

HOW STANIS THE WAR?

1418

Home from the Quebec conference, in good health and high spirits, the Prime Minister returned to Britain to find the war situation most hearteningly transformed. When he went away we were still talking about a bridge head. Now, the Allied armies are massed on the frontier of Germany and in places have marched beyond. This is the position after a long sequence of victories without parallel history. From great areas of occupied territory the Germans have been blasted out.

Liberation was doubly welcome in Vichy, the town that will go down to history as headquarters of the miserable puppet Government of Marshal Petain. French men of the F.F.I. came to restore the self-respect of the town.

Belgium too is free. The House of representatives elected to the office of Regent, the brother of King Leopold, Prince Charles, Count of Flanders. The Prince deputizes for Leopold, King of the Belgians, who is a prisoner in Germany.

One of the prizes of liberation is Marseilles, first port of France and on the scene to estimate the extent of Germany's demolitions were British, French and American Admirals, Admiral Cunningham the British representative. Of high interest were the remains of U Boat pens, still under construction in Marseilles when the Germans fled.

The harbour of Toulon, chief French naval port in the Mediterranean, lay strewn with men-o'-war, the great battleship Strasbourg among them. French naval men scuttled the warships before the Germans moved in.

On the fringe of Boulogne, Canadians found the great coastal guns, much used in the last four years bombarding the Dover area - a welcome capture.

Havre, second port of France has been as thoroughly demolished as Marseilles. Here too the occupying forces found unfinished U Boat pens, though the Germans had some time ago abandoned their faith that submarines would bring victory.

Further west the much damaged naval port of Brest also fell into Allied hands, after a bitter and prolonged siege. The official surrender was carried out in the main square. To an American Colonel the enemy capitulated.

Here in Britain, sharing interests with war news, was the announcement of the Government White Paper on Social Security, its proposals running almost parallel with the Beveridge Report. Subject to Parliamentary sanction the reforms will be adopted as soon as possible after the war.... Also revealed is the surprising fact that Britain strikes oil. Up in good farming country, the location still secret, oil experts made successful borings at a critical time in the U Boat war. More than three hundred wells are now tapping oil. Meeting newsreel and press men on news-release day was Geoffrey Lloyd, Minister of Fuel and Power.

(next) Farmers are compensated for actual damage to their land, but the land owners get no royalty. Oil deposits were vested in the crown ten years ago. Its unlikely that the highly expensive borings here would have paid in peacetime, but now that the Government has shouldered the cost it is possible that the State will eventually get a handsome return. As to output, enough oil is found here to keep a large bomber fleet in the air.

Welcome light was shed by the Prime Minister on the campaign in Burma. Nowhere in the world do soldiers contend with more hardships than the three hundred thousand men of the British 14th Army. Often only by air can supplies reach them in the dense jungle outposts. These men are fighting the largest Japanese Army the Allies have yet encountered on the land. The ten divisions the enemy hurled against us in the hope of conquering India have already lost sixty thousand men killed. That war can be waged at all by white men in this jungled country, and at the height of the monsoon, runs counter to everything written by military experts in the past.

(t) Along water-ways almost dry in summer but swollen now by the monsoon, the Chindits carry their wounded to casualty clearing stations out of gun-range. High up in the claim for the gratitude of the free world, rank the men of the 14th Army, battling nature and the enemy at the same time.

Salute to airborne indeed! The Allied Airborne Army came within an ace complete success in the gallant and daring attempt to establish Dempsey's Divisions of the Rhine. Four of the five landings succeeded. Land forces quickly made contacts, ousting the enemy from land whose water-defence he thought rendered him secure.

(Grave) Typical of these heroic airborne operations was the landing at Grave, where the airborne men were re-inforced by paratroops, joined by the land forces and soon firmly in possession of their objective.

Greatest prize of the airborne operations was the huge bridge over the lower Rhine at Nijmegen. It is close on a mile and a half long, fourteen times longer than the bridge at Arnhem, which we failed to capture.

But to the men who flew to Arnhem goes the greatest honour. Their objective was at first nearly sixty miles away from the spearhead of General Dempsey's Army. In all more than eight thousand men were put down east of the Lek, as the right branch of the Rhine is called in Holland. They landed excellently equipped and with no thought of failure. This record of what they accomplished was made by Army cameramen. A great number of paratroopers joined the glider-borne units. These eight thousand acknowledged no superior fighting men in the world, they very quickly captured positions from which they prevented the enemy reaching the bridge over the Lek. They knew they could hold out till the hour when the land forces expected to join them.

(GV after CU damage) In the early period of their success they took several prisoners, and fighting with the ferocity of a crack division they killed more

on they captured.

After CU dead) Men of the House of Oranje, Dutch Resistance Movement told them the disposition of the German Forces. A country bungalow make a comfortable headquarters, but as the days dragged on the situation changed. Against this relatively small force the enemy mustered every man he could. Help did not come. Every day the perimeter at Arnhem dangerously shrank.

Some supplies got through till the bad weather made flying impossible.

(indicators) At dusk the target indicators told them our bombers were active against the enemy, but still the land troops did not come, and orders to withdraw were sent by General Montgomery to the survivors, and so, after perhaps the most heroic episode of the war, the men of Arnhem retired. But not the eight thousand. About two thousand survived.

(Jeeps) They did not fail. In those nine nightmare days and nights they held the Nazis back. That we today hold the undamaged Nijmegen bridge we owe to the unforgettable sacrifice of the men of Arnhem.