

Chronicle of a naval conflict : 1939 - 1945

This thematic exhibit examines the naval war which, so bitterly, was fought among Navies during the Second World War from 1st September, 1939, to 6th August 1945.

That day, the whole world witnessed, almost incredulously, the devastation of the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan, which practically sanctioned the dramatic return to peace.

As far as possible, postal documents and other philatelic materials narrate the events of that naval war connected to the great military events, both land and air, which determined its developments.

To do this and to better frame the described war events, the exhibit has been divided into five parts that examine the chronological events of this great maritime conflict that caused the loss of thousands of human lives.

The exhibit is not a hymn to war, but a warning for future generations so that similar conflicts never occur again.

At the same time it is also a tribute to the memory of all those sailors who, beyond the political beliefs leading them to confront each other, knew how to hold high the honour of their flags even in the darkest hours of their nation.

PLAN OF EXHIBIT

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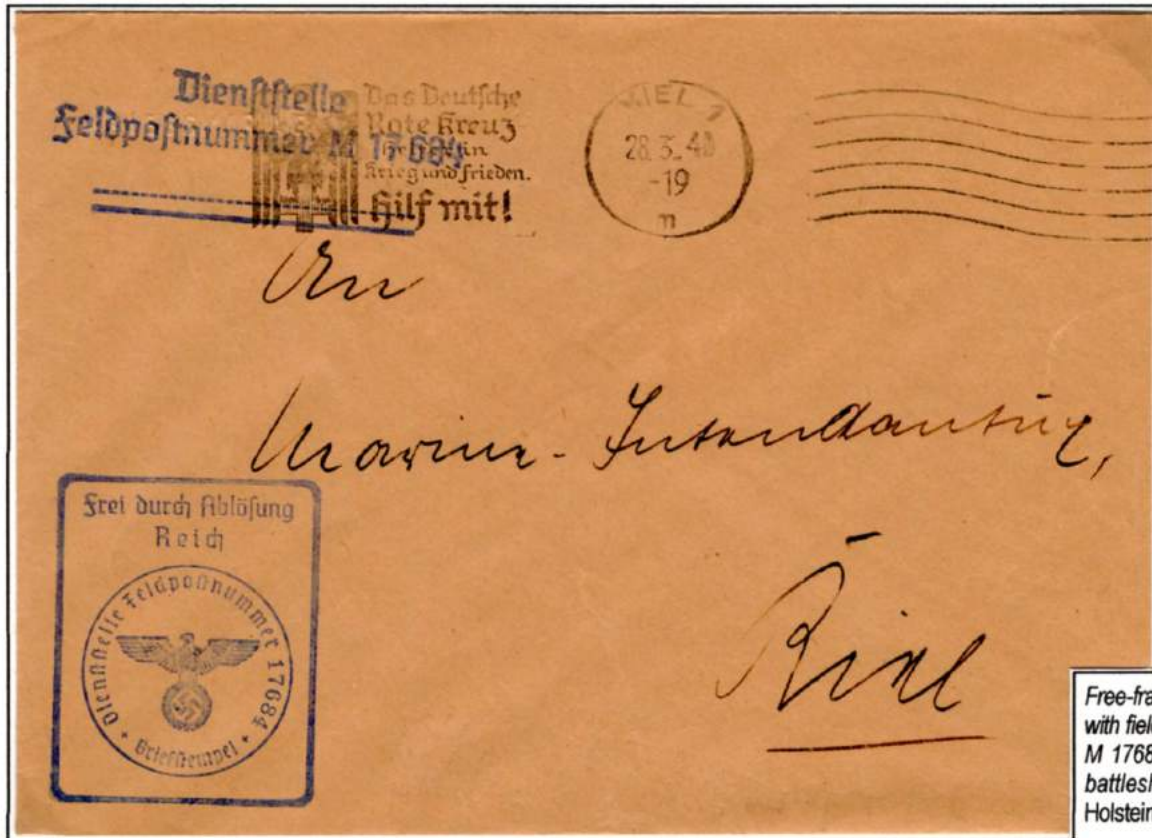


Italia, 1917 - free-frank military postcard

1 - THE FIRST EVENTS OF THE WAR (SEPT. 1ST - DEC. 31ST 1939)

1.1 - Invasion of Poland

The Westerplatte under attack



At 4:45 a.m. on 1st Sept. 1939, the old German battleship **Schleswig-Holstein**,



.....moored in the port of Danzig (now Gdansk), opened fire on the defences of the **Westerplatte** peninsula,



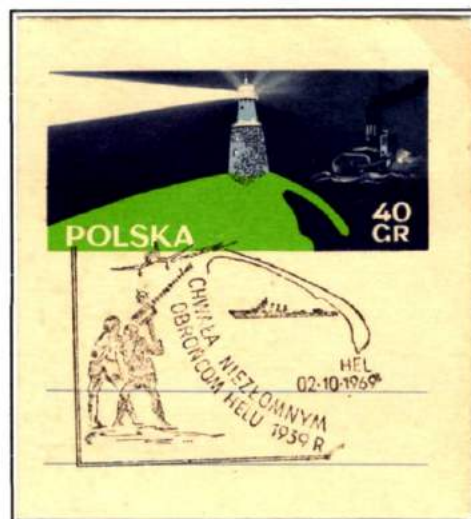
....while **armoured vehicles** and **airplanes** raided Poland. It was the beginning of the Second World War.



Only the 7th, after a **heroic defence**, the **Polish soldiers**,

.....commanded by **Major Henryk Sucharski**, surrendered to the preponderant enemy forces and the stronghold was occupied by **Nazi troops**.





On 2nd October, after aerial bombardments carried out by the **Stukas** and from the sea by German naval units, the fortified peninsula of Hel fell.



During the attack the Polish navy suffered the loss of the destroyer **Wicker** and of many gunboats and minelayers.

Mechanical cancellation depicted with the stylized silhouette of the destroyer Wicker, identified with the letter "W".



Fortunately, few days before the German invasion, most of the Polish naval ships, including the destroyers **Burza** and **Błyskawica**, had managed to repair in England



On 14th October, the surface units were reached by the submarine **Orzel**, which managed to reach Great Britain after an adventurous journey lasted 42 days.

Commemorative cancellation of the escape of the submarine Orzel from Poland.



On 3rd September, having received no assurance about the cessation of hostilities against Poland, **France**



.....and Great Britain



...announced in a radio communiqué that they had declared war against Germany.



V-mail, short for "Victory mail", was a special mail microfilming system put in place during the war to drastically reduce the space needed to transport mail, thus freeing up room for other valuable supplies.

V-mail sent from Great Britain on 1.12.1943 and forwarded on the 23rd of the same month to the recipient in Texas (U.S.A.).

Germany, 1944 - Registered mail from Linz Donau (A) to Linz on the Rhine (D), franked for 54 pf. (2nd weight postal rate for inland, 24 pf. + registration fee, 30 pf.). The mail to Austria had the same rates for the interior of Germany. Arrival postmark on the reverse.



That same evening, the **commander** of the German **submarine U-30** **sighted** a passenger ship about 230 miles west of the Irish coast. It was heading for America and was sailing with its lights off.



The ship was the **s/s Athenia**. Mistaken for an auxiliary cruiser, it was **torpedoed and sunk**, taking about a hundred people into the abyss.



30th anniversary of the sinking of
the ss. Athenia.

Germany, 1941 - free-frank military postcard sent by a German officer from Nowa Ruda (Poland) depicted with a U-Boote type VII.



On 14th October, the British suffered the first great failure. That night the **German submarine U-47** forced the entrance to the naval base of **Scapa Flow** and with two torpedoes hit the battleship **Royal Oak** which sank almost immediately with the loss of 786 crewmen.



On 23rd November, the British auxiliary cruiser **Rawalpindi** was intercepted and sunk by the German cruisers **Scharnhorst** and **Gneisenau**,

35th anniversary of the sinking of the auxiliary cruiser Rawalpindi.



....between Faroe Islands



.....and Iceland.



Then, in fear of being intercepted in turn by the British ships, including the aircraft carrier **Furious**,



.....the battleships Hood,.....



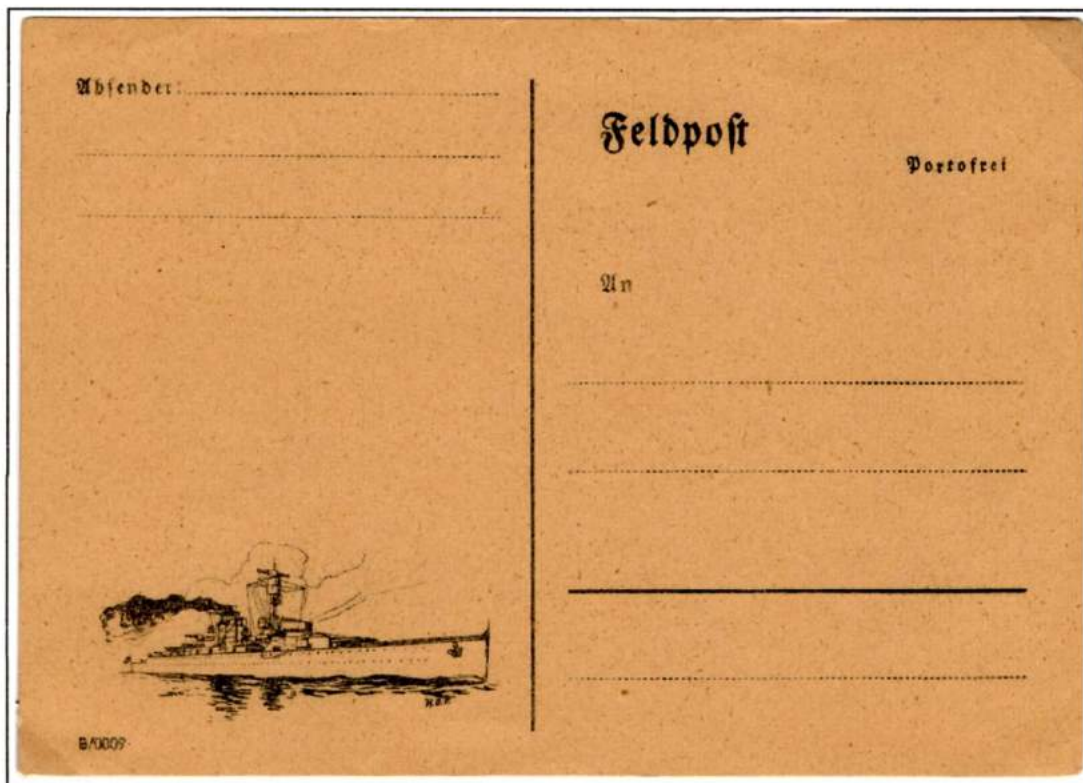
.....and Repulse,

...the two German units **reversed course** and returned to their ports.



German signaling sailor and Scharnhorst-type battle cruiser which reverses course with a left turn.

At the outbreak of the conflict, the German Admiral Raeder had sent the battleships **Deutschland** and **Admiral Graf Spee** to the Atlantic, to intercept the Allied merchant ships. The activity of the first unit, operating in the North Atlantic, was almost negligible, so that on 1st November it was recalled home and, at the end of the same month, it was renamed Lutzow. More profitable was the hunt of the second unit, which operated South of the Equator and which, until 7th December, had sunk 7 allied merchant ships.



Free-frank military postcard depicted with the battleship Deutschland



Battleship Admiral Graf Spee - Postal stationery printed on private order on the occasion of the philatelic exhibition organized by the Siemens Factory Collectors Group in Berlin on 30/31 March 1940.

On 13th December, the German battleship **Admiral Graf Spee** was intercepted

.....in South American waters of the **River Plate**

....by the British squadron of Commodore **Harwood**, ...



....consisting of the cruisers **Exeter**, **Achilles** and **Ajax**.



In the following combat, historically known as the **Battle of the River Plate**, units of both sides suffered severe damages.

The British cruiser **Exeter** reached the **Falkland Islands**,

....while **Graf Spee**, took refuge in Montevideo, where the Uruguayan government granted 72 hours to repair the damage and leave.



40th anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate and crest of the cruiser Ajax.



60th anniversary of Graf Spee's entry into Montevideo for repairs.



35th anniversary of the Battle of the River Plate where is shown the battleship Graf Spee in the sinking fase.

On the 17th, after having disembarked most of the crew, the German battleship came out of the estuary of the River Plate and was **scuttled**, complying with the orders received from Germany.

The commander, Capt. **Hans Langsdorff**, committed suicide three days later.





40th anniversary of boarding at the German ship **Altmark** with in the middle the crest of the destroyer **Cossack**.

On 14th February, 1940, the English destroyer **Cossack**, in a **Norwegian fjord**, intercepted the German support ship **Altmark**, loaded with British prisoners, which was boarded and captured. After this act, Hitler started Operation "Weserübung", the invasion of Norway.

Free-frank military postcard edited by OKW (Oberkommand Wehrmacht)



On 8th April, German landing craft transported **Army** units to the Norwegian coast.



Blurred print and brown instead of white letters.

At the same time, the air force launched **airborne troops** into the Scandinavian country.



MIT UNSEREN FAHNEN IST DER SIEG!

KdF.-Sammlergruppen, Abgabepreis 20 Rpf.

POSTKARTE



Thus were occupied some of the most important Norwegian cities, including Oslo and Bergen.



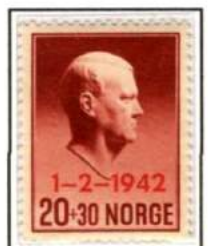
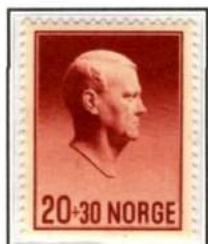
Continuous mechanical cancellation of German propaganda with the V between two laurel branches, an unequivocal sign of "Victory".



The Norwegian King **Haakon VII**, in fear of being captured by the Germans, took refuge in England with the Government and the Army General Staff.



Letter sent by air mail from Sandnes to Bryan, (Ohio - USA) franked for 3.35 Kr.



Overprinted 1.2.1942, for his entry into the National Government



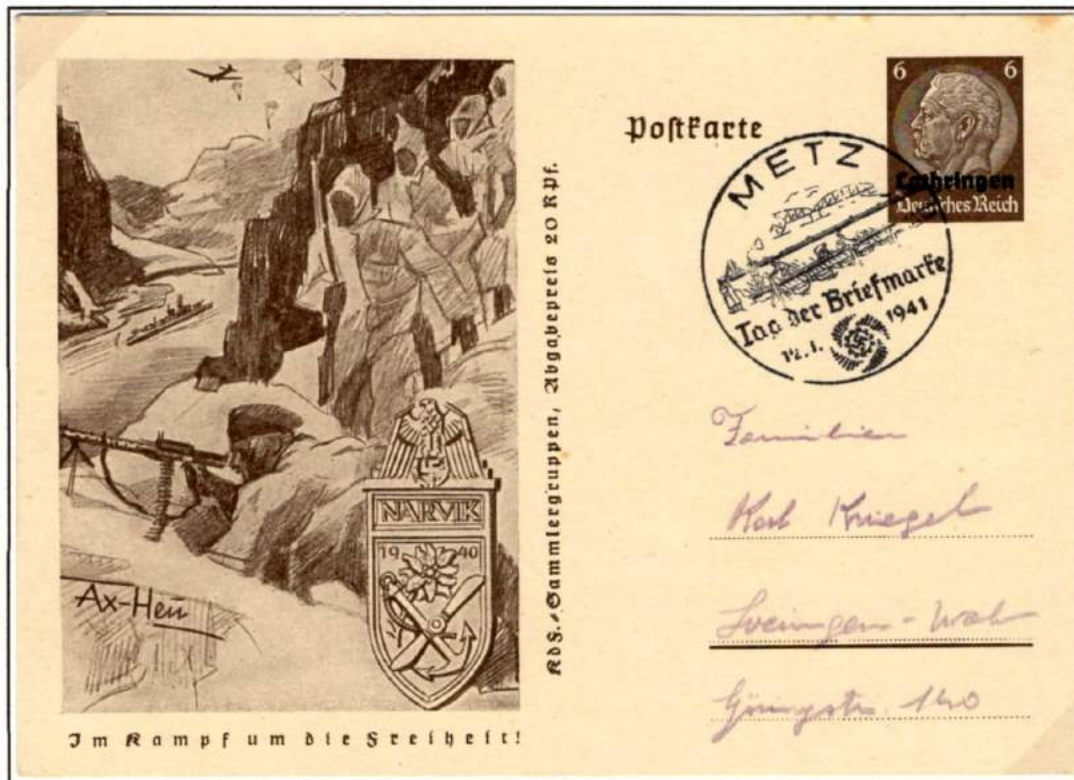
Issued for his appointment as President of Ministers

This allowed the pro-Nazi **Vidkun Quisling** to assume full power and to collaborate with the Germans.



Registered letter from Oslo to Grimstad franked for 50 ø. (1st weight domestic rate, 20 ø. + registered rate, 30 ø.)

The main battle between the **Germans** and the **Anglo-French-Polish-Norwegian Allied forces** took place near **Narvik**

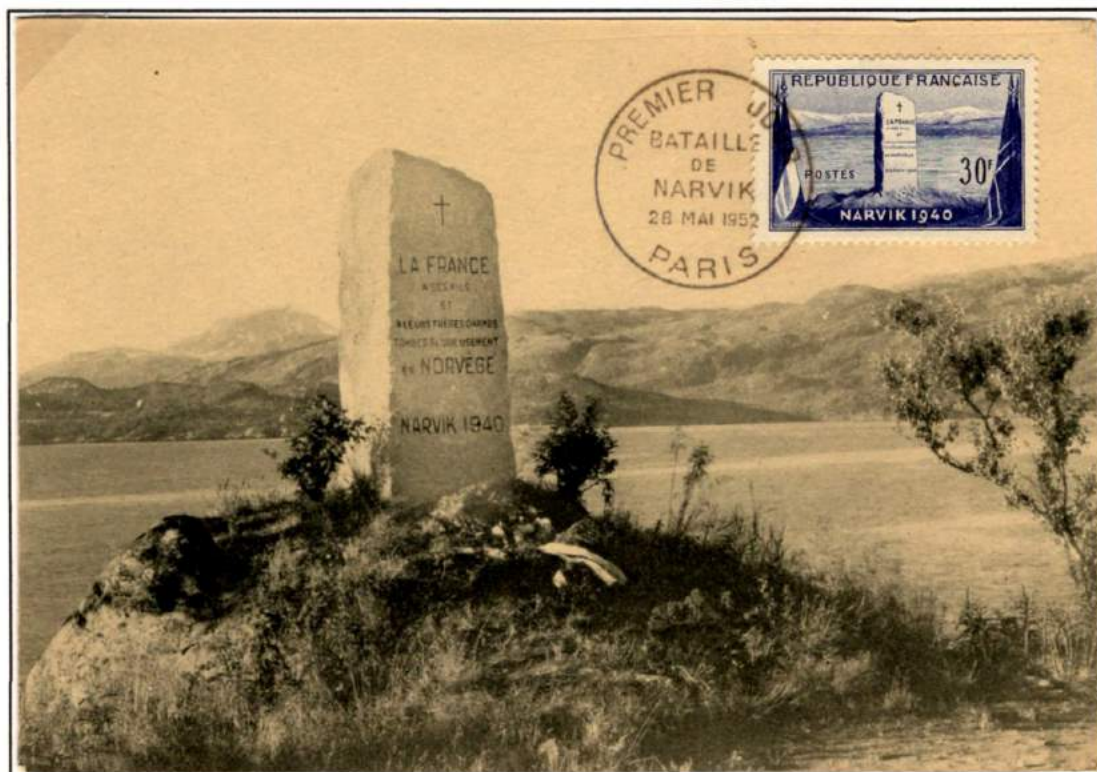


The Norwegian fjord of Narvik



Fjord of Narvik

.....and the losses were heavy for both sides.



Monument erected at Narvik in memory of the French and their allies fallen in Norway.



During the Norwegian naval campaign, the Navies of Great Britain, France and Poland



25th anniversary of the participation of Polish warships in the Battle of Narvik.



.....suffered heavy losses with the sinking of the British destroyers **Hardy**,



.....**Glowworm**, repeatedly hit by the German cruiser **Admiral Hipper**,



.....of the French cruiser **Bison**

.....and the Polish destroyer **Grom**.



Monument to the 59 Polish sailors perished in the sinking of the Grom.

The Germans, for their part, suffered the loss of the minelayer **Hansestadt Danzig**, a former passenger ship,



.....and of the cruiser **Königsberg** that, damaged by the Norwegian land defences, was sunk by British **Blackburn Skua** dive bombers,.....



...of a transport ship torpedoed by Polish submarine **Orzel**,

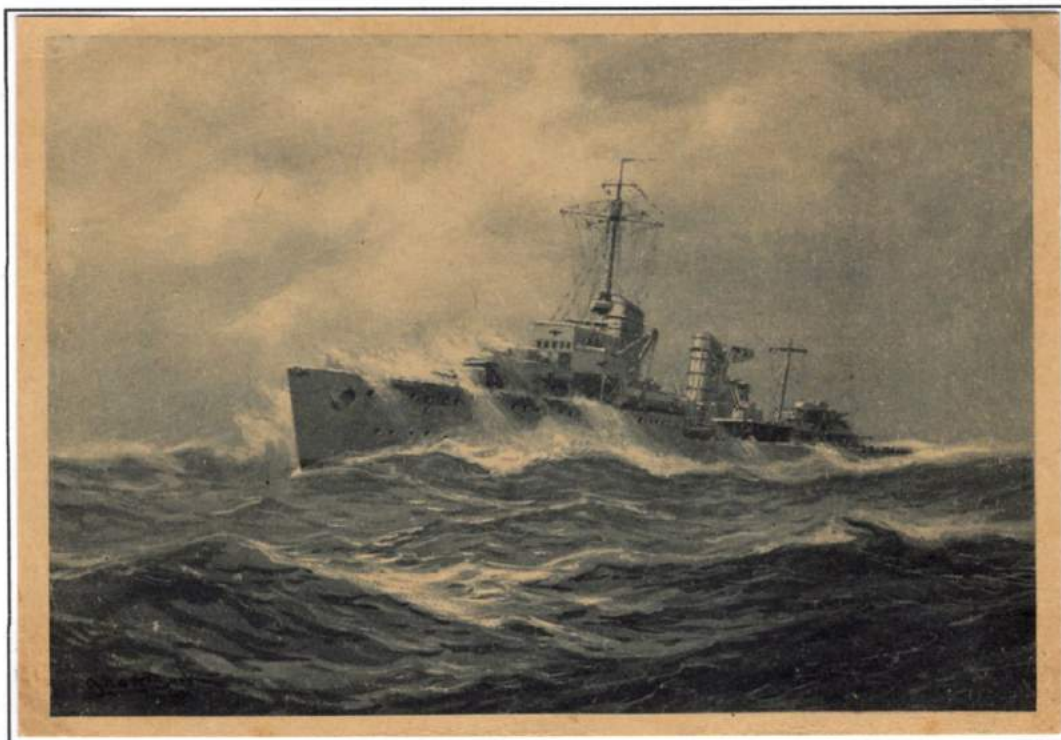


....and serious damage to the battleship **Lutzow**, torpedoed by the British submarine **Spearfish**.



Destroyer **Wilhelm Heidkamp**

They also suffered the sinking of the destroyer **Wilhelm Heidkamp** and damage of many other destroyers.

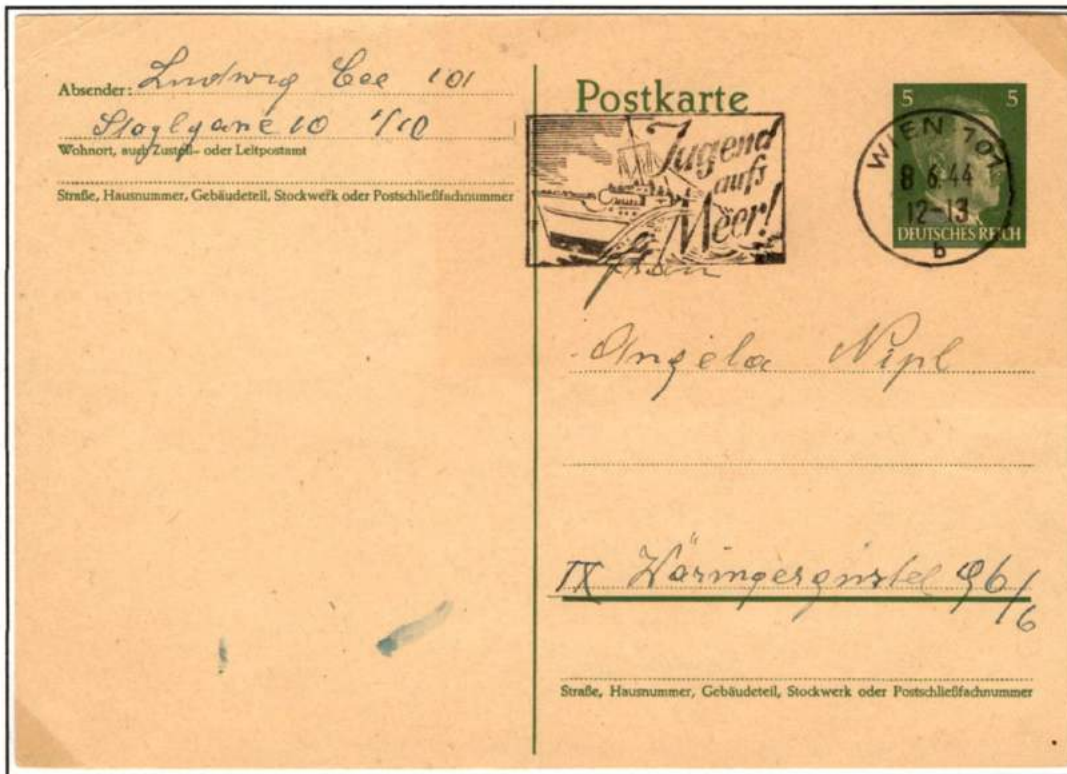


German free-frank military postcard edited by OKW (Oberkommand Wehrmacht = Supreme Command of the Armed Forces) and depicted with a destroyer class 1936.



On the night of 9th May, 1940, a British naval force, formed by the cruiser **Birmingham** and four destroyers, while patrolling the Skagerrak Strait,

.....was attacked by four German type "S" torpedo boats, coming from Wilhelmshaven base. This attack highlighted the dangerousness of these small units, also in front of ships of greater displacement.



Schnellboot type S 14 with torpedo tubes on deck.



Schnellboot type S 26 with torpedo tubes incorporated in the bow structure.



On 10th May, 1940, the German troops invaded France

....bypassing the **Maginot Line**, a defensive system considered insuperable by the French. Anglo-French-Belgian forces retreated northwards, towards the English Channel,

.....reaching **Dunkirk** and waiting to be evacuated to Great Britain.



On 26th May, the recovery of Allied troops from the Dunkirk began. The evacuation, codified as Operation "Dynamo", ended on 4th June .

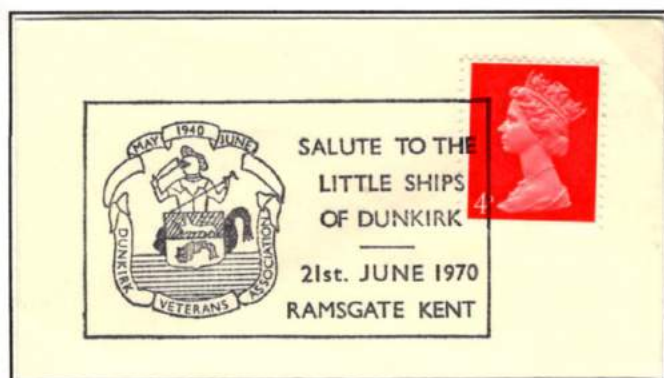


Thanks to the use of Royal Navy ships, merchant units

The HMS Tynwald leaves Dunkirk protected by a "Spitfire" fighter plane.



.....and private vessels, led by civilian volunteers, it was possible to evacuate 340,000 soldiers.



Cancellations in honour of the small boats involved in the evacuation of the Anglo-French-Belgian troops from Dunkirk.

Motor yacht Sundowner





After the defeat of Dunkirk, on 22nd June, 1940, France, tightened in the Italian-German grip, asked for the armistice, which was signed by the new Prime Minister Marshal **Pétain** on the same **wagon** that had hosted him as the winner 22 years earlier.



The French **fleet**, in order to prevent a possible German coup,

Letter sent from Mers-el-Kebir (Oran), 21.1.1943, to Geneva with postmark and postal inspection band. Franked 4 fr., 1st weight rate for foreign countries.

....moved to **Mers-el-Kebir** and **Dakar**.



Registered mail from Dakar to Montluçon (France). Franked 4 fr. (first rate + 1 fr., air surcharge + 1 fr., registered mail - 2 fr.).



Adm. Somerville and cruiser Hood
Adm. Gensoul e battleship Dunkerque

The British, fearing that Petain's government would promote the cobelligence with the enemy, sent their fleet with the intention of forcing the French units to surrender. Obtained a clear refusal, two **dramatic clashes** ensued.

The battle of Mers-el-Kebir

The French battleships **Bretagne** and **Dunkerque** were sunk at Mers-el-Kebir....



...and **Richelieu** was sunk in Dakar. It was later recovered and repaired.



Few units managed to escape that hell of iron and fire and reach Toulon, among them battleship **Strasbourg**.

Free-frank letter shipped from battleship Strasbourg.



Among the British ships that participated in the two raids there were

....the battle cruiser **Hood**,



.... the aircraft carrier **Ark Royal**,



....the destroyers **Keppel**,....



.... **Foresight**,



.... **Forester**,



....**Foxhound**



....and the gunboat **Milford**.



A few days earlier, on 18th June, Gen. De Gaulle, from London, contacting French people, had announced the constitution of the French Free Naval Forces (Forces Navales Françaises Libres - F.N.F.L.).



Original

On 1st July, the command of the F.N.F.L. was entrusted to **Admiral Muselier**, who had joined him in England with the aim of continuing the war alongside the Allies.



Red colour of the flag out of register and badly inked print of "General De Gaulle" and the words below of "Quartier General".

Among the officers who accepted the invitation of De Gaulle are remembered



...C. Colmay,...



....H. D'Estienne ..



....and L. Blaison.



The F.N.F.L. Navy availed itself of the oceanic submarine **Surcouf**,

.....of the destroyers **Triomphant**.....and **Savorgnan de Brazza**,

.....of the armed merchant ship **Cap des Palmes**.and the aviso **Chevreuil**.



In May 1941 the British Admiralty ceded to the F.N.F.L. three corvettes, **Mimosa**, **Aconit** and **Alysse**.



Capt. Birot and corv. Mimosa, sunk on June 5, 1942 by German submarine U. 124.

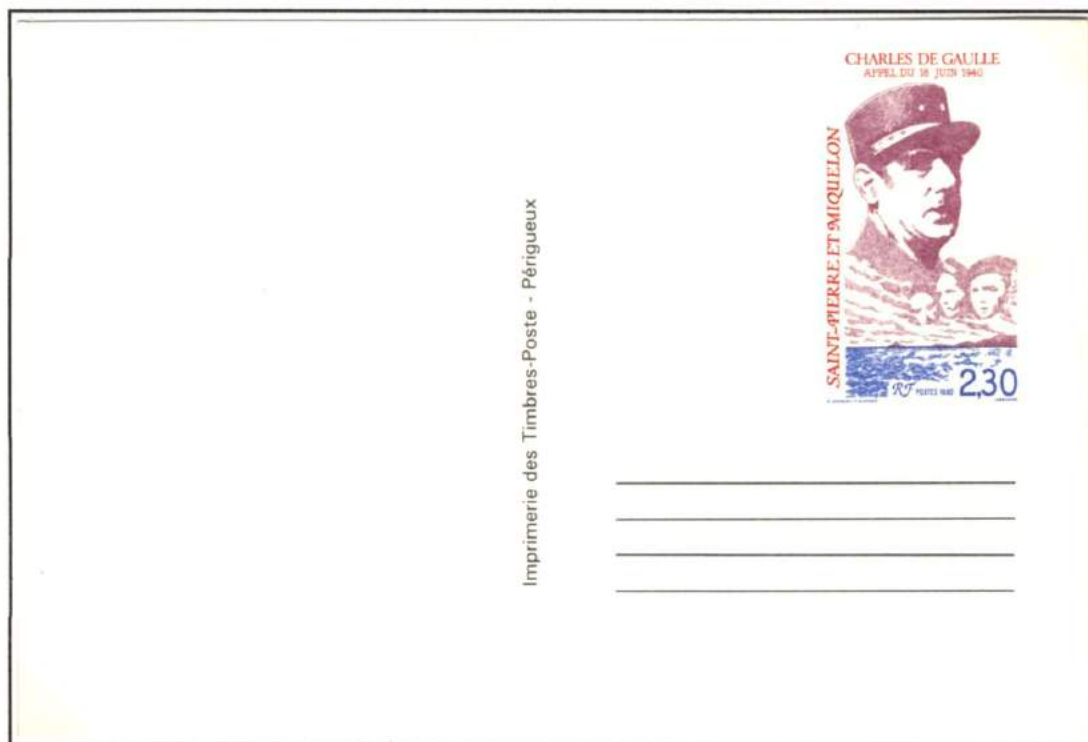


Capt. Levasseur and corv. Aconit who, on March 11, 1943, sank the German U-444.



Capt. Lehalleur and corv. Alysse, sunk on February 8, 1942 by the German U-654.

On 22nd December, 1941, **Gen. De Gaulle** ordered the F.N.F.L. to occupy the island of **S. Pierre and Miquelon** to prevent the destruction of the French radio station by the Canadians. The occupation was carried out on **Christmas 1941**.



Issued on the 50th anniver. of the occupation of the island.

To commemorate that event, some stamps were overprinted with the wording "**Noël 1941 - France libre - F.N.F.L.**",



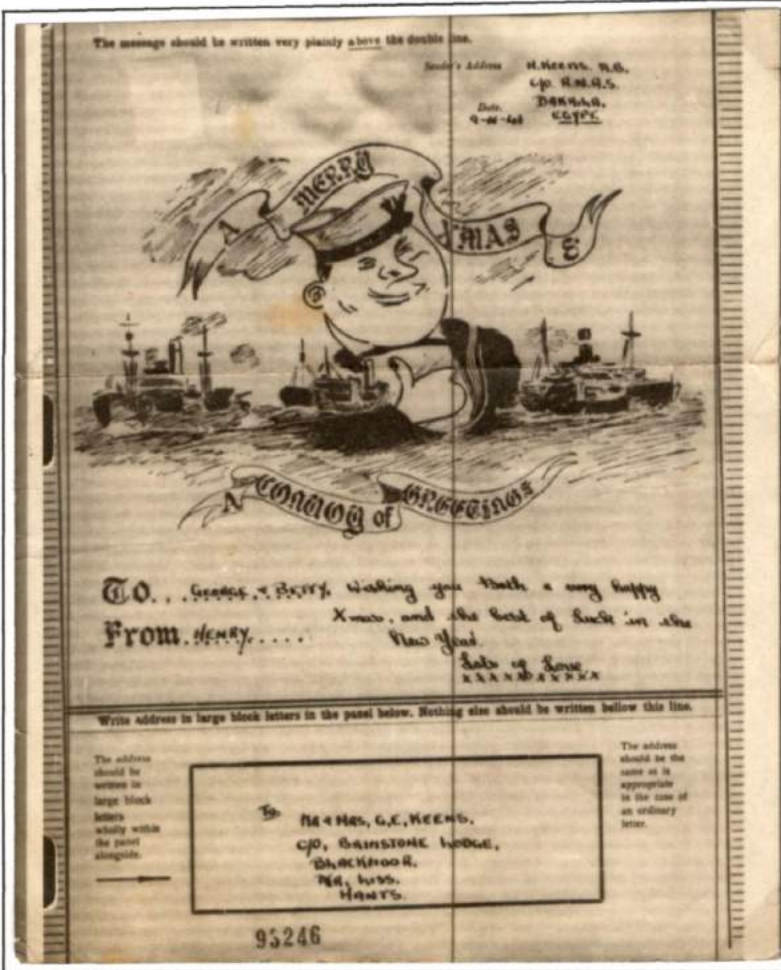
All other postal values in use on the island were overprinted "**France Libre - F.N.F.L.**".

2 - FROM THE ATLANTIC OCEAN TO THE RED SEA: 1940 - 1941

2.1 - The Atlantic route to northern Europe

Allied naval convoy hunting

Since the beginning of the conflict, **Allied convoys of merchant ships** crossed the Atlantic Ocean,



Xmas Airgraph sent on 9.11.1941 from R.N.A.S. (Royal Naval Air Service) in Egypt.



