

PACIFIC

Hugh Gibson Suva, Tuesday, July 6, 1943.

Good Evening, Everybody:

46
Northwest of the island of New Georgia, where our troops are fighting the Japs, there ~~xxx~~ is another island called Kolombangara. Between the two, there is a stretch of water called Kula Gulf. On the New Georgia side of this gulf is the Japanese airbase at Munda, —

~~the~~ the Number One objective for the American forces. On the Kolombangara side of the Gulf, is a place of Number One importance called Vila - the main Jap supply base for that area - and on it the Japs must depend for munitions and food. So the importance of Kula Gulf is clear. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~

If we can dominate it, we can cut ^{off} the Japs at Munda ~~off~~ from their supplies at Vila. The Gulf is ~~immensely deep,~~

~~a vast scenic chasm. That's picturesque, but the~~

~~importance~~ thing is the width of the gulf - it's a

mere fifteen miles across. ~~So, as a space for~~

~~battle, it isn't so large.~~ Great squadrons of

battleships could hardly maneuver in a fifteen mile width, and an engagement there would be confined, most likely, to light forces.

That gives us the geographical conditions of the Battle of Kula Gulf, about which we are told today. The Navy Department tells of a brisk engagement fought in the narrow waters. The details are not yet known. The communique states merely that the enemy suffered what is called ^{ed} - "considerable damage." And our forces incurred, in the words of the Navy Department "some damage." Which would indicate that our side had the better of the Battle of Kula Gulf. Obviously, it was fought to assert our control of the stretch of water that lies between the Japs at Munda and their supply base. If we dominate Kula ^{Gulf} ~~Bay~~, Munda is isolated.

Today's Navy communique tells of a previous

engagement, in which we lost a destroyer. American naval units were bombarding the Japs on both sides of Kula Gulf. ~~For example, they were hurling shells into Vila, the enemy supply base.~~ During this bombardment, the destroyer STRONG was torpedoed and sunk - a twenty-one hundred ton craft, commissioned last year.

The Navy emphasizes the fact that the naval fighting thus far is probably only preliminary. It expects the Japs to make a series of hit and run raids against our forces assailing ~~the Japs~~ Munda. They believe it will be the story of Guadalcanal all over again - recalling how Japanese warships tried again and again to relieve their Guadalcanal garrison, until the big sea battle in which the enemy incurred the heaviest defeat in Japanese history.

On land - United States marines are still fighting their way through the jungles of New Georgia.

pushing ~~them~~ through difficult country toward the

Munda air base. The news about them today is ~~little~~ ^{meager}.

The marines, ~~pushing~~ advancing, are deep in the equatorial forest, with little facility and little time for sending out reports of what they are doing.

On still another island, Vangunu, which occupies a subordinate position with relation to New Georgia - the American task has been completed. Our forces have captured a village called Vura, and that ended Japanese resistance on Vangunu.

RUSSIA

The latest word from Russia tonight relates that in the fighting today, the Germans lost four hundred and twenty-three tanks. The news since the present Nazi offensive began on Monday has featured large numbers of German tanks destroyed. If the figures given by Moscow do not represent duplications in part, the figure ~~for~~ for forty-eight hours adds up to one thousand, a hundred and sixty-one - which represents an enormous loss of tanks.

Tonight's Moscow story tells how the new offensive began, -half past four in the morning, the dim light of dawn. Suddenly, the German line burst into flame, as a tremendous artillery barrage began. The Nazi plan was to flatten out the first line of red army positions - to clear the way for the tanks. But the Red artillery replied, and when the swarms of tanks lunged forward - destruction of the armored monsters began.

The original battleline is along two hundred miles from Orel through Kursk, to Belgorod. Today, the line of fighting was extended northward from Belgorod to a point a hundred and forty miles south of Moscow. The heavy German assault has made few gains. At some points the Nazi tank squadrons, headed by giant Mark Sixes, broke through - only to be cut off when Soviet infantry surged around and behind the armored units. At other points, the Germans succeeded in making small gains which they have been able to hold. Moscow reports the Red troops are now fighting to wipe out the salients thus created.

The exact status of the offensive is not known. Both London and Moscow declare it is impossible to say whether the German drive is really the beginning of an all-out attempt to smash through - or whether it is no more than a local action on a large scale,

designed to establish local gains.

Berlin today tends to minimize the whole thing - which might be an indication that the attack is not going any too well. The German version is that the Nazi war machine on the Orel-Kursk-Belgorod front began a local offensive, to which the Soviets responded *with* so powerful a counter-drive that the Hitler command had to throw in its reserves - thereby bringing on a large scale burst of fighting. Moscow thinks that perhaps the present drive represents a German attempt to forestall a big Red army offensive - with the idea of attacking first and beating the Soviets to the draw. All in all, it is impossible to say whether the Nazis are going all out, as they did last year in their drive for Stalingrad, or whether their burst of activity is intended to be no more than an element of sporadic fighting during the summer.

