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The clash of sky and sea power in the Mediterranean now turns out to have been a pitched battle between planes and ships -- the war's Number One engagement thus far between the rival elements of air and water. For several days Italian and German accounts have been drifting in. Today confirmation from the London Admiralty -- a recital vivid and brief. The action is described as in two parts.

"Our naval forces," London relates, "have been operating in the central Mediterranean, covering the passage of convoys. On the morning of January Tenth in the Sicilian Channel," says the Admiralty, "two Italian destroyers were encountered. One of these, of the Spica class, was sunk, but the other managed to escape."

To this we can add that the Spica class of Fascist destroyers are small craft -- <sup>of</sup> six hundred and thirty-eight tons. "Later," the Admiralty Bulletin goes on, "HMS Gallant was damaged by a mine or torpoedo, but arrived in harbor." Reference to ~~the~~ ship lists informs us that the Gallant is a destroyer of a thousand, three-hundred-and-thirty-three tons. <sup>A previous</sup> ~~The~~ story from Rome would seem to indicate that it was torpoedooed by an Italian submarine.

Thus far the clash was on the sea -- between warships.

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Then came the aerial phase, which the Admiralty described <sup>S</sup> as follows: "German and Italian air forces working from Italian air bases and including a number of dive bombers -- made great efforts against our ships during these operations." The use of the ~~was~~ words "great efforts" is illustrated by a reference to last night's story, in which we quoted <sup>McCarthy as</sup> ~~the~~ United Press correspondent <sup>as</sup> telling how Nazi dive bombers operated with the greatest of skill and daring, diving to within one hundred feet of the ships before releasing their bombs. The London Admiralty <sup>says</sup> ~~continues~~: "HMS Illustrious was hit and received some damage and casualties." <sup>TP</sup> We know that HMS Illustrious is a giant aircraft carrier, one of the newest

and most powerful in the world. "One of our cruisers, HMS Southampton," the London story goes on, "was also hit and suffered casualties." HMS Southampton is a cruiser of the newest type. It was an escort to King George and Queen Elizabeth on their trip to Canada and the United States year before last. A crack unit of the British fleet.

The London bulletin concludes, "Twelve enemy aircraft at least were shot down and a further number damaged. The main object of the operations which was escorting a convoy from west to east, was carried out according to plan.

## MAGINOT LINE

It may sound like ancient history but -- there's action on the Maginot Line. Such is the story that we get from Berlin today. What's happening to that world-famous but ill-fated fortification which was to have saved France forever from the peril of invasion? Why are they tearing down the Maginot Line. Tearing it up -- that might be the better expression, for so much of that incredible stronghold is far below the earth. Ripping out the innumerable concrete pill boxes and the tank traps, digging up the tremendous subterranean world of steel and mechanism.

Today's dispatch from Berlin points to the fact that the Maginot Line occupies a lot of land. The surface constructions extending from Switzerland to Belgium make tens of thousands of acres useless for agriculture. So they are eliminating the whole thing, to turn the land back to farming, the land to be distributed among German peasants. Much of the Maginot Line extends through Alsace-Lorraine, which the Nazis right now are trying hard to Germanize -- moving out French elements and moving in Germans. So now the Maginot Line serves to help this purpose -- the land it occupies to be turned over to German peasants. What a twist of bitter irony in that! The celebrated fortification which was to have

guaranteed the security of France turns into an aid to the Nazis in Germanizing the border country.

BILL

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President Roosevelt today used some strong language, and put it on the record as strongly as possible. In a blaze of denunciation he used the words -- "rotten and dastardly". The thing that provoke the presidential ire was the statement by Senator Wheeler of Montana -- he made it in a radio address condemning the President's bill for "All Out Aid to Britain." The Senator characterized the White House Foreign Policy in these bitter words: "A New Deal A. A.A. program -- plowing under every fourth American boy."

Today in his press conference the President spoke of the Wheeler blast as follows: "I regard it as the most dastardly, *unpatriotic* ~~common~~ thing that has ever been said. That really," he continued, "is the rottenest thing that has been said in public life in my generation."

