

L.T. - SUNOCO. WEDNESDAY, NOV. 18, 1942.

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

Marshall Petain has made British-Hating ~~Hit~~
Hitler-Loving Pierre Laval the virtual head of the
French state. He today signed a special amendment to
the French constitution naming the swarthy little
Pro-Nazi as his presumptive successor. He also
invested Laval with full powers, which makes him the
de facto head of the French government.

AFRICA

The story of the Battle for Tunis today is one of suspense. On the one hand, the British and Americans have captured bases deep in Tunisia. The first vanguard action has been fought between ground troops of the Allies and the forces of the Axis. British General Anderson reports that his men threw back the Germans and Italians.

British paratroops seized one important airdrome and thousands of French North African soldiers joined the Americans and the British. So the men of the three great Allied Nations of the last war are again fighting side by side.

The Germans and Italians have an unknown number of troops in Tunisia. Against them are more than a hundred thousand of ours. The British First Army in North Africa pushing from the west numbers a hundred and fifty thousand. How many Americans there are, we

don't know. And the French number some thousands. But the Germans and Italians are in a strong position, and evidently in full control of the strong naval and air base at Bizerte. Also the fort that occupies the site of the ancient city of Carthage, controlling the narrow entrance to the harbor of Tunis. General Anderson is advancing upon the northern coastal area of Tunisia with three columns on a sixty mile front. A fourth spearhead struck toward the Gulf of Gabes, due south of Tunisia. The purpose of that movement is to cut off the line of supply from Tripoli to the Axis troops in Tunis, also its possible line of retreat.

Both British and American paratroops are seizing one airdrome after another throughout Tunisia. And our paratroopers are scouting the Axis positions and reporting their lines and dispositions by field radio.

One positive report brings word that the

United States air force under Brigadier-General Doolittle is seizing air bases with amazing speed. Which means that our Fliers and the R.A.F. will be in a position to hold what amounts to an umbrella of fighting planes over the advancing British and American armies.

Another Allied column is advancing north from Lake Chad to cut off Rommel. Lake Chad, way down in Equatorial Africa, thirteen hundred miles to the south of Tripoli - across the vast Sahara. And this is one of the most dramatic and hazardous ventures of this immense African campaign. The thirteen hundred miles which separate Lake Chad from Tripoli are mostly over the trackless Sahara. And it is presumed this column consists of Americans and Fighting French.

The latest reports of the parachute attacks

on Tunisian airdromes are described as the largest operations ever undertaken by air borne units, even ~~larger~~ larger than the spectacular attack the Germans made on Crete in Nineteen Forty.

And a communique from Allied headquarters announces that the war at sea against the submarines of the Axis powers is being waged with considerable success. That means, the Allies are having better luck protecting their convoys and destroying U-boats.

EGYPT

On the Eastern Arm of the African front, Field Marshal Rommel will most probably make his last stand at El Agheila, a strongly prepared defensive position at the head of the Gulf of Sirte. We have heard this before but the prediction was repeated today by General Sir Harold Alexander, Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Army of the Middle East. "Rommel intends to fight there," he said, "because he hopes that if he can maintain his line at El Agheila it will result in a stalemate." Alexander added that Rommel is doing his utmost to get reinforcements by sea and air. El Agheila already has been prepared for defensive positions with minefields and barbed wire.

Three hundred miles west of El Agheila is another reasonably good defense position called Misourata, in Tripolitania, only about a hundred miles east of the city of Tripoli.

Anyhow Rommel has not yet shown any intention of evacuating Africa altogether. But he isn't getting new equipment in any quantity, thanks to the British and American fleets, and the R.A.F. and our fliers. The rapid advance of Allied landing fields is making Rommel's job increasingly more difficult. He may try to evacuate his troops from Tripoli just as the British evacuated Dunkirk. "Which," says General Alexander, "would be an expensive operation."

Alexander also made a new point, an interesting one, concerning Hitler's reserves. He will have to withdraw some of his air force from Russia, with the advance of winter. While last year he was able to give his aviation corps a period of rest and time to prepare and re-equip. Hitler will not be able to do that this winter. He will have to send his air power into Sardinia and Sicily to meet the threat from ~~the~~ North Africa.