...carrying **means** and **raw materials** needed by England to survive and fight against Germany.



Thus the **Battle of the Atlantic** began.

The **Airgraph Service** was launched by the British Post Service, in conjunction with Kodak Limited, in 1941. This form of communication was designed to solve the problem of sending mail between Britain and the Middle East.



The Germans entrusted the task of sinking these ships to submarines.





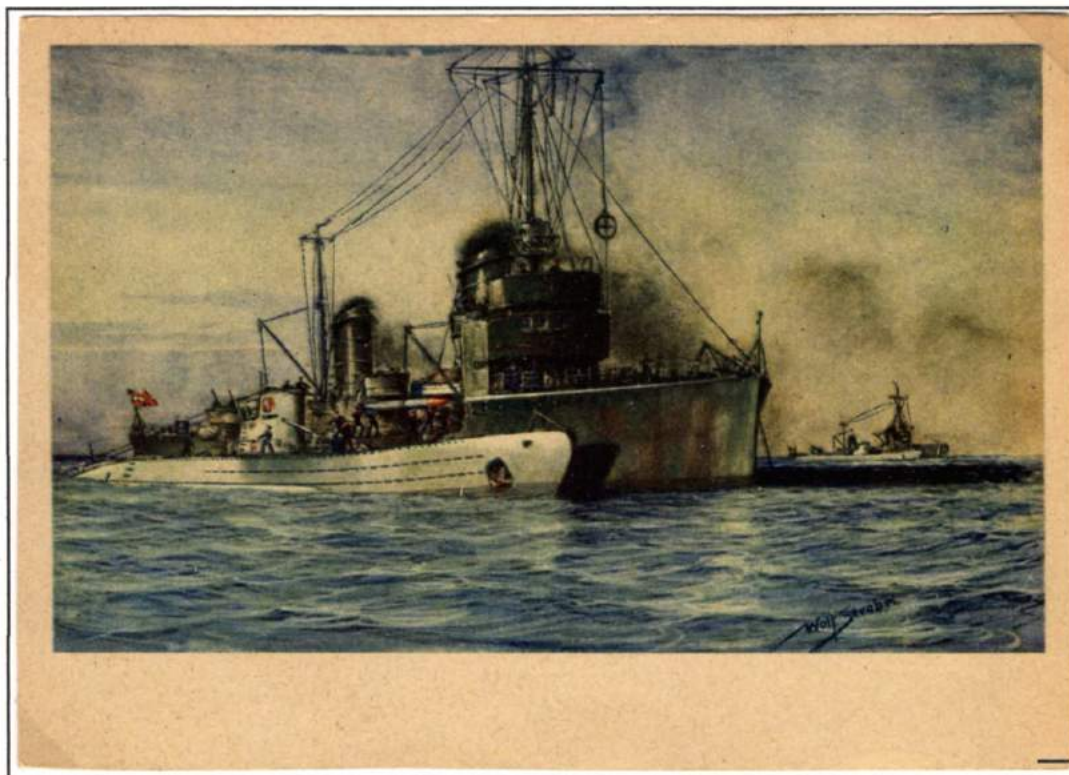
Surface units were also employed alongside the submarines.



In late 1940, these achieved a few successes, such as the pocket battleship **Admiral Scheer** which sank the auxiliary escort cruiser **Jervis Bay**



.....and 5 merchant ships after intercepting an Allied convoy.



German free-frank military postcard edited by OKW (Supreme Command of the Armed Forces) depicted with U-boats refuelling torpedoes from support ship.

During the Battle of the Atlantic, the Germans managed to organise a logistical system of supply at sea



.....allowing them to keep the **U-boats** in the operational area almost uninterrupted.

Among German submarine **support ships** is to remember the m/s **Kota Pinang**.

Commemorative cancellation of the sinking of m/s. **Kota Pinang**. In the center is depicted the British cruiser **Kenya**.



On 3rd October, 1941, it was sank by the British cruiser **Kenya**



Also the **Italian Underwater Forces** took part in the Battle of the Atlantic.



Free-frank military postcard sent on 16.6.1943, from "Betosom" and bearing the postmark with the wording "Italian Underwater Forces in the Atlantic".

They were based in **Bordeaux**, on the Atlantic coast of German-occupied France.



The submarines of the **Atlantic Base**, conventionally named "Betosom", operated as the **11th Submarine Group**.



Overprint on 5 lines carried out c/o the printing house of the Base - font "Elziviro - body 6" - Italy - Fascist Republic - Atlantic Base



Overprint on 5 lines carried out c/o the Oliveaux printing house in Bordeaux: - **Italian Social Republic - Atlantic Base**



Free-frank military postcard sent from the Atlantic Base on 4th April, 1941, with the cancellation "XI Submarine Group".

The **Italian submarines** participating in the Battle of the Atlantic were 32 and 16 were lost. A sad record partially offset by the 101 Allied merchant ships sunk for a total of 568,573 GRT.



Italy, 1942 - Free-frank military postcard depicted with a submarine departing for the mission.

Among them was the **Brin**, which took an active part by sinking two Allied merchant ships.

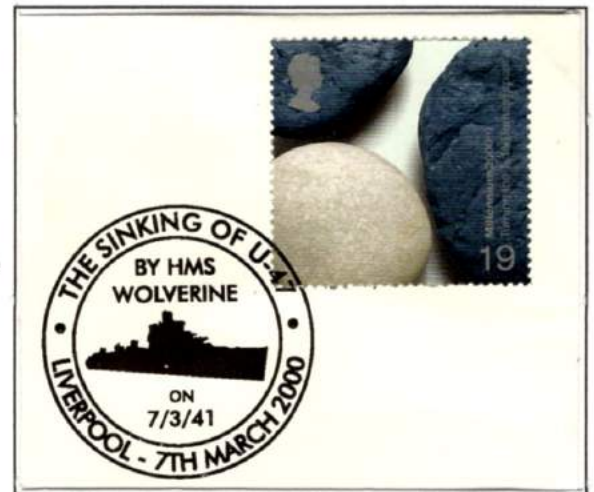


Free-frank military postcard posted on the submarine **Brin**, 11.7.41, with postmark "XI Submarine Group", and the boxed linear cachet "verified for censorship" and double circle censor's marking with number "4" assigned to censor on board.

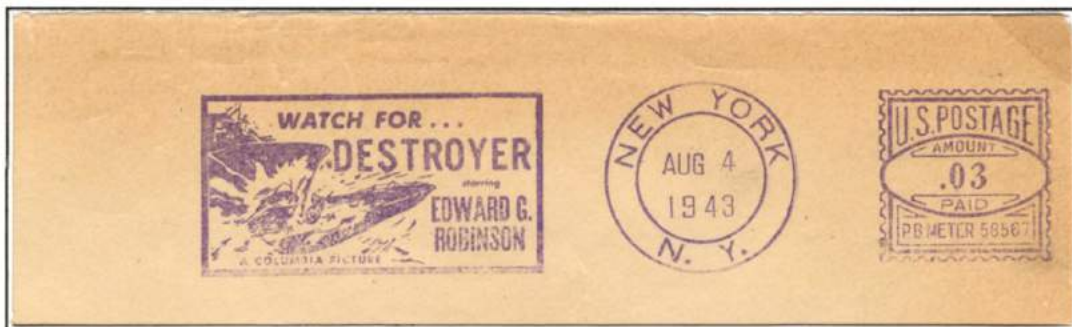


Sinking of U-97 by the destroyer Walker.

Sinking of U-47 by the destroyer Wolverine.



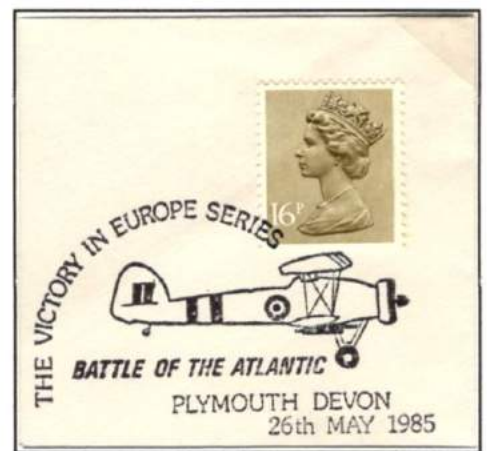
The German U-boats also suffered heavy losses due to the continuous and ruthless hunting undergone by the Allied escort units.



PITNEY BOWES "CVS" franking machine, with PB Meter prefix and counter number. The picture on the left shows an American destroyer ramming a U-Boot.



A great contribution to the war against submarines was given by **small aircraft carriers**, such as the **Audacity**, whose **planes** were used for both underwater and air defence of the convoys escorted by them



Destroyer Banff,
ex USS Saranac

Destroyer Buxton,
ex USS Edwards

In September 1940, the U.S.A gave Great Britain 50 old **destroyers** still able to carry out the antisubmarine service.



Destroyer Rockingham,
ex USS Swansey

Destroyer Georgetown,
ex USS Maddox



The Bismarck shoots at the British ships



On 24th May, 1941, the **Bismarck**, the powerful German battleship, on its first war mission, was intercepted by a powerful British naval force while leaving the **Denmark Strait** heading for the Atlantic.

The Prince of Wales responds to fire while the Hood is hit in the middle of the ship.



In the ensuing clash, the battleship **Prince of Wales** was damaged and the battle cruiser **Hood** was sunk, while the German ship escaped towards France.



Two days later, the **Bismarck** was attacked by **Swordfish** torpedo bombers,



.....which had taken off from the aircraft carrier **Ark Royal**,



.....and a few hours later by a British naval squadron, including the battleship **King George V**



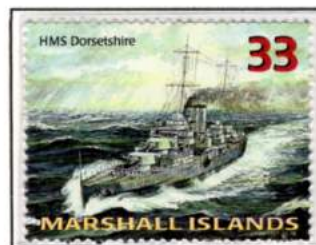
.....the cruiser **Dorsetshire**....



....and the Polish destroyer **Piorun**.



A lot of gunshots and torpedoes hit the German ship, **causing fires** and reducing it to a floating pontoon.



On the morning of 27th May, the cruiser **Dorsetshire** launched a torpedo salvo against the German ship,

.....which **sank** causing the death of 2200 crewmen.





W. Churchill aboard
HMS Prince of Wales.



Perforation shifted left.



Variety of coil stamps with vertical perforation shifted right - issued
on 28 h February, 1968

From 12th to 13th August, 1941, **Winston Churchill**, British Prime Minister, and **F.D. Roosevelt**, US President, met in **Placentia Bay, Newfoundland Island**.



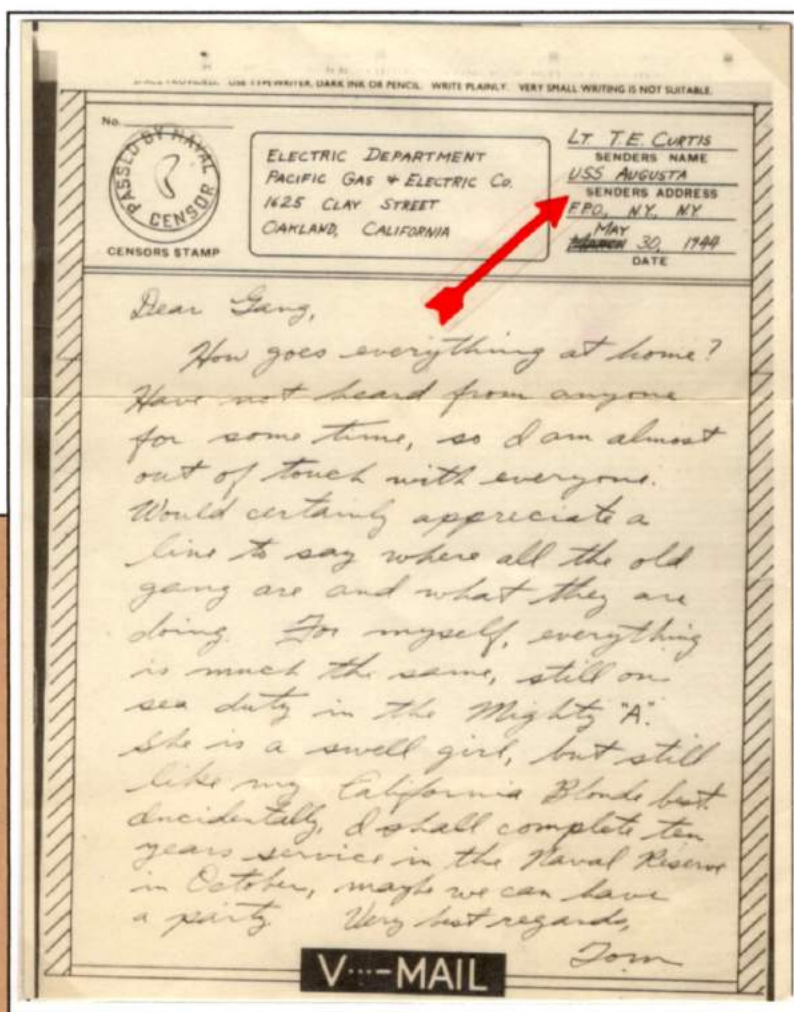
Placentia Bay



The talks took place on board the ships **Augusta** and **Prince of Wales**.



The talks ended on 14th August, with the signature of the **Atlantic Charter**. In that document, were established the bases for the future world order in addition to the material aid that the United States would have given to Great Britain by escorting convoys to Europe by U.S. ships.



V-mail shipped from cruiser Augusta, on 30th May, 1944, when the ship was in Plymouth (G.B.) waiting to take part in the invasion of Normandy on 5th June.



In August, the Allies began sending **convoys to Russia** following the **Arctic route**. This was necessary to bring aid to the new Ally after the invasion of Hitler's troops in June 1941. The Allied ships gathered in Iceland and reached Archangel or Murmansk. In late 1941, 63 merchant ships had formed these convoys and only one was sunk by German submarines.



50th anniversary of the **Dervish convoy**, carrying the first supplies to the USSR on 21st August 1941.



That intense naval traffic alarmed the Germans, and although they were not yet at war with the U.S.A. they attacked the American units escorting the Atlantic convoys causing damages and losses, as happened to the destroyer **Reuben James**, hit and sunk by a torpedo on 31st October, 1941.

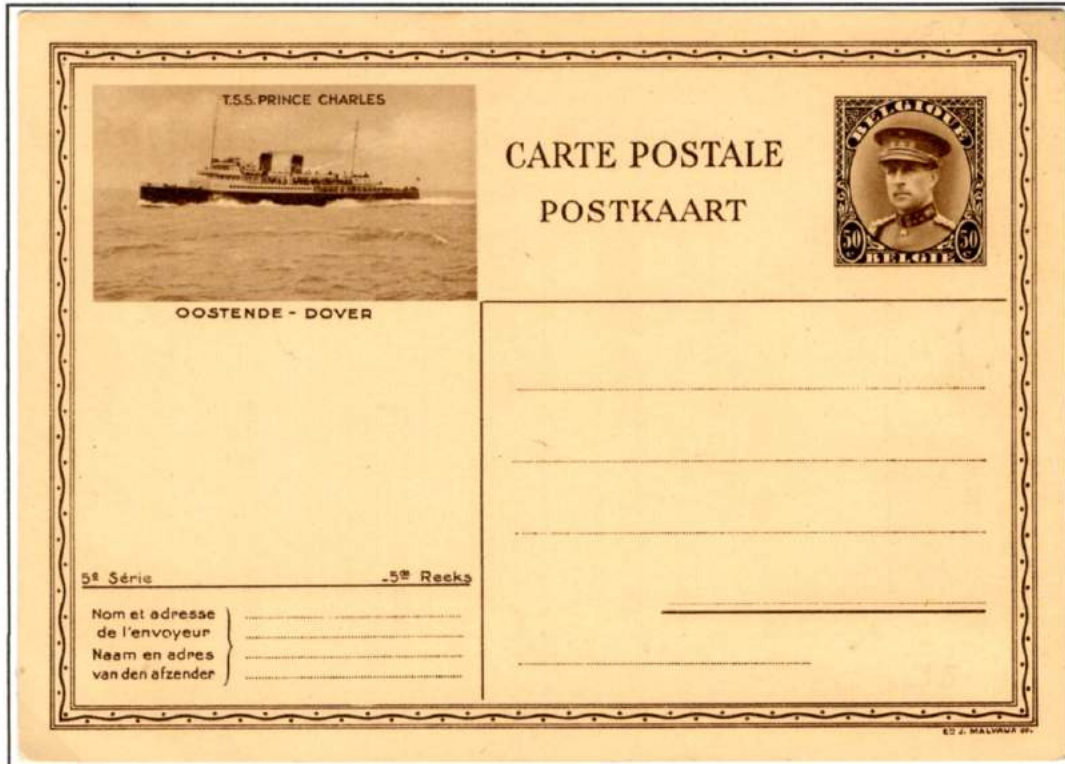


Commemorative cancellation for the 40th anniversary of the sinking of the destroyer Reuben James.

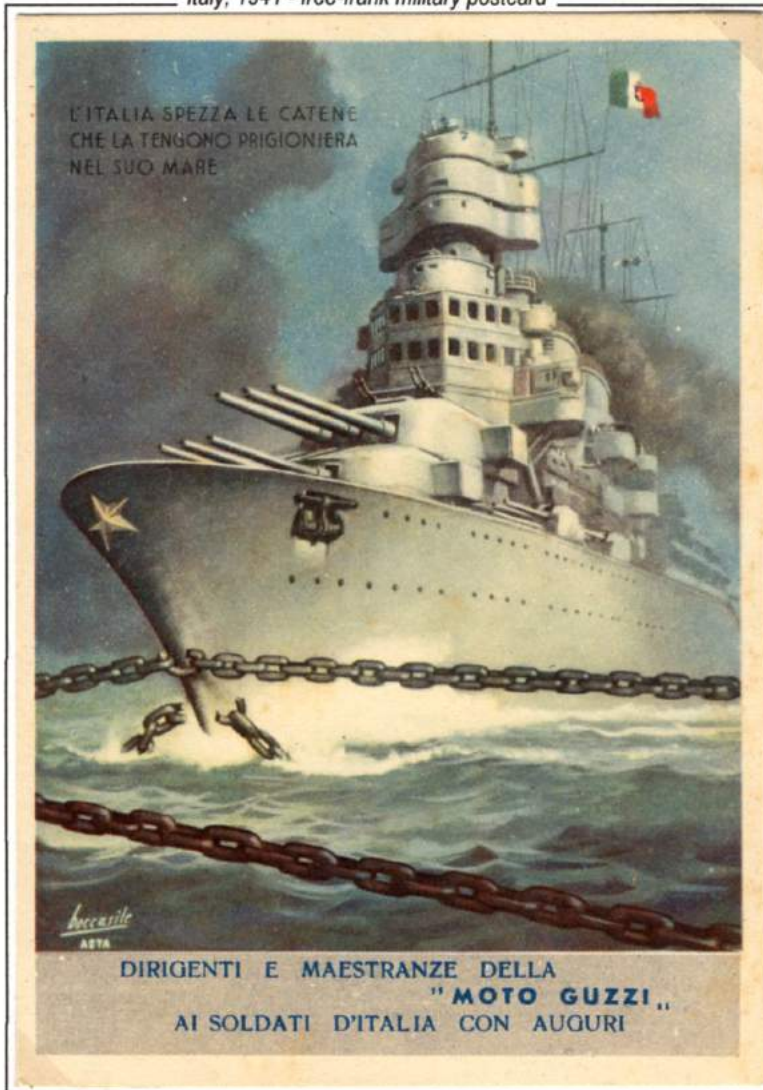
Meanwhile, on 27th November, British commandos attacked the island of Vaagso, Norway, destroying military and industrial installations, protected by the cruiser **Kenya**, 5 destroyers and a submarine.

45th anniversary of the raid on Vaagso
and crest of the cruiser Kenya.

For their transport were employed the m/s **Prince Charles** and **Prince Leopold**, former Belgian ferries on the Ostend-Dover line. The raid ended with the capture of about one hundred prisoners among German technicians and soldiers.



Italy, 1941 - free-frank military postcard



On 10th June, 1940, Italy entered the war alongside Germany.
The Italian Navy,



....like all Italian **armed forces**, had a lacking technical preparation, a very serious problem in view of a conflict as important as the one it was facing.



It was to face the powerful **British fleet**, although the theatre of the fighting would be limited to the **Mediterranean Sea**.

Italy, 1941 - free-frank military postcard



On 9th July, 1940, the naval battle of Punta Stilo took place off the Ionian coast of Calabria. It was the first clash between the Italian "Regia Marina" and the British Royal Navy. British battleship **Warspite**, under the command of **Admiral Cunningham**,



.....managed to hit Italian battleship **Giulio Cesare**



Letter posted on the battleship **Giulio Cesare**, 14.6.1941, with the ship's postmark, and the boxed linear cachet "Verified for censorship" and double circle censor's marking with number "1", assigned to censor on board. Arrival postmark 26.6.41.

.....and the cruiser **Bolzano**, which broke contacts thanks to the intervention of the escort units.



Postcard posted on the cruiser **Bolzano** on 3rd July, 1940



On 19th July, the Australian cruiser **Sydney** and 5 British cruisers, patrolling off Cape Spada (island of Crete) to defend the **allied convoys** between Greece and Alexandria,



....located and attacked the Italian cruisers **Delle Bande Nere**



.....and **Bartolomeo Colleoni**, which were searching the allied merchant ships.



Postcard sent on 24th May, 1939 from the cruiser Colleoni, when the ship was in service in the Far East.

In the ensuing fight, the "**Bartolomeo Colleoni**" was lost while the "Delle Bande Nere", damaged, retreated towards the Libyan coasts



38th anniversary of the sinking of the Colleoni. Note how the name Bartolomeo was misspelled as **Bartimeo**.

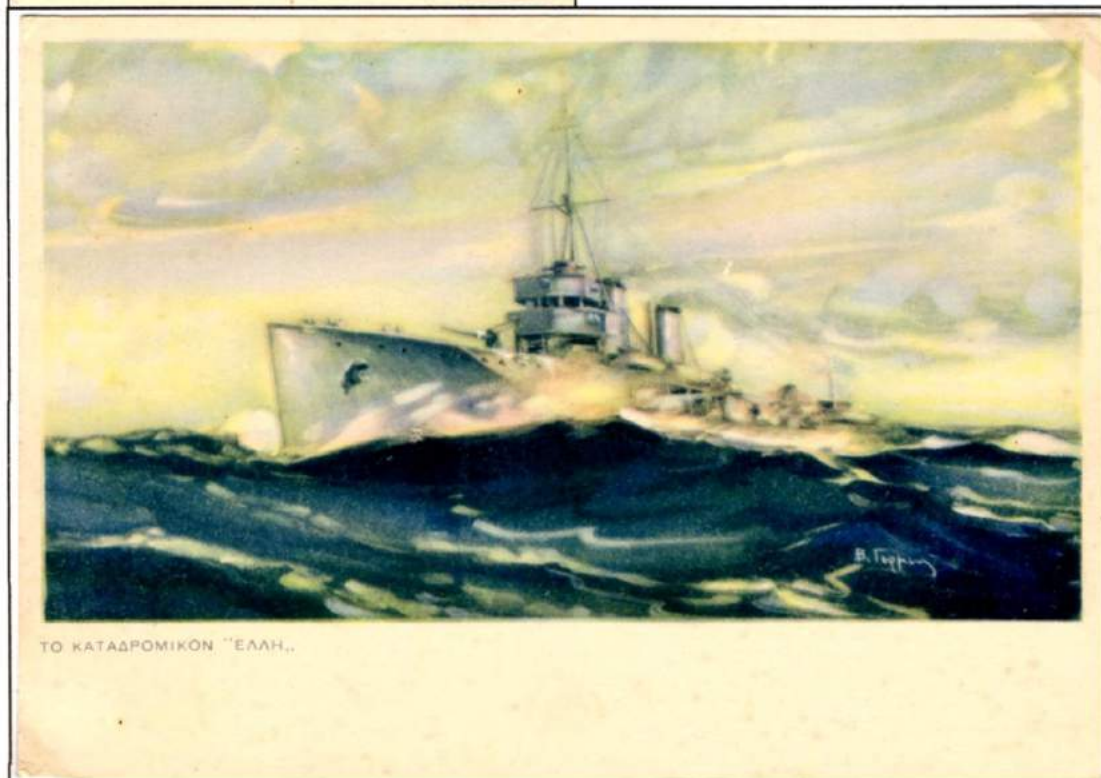
On 15th August, the submarine Delfino, located near **Greece** to hit the neutral ships in service to the British,



Italy, 1941 – free-frank military postcard



.....torpedoed and sank the small and old Hellenic cruiser **Helli**,



....from which a **column of fire and water** rose up.



Greece, 1941 - Postal stationery



OXI = NO - Greek reaction to the Italian ultimatum

On 28th October, after the Greeks had rejected an Italian ultimatum, the attack on Greece was launched and the situation was immediately compromised,

.....although Mussolini was convinced he could win an easy final victory.



Italy, 1942 - free-frank military postcard with Mussolini's sentence



Destroyer *Adrias*

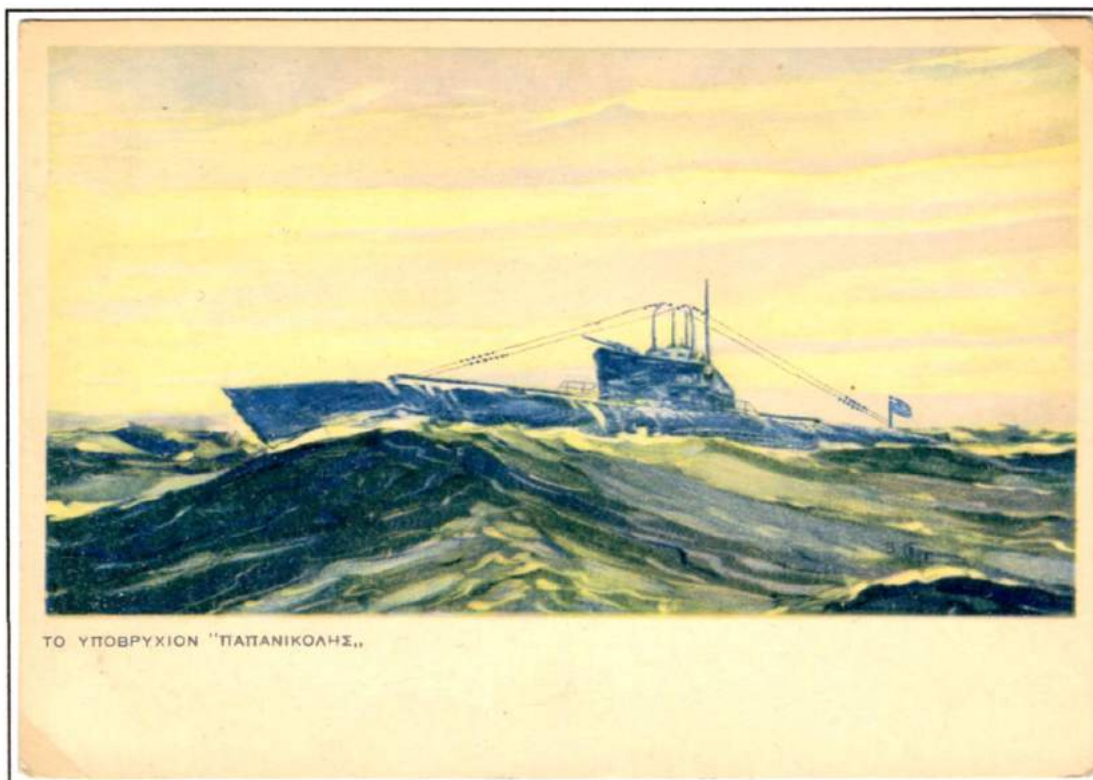
Now there was another enemy at sea, although of modest naval forces, forcing the Italian Navy to deploy a part of the fleet in the lower Adriatic Sea, taking it away from the main Mediterranean front.



Destroyer *Vasilissa Olga*



The obsolete battleship *Averoff*.



Greece, 1941 - Postal stationery



Submarine *Papanicolis*

On the night between 11th and 12th November, twenty "Swordfish" torpedo bombers.....



35th anniversary of the raid on Taranto, at the centre is the crest of the aircraft carrier Illustrious.



.....took off from aircraft carrier Illustrious,



.....arrived unnoticed 170 miles from Taranto and, in two waves, hit the Italian fleet moored there.

A first plane, then shot down, dropped a torpedo against the battleship **Conte di Cavour**, tearing its left side and making it unusable for the rest of the conflict. Two others planes attacked the **Andrea Doria**, without being able to hit it.



battleships Andrea Doriaand Conte di Cavour



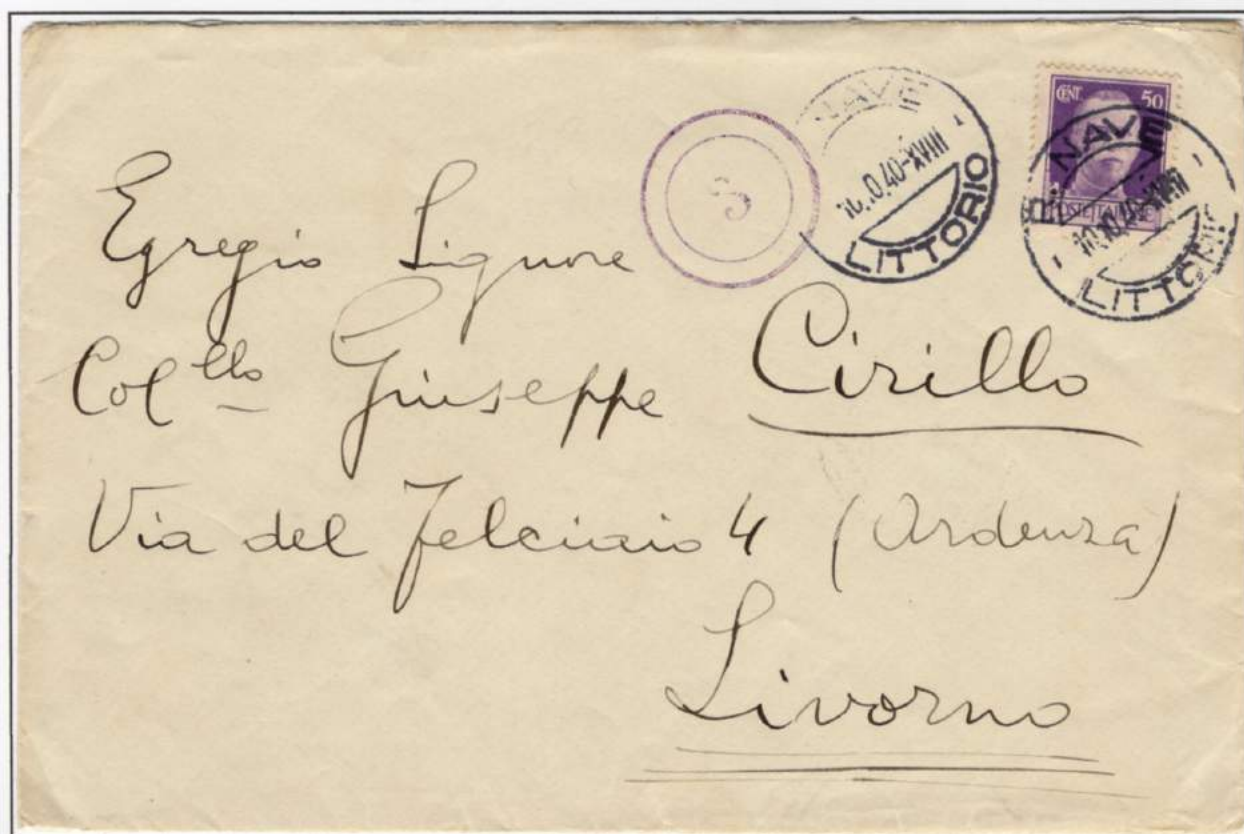
Free-frank military postcard sent from the battleship Conte di Cavour on 17th October 1940, twenty-five days before being hit by British torpedoes.

The attack also caused damages to battleships **Caio Duilio**, hit by two torpedoes,



Free-frank military postcard sent from the battleship Caio Duilio on 22nd April, 1943 with the boxed linear cachet "Verified for censorship" and censor's personal circle marking with number "35" and letter "A", applied at the Ministry of the Navy.

.....and **Littorio**, hit by three torpedoes. The two units, after being repaired, resumed service in 1941.



Letter posted on the battleship Littorio with the ship's postmark and double circle censor's marking with number "3", assigned to censor on board.

In early 1941, a **Luftwaffe squadron** arrived in Sicily to help the Italian Air Force, both to counter the British supply convoys to Malta and to defend the Italian ones going to Libya,



Service registered free-frank military letter, marked "kenn - nr" K 463, shipped, on May 15th, 1943, by German aviator from field post number L 28281 A, based in Königsberg, East Prussia, and where the letter "L" is for Luftwaffe.



.....carrying the vehicles, materials and men of the Afrika Korps,

...led by Gen. Erwin Rommel.





German free-frank military postcard edited by OKW (Supreme Command of the Armed Forces), depicted with the "Stukas" dropping their deadly bombs.



On 10th January, the German Air Force began the massive and systematic **bombardment** of the British stronghold,



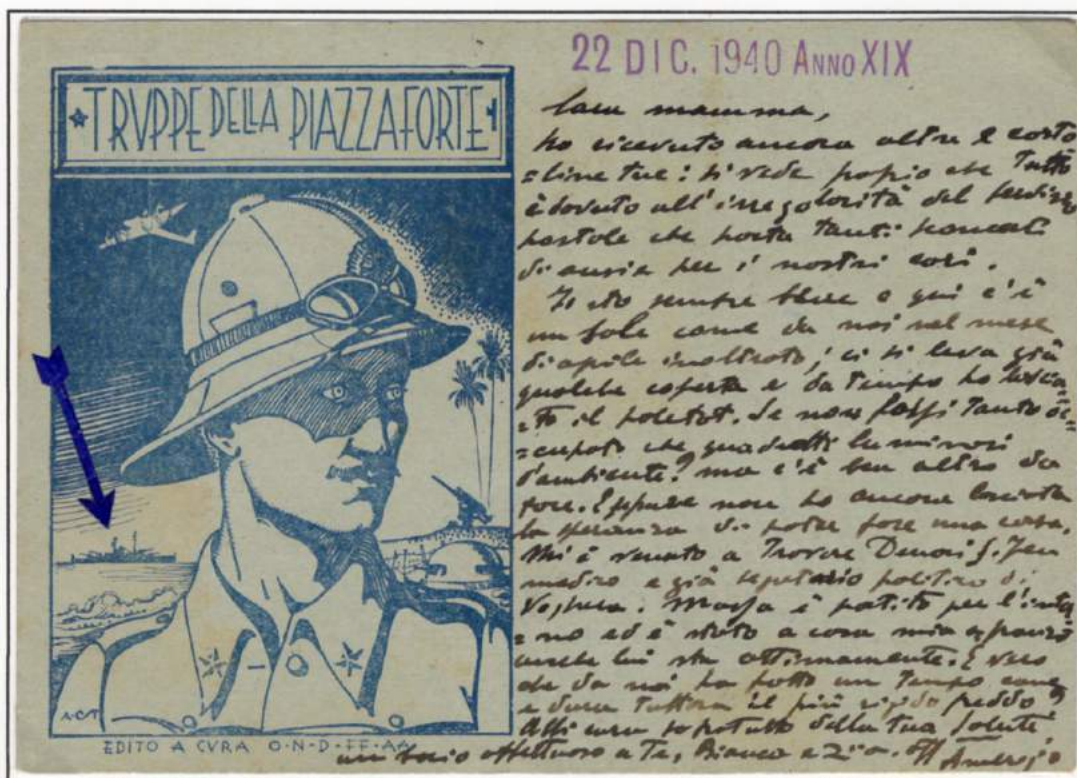
.....causing **damages and devastation**, forcing soldiers and population to spend sleepless nights.



Since mid-February, the British deployed some **destroyers** and **submarines** of the **Mediterranean Fleet** on the island for further defence. These ships inflicted heavy losses on Axis ships going to Libya

On 22nd January, 1941, the British ground offensive led to the fall of the **Tobruk** stronghold. The obsolete, but robust, cruiser **San Giorgio** was scuttled from its crew. The tenacious resistance to dozens of British air attacks made the enemy believe that it was fixed on a concrete base.

Italy, 1942 - free-frank military postcard - In the background the cruiser **San Giorgio** indicated by the arrow



On 25th March, 1941, two Italian **destroyers** transported vehicles and raiders of the 10th MAS Flotilla near the **Bay of Suda**, Crete Island.



