

STANDARD, TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 1944
SUNOCO

(Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews)

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

An end came today to one of the most historic structures on this earth-the ancient Benedictine Monastery of Monte Cassino. It was built in the Sixth Century by St. Benedictine, who founded the Benedictin Order, and ranks as the oldest monastery in western Europe-the ~~xxx~~ original. Pope Pius the Twelfth had asked both the Nazis and the Allies to spare Monte Cassino, and the British and American commanders did everything they could to comply. If the Germans had let the Monastery alone, nothing would have happened to it. But they turned it into an observation post and a fortress bristling with guns.

So the final step had to be taken. This was preceded by a warning yesterday leaflets dropped on the Monastery, bidding the monks to take shelter from the bombardment that was coming. And today's

ITALY

squadrons of planes bombed the Monastery of Monte Cassino. With the explosion of one bomb, the gleaming blue dome fell to pieces, and others tumbled its walls. After the air bombing, Allied guns poured shells into what remained of the first Monastery of western Europe--which tonight lies in ruins.

During the assault, Nazi troops fled from the building--swarming out. And this was telltale evidence of the necessity of the destruction--proof that the Germans themselves had brought it on, by turning the Monastery into a military fortress. It is not known whether the monks themselves left for some safer place--or if they took refuge in the deep monastic caverns--where they may still be.

On the Casino front in southern Italy, things are relatively quiet. It would appear that the Monastery stronghold of the Nazis had to be reduced, before the Fifth Army advance could go on.

And things were relatively quiet at the bridgehead below Rome. A few German thrusts were

beaten back, but the great German assaults that drove for days have ceased.

With little action reported on the ground, the focus of attention is in the air. The weather has turned clear, skies bright--those traditional Italian skies. And that's all that allied air power has been waiting for--some consistently good weather. So today the burden was placed on the air forces. The next move was theirs--in the battle against the powerful Nazi enemy. The result was that today a sky action established a near record, with British and American pilots flying fifteen hundred sorties.

Rome was bombed. ²⁴ Allied warplanes hit railroad yards in the city, which is only a score of miles from the beachhead. The puppet Fascist government had declared Rome an open city, but this action by the Nazi stooges was a palpable fraud, with the Germans using the Roman railroad centers as all important cogs in their system of communications. Once again, as at Monte Cassino, they were using the reli-

gious sanctity of the place as a shield for their military operation.

FOLLOW ITALY

An interesting detail about the battle of the Beachhead comes in a late story which tells how American warships are collaborating--by bombarding a stretch of the Appian Way near the coast--the ancient Appian way being a most important artery of transportation for the Nazis. We are told that naval guns were able to intervene because of a newly devised method which enable them to act as land artillery.

Ordinarily the naval guns are unable to shoot high enough to lob their shells over the way land batteries do. But some technical genius found that this could be done by elevating the angles of the guns and reducing the charges of powder--less powder enabling the cannon of the warships to lob their shells over--almost like mortars.

MUSSOLINI

Here is word about a matter that has not been too clear--the question of Mussolini's part in the execution of his son-in-law, Count Ciano. Today the one time Black Shirt Dictator of all Italy assumed full responsibility. He disclosed that it was his own decision that sent Italy's former Foreign Minister before the firing squad, and he defended his action in the matter.

He was interviewed by a Japanese newspaperman who came out flat and asked Mussolini how he could have sent his own son-in-law to doom. Whereupon the fallen Duce proceeded to give an outline of what Ciano had done, accusing him of treason to a lot of things, including what Mussolini called "our scared alliance with Germany and Japan."

And right here he made one interesting statement. He said that Ciano was responsible for the fact that the Italian fleet passed into the hands of the Allies.

And with this the discredited Dictator gave

MUSSOLINI

himself a Japanese palm of honor, likening himself to the Samurai. "These acts of Ciano," said Mussolini "obliged me to act like a true Samurai in placing honor before all else."

A world of opprobrium has been heaped upon the disgraced despot, and now he is also a Samurai.

AIR WAR

Today American and British planes gave an explosive answer to German boasting about the fortifications the enemy has built against a second front invasion. Marshal von Rundstedt, the German Commander for Western Europe, did some big talking about what the Nazis call- "the Atlantic Wall." He said it was impregnable, couldn't be forced-- bomb-proof, assault-proof.

Well, today Allied air fleets flew to see how bombproof it really was. All day long American and British planes, bombers heavy, medium and light, hurled tons of high explosive upon the Atlantic wall

BLOCKADE

It was stated in Washington today that the British closing of the Bay of Biscay amounts to a tightening of the blockade against Nazi Germany. It is aimed particularly at German blockade runners--so stated Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox.

At the same time, the word from London speaks of the measure as "pre-invasion control." which would indicate that the British naval move has to do with the expected launching of a second front somewhere on the French coast.

By keeping all neutral ships out of the Bay of Biscay the Allies can keep prying eyes from noting things that might be a tip-off to the Nazis.

