

P. J. - Sunday. Tuesday, Nov. 14, 1939.

FIRE

There is not only a sense of tragic horror but also one of mystery, when the news comes - fire has destroyed a town, ^{and} the victims may number as many as eight hundred!

It was in no sense a large city, and ^{so many} ~~the most~~ of its inhabitants ^{may} ~~must~~ have perished. When we hear that, we wonder - how? What could make a fire so frightfully disastrous? The answer is like a fantasy of terror.

Down in South American Venezuela, is the Lake of Maracaibo, and on its banks stood the town of LaGunillas. The town stood high, on stilts, built on piles over the water. It was inhabited by Venezuelan workers, oil field workers. Lake Maracaibo is the center of the great Venezuelan oil industry, its waters covered with waste petroleum. The news dispatch relates that the water underneath the houses of the town that stood on stilts was coated an inch thick with oil. So there ^{were} ~~XXXXXXXX~~ the makings of the ultimate tragedy of fire - not only the houses burning down, but the water beneath them flaming high, the lake on fire. The news tells of how two hundred people managed to get aboard a lighter that was moored

and tried to push off - but the lighter capsized into the
blazing water.

In the ^{world's} historic record of calamity by fire, a
prominent place must be given to the ~~the~~ flaming tragedy on
Lake Maracaibo.

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FINNS

There's alarming word from Finland, about the state of things on the Finnish-Russian frontier. There Finland has three hundred thousand troops mobilized, and they are faced by heavy forces of the Red Army. A state of war is said to exist, but it's called - "a war of nerves."

Reports from Helsingfors tell of Soviet actions, you might call them antics - intended to break the morale of the Finns. Red Army troops lining up at the border and blazing away - shooting into the air, however, just making a hostile demonstration. And Red Army soldiers coming in a rush with fixed bayonets - right up to the frontier barriers. It must be a fearsome sight to see - the hordes of Red soldiers in a bayonet charge, though it's only a sham battle effect. And Soviet warplanes are described as hedge-hopping across the border, with a lot of roaring action, just keeping things disturbed. All a lot of warlike display, ~~a shot at the morale of~~ ^{pressure on} the Finns - a war of nerves. Well, we remember how the present European conflict was preceded by a war of nerves - which presently turned into the real thing.

And today on that Finnish-Soviet border one instance

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of the real thing is reported - a Soviet warplane shot down.

The story is not confirmed, but it tells circumstantially how a

Finnish anti-aircraft battery blazed away at a Red army plane,

which fell between the lines, the No Man's Land across which the

Finns and the Reds are facing each other.

PEACE

Hitler today handed in his reply to the Belgian-Dutch peace proposal -- and tonight it is in the hands of King Leopold and Queen Wilhelmina. There is no official word of what's in the Nazi communication, but Berlin gives us a pretty strong indication that it's -- a rejection. Not an outright refusal of the Leopold-Wilhelmina offer to mediate -- nothing so direct as that. We are informed that Hitler has told the King and Queen that the attitude of Great Britain and France make it impossible to talk peace just now. (With London and Paris demanding an end to Hitlerism as the first condition, peace discussions are impossible ~~just now~~ -- so says Hitler.)

~~Handwritten scribble~~

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BELGIUM

Today in Brussels a whole political party walked out of the Belgian Parliament - seceded from the session. The Flemish party - which reminds us once again of the lack of unity in King Leopold's realm. Belgium is divided into two groups, the French-speaking Walloons, and the more German Flemings, who talk a Teutonic sort of language. (They've been at odds for a long time - with Flemish demands for autonomy, and the use of their own tongue)
~~language.~~

The present session of the Brussels Parliament was opened with an address by the speaker - an address in French. Today the leader of the Flemish group demanded that the speaker's address be translated into Flemish. He harangued violently for an hour, kept other deputies from talking - had the place in an uproar. It all ended with a motion to expel the Flemish leader. The Walloon majority carried the day and voted to have the obstreperous Fleming tossed right out. Thereupon the entire Flemish minority walked out - seceded.

All this is a rather usual sort of thing in Belgium - but it's of decidedly unusual importance now, with Nazi German threats against Belgium and Holland. Hitler might say he must go in to protect the Teutonic Flemings.

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SUBMARINES

The Germans are talking ominously about taking restrictions off their submarine warfare. The Nazis are contending that because Britain is arming merchant ships, the U-boats have the right to sink them without warning.

Today a German navy spokesman declared that hereafter if an armed merchant craft made any attempt to escape or resist a submarine, it would be sunk without further ceremony. Any move to get away or uncover a gun would be regarded as resistance. And Berlin newspapers are demanding that the British arming of cargo vessels should be answered by unrestricted torpedoing - ~~axward~~ the World War way, spurlos Versenkt.

