

P.L. - Sunoco. Thursday, Feb. 13, 1941.

FAR EAST

The most acute spot in the troubled picture tonight is the Far East. A series of new signs suddenly appeared in the Eastern Asiatic area. United States consular officials have advised Americans to leave ^{Japan and} ~~China~~ Japanese occupied territories. Also Shanghai and other focal points in the crisis. This applies not only to women and children but also to men who are not held by urgent business. Today, the United States diplomats in Tokyo said they were going to renew the insistent advice - to leave.

In Australia, the Dominion government is reacting in such fashion as to suggest urgent danger. The Australian war ~~XXXXXX~~ cabinet has been called for a meeting tomorrow to consider a situation that is officially described as - "of utmost gravity." Similarly, with Dutch officials in the East Indies. They're reported ~~x~~ as taking a grave view of the progress of events, and Dutch shipping has been ordered out of French Indo-China waters - vessels instructed to go to neutral harbors like Manila.

The only obvious evidences that we have to account for all this Far Eastern nervousness concerns movements of the Japanese fleet. Squadrons of the Mikado are maneuvering off the

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coast of Siam, and a large naval force is reported to be concentrating suddenly off French Indo-China. All this in the neighborhood of the Dutch East Indies - those rich islands which are an admitted goal of Japanese ambition. Tokyo has been making demands on the Dutch East Indian government - demands that have been refused.

BALKANS

The Balkan side of the situation ~~was~~^{is} represented by a ^{tonight} report that the Premier and Foreign Minister of Yugoslavia are on their way to confer with Hitler. The earlier stories indicated that the Regent of the Balkan Kingdom, Prince Paul, might also be going - but apparently this isn't true. The meeting, they say, is scheduled to be at Berchtesgaden^d - Hitler's mountain retreat, a place of ill omen. Going to Berchtesgaden sounds bad, especially for the heads of state of a small nation.

A story from Belgrade states the purpose of the trip in these diplomatic words - "the clarification of Yugoslavia's relation~~to~~ the Axis." That of course can mean anything or nothing. Rumor, however, is a little more definite - the clarification has really to do with Yugoslavia's relation to new big German moves in the Balkans. Obviously, the trip of the Yugoslav Premier and Foreign Minister to see Hitler tie in with the huge concentration of Nazi troops in Rumania, German infiltration into ^{Bulgaria,} ~~the Balkans,~~ and the general threat that Hitler may be making ready for a drive in the direction of the Dardanelles. Objective - Greece, or possibly the Suez Canal.

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One story of troop movements today tells of horses -- the Germans sending not masses of motorized mechanism, but large numbers of draught animals. This -- because of the condition of the roads of Rumania in winter. Motorized transport exceedingly difficult - so back to horses. This bears out an assumption based on the weather, winter -- a surmise that no large military operation is to be expected in the Balkan area until Spring.

SPAIN

Much of the sense of impending crises comes from the visits of state that the Spanish leader Franco and his Foreign Minister have been making -- to Mussolini yesterday and to Marshal Petain today. Franco conferring at length with Petain, at the old City of Montpellier, and from French sources we hear that the discussion concerned the balance of power in the Mediterranean. That balance of power has been considerably altered by the victories that British General Wavell has been scoring over the Italians. The mention of Spain. of course, implies -- Gibraltar.

The latest is a report that Franco said - "No". It's a rumor from Vichy, which declares that the Spanish chieftain refused an offer by Mussolini -- an offer of Gibraltar. Of course, the Duce doesn't hold Gibraltar and has lost a good deal of what he formerly held. But the idea was for the Germans to take a crack at the Rock, capture it and turn it over to Spain. Franco is said to have replied that Spain will not enter the war with Great Britain, is in no position to do so -- short of materials, short of food.

In today's discussion with Marshal Petain, the Spanish Generalissimo is reported to have reaffirmed his stand in the matter. And Petain is said to have nodded in agreement on his side.

Neither will he take his disrupted country into the war against Great Britain.