The **Navy's** raiders, aboard **explosive boats**, violated the base of Suda, important support point for British traffic to and from Greece and the Mediterranean Fleet itself. The heavy cruiser **York** was heavily damaged in the action.

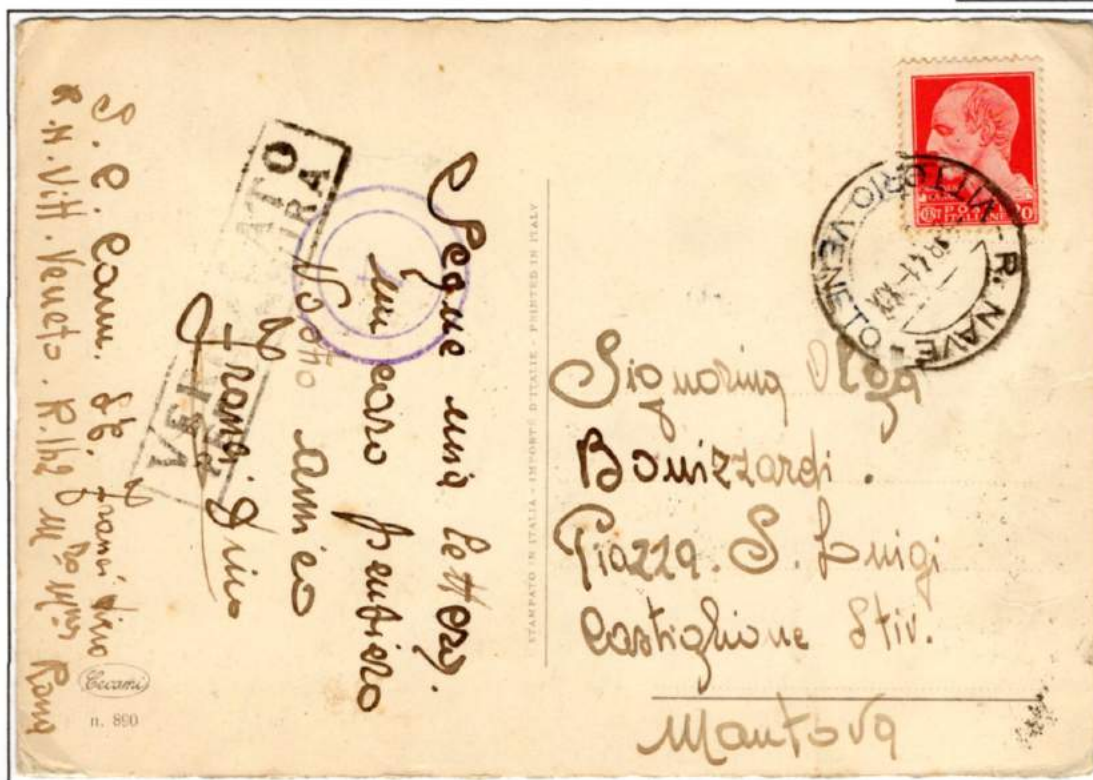
Italy, 1944 - free-frank military postcard for the 10th MAS flotilla. The picture depicts to the episode of Suda.



Island of Gaudo

On 28th March, between the island of **Gaudo** (Crete) and Cape Matapan (Greece), a British squadron of 3 battleships, including the **Valiant**, 1 aircraft carrier, 4 cruisers and 13 destroyers,

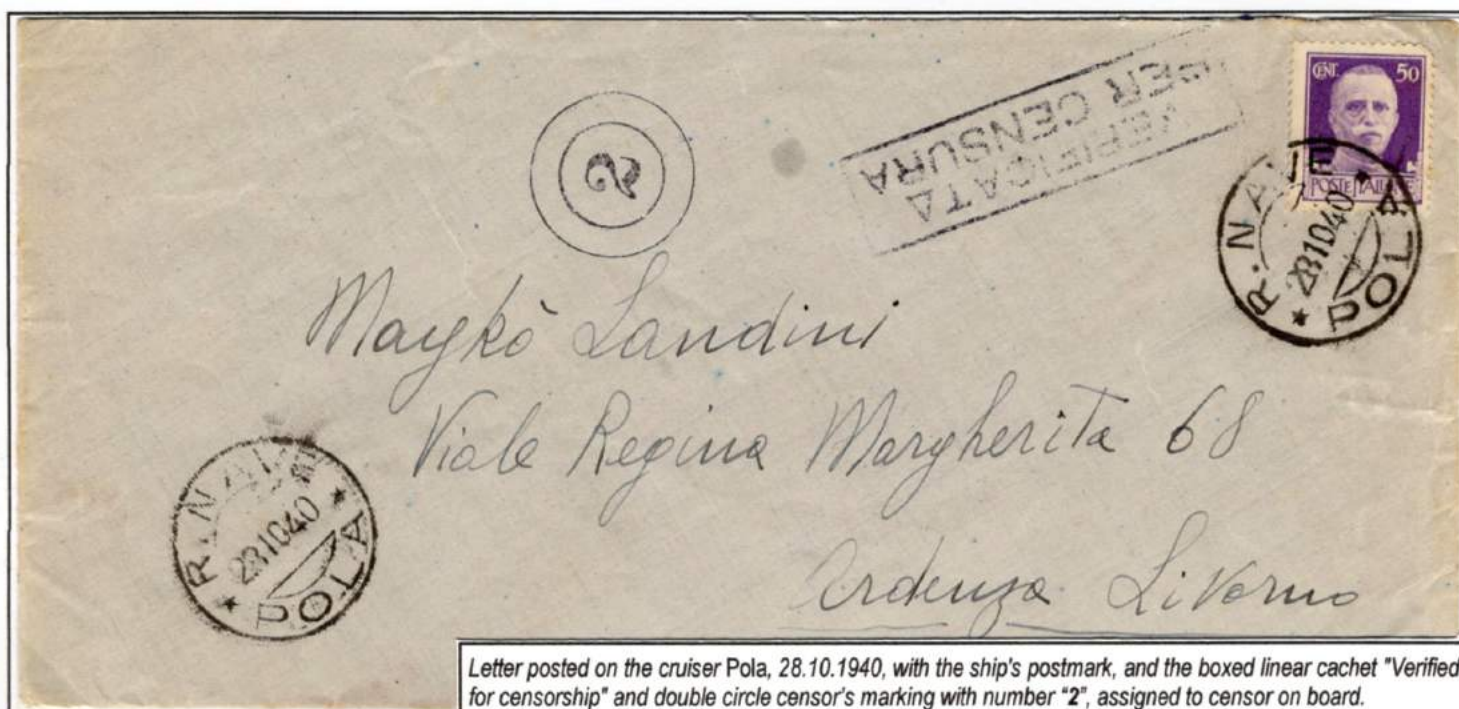
35th Anniversary of the Battle of Matapan
and crest of the battleship Valiant.



.....intercepted the Italian one led by the battleship **Vittorio Veneto**. In the fight, the Italian flagship was hit but managed to retreat,

Picture postcard posted on the battleship Vittorio Veneto, 6.8.1940, with the ship's postmark, and the boxed linear cachet "Verified for censorship" and double circle censor's marking with number "4", assigned to censor on board.

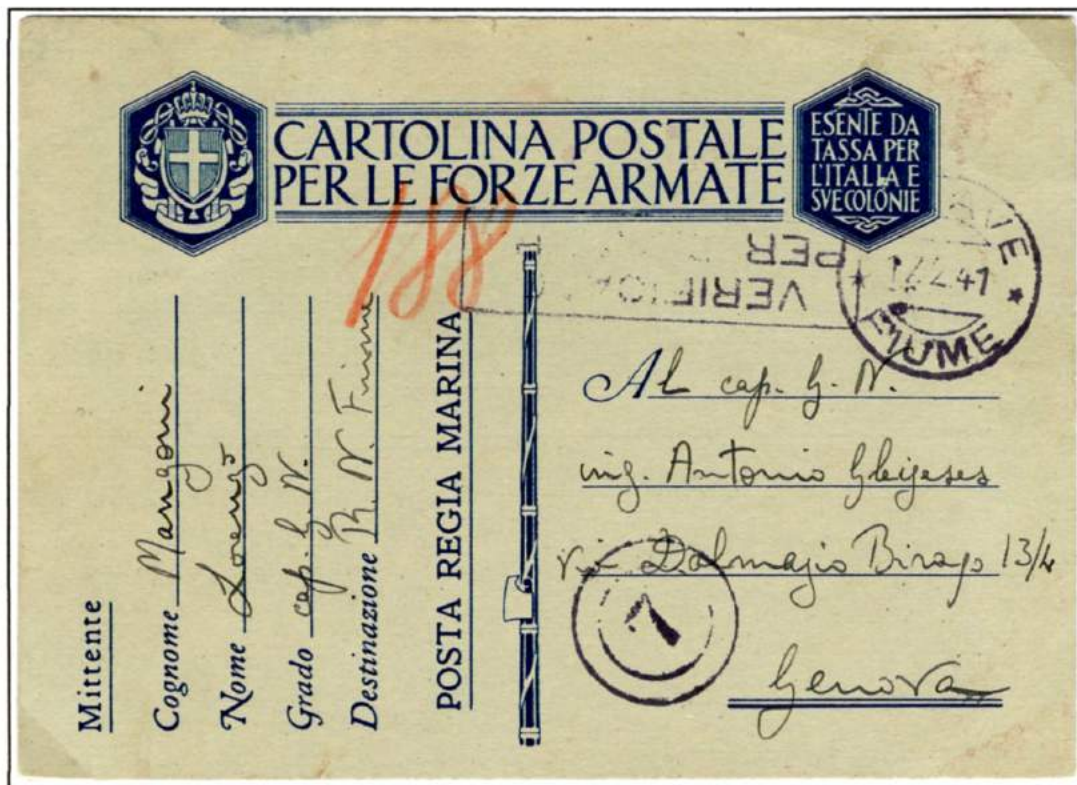
.....while the cruiser **Pola** was damaged and immobilized by a torpedo launched from an enemy aircraft.



Letter posted on the cruiser Pola, 28.10.1940, with the ship's postmark, and the boxed linear cachet "Verified for censorship" and double circle censor's marking with number "2", assigned to censor on board.



In the meantime, the British ships' radars located



Free-frank military postcard shipped from Italian cruiser Fiume with linear stamp "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with number "7" assigned to the censor on board.

.....the cruisers **Fiume** and **Zara**, and four destroyers running to the aid of Pola. In a short time, Italian units were repeatedly hit by enemy artillery, which caused the sinking of the 2 cruisers and 2 destroyers. Later, the Pola also sank. In a few hours the Italian Navy lost 5 ships and 2303 crewmen.



Letter shipped from Italian cruiser Fiume, 18.10.40, with postmark and double circle marking with number "4" assigned to the censor on board.

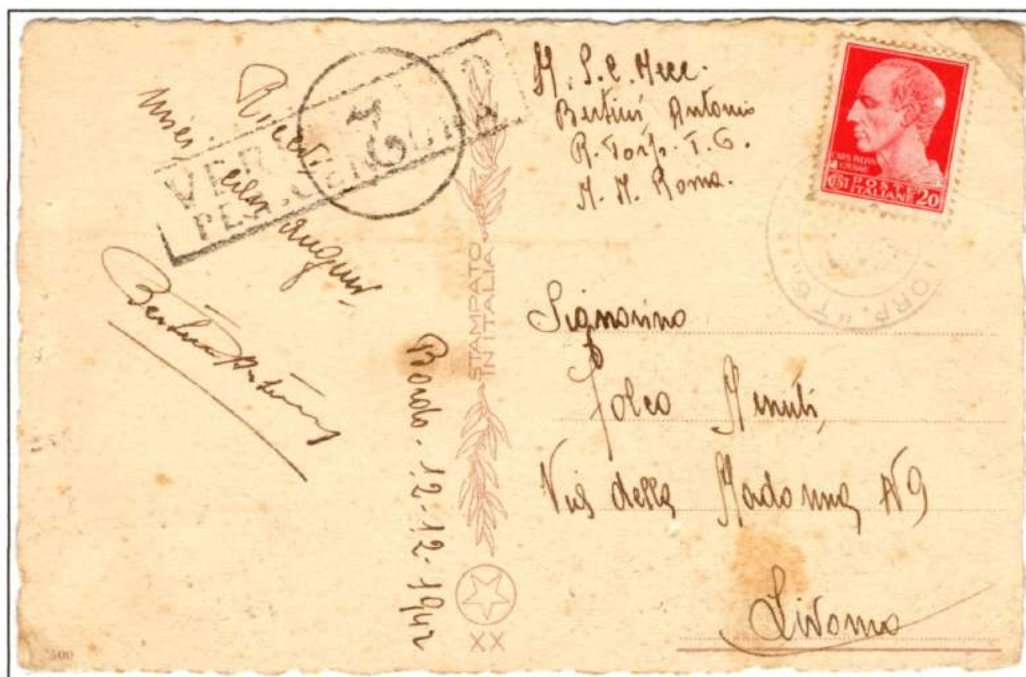


On 27th March, 1941, a popular military uprising had overthrown the pro-fascist government in Yugoslavia and this led Hitler, on 6th April, to attack the Balkan nation with the help of Italy.

As a result, **several ships** fell into Italian hands, including 3 destroyers and some torpedo boats.



Destroyer Dubrovnik, from 17.4. 1941 it became the Regia Nave Premuda.



Postcard from the T-6 torpedo boat. Acquired as war prey, it kept the same Yugoslavian name.



NAORUZANI BRODOVI — 1944

The Yugoslavian Navy was able to reorganize itself

.....by **motorboats** and **arming fishing boats**, using them against the enemy coastal ships and to transport commandos to the occupied coasts, in order to carry out acts of sabotage.



Armed fishing boat



On 20th May, the Germans attacked **Crete**



.....entrusting the main effort of the occupation to the **airborne** troops.



Meanwhile, troops of the **5th Mountain Division** landed on the northern coast of the island,

....transported there by slow motor-sailers escorted by some Italian **torpedo boats**, including RN **Aldebaran**.

Free-frank military postcard shipped from the torpedo boat **Aldebaran**,



To evacuate most of the **Greek, British, Australian and New Zealand** soldiers, who defended the Island, ...



....the British fleet, including the cruiser **Carlisle**, the gunboat **Auckland** and the battleship **Warspite**, left Alexandria and headed to Crete, knowing the risk it was exposing itself to. Despite the damage suffered, the British units managed to rescue over 16,000 men.



40th Anniversary of the delivery of the Victoria Cross to the commander of the submarine Upholder (crest of the ship in the centre of the cancellation), for the victories reported against the Italian convoys directed to Libya.

On 24th May, the British submarine Upholder attacked and hit, with its last available torpedoes,

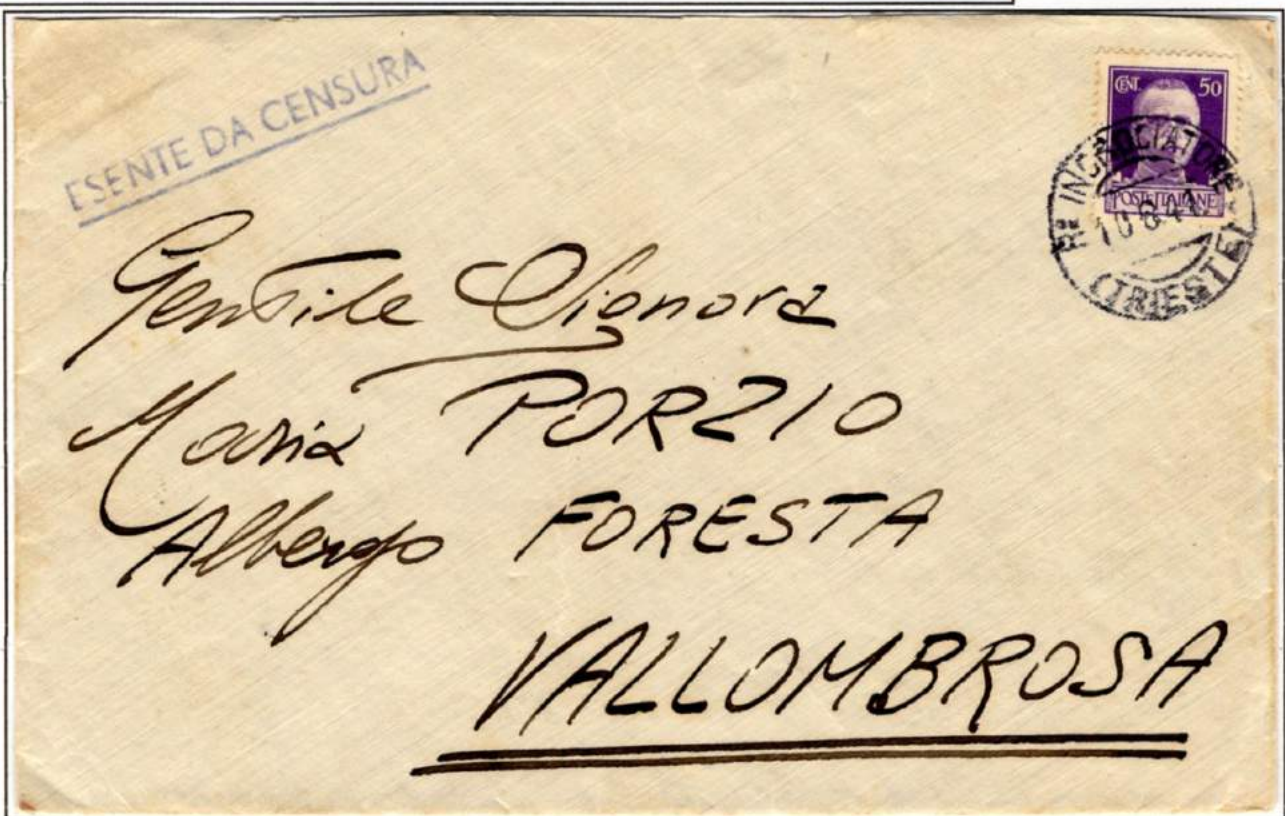


.....the ocean liner **Conte Rosso**, which was part of an Italian convoy directed to Libya

Left - postcard with postmark on board the s/s Conte Rosso.

Below - envelope with postmark on board of the RN Trieste.

.....and well protected by an escort including the cruiser **Trieste**. The ocean liner sank in 15 minutes, with the loss of 1297 men, on a total of 2729 it carried.



On the night of 26th July, the **torpedo boats** of the 10th MAS Flotilla attempted an attack



.... against the port of **La Valette**, Malta, to destroy British warships and submarines which were causing serious damage to Italian convoys to Libya.



During the approach to the Island, the raiders were **detected by radar**



Italy, 1944 - free-frank military postcard depicted with a torpedo boats type "500".



....and monitored by the **Naval Base Operations Centre**.



When the raiders arrived near **Malta**, ...

....they were illuminated by the **powerful spotlights** of the coastal defences and were killed or captured before the attack began.



Italy, 1941 - free-frank military postcard.



In late September, to bring aid to Malta, the British organized **Operation "Halberd"**.



The convoy, leaving Gibraltar,



....was escorted by British ships, including the battleship **Nelson**, ..



...the Dutch destroyer **Isaac Sweers**,.....



.....and the Polish destroyers **Garland** and **Piorun**.



Italy, 1941 – free-frank military postcard.

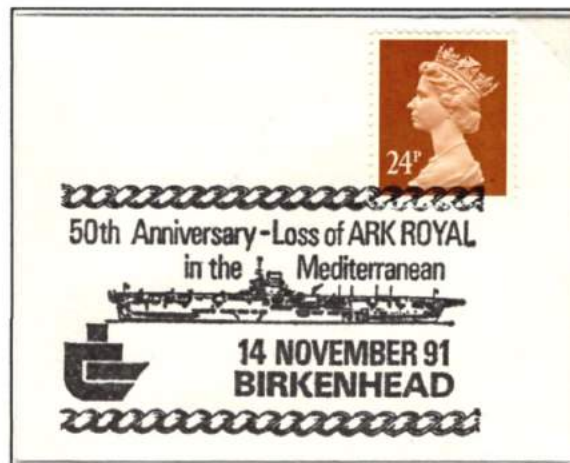


Near Tunisia, the convoy was repeatedly attacked by **Italian torpedo bombers SIAI S. 79**, managing to pass despite losing a merchant ship and damaging a battleship. Nevertheless, 50,000 tons of materials essential for the survival of the island were brought to Malta.



Commemorative cancellation of the air and sea battle of 27.9.1941.

On 13th November, the Royal Navy suffered a serious loss by the sinking of the aircraft carrier **Ark Royal**, torpedoed by submarine U-81 while returning to Gibraltar



....after launching **planes** to supply Malta.



On 17th December, in the Gulf of Sirte, there was a fight between Italian and British ships escorting convoys to Libya and Malta respectively. The intervention of the Italian units, including the battleship **Andrea Doria**,

.....the cruisers **Trento**



.....and **Montecuccoli**, had no effect for the dispersion of the British ships: favoured by the darkness, they reached Malta unharmed.

Postal stationery posted on the cruiser Montecuccoli with the ship's postmark and double circle censor's marking with number "7", assigned to censor on board.

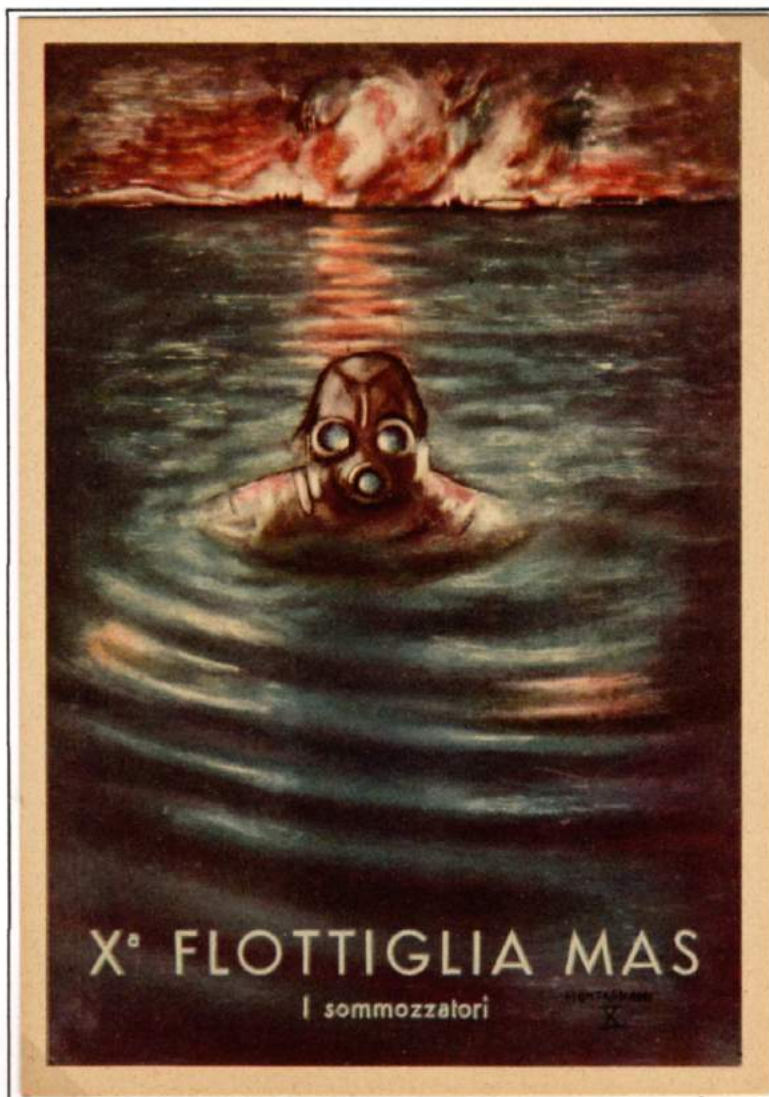
On the night between 18th and 19th December, **men and assault crafts** of the **10th MAS Flotilla**.....



Italy, 1942 - free-frank military postcard depicted with a slow running torpedo known as "Pig"



.....breached **Alexandria's** naval base.



Men and crafts were transported near the British base by the **submarine Scirè**.

Protagonists of this exceptional episode were the **Italian Navy divers** Durand de la Pen, Vincenzo Martellotta and Antonio Marceglla,

....who knocked out the battleships **Valiant**, Queen Elizabeth and the tanker Sagona.



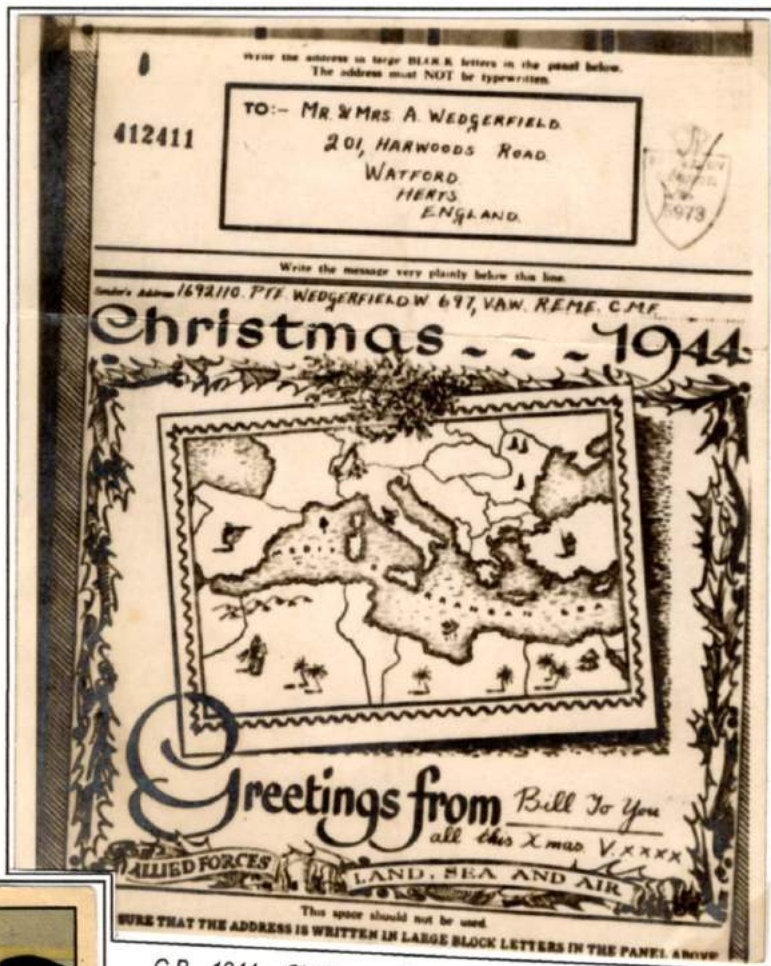
Italy 1944 - free-frank military postcard for 10th MAS Flotilla. The image refers to the episode of Alexandria.

Crest of the battleship **Valiant**

The loss of these two great units and the aircraft carrier **Ark Royal**



....forced the British to abandon all offensive ambitions in the **Mediterranean sea** for a few months.



G.B., 1944 - Christmas Airgraph depicted with the map of the Mediterranean sea.

All this made euphoric the Italian-German military circles ...



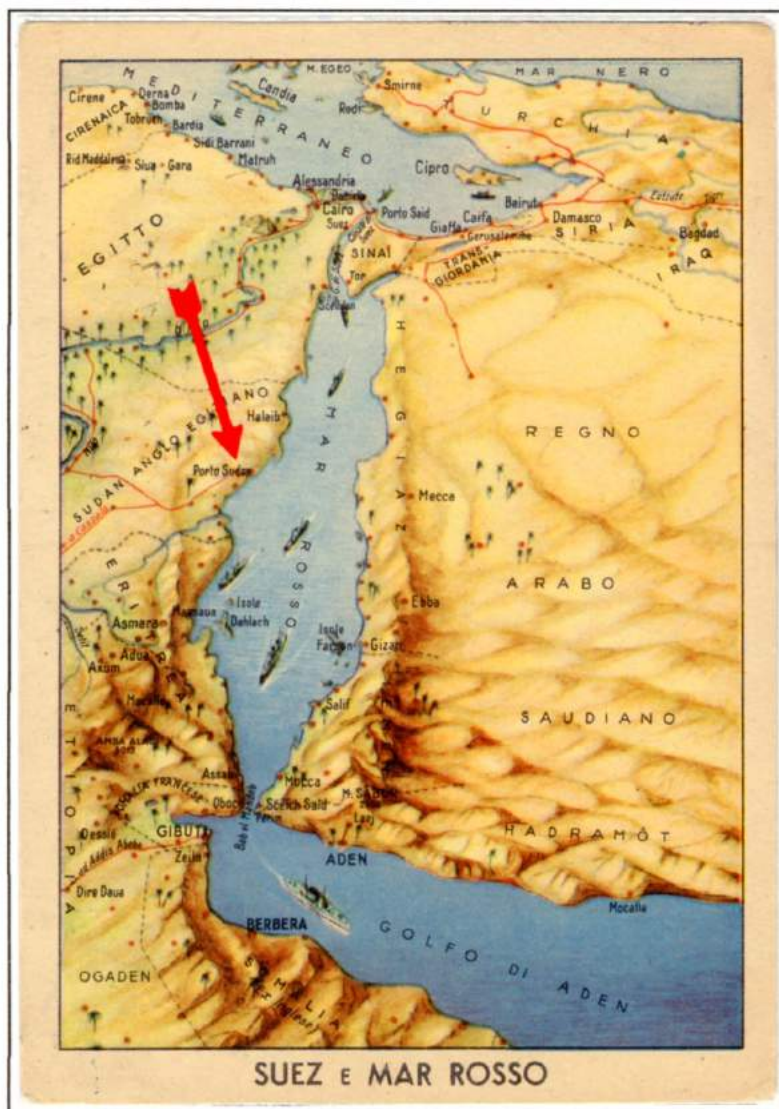
....which wanted to underline the **crisis** of the British Navy through some **satirical free-frank military postcards**.

Italy, 1941 - free-frank military postcard depicted with Winston Churchill, Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, talking with a British Admiral.

The British Admiral: - Sir, I propose to rename the "Home Fleet": let's call it "Truth". Maybe it will come back to the surface



L'Ammiraglio inglese: — Eccellenza, vi propongo di ribattezzare la "Home Fleet": chiamiamola "Verità". Chissà che non rivenga a galla.



Italy, 1941 - free-frank military postcard

In April 1942 the Italian civilians, still present in Eritrea, were evacuated by British with the support of the m/s **Saturnia**, which was placed under the aegis of the **Italian Red Cross** for the occasion.

Free-frank military postcard with rubber marking "Italian Red Cross - Overseas Mission - Saturnia ship".



The participation of the Italian Navy in the **Red Sea** war, controlled to the north and south by the British, was of little potential



....counting **five old MAS** dating back to the First World War and 6 destroyers.

On 3rd April, 1941, six Italian destroyers, constituting the major naval force, were intercepted by the British air force on the way to bomb **Port Sudan**.



In the clash the destroyers **Nazario Sauro** and **Manin** were lost, the others, damaged, self-sinking near the Arab coast.

3 - THE CONFLICT BECOMES GLOBAL

3.1 - War in the Pacific and Southeast Asia (Dec. 1941 - Jun. 1942)

Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor

At 06:40 a.m. on 7th December, 1941, near Pearl Harbor naval base in Hawaii,



.....a Japanese **pocket submarine** was sighted and attacked by a **maritime patrol aircraft** and by the the destroyer **Ward**. Although this sighting was reported to base's command, no one bothered to give, if not an alarm, at least an early warning.



Meanwhile, at 06:00 a.m., about 200 miles north of Oahu, the **first wave of aircraft**, destined to bomb the American fleet at Pearl Harbor, took off from the Japanese aircraft carriers **Akagi**, **Soryu**, **Hiryu**, **Kaga**, **Shokaku** and **Zuikaku**,

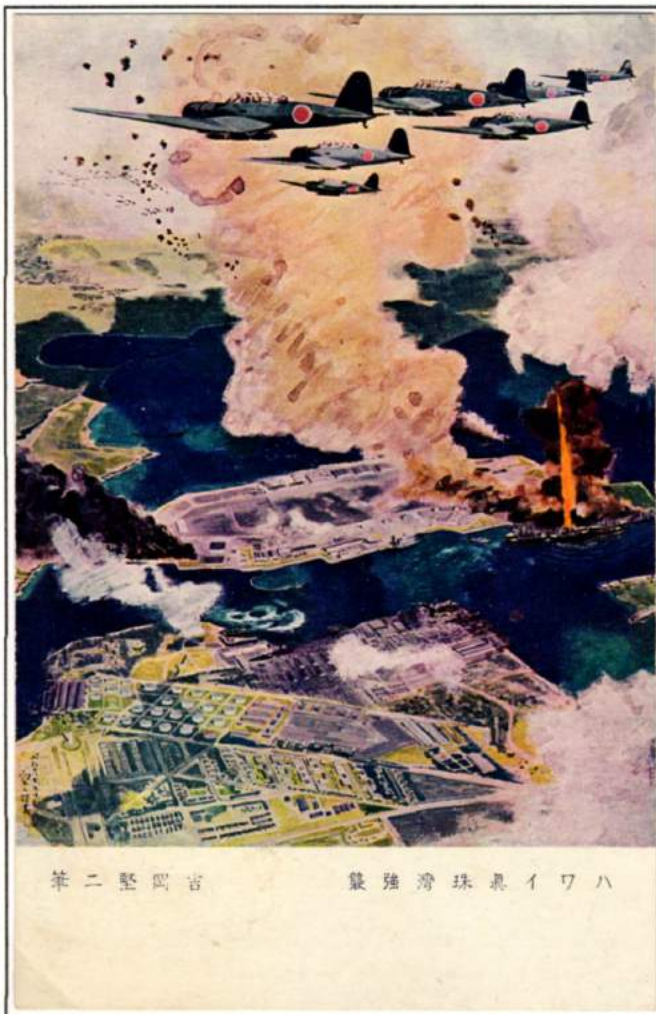
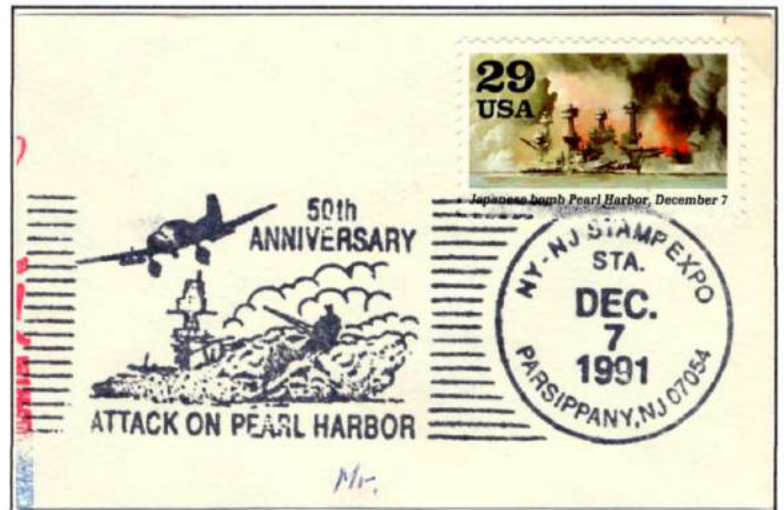
.....followed an hour later by a **second wave**.



At 07:48 a.m. the first **Japanese planes** struck the airports of **Kanehohe, Wheeler, Ewa and Hickam**.



At 7:55 a.m., more **Japanese planes** attacked the naval base at **Pearl Harbor**.



Hundreds of **bombs** were dropped on **ships at anchor**



.....and on **naval air and port facilities**.

Japan, 1943 - 2 s. postal stationery depicted with the Pearl Harbor naval base under attack by Japanese aircraft on the morning of 7.12.1941.

