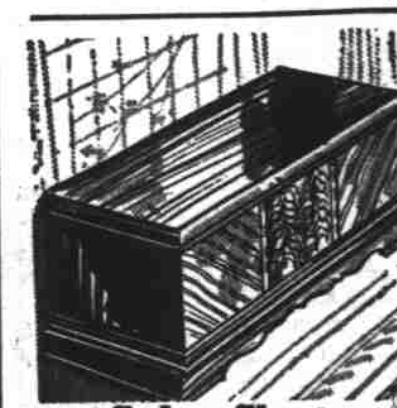


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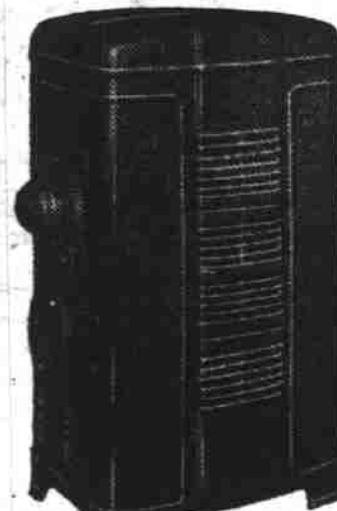
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