



Fourth
PHASE MAP
Jan. 23 to Mar 26

LEGEND
 AXIS
 8th ARMY

AREA COVERED
 0 100 200 300
 SCALE OF MILES

AIR BLITZ
 MARCH 2nd

ADVANCE
 JAN. 24th

FALLS
 FEB. 7th

SGT. Nathan H. Schick

No Pause at Tripoli

WITH the city of Tripoli in the hands of the Allies, the Ninth U.S. Air Force paid tribute in speeches and awards to those whose exploits had played a large part in the winning of the Western Desert. While British and American flags waved over the fallen city, President Roosevelt and Mr. Winston Churchill were meeting in Casablanca, 1,500 miles to the west. No time was lost by the victorious Eighth Army for on the day following their triumphal entry into Tripoli, they again moved westwards.

Consequently, there was no pause in the Ninth's hard-hitting schedule. Its strengthening air weapons continued to pound retreating enemy columns west of Tripoli and operations against the Continent mounted on an ascending scale.

The Liberators continued relentlessly to deal out punishing blows on Naples, Crete, Messina, Palermo and Crotona. The aerial assault of these targets became more intensified as the Axis withdrew into southern Tunisia and small areas of western Tripolitania. And in Tunisia, near the coastal corridor which is the elbow of the historic French province, the striking power of the Ninth Air Force was also applied. Mitchells from the 12th Bombardment Group raked the Medenine area with explosives and Warhawks of the 57th Fighter Group attacked shipping off the Tunisian coast and dive-bombed the Tripolitanian port of Zuara.

On one of the now numerous Liberator raids on Naples harbor, three merchant vessels moored there were sent to the bottom. Scores of hits on the Massaniello and Vittorio Emanuel moles and along the waterfront left great fires blazing from one end of the harbor area to the other. Heavy black smoke again rose to great heights over the city.

The Liberators flew hundreds of miles over enemy territory approaching and leaving Naples without fighter escort at the cost of only one bomber shot down. That ship fell victim to a formidable force of fighters. It was shot down immediately over the target area and fell into Naples Bay after having dropped its bombs on the target. In return, two and possibly three ME-109's were shot down and others damaged.

General Timberlake, described the attack as one of the most successful yet carried out by the United States Air Force in the Middle East.

"It points to things to come," he said. "To reach a target like Naples you have to have heavy bombardment. To bomb it with precision you have to attack during daylight. You can't have fighter protection because your fighters can't fly that far and get back to their base.