In less than two hours the American fleet was wiped out losing four battleships, West Virginia, Tennessee, **Oklahoma**, **Arizona**,

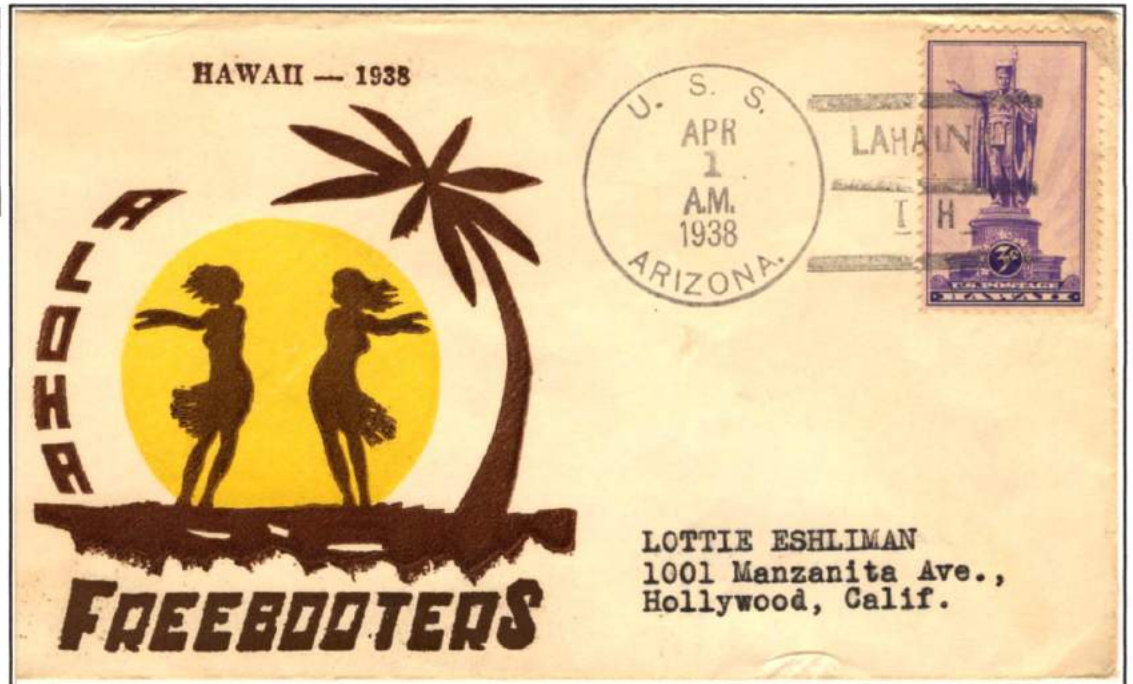


Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, December 7

battleships **Oklahoma** e **Arizona**



.....and numerous cruisers and destroyers, including the destroyer **Shaw**.



Fortunately, American aircraft carriers were not on base that day. The Japanese high Command later regretted this mistake.

The only ship that managed to move in that chaos, in an attempt to take to sea, was the battleship **Nevada**. Hit by a torpedo and three bombs, this unit also settled on the shallow water with its load of dead.



At 1:30 p.m. - Washington time - a brief **announcement** from the **White House**, regarding the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, was read to journalists giving any further detail.

In the afternoon the Hawaiian newspaper "Honolulu Star Bulletin" came out in an extraordinary edition titling: "War! Oahu bombed by Japanese planes".





Ink spot

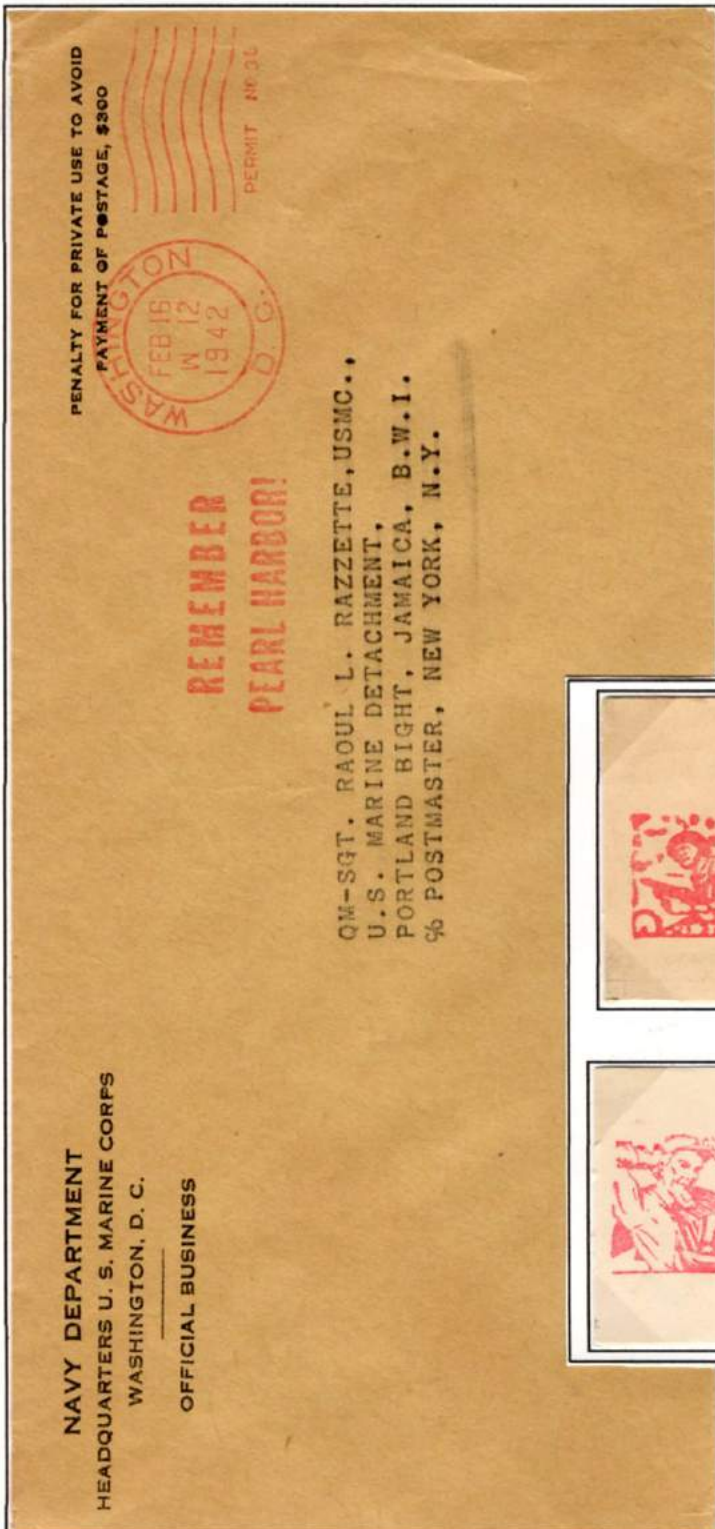
Misperforations



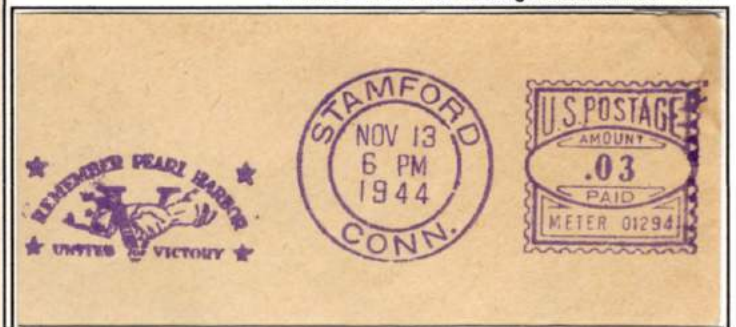
The day after, President F.D. Roosevelt...



.....announced to members of Congress that the U.S.A. had declared war on Japan, calling 7th December "day of infamy".



PITNEY BOWES franking machine mod. "CA".

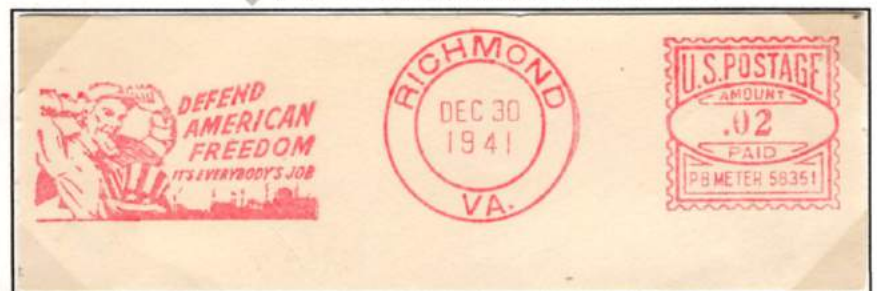


The aphorism "Remember Pearl Harbor", coined by him on that occasion, became the first weapon of the United States

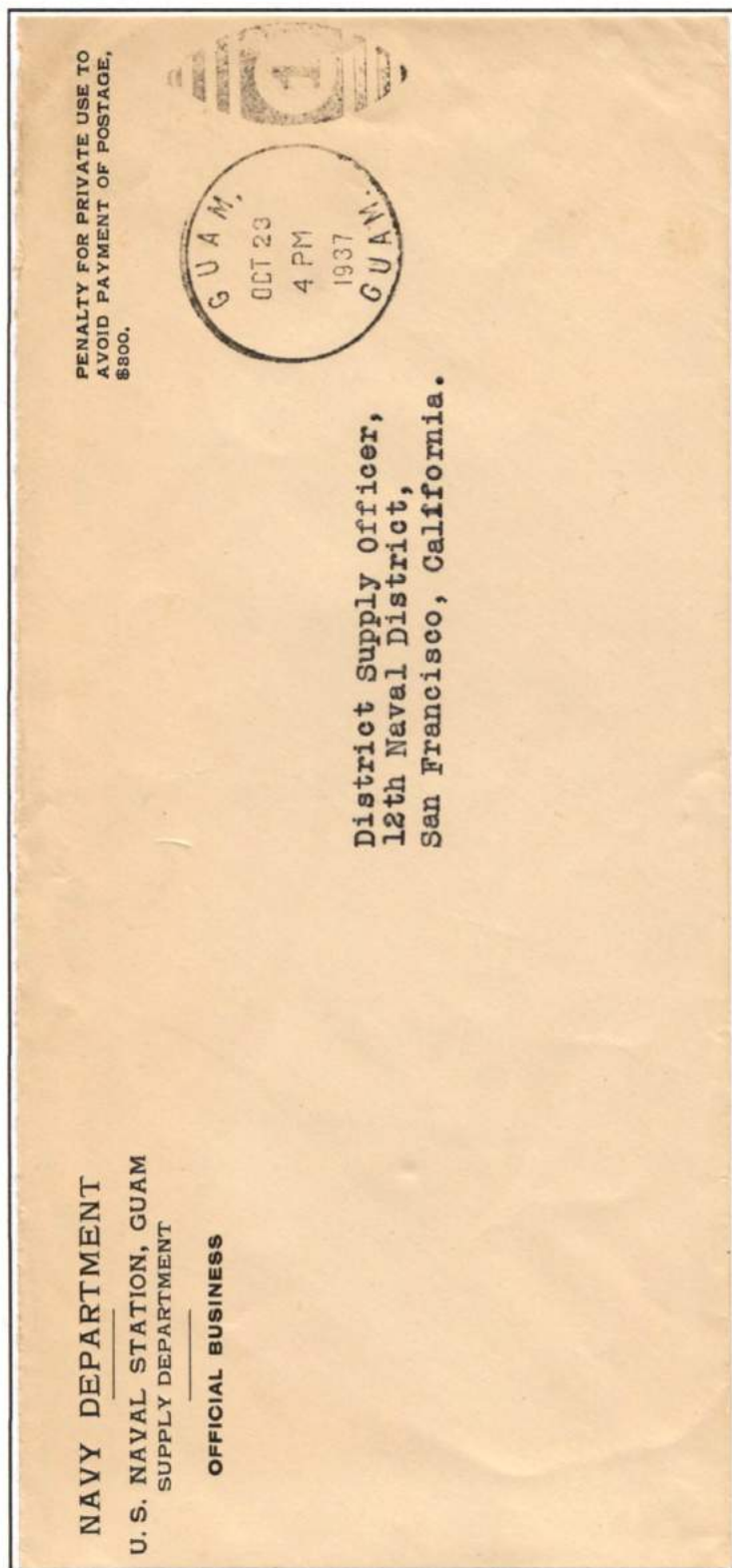
Postal service envelope for the exclusive use of the Navy Department - Headquarters US Marine Corps - Washington D.C.



PITNEY BOWES franking machine mod. "CVS".



.....mobilizing every resource of the country, both material and moral.

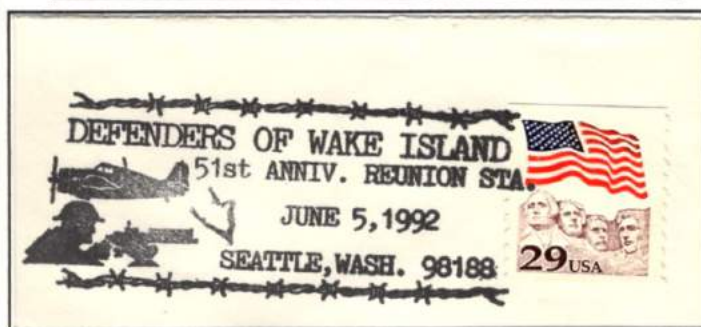
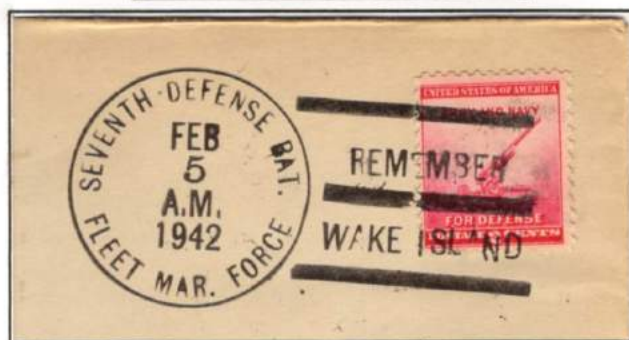


Thus began the "Battle of the Pacific", as historians have unanimously called the four long years of war fought in the Pacific Ocean and Southeast Asia.



Simultaneously at Pearl Harbor, the Japs attacked the U.S. bases of Guam Island, which fell on 10th December,

Postal service envelope for the exclusive use of the Navy Department - US Naval Station, Guam.



.....and Wake Island, where the resistance lasted until 23rd December.



On 8th December, a large number of **Japanese transport ships** reached the coast of **Malaysia**, landing there a lot of troops.....

Japon, 1943 - free-frank military postcard



.....protected by **warships**.

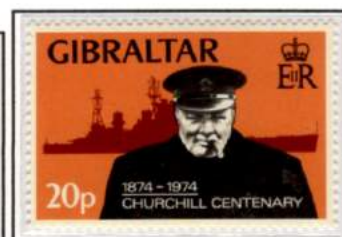


Italy, 1943 - free-frank military postcard. Allegoric picture of Japan's victory over the Allied naval forces. In the foreground the British battleship Prince of Wales as it is sinking.

Cancellation commemorating the 50th anniv. of the sinking of the two British units in the Gulf of Siam.



On 10th December, off the Gulf of Siam, **Japanese aircrafts** attacked and sank the battleship **Prince of Wales**



....and the battle cruiser **Repulse** both sailing towards Malaysia.



On 8th December, the Japs also landed on the island of **Hong Kong**.



Japan, 1943 - 2 s. postal stationery



Despite the **strong** defence of the British soldiers.....

....Hong Kong capitulated on 25th December 1941.



At the same time, the British stronghold of **Singapore** was attacked and the British garrison defending it **surrendered** on 15th February, 1942.



シンガポール英軍の降伏

宮本三郎筆



Commemorative cancellation of the Singapore surrender

Japan, 1943 - 2 s. postal stationery



After conquering the Malesya, the Japanese aimed at **Java**, where there were important oil deposits.

An Allied naval squadron was sent to fight them and on 27th February, 1942, in the **battle of the Java Sea**,



....many Allied units were lost, including the cruiser **De Ruyter**

.....and the destroyer **Kortenaer**, both Dutch.



The following evening, a Japanese naval force, including the cruiser **Haguro**, intercepted the surviving Allied units which had left Java to reach Australia.

In the ensuing battle, all Allied ships were hit and sunk, among them the British cruiser **Exeter**.



On 18th March, after two months of furious fighting, **Rangoon**, the capital of Burma, fell to Japanese.....

.....and the whole country **was occupied** in May.



Overprinted
Japanese occupation



Issued during
Japanese Occupation

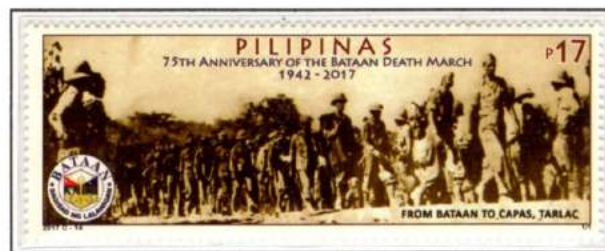




The Philippines also suffered the fate of other South East Asian states, at various stage. On 2nd January, 1942, Manila fell,



.... on the 12th March, MacArthur left the Island



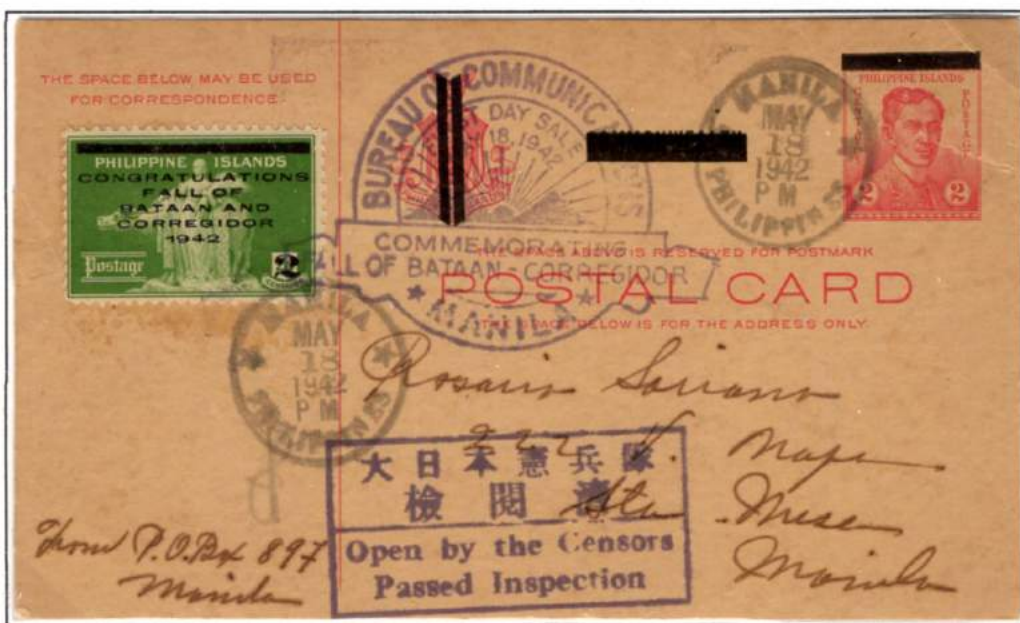
....and on 9th April, the defenders of Baatan surrender to the superior enemy forces. The survivors were forced to a long and exhausting transfer to Capas, know as the "death march", walking for about 50 km..



Also on the Corregidor island, ...



....on 6th May, the American soldiers were forced to **surrender**, after a strenuous and vain resistance.



Postal stationery with obscured Philippine inscriptions and additional overprinted stamp, and Japanese postal cancellation commemorating the fall of Bataan and Corregidor and rectangular military censor's marking.



Philatelic letter from Manila to Pasay franked for 7 s. with stamps issued in 1943 and postmark commemorating the 1st anniversary of the fall of Bataan. & Corregidor and military censor's marking.

In less than five months the Japs had occupied and submitted a large part of the Asian continent,



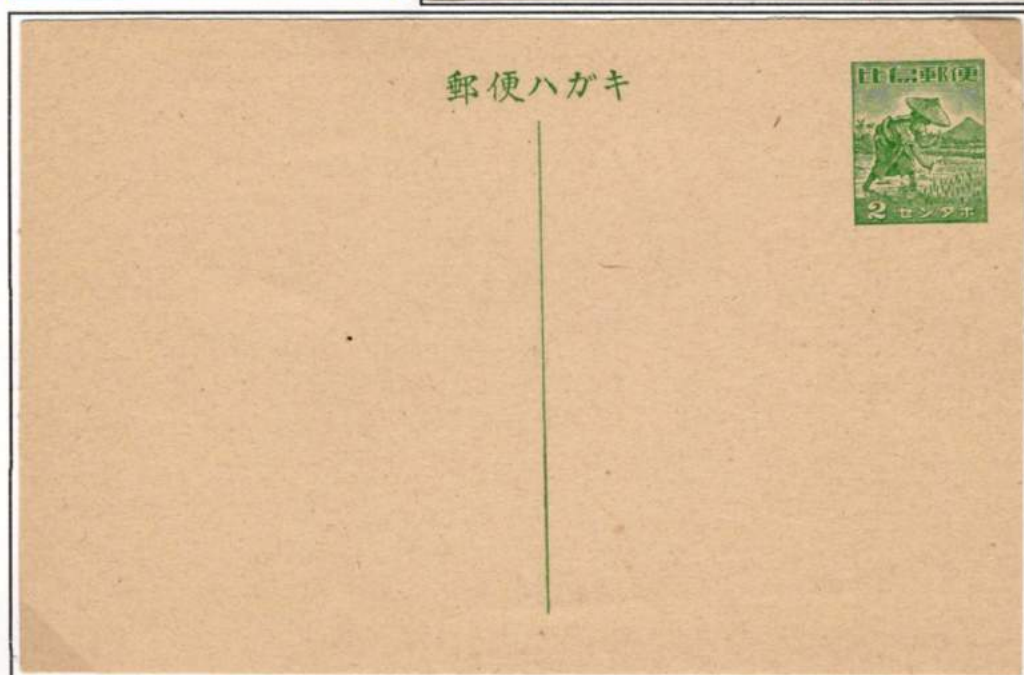
Letter stamped with an overprinted 1935 stamp for the first anniversary of the conquest of the Philippine islands. Violet marking in square box showing Japanese expansion in Southeast Asia and a rectangular military censor's marking.



....from the Aleutian Islands,....

....to Malaysia

Malaysia (Japanese Occupation of Malacca), 1944 - Postal Stationery with postmark dated **2604**. Postmarks with **2601>2605** (1941>1945) were used exclusively in the occupied countries of Southeast Asia.



...and to the Philippines.



Philippines, 1943 - postal stationery and stamps issued during the Japanese occupation.

From the British possessions on the island of Borneo.....



Overprinted
"Japanese
Occupation"

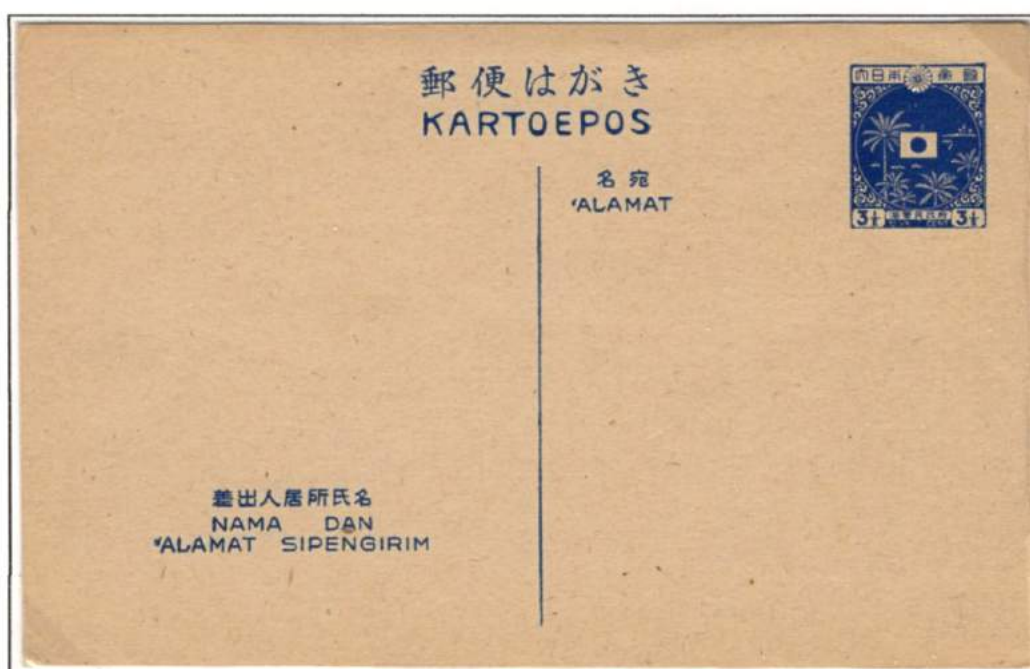
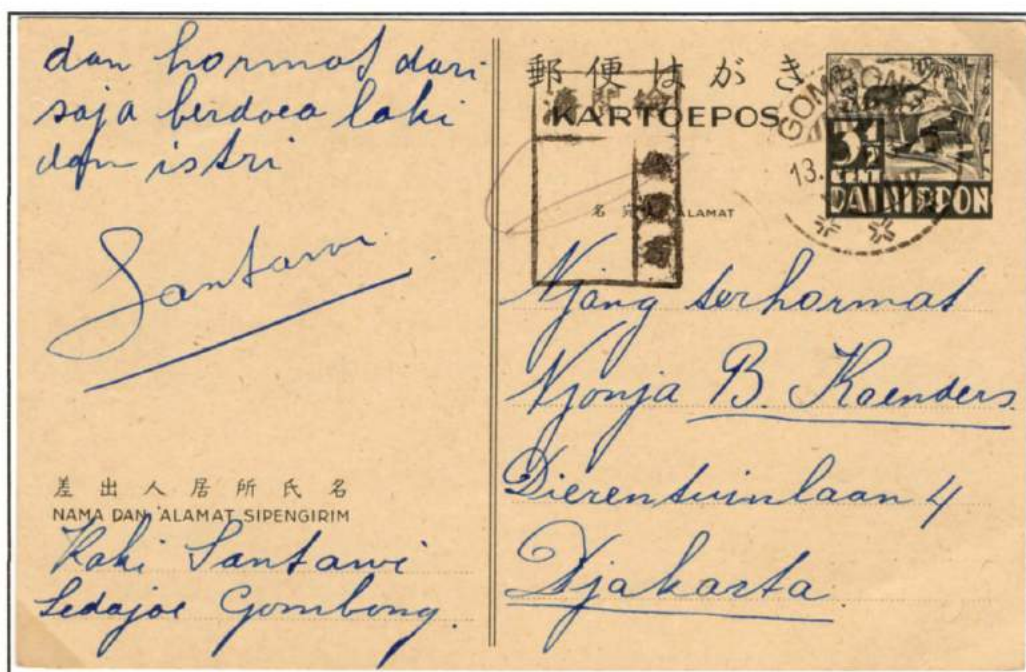


....to the Dutch Indies.



Issued in 1943 during the occupation of Java.

Dutch Indies, 1943 - Postal stationery printed during the Japanese occupation (DAI NIPPON) of the island of Java. From Gombong to Jakarta, 13.12.03, where 03 indicates the year 2603 of the postal date used by the Japanese in the occupied countries of Southeast Asia, corresponding to 1943, and military censor's marking.



Dutch Indies, 1943 - Japanese occupation of Sumatra - Postal stationery

Then they turned their attention to Australia.....



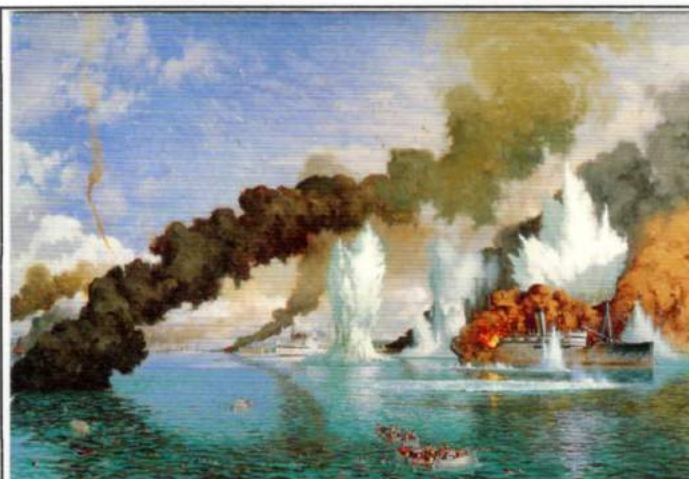
.....where all armed forces were alerted in prevision of a Japanese attack.



On 21st January, the Japanese occupied Rabaul in New Britain,



.....and on 19 th February they bombed Port Darwin in Australia.



Federation Frontline

The bombing of Darwin 1942-45

Hx.

MAURO COSMAI
9 William St.
PT. Pirie

5 5 4 0

SOUTH AUSTRALIA



On 2nd May, they attempted to land at Port Moresby, in New Guinea,

.... but they were rejected by the Allied defences, suffering heavy losses.



In order to prevent the Japanese fleet, including the aircraft carrier **Zuikaku**, from reaching Port Moresby,



....the Americans sent into the Coral Sea.....



.....a naval Task Force, including the aircraft carrier **Yorktown**.



This gave rise to a clash known as the **Battle of the Coral Sea**,



.....where the ships of both Navies, although never coming in direct contact of fire, suffered heavy attacks by **planes** embarked on aircraft carriers.



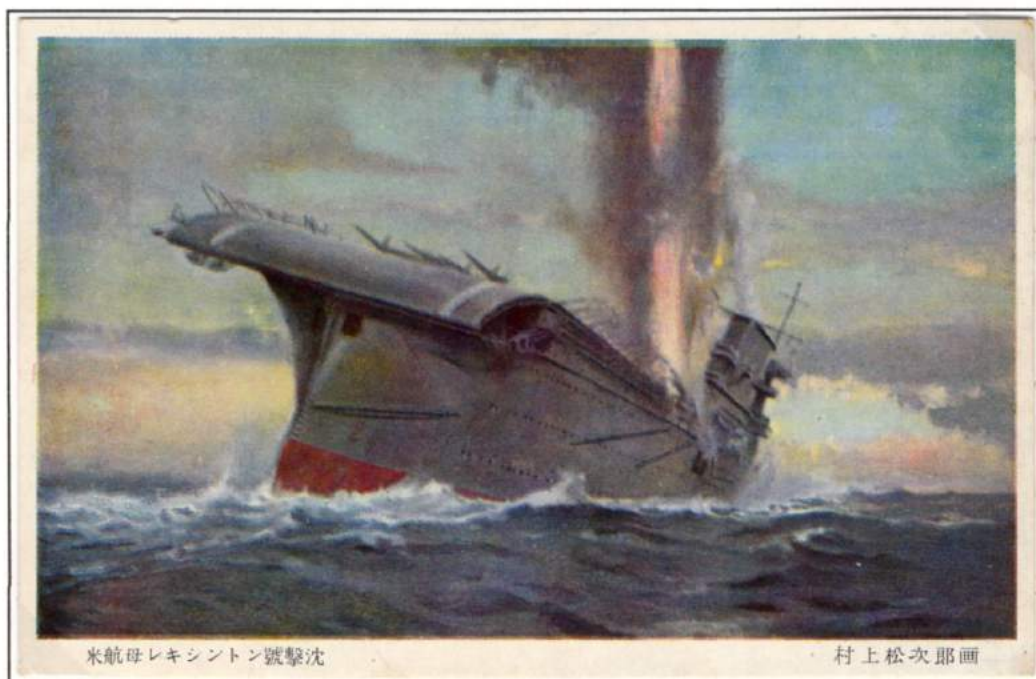
The aircraft carrier **Soho** in flames after the American air attack.

The battle ended with the sinking of the Japanese aircraft carrier **Soho**,

....of the American aircraft carrier **Lexington** and with an American tactical victory, having been stopped the landing on Port Moresby.



The aircraft carrier **Lexington** attacked by Japanese torpedo bombers.



Japan. 1943 - free-frank military postcard. The **Lexington** skidded to port just before sinking.



Failed the attempt to land in Australia, the Japanese aimed at **Midway**, a group of islands a few hundred miles from Hawaii,



.....but they were sighted by a maritime patrol plane.

Original - 1985

Fluorescent paper and matt rubber

Reprint of 1992 & glossy rubber



Briefed of this enemy move, Admiral **Nimitz**, Supreme Commander of the Pacific naval forces,



....sent his ships, including the aircraft carriers **Yorktown**, led by Admiral F.J. Fletcher,



.....**Enterprise** and **Hornet**, to stop the Japanese attack.



From 3rd to 6th June, in the waters of Midway, a bloody battle took place, where the main protagonists were the **planes** embarked.

During the battle, the Japanese lost four aircraft carriers, including the **Akagi**, led by Adm. **Nagumo**.

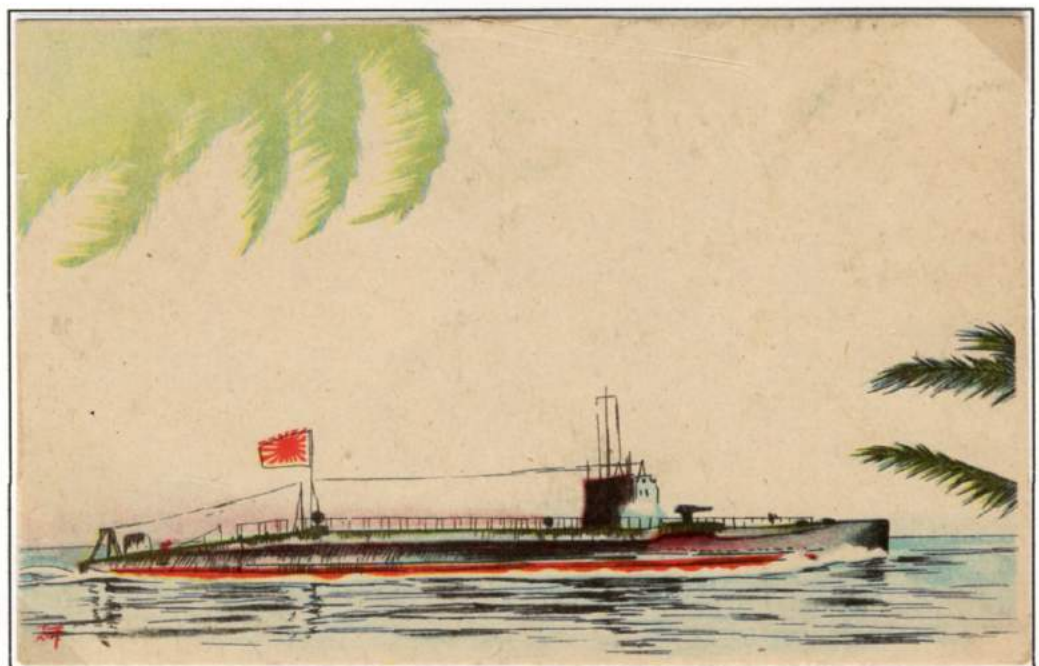


The Americans lost the **Yorktown**, hit by enemy aircraft



.....and definitively sunk by the Japanese submarine **I.168**, while being towed at Pearl Harbor.

Japan 1943 - free-frank military postcard depicting the submarine **I.168**.





On 12th February, 1942, the Germans began operation "Cerberus", the return to Germany of the battle cruisers **Scharnhorst** and **Gneisenau**, which, sailed from Brest the day before,



....had to cross the **Channel**, the shortest but also the most dangerous route.



The German ships were sighted late, near Dover, and were attacked by 12 British **Fairey Swordfish** torpedo bombers, all shot down



Special postmark in memory of Lieut. Comdr. Esmonde, shot down, on 12th February, 1942, while trying to torpedo the two German battle cruisers. In the centre, the crest of the British Naval Air Station HMS Daedalus, from where the torpedo bombers took off.

....by the German **escort ships**, including torpedo boat **T.17**. This allowed the two battle cruisers to pass unharmed. For the British, it was the most humiliating of all the blows suffered during the conflict.



German free-frank military letter from the torpedo boat T.7, escorting the two battle cruisers, with a violet administrative cachet with field post number "M 14068", where "M" is for Marine (Navy).



On 28th March, the British commandos attacked the port of Saint Nazaire to sabotage its large dry dock, where German battleships were repaired. The old cruiser **Campbeltown** was used for this raid. With the bow filled with explosives it was directed to the entrance of the dry dock where it exploded causing serious damage.



German free-frank military letter shipped from the command of the port of Saint Nazaire, with blue administrative cachet and with field post number 08682 L.



During 1942, the British ships sank some German submarines,



.....causing great damage to **Allied
convoys.**



On 4th July, 1942, the Allies suffered heavy losses when the **PQ-17** convoy,

Airgraph from the cruiser Suffolk. The unit was assigned to the direct or indirect protection of convoys going to the Soviet Union.



...sailing to Soviet Union via the Arctic route,
was attacked and practically destroyed



.....by a group
of U-boats

.....despite the many surface escort ships, including the cruiser **Suffolk**.

MAKE SURE THAT THE ADDRESS IS WRITTEN IN LARGE BLOCK LETTERS IN THE PANEL ABOVE

Write the address in large BLOCK letters in the panel below.
The address must NOT be typewritten.