MEDITERRANEAN

In the Mediterranean, Allied air power today continued its task of smashing Axis military centers in Sicily and Sardinia. The story has two angles - bombs dropped, and enemy planes shot down. Today a huge weight of high explosive hit airfields at strategic ports, and forty-five hostile aircraft were downed in battles of the sky. In three days of air offensive, the number of Axis planes destroyed has risen to more than one hundred - which is an indication of the magnitude of the engagements that are being fought high above the Mediterranean.

The most dramatic of these occurred when thirty Flying Fortresses raided an air base at Gerbini in Sicily. The Fortresses, in their tight formation, were met by a swarm of a hundred and fifty fighters - German Messerschmitts, mostly. And the battle was on. The Fortresses fought off attack after attack,

as they roared on to the target, bombed the Gerbini air base, and then flew homeward.

The Nazis assailed them from above and below. High above, they dropped light fragmentation bombs, trying to hit the Fortresses. And from below they came streaking - with guns blazing. Three big bombers were lost - but here's the record the American squadron made.

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First:- thirty enemy fighters were destroyed - the largest number ever shot down by a Fortress formation in a single engagement.

Second:- one Fortress shot down seven, and that was a record for one bomber.

Third:- Machine Gunner Sergeant Benjamin Warner of San Francisco got seven all by himself, which established a record for a single gunner.

The air battle in the raid against the Gerbini

airdrome is to be marked down as perhaps the sharpest victory scored by the Flying Fortresses of the U.S.A. A victory for the American air fighters, but it's another kind of victory too - a success to be credited, in proper part, to the war workers at home. This is brought to mind by a telegram that I have here - a telegram from Brigadier General Whitten of the United States Army. Let me read it. The wire is addressed to the workers of the Sun Oil Company, and it reads:

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

"Your conscientious work to produce high octane gasoline of the type needed to maintain our air attacks on the enemy is an essential contribution to the American war effort."

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"Every American heavy bomber," continues General Whitten's telegram, "requires more than a ton of gasoline for a raid on Sicily or Sardinia; more than

two tons for an attack on Germany. Each successful raid is evidence of another good job that has been done also by you American workers who are producing vital airplane fuel."

So says the General in tribute to Sun Oil workers. His figures that tell of the amount of gasoline consumed by the big bombers is another reminder of the reason why we civilians are short of gasoline. It takes oceans of motor fuel to keep American air power winning x in the battle zones, and he calls upon us to do with a great deal less than we ^{sh} would like to have.

SUBSIDIES

The Senate voted again today - to kill the subsidies. By a vote of thirty-six to twenty-eight, the upper House, for a second time, declared itself against the White House program for rolling back prices by the payment of subsidies to food producers.

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The history of the subsidy business goes like this. First - the Senate and the House of Representatives voted by huge majorities to put an anti-subsidy clause into a bill to continue the Commodity Credit Corporation. This was opposed by the White House, and the President vetoed the bill. The House thereupon voted to sustain the veto and adopted a resolution to continue the Commodity Credit Corporation until January First - without any mention of subsidies.

That left it up to the Senate to approve of the resolution, but the Senators today went right back to their original stand - and put the ban on subsidies

back into the Commodity Credit Corporation bill.

That, of course, defies the White House veto and

invites another one - if the House now agrees with

the Senate and supports the ban.

GYPSY

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From time to time we hear of ingenious schemes for beating the draft - but leave it to a gypsy to provide something special. The tribes of Romany are legendary for sharp conniving and peculiar ways, and this is illustrated by the story of George Frank, a gypsy of Cincinnati.

He knew that married men with children were not being called up, but he had neither wife nor child. So what did he do? He bought a family. He paid cash on the line for wife and children. A friend of his, another gypsy, had a sister with three children. There was a bit of bargaining, and the deal was made. After the money was paid, George Frank and the woman with the children were married. That was simple. The wedding was performed in gypsy fashion - with the couple eating some salt bread in the presence of their parents.

Among the tribes of Romany, the munching of salt bread

takes the place of wedding bells, orange blossoms
and the ~~parents~~ blessing of the Church.

So now George Frank was a married man with
three children, which guaranteed to keep him out of
the draft as long as fathers were not being called up.
The trouble was, however, that there was another gypsy -
and he fell in love with the wife who had been so
conveniently purchased. He knew about the transaction
and his romantic ardor led him around to the Selective
Service Board - where he told the story of the buying
of a family to dodge the draft. Today the clever
gypsy was arrested, and I suppose that soon he'll be
doing - squads right.

3/2 And now, speaking for Lowell
Thomas, so long until tomorrow