CRIPPS

The British are not quite so sanguine about the Battle of North Africa as President Roosevelt was yesterday. Sir Stafford Cripps, leader of the House, warned the Commons today that ~~xxxx~~ there still is a stern, uphill fight ahead of the Allies before the entire area can be conquered. Cripps added the information that the British and Americans are taking what he called "very special measures against U-boats". These measures are both offensive and defensive.

One aspect of the North African campaign still sticks in the craw of the British lawmakers. The statement issued by President Roosevelt describing the acceptance of Admiral Darlan as a temporary expedient, has not satisfied all the members of Parliament. It may be a ruse of war, said a labor member, but the British people cannot understand it. All they understand, he continued, is that they and many Frenchmen believe

Darlan to be a traitor and a Quisling. They do not consider him fit to rule Frenchmen and be a superior officer to such a fine soldier as General Henri Giraud.

The statement issued by President Roosevelt yesterday was read to the Commons by Sir Stafford Cripps. He defended the acceptance of Darlan as justified for military reasons.

Cripps then repeated the threat to Italy, uttered by Prime Minister Churchill last week. The British Lord Privy Seal said: When we establish airfields in North Africa, the Italians will come to realize what their German Allies have suffered in the last few months. The United Nations," he added, "will spare no effort for the continuous bombing of Germany and Italy whenever weather permits." About the battle of the Pacific, Cripps appeared to be quite optimistic.

From information in the possession of the British Government, it appears probable that the Japanese will be unable to hold Buna on the north coast of New Guinea, said he, because of the heavy casualties they have suffered.

ORAN

Some interesting details have just come to light about the capture of Oran. It was greatly helped, we learn, by revolt within the French army. That revolt was led by some of its highest officers. For instance, the acting Commander of one French garrison sent his men into battle with only ~~xxxxx~~ three bullets each. As he expected, they surrendered without a fight. But there were pro-Fascist soldiers and officers in the French North African Army, a number of whom were killed by their own countrymen, who fired upon them instead of firing upon the Americans. Comparatively few resisted. One officer explained: "We had to fight, or else. But lots of us tried to fight as little as possible." For instance, one detachment of American soldiers landed in Oran harbor too soon. They were captured, led to a Zouave barracks, given plenty of good red African wine, and then put on

parole. The bulk of the resistance in practically every part of Africa, was made by the French Navy, which always tends to be anti-British. At first, French sailors were cold and standoffish towards the Americans. But now even they have become friendly.

A number of French troops did fight our men for all they were worth. The Americans had no bloodless parade into Oran. But most of the Frenchmen in Africa were delighted when Admiral Darlan issued the order to cease firing.

SOLOMONS

Japanese propaganda was in a difficult spot today. First of all, it announced that the engagement which just ended in the Solomons has been a decisive Japanese victory. Later, the Japs crawfished and admitted the loss of thirteen vessels.

With our own Navy giving such specific details, the enemy evidently could not keep up the pretense altogether. So they admitted that one battleship, one cruiser, and three destroyers had been sunk, another battleship and seven transports damaged, forty-one planes destroyed or missing.

The truth, as we heard from our own Navy, is that they lost twenty-three warships including transports and cargo ships. But, this is the first time since the war began that they have admitted the loss of a battleship.

ABBEY

For almost nine hundred years, Westminster Abbey has been under the sole control of its clergy. But a week from tomorrow, next Thursday, will be an epochal event in the annals of the Abbey, when it will be turned over to men of the armed forces of the United States for special non-sectarian Thanksgiving Day services, lead by Army Chaplain James L. Blakeney, a Protestant assisted by Roman Catholic and Jewish Chaplains. And this will mean a Roman Catholic clergyman in the Abbey for the first time since the days of Henry the Eighth; and a Jewish divine officiating there for the first time in history. Says the Right Reverend The Dean of Westminster: "This is not an abandonment of our age-old position, it merely is a deviation under an exceptional circumstance."