SHIPS

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The North Sea is a cheerless place these days. Even in the brightest of summer, that turbulent body of water is no blue and luminous Mediterranean. The North Sea, gray and grim - especially at this time of year, as winter comes on, chill and blustery, with blasting, frosty gales. And now, with war on the ocean, there could be hardly any more forbidding space of water on this globe - than the North Sea.

Today, some fishermen were out in a motor trawler, seeking the day's catch. They saw a destroyer of the blockade patrol. It was speeding along a couple of miles away. Suddenly they heard a loud explosion, and saw the destroyer ^{wreathed} ~~writhing~~ in smoke. It had struck a German mine, and was sinking.

The fishermen hurried to the rescue, and here's how one of them describes what they saw:- "The destroyer was surrounded by oil," he relates, "and men were plunging into the sea from the decks. Some clung to debris and spars. Others swam, and we saw some sinking. Many were exhausted when we pulled them into our boat. A number refused help until we had picked up weaker swimmers."

One of those who refused help until others were saved was a hardy British jack tar who certainly had a sense of humor. As he

swam in the icy water and the oil, he sang a cheery song, a mocking mammy song. It had this refrain, which he chanted loudly:- "Even Hitler had a mother."

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The fishermen worked lustily, hauling in one survivor after another, survivors half frozen by the icy sea, half smothered by the oil. And from the water rang out the ironical song - "Even Hitler had a mother."

They saved seventy men of the crew of the sunken destroyer, only half a dozen men missing - remarkable that so many were rescued. One fishing boat, crowded with survivors, was on its way to port - when another startling sight was spied. And here's how one of the fishermen describes it:- "En route to shore with our survivors," says he, "we saw an explosion under the bow of a British cargo boat. Great fountains of water were blown around her. All the members of her crew," the fisherman continues, "escaped in the ship's boats."

Yes, the fury of war is playing havoc on the grim North Sea.

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~~A British fishing trawler picked up twenty three members~~

~~of the crew of a Norwegian freight ship. They had been drifting for more than thirty hours after their ship had been torpedoed by a U-boat. Another boatload of survivors of the torpedoing was sought in vain.~~

~~London reports an explosion in the British freighter MATRA - what sort of explosion we are not told. The MATRA sank, fifty lives saved, two lives lost.~~

And Today we get a story of amazing misadventure. The very devils of the North Sea appear to have been active at one point off the east coast of England. There, two weeks ago, a steamer was sunk. Then last Saturday, a distress call came from a freighter at that same place. A rescue boat found the steamer had struck the wreckage, and she sank. The next day, the lifeboat got a call from another ship, once more at that ill-omened location. *The* second ship had hit the wreckage and was sinking. The rescue boat picked up eighteen survivors and was on its way to shore when still again the radio began crackling with distress signals. At the same place, a third steamer had run into the wreckage! Three vessels lost in three days, hitting the same submerged hulk of a sunken ship!

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On that arm of the North Sea, the Gulf of Finland, a Soviet aviation disaster is reported. In bad wintry weather a squadron of nine Red planes flew out from the Esthonian coast. Caught in clouds and storm, seven had to make forced landings and were badly damaged. Two of the Soviet war planes are missing - presumably lost.

ROOSEVELT

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President Roosevelt indicated pretty strongly today that the government wouldn't stand for the plan to put American ships under the flag of Panama - thereby enabling them to sail legally to the war zones. The President told the White House press conference this afternoon that he in part agreed with the contention of Secretary of State Cordell Hull - that the transfer of American ships to foreign flags would be a violation of the spirit of the Neutrality Bill. ^{The} President ~~Roosevelt~~ added that he himself didn't favor anything that would put any of the Pan-American nations out of line with the neutrality policy of the United States. ~~(He'd like to see a common Pan-American neutrality front, followed, and we certainly wouldn't be encouraging that if we allowed American ships to use the Panamanian flag for navigating into the war zones, which our own neutrality law forbids.)~~

The President wouldn't say positively that he'd veto the idea, but he told the newspaper men - they could see how the wind was blowing.

AVIATOR

It wasn't so long ago that singers of popular songs were crooning "I Kiss Your Hand, Madame, " but of course there's a difference between a hand and a foot. However, if General ^{isimo} Francisco Franco chooses to ignore the difference -- well, he's the Dictator of Spain. That was pointed out today by Mrs. Edith Rogers Dahl. She's the wife of American Aviator Dahl who flew and fought with the Left-Wingers in Spain and was captured by Franco. He's still a Franco prisoner; ~~and~~ no telling when he'll be turned loose.