One bit of Spanish news has a sound of times gone by rather than any particular meaning in the present state of actualities. / Former King Alfonso has renounced his rights to the throne of Madrid -- the non-existent throne. The exiled monarch is ill, suffered a heart attack last night. Today he turned over the royal succession, or what's left of it, to his son -- Don Juan. Alfonso, when he quit the throne, never renounced his right to it. His act today is merely in line with that of other exiled dynasties who keep up the pretense of royal succession. A late rumor has come in that the throne may be restored with Don Juan on it.

CONVOY

Berlin gives us a grandiose picture of the convoy attack in the Atlantic - grandiose as much in the implication as in the event. It [']is headline news, when we are told that ~~some~~ Nazi ^Eforces attacked a convoy west of Portugal and sank thirteen ships, totalling some fifty thousand tons - ships loaded with war material for Britain, large vessels, claim the Nazis. A formidable stroke, according to the ^{story,} ~~claim,~~ But Berlin adds that the convoy attack ^{is only} ~~was~~ the beginning of a new system of assault against ~~the~~ British sea lines - a combined offensive of U-boats, warplanes and surface raiders, these acting in conjunction. This type of combined manoeuvre, the German accounts would indicate, sets a pattern for a new phase in the attempt to blockade Britain; and ^{it's} ~~all~~ part of the much expected all-out attack on the embattled island.

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London admits that the big convoy was assailed, but gives no details about possible losses. Such information not being available - because British convoys are ordered to scatter in case of attack. They speed off in all directions, and there must be a considerable lapse of time before isolated vessels are heard from.

LUCKNER

I have a letter here which bears upon a story featured in the news of late - the story that one of the German sea raiders in the south Pacific is commanded by Count von Luckner.

That was of particular interest to me, because in my book, THE SEA DEVIL, ^{years ago} I related the story of Luckner's command of a sailing-ship-raider in the previous war. It was of interest to a host of people in this country, who knew the Count during his lecture appearances far and wide. ^{The recent} ~~The~~ south Pacific story was stated with positive assurance, a survivor of a sunken ship declaring that he had recognized one of the German raiding captains as Count von Luckner.

I had my doubts at the time, and now have definite proof.

I've just received a letter from Count Felix von Luckner, and it comes from Germany, ^{the Count's handwriter.} Let me read you one paragraph:- "Another year has come," writes the old sailor, and he continues in nautical fashion:- "May you and all your beloved ones sail happy in the New Year and still more happy out of it. And may it not be too far distant till we meet again."

Then Count Luckner tells what he is doing in these days

of war, himself and his wife Ingebord. "I spend most of my time at present with hunting in the great forests of the Hartz", he says, "and Ingebord and I are living in a log cabin. The snow is so high that we are almost cut off from the outside world. And we feel happy to see nothing but our game, which we are feeding." That's a typical Lucknerism - hunting and feeding the game!

No mention of the war, not a word. The letter is of news value only as evidence that Count Felix von Luckner, whom so many thousands of Americans know, is not in command of a sea raider in the south Pacific. ~~TP~~ ^{TP} In a cabin in the mountains — out of things.

LEND-LEASE

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee today okayed the Lend-Lease Bill. The vote was fifteen to eight. One Republican voted for the administration measure, and ^{two}~~several~~ Democrats voted against it. The Committee okay was expected, and therefore is not of such acute interest. Attention focuses on the principal amendment that was put into the bill, as approved by the Committee. This amendment places a limit on the amount of armament that President Roosevelt is permitted to lend or lease or give to Great Britain - or any other nation for that matter. The limit is in terms of money - one billion three hundred million dollars. The President is permitted to transfer armament to that value - and no more. Not without the further consent of Congress.

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This amendment sounds something like the one which the lower House put into the bill. That too was a limit, and the figure was the same - one billion three hundred million. The lower House said the President couldn't transfer any more armament than that out of stocks for which money has already been put up. ^{There would} ~~They'd~~ be no limit to what he could give out of war materials to be paid for by future appropriations. Today's

Senate amendment, however, makes the limit apply to everything, present and future. In order to transfer any more, the President would have to go to Congress for authorization.

DESTROYERS

Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox had a long conference with President Roosevelt today - and the conversation must have been exceedingly interesting. Of course it had to do with the Knox-Willkie dispute about transferring United States destroyers to Great Britain. The recent Republican candidate ^{making} ~~made~~ the proposal to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee - that we should lend or lease to Britain five or ten destroyers a month. The Secretary of the Navy ^{coming} ~~came~~ back with a declaration that the United States fleet could not spare any more destroyers, ~~it~~ needs all it has; ~~with~~ Willkie countering ~~back~~ with a reference to - "high authority", saying that he had been told by a high authority that more destroyers could be made available to Britain. It was assumed, of course, that he had this from the President. If so, ^{it} ~~he~~ implied a contradiction between the White House and the Navy Department - between the President and the Secretary. ~~It wasn't hard to guess that the opinion expressed by Secretary Knox was derived from the admirals and commander of the fleet.~~ The situation was beguiling, and today the Secretary went to the White House for a talk with the President. When he emerged he

admitted - yes, the conference concerned what he called - "the destroyer question."

What transpired? Has the Secretary changed his mind?

A newspaperman put the question ⁱⁿ the following formal fashion:

"May we assume," he asked, "that you still believe that from five to ten destroyers a month could not be sent to England in line with our own defense program?"

To which Secretary Knox replied:- "I have not changed my opinion."

The newspaperman continued:- "Has the President made any decision in the matter?"

To which ~~he~~ the Secretary responded:- "Ask the President."

"Has any decision been made?" the inquirer persisted.

And once again the response was:- "Ask the President."

Well — here's what we
~~Yes, it must have been an interesting conversation, if~~
get from the White House: —
~~we could only have been there and heard it.~~

ADD D DESTROYERS

~~Here's the latest. A White House~~ ^Q statement that the president

is keenly aware of the destroyer situation. These words are used:-

"Thoroughly informed concerning the question of British destroyer needs." White House Secretary Steve Early gave out the statement

and ~~tonight~~ denied that there was any controversy between the

president, his Secretary of State and Wendell Willkie. The White

House Secretary indicated that no decision has been made. The question

of destroyers

will be brought up for study from time to time before it is decided.

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COHEN

It was confirmed today that one of the most talked of insiders in Washington is going to London with the new Ambassador. The envoy is the former ^{Republican} New Hampshire Governor, John Winant. The much talked of insider is Ben Cohen, of Corcoran & Cohen.

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All through the New Deal, those two ^{C. & C.,} were reputed to have the inside track at the White House, advisors, idea men. Anti-New Dealers didn't like the team of Corcoran and Cohen, and used such terms as - "backstairs" and "behind the scenes." Then in the last day or two came the report that Ben Cohen had been assigned by the President to a post with the ~~New Hampshire~~ new Ambassador to London. This today was confirmed by Secretary of the Interior Ickes. Cohen has taken a leave of absence from his job on the defense power policy committee. He'll be gone for two or three months, said Secretary Ickes today. There are reports that Ben Cohen will be legal advisor to Ambassador Winant, but ~~Secretary~~ Ickes stated he didn't know exactly what duties would be undertaken by the member of the team of Corcoran and Cohen.

GREEKS

Today an interesting idea was propounded for Greek war relief. A luncheon was given by Spyros Skouras, an important motion picture theatre executive. He's the Director of Greek War Relief in this country. Skouras asked a group of commentators to partake of his hospitality and give their advice for speeding up the drive to raise funds in behalf of the small nation which has made that surprising fight. One commenatator spoke up with a brilliant suggestion. Elmer Davis pointed out that in this country there is one prominent Grecian phenomenon, in the colleges -- Greek letter societies. So why not list Phi Beta Kappa, Kappa Sig, Beta Theta Pi, Pi Phi and the sweethearts of Sigma Chi in behalf of the historic land which produced that alpha bet? After all, the Greek letter societies are an evidence of the cultural tie between ourselves and Greece -- the universal tie of western civilization. So Elmer Davis, advised Spyros Skouras to appeal to the Greek letter societies, to join up for the relief of Greece, which needs aid so bady -- in its new Marathon and Thermopylae.

At the luncheon today, Spyros Skouras, the ardent Greek, got off a neat one when he read a list of medical supplies for

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which the Greek army is in the greatest need. He went down the list of medical terminology, and then broke off, saying with a grin - "And a lot more Greek and Latin words ^{that} ~~which~~ I can't pronounce."

He seemed to have the most trouble with the Greek names!

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And now Hugh a little Greek
from you.