

FRENCH FLEET

L.J. - Sunoco. Tues., Dec. 8, 1942. C

Tonight we find some doubt cast upon that old and doubtful question - the French fleet. ~~When the news came nearly two weeks ago that the French crews at Toulon had scuttled their warships to keep these from falling into the hands of the Nazis, the problem of the French fleet seemed to be solved.~~ But ~~now it appears that~~ [^] not all the vessels at Toulon were put out of business. This was ^{officially} disclosed today by Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox, who gave the results of observations that Allied planes had carried out over the harbor of Toulon.

Secretary Knox gave a series of figures which show that fifty of the French warships were sunk or damaged, or have not been accounted for, while fifteen have fallen into German hands intact. ~~These fifteen included four submarines.~~ The vessels that the Nazis have picked up in good shape consist of destroyers,

light cruisers, and an obsolete battleship, ~~and~~
four submarines, the
vessels that were scuttled range from gunboats to
modern battleships.

The main question concerns the battleships.

At Toulon, when the Nazis seized the place, were
three mighty vessels of war: - ^{the} Battleships DUNKERQUE,
STRASBOURG and PROVENCE. What does Allied aerial
observation tell us about them? The DUNKERQUE was in
drydock. She was scuttled and now lies with her deck
level with the water. ^{the} Battleship STRASBOURG sits on
the bottom on an even keel. The PROVENCE is partly
sunk, her stern lying very low in ^{the} water. Secretary
Knox tells us that these three scuttled battleships
can be salvaged - just as our own battleships at
Pearl Harbor were salvaged, as shown in the newsreels
that were released today. Our own Movietone reel,
for example.

The general implication of Secretary Knox's disclosure is that the French crews at Toulon did a considerable job in wrecking their ships, but not a complete ^{one} ~~job~~. (Twenty-five per cent of the ^{lost} ~~ships~~ at ~~Toulon~~ have fallen into Nazi hands, afloat and intact. However, we may note that this is ~~on the~~ evidence of aerial observation, and it may be that some of the ships that appear to be okay are really damaged inside and out of commission.)

To balance whatever the Nazis may have picked up at Toulon, we can consider what we are getting at Dakar. That important West African harbor has come over to our side, and we will gain the use of ~~the~~ French ships there. This was indicated by Secretary of the Navy Knox today.

TUNISIA

The latest from Tunisia is given in a terse military style by today's bulletin from the War Department. It states: ^{"An} ~~the~~ enemy ^{attack} ~~xxxxxxx~~ in the Tebourba area on December Sixth had penetrated one of our positions. Yesterday our armored units delivered a strong counter-attack. During the night the enemy withdrew." ^R Which is soldiers' talk for relating the fact that the Nazis at Tebourba have been smashing at the positions held by American and British troops in the hills. These hills outside of the town of Tebourba are a dominating feature of the landscape, and are of Number One military importance. We are holding them firmly - as the battle for the tip of Tunisia has gone into something of a stalemate.

^R Day before yesterday, the Nazi attack smashed into our fighting front, and drove a wedge into it. But the next day, up came our tanks and the rumbling,

grinding, thundering armored forces hit the enemy so hard, shot him up so much, that during the night he withdrew.

The remainder of today's War Department communique tells of air activity. "Our light bombers and fighters," it says, "gave good support to our troops in the forward areas." And it tells of sweeps made by our P-38 fighters over southern Tunisia. ~~In~~
^{TP}~~these~~ We destroyed two enemy aircraft, and one of our planes is missing. ~~The bulletin gives us some more information about heavy air battles fought~~ ^{day} before yesterday. ~~These show that~~ three more Nazi planes were shot down, while five more of ours were lost.

~~Between December Third and Fifth, twelve enemy planes were destroyed, while fourteen Allied aircraft were lost. The British report seven Axis planes shot down, while the Royal Air Force lost eight.~~

RETAKE

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that {
Last Saturday, the Twelfth United States Air Force destroyed one Nazi plane, while six of ~~its own~~^{ours} were wiped out. Those figures against us were balanced considerably by air fighting on Sunday, when we accounted for four enemy planes, with no loss at all to ourselves. Allied headquarters in North Africa states that right now the Nazis have some degree of superiority in the air - but the whole thing is mighty evenly balanced.

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The picture of the air situation is one of indecisive fighting, with neither ourselves nor the enemy able to gain real supremacy. This version was amplified today in Washington by Lieutenant-General Henry H. Arnold, Commander of the Army Air Forces. He said ~~xx~~ that our planes are now up against a first class air force for the first time in this war. Our P-38 pursuits are battling against the best planes

the Nazis possess - the Focke-Wulf ^{es} ~~Hundred-and-~~
~~ninety~~ and the Messerschmitt ^{s of the latest models,} ~~hundred-and-Nine G.~~

How are we making out against the best Nazi air equipment? The score is about even, said General Arnold.