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One of the Spanish Civil War incidents that made headlines was when the American aviator's beautiful blonde wife wrote to Franco to save her husband's life -- and enclosed a photograph of herself for the Generalissimo to gaze upon. Apparently the very blonde picture was good to look at, for Aviator Dahl's life was spared. In fact, Mrs. Dahl got a reply from Franco, ~~which~~ in which the Generalissimo concluded: "Your obedient servant kisses your foot."

Today Mrs. Dahl landed in the United States and the reporters immediately asked her about the foot part of it. "Yes, of course it's true," she said. "But it's ridiculous

to make a fuss over that. It means the same as ^{when} we say over here 'Cordially yours.' ~~or something like that.~~ Yes, it just depends upon useage, Cordially yours, Kiss Your Hand Madame, or Your obedient Servant kisses your foot.

Mrs. Dahl was indignant that there should have been any excitement about the foot. It didn't do her husband any good, she implied. "The reporters picked it up, ^{then,} and it did a great deal of wrong," ~~she~~ said she. "It does no good to make a fool of Franco." No it doesn't -- particularly in Spain, *with your husband in the lockup.* ~~No good to make a fool of Franco, even in the matter of kissing a lady's foot.~~

ANNENBERG

~~An important affair of law came to an end today,~~

Today

~~when~~ M. L. Annenberg, prominent publisher, dissolved his nationwide service giving news about the races. This was announced by the United States District Attorney in Chicago, who says that Annenberg had informed him that he would ^{QUOTE} ~~quit~~ forever quit the business of providing race information through the wires to gamblers and bookies END QUOTE.

There has been a lot of litigation about the Annenberg business connected with racing, ^{— indictments, prosecutions —} ~~with~~ the government getting injunctions against telephone and telegraph companies - forbidding them to transmit data about the running of the horses and the betting. All of which now ends with Annenberg's announcement that he is dissolving his news service.

SNOW CRUISER

Well, they finally got the snowmobile aboard ship today - the giant PENQUIN in which Admiral Byrd will gad about on the south polar ice pack. The snowmobile, with its tires ten feet tall, arrived at Boston nineteen days late - after various misadventures on the overland route from Chicago. Then they had new problems to solve to get it on the ship. The cruiser for the ice fields was too large, no way of navigating it aboard - as it was. They had to slice away a ten foot section of the PENQUIN'S tail, which some longshoremen did with acetylene torches. Then, with its tail cut short, the snowmobile was able to roll ~~in~~ on to the ship under its own power. The vessel dropped a foot deeper into the water - from the weight of that monster vehicle of exploration, a house and a laboratory on wheels.

Now all that remains is for Admiral Byrd to take it down to the Antarctic continent, ~~and~~ go snowmobiling on the ice,

and show Penguin the 1st to the penguins of the Antarctic. And wont they ~~swell~~ burst their white shirt fronts with pride when they see what has been named after them!

FOOTBALL

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Down in Texas they're having an epidemic of - Rose Bowl fever. From the Panhandle to the Rio Grande, from the Red River to the Gulf, the cry is universal - "the Aggies for the Rose Bowl!"

The demand rose high when Texas A. & M. beat Southern Methodist on Saturday, and ever since it has been swelling in loudness - ^{that} those Texas champs are the right ones to make the trip west and meet the top-ranking team of the Pacific Coast.

In the statewide paean of praise for the Aggies, there are not a few raspberries. ^{They are} razzing Tennessee. Some football fans other than Texans might think the pile-driving Tennessee team a likely Rose Bowl candidate, unbeaten and untied. - a wonder outfit of football. Many experts consider Tennessee one of those ^{dream} teams of all times. But the Texans are making fun of the Tennessee schedule - ~~a weak one, as everybody admits~~ ^{saying} The eleven ^s that Tennessee has played have ^{not} ~~been~~ ^{decidedly} unworthy of ~~the~~ Tennessee power.

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The only Texan who seems not to be at all infected by the Rose Bowl fever, is the coach of the Aggies, Homer Norton. When he hears somebody roar, "The Aggies for the Rose Bowl", ~~Coach~~ Norton merely remarks ~~xxx~~ with sober realism - that his

Aggies still have two games to play, with Rice and Texas "U", and he remarks that they might lose either game or both. It doesn't seem likely, but then football coaches are not distinguished for rosy optimism. They take too many hard knocks for that. Coaches

are immune from ^{outward expression} ~~various kinds~~ of pigskin fever. Many actually weep in public.

And Hugh have you anything to cheer us up after that sad story about tears and pigskinitis.

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