STANDARD GAGE

Tonight I am in still another city, broadcasting from Poughkeepsie. Here with another crowd of Army and Navy officers, taking part in another presentation of another Army-Navy E award. And this award is of great importance to every man in the world who is fighting with the United Nations. The Army-Navy E pennant today, here in Poughkeepsie, was given to Standard Gage which makes the precision gages that are used everywhere in modern industry. Without them our guns, our cannon, and our torpedoes would not shoot as straight as they do.

Headed by Erik Aldeborg, a Swedish engineer long associated with Johanssen, the Swede who made it possible to deal in metals to hundred of ~~thousands~~ thousands of an inch, yes to millionths of an inch - he and his colleagues here at Standard Gage are now making gages for all of the United Nations. So, Poughkeepsie is the precision capital of the world.

ROOSEVELT

Congress today exhibited a far more independent attitude toward President Roosevelt than it has in the last few years. A couple of weeks ago, Mr. Roosevelt asked for special powers authorizing him to suspend tariff and the immigration laws for the duration of the war. He made it clear in his message that he wanted full and sweeping powers. Both houses of Congress today admitted they were willing to help him out. But Senators as well as Congressmen declined to give him blanket authority. The Ways and Means Committee of the House unanimously agreed that some legislation was necessary. But the Committee also generally agreed that what the Administration wanted is too broad in scope. The Finance Committee of the Senate showed a similar reaction. So - Mr. Roosevelt's new powers, when he gets them, will be specifically described and limited.

DRAFT

The eighteen and nineteen year olds will register during December. President Roosevelt today issued this proclamation, setting the date. Those who became eighteen in July and August, will register during the week beginning December Eleventh and ending December Seventeenth. Those who had their birthdays in September and October, will register the following week. Those who became eighteen in November and December, will show up during the week after Christmas, so that registration will be spread over a period of three weeks, making the job easier for the draft boards. At the same time, it will make it necessary for the boards to put in steady work over what are usually the holidays. This will add a force of at least half a million men to the Army.

General Hershey, Director of Selective Service,

has now issued positive orders to his boards to defer all men where work is essential on farms. Also, those who have been so deferred must obtain permission from their boards, if they want to quit their farm jobs and take up one somewhere else. That applies to men with children as well as to others.

FLYING_FORTRESS

One of today's thrills in the news tells of a battle in the air between a flying fortress and several squadrons of German Focke-Wulf fighters. The lone fortress had been taking part in a raid on the French industrial city of Lille.

The pilot, First Lieutenant Bob Riordan of Houston, Texas, tells about it. "A formation of Focke-Wulf Hundred and Nineties jumped us and came in like hornets," he says. "There must have been thirty of them. When they knocked us out of formation, I knew we were in trouble." Then he continued: "When they slammed two cannon shells into the rudder controls, I told the boys to get ready to bail out."

One cannon shell lacerated the left side of the tail gunner, Staff Sergeant DeJohn of Ainsley, Alabama. But he went on firing his one remaining gun for ten minutes. With only one hand, he brought down

one enemy fighter.

Second Lieutenant George Spellman of Holyoke, Mass., dragged the Sergeant into the radio room. Then the Lieutenant operated the tail gun in a temperature of twenty degrees below zero.

Another member, the co-pilot, added: "You should have seen that gun barrel, it was so hot, it bent."

Meanwhile, the top turret gunner, Staff Sergeant Holloway of Fredericksburg, Virginia, blew another enemy plane to bits.

The lower turret gunner, Staff Sergeant Owens of Roanoke, Virginia, bagged another Nazi fighter. And that made three.

A German shell blew a hole in the fortress's fuselage, as big as a cabbage. Machine gun bullets cut the ammunition belt of the waist

gunner. But he put in a new one and bagged himself another German plane.

By that time one motor of the Flying Fortress was knocked out, one wing tip was rolled up like a sardine can, the rudder controls were half frozen, and one member of the crew badly wounded. But she got home and all six of the crew survived and were decorated. Yes, and they heard some words of praise from King George the Sixth, who said: "I don't see how you did it!" And the King sure said a mouthful.

And now Hugh, what do you say?