

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

The story of British parachute troops landing in Italy takes a sinister turn in the late news. The first bulletin from Rome was brief and fragmentary -- merely stating that on Monday night British warplanes dropped parachutists in two places, both in southern Italy, in the Province of Calabria, the toe of the Italian boot. There was no statement of how many British soldiers floated down out of the sky, a mere mention of two suicide squads.

Then later word -- they were captured after some fighting, in which a police officer and a civilian were killed. They are now reported as saying that British planes carrying them from Greece lost their bearings and dropped them at wrong places.

The latest account from Rome tonight raises the question:- What is the status of these parachute soldiers? Are they to be regarded as prisoners of war -- or spies? They were heavily armed with machine-guns, hand grenades and supplies of explosive, and were well supplied with Italian money. They speak fluent Italian and were obviously picked for their knowledge of that language. The uniform they wore is a central point of discussion. Rome describes their clothing as plain

khaki jackets, long khaki trousers, without puttees; and, civilian shoes. The Italians declare their uniforms bore no insignia, no military markings. So were they really uniforms or ~~it~~ just clothes?

The authorities in Rome said that tonight they were investigating to find out whether Great Britain has ever publicly announced the uniform of British Parachute troops, and whether the parachutists were garbed accordingly. The point of it is that an enemy operating behind the lines is a soldier, if in uniform - and is required to be treated as a prisoner of war. If he's doing his war work in civilian clothes, his status is that of a spy.

The purpose of the parachute landing was to attack 1 important objectives, says Rome, but they didn't succeed apparently. The capture of the soldiers of the sky is related with this phrase - "before they could cause the grave damage they had in mind." They are said to have admitted that they were flown from Greece to blow up railroad junctions and water power developments -- but were dropped at the wrong places.

Well, there are possibilities of decidedly grave damage in that part of Italy. It's a mountainous and barren area, but is the site of one of the great Italian aqueducts, a system of water power for

many factories and of water supply for more than two hundred and fifty communities. In addition, there are other power developments which provide electricity for war industries at Taranto and Naples -- and as far north as Rome. These large and important projects down toward the toe of the boot might well be the target for a British raid - parachute raid.

London gives no confirmation of the story, says nothing is known about it. But there was excited interest in the British capital, and it was pointed out that General Wavell, the victorious British commander in north Africa, might well resort to tattack by parachute. He was a military observer in Moscow some years ago when the Red Army put on one of its mass demonstrations, dropping military units from planes. They say that General Wavell was impressed with these parachute tactics, and may now be trying them out at the expense of Italy. Nazi Germany used parachute troops with telling effect in the blitzkrieg blow that demolished the Low Countries and France.

## AIR BATTLE

Today, in the vicinity of the British town of Folkstone, on the English channel, there was a phenomenon of new military import. Out of the sky there fell a rain of machine gun bullets. Also shells such as are used in small cannon -- aerial cannon. In the sky high above the Channel a huge air battle was being fought. So there was no surprise that machine-gun bullets dropped to earth. In an air fight there's a mass fire of machine guns; and thousands of spent missiles rain downward.

But the cannon shells were another matter. It became known at the beginning of the war that German fighter planes were equipped with cannon, but these were not so much in evidence in the great air battles of last summer and fall. The fire of machine-guns massed on a plane seemed to be more effective. Recently, we've heard that the British have been mounting cannon on their new fighters. New tactics developing in the war of the sky? Only the other day air Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding told me of new sky fighting with cannon because of armored planes. So today cannon shells as well as spent machine-gun bullets, fell on Folkstone.

The air battle is described as being the greatest since the mighty combats on high last September, when hundreds of planes

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whirled in giant dogfights. Today's engagement began when a big fleet of British bombers, heavily escorted by fighters, flew out over the English Channel to attack the invasion ports on the other side. At first there was no opposition, but then a huge swarm of Nazi fighters came roaring. The battle was fought among the clouds, an intricate maze of warplanes in the acrobatics of combat. Berlin claims that nine Spitfires were shot down. Britain relates that the Nazi armada was driven off.