Yes these are strong words. To hammer them home the president resorted to the device of permitting the newspapermen to quote him directly -- which is usually against the press conference rule. He even had the press conference stenographer to read back his notes, so that the reporters could get the

strong words <sup>liberally</sup> -- verbatim. <sup>H</sup> Senator Wheeler, when informed of this, immediately retorted that the president had lost his temper. "I sincerely hope," said he, "that no American boys will be plowed under because of the Administration's war-minded Foreign Policy."

There's some comment about the president's refraining from giving <sup>direct</sup> ~~any~~ acknowledgement to the Wilkie endorsement of the All Out Aid to Britain Bill, with the vast powers it would confer upon the president. There was an indirect thank-you, a statement by a White House secretary, that the president appreciated all the <sup>support the bill</sup> ~~interest he~~ gets, but could not single out any individual for a <sup>e</sup> special appreciation. It's being pointed out that during the political campaign President Roosevelt never once mentioned the name of Willkie - his opponent. Nor does he mention it now.

~~Associates of Willkie say that his endorsement of the President's bill has drawn a big response. Eight hundred telegrams and many telephone calls. All in congratulation - save a few.~~

We're given today what is called some inside dope about the forthcoming Willkie trip to Great Britain. It comes from the

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newspaper called GREENWICH TIME and it quotes Sam Pryor who ~~is~~ <sup>was</sup> Willkie's Eastern Campaign Manager. He is credited with the statement that Willkie is going across the ocean to find out something about Great Britain's war aims. "Mr. Willkie wants to know what is going on," Sam Pryor is quoted as saying. "He wants to make sure in his own mind just where the war is heading." The story is that when he comes back he will tell the nation about what he learned.

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There's some talk <sup>that</sup> ~~about~~ Willkie may testify before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee -- in the hearings concerning the Defense Aid Bill. Chairman ~~Soi~~ Bloom stated today that a whole string of witnesses will be heard -- including opponents of the bill. He added that he himself might sponsor what he called: "one or two amendments." But Chairman ~~Soi~~ Bloom did not specify what these amendments might be.

In the Senate there ~~was~~ some strong denunciation of the bill to lend armament. Senator <sup>C</sup> ~~R~~apper of Kansas referred to what the President said about taking the dollar sign out of Aid to Britain. "the silly old fool dollar sign," were the presidential words.

Senator <sup>C</sup> ~~K~~apper spoke as follows:- "The people of the United States are going to pay a heavy price in blood and sweat and tears and taxes and post-war depression -- if they forget the 'silly old dollar sign' <sup>in</sup> ~~and~~ foreign relations," *said he.*

To this Senator Pepper of Florida responded that the American Foreign Policy could be summed up in four words: "England must not fall." <sup>Democratic</sup> ~~^~~ Senator Pepper, however, spoke in favor of putting a time limit on the vast presidential powers that the bill would confer. He said he <sup>saw no</sup> ~~did not see any~~ objection to limiting those presidential powers to an period of two years.

PLANES

The question of labor <sup>and</sup> ~~in~~ national defense was brought before the Senate Naval Affairs Committee Today. The committee is investigating the lag in armament production, and Glen Martin, whose company manufactures the Martin bomber, was the witness. He stated that it was essential to the Defense Program to establish a six-day week. This would increase military aircraft production from twelve to fifteen percent. Companies now producing a hundred planes a month could turn out a hundred and fifteen. "The six-day week is by all means necessary," he summarized. "It is essential in the emergency."

Glen Martin went still further -- "Draft labor and industry," said he. ~~He put that thought in these words: "I think," he declared, "the government should have the power which would permit it to draft labor and industry."~~ He then made the point that the government already has the right to conscript industry. So what he was thinking about was -- labor. He spoke of union organizers taking advantage of expanding armament production. Or, as he expressed it; "Taking a bite into a bigger and bigger mallow." They should not be allowed to use strikes," said he, "to put the

manufacturer in a jam."

The proceedings today did not make clear just what was meant by the term -- "draft labor". We're still to learn what ideas there may be for conscripting the workers in the interest of national defense and aid to Britain.

We do know, however, that <sup>there is</sup> ~~it's~~ a decided labor angle. You can't sit next to the news wire all day without realizing that vividly -- with the news flashing a series of walk-outs, real or threatened, in armament industries.

## SENATE

The United States Senate today was called upon to solve two difficult problems, questions of thorny perplexity. The Senate failed to solve either of the brain-twisters, and took the easiest way out -- pass them along, pass the buck.

In the case of the Senatorship of West Virginia, the lawmakers referred that obfuscating dilemma to the Committee on Privileges and Elections. Let the committee decide who is West Virginia's Senator and who is not.

It's a case, of course, in which a retiring Governor made a nomination to a Senate vacancy. But the incoming Governor made another nomination. One and one equals two. So today there were two Statesmen demanding that the Senate seat them.

The two contending statesmen offered mighty little elucidation. They didn't get up and argue against each other in forensic fashion. They sat on the sofa at the back of the Senate Chamber -- side by side, chatting chummy. So the Senate refused to seat either of them, and passed the buck along to a Committee.

The second headache was the conflict between Senator McCarren of Nevada and Senator Van Nuys of Indiana as to who's to be chairman of the Judiciary Committee, which is one of the most important.

It's a question of seniority -- length of service, with the seniority based on two factors: How long has the lawmaker been in the Senate? And how long has he been a member of the Judiciary Committee? Well, it happens that both McCarran and Van Nuys became Senators on the same day. Then later on they were appointed members of the Judiciary Committee -- on the same day. Sounds something like the question of seniority in the case of twins.

There are two possible ways out. When the two Senators took the oath of office, McCarran came first -- a few minutes before Van Nuys. That's because the oath was taken in alphabetical order and M comes before V. So he might be considered to have a few minutes margin. And that might make him the Chairman. Again it's something like the case of twins. Sometimes the one born first is considered the elder.

The second way out of the Senatorial dilemma lies in an old precedent concerning the seniority of a state. Indiana became a state before Nevada did, which might be considered as giving the Indiana senator the preference. That would make Van Nuys the Chairman. It's all so intricate that the Democratic Steering Committee is in the Senate today, passed the buck, and appointed a sub-committee of five to figure it all out.

SHOOTING

There was a melodramatic and murderous affair in New York <sup>this afternoon,</sup> today, a blast of gunfire in one of the most crowded areas of the Metropolis. Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street is an elite shopping center, with fashionable stores and towering buildings -- towering indeed -- the Empire State Building, ~~is~~ there, tallest in the world.

Two bandits, two <sup>brother</sup> thugs named Di Stefano, staged a ~~raid~~ hold-up in a building on Thirty-fourth Street just east of Fifth Avenue. The victim, an office manager, refused to turn over a payroll he was carrying. They shot and killed him, and seized the money. Pistol in hand they ran out into the street, and darted into the nearby department <sup>store</sup> of B. Altman and Company. Police, attracted by the commotion, <sup>gave</sup> ~~chased him~~ -- a wild pursuit through one of New York's smart shops. Women shoppers milled in a panic as the two bandits plunged through them -- the police following. The thugs darted out of a side door, ran to a nearby taxicab -- and jumped into it. Menacing the driver with their pistols they told him to step on it. <sup>H</sup> But he couldn't ~~xxx~~ step on it very much in the thick traffic of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-fourth Street.

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He could make little headway, and they jumped out. The police were close behind. Policeman Edward Marr opened fire. One of the bandits dropped. The policeman seized the pistol from his hand and pinned him to the sidewalk -- his foot on the neck of the criminal. Then occurred a terrifying twist. The prostrate crook got one hand into another pocket, pulled out another gun, and firing upward shot the policeman dead. Then he tried to struggle away, blazing with his pistol. He hit the taxicab driver who had driven him, also a guard of an adjacent bank -- wounding them both. Other policemen jumped him, beat him to the pavement, and disarmed him.

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Meanwhile the second bandit was causing <sup>another</sup> a scene of wild pandemonium. He darted into a Woolworth Five and Ten ~~Cent~~ store -- crowded with women. <sup>Q</sup> The policeman close behind, ~~xx~~ caught him, and there was a wild battle through the Five and Ten -- wrestling and struggling. There ~~was~~ <sup>a</sup> screaming stampede of women, until the policeman finally beat the fugitive down with the butt of his revolver. <sup>H</sup> So tonight, after all the excitement, <sup>wounded and battered</sup> there are two <sup>injured</sup> ~~injured~~ murderers in jail -- awaiting the process of the law, justice and doom. <sup>And now Hugh James,</sup>

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