"At present," he explained, "it is touch and go as to who is the stronger. In some sections we are, in others they are."

General Arnold added that the air battles over Tunisia will decide ~~as to~~ who is to have aviation superiority in the Mediterranean - and possibly in the whole European theatre of war. So what have we to look forward to? The air losses on each side are about even, but we can certainly out-build the Nazis two to one in the production of warplanes.

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SPAIN

Over in Spain the oracle spoke today - "oracle" being, I think, the proper word to describe

Generalissimo Francisco Franco on this particular occasion. The Spanish dictator delivered an address that had been considerably ballyhooed in advance.

~~The situation regarding Spain has grown more tense again.~~ There is a new crop of rumors that the Nazis may try a drive through the Iberian peninsula, to get at Gibraltar. - ~~the idea being that if they could close the Straits leading to the Mediterranean, they could handicap our North African operations. If Hitler should attempt any such counter-blow, the attitude of the Franco Government would be of Number One importance.~~ And the rumor was that the Generalissimo in his big speech today would have important things to say about his attitude.

~~All of which put Franco somewhat in the~~

~~position of an oracle, and he certainly talked like~~
~~one. The world was listening more or less, and trying~~
~~to figure out the meanings.~~ The Delphic oracle of old
 used to utter dark and mysterious things which nobody
 could understand, and Franco today followed the
 Delphic tradition.

For example, he stated: "We ~~xxx~~ Spaniards
 do not belong to a world which is other than European."
 That might seem to be an obvious geographical fact,
 but interpreters were immediately reminded ~~of the fact~~
 that Hitler often uses the term "European world" to
 describe his own phoney new order. So Nazi meanings
 were read into that Franco sentence.

The Generalissimo also denounced Soviet
 Communism - which Franco has been doing for a long
 time. And he denounced liberalism and capitalism.

But that ^{too} is nothing new for Franco.

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On the other hand, he added: "There is no difference between what the masses of people in Germany and in England think." That would seem to be open to dispute, but the reference to both England and Germany is taken to mean that Franco intends to stick to a middle policy - middle of the road, neutrality. In which case - Spain would resist if the Nazis tried to push through the country.

Franco was pure Delphic oracle when he said: "The moment at which great problems will be solved is no longer distant. When the war ends and general demobilization is carried out," he continued, "the time will arrive at which to draw the proper moral from events."

But the old boy was on solid ground in one ~~remarks,~~ ^{said he,} ~~thing that he said,~~ "Truth will prevail!" ~~he declared~~
~~To which we all say, Amen brother, Amen.~~

RUSSIA

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In Russia, the battle is pretty well tied up by the weather. A wild blizzard is sweeping ~~on~~ the Stalingrad front, with cossacks riding through deep snows. Moscow ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ tells how the blizzards are holding up Soviet attacks. Heavy snow handicaps the work of Red Army engineering units who are required to clear away the fields of German land mines and tank traps. Deep snow banks are slowing down the work. So the drive against the Nazi line is impeded, and at the same time the German defense is stiffening ~~across~~ ^{along} the entire front - the Nazis counter-attacking.

PRISONERS

The Government of Switzerland has proposed that both Great Britain and Germany discontinue the practice of shackling prisoners. Switzerland, as a neutral nation, represents both the British and the Nazis in dealing with ^{prisoners} ~~questions~~ of war. ~~prisoners~~.

~~Two months ago, the Berlin charged that the British put chains on ~~xxxxxxx~~ Germans captured in the Dieppe raid. And the Nazis, claiming that they were retaliating, shackled a number of British prisoners. In return, Britain put shackles on a number of German prisoners. For 2 months~~ ~~prisoners. So a number of~~ captives on both sides

have been in chains ~~ever since~~. The Swiss have been trying to do something about this, and today made their proposal - that both sides release prisoners from chains. ~~Switzerland suggested a date for this - this date not being made public right now.~~

London responds that the Swiss proposals will be considered with what London calls - "the utmost sympathy."

JEWS

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Today a group of Jewish leaders presented to President Roosevelt a report on the Nazi treatment of Jews in Europe - and the President was shocked. This was stated by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, upon emerging from the White House. The memorandum submitted to the President told a sordid bloody story of how the Nazis are carrying out Hitler's orders to exterminate the Jews in Europe, and it continued with a record of atrocity.

In London, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster denounced the Nazi persecution of the Jews. He called upon the Christian sense of justice to see that a speedy end is made to the anti-Semitic ~~persecution~~ ^{horror}. Arthur Cardinal Hinsley stated that the Nazis intend to turn Poland into what he called "a vast cemetery for the Jewish population of Europe."