TO:—

MR. J. A. BEABLE.
NO. 21. PARKER, ST.
HARROGATE.
YORKSHIRE.
ENGLAND.

DATE STAMP
384118

Write the message very plainly below this line.

S. Beale, No. 21, Parker, Harrogate. Sender's Address: H. M. S. Suffolk, 50 C. C. C. London.

H.M.S. SUFFOLK

CHRISTMAS
GREETINGS

FROM

Your darling Son
George. Harrogate.
Wishes Mother, that
by the next Xmas.
We shall be all
home, together, for good.

This space should not be used.



On 31st December, the Allied convoy JW-51, sailing to USSR,

....was intercepted and attacked in the Barents Sea



....by German surface ships, including the heavy cruiser **Admiral Hipper**.

The intervention of British escort units, including the cruiser **Sheffield**

...and numerous **destroyers**, allowed the convoy to pass undamaged.



In the first four months of 1943, the Allies achieved excellent results in the fight against **German submarines** ...

..... by using new and more suitable naval surface ships.



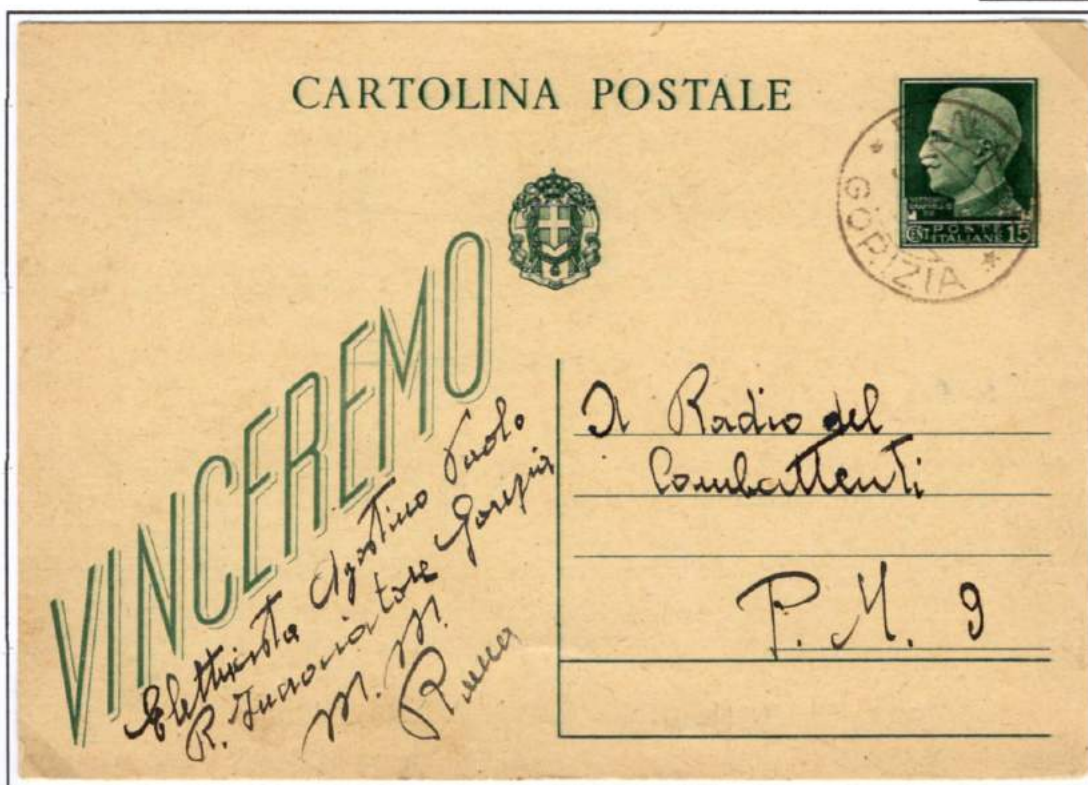
A great contribution also came from **planes**, either **ground-based**

.....or **embarked on small aircraft carriers**, after they were equipped with radar devices capable of disturbing the enemy ones, so much so that they could not be detected until the time of the **attack**.



On **22nd March, 1942**, a British convoy, coming from Alexandria to Malta, was intercepted and attacked by an Italian naval squadron, in the Sirte Gulf. The fight, known as **the Second Battle of Sirte**, lasted until evening with a stormy sea causing much more damage to the ships than the battle.

Commemorative cancellation of the 2nd battle of the Sirte depicted with a cruiser class "Dido".



Among the Italian ships that took part in the battle were the cruiser **Gorizia**

Postal Stationery shipped from the cruiser Gorizia.

.....and the battleship Littorio.

Free-frank military postcard shipped from Italian battleship Littorio with postmark 21.1.42, with linear stamp "Verified by censorship" and double circle marking with number "5" assigned to the on-board censor.

Mittente

Cognome Piero Pasquino

Nome Lauroville

Grado Segr. D. S. T.

Indirizzo C. N. Littorio
M. M. Bone

VERIFICATO
PER TELEGRAMMA

Alla Famiglia
Pasquino
Luigino Sella 5
Vercelli

The first one, whose large escort included the cruiser **Charybdis** and the aircraft carrier **Eagle**, was intercepted in the waters of Pantelleria

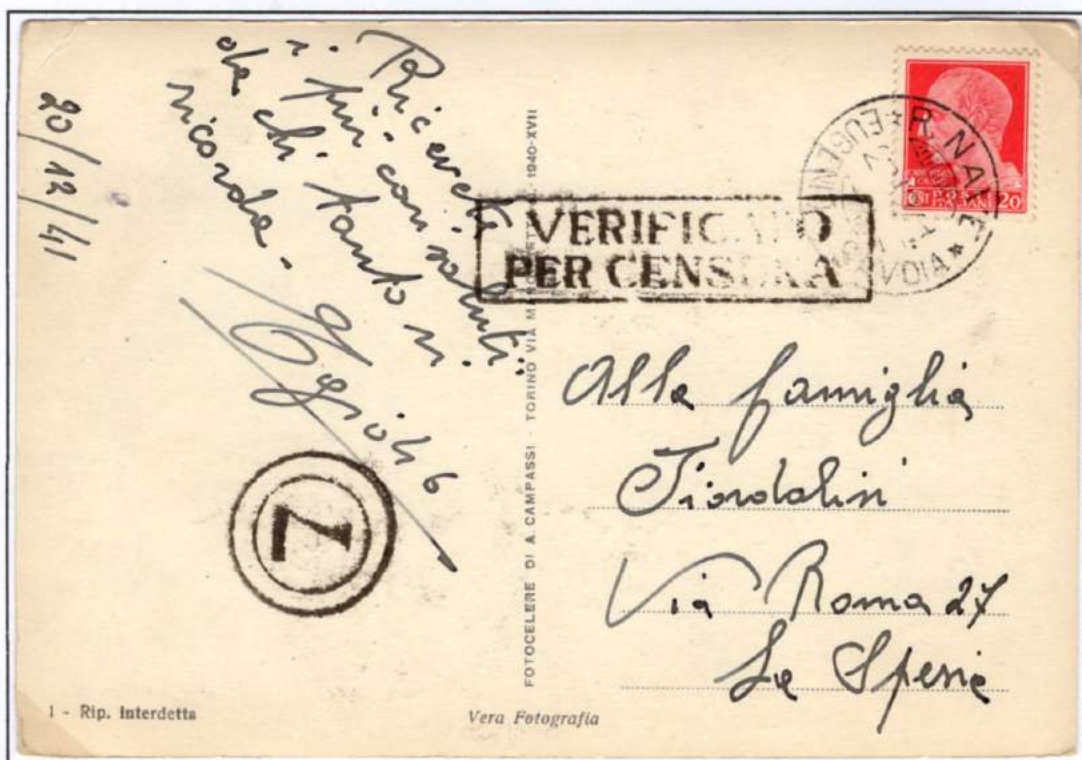
In the 1st decade of June, the British organized the simultaneous departure from Gibraltar and Alexandria of two convoys named "Harpoon" and "Vigorous".

.....by Italian torpedo bombers



.....and a naval squadron, including the cruiser **Eugenio di Savoia**.

Postcard shipped from Italian cruiser **Eugenio di Savoia** with postmark 20.12.41, with linear stamp "Verified by censorship" and double circle marking with number "7" assigned to the on-board censor.



In the fight, known as **Battle of Pantelleria**, the torpedo bombers sank the destroyer **Bedouin**,

.....damaged the battleship **Malaya** and the cruiser **Liverpool**.



Only two merchant ships survived, reaching Malta with their precious cargo.



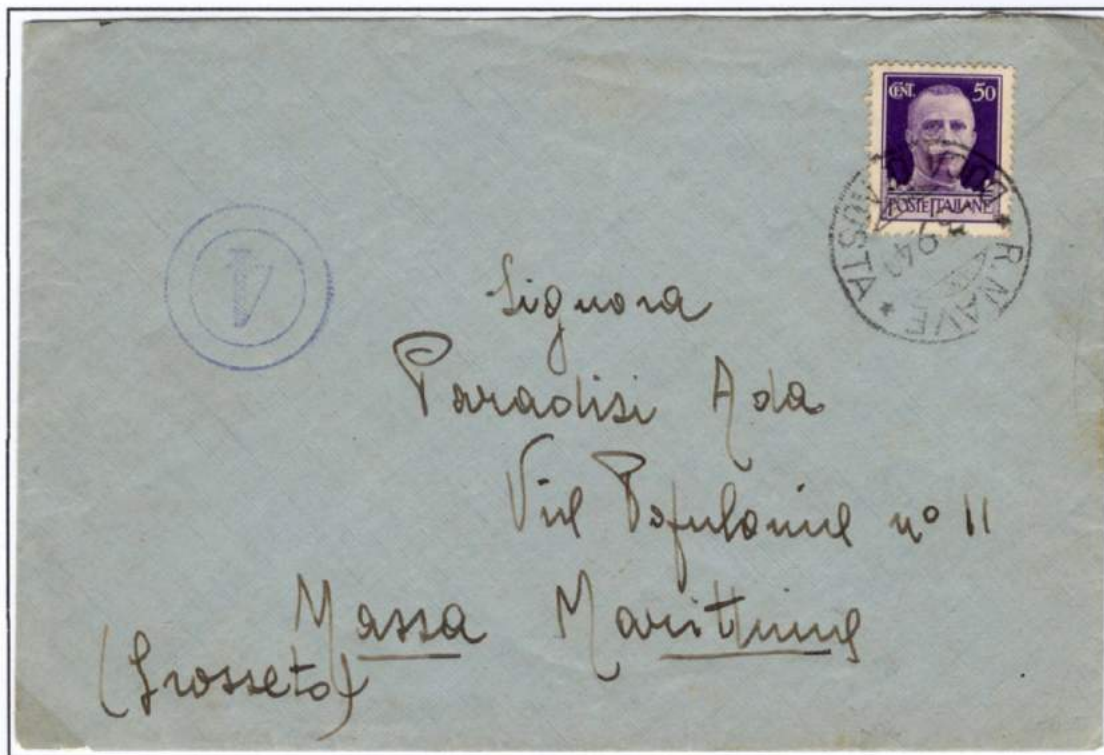
Cancellation depicted with the destroyer **Bedouin** hit by an Italian torpedo bomber.



On the 15th, the convoy coming from Egypt, protected by an imposing escort including the cruiser **Hermione** and the destroyer **Exmoor**, was forced to reverse the route under the protection of Malta's planes



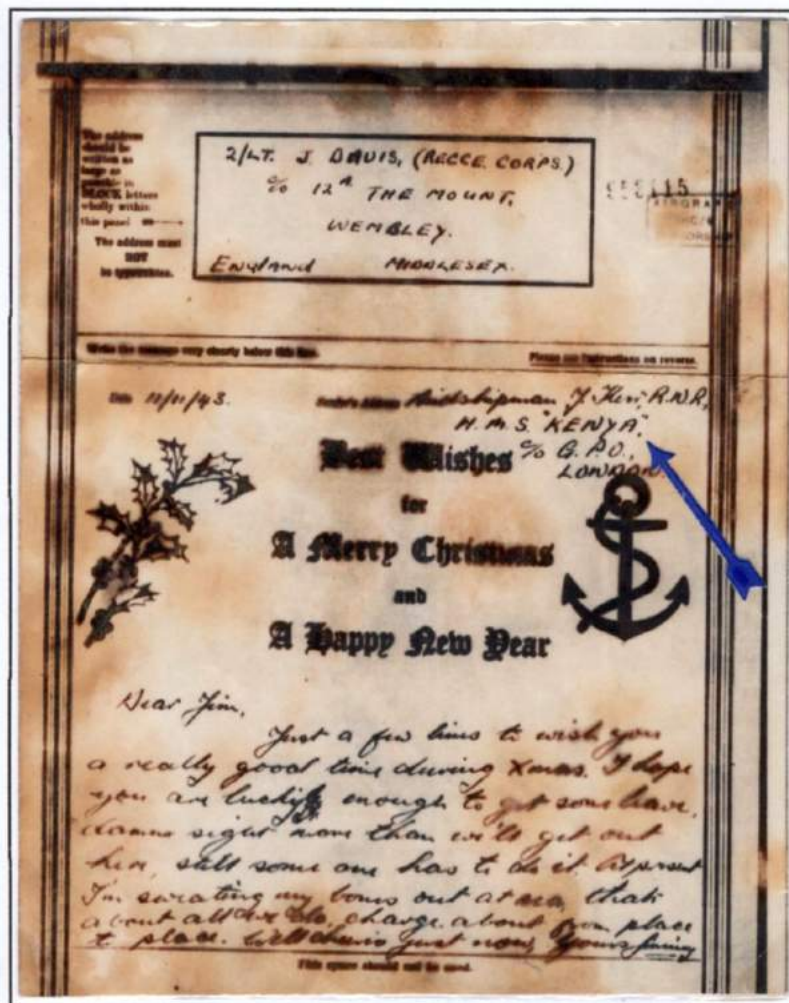
.....having been intercepted by an Italian naval squadron, including the cruisers **Duca D'Aosta**



....and **Trento**. In the battle the Italians lost the Trento and the British the Hermione.



On 10th August, the British launched **Operation Pedestal**, the most important supply mission in Malta. 13 merchant ships and one tanker, escorted by an impressive naval squadron, were attacked by the Italian-German forces the next day. Italian people know it as the "Mid-August Battle".



Airgraph of 11.11.1943 sent by sailor of the cruiser Kenya



The British suffered damage to cruisers Kenya,



....Nigeria,



....aircraft carrier Indomitable



.....and the battleship Rodney.



Furthermore, they lost the aircraft carrier Eagle,



....the destroyer Foresight,



.....the cruisers Cairo and Manchester,

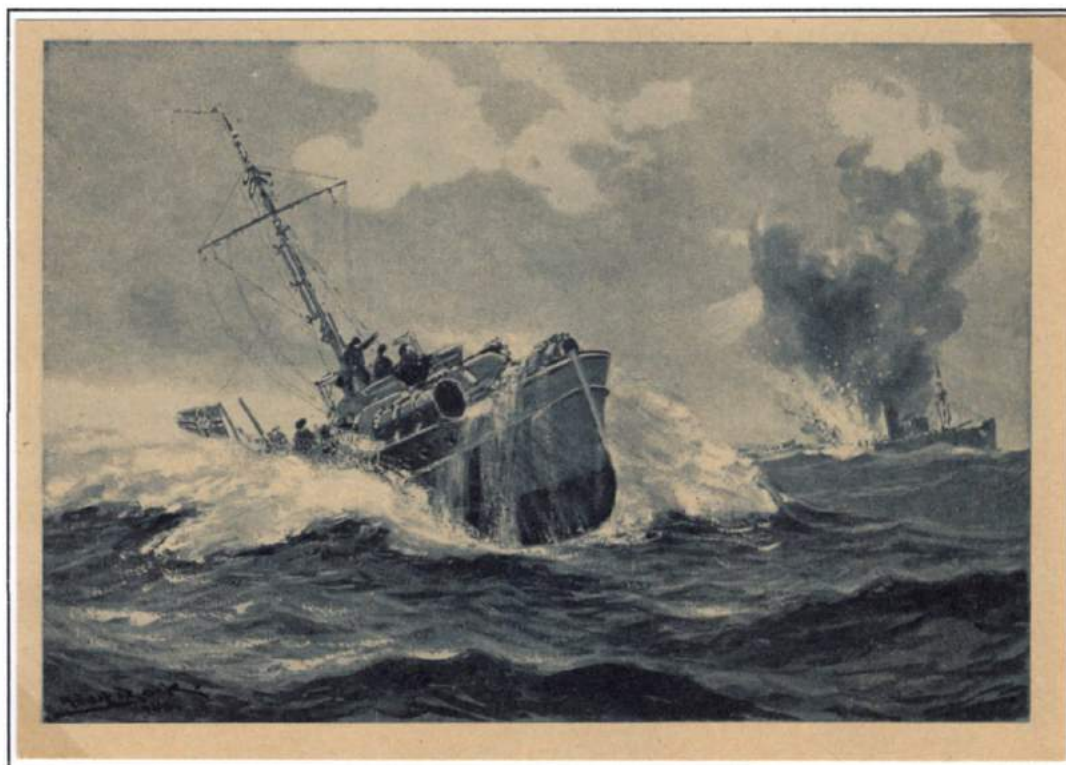


....the latter due to torpedoing by the Italian motor torpedo boats MS 16 and MS 22, and 9 merchant ships.



Only 4 cargo ships and the tanker Ohio reached Malta, although damaged, and for the island was the salvation.

The Axis forces, for their part, reported the shooting down of 60 airplanes, the damage of a **German torpedo motor**,



German free-frank military postcard edited by OKW, depicted with the sailors of a German motor torpedo boats exulting after striking an allied merchant ship.

.....the loss of two Italian submarines, and the damage to two cruisers, **Attendolo** and Bolzano.



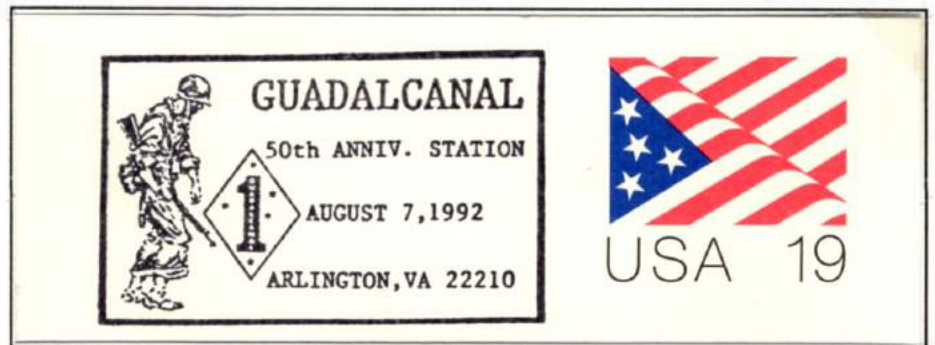
Free-frank military postcard posted on the Italian cruiser Attendolo with postmark 21.1.42, with linear marking "Verified by censorship" and double circle marking with number 6 assigned to the censor on board + single circle marking with number 4 C (3), about 25 mm, assigned to the censor of the peripheral ministerial office of the Navy.

4 - THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE

4.1 - Pacific: the allied counteroffensive (Aug.1942 - Dec.1943)

The Solomon Islands campaign

On 7th August, after the success of Midway, the **Americans** took advantage of the favourable moment by **landing** on the island of **Guadalcanal**.



It was one of the southern islands of the Solomons.

Here the Japs had built an airport, named **Henderson Field** by the **Americans** after its occupation.



The landing of American troops was protected by an Allied naval force, including the US



....battleships **North Carolina**

..... and **Chicago**,



....the aircraft carrier **Wasp**,



.....the Australian cruisers **Canberra** and **Hobart**.



In the night between 8th and 9th August, a Japanese naval squadron, led by **Admiral Mikawa** embarked on the cruiser **Chockai**,



..... intercepted, near the island of **Savo**, an American convoy sailing to **Guadalcanal**



....to supply **bridgeheads** in need of supplies and munitions.

Japan, 1943 - free-frank military postcard - Cruiser Chockai fires on the Allied naval units.



In the ensuing battle, the cruiser **Chockai** fired on the Allied units, which lost four heavy cruisers,.....



...including the American **Quincy** ...



....and the Australian **Canberra**, ...



...and the Australian light cruiser **Hobart** suffered heavy damage.



Nevertheless the convoy passed unharmed and for the Japanese it was a fictitious victory.

On 24th August, in the Eastern Solomons, there was a new fight and the Japs lost the aircraft carrier **Ryūjō**, ...



...while the Americans had damage to the aircraft carrier **Enterprise**.



Between August and September, the Japanese made a new attempt to land at **Milne Bay**, in New Guinea, but were rejected by the Allied Air Force.

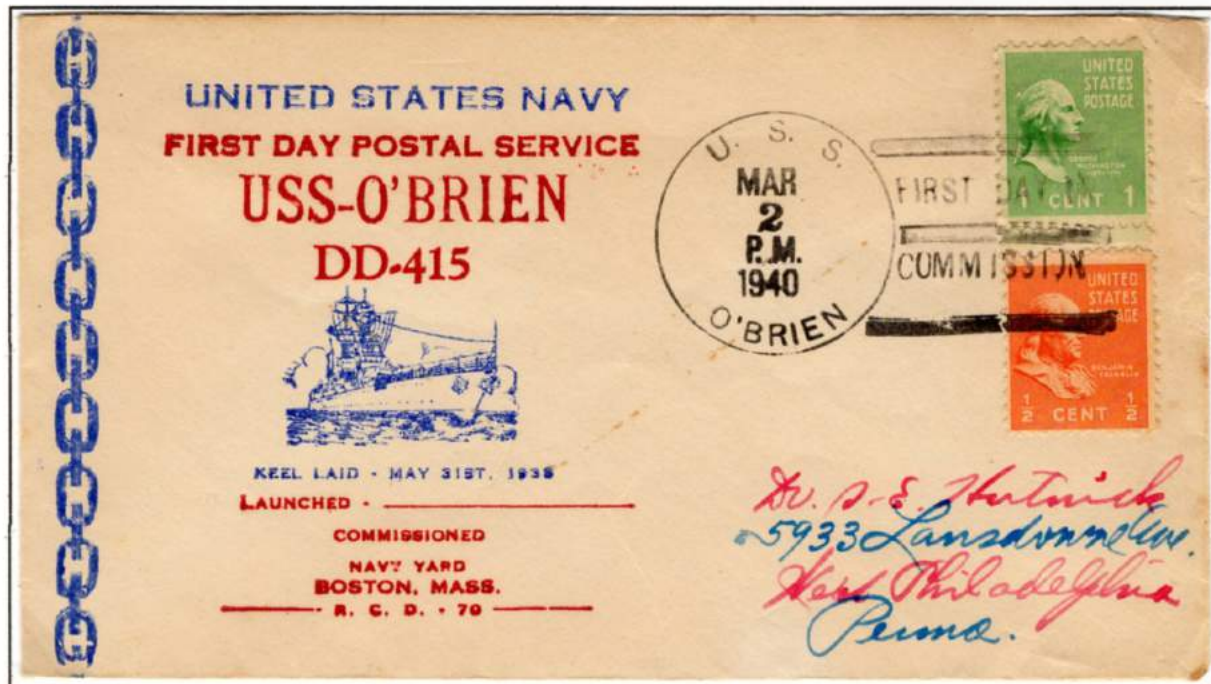


The battle for the capture of Guadalcanal was a no-holds-barred struggle and on 15th September, off the island of **Santa Cruz**,

...the Japs sank the American aircraft carrier **Wasp**



....and severely damaged the destroyer **O'Brien**.



On 11th October, off **Cape Esperance**, an American Task Force, including the cruiser **San Francisco**, intercepted the Japanese fleet which, taken by surprise, suffered heavy losses.

Fifteen days later, on the island of Santa Cruz, the Japanese sank the American aircraft carrier **Hornet**.



Between the 13th and 15th November a new clash took place between Japanese and Americans on Guadalcanal and the latter suffered damage to the battleship **South Dakota**,

.....the cruiser **Portland** and the sinking of many smaller units.





The Japanese losses were much more serious, losing, besides some **destroyers**,



....the battleships **Hiei** ...



....and **Kirishima**, ...



.....this last one hit and sunk by the US battleship **Washington**.



While the fighting was going on, Japanese **transport ships** began to land men and vehicles



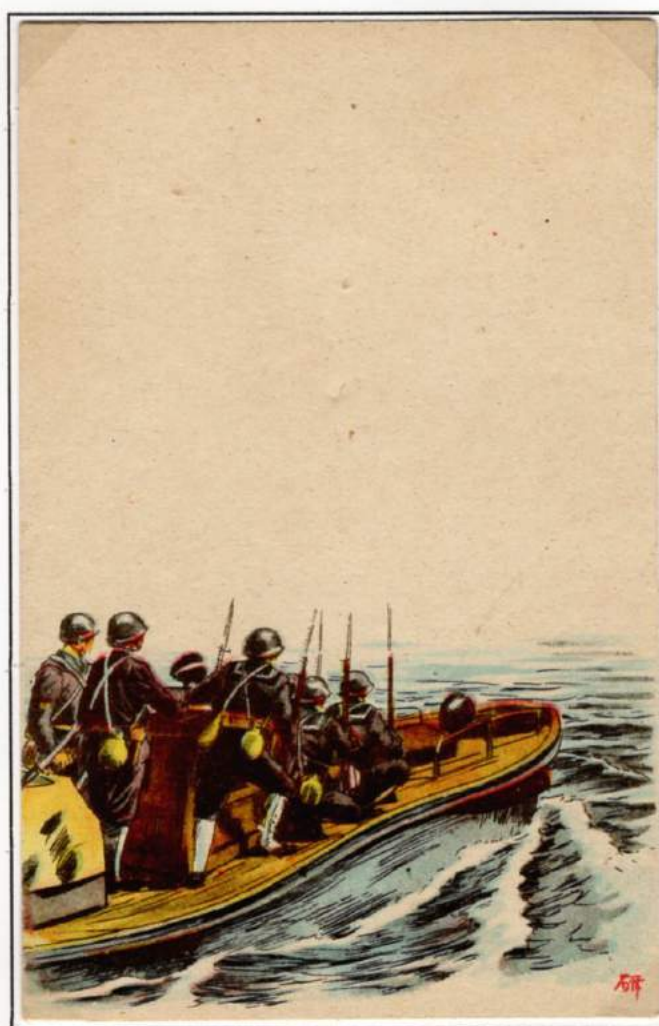
....before being attacked and sunk by the **airplanes of the Enterprise**.



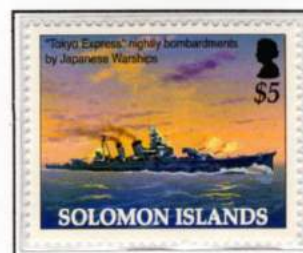
Nevertheless, about **4000 soldiers** and **naval infantrymen** reached the island.



Japan, 1943 - free-frank military postcard depicted with Japanese motorboat and naval infantrymen.



From the 30th November, the Japanese, realizing that it was very dangerous to make daytime landings, decided to supply their strongholds at night by means of **destroyers**: the Americans called this system "**Tokyo Express**".





On 9th February, 1943, the Allies launched the decisive **attack** forcing the Japanese to retreat from Guadalcanal

....and take shelter in more backward positions in **New Guinea**.



On 2nd and 3rd March, the **Battle of the Bismarck Sea** took place.

Allied aircraft sighted and attacked a **Japanese convoy**, leaving from Rabaul to New Guinea, causing heavy damage, and sinking transport ships and four destroyers, including the **Arashio** and the **Shirayuki**.



In June 1943, the Allies launched an offensive by **landing in New Georgia**,

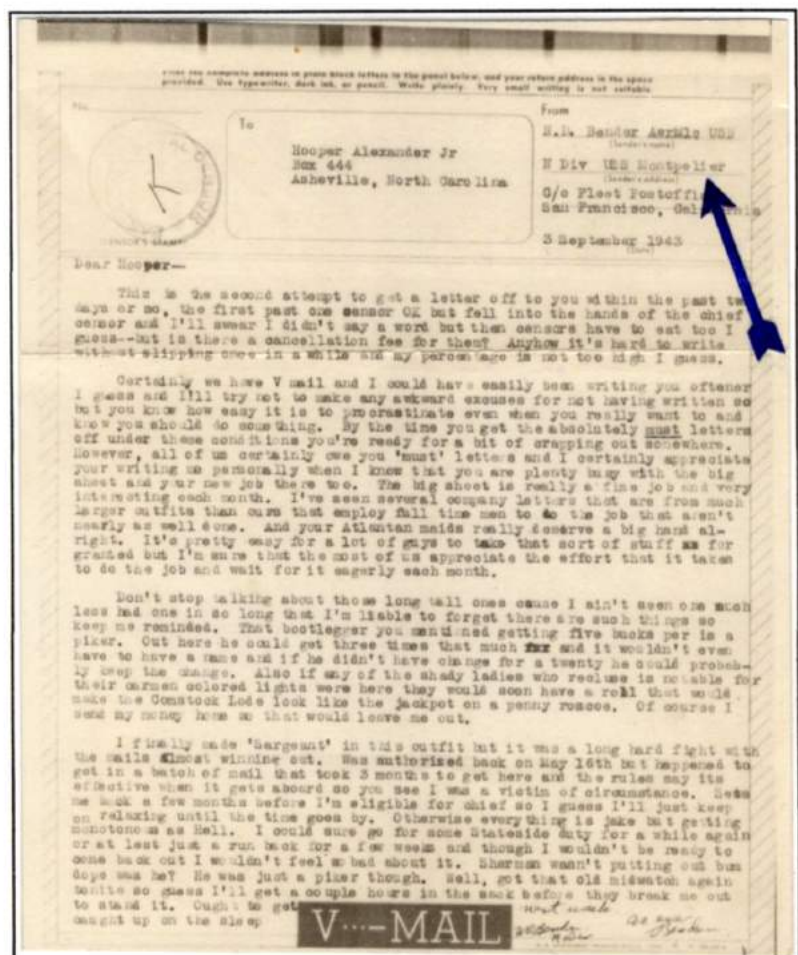


.....protected by a naval task force, including the US cruisers **Montpelier**



.....and **Honolulu**.

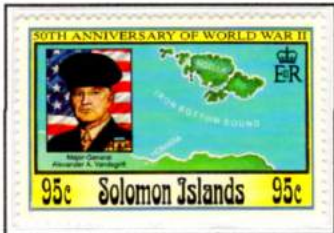
"V---MAIL" sent from the cruiser **Montpelier**, 3rd September 1943, and with naval censor's marking.





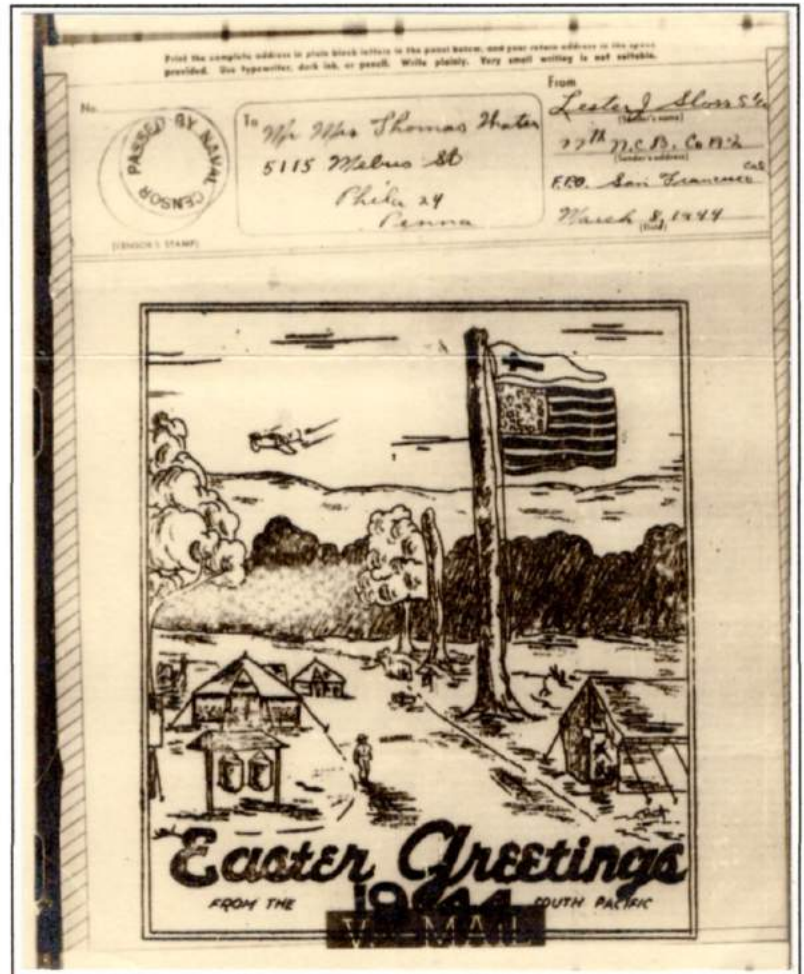
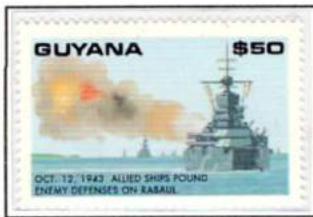
After the landing in New Georgia, the American offensive focused on the occupation of the **Central Solomons Islands**,

....whose attack plans were studied by Gen. A. Vandegrift

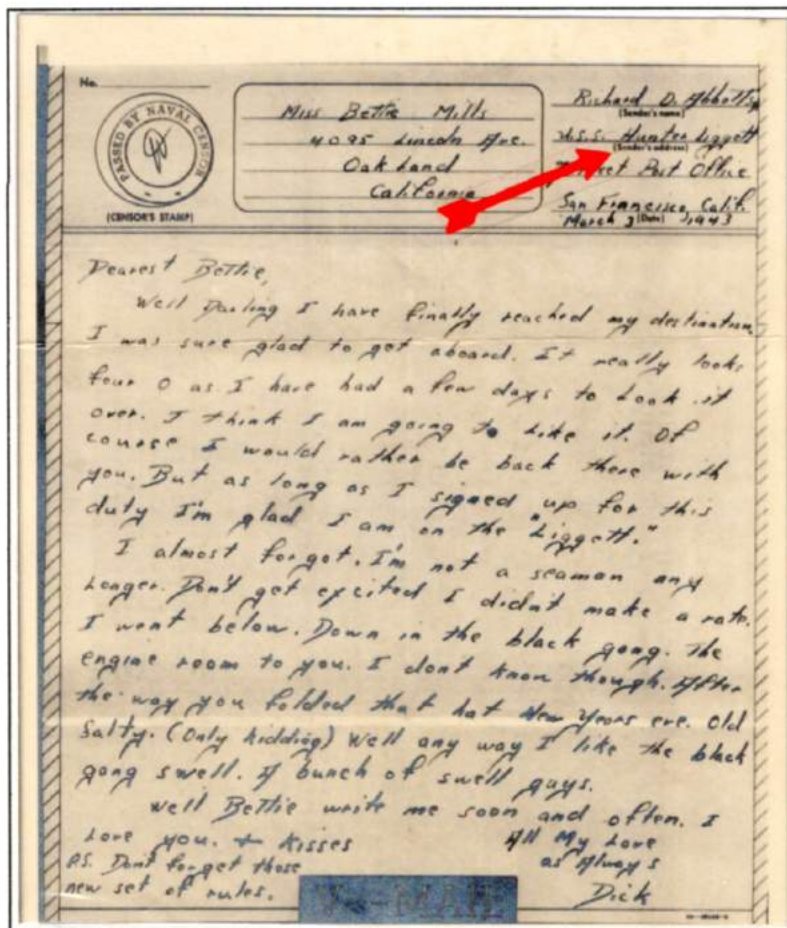


.....and where the Americans built some logistic bases.

From mid-October the Allies concentrated **their attack**, both **naval** and **aerial**, against the **Japanese fleet** and defences at Rabaul.



"V-Mail" of March 1944 from the 77th Naval Construction Battalion, based in the South Pacific, with naval censor's marking.



In early November, US transport ships, including the **Hunter Liggett**,

.....landed troops on Bougainville Island.



Specimen

V-Mail shipped from USS Hunter Liggett, 3.3.1943, to Oakland, California, with naval censor's marking.

Among the meanders of islands and islets of the Solomons,



....the US PT Boats (torpedo boats) were very active in fighting against the Japanese convoys carrying supplies to their strongholds.



The most famous PT Boat was the PT 109, led by J.F. Kennedy, the future president of the U.S.A.,.....



