

# Free France

Vol. 5 No. 6

March 15, 1944

PUBLISHED BY THE FRENCH PRESS AND  
INFORMATION SERVICE

An Agency of the Committee of National Liberation

501 Madison Avenue, New York 22, N.Y.

Phone PLaza 3-4361



## FRANCE AT WAR

### I - THE SAVOIE FRONT

The progress of the operations started by the militia and German troops, to wipe out the Maquis may be summed up as follows: Unable to force the Maquis to yield, they have been attacking the villages, not only in Haute-Savoie and Savoie, but also in all the surrounding regions, hoping in this way to cut off all means of getting supplies to the "outlaws". The Maquis, on the other hand, in order to protect the peasant population, who are being victimized by the militia, have changed their tactics. Instead of withdrawing when attacked, they are counter attacking in force against the militia and Germans. This has checked the militia's punitive measures against the civilians, but has led the Germans to decide to replace the French police forces with their own men. The following are recent news items published by the neutral press or coming directly from France, through London, and comments in the Vichy papers.

#### Punitive Measures Against the Civilian Population

Peasants returning home to Manche de la Roche sur Foron, found all the station gates barred except one which was guarded by militiamen who searched every passenger. Several of these were prevented from taking the train and forced to stay all night in la Roche. The militia arrested several men who were taken to an unknown destination.

(JOURNAL DE GENEVE, March 3, 1944)

A report which reached London yesterday gives details concerning the operations undertaken in the Savoie region by the militia and directed by Darnand. It shows that action is being pressed more widely against the villagers who are suspected of helping and feeding the "maquisards", than against the resisters themselves. Already several



peasants who refused to supply the Underground with food have been killed. Many farm buildings have been burnt down and whole villages subjected to a veritable reign of terror. This being so, the leaders of Resistance have appealed to the peasants to help the men of the Maquis to escape, but have also ordered the latter to defend the persecuted country people by force of arms.

*(French Information Services, London, March 3, 1944)*

We are informed from France that the Germans are starting a campaign of terror against the civilian population in regions where there are men hiding out in an attempt to escape deportation into Germany. Several times already in the course of recent months, when the Germans failed in their attempts to liquidate the Maquis they revenged themselves upon civilians. For instance, on December 1, 1943, near St Feréol, (Drôme) when they were not able to locate the Maquis who they believed must be scattered over that region, they burnt down a village. These methods of terrorism are to be applied on an ever larger scale from now on.

In Savoie and Haute-Savoie, Germans and militiamen, since they could not wipe out the Maquis, have turned their rage against the civilian population whom they are trying to intimidate by taking hostages from the villages and murdering any inhabitants suspected of providing the rebels with food.

For ten days the Ain department has been filled with scenes of horror. Several thousand soldiers, some of them Germans, others from Germany's satellite countries, who belong to the Wehrmacht, have launched an attack under General Schack's command, supported by planes and heavy artillery, against the Maquis in the Jura mountains. During the first engagement the Resistance lost 14 men, but inflicted heavy losses on the Germans - 32 killed, of whom two were officers, and 69 wounded.

In revenge General Schack's troops have attacked the civilian population of the region with the utmost savagery. According to first reports scores of men and women have been murdered, several hundreds of civilians arrested, and 400 houses burned. Entire villages are in flames.

*(Commissioner of Information, Alger, March 7, 1944)*

The militia discovered 300 tommy guns, and huge quantities of arms. In reprisal they have set fire to 400 houses in the Ain department.

*(A.T.S. Geneva, March 11, 1944)*

## The Maquis Attacks the Militia and German Troops

During one of the first operations against the Maquis at Bonneville, commanded by General Marion, the prefect of the region, 9 policemen,



including two superintendents, were taken prisoners by the Maquis.

(*COURRIER DE GENEVA, March 1, 1944*)

Four police commissioners and 13 other high police officials were murdered in the Haute-Savoie region by French partisans while carrying out a punitive expedition against the Maquis.

(*ALLEHANDA, March 6, 1944*)

Young men of the Maquis attacked a train in the Pymont (Ain) station, in which 50 German railroad experts were travelling on a mission to St. Gingolph. As soon as the train stopped the partisans attacked the Germans with machine guns, and later returned again to the attack. The German losses are not known. The partisans lost three dead, several wounded and a number taken prisoner. German troops supported by the French militia searched the entire region, and the police took severe measures to impose order.

(*JOURNAL DE GENEVE, March 9, 1944*)

At Entremont, on March 9, reserve Mobile Guards were arrested by a Maquis band. Mobile Guards were killed on Thursday night, and 80 hostages belonging to Darnand's forces for the "maintenance of order" were seized. It is reported that militia troops are being sent at the rate of 300 a day into the Haute-Savoie where the situation is again very acute.

(*JOURNAL DE GENEVE, March 13, 1944*)

The Gestapo was most active near the Franco-Swiss frontier. Several persons were thrown into the Annemasse prison. It is reported that these arrests are in reprisal for a British raid over that region. Among those arrested were two priests including the parish priest of Douvaine. Five youths taken after an attack had been made on a German squad on March 12, in the Erse region near Petit Bonnard, and during which Captain Quink was killed, were sentenced to death by a French court-martial. The sentence provoked violent excitement in the Petit Bonnard valley.

(*JOURNAL DE GENEVE, March 13, 1944*)

### Punitive Measures Against the Partisans

In the Court of Appeals at Chambéry, François Nicollier, aged 24, of Allinges, Pierre Boucher, aged 63, of La Rochette, and Francis Pultes of Cruseilles, were sentenced to death for being in possession of arms.

(*PETIT DAUPHINOIS, March 9, 1944*)

Seven terrorists appeared yesterday before the French Military Tribunal at Annecy. Five of them were condemned to death and executed.



a few minutes after the sentence was pronounced. The cases of two others who were not convicted of murder but who are to be retried for complicity will be heard before a competent court.

*(Radio Vichy, March 10, 1944)*

The cellars of the Hotel Savoie and Leman in Thonon have been transformed into prisons where a number of partisans are held.

*(JOURNAL DE GENEVE, March 4, 1944)*

## German Troops Replace the Militia

It is reported from the frontier that an extensive operation has been begun against saboteurs in the Ain department where Darnand's new militia forces have proved incapable of wiping out the Maquis. German troops are led by experienced officers, some of the rank of general, with aircraft and armored cars at their disposal. The fighting in Haute-Savoie becomes fiercer every day.

*(SVENSKA MORGNBLADET, March 9, 1944)*

Some surprise was expressed in Haute-Savoie when a statement was given out by Colonel Lelong saying that the army of Underground terrorists in the mountains were still a source of great danger, but that they had been completely surrounded, and that their food supplies were cut off. As the communiqué seems somewhat contradictory, people are wondering whether it might not have been issued in order to prepare public opinion for a withdrawal of the militia after a month of unpopular activity. We know some of the members of the militia posed as the righters of wrongs, but they have distinguished themselves too often by brutality to gain any support from the people. Some of them are youths, not yet 22 years of age, who cannot be expected to realize that their behavior is not indicative of an understanding of French psychology.

Police activities have in no way quieted the region, but have only added to the existing unrest, despite their avowed friendly intentions to restore calm for the good of the nation.

*(TRIBUNE DE LAUSANNE, March 9, 1944)*

## II - THE ITALIAN FRONT

### General Giraud Visits the French Lines

General Giraud, Commander-in-Chief of the French Forces, recently visited the Italian front for the second time. He inspected the most advanced posts, seeