

L.T. - SUNOCO. THURSDAY, FEB. 19, 1942

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

In Burma, the Japs have crashed through - they've broken the British defense line along the Bilin River. This is stated tonight in an official communique from the Burmese capital, Rangoon. Late news, just off the wire, discloses that the empire forces are making a new withdrawal -- with the enemy pressing forward. They are now within forty-five miles of an all-important railroad junction to the north of Rangoon.

Today's British withdrawal followed a savage two-day battle -- a climax of fighting. The empire forces counter-attacked fiercely to stem the Jap drive -- slow it down. And American volunteer air forces roared into action as the battle swirled. Hitherto, those American volunteers, originally assigned to defend the Burma Road to China, have been raiding

Jap communications behind the lines, but today they were thrown into the main conflict to knock out enemy dive bombers.

The extent of the Japanese threat is indicated by a dispatch which tells us that the military authorities in Burma have decided to mine the approaches to Rangoon.

They're planting mines in Rangoon harbor in such fashion the Japs won't be able to attack it by sea. But at the same time the British won't be able to use it. This means that they are abandoning Rangoon as a source of entrance or supplies to China along the Burma Road. That same Burma Road is so gravely menaced now, that attention is focused on other routes of supplies for China -- a road from India via Assam, for example.

One bright spot is to be seen in Japanese controlled Thailand, next door to Burma. There Chinese forces have driven across the frontier and have defeated a force of Siamese soldiers -- hurling

them back for a long retreat. This may be of large strategic importance, because a Chinese drive into Thailand would threaten Japanese communications with Burma.

INDIES

A late army bulletin from Washington tells of a big air battle over Java, and American warplanes were in the thick of it. It was the largest Indonesian sky engagement in which our air fighters have taken part thus far. We had more planes in it than in any other -- sixteen.

But they were heavily outnumbered. Twenty-five Japanese warplanes roared to bombard Soerabaja, the only naval and air base that the United Nations have left in the Southwestern Pacific. Our sixteen planes attacked the twenty-five and shot down six. One of our embattled aircraft was hit, disabled, forced down. The pilot came to earth safely with his parachute.

And there's news about American ground troops in Java -- belated news. They've been there for some time apparently, covered by military secrecy. We've known all along, of course, that American warplanes were in action in the Dutch East Indies, but we didn't

know about the presence of regular land-fighting soldiers. Today's dispatch from Batavia indicates that they arrived on the island of Java as long as six or seven weeks ago. Not many, the authorities indicate -- a relatively small body of troops.

The Indonesian war news tells of air attacks on Java and sharp fighting in Sumatra. Japanese bombers struck once again at air fields on the great and rich island that now is the last great stronghold of the United nations in the archipelago.

In Sumatra, Dutch forces are reported to be fighting stubbornly to keep the Japs from taking the extreme southern tip -- which is just across ~~the~~ from Java, separated only by the narrow straits of Sunda -- and that wild volcano of Krakotoa.

Batavia today gave us a summary of the damage inflicted on the enemy sea forces by the briskly fighting Dutch and American ~~see~~ and air units. A hundred and eighty two Jap vessle hit -- a hundred and nine of them known to have been ~~xxixkx~~ sunk.

All classes of vessels are listed -- including two battleships sent to the bottom and two damaged; cruisers, destroyers, aircraft carriers and a huge lot of transports -- they all add up to a Japanese casualty list of a hundred and eighty-two ships.

AUSTRALIA

Port Darwin in North Australia, bombed today bombed twice, in fact. The hostile sky fleet came from Japanese aircraft carriers off the coast apparently. A hundre enemy bombers strongly protected by fighters, struck at the strategic port on the north coast of the southern continent. Four Jap bombers were shot down.

The attack caused a good deal of havoc. "The damage to property was considerable," sates the Australian Prime Minister, and he adds: "The Government regards the attacks as most grave." He went on to say that a severe blow had been struck - the first enemy assault against the mainland of the continent of Australia.

PHILIPPINES

Tonight's late Navy bulletin tells of an undersea blow struck by an American submarine far across the Pacific. It happened in the EastChina Sea, deep in the oceanic area controlled by the enemy. One of our submarines torpedoed and sank a five thousand ton cargo ship -- one of those supply vessels on which the Japs must depend for running their far-flung campaign.

-----0-----

From the Philippines there's an ominous hush. The silence is in the news over here, but not in the sound of battle over there -- just the reverse. The Japs are conducting a tremendous and incessant artillery bombardment, which apparently is a preliminary ~~xx~~ for an all out assault on General MacArthur's lines.

U-BOATS

A large factor of distance enters the latest accounts of enemy submarine activity in the Caribbean area. Today another oil tanker was torpedoed off the island of Aruba. This brings the number up to ten -- that many tankers attacked by U-boats near the Dutch Island. And once again Aruba was bombarded -- or, at least, that would seem to have been the case. Shells landed in the neighborhood of a big oil refinery. Local authorities say that these shells might possibly have emanated from defense guns; but, they think it much more likely they were fired by the enemy.

And there has been enemy submarine activity off British Guiana also. This was disclosed by Army officials at Panama today. They speak of the U-boat campaign in the Caribbean as being on a broad front east of the Panama Canal. And the U-boats no doubt are operating from bases in French Guiana or the French West Indies -- right under our noses.