Original



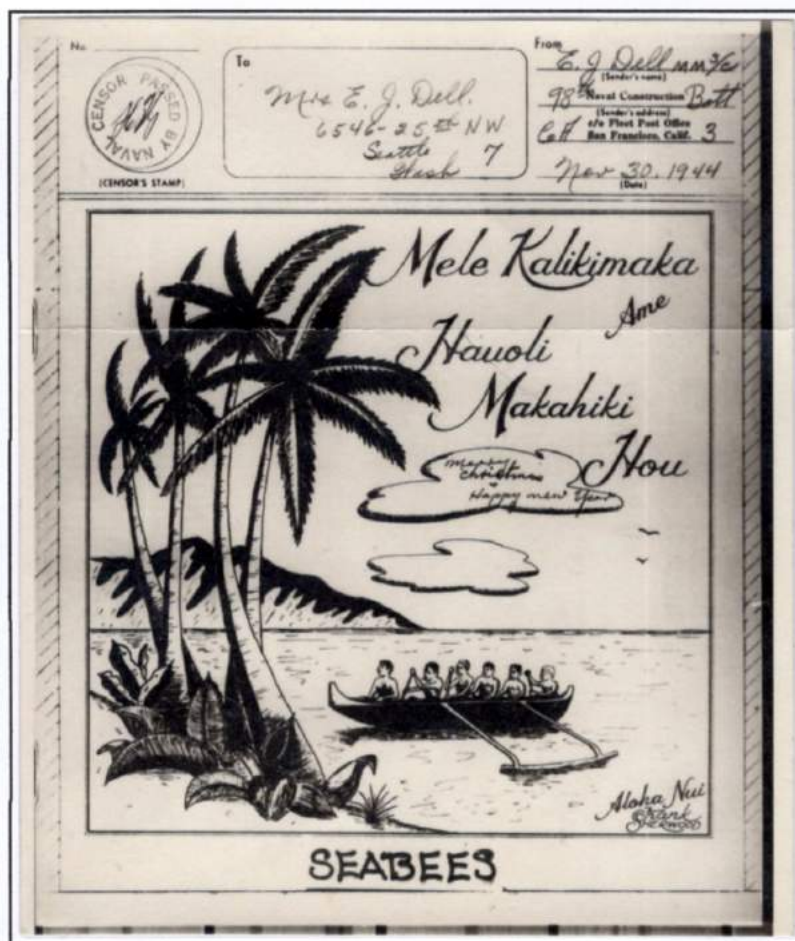
misperforation



....rammed and sunk by the Japanese destroyer Amagiri, off the island of Lumbani on the night of 2nd August 1943.

The eleven survivors of the shipwreck took refuge on Naru, a small uninhabited island, where, accidentally, they were found by local explorers at the service of the Allies.

Lt. Kennedy engraved a message on a coconut that the islanders quickly took to the nearest allied observation post (Coastwatchers).



Thanks to these intrepid Coastwatchers, Kennedy and his men were recovered and rescued 7 days after the shipwreck.



For rescuing the crew after the shipwreck, Kennedy was awarded the Navy and Marine Corps Medal.



U.S.A., 1944 - V-mail sent by a marines of the 98th Naval Construction Battalion, known as Seabees, located in the South Pacific.



In November 1943, the Americans decided to occupy the **Tarawa Atoll**, in the Gilbert Islands (today Kiribati),



.....protected by an imposing naval task force, including the battleship **Maryland**,



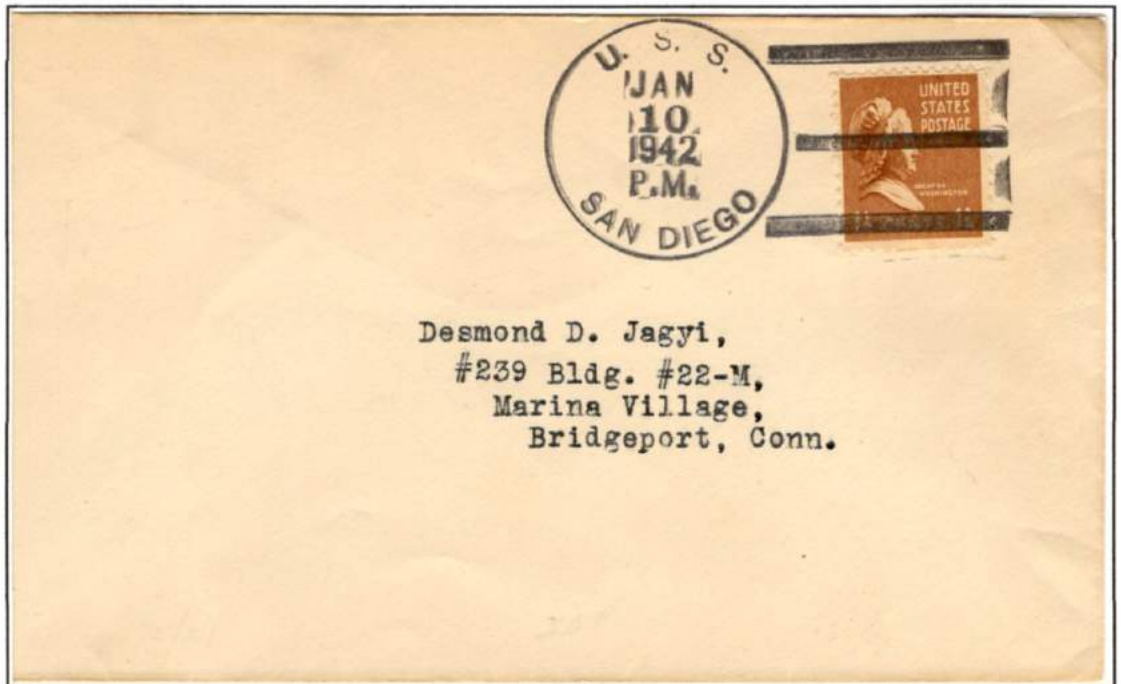
....the destroyers **Ringgold**, **Dashiell**,



....the cruisers **Indianapolis**, **San Diego**



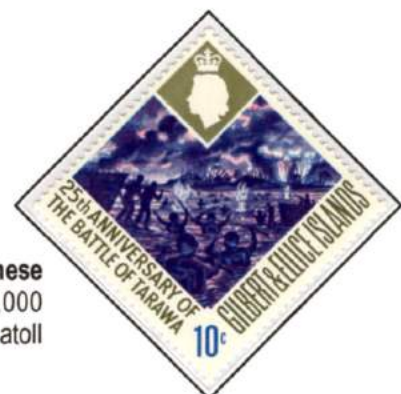
....and the minesweeper **Pursuit**.



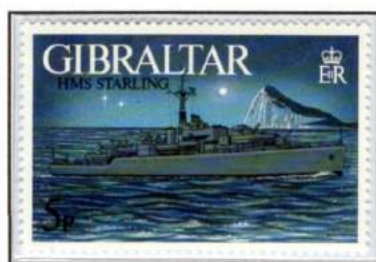
On 20th November, **Marine Corps** troops landed on the island.



Due to the fanatical **resistance of the Japanese defenders**, about 3,000 men, of the 18,000 landed, lost their lives. Nevertheless, the atoll was conquered in just 4 days.



From May 1943, the Allied naval offensive in the Atlantic became more consistent. **Corvettes** and **destroyers** intensified the hunt against German **U-boats**, causing them heavy losses.



PITNEY BOWES franking machine mod. "5322" of 1968. In the postage imprint the three wavy lines on the right are aligned under the GE of "postage". On the left is depicted the turret of the German submarine U-505 captured by the Americans off the African west coast on 4/6/1944 and currently exposed on the lawn in front of the Chicago museum.



The Atlantic routes were no more safe for the **German U-boats** and if crews wanted to breathe a bit of fresh air they had to do it at night, with careful and continuous vigilance.



German free-frank military postcard edited by OKW (Supreme Command of the Armed Forces)

Issued 1938



Issued 1953



On 26th December 1943, the JW-55B convoy, consisting of 19 merchant ships sailing to the USSR, was intercepted at **North Cape**



....by the battle cruiser **Scharnhorst** and its escort destroyers.

Commemorative postmark of the Battle of North Cape.



The British cruisers, including the **Belfast**, protecting the convoy, located it by radar and attacked it immediately .



The **Norfolk** and **Sheffield**, hit in the clash, had to abandon the pursuit,



.....leaving to **Belfast** and **Scorpion** the ungrateful task of keeping the German unit under their gunfire



.....until the arrival of the battleship **Duke of York**.



At 7:45 p.m. on the 27th December, the **Scharnhorst** sank, after being hit by the big guns of the British ships and by 11 torpedoes scored by the destroyers, taking almost all of its crew with it: the survivors were only 32





On 22nd September 1943, three British "X" class pocket submarines - X5, X6 and X7 -

....penetrated the Altafjord, where the German battleship Tirpitz was anchored, damaging and knocking it out.



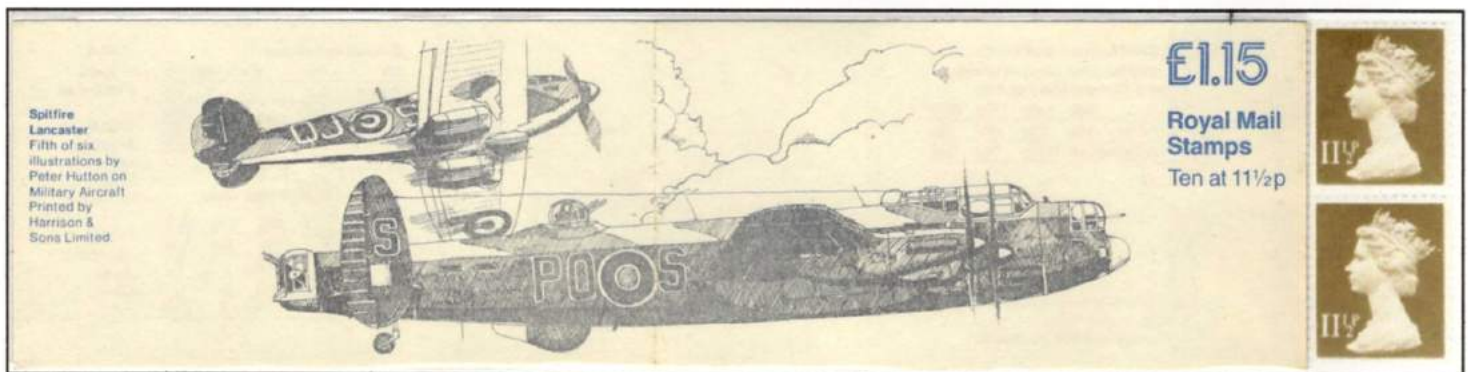
After repairs, it became operational again but, between April and July 1944, it was attacked and damaged by Fairey Barracuda dive-bombers,....



.....launched by the aircraft carrier Victorious, entered Norwegian waters protected by British ships ...



.....including the cruiser Bellona.



On 12th November 1944, British "Lancaster" bombers,

U.K., 1981 - Booklet with 10 stamps x 11½ p. each.



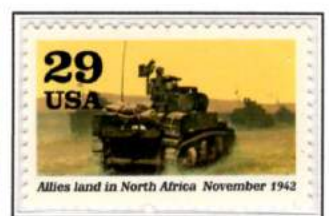
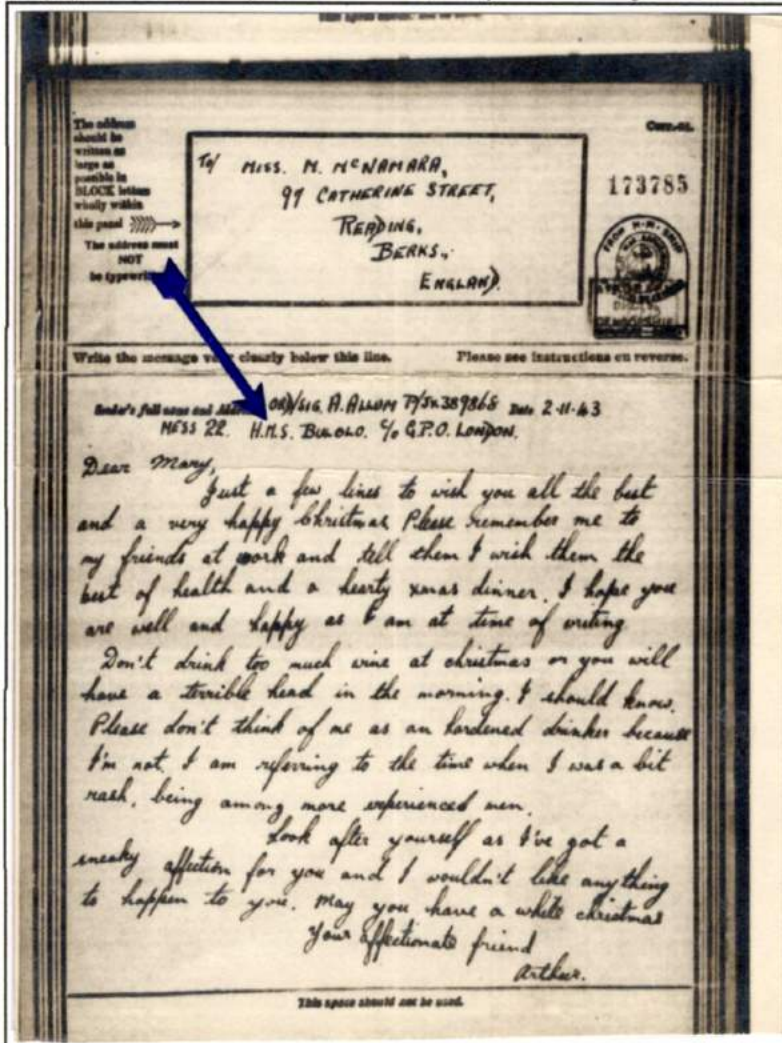
.....armed with the deadly 10,000 kg Tallboy bomb,



....attacked and sank the German colossus. With the sinking of the Tirpitz, the epic of the great German warships came to an end.

On the night between 7th and 8th November 1942, a large Allied amphibious invasion force landed its troops in North Africa.

Airgraph sent from the ship Bulolo, 2.11.1943, six days before landing in North Africa.



The Naval Command Headquarters was located on the m/s Bulolo, a small passenger ship converted to its new role.



Operation "Torch" had begun.



76 hours after landing, and having won the weak French resistance, the Allies controlled 2000 km of the African coast with the important ports of Casablanca, Oran and Algiers.



On 24th December, in Algiers, ...

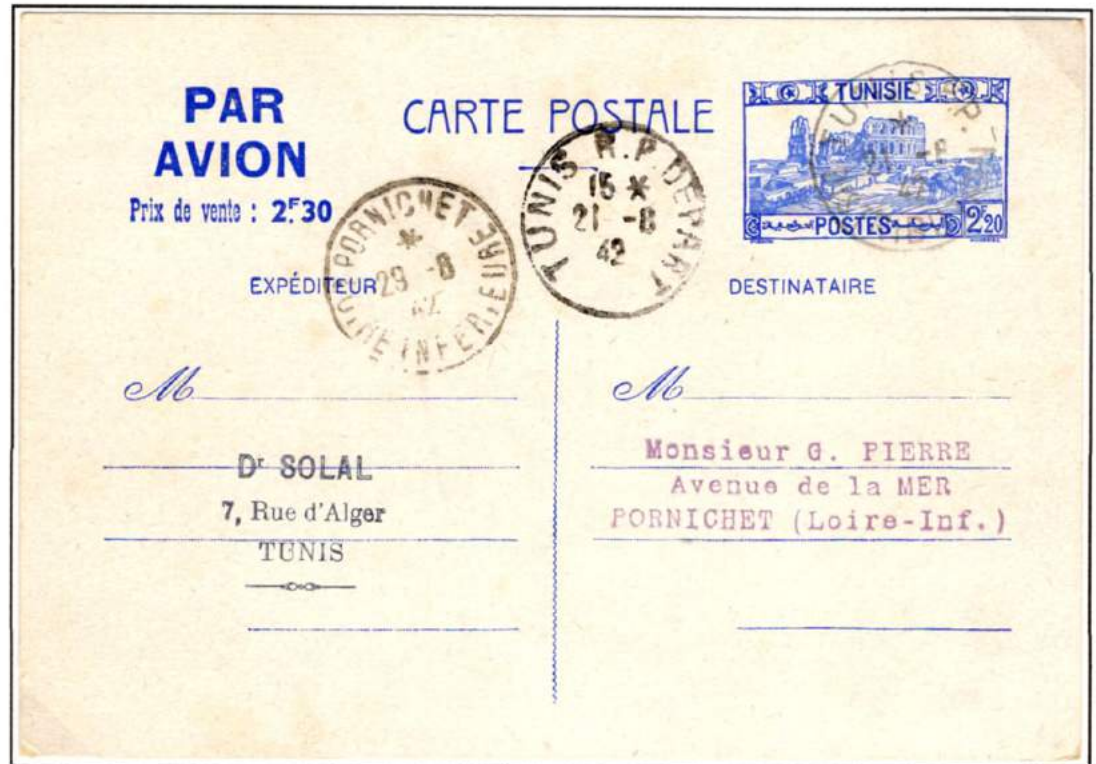
.....an extreme right-wing man killed **Admiral François Darlan**, Supreme Commander of the Naval Forces of the Republic of Vichy, considering him the main responsible for the French surrender in North Africa.



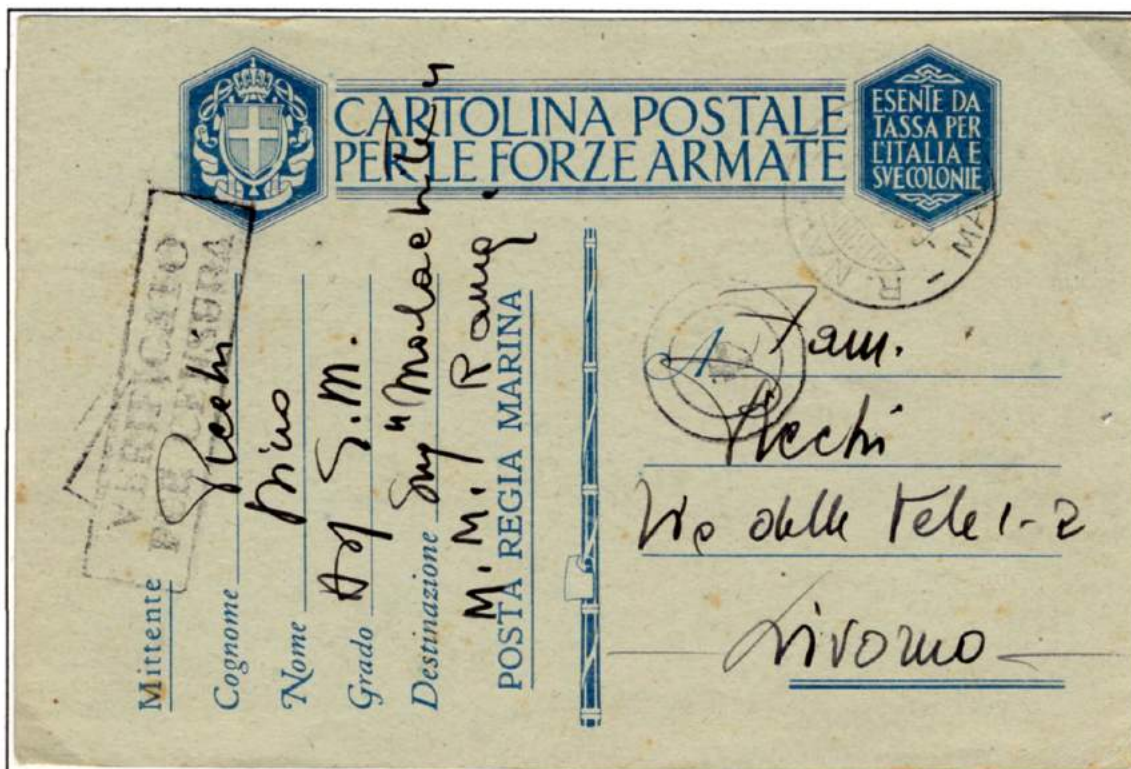
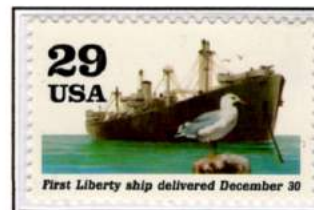


The Axis' response did not wait: on the 9th November, the German troops

....occupied Tunisia.



This allowed the German Air Force to bombard the Allied bridgehead in Algeria, causing damage to ships engaged in the transport and landing of men and materials.



To contrast the allied landings, submarines were also sent to the ports, paying heavily for their audacity and losing 19 boats, 11 Germans and 8 Italians, including the submarine **Malachite**.

Free-frank military postcard shipped from the submarine **Malachite** which, on 23/11/1942, penetrated the bay of Philippeville where it torpedoed an allied merchant ship.

From mid-November 1942, the Italian Navy began to supply the Axis troops in Tunisia across the Sicilian Channel, on what was called "the route of death", where, on 2nd December, the destroyer **Nicoloso da Recco** was seriously damaged



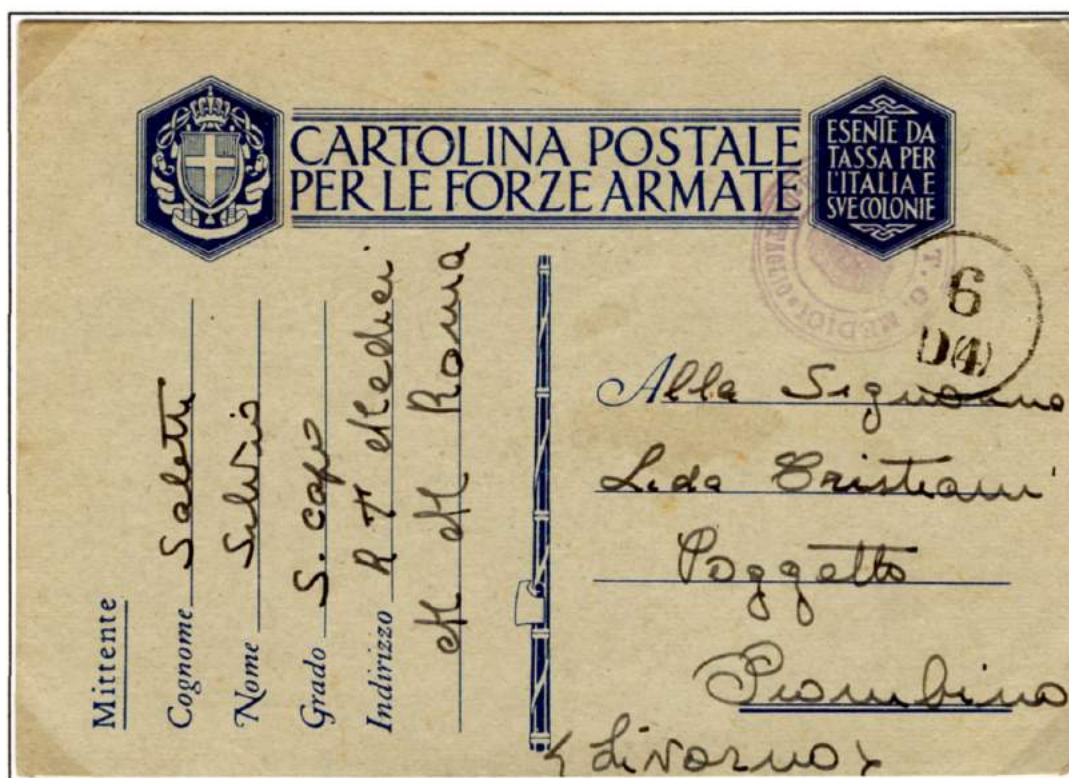
Free-frank military postcard with oval marking "Royal Post - Cruiser Nicoloso Da Recco", with linear cachet "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with number "4" assigned to the censor on board.

....and, on the 17th, the destroyer **Aviere** was sunk by the British submarine **Splendid**.



Letter sent from the destroyer Aviere, 30.11.1942, 17 days before being sunk, with postmark "R. Nave Aviere", with linear cachet on two lines "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with the number "3" assigned to the censor on board.

Between December 1942 and May 1943, the Allied Air Force dropped tons of bombs on Sicilian ports in an attempt to prevent the departure of convoys to Tunisia, causing severe damage to port installations and sinking many **smaller military units**, the only ones still available to escort the convoys, as the larger units had taken refuge in the ports of the Upper Tyrrhenian Sea.



Free-frank postcard sent from the torpedo boat **Medici**, with administrative marking and circular marking with number "6 D(4)" about 25 mm, assigned to the censor of the peripheral ministerial office of the Navy. The unit was sunk at the port of Catania on 16/4/1943.



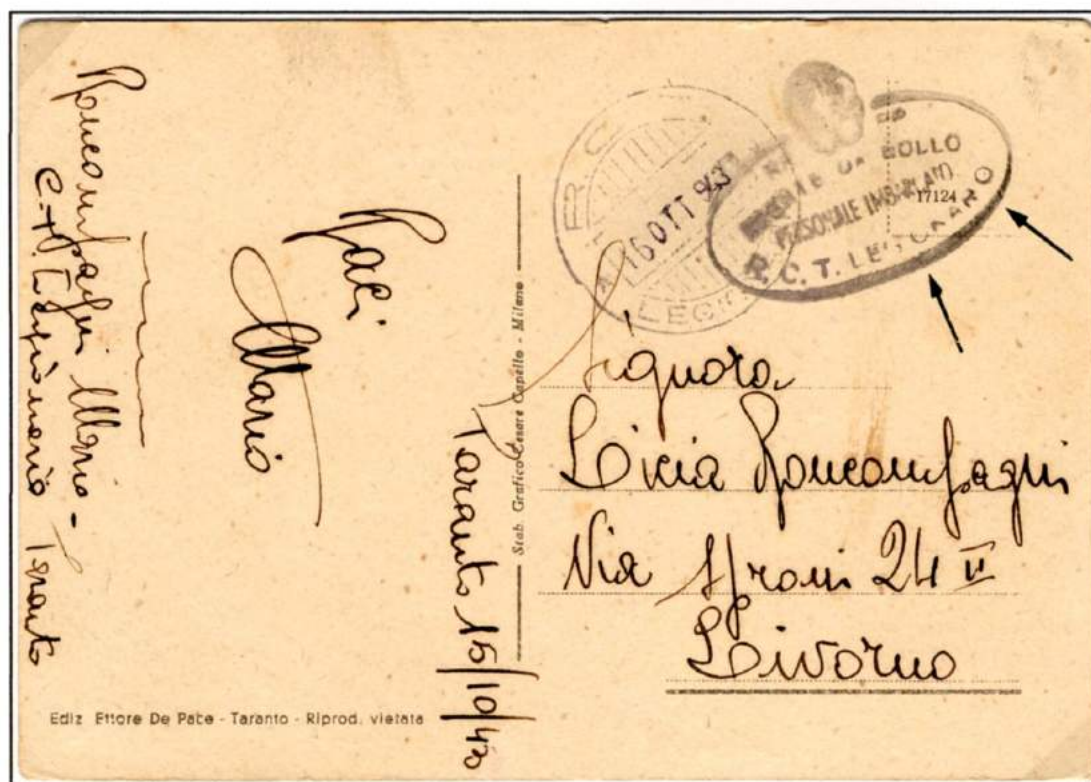
Free-frank military postal letter sent from the patrol boat **A.S. 213**, with administrative marking and circular marking with number "4", assigned to the censors of the peripheral ministerial office of the Navy. The ship was sunk in Palermo, on 9/5/1943.

On 17th January, 1943, near the Sicilian coast, the sailors of destroyers **Bombardiere** and **Legionario**, escorting a merchant ship, sighted the trail of a torpedo. Soon afterwards the first ship was hit in the middle and, broken in two, it sank in few minutes



Free-frank military postal letter shipped from destroyer Bombardiere, 17/12/42. Exactly one month later, the ship disappeared with almost all of its crew.

The **Legionario**, fearing to be hit in turn, launched its rafts to the castaways and proceeded towards Palermo escorting the merchant ship.

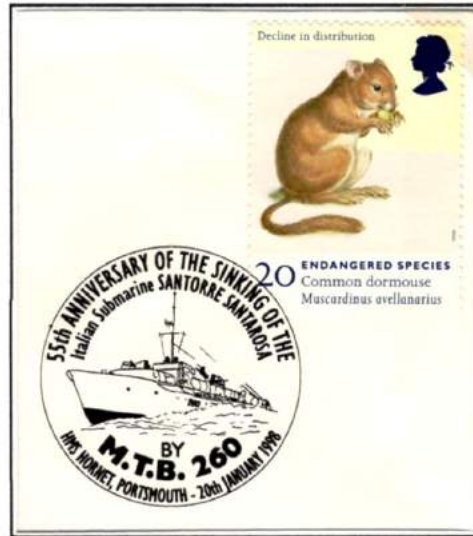


★ Postcard shipped from the destroyer Legionario. To be noted in the oval marking, which attests the postal franchise, the total absence of the "I" in the name of the ship; in fact it reads **Legonaro**.

In early 1943, in Libya, the **8th British Army** of General **Montgomery** was again advancing towards Tripoli and the Italian Navy again had the task of supplying the Italian-German troops.



On 15th January, the submarine **Santorre di Santarosa**, destined to one of these transport missions, left to Africa but, on the 19th, it ran aground on the shallows of Kaliuscia, a few miles from the Libyan port and, on the night of the 20th, it was seriously damaged by the British **MTB 260** torpedo boat and finally sunk by its own crew.

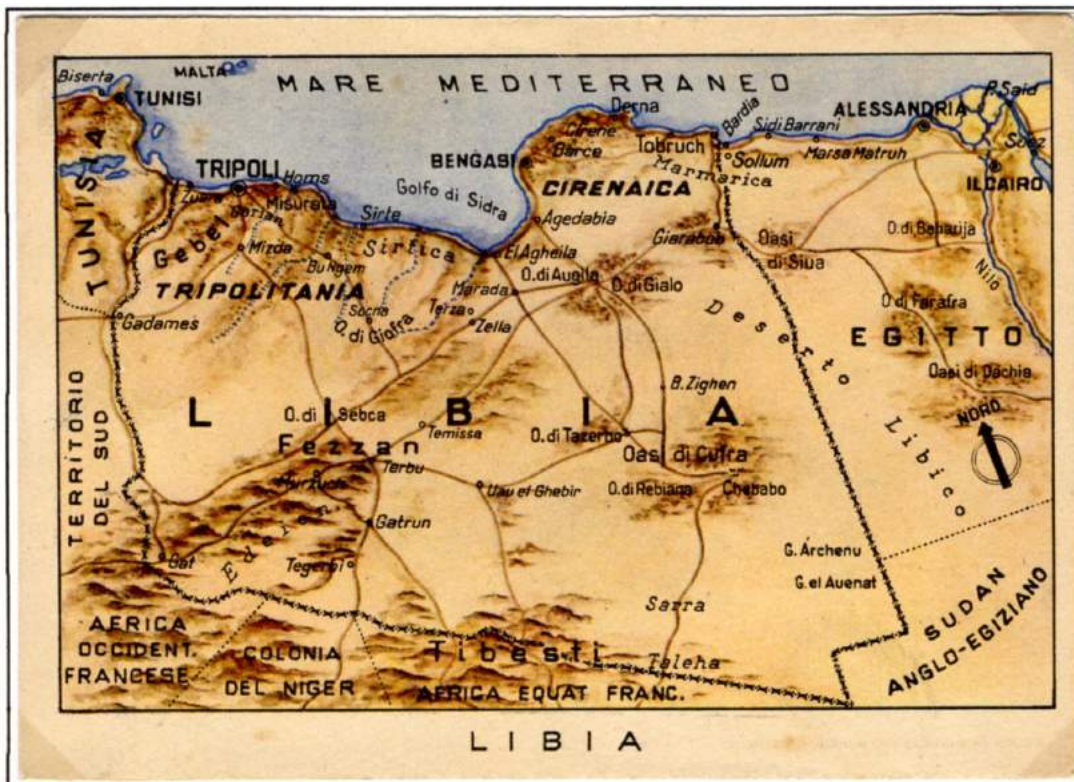


On 23rd January, the British troops

...entered Tripoli victoriously, ...



.....decreeing the liberation of **Libya** and allowing them to penetrate Tunisia,



.....where Axis forces were resisting tenaciously.



Italy, 1941 - free-frank military postcard.

With the loss of Libya, all supply traffic was shifted to Tunisia and Italian ship losses became heavy. On 31st January, the torpedo boat **Prestinari** was lost after hitting a mine.



Free-frank military postcard sent from the torpedo boat **Prestinari**, with administrative rubber marking to certify the postal franchise, 2 circular markings with number "5 B(6)" and "60 A", assigned to the censor of the peripheral ministerial office of the Navy, with postmark of the central ministerial censorship + rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship".

The same happened to the destroyer **Saetta**: broken in two, it sunk in less than a minute.



Free-frank military postcard sent from destroyer **Saetta**, 19.8.1942, with rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with nr. "4" assigned to the censor on board.

Free-frank postcard sent from destroyer Malocello, 8.12.1942, with 2 circle marking with nr. "3" assigned to the censor on board.

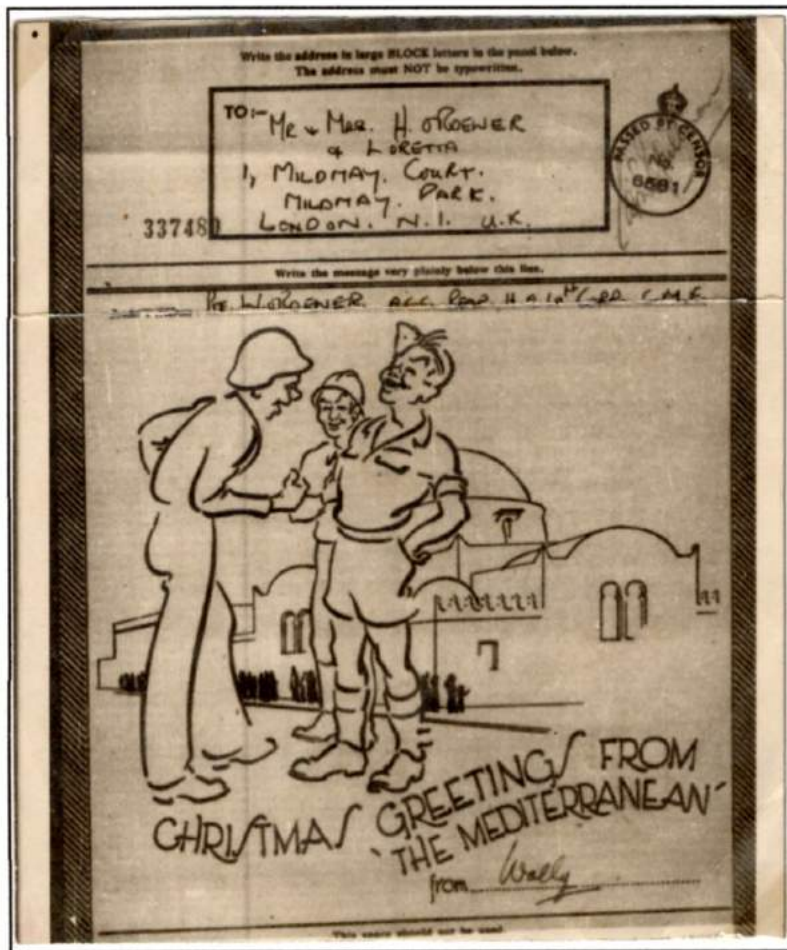


On 24th March, the destroyers **Malocello** and **Ascari** hit the British mines. The two ships took about 1,000 men to the abyss, among sailors and German soldiers destined to the Tunisian front.



Free-frank postcard sent from destroyer Ascari, 4.8.1942, with rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship" + 2 circle marking with nr. "1" assigned to the censor on board

On 13th May, after seven months of violent fighting, the Italian-German **resistance** in **Tunisia** ceased.



1943 - Xmas airgraph from North Africa shipped by a British soldier.



