

P.I. - Suva. Thursday, March 4, 1943.

Tonight the Bismarck Sea finds its way into the pages of history - the body of water between New Guinea and the smaller island of New Britain. The ~~X~~ Bismarck Sea runs red tonight with Japanese blood. From the coast of New Britain to the coast of New Guinea, its waters are strewn with the wreckage of Japanese ships and airplanes. All as a result of one of the spectacular battles of all time.


Twenty-four hours ago all we knew was that a vast enemy convoy had been sighted, on its way to Lae, on the north coast of New Guinea. Tonight the story of a great battle starts to unfold.

And the score is really something. Ten Japanese warships gone to Davey Jones. Cruisers and destroyers. Also, twelve transports. In addition to those, fifty-five Jap planes were destroyed in the battle. And those twelve transports were carrying fifteen

thousand Jap troops. In a sense, this is the greatest victory we have won so far, because our losses were so spectacularly small. Just one bomber and three fighter planes.

The Japanese losses were heavier in the naval battle off Guadalcanal, the Battle of November Thirteenth-Fifteenth. In that one, the enemy lost twenty-eight ships destroyed including two battleships, with ten others damaged. But in that previous battle, we lost two cruisers and six destroyers. So, if we count the cost of materiel and manpower, the Battle of the Bismarck Sea is our greatest victory.

The last word in the news concerning it is dramatic in its military brevity. An American flying fortress radioed this report to its



base:- "Sighted from six thousand feet, three cargoers, two destroyers - one large, one small - remaining as last vestige of twenty-two ship convoy. All cargoers on fire, smoke rising three thousand feet. Large destroyer moving slowly with heavy oil slick pouring out from stern. Small destroyer low in water with hole in starboard waterline." *And that was all that remained of the great Jap Battle of the Bismarck Sea!*

*made for the*

There were no enemy ships reported damaged in the Battle of the Bismarck Sea for one good and eloquent reason: the Jap convoy was wiped out completely. *And* there is no "perhaps," no "probably" *attached to this* ~~in the~~ story. ~~Not a~~ *And not a* single enemy ship got through *to its goal.*

General MacArthur's headquarters reports another most important factor in this victory, a psychological and strategic factor. Military authorities point out that it has definitely broken up

the time schedule of the Japanese high command in the south Pacific, More, it imperils all of the ~~Mikado's~~ Mikado's forces in New Guinea. For that naval task force was on its way to reinforce the Japanese <sup>base</sup> ~~base~~ at Lae in northeastern New Guinea. Lae was always one of the most important places in that fabulous island.

It was the port from which the minefields in the interior were ~~victualled and~~ <sup>IP</sup> supplied. The official communique from MacArthur's headquarters uses these words:- "Our decisive success cannot fail to have the most important result on the enemy tactical plans." And it adds:

"His campaign for the time being at least is completely dislocated." And here's a ~~genuine~~ rhetorical MacArthur touch: "Merciful Providence guided us to our victory."

With an assist, you might add - if you were talking baseball - by good planes and good fliers.

Not the least ~~part~~ <sup>part</sup> of the victory is the heavy losses of the Japanese in the air. Fifty-five planes in one day's battle, ~~that is not high in any fighting country's air war.~~ Last Monday we heard a report from General ~~Chennault~~ Chennault in China that the Japanese ~~had no more~~ <sup>were getting low on</sup> air reserves. ~~It~~ It has been conspicuous, as the General pointed out, that the Allied forces in China and Burma were meeting with but little resistance in the air. The ~~speculation~~ speculation then was that the Jap high command had withdrawn planes from that theatre of war to send them to Rabaul and other points ~~immediately~~ <sup>and now</sup> north of Australia. The Battle of the Bismarck Sea has made a heavy dent in those forces.

All of which is ~~most~~ interesting, ~~as well as~~ <sup>and</sup> gratifying; ~~But~~ <sup>the</sup> the Battle of Bismarck Sea is even ~~more than that.~~ It becomes even more important than

the Battle of the Coral Sea, the Battle of Midway Island  
or the Battle of the Thirteenth November off Guadalcanal

*For this time apparently there*  
~~It is actually an epic in the history of warfare. There~~

*That is*  
were no ships engaged on our side. The attacking forces

were entirely Allied bomber and fighter planes. The

Jap convoy was only eleven minutes flying time from

the coast of New Britain and within easy range of

Japanese airfields ~~of~~ on New Britain. So the Jap fleet

had plenty of land-based fighter protection. But our

own land based planes destroyed it utterly. In other

words, land-based planes without any other help can

annihilate a fleet, even when the warships have air <sup>protection.</sup>

~~II - *Deep formations in the area buzzed with activity.*~~  
~~*I suppose this*~~  
~~protection. That~~

will be something for the military

experts to ~~be~~ debating and writing about for <sup>years</sup> a long

~~time to come. No wonder one army airman is reported to~~

~~have cried: "What did we tell you!" Air-minded men~~

~~all over the country are saying today: "Now you see~~

~~what air power means!~~

However, another dispatch from MacArthur's headquarters reports that to military men one of the mysteries of the affair was the failure of ~~the Japanese~~ <sup>the Japs to</sup> give their armada sufficient ~~greater Japanese~~ fighter protection. The explanation ~~is~~ <sup>seems to be</sup> that they counted too much on being protected by bad weather, clouds, low visibility.

