Washington Digest

Allied Command Aided By French Underground

Quarter of Million Men in France Said to Be Ready, Anxious and Able to Bear Arms Against Germans.

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WNU Service, Union Trust Building
Washington, D. C.

"Arms are what we want, arms, arms, arms!"

My companion leaned across the table and pounded it with Gallic fervor, his black eyes flashing.

It was our first meeting for more than a year, and I knew that those eyes fixed on me so earnestly had met the light of the desert sun, for he had fought with the Free French forces under De Gaulle in Africa and had had many an adventure serving his country abroad before he returned for this visit to his temporary home.

"We have a quarter of a million men in the French underground, ready, willing, able and anxious to bear arms—only one out of 20 of those has a single firearm, and that means that while 12 men can harrass the German forces, as they are doing every day and every night, despite their inadequate help from the outside, 228 others must sit, twiddling their thumbs. They are getting very tired of waiting but their ennui would leave them if firearms could be put in their hands. If America will provide them, we will guarantee to get them into France, we will guarantee to transport them and distribute them."

It is very difficult to write of that shadowy world, the European underground, for even the few scraps of information which one might piece together make a dangerous pattern which might bring swift enemy reprisal.

There is no question about the efficiency and the effectiveness of this silent army in France, in all the occupied countries for that matter. There is no question about the fact that through it flows a steady stream of information out of the heart of the enemy territory right back to the Allied high commands.

Today two-thirds of the Creusot factories, once the makers of the famous French 75s, long a vital source of the German arms supply, have been put out of commission by a group of loyal Frenchmen, according to a story that is now current in Washington.

Few Involved

They did it at very little expense, few men were involved, and not a single civilian life was lost. They did it by blowing up a key dam and thus cutting off the electric power from the plant. At least three expensive Allied air raids, long and carefully planned, had failed to destroy this dam.

Not long ago, word came to another group of these French guerrillas that a German munition train was about to move over a certain stretch of track. The bolts were removed and the rails spread. Then came the word that ahead of the munition train was a passenger train. Immediately men were sent out to flag the passenger train and order it to slow down while other men worked feverishly to put back the bolts. The passenger train went on safely. Once more, the bolts were withdrawn and before long, the munition train was a wrecked and smoking mass. No French civilian had been injured.

Less dramatic is the thankless and difficult task which the French National Committee of Liberation has before it, attempting to work out with the provisional assembly, the machinery for administering the areas of France as they are liberated by the Allied armies. The committee must labor in an atmosphere of deliberation and enforced delay which the mood of the underground finds it hard to grasp.

The members of the French National Committee of Liberation, with headquarters in Algiers, have gradually achieved more and more authority under the Allies. There have been many obstacles to overcome and the French, of course, feel that they have not been given the free hand which they desired and deserved. However, within recent weeks, it has been evident that the Allies are changing their ultra-conservative policy and it is now taken for granted that representatives of this committee, and later the provisional assembly, which meets in Africa, and which is made up of persons representing various groups in France, will be given the responsibilities of administering the reoccupied French territory as it is liberated, piece by piece; also of creating the machinery for the final plebescite which will decide the permanent government.

Great Difficulties

The committee itself works under great difficulties. Many of the members are utterly inexperienced in politics and they have responsibilities much greater than a normal governmental body would have. They must serve as an administrative agency, they must serve as a quasi-legislative body, and they must likewise plan regulations governing procedure in the interim between liberation of France and the time when a free election is held.

The recent meeting of the assembly (February 29) began the long and complicated consideration of the plans for the provisional government. One typical plan suggested can now be described in some detail although, of course, it is likely to be modified as a result of the discussion in the coming weeks and months, and in the application thereafter.

It covers, roughly, two phases.

First, is partial liberation.

Just as soon as the Allies have taken over a portion of France and the military organization moves forward, the French committee would be placed in charge under this plan. Immediately municipal officers would be selected, councils for each municipality. When an entire province has been taken over, each municipal council already functioning would select delegates to the assembly now existing in Algiers. There are, at present, about 110 members of this assembly, composed of Frenchmen who have been selected by the underground organizations, by political organizations and by labor and other groups, and have been smuggled into Africa. They would be joined, or perhaps substituted by, the newly elected delegates chosen by the municipal groups of each province. There would be approximately one for each 100,000 inhabitants.

Finally, the day comes when Allied troops march down the Champs Elysees and across the Seine to the Place du Palais Bourbon. Then the ancient building, which housed the chamber of deputies of the Third Republic, will open its doors to the new assembly. By this time, it will probably represent at least two-thirds of France.

Second Step

Now the second step of the plan, now considered, will be taken.

The assembly will have reached, depending on the populations liberated, some 400 members.

Then the provisional government (I use the word "government" in the European sense; we would call it the "cabinet" with an executive head) would be chosen by the assembly. The national committee would cease to be the executive body but would assist the assembly, under this chosen government, to work out the plan for the general election which would decide upon the form of government which France would have.

However, this election could not be held at once for the thousands upon thousands of Frenchmen taken from their homes for forced labor in Germany and elsewhere would have to be repatriated first.

Every attempt is now being made to carry out the preliminary plans for procedures in the spirit, if not exactly in accordance with the letter of the French constitution and law. There are, however, many practical difficulties which arise. Take the question of woman suffrage. Under the French constitution, women are not permitted to vote. However, at present, with most of the men away in the army or as deportees in Germany, the women make up the majority of the population. Therefore, it would be desirable for them to cast the ballot in order to get a true representative opinion of any locality.

Meanwhile, the cry of the loyal Frenchman, in and out of his country, is for arms and ammunition, dynamite and the other tools of sabotage and demolition with which they believe they can vitally disrupt communications and assist the invasion.

BRIEFS . . . *by Baukhage*

There are 1,700,000 rural boys and girls 10 to 21 years old who are now members of 4-H clubs. They live in every county in the United States, Alaska, Hawaii and Puerto Rico.

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The war department has revealed that the army air forces have destroyed 40 per cent of Germany's capacity to produce fighter planes.

Production of prewar models of all-metal domestic ice refrigerators will not be resumed in the near future, the WPB reports, mainly because reversion would involve a long change-over period.

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Civilians in the U. S. will have more frozen vegetables during the next five months, as a result of an expected record high production.

Victory gardens are increasingly important in our wartime food program. In 1942, 15 million victory gardens were planted. In 1943, the call was for 18 million and there were 20 million. They produced about 8 million tons of food—nearly 40 percent of all vegetables grown for fresh consumption in the United States. Using products from victory gardens or commercial markets, American families canned some 4 billion jars of food last year, according to a report from the American Institute of Public Opinion.

Paper and magazines stored away in closets, attics and basements are a fire hazard. Paper is badly needed for many war purposes, including cartons for shipping munitions and clothing to the war fronts.

Even if all waste of food cannot be eliminated, much of it can be prevented. Since the farmer has not let the public down but has produced food at all-time record levels, the public must not let the nation down but must conserve feed more carefully than ever before.

NEWS ITEMS OF AND AROUND STILL POND

Dr. J. Earl Cummings, of Easton, Md., District Supt. of the Peninsula Conference held the 4th Quarterly Conference of the Betterton - Still Pond Charge, in Stil lPond Methodist Church, Sunday afternoon, all reports were excepted and our popular pastor, Rev. Harvey B. Flater and Mrs. Flater, were unanimously invited to return for another year this being their fourth year.

Mrs. James Collins and boys, Donald and Elwin, of Chestertown, spent the week-end with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Elwin Ford.

Fourteen members of the Still Pond Home-Makers Club enjoyed the all day county wide meeting of the clubs in "William Smith Hall" at the College, Chestertown, Tuesday. The days program started at 10:30 Eastern war time, under the direction of our county president Miss Louisa Travers

The blanket winner from the county wide club, for this week is, first club, Mrs. Douglas Whitley, Betterton. Second club, Mrs. Florence Hass Worton.

Mr. Howard Stayton, of Delaware spent Friday as guest of his cousin, Mrs. Florence Watson.

Our church joined the Betterton folks for the Sunday evening services.

Mr. Ralph Copper tended his wife, Mrs. Copper a complete surprise birthday party, Wednesday, The evening was enjoyed by the following guests. The honor guest Mrs. Copper, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Cleaver, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Sutton and Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Anthony all of near Blacks; Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Meeks, Mrs. Durwood Gosman, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, Arcade Besse, Mrs. Dora Meeks and many others, at a late hour refreshserved, after which all wishing Mrs. Copper happy returns, left for home. ments of ice cream and cake was Many nice gifts were received.

Mrs. Dora Meeks had as recent visitors, her sister, Miss Lizzie Scotten and neice, Miss Betty, of Kennedyville.

Mr. and Mrs. Luke Nicholson, and Mrs. Ralph Copper were in Wilmington, Friday.

Mr. and Mrs. J. Leonard Price enjoyed the minstrel show in Millington Thursday evening and report it fine.

The Toyona Sunday School Class held their regular monthly meeting with Miss Louisa Travers. The meeting was preceded by a covered dish luncheon.

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. J. Hepburn, Jr., and daughters, of Delaware were recent week-end guests with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wm. J. Hepburn, Sr.

The Officials of the Still Pond Methodist Church held their regular business meeting at the parsonage, Tuesday evening. Rev. Flater had charge of the meeting.

Mr. and Mrs. Warner Geary were hosts to the members of the Philathea Sunday School Class Wednesday evening.

Mr. Lewis Atwell visited in Baltimore Monday last.

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THE OLD JUDGE SAYS...

"I was just tellin' my brother Fred this morning, Judge...there's never been a time in our lives when we got to live up to that old sayin' 'United we stand, divided we fall' more than we have to today."

"How true that is, Herb. And for the life of me, I can't figure out why, at a time like this, some folks insist on raising a question like prohibition. I can't imagine anything that would tickle our enemies more than to get us folks over here taking sides against each other, arguing about an issue like that. We've got a he-man's job on our hands to win this war and we can't be wasting our minds, our money and our strength fighting about something we tried for nearly 14 years and found couldn't work.

"I say there's a time and a place for everything, and this is no time or place to be doing any fightin' except the kind that's going to win the war."

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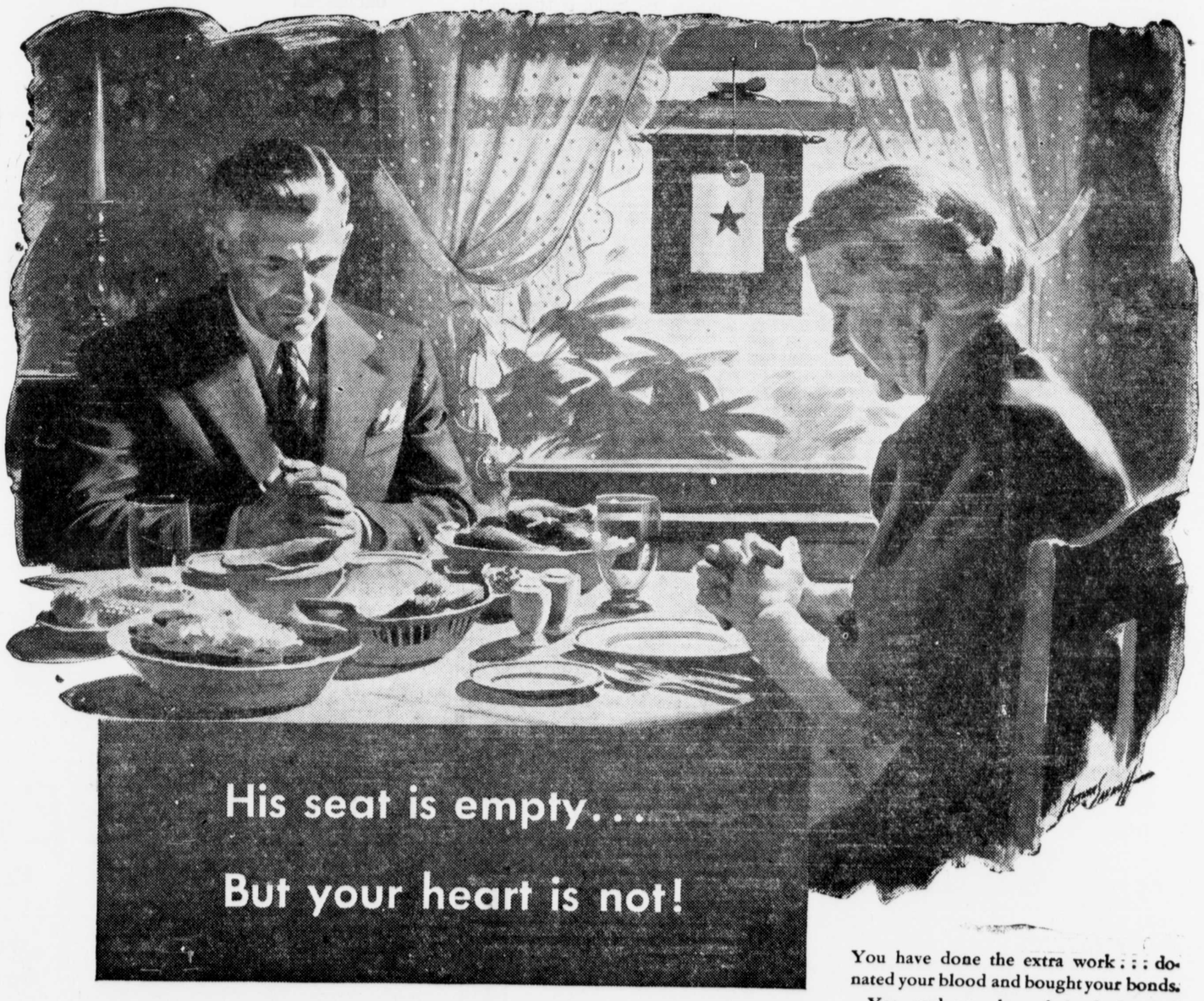

WHEREVER he may be, his country has provided him with the best guns, the best uniforms, the best food that skill and money can produce.

But there are some things that cannot be handed out by Government Issue.

And these are the things he misses most . . . his Dad's friendly counsel, his mother's homey touch. These are the things he needs . . . the things he gets through the Red Cross, *your* Red Cross . . . *his* home away from home.

They seem like little things in print . . . coffee and doughnuts after a long march . . . a bed with real sheets when he is on furlough . . . real American cigarettes and chocolate bars . . . and men and women stationed everywhere, at every tiny outpost . . . to bring him comforts, service and companionship.

Little things?—Perhaps.

But these are the "little" things that count—the things that help your boy to do his man-sized job. These are the things that prove to him—when the going is toughest—that *his* people haven't forgotten him.

For Red Cross is at his side.

* * *

You have given your sons . . . You have done the extra work . . . donated your blood and bought your bonds.

Yes, and you have helped the Red Cross before. Giving to the Red Cross has always been a great proud habit of thirty million American families . . . proud that they *could* give . . . proud of Red Cross that made giving worthwhile.

But this year, when the need is greater than ever, when we serve more than eleven million American boys all over the whole world—this year you will want to give more . . . to give freely to your own Red Cross . . . to your own sons in the service.

This year dig deep and be glad. For wherever he is

GIVE TO THE RED CROSS

The RED CROSS is at his side
and the Red Cross is YOU!

This space contributed by The Transcript

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