In Washington, Secretary of War Stimson

stated today that the possibility of U-boats operating in the Caribbean had been foreseen. He recalled what happened during the Spanish-American War, a state of public panic then. There was, what the Secretary called - "a terrific howl for ships for every harbor and port to meet the threat of a Spanish fleet that comprised only four cruisers."

We can't win the war by distributing our fighting units everywhere, said the Secretary. "If we scatter our forces on the defensive," he observed, "it's the surest way to defeat." The formula for victory, he prescribed, is to mass our power and launch an offensive to crush the Axis.

In the meantime, many are asking what about French Guiana and Martinique?

CHURCHILL

London gives us a report that King George has intervened in the political crisis facing the Churchill government. The royal intervention, they say, takes the form of a suggestion that the Prime Minister do something right away to pacify the storm of criticism. In other words -- make the cabinet changes that are being demanded. London informs us that King George told Churchill that he ought to speed up the changes -- have a cabinet shake-up right away.

Churchill is taking the royal advice - so they say. He's about to announce the creation of a small inner cabinet - a special group to direct Britain's part in the world wide conflict. And with this we hear a name that has been mentioned more and more in recent days -- Sir Stafford Cripps. He's the stalwart of the labor party, and until recently was British Ambassador to Moscow. Sir Stafford Cripps, we hear, will have a leading role in the new Churchill war cabinet. He may act as the Prime Minister's

Deputy -- speaking for him in Parliament, whenever necessary.

Other members of the new inner circle are said to be Labor Minister Ernest Bevin and Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden. The guess is that Lord Beaverbrook, Minister of Production, will not have a place in this inner war cabinet. They say that Beaverbrook's chief job will deal with British-American matters and that he will spend most of his time ~~hw~~ between Washington and London.

Proceedings in Parliament today disclosed the fact that Britain is constructing a big air invasion army -- troops to be landed by parachute and transport plane. Also, the British are going in heavily for anti-tank guns -- specializing in the development of the kind of artillery that knocks out the moving fortresses of the blitzkrieg.

And London tonight tells us of new war power on the sea. Two new British battleships are

about ready to be launched -- thirty-five thousand ton giants of the King George the Fifth class. The new Duke of York is that class, and so was the Prince of Wales, which was sunk off Malaya.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Today the Administration suffered its sharpest defeat in Congress since the United States entered the War. The House Ways and Means Committee turned down a White House measure for emergency unemployment relief during the present period of transition.

Tens of thousands of workers are being left without jobs during the time it takes to turn civilian into war industry, changing plants from civilian production to armament. Such workers made temporarily jobless get unemployment benefits from the states in which they live. The President's idea was to give them more than would be provided by the States -- the Federal government to chip in with an added amount.

He suggested that they should receive sixty percent of their normal wages up to a maximum of twenty-four dollars a week. The money to finance this was reckoned at three hundred million dollars, and the President asked Congress for an appropriation ^{of that amount,} _^

The whole thing was opposed by a number of Governors of States. They were afraid that federal aid in this particular case would be only a first step toward the federalizing of the whole business of unemployment compensation. Washington, they thought, might end by taking control from the States. Several Governors appeared at congressional hearings and opposed the three hundred million dollar appropriation, and other governors made local statements in opposition. The result was that the Ways and Means Committee voted against the appropriation -- sixteen to eight.

Administration leaders are annoyed by today's turn-down, and are predicting that within a few months the states now opposing the federal aid plan will be asking the assistance of the federal treasury.

PENSION

The Senate late today voted to repeal the congressional pension law -- the hottest political potato in a long time. There was a lot of parliamentary and legislative tangling during the day, and then the Senate finally voted on the proposal to eliminate the plan that would permit the law makers to qualify for pensions under civil service. A majority of ballots favored the abolition of the pension business. The decision is still tentative, because it is tied up to prospects of what the House of Representatives will do. However, the House probzably will do the same thing that, and after some more complications, there'll be an end to the pension measure which provoked ridicule and indignation all over the country.

WRECK

Back in the old days they sometimes put on a spectacular stunt, a head-on collision of two locomotives -- using a couple of old engines to provide a circus for the spectators.

Today that seme crashing thing occurred, not as a stunt but as an accident -- when two crack passenger trains collided head-on in Florida.

Some twelve miles north of West Palm Beach, the railroad tracks run through a cow pasture and a palmetto grove. There's a siding at the place, an extra set of tracks where a train may pull in to let another train pass by in the opposite direction.

Today, two New York-Miami streamliners were speeding along. The Orange Blossom Special - Southbound. The Sun Queen Northbound. And both were heading into that stretch of cow pasture and Palmetto grove. One of the trains should have turned off into the siding, and waited for the other to pass, but it

didn't. And that's what caused the fireworks.

The two trains collided head-on -- with a tremendous rending and crashing and spouting of fire. Baggage and passenger cars were telescoped, and the oil burning Diesel engines of the locomotives burst into flames with the blaze leaping high.

The astonishing thing is that only one person was killed -- the engineer of one of the trains. The cars were crowded with passengers, and a number of these were injured -- but only a few seriously. You'd think it would have been much worse wouldn't you, Hugh? With streamline trains colliding in that Florida cow pasture and Palmetto grove with locomotives bursting into flames?