~~There is no end to the interesting details of~~  
<sup>the</sup> ~~this~~ battle. ~~It~~ began Tuesday morning when an Allied reconnaissance squadron spotted the convoy. A few minutes later, Allied bombers were over the spot and promptly blasted two of the large Jap transports. But the convoy kept going and entered the Hunan Gulf on the northwest New Guinea coast. By Wednesday morning other Jap ships had joined it. It had now become ~~a steady~~ <sup>an immense, slow moving</sup> affair. Allied fighters kept at it all day blowing up one after another of the Jap fighters that

were protecting the convoy. Meanwhile, our bombers were swooping down at low level, wrecking one transport and warship after another. At the same time, B-25 Mitchel medium bombers were potting one ship after another, ten in all. <sup>TP</sup> One destroyed <sup>TC</sup> just rolled over and sank. A medium transport of five thousand tons went to the bottom two minutes after a direct hit. *and*

*a number of Tap*

*TP then,*

*^* Destroyers were left burning and smoking. *^* While the

enemy was already in bad ~~xxxxxx~~ straights, along came

three waves of our giant bombers, the flying fortresses.

*Whereupon*

*^* One enemy ship after another blew up and sank.

~~And~~ *H*ere's a Navy communique to supplement

the news from ~~General~~ MacArthur's headquarters! - While

the Battle of the Bismarck Sea was going on, other

American bombers attacked five enemy air bases in the

Solomons. The pilots were not able to observe how much

damage they did. But their idea evidently was to



prevent the Japs from using those bases in the Solomons

to support <sup>the</sup> ~~so~~ big Japanese convoy, <sup>down New Guinea way,</sup> ~~And the strategy~~

~~succeeded up to the hilt,~~ <sup>And thus</sup> those enemy bases were

evidently immobilized, <sup>— all thru</sup> ~~for so long as~~ the Battle of

the Bismarck Sea, ~~lasted.~~

AFRICA

52  
Another big battle seems to be brewing in Tunisia. The American forces have caught up with the retreating army of Marshal Rommel. They have made contact with the enemy for the first time since the Germans took it on the run out of Kasserine Pass. Our army is now within three miles of another divide in the mountains, <sup>where</sup> Faid Pass. ~~There~~ Rommel is evidently preparing to make a strong stand. He already has formidable defenses there and is bolstering them up for all he is worth. He has also concentrated armored and mobile divisions to meet the attack from General Montgomery's Eighth Army.

Meanwhile, the Nazis were attacking in waves, <sup>attacking</sup> the British lines in northern Tunisia. ~~They are being~~ <sup>↑</sup> ~~killed at a fierce rate, but they still keep coming on.~~ <sup>and</sup> The British lines are holding, ~~but there is no denying~~ <sup>↑</sup> ~~that they have been bent.~~

At the same time, the British Admiralty announces that its submarines have sunk seven more enemy supply vessels in the Mediterranean and damaged nine others.

## RUSSIA

The Red Armies of Russia are ~~on the march~~  
~~again~~, marching ahead on a front of four hundred miles.  
In some parts of ~~that front~~ they seem to be ~~not marching~~  
~~so much as~~ galloping.

On the Rzhev front they have gained thirty-two miles. In the area between Orel and Kursk they have gone ahead twenty-four miles. <sup>And -</sup> They have gained three major objectives. On the way they retook Chertolino and Olenino. Thus <sup>ing</sup> ~~they~~ throw the Germans out of the last strong points they held on the Velikie Luki railroad. And below Kursk they captured two important towns with ~~even~~ more unpronounceable names which puts them within forty miles of the big German ~~base~~ at Vorozhba.

The German line is anchored to four great salients. Two of those are directly threatened by the spear heads of the Soviet armies. The Nazis lost one of their strongest ~~points~~ anchors when they had to give up Rzhev. The recapture of that place enabled

the Reds to drive southwest and threaten another  
bristling strong point, the salient from Vyazma to  
Gzhatsk. In that advance they have already taken  
eleven towns and villages. Moscow reports that the  
Germans resisted strongly but were swept away.

The next immediate goal ~~of~~ the Russian ~~plan~~ is  
Orel. And if they take that one they will have increased  
cause for triumph. ~~They have retaken two important  
points on the railroad between Kharkov and Bryansk.  
And the danger to Orel is confirmed by reports from  
Berlin.~~ The Nazi high command ~~itself~~ admits that  
the Russians are attacking in great force both north  
and south of Orel. The chances are that at this moment  
the final assault on Orel has begun. And it will not  
be long before the Red armies are at the gate of  
Smolensk, that crucial point in the two great historic  
invasions of Russia.

The Germans, on the other hand, have beaten the Russians back south of Kharkov. ~~They report the capture of an important place, Slavyansk. It is one hundred miles to the southeast of Kharkov.~~ Moscow does not deny <sup>this</sup> ~~it~~ and London observers declare that the Germans undoubtedly have made gains in that region. But they also say that these gains are not important.

