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BALKANS

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Military strategy is a complicated affair to discuss, usually requiring maps and charts - and sometimes even these don't make it quite clear. The campaign of the Balkans, however, has elements of dramatic simplicity, which make it possible to tell about the movements and objectives of the armies without too much confusion and obscurity. Today the Balkan battle took a spectacular turn - with a drive through a mountain pass. Tonight, the issue is in suspense, a rather breathless suspense. And, as it happens, the situation can be ^{described with some sort of} ~~put with a fair and out~~ clearness.

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There are two valleys, parallel, both running north to south, each with a river flowing into the Aegean Sea. These two parallel valleys are something more than thirty miles apart. ~~They're~~ Both fringed by high mountains. Between the two is a lofty and rugged range, separating them. How to get across that mountain range with an effective military drive, from one valley to the other - that's the essence of the problem. The two valleys are ^{named} ~~called~~ the Struma and the Vardar. We may call them the east valley and the west valley. The east valley is mostly in Bulgaria - though the southern end of it, on the Aegean Sea, is Greek, The Germans, in control of Bulgaria,

occupy the east valley down to the Greek line. The west valley, across the mountain range, is mostly in Jugoslavia, and reaches down to Greece and the Aegean. Obviously, if the Germans could *get* ~~drive~~ across the mountain barrier and drive down the west valley, they could outflank the Greek positions further east. ^{HP} So here are the events told in the news today:

First of all, there's something not so very important.

To the east of the east valley the Nazi motorized columns drove to the sea. The Greeks there apparently made no concentrated resistance. Eastern Thrace, not strategically important. To be *the Nazi advance now* sure, ~~it~~ separates Greece from Turkey, but then it doesn't appear *AA* that the Turks intended to do much anyway. The Germans might hit westward along the coast of the Aegean, but that's not so promising - the country is so difficult.

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In the valley situation, the Greeks today defended strongly, as the Germans drove against them on the Struma. Athens states that several Greek forts were captured - defended to the last man. A German account tells of fierce attacks against these forts, some of them as high as four thousand feet. Tanks and

dive bombers in coordinated assault - the familiar blitzkrieg technique. At one point, states Athens, a Nazi tank column entered a narrow defile, and was trapped. The Greeks had hidden mountain batteries on both sides of the gorge. "The enemy," says the Athens ^{account,} ~~dispatch,~~ "were allowed to enter the ravine, and then were subjected to a heavy fire of fort guns, machine guns, and automatic rifles. No German escaped the ravine," the Greek account concludes.

The Nazi drive ^{in that locality} against the Greek line, was characterized by intense air activities - on both sides. The British R.A.F. blasted German troop concentrations moving to the attack. The Nazis, on their part, landed ~~xxx~~ parachute troops behind the Greek lines. The report is that a hundred and twenty parachute soldiers came to earth. Seventy were captured, twenty or twenty-five were killed. Only a few are still at large. ^{Later word, from Athens, The Greeks have huddled back a Nazi mass assault with ~~the~~ tanks.} This brave and stubborn Greek defense was at the

lower part of the east valley. Then startling news came - that

Nazi armored troops were driving across to the west valley, over the

mountain barrier, getting through a lofty and difficult pass.

And that brought the dire threat that the Greek positions in the east valley would be outflanked. It was a surprise maneuver by the forces of the blitzkrieg. Berlin states that armored units pushed through ^{the craggy} ~~a lofty~~ pass, which had been considered invulnerable - impossible to get through. The defenders there were Jugoslavs.

Apparently they weren't in ^{numbers,} any great ~~force,~~ believing that the pass could not be forced. An Athens report stated that the Yugoslav troops had been ^{pushed} ~~forced~~ back, leaving the western flank of the Greek army uncovered - and in danger.

We heard that R.A.F. planes were bombing the Nazis at a place called Strumicka. That point ~~is far across the lofty pass from one valley to the other.~~ It indicates a German push through the mountain barrier of eighteen miles, and places them only fifteen miles from the Vardar River, which stream is right in the middle of the west valley. German dispatches tell how the surprise drive was accomplished. Nazi Alpine troops with machine guns, light artillery, ^{carried on the backs of mules,} motorcycle units,

bumping along the rugged mountain trails. And assault troops with flame throwers attacking mountain forts.

This surprise thrust from one valley to another recalls a maneuver that was decisive in the Norwegian campaign. That too was a battle of valleys, and blitzkrieg units cut across a mountain pass, believed to be safe. Thus they outflanked the Norwegian and British defenders.

Is this same story to be repeated in the Balkans?

The latest word tonight does not indicate whether the Nazi—over-the-mountain drive from valley to valley is really a success or whether it will be checked. It is a peril indeed. It threatens not only to outflank the Greek forces but also to separate the Yugoslav army from the Greeks and British - drive a wedge between them, isolating the Yugoslavs.

There was still more perilous word today, a report that the German army ~~today~~ captured two vitally important points.

One, the City of Nish. The other, a town the name of which ~~I can't~~

~~pronounce.~~ ^{is} ~~It's~~ spelled - S-k-o-p-l-j-e; ^{skoh pul yea} ~~Suppose I make a stab~~

~~and call it - Seepe-lyay. Although - that would probably make~~
~~the hair curl on any Yugoslav head.~~ If the Nazis have captured

Nish, it means that they've seized an all-important railroad center
to the north. *— Skoh pul yea —* If they've taken Skoplje, it signifies much more.

For that place is a railroad point at the northern end of the
Vardar Valley. Its seizure would virtually cut Yugoslavia in two,

because the valley is about the only way of communication - north
and south. Moreover, at Skoplje the Nazis would have an open road

down the valley, a fairly short drive to the critical theatre of

events further south. ^H The report of the capture of Nish and Skoplje
emanated from Budapest - from German sources there. It is not

confirmed in Berlin., Nazi military spokesmen said they know nothing

about it, and ~~the~~ German indicates ^{ions are that} ~~are~~ the story of the capture of
Skoh-pul-yea Skoplje is probably incorrect. It's sixty miles within Yugoslavia,

and the Hitler armored ^{di} ~~visions~~ could hardly have ^{to gotten} ~~got~~ that far so

~~xxx~~ quickly - through mountainous country. Berlin spokesmen are

inclined to think that the report of the capture may be explained

by dispatches telling of the air bombardment of Skoplje. *Skoh-pul-yea.*

Today's military events make it seem probable that the Greeks will abandon their present line of resistance in the Struma Valley. The indications are that they are likely to retire from the positions they have been defending so staunchly, and select a stronger area of defense further west. The line suggested would involve the surrender of the important port of Salonika. London today gave a hint of such a retreat, with British military spokesmen pointing out that Salonika is not of such great strategic value, and consequently might well be abandoned. If these indications should turn out to be true, it would mean that the Greeks and the British will fight their battle along the strongest kind of line amid the mountains of northern Greece.

There were reports today that British Empire troops were in action. One rumor told of their pushing into Bulgaria. But this seems to be unlikely. We have reports from Berlin, Athens and London alike - that British Empire forces have not yet entered the battle. Yet those Empire forces are certainly there.

Dispatches from Greece tell of mass movements of British troops

toward the fighting front. ~~They're~~ Largely Australians and New Zealanders - veterans of the victories against the Italians in north Africa. Greek girls greeting them at railroad stations, giving them armsful of flowers. The Greek people rejoicing because of - the miracle. The miracle for which they've been praying, the arrival of the British, the army of many victories, the Army of the Nile. ~~For that~~ has sent a wave of optimism through Greece.

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theatre

Aside from the main ~~theory~~ of operations, we hear the Italians in Albania have abandoned the town of Scutari, captured by the Jugoslavs. And also, further to the north, where Italy proper adjoins Jugoslavia, the City of Fiume. The place is almost surrounded by Jugoslav territory, and the report is that the Italians have evacuated Fiume.

AID

The attitude of the United States toward the Balkan war was formally expressed by President Roosevelt today - in a message to ^{the} boy King, Peter the Second, ~~of Serbia.~~ The President denounced the Axis blow at the Balkan Kingdom, called it unprovoked and ruthless aggression, criminal. He expressed to the youthful monarch the hope that Yugoslavia might successfully resist the Nazi-Fascist attack, and promised aid. The President stated that the United States would extend to the Jugoslavs all possible assistance in the way of armament.

The Washington word is that a certain amount of aid is already on its way to Yugoslavia, has already been shipped. It is believed that the equipment includes seventy-five millimeter artillery, the kind which President Roosevelt had previously released as aid to Greece. Of course, war-time shipping conditions being what they are, it may take some time for American weapons to get to the embattled nation of Yugoslavia.

~~President Roosevelt conferred today with General Sikorski, Prime Minister of the exiled Polish government. General Sikorski is~~

The question of convoying will become more acute, with the receipt of today's news about ship sinkings. For weeks Washington has been tense over the question of whether or not to use American warships to convoy Lend-Lease supplies to Britain. So what figures do we get from London today? The Admiralty ^{bulletin} ~~report~~ concerns the week ending March Thirtieth, the week before last. During those seven days, the Nazi sea campaign destroyed more than seventy-seven thousand tons of shipping. ^H But that isn't the more serious part of the story. The London Admiralty ~~revises~~ revises ship sinkings for the previous week. These had been originally reported as more than ninety-four thousand tons. Now London changes the figure, revises it upward - to a hundred and forty-eight thousand tons. ~~That's~~ ^{that} the biggest loss of ships since the Germans began their intensified sea campaign around March First. Today's news indicates that the losses for the month of March amounted to half a million tons! And the London dispatch reminds us again ^{that} the figures for sinkings do not include damage to freight ships by air bomb attacks. The rate of destruction certainly approaches the critical point, and could not go on indefinitely - without something being done.

LABOR

Opposition to legislation against strikes was expressed today in testimony before the Military Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives. One of the witnesses was Sidney Hillman, Associate Director of the Office of Production Management. Hillman said: "I am a great believer that we can get more through cooperation than coercion." And he repeated his previous contention that the strike situation is not as bad as reported. "Never in all my experience," said he, "has there been such cooperation between labor and management as there is now."

The latest along this line is a statement by President Roosevelt -- that he is inclined to favor something to provide a period of cooling off when strikes are threatened, a time of delay for talking thing over.

On the actual strike front, the number one bit of news is in the Ford walk-out. Tonight taking a hand in negotiations is Philip Murray, President of the C.I.O and a member of the Labor Mediation

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Board. ~~He~~ flew to Detroit today at the request of the Governor of Michigan. He's using his personal efforts to settle this strike which has thrown one hundred and twenty-five thousand men out of work. One supposition is that the entrance of Philip Murray into the picture will delay the placing of the Ford walk-out before the Defense Mediation Board. Anyway officials of the Ford Company are now for the first time taking part in actual negotiations. This -- as Henry Ford is reported to take the attitude that he'll turn his vast automobile plants over to the government if the strike is not settled.

trouble
In the ~~coal strike~~ the Southern Operators today proposed that all mines be opened immediately with the granting of a wage increase of sixty cents a day -- this increase to apply until the companies and the union arrive at a final settlement for a contract.

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~~The~~ At Cleveland there were two wildcat strikes in defense industries -- work stoppages unauthorized by the Union, the C.I.O. One, *at* the United States Aluminum Company did not last long. The men have returned to work.

~~The Allis-Chalmers plant reopened today, thereby ending the defense strike that attracted the most attention of all -- the vitally~~

In Congress today there were remarks about the possibility of a nationwide strike in behalf of Harry Bridges, the West Coast C.I.O. leader.

CENSORSHIP

President Roosevelt today declared himself against censorship. He said he opposed the idea of official government curb against the press and radio. "I much prefer to go along with the overwhelming majority of newspapers," said he.

The President's remarks, made at a White House press conference, came as a result of stories published about a damaged British warship arriving in New York. The Navy Department asked that nothing be said about the coming of the giant battleship for repairs under the Lend-Lease Act. But some papers printed the story. That brought up the subject of censorship at the press conference, and evoked the President's remark that he preferred voluntary cooperation rather than a curb imposed by the government.

And now I'm not going to censor my Sunoco colleague, Hugh James, by invading his time.