**Tunisia was finally
liberated**



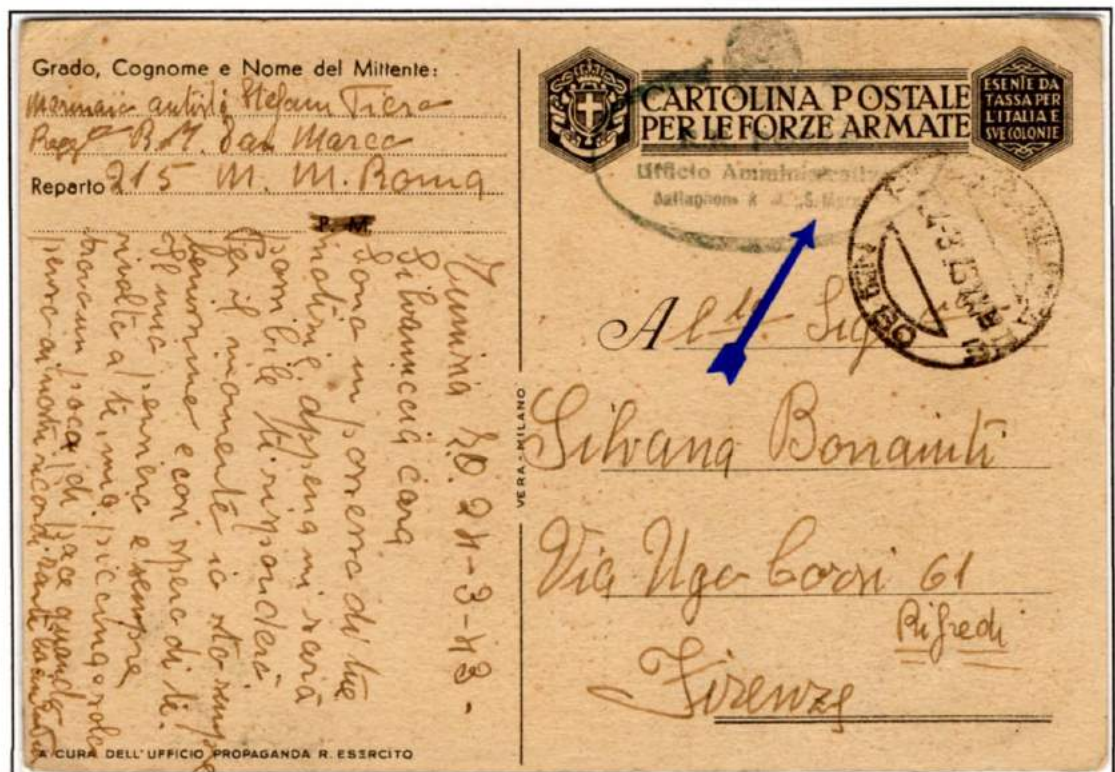
.....allowing the **Allies** to have absolute control of the **Mediterranean coasts** of North Africa.

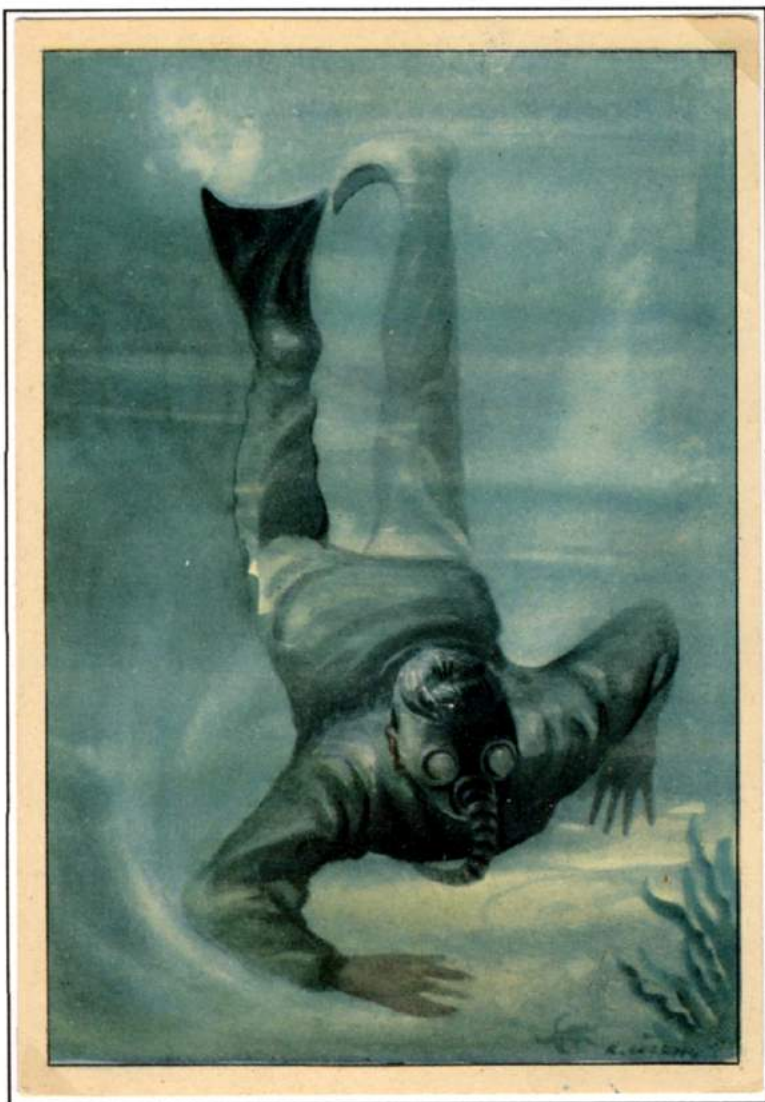
Another small step had been made towards the **final victory** .



Due to the surrender, about 200,000 soldiers fell prisoners, including many Italian sailors of the **Battalion "San Marco"**.

Free-frank military postcard sent by a sailor of the Battalion "San Marco", deployed in Tunisia on March 1943.





While fighting in North Africa, the Italian **scuba divers** of the 10th MAS Flotilla, known in Italy as "**frogmen**", attacked

.....the port of **Gibraltar** without stopping.



Italy, 1944 - free-frank military postcard for the X^a MAS, depicted with a scuba diver, usually known as "frogman".

Men and vehicles operated from ship Olterra, moored in **Algeciras**

....destroying and damaging many Allied **merchant ships**.



Italy, 1941 - free-frank military postcard.



5 - THE RESOLUTIVE PERIOD

5.1 - The invasion of Italy

Allied landing in Sicily



After taking absolute control of the Mediterranean coasts of North Africa, the Allies attacked Sicily,

... code name **Operation Husky**. It began on the night of 19th - 20th July 1943.



The **southern part** of the island, between Syracuse and Ragusa, was chosen for the landing.



Three British divisions landed on the beaches of **Avola**, near Siracusa,



.....and two American ones in the area of **Licata** and **Gela**.



A minor landing took place near **Capo Passero**, to build an airport.

30th anniversary operation "Husky" depicting the Sicily Island and the Allied landing directions..



Heavy air raids were needed to break the Axis resistance.

The course of that landing and the following military actions were depicted by the photographer Robert Capa. One of his most famous photos depicts a **Sicilian shepherd**, bent over, showing the way to a crouching **American soldier**.



The landings were protected by an imposing naval force, composed of 6 battleships, 7 aircraft carriers, 2 monitors, about twenty cruisers, including.....



...USS Philadelphia,...



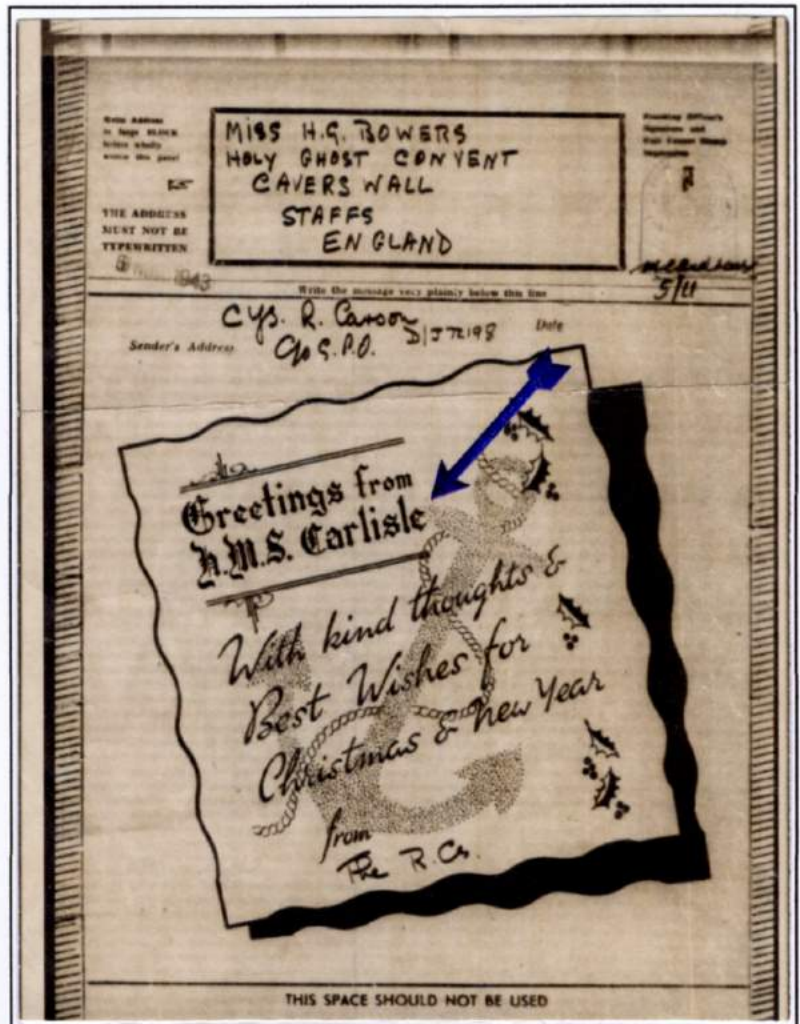
...HMS Carlisle,....

Airgraph shipped from cruiser HMS Carlisle.



...USS Gleaves,....

...and HMS Charybdis....



Airgraph shipped from destroyer HMS Cleveland



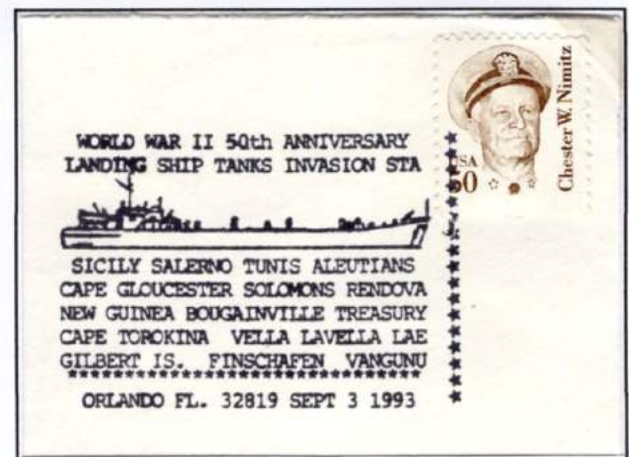
....a hundred destroyers, including

...HMS Cleveland

....and USS McJanahan....



.....and an incalculable number of landing units.





Gen. B. Montgomery,
8th British Army

Gen. G. Patton,
7th U.S. Army

While in Sicily the **Anglo-American advance** was progressing rapidly,.....



21/07/1943, bombardment
of Cotronei, Ionian coast,
by the British destroyer
Quilliam.

1/8/1943, bombardment in
the Gulf of Euphemia,
Tyrrenian coast, by the
British cruiser Euryalus.

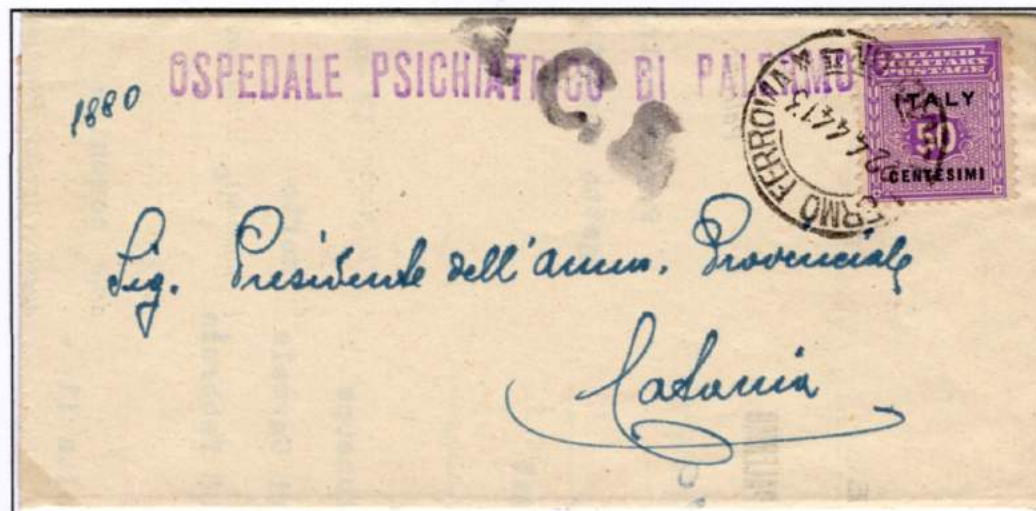


.....Allied ships began to bombard both Ionian and Tyrrenian Calabrian coasts, preparing the landing on mainland.

On 17th August, the **campaign of Sicily** officially ended with the complete possession of the island by the Allies.



For the occasion a **set of stamps** was issued with the wording "**Allied Military Postage**" valid from 23th August 1943 to 30th August 1944.



Letter from Palermo to Catania, 22.4.1944, franked with the value of 50 c. of the series printed by the military authority of occupation, whose use was allowed only for travelling mail within Sicily, with linear A.C.S. (Allied Censorship Station) marking.

5.1 - The invasion of Italy

The armistice and the Allied landing in Salerno

On 3rd September, **British troops** crossed the Strait of Messina



..... occupying **Scylla**, north of Reggio Calabria.

The invasion of the Italian peninsula had begun.

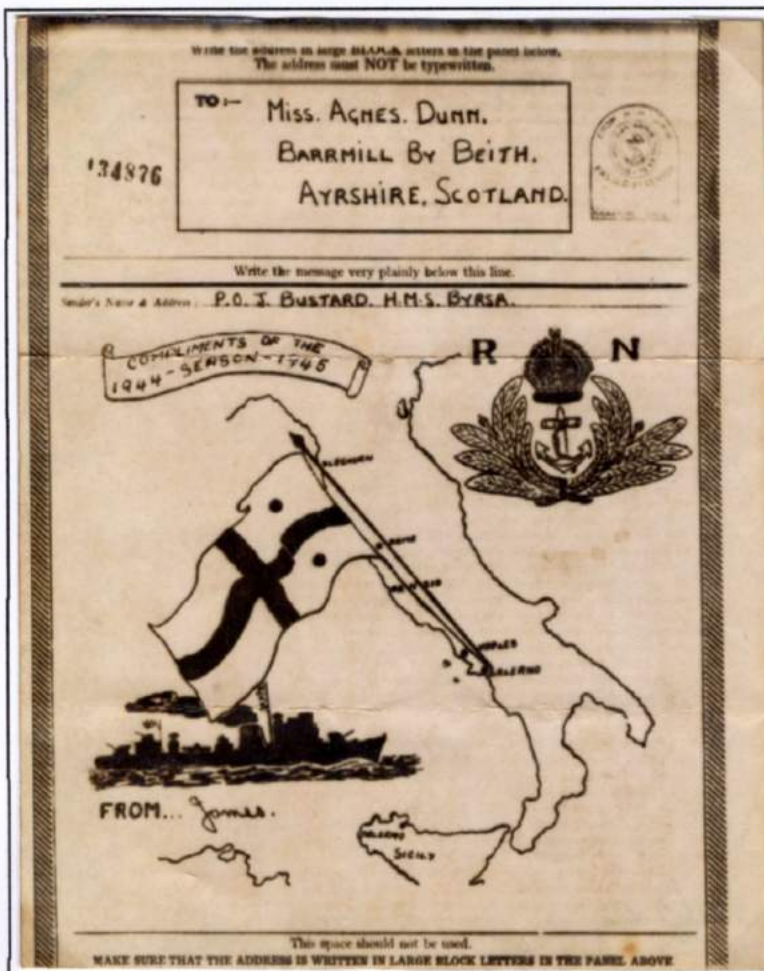


On 8th September, General **Eisenhower** announced, by radio from Algiers, that hostilities between the Allied Nations and Italy were ceased

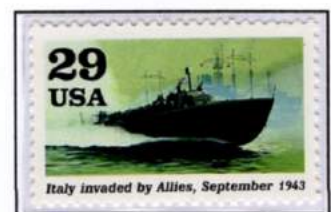


Mis perforations

....due to the **armistice signed in Cassibile**, on 3rd September. For the clauses contained in it, the Italian fleet should have reached Malta.



The morning of **9th September**, the **Allies landed in Salerno**, in an attempt to surprise the Germans, struck but not disoriented by the Italian surrender.



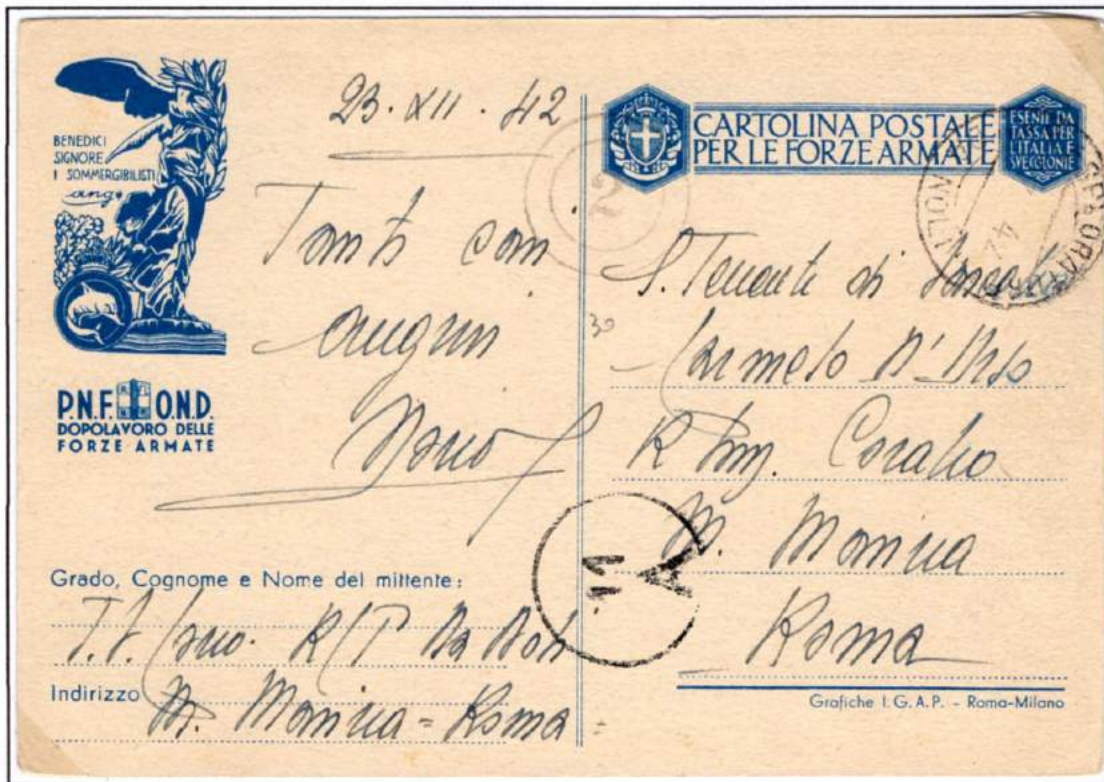
Airgraph from the British naval base **Byrsa**, created in Naples after the Allied landings in that sector.

That same day, many units of Italian fleet left the national ports to Malta, but some did not succeed. Such was the case of the battleship **Roma** sunk by German planes near the island of Asinara



Italian postal stationery sent from battleship Roma, 10.8.1942, with rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship" + 2 circle marking with number "5", assigned to the censor on board.

.....and of the destroyer **Da Noli**, which sank after hitting a mine west of the Bocche di Bonifacio.



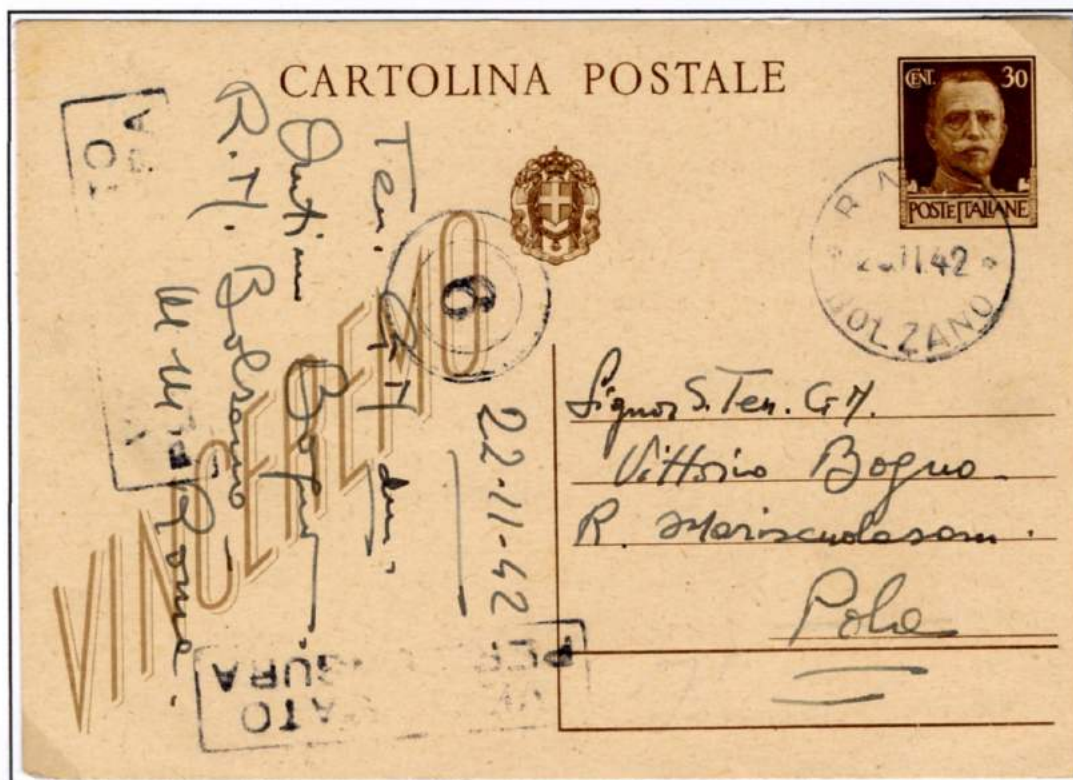
Free-frank military postcard sent from the destroyer Da Noli with postmark, 23.12.1942, with double circle marking with number "2" assigned to the censor on board + single circle marking with number "11 A", about 25 mm, assigned to the censor of the central office of the Ministry of the Navy

The Germans captured only a few units and almost all inefficient for immediate wartime deployment. Among them, the destroyer **Pigafetta**, in Fiume,



Free-frank postcard shipped from the destroyer Pigafetta, 30.9.1941, with rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with number "4", assigned to the censor on board + arrival postmark of San Frediano a Settimo - Pisa, 2.10.1941.

.....and the cruiser **Bolzano**, in La Spezia.



Italian postal stationery shipped from the cruiser Bolzano, 22.11.1942, with rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with number "6", assigned to the censor on board.

The Germans seized the sunken units to demolish them and to send the wreckage to Germany, where the war industry was short of raw materials. Such was the fate of the cruiser **Bari** half-submerged in the port of Livorno.



Free-frank military postcard shipped from the cruiser Bari, 26.11.1942, with rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with number "3", assigned to the censor on board.

Some commanders, having ships unable to move, sank their units to avoid their capture by the Germans. Among them the old cruiser **Taranto**, in La Spezia.



Free-frank military postcard shipped from the cruiser Taranto, 29.8.1943, with rectangular cachet "Verified by censorship" and 2 circle marking with number "3", assigned to the censor on board.

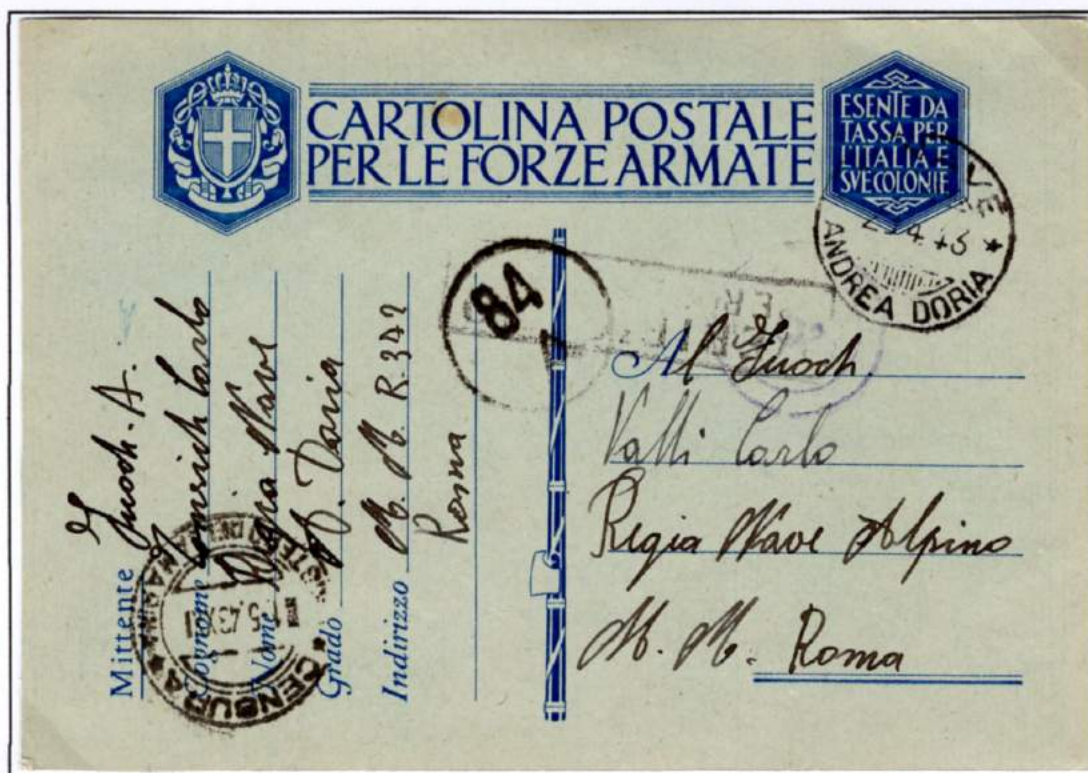


On 11 September, many units of the Italian Navy arrived in Malta.

With this act, the Italian Fleet declared its **surrender** to the Allied forces.



The battleships **Caio Duilio** and **Andrea Doria** were among these vessels.



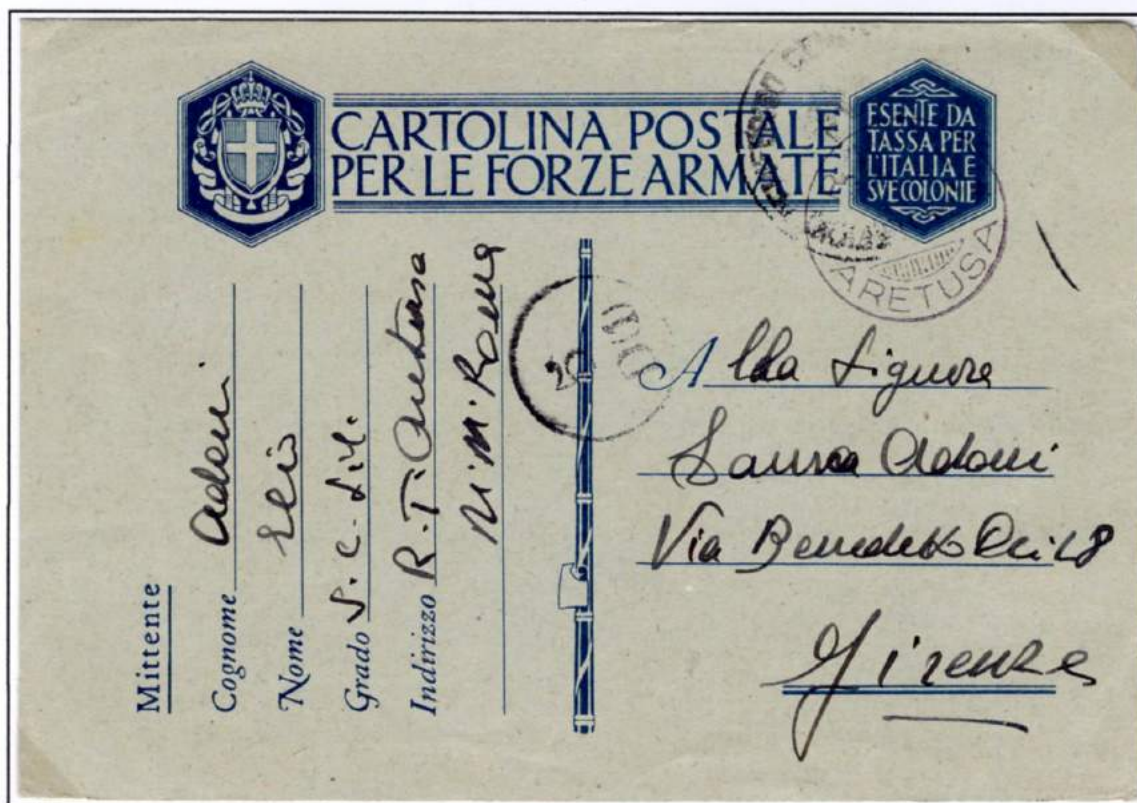
In the following days, many other units arrived in Malta, including the corvette **Gabbiano** which, on 24th April 1943, had sunk the English submarine Sahib



Free-frank military postcard with a little circular marking "Corv. Gabbiano".



.....and the torpedo boat **Arethusa**, which had behaved honourably in the convoy escort on the "death route".



Free-frank military postcard with onboard postmark and circular marking of the censor of the peripheral ministerial office of the Navy.

On 22nd January 1944, in order to get around the "Gustav" line, created by Germans south of Rome, the Allies landed at **Anzio** and **Nettuno**.



The surprise lasted only a few days and the Anglo-American bridgehead was maintained thanks to the support fire of the British naval forces, including the **cruisers**



.....Phoebe,

.....Penelope,

.....Spartan

.....and the **destroyers**



.....Laforey, ...

.....Faulknor



.....Exmoor,

.....Blankney.



Airgraph shipped from the cruiser **Spartan** which was hit and sunk by German rocket bombs, on 29/1/1944

On 4th June, the **Allies** freed Rome after 5 months of fierce fighting.

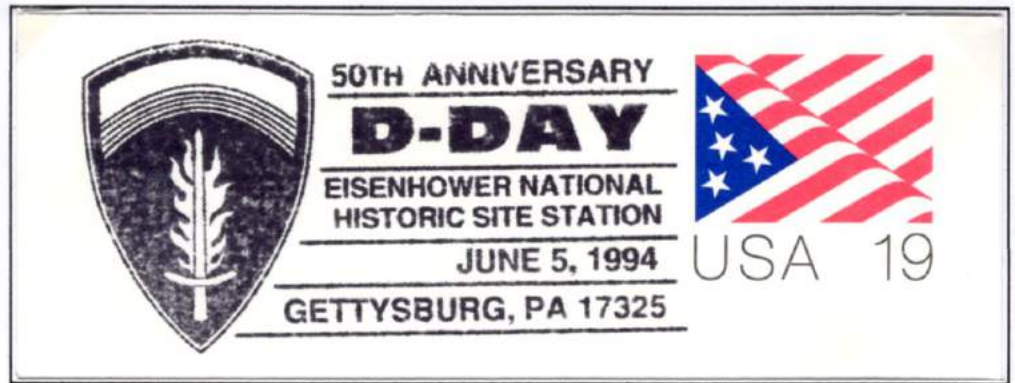




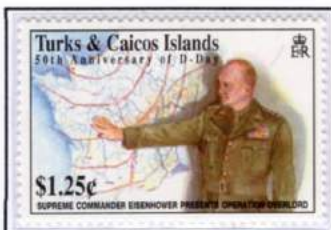
Misperforations



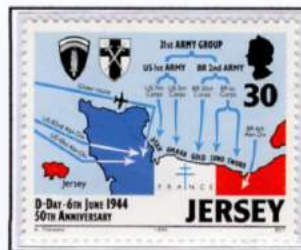
On 4th June 1944, Gen. **Eisenhower**, supreme commander of Allied troops in the West, informed the various Army Corps commanders



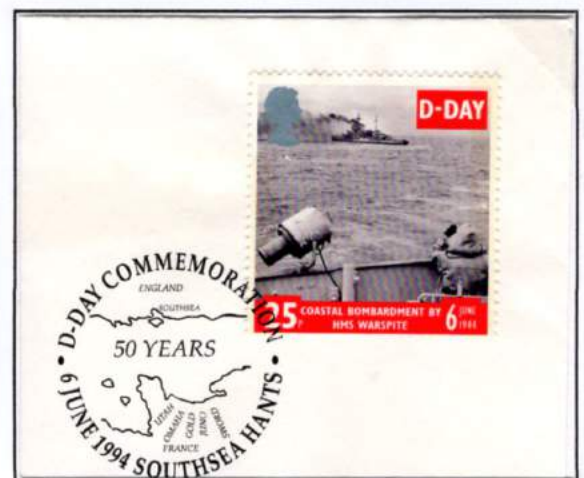
.....that **D-Day**, the day set to begin the invasion of Europe, would have started between 5th and 6th June.



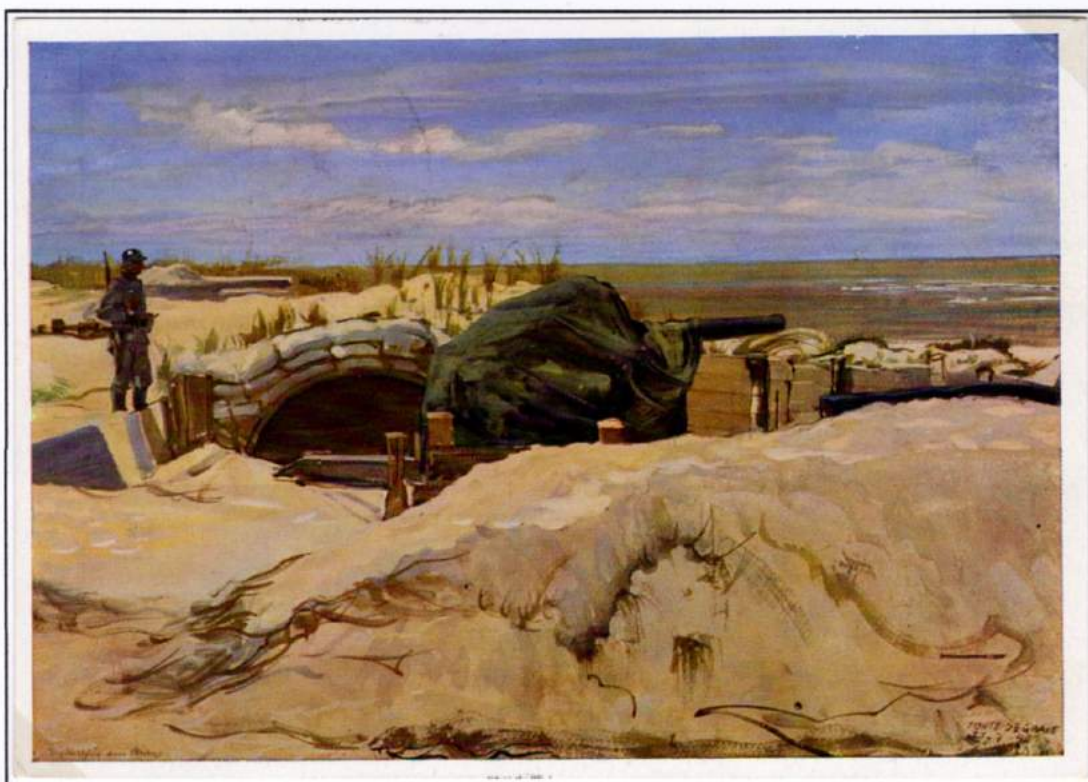
Eisenhower explained to them the various **phases of the operation**



....and that the destination of the attack would have been **Normandy's French coast**.



Here the Germans had created a defensive system, called the **Atlantic Wall**, considered insurmountable.



Germany, 1941 - 6 pf. postal stationery on private order.

Artillery emplacement covered with camouflage.



The night between 5th and 6th June, Operation Overlord, code name for the invasion of France, began.



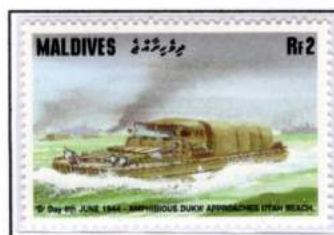
About 1200-planes and gliders transported and launched airborne troops into French territory.