— o —

The Russians are advancing so far and so fast in the center and to the north that the further the Germans advance to the southeast of Kharkov the more they will be in danger of being surrounded, cut off and annihilated.

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## DISASTER

Tragic news from London. A hundred and seventy-eight men, women and children perished - in a panic.

It all started with an air raid alert. There were nearly two thousand people in one of the air raid shelters of the London subway. A woman carrying a bundle, and a baby, went down the steps to join them. She had almost reached the foot of that flight of steps when she tripped. And that brought on the tragedy.

Behind the woman carrying the baby was an elderly man. He fell. Their bodies tripped those behind them. Presently there was a mass of struggling people lying on the steps of the landing. Although the stairway was completely blocked, people kept jamming in from the street. No one apparently knew what was happening. Those behind pushed those in front. And ~~the~~ by the time the police and air wardens were able to

disentangle the jam it ~~xx~~ was found that a hundred and seventy-eight had died from suffocation.



## LABOR PACT

25  
The Naval Affairs Committee of the House is taking up the matter of absenteeism. Former Admiral Emory Land, Chairman of the Maritime Commission, today declared to the Committee that:- "The illegitimate absentee is first cousin to the slacker." Then he went on to tell them that in the shipyards alone - this absentee business is now costing us one hundred Liberty ships a year.

All of which makes ~~n~~ an item of news from Austin, Texas, doubly interesting. The leaders of the labor unions in Texas have just signed an agreement with Governor Stevenson providing that there shall be no strikes, no slow downs, no lock outs, no work stoppages of any kind whatsoever, in Texas, for the duration.

And maybe it will be contagious - and catch on in other states.

ROOSEVELT

*Today*

~~This~~ was an important anniversary ~~at~~ the White house, the tenth anniversary of the day on ~~which~~

Franklin Delano Roosevelt <sup>first</sup> took office as president. *Today*

He began his eleventh year with prayer. There were special services in the East Room, ~~of the White House~~ attended by virtually all of the important officers of the government, <sup>including</sup> cabinet members, justices of the Supreme Court, congressional leaders, department heads, even the top officers of the armed services with their wives.

That completed the religious and ceremonial feature of the anniversary. But a piece of news that came to light made it even more spectacular: <sup>a political sensation which recalls</sup> ~~It was a piece of news which recalled~~ that day in June Nineteen Forty when Mr. Roosevelt announced that he had nominated two Republicans for members of his cabinet. It was on June Twentieth, Nineteen Forty that he announced the names of Colonel Frank Knox, former Republican candidate for Vice-President as

Secretary of the Navy. Also Henry L. Stimson, former  
Republican Secretary of State for Secretary of War. )

~~That~~ <sup>It</sup> was a political bombshell. Let me quote  
from my ~~own~~ broadcast of June Twentieth, Nineteen  
Forty. "Congressional circles were left speechless,"  
so says a Washington news dispatch. Republican  
Senator Bridges of New Hampshire was so astonished  
he was incapable of comment. Senator Cotten Ed Smith  
of South Carolina remarks that it was a purely  
political move to scotch the Republicans. Colonel  
Theodore Roosevelt spoke out urging Messrs. Knox  
and Stimson to refuse the appointment." It was  
generally considered on June Twentieth, Nineteen Forty,  
as a political<sup>i</sup> move aiming at a coalition government.  
As soon as Republican leaders recovered their breath  
they began to speak out against the idea. On the  
~~following day the Republicans assembled for their  
convention in Philadelphia officially rejecting the~~  
*On the very next day*  
~~idea of a coalition~~ The Republican National Committee

adopted an unanimous resolution which read: "Having entered the cabinet, Stimson and Knox are no longer qualified to speak as Republicans or for the Republican Party."

That is what happened in June Nineteen Forty. Today we learn that President Roosevelt informed a delegation from the Democratic National Committee that what the country needs today is not party government but a national government. The committee men called at the White House to urge Mr. Roosevelt to run for a fourth term. The understanding is that this ~~xxxxxx~~ was the President's reply:-- <sup>we need</sup> a national government rather than a party government.

~~This made several Republican commentators remember that a one party government is the aim of not a few New Deal office holders in Washington.~~ During last year's congressional campaign there were repeated suggestions to that end, though none of them were exactly official. <sup>today</sup> The Republicans <sup>^</sup> retorted that a

one party government was the first step <sup>toward</sup> ~~into~~ Fascism.  
Others were pointing out this afternoon that

Mr. Roosevelt's proposal for a national government  
is along English lines. Britain <sup>having</sup> ~~has~~ been under a  
national government even before the war began.

8/2  
~~THE~~ A voice from the middle West spoke today  
about the fourth term campaign. Alf Landon, Republican  
candidate for President in Nineteen Thirty-Six uttered  
these words: "~~Mr. Roosevelt still is the old master  
at slick politics.~~" And he continued, "Mr. Roosevelt  
realizes fully that the shocking idea of a fourth  
term will create disunity when we need unity. If  
he succeeds," Landon said, "it means the end of  
both political parties in America as we heretofore  
have known them."

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And now Hugh,