The Germans have a follow-up to yesterday's story of a destructive attack on a British convoy in the Atlantic. They now raise the number of ships sunk to fourteen; tonnage eighty-two thousand. And the Nazi high command today claimed that a second British convoy was attacked and dispersed - this one by air <sup>assault,</sup> ~~attack.~~ The action is described as occurring off the coast of Scotland - six British merchant ships damaged heavily, set on fire, disabled - according to the Nazi claim.

GREECE

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There's a French report tonight that Germany is trying to persuade Greece to make peace with Italy. They say that the Fascist government in Rome has agreed to let Berlin mediate and settle the Greek-Italian War - if possible. It's to be done by Nazi diplomatic efforts at Athens combined with threats of a German stroke at the rear of the Greek army. The story goes on with the statement that Italy is desperately short of gasoline, and has so little that Fascist planes don't venture to fly east of Crete - too much distance for the little gas on hand. Hence there's not much hope that Mussolini can retrieve the situation in Albania by winning any victories. ~~And~~ Hence the desire to call the whole thing off. This, moreover, would enable the Fascist Duce to concentrate what resources he has left for the defense of ~~what he~~ <sup>what he</sup> ~~has left of~~ Tripoli, in north Africa.

SPAIN

We continue to get what purports to be inside information about the conferences that Franco held with Mussolini and Petain. Today's version is that the Spanish leader offered the Italian Dictator to do anything he could in the cause of peace - mediate, try to bring the war to an end. The talk between Franco and Marshal Petain was along the same line - peace. This continues the supposition that Franco has no idea of joining the war against Great Britain - that he rejected the proposals for a stroke against Gibraltar.

On the other hand, here's a dispatch that has an alarmist sound - sudden defense activities at Gibraltar. The report is from nearby Spain. They say that just across from the Gibraltar line, busy doings are being observed at the Rock - every man called to his defense post, warships dashing on patrol duties, R.A.F. planes scouting all the time. Signs of vigilant guard against a sudden attack. All this <sup>new</sup> ~~sudden~~ defense activity has been going on for ~~■~~ forty-eight hours, began two days ago!

## JUGOSLAVIA

There's not much to be said about the meeting between Hitler and the Yugoslav Premier and Foreign Minister -- save that they met in Germany. The bulletin telling of the conference uses the usual empty diplomatic phraseology, saying -- "the discussion of questions of mutual interests occurred in the spirit of the traditional friendly relations of both countries."

The supposition is of course that Hitler is trying to lay down the law to the two Yugoslav ministers and draw their nation into the Nazi camp for some sort of German plan of activity in the Balkans.

Of more consequence is a report from Turkey -- if it's true. It emanates from what is described as "foreign sources close to the Soviet Embassy", and declares that Stalin's Russia will do nothing to keep the Germans from occupying Bulgaria -- if they should decide to do so. If Hitler moves, Stalin will remain quiet. Here's the latest from the Balkans. Rumania is said to be detaining the British Minister -- won't let him go -- though Britain has broken relations.



## FAR EAST

There's nothing new in the Far Eastern situation, which is regarded as a Number One point of danger. Australia has been keenly alarmed by the prospect of an ambitious blow by Japan, but today the Acting Premier at Sidney spoke some relatively reassuring words. He said the crisis had grown no worse, things more or less suspended in the balance - but no new signs of a Far Eastern flare-up.

The state of things out there on the other side of the world was much in mind when President Roosevelt today received the new Japanese Ambassador. Personally, the greeting was cordial for Ambassador Nomura and President Roosevelt are old friends. The new envoy expressed himself in these words to the President: "It is a source of real pleasure to be stationed in your great country, where I have a large number of friends - among whom I am happy to count you, Mr. President, as one of the oldest and closest."