At the same time, from the British ports, the operation "Neptune" started,



.....i.e. the transfer by sea of troops and war material to French territory by merchant ships,.....



.....and hundreds of landing crafts of all kinds.....



battleship HMS Warspite



Polish destroyer Dragon



cruiser HMS Mauritius



cruiser HMS Enterprise

.....escorted and supported by 1200 different types of warships.



KdF.-Sammlergruppen, Abgabepreis 20 Rpt.

POSTKARTE



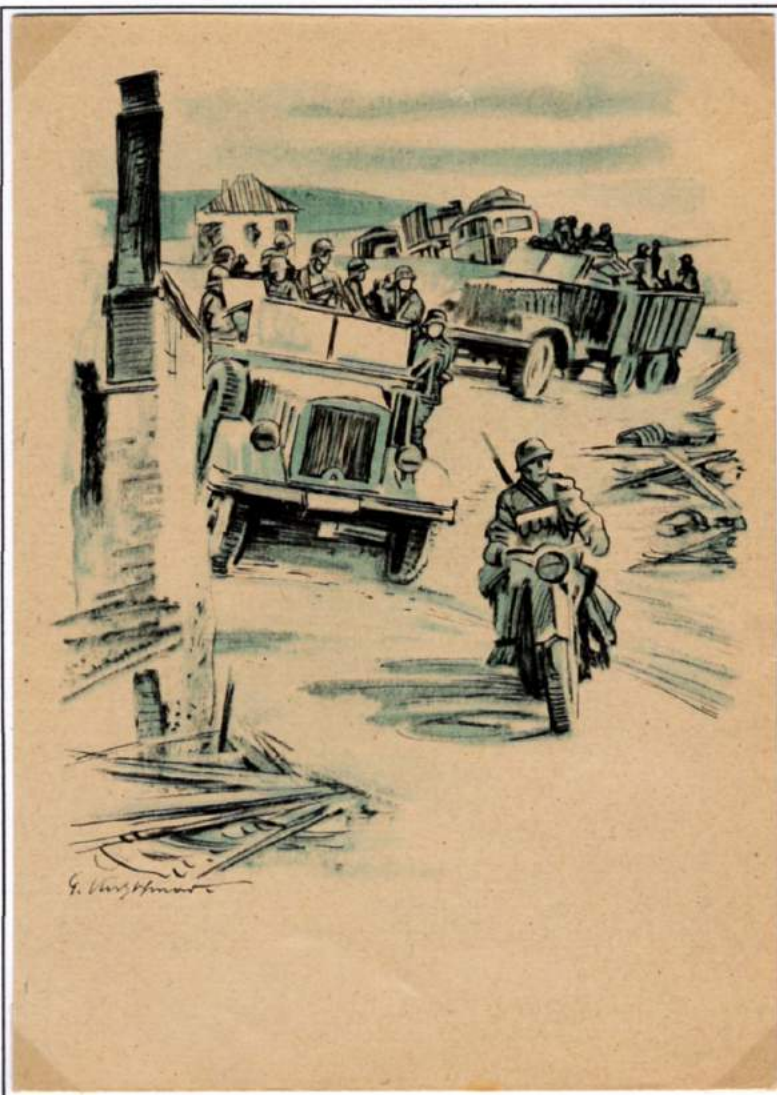
MIT UNSEREN FAHNEN IST DER SIEG!

At the first light of dawn the **German sentinels**, placed on the **Atlantic Wall**, sighted the first **Allied ships**, far on the horizon.

170 mm German cannon on the Atlantic Wall covered with



About half-hour later, the invasion force appeared in all its power.



The Germans, caught a little unprepared, began to send **reinforcements** to counter



.....that stream of men and vehicles.



At 6.30 a.m., the first Allied landing craft reached the Normandy coast.



The American soldiers had to face and overcome the German anti-landing barriers.



Despite obstacles and heavy losses, they landed,



Saggio di colore



.....followed by numerous armoured vehicles.



Finally, under the pleased eyes of Gen. O. Bradley and Supreme Allied Commander Gen. D. Eisenhower, the American troops settled on the French beaches.....



.....named "Utah" and "Omaha".





Less than an hour later, the first Anglo-French-Canadian troops landed on French territory.



Beaches allocated to them were named as "Gold",



..... "Juno"



.... and Sword".



On 23 July 1944 the British cruiser **Scylla** was badly damaged by a mine off "Sword" beach and declared a total loss.



Registered mail with military postmark with Kenn number n.447 and administrative marking of the German military command of Cherbourg port with field post number 04312.

The Kenn-No. was a number ranging from 100 to 999 and was applied to registered letters of field mail service subject to military secret.



The Allied offensive also continued along the coasts of the Cotentin peninsula towards Cherbourg,

...whose port was defended by 40,000 men and 21 long-range batteries.



On 25th June, the attack began with a heavy bombardment by the British cruiser Glasgow,

.....the American cruiser Tuscaloosa



.....and the old battleships USS Nevada,



.....USS Texas,



.....USS Arkansas.



Small varieties of darker colours: hairs, of the signaller, soldiers sitting on the tank and cannon almost to the turret, ship funnel in the foreground and ship silhouettes behind, three upper rings of the right side chain acting as a frame.



On 15th August 1944, the Allies landed in Provence, in the south of France, and in less than a month, near Dijon, they met with troops coming from Normandy.

It was the last great landing of the Allied armies in the Mediterranean. It was protected by 6 battleships, 21 cruisers and about one hundred destroyers, including the French cruisers Duguay-Trouin,



thick paper



thin paper



.... Emile Bertin, the battleship Lorraine (background),

Evanescent print

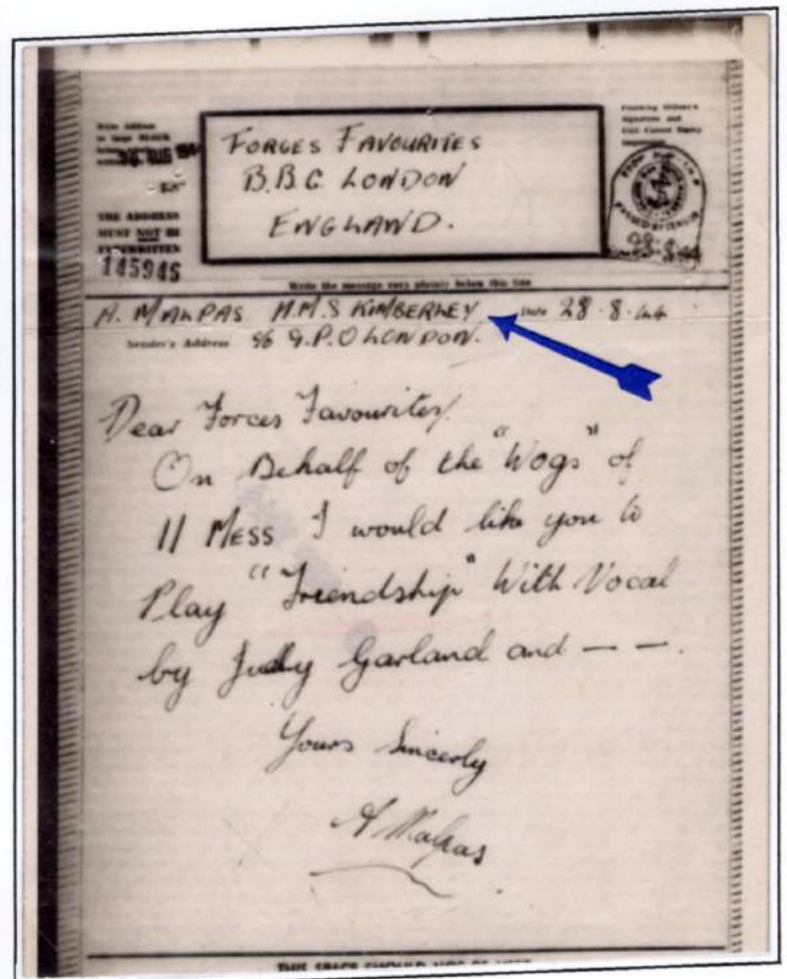


.... the British destroyers Kimberly

..... and Calpe.

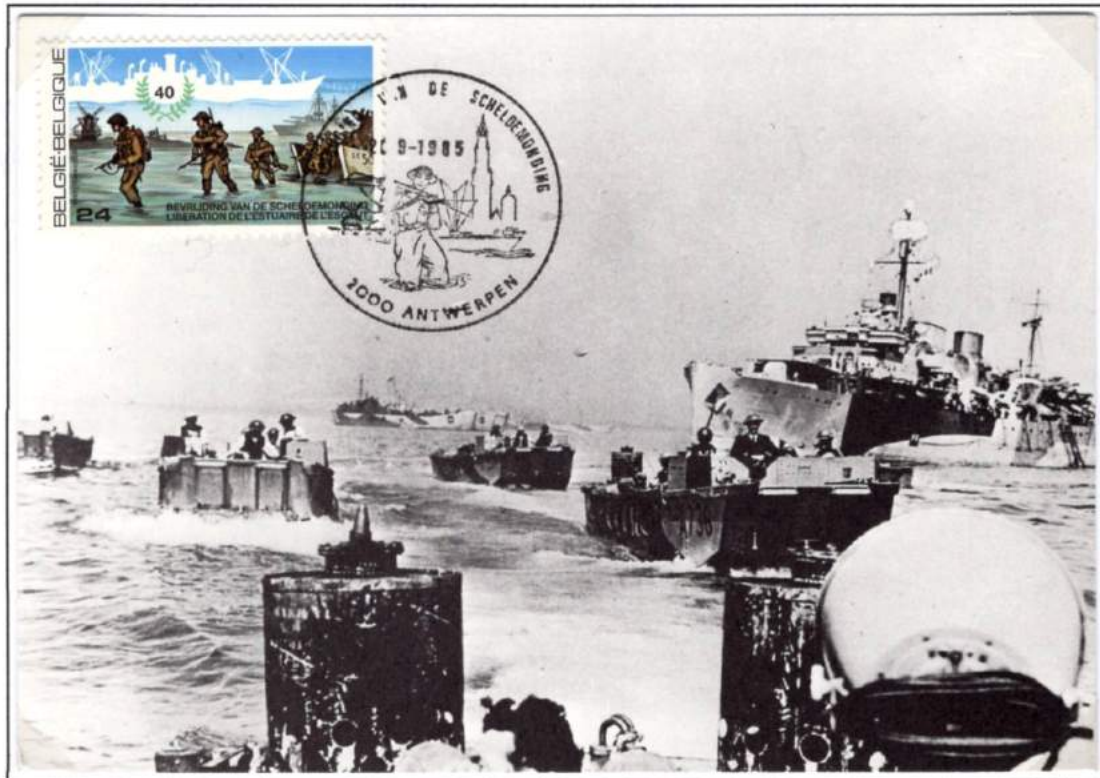


Airgraph shipped from the British destroyer Kimberly, on 28.8.1944.





On 1st November 1944, Anglo-Canadian troops attacked the island of Walcheren, on the Scheldt river estuary, where, on 4th September 1944, the Germans were fortified themselves after liberation of Antwerp by Allied troops. After eight days of violent fighting the Allied defeated the enemy.



The fall of Walcheren allowed the Allies, after fierce fighting, to liberate Holland

..... and, on 24th March, 1945, crossing the Rhine, they entered Germany.



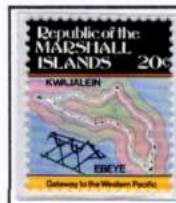
From 31st January 1944, U.S. Air Forces attacked the various **archipelagos** of small islands scattered throughout the Pacific, attempting to bypass the Japanese perimeter defences.



In late February, the **Marines** retook the atolls



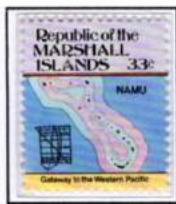
....of Jaluit,...



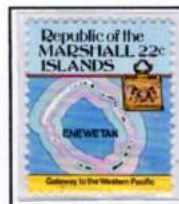
.....Kwajalein....



....Majuro,...



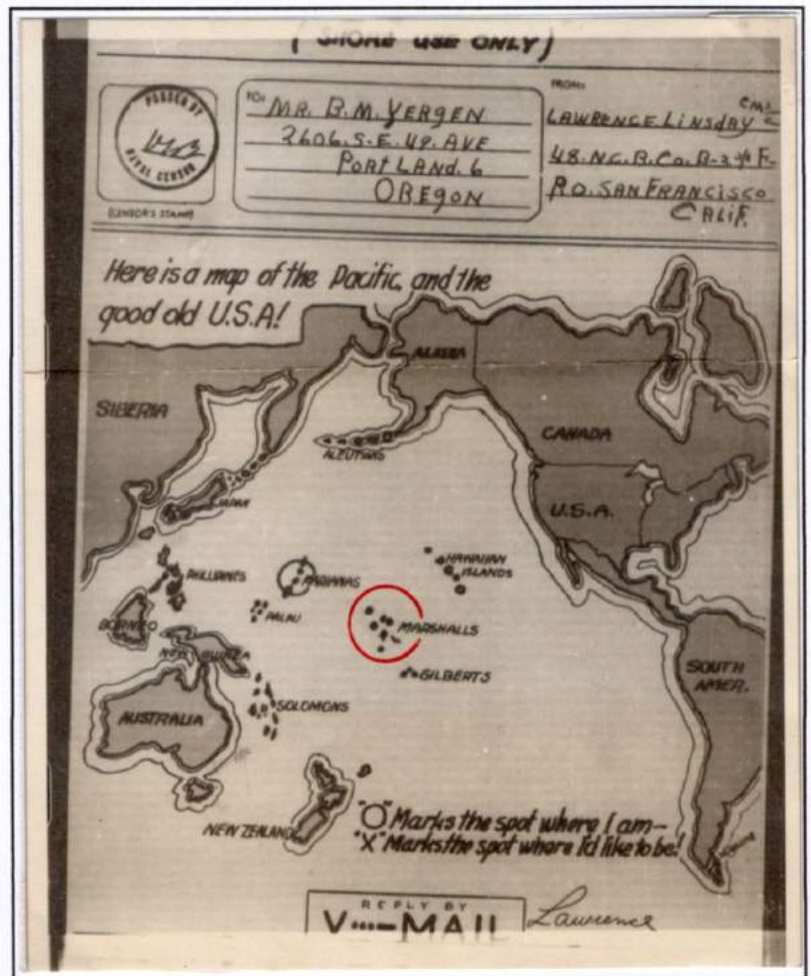
....Namu....



...and Eniwetok,...

.....part of the **Marshall archipelago**.

V-mail sent from Guam to Portland (U.S.A.), on 8th March 1945, depicting the Pacific Ocean. The red circle indicates the Marshall Islands.



At the same day of the capture of Eniwetok, the 5th Fleet and the **US Air Force** attacked the **Truk Atoll** in the Caroline Islands,



....destroying a large number of Japanese planes.



In March - April it was the turn of the island of **Yap**. The Americans approached Japan day after day.

On 15th June, the **U.S. Marines** landed on the island of Saipan. The battle for the conquest of the Mariana Islands had begun.



This led to the **battle of the Philippine Sea** (19th - 20th June), where the Japanese fleet suffered a heavy defeat.



On 21st July, the **U.S. naval units** carried out a heavy bombardment on the island of Guam,

.....while **marines** landed on the island, freed 20 days later.



On 10th August, the **Marianne Islands' campaign** was officially considered closed.

On 15th September, after **bombing** the Japanese defences,



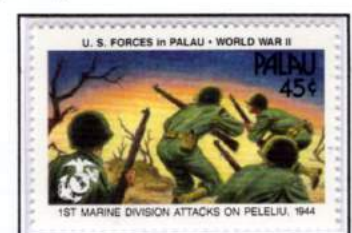
V-Mail shipped from the Mariana Islands after their conquest.



.....the **marines** landed on the island of Peleliu (Palau Islands).



The **ensuing battle** was fierce and bloody and only on 25th November the island was completely liberated.



From the 20th to the 25th October 1944, the "battle of Leyte Gulf" took place. The name derived from the island of the Philippine archipelago where the U.S. naval forces, including the aircraft carrier **Independence**, fought against the Japanese ones.



US aircraft
carrier
Independence

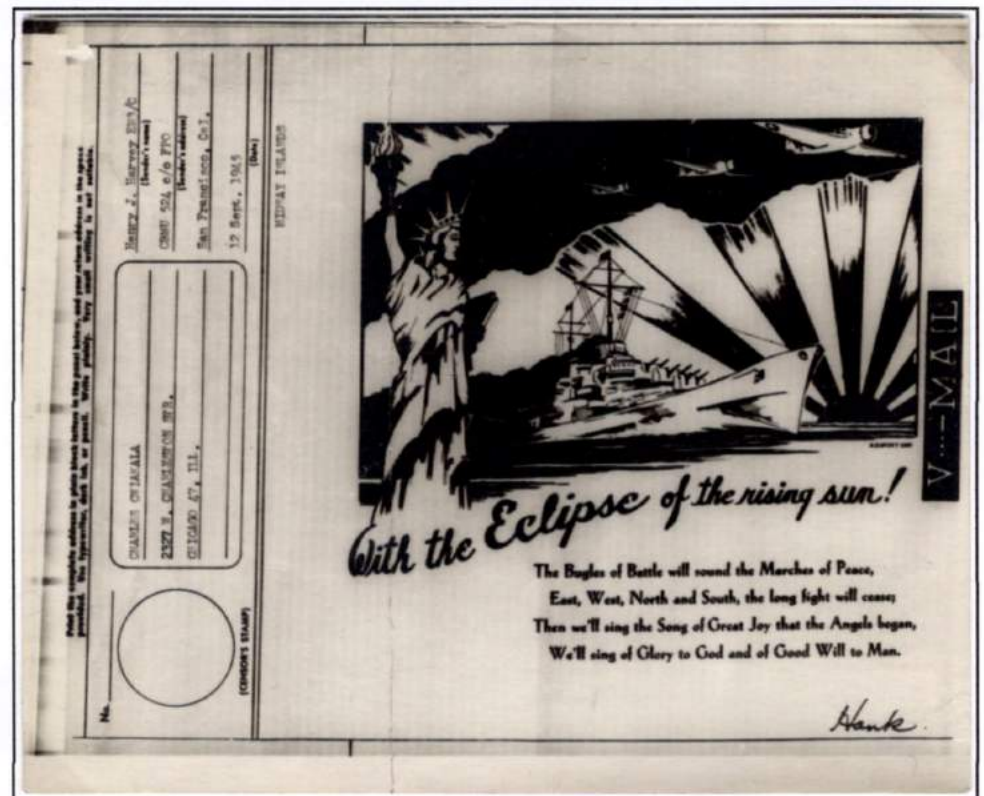


The Japanese losses were heavy, including the cruiser **Nachi**.

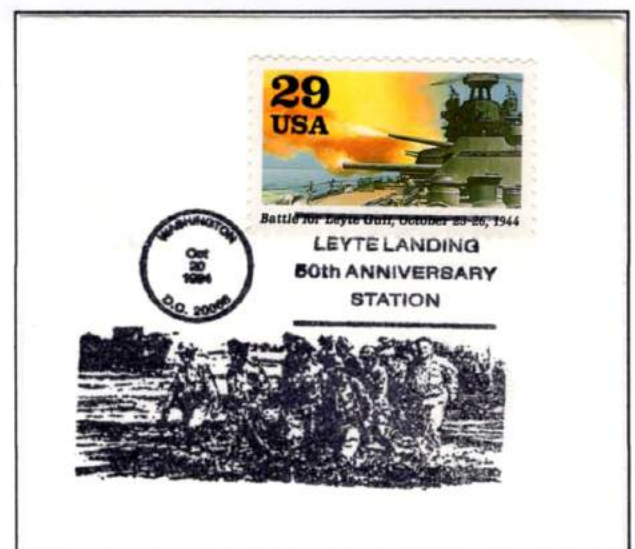


This caused the Eclipse of the Navy of the Rising Sun Empire.

V-mail sent on 12th September 1945 by marines of the 524th Construction Battalion Maintenance Unit on duty at Midway at that time, depicting the Eclipse of Rising Sun.



In early December, the island of **Leyte** was finally occupied by the Americans, allowing Gen. **MacArthur** to return to the Philippines two and a half years after his retreat.



In mid-December, the **Japanese Imperial Navy General Staff** acknowledged that the Philippines was lost



"V---MAIL" shipped from the destroyer **Babbitt** (DD 128) with a humorous vignette of the defeat of the Japanese fleet.

.....and, in order to avoid further damage and loss, ordered the surviving vessels, including the battleship **Yamato**



.....and escort ship **Shimushu**, to retreat to their home ports.



On the stamp the name of the vessel is wrongly indicated as **Shumushu** instead of **Shimushu**.

This allowed the Americans to spread throughout the archipelago: on 3rd March 1945, the **Marines** liberated **Manila**.



On 6th March, the **airborne troops** occupied and liberated **Corregidor**.



Philippine campaign had ended with the **Japanese** driven out of all the islands of the archipelago.

"V---MAIL" from landing ship LST 696 with humorous vignette of the victory of the Marines (**Eagle**) against the Japanese.



In late 1944, a large part of the British fleet, including the cruisers



.....Royalist,.....

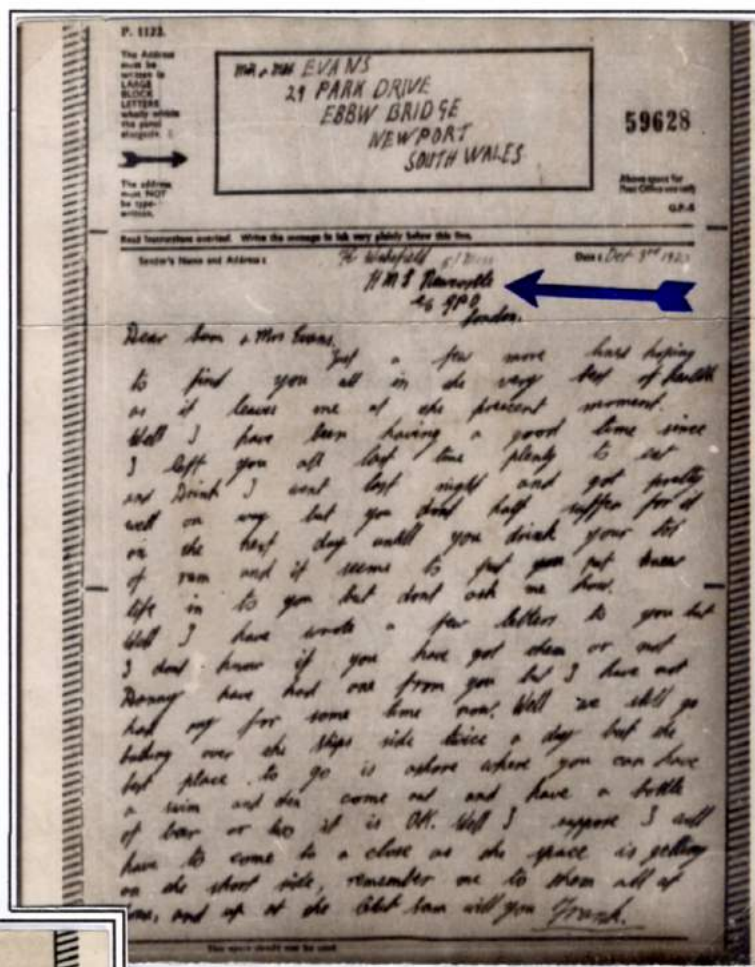
....Newcastle,....

Airgraph shipped from the cruiser Newcastle which, on 20/12/1944, bombed the Belawan Deli oil refineries in Sumatra.

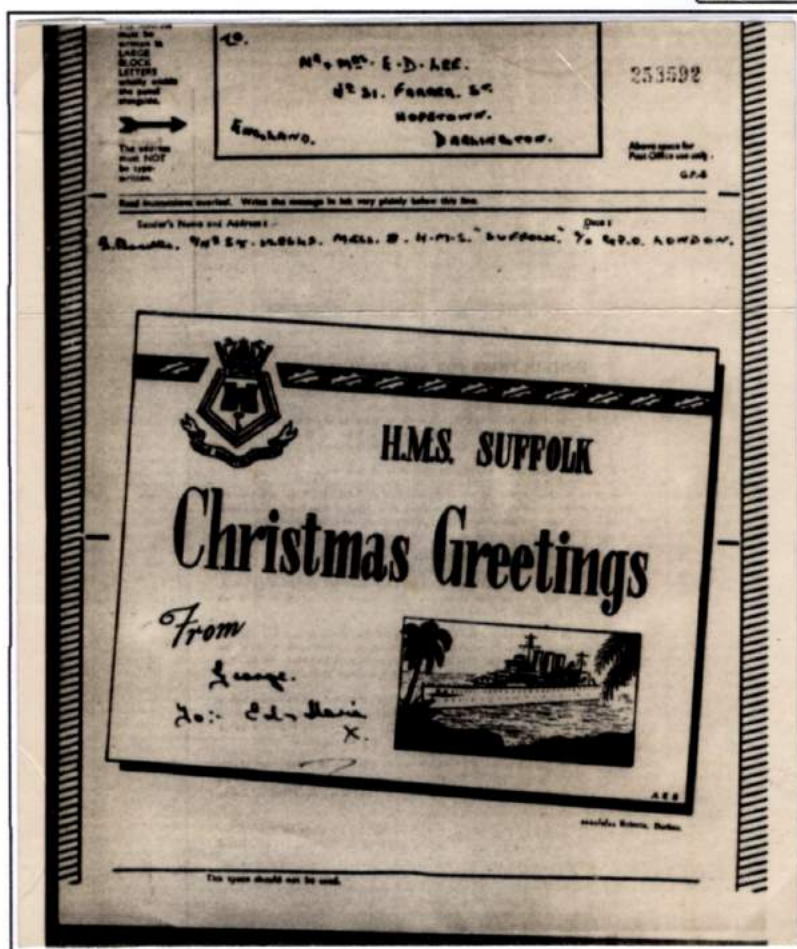


.....Cleopatra.....

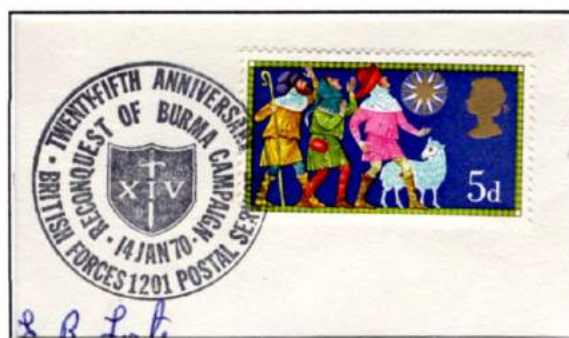
.....and **Suffolk**, returned to Southeast Asia taking part in the last phase of the fight against Japan,



.....supporting the British troops fighting in **Burma**
since 14th January 1945,



*Airgraph shipped from the cruiser Suffolk which, on 4/1/1945, bombed the Pangkalan
Bradan oil refineries in Sumatra.*



.....and bombarding the oil deposits on the island of **Sumatra**, in order to interrupt the supply of fuel that was sent to the Japanese Air Force in Indochinese territory.



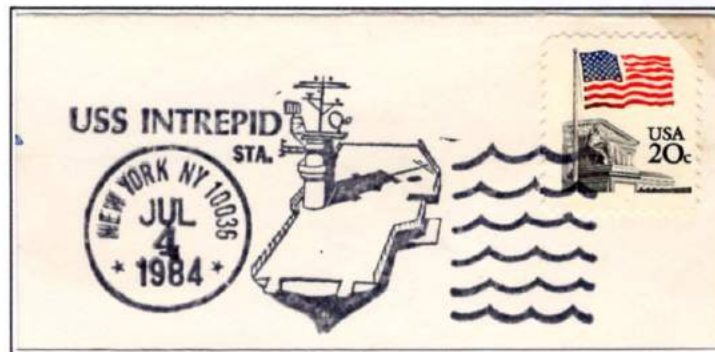
Local mail stamp



On 19 February, 1945, the Americans landed on Iwo Jima and, on the 23rd, they raised their flag on the Suribachi volcano, after capturing the Japanese positions. On the 27th, the island was completely freed by the enemy.



Four days later it was the turn of **Okinawa**,



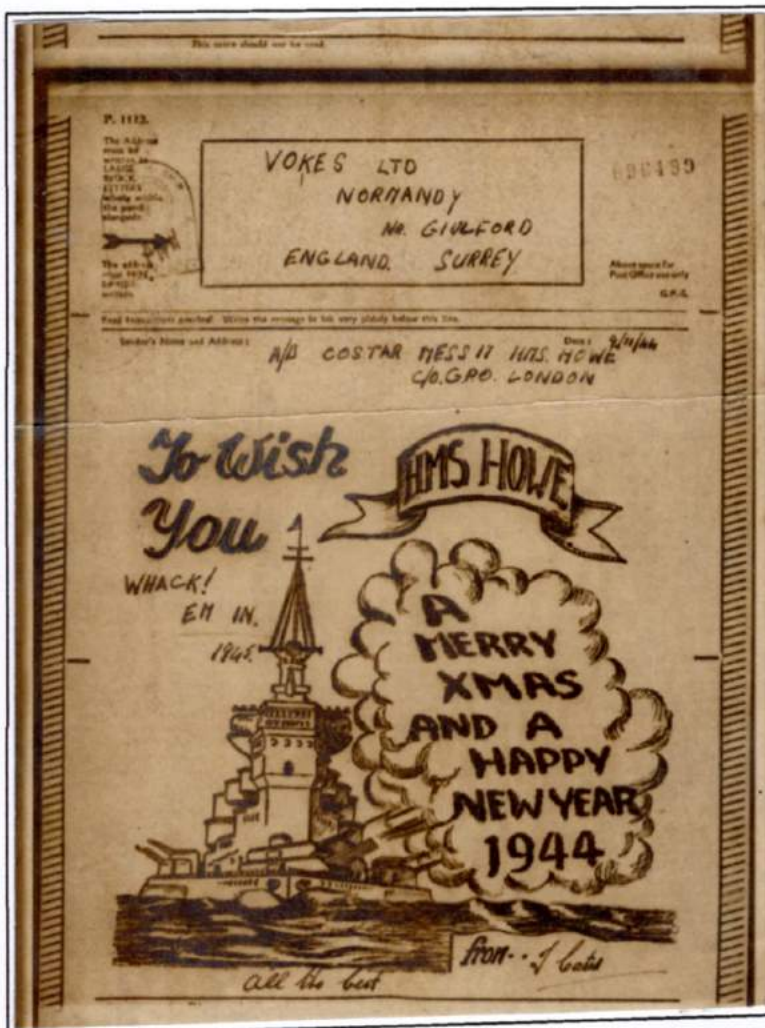
.....where the Allied naval units, including aircraft carrier **USS Intrepid**, the battleships **USS Massachusetts** and **HMS Howe**, suffered damage by "Kamikaze" attacks but for the Japanese it was a defeat.



Most of their fleet, including the mighty battleship **Yamato**, was lost vainly trying to stop the enemy advance.



The **American troops** defeated the Japs after furious combats, which lasted from 1st April to 30th June. Human casualties were very high on both sides: 12,500 Allied dead and 36,500 wounded, and 110,000 Japanese killed in battle.



Airgraph from the British battleship **Howe** which took part, with the Allied Pacific fleet, in the preparatory bombardments for the Marines' landing in **Okinawa**.

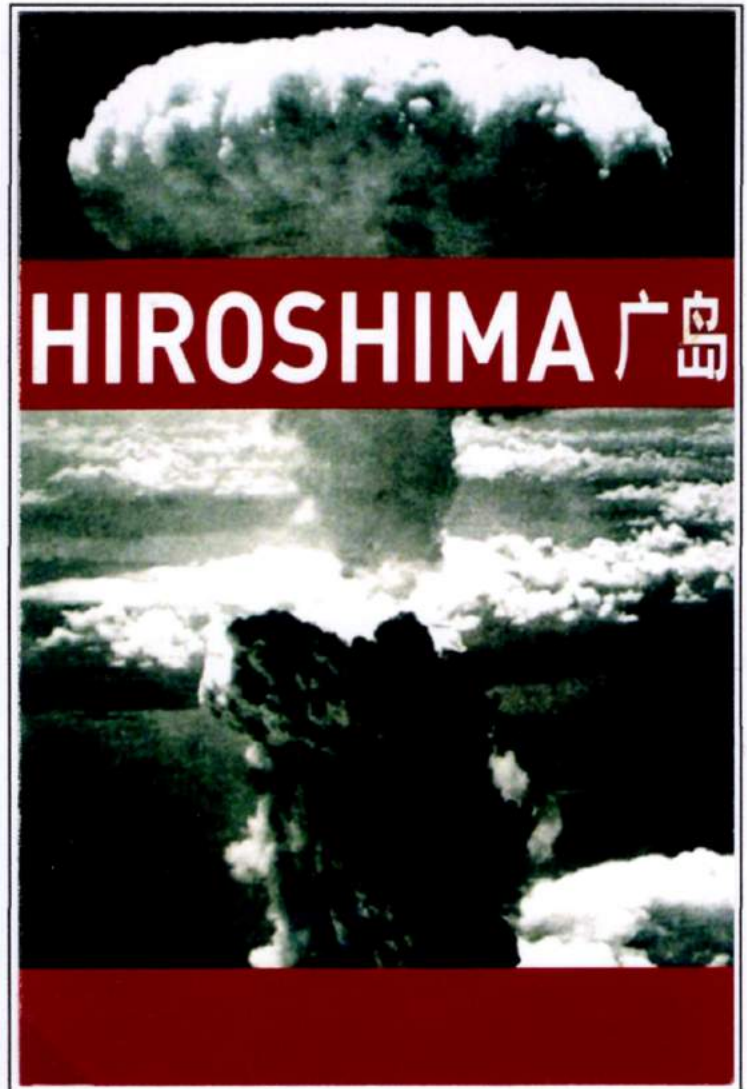


Arrived at the gates of Japan, the Americans intensified **bombardments** on the cities, hoping to weaken the enemy's resistance.

Boeing B-29 "Superfortress" bomber



China, 2009 – 80 f. postal stationery



Due to the negative results, it was decided not to sacrifice other lives and, on 6th August, a **Boeing B-29 bomber** dropped the first **atomic bomb** on **Hiroshima**, followed by a second one on **Nagasaki**, three days later.



Commemorative stamps issue for the 4th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



For Japan it was the capitulation. On 10th August, **Emperor Hiroito** and the Japanese government accepted the clauses

.....of the **Potsdam allied ultimatum** of 26th July, which provided for the recognition of defeat and the acceptance of unconditional surrender.



Misperforation



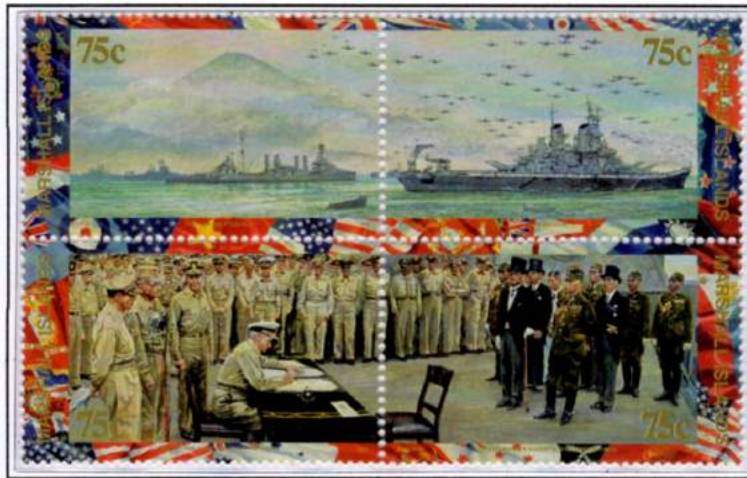
On the 14th, the American President **Harry S. Truman** announced to Congress the end of the hostilities.





On 2nd September, 1945,

.....on the battleship **Missouri**,.....



.....anchored in Tokyo Bay, the **capitulation of Japan** was signed in the presence of the highest **Allied authorities**, decreeing the end of the 2nd World War.



Among the signatories were the French **Marshal Leclerc**

.....the Americans Adm. C. Nimitz and Gen. D. MacArthur.



Misperforation



Total fluorescence, matt rubber and image shifted down.



Original issue



Misperforation

Gen. J. Wainright also took part in the capitulation of Japan, as an observer but not as a signatory. In May 1942, he signed the surrender of American troops in the Philippines. Taken prisoner, he spent the rest of the war in a Japanese concentration camp.

"V-MAIL" depicting Gen. Jonathan Wainright

