

Interpreting The War News

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Wherever else the allied diversion offensives against the axis may be building up, it seems obvious that the nazi leadership expects the first blow to fall in Egypt and is making frantic efforts to bolster that front.

The presence of Marshal Rommel in Berlin recently invited conjecture that he was there to demand reinforcement, particularly in air power. His African corps, stalled for months in the narrow Egyptian corridor, is in a perilous trap. The growing allied air superiority emphasized by Churchill the same day that

Roosevelt spoke has been nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the Egyptian Mediterranean theatre.

Tending to confirm the view that Rommel's mission to Berlin was to make urgent personal ap-

peal for help, even at the cost of withdrawing air or other forces from Russia, Cairo now reports a furious and sustained new axis air assault on Malta. A record one-day bag of enemy planes by Malta's defenders was one result. Seventy five axis ships were downed or damaged against five British.

That is a ratio of 15 to 1, a staggering loss. It seems clear that with the longer route across the eastern Mediterranean from Crete or Greece to Tobruk under constant blasting by long-range American as well as British bombers based in Egypt, the axis is again resorting to the short line from Sicily to supply and reinforce the African corps.

If that is true, and if a transfer of German air force to Africa for either offensive or defensive use is in progress, it must be from

the Russian front they are being withdrawn. That might account for the change in tactics at Stalingrad foretold by nazi broadcasters.

Moscow accounts of the fighting at Stalingrad for several days have made virtually no mention of German dive bombing. Berlin versions have stressed air operations not against Stalingrad itself; but against Russian communications across the Volga and in the Don-Volga corridor west of the river supporting the soviet relief offensive.

There is at least a suggestion that some part of the German air force concentrated against Stalingrad, particularly dive bombers, have been switched elsewhere. Their most probable destination would be Egypt, where allied preparations to take the offensive are well advanced.

Board Hears Proposals To Halt Fire

Several proposals providing a more adequate water system, for protection of the state flax shed area at the Oregon state penitentiary, were received by the state board of control at its meeting here Wednesday but definite action was deferred.

The proposals, prepared by the state fire marshal's office and state utilities commission, estimated the cost of this protection from \$16,000 to \$28,000. One proposal included a pipe line around the entire flax shed area and installation of additional hydrants. Fire fighting equipment was included in other proposals. State Treasurer Leslie M. Scott

suggested that a sprinkler system be installed in the flax mill. The cost of this improvement was estimated as high as \$20,000.

"The flax mill is the center of the state flax operation," Scott declared, "and it should have adequate protection against fire."

M. D. Wooley, superintendent of the state training school for boys, appeared before the board and suggested salary increases for a number of his employees aggregating \$4500 for the remainder of the current biennium.

Keeping some boys at the school for more than five months, the present average, and opening a fourth cottage at the school at the beginning of the next biennium also were discussed by the board. Wooley said such a program was necessary in event a large number of the boys were to be rehabilitated. He estimated that 80 per cent of the boys would

be kept in the school more than five months. Wooley's suggestions were referred to the state budget officer and secretary of the board of control to prepare a definite report for consideration at the next board meeting.

Lumber Board Opens Hearing

SEATTLE, Oct. 14-(AP)—In an informal atmosphere, the war labor board's new Pacific coast lumber commission heard representatives of both labor and employers Wednesday in the first of the wage dispute cases to come before it.

The case involves the Northwestern District Council of Lumber and Sawmill Workers (AFL) and the Employers' Industrial Ne-

gotiating Committee, affecting approximately 30,000 workers.

Both sides agreed to limit the hearing to two questions: whether wages in the industry should be raised from 82½ cents an hour to a minimum of \$1.05, as the union is asking, and, if the raise is granted under the commission's broad powers, whether it be retroactive to May 1 or September 1.

To expedite the hearing, four-man groups were named by each side to carry on the discussion of the issues.

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