The President responded in a similar spirit. But both statesmen agreed that there was grave cause for trouble between their respective countries. Said the President to the Ambassador: "There are developments in the relations between the United States and Japan which cause concern."

LEND-LEASE

There was a new suggestion today in the argument over the possible transfer of American destroyers to Britain. The word from Washington is that there may be a compromise between the opposite opinions - Wendell Willkie saying we ought to give Britain from five to ten destroyers a month, Secretary ~~Knox~~ of the Navy Knox retorting that the fleet needs all the destroyers that it has.

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The new proposal is that, instead of handing over our own destroyers, we should use our shipyards to repair British destroyers. It is pointed out that one reason why the British Navy is in such need, is because a lot of their own <sup>war craft</sup> ~~destroyers~~ are laid up and need reconditioning. Some are just affected by the wear and ~~ex~~ tear of hard usage, while others have been damaged in battle, hit by shells or bombs. And the British shipyards are so heavily over-worked they can't recondition the destroyers that need it - not with any promptness. So, if we would do the reconditioning in our own shipyards, the British would have more destroyers in service - which is the main thing. <sup>therefore</sup> ~~so~~ let them <sup>send</sup> ~~seven~~ five or ten destroyers over here every so often to be

repaired. That's the argument

Senator Wheeler, leader of the opposition to the bill, delivered a scathing attack today. He declared that British dominions and colonies are asking and getting cash for war materials they deliver to Britain. "The British Colonies," said he, "are demanding that cash be put on the barrel-head." That was the Wheeler theme in bitterly assailing the request that we lend, lease or give.

All of this is preliminary to the big debate which begins on Monday. It promises to be a longdrawn out affair, but administration leaders see the passing of the Lend-Lease Bill by a majority of as much as three to one.

## DEBT

Debate in the Senate today urged -- higher taxes. The lawmakers were debating the bill to raise the limit of the national debt -- lift the lid to sixty-five billion dollars. Several Democratic senators spoke up with the demand that more money be raised by taxation - to avoid a continual piling up of the public debt. Said Senator Tydings of Maryland:- "The ability of the people to pay is higher now than it will be at any future time, that is judging from our present outlook."

The amount of talk today wasn't very much. The Senate soon got around to a vote. There was no count, no need for any. The Senate passed the bill to raise the debt limit to sixty-five billion dollars -- did it by a voice vote -- nobody speaking up in objection.

## MUSIC

Here's an idea for you music lovers to argue <sup>about</sup> - it may  
seem almost a sacrilege to some. It concerns the oratorios of  
Handel, those great sacred <sup>h</sup> coral works, a religious heritage.  
A prominent personality in the operatic world suggests - why not  
stage the oratorios of Handel as operas?

I heard about this, talking to Herbert Graf, who is  
stage manager at the Metropolitan Opera House. He told me that  
the ~~Hungarian~~ <sup>Handelian</sup> oratorios would go magnificently as operas - all  
except the "Messiah", which is sheer music, not drama. He named  
especially - "Joshua", "Judas Maccabeus" and "Saul", with its  
famous death march. They'd be a natural answer to the call for  
opera in English - because ~~they~~ <sup>oratorios</sup> were written in English. In  
passing, the Handel operas were written in Italian, including  
the famous aria, which we know as the Largo. Yet Handel was a  
German. (The Metropolitan Opera House stage manager tells me  
that the scenarios of the Handel oratorios were taken from  
medieval miracle plays, and are especially adapted to stage  
production. So) Herbert Graf <sup>says</sup> ~~tells me that~~ he plans this summer  
to give oratorios as opera as a music festival event. He

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mentioned the Berkshire Music Festival, which is of  
nationwide fame -- the great summer event at Stockbridge,  
Massachusetts.

ALL in all, it's an idea that can start many  
an argument among music lovers.

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And here's one for gasoline lovers --