JOBS

President Roosevelt today ~~xxx~~ gave an answer to statements that millions of civilians have soft government jobs. There has been talk about huge numbers of people who work for the government in civilian capacities - the insinuation being that these are having an easy time during the war. The President said that such talk left a wrong impression and gave a false implication. And he proceeded to give figures. ^{TR} How many civilians are employed by the government? Two million ~~and~~ five hundred thousand, said the President. Of these, he declared, more than one million and five hundred thousand are engaged in the actual production of munitions for the Army and Navy. ^{In other words} They ~~are~~ government employed ~~xxxx~~ armament workers.

He ~~said that of the two and a half million~~ civilian federal employees, only ~~twelve per cent work~~

SILVER

The Senate today had another filibuster - this one concerning silver. A couple of weeks ago, a group of Southern Senators filibustered against the bill to abolish poll tax, and talked it to death. In the Senate today, Senator Pat McCarran of Nevada started in with the same tactics to block the bill that would permit the government to sell silver for war use - at fifty cents an ounce. ~~The government has a huge lot of silver, and to put it on the market at fifty cents an ounce would do things to the current price of the while metal - which is a dollar and twenty-nine cents an ounce. Western states producing silver want to keep the price up, and Senator McCarran's State of Nevada is totally western and largely a producer of silver.~~

The Senator began the day by saying: "I am going to talk for a long time to keep this bill from coming up at this session." So he started in on a

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talking marathon. What did he have to say? Nobody seems to know. The Senator spoke in such a low voice you couldn't hear. Having a long oratorical way to go, he was saving his tonsils.^W As he whispered on, the other Senators, one by one, got up and left. Finally only two remained. One was Senator Van Nuys of Indiana. He couldn't leave, because he was presiding in the absence of the Vice-President - just out of luck. Senator Thomas of Oklahoma was busy working on some papers at his desk, (quite oblivious as the gentleman from Nevada kept making movements with his mouth - and little if any sound came out.)

NYLONS

Here is a story for the ladies - it's about Nylons. At Wilmington, Delaware, today, the owners of a drygoods store donated three hundred and sixty-one pairs of Nylon stockings to the Red Cross. They explained the reason in these words:- "in the interest of public safety." Those Nylons were dangerous to have around - a peril to the drygoods store.

Yesterday the store owners made a big mistake. They had acquired six hundred pairs of Nylon stockings and advertised these for sale between the hours of seven and eight P.M. And at seven o'clock sharp the trouble began. Five thousand women stormed ~~to~~ the store to get at the six hundred pairs of Nylons. They just about ripped the place apart, and motorcycle police had to be called to restore order. ^{IX} The ladies were so violent about getting to the Nylon counter, the unfortunate sales girls were swamped and could not

go on selling. So of the six hundred pairs of

stockings, less than half were disposed of. *Too much demand!* And today

the store owners donated the remaining three hundred

and sixty-one pairs to the Red Cross - "in the interest

of public safety," ~~they explained.~~

MELTON

Last night I went to the Metropolitan Opera
~~House~~ debut of an old radio friend of ours, James
Melton - whose mellifluous voice has been heard so much
in broadcast programs and motion pictures. ~~I heard~~ ^{And}
Jimmy ~~Melton~~ ^{did} a brilliant job in Mozart's opera,
"The Magic Flute" - ~~and also~~ ^{After which I} listened to a good story.

Several years ago, as a radio singing star,
^{Yes,}
Melton went to Hollywood to play in a motion picture.
When he got out there, he objected to the plot of the
film feature in which he was to play. He didn't like
the story, said it was not plausible. ~~That~~ ^{was} sort of
thing that could not happen. The screen drama concerned
a young radio tenor who had operatic ambitions - and made
a success at the Metropolitan. That ~~is~~ ^{was} what Jimmy Melton
thought rather ridiculous - couldn't happen. The
Hollywood producers insisted, however, and he went ahead
and appeared in the picture.

The producers were right, and he was wrong, -
as Jimmy Melton himself ^{has now proved} ~~proved last night~~ by doing
the thing he once called impossible. A radio tenor
making a success at the Met. And doing it in
style.

FIRE

58 1/2 Here is a classic about a false fire alarm -
it finally had to happen. At Indianapolis today,
somebody turned in an alarm, and eight fire trucks
converged on a hotel. No sign of a blaze there -
just a false alarm. The firemen were growling angrily
when just then a fire ~~xxx~~ broke out across the street.
A bad blaze in an apartment house - and the firemen,
called by a false alarm, were on the spot to distinguish
the real thing.

59 And now something neither
false nor alarming from
Hugh James.