Tonight's news from Russia concerns what they call the "Cherkassy pocket," that trap in which a great force of Germans was encircled in the bend of the Dnieper. The Germans have been trying desperately to relieve the surrounded army and save it from annihilation, and it would appear that they did make some progress. Moscow states, however, that even though the Germans should succeed in breaking through the ring of encirclement, they won't rescue any great proportion of the troops in the trap. Because these are rapidly dwindling, under incessant Soviet attack.

SOLOMONS

Tonight a dispatch from Allied headquarters in the Southwestern Pacific tells us that American forces have completed the ~~XXXX~~ conquest of the Solomon Islands. This sounds more dramatic than it really is -- because the Solomons have been ~~xxx~~ virtually conquered for some time -- ~~xx~~ after the campaign that began with Guadalcanal a year and a half ago. However, the Solomons are a numerous group of islands, and some small ones still remain to be occupied. Over the weekend Rook Island was taken -- without resistance. And tonight the announcement is made that the Green Islands have been seized -- the Green Islands being north of Bougainville. Again there was no resistance -- in an operation which is summarized by tonight's communique from General Marshall's headquarters, in the following words:

"For all strategic military purposes," says the communique, "this completes the campaign for the Solomons."

The new occupation isolates ~~many~~ ^{sundry} Jap

garrisons such as the one on Bougainville. But

they, apparently, don't count any. Because the

official dispatch states: "Starvation and disease

render the Japanese positions hopeless, and their

fate is sealed." pilots who have encountered the Tojo,

say it is heavily armed, with formidable cannon in the

wings and two guns firing through the propeller. They

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And the American pilots give one final detail.

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but, how does it behave when hit by American fire? "It

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Word from China tells us about a new type of Japanese fighter plane, which is described as an improvement over the regular Zero. This new one is named after the big war lord in Tokyo, and is called - "the Tojo Fighter."

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ARGENTINA

We have a report tonight of a shake-up in the ~~governmen~~ government of Argentina. The neighboring republic of Uruguay has word that three leading members of the Argentine Cabinet have resigned-and the rumor connects this with the sinking of an Argentine ship off Trinidad--sent to the bottom by a Nazi submarine. This has created high indignation at Buenos Aires, and ~~some~~ some members of the Cabinet net of President Ramirez are said to be urging a declaration of war.

FOLLOW ARGENTINA

Today The latest tonight is another dispatch from Uruguay which states that an attempt to take Argentina into the war was foiled by younger officers of the Argentine army. The ruling group in Buenos Aires is being called a "Government of Colonels," and some of these are said to have been in favor of a declaration of war against the Axis. But a powerful group of younger officers, less than Colonels, are said to have held a series of meetings and forced the Colonels to refrain from a declaration of war.

Today at Livonia, New York, Mrs. William I. Vosler, told of letters that she has received recently from her son, a technical sargeant who lies wounded at an air base hospital in England. Writing home, he said ~~that~~ with humble discontent: "I really don't feel that I've done much to win this war." He told of this and that, but never mentioned a word about the brave thing that he had done. ~~He didn't say that his eyes had been injured but his parents could make a guess because a nurse passed him letters for him.~~ So there was a flash of surprise at the home in Livonia, New York today, when the news was brought that Technical Sargeant Forrest L. Vosler had been recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor.

His father, an insurance salesman, voiced his ~~own~~ own astonishment, and then added this significant statement: "He always told us," said the father, "that he

wanted to be thrown out of his plane if he was seriously wounded." And that's the key to the story.

Over Nazi Germany on a bombing job, a Flying Fortress was badly shot up and disabled, and Nazi fighters closed in for the kill. Sargeant Vosler, the radio operator, was wounded when a shell burst in his cubicle. His legs were riddled with shell fragments, but he crawled to a gun, and blazed away at the enemy fighters. Then a twenty millimeter shell burst straight ~~in~~ front of his face - and he was blinded. The Fortress was so badly damaged that it was sinking toward the Channel. Others of the crew began to throw equipment overboard, everything they could - to lighten the plane. And there was Sargeant Vosler, who had always said he wanted to be thrown overboard if he was badly injured - the sargeant with his hundred and seventy-five pounds of weight. First he groped to his radio set and, blinded as he was, felt

around and sent out distress signals. Then he crawled to the top turret gunner and his pal and begged:

"I'm hit badly and no use to you now. Throw me out," he pleaded, "It will save a hundred and seventy-five pounds - and maybe get you back to England."

The top turret gunner, in refusing, spoke soothingly - and in a brief time the Fortress hit the Channel. They were all able to get out, including the blinded sargeant, who thereupon climaxed the day of courage by saving the life of the tail gunner, who was badly wounded - holding him up until rescue came.

At the air base hospital today, the doctors said there up no hope for Sargeant Vosler's left eye - but they think they can save the sight of the right eye. And his superior officers have recommended the Congressional Medal of Honor.

And now ~~Hugh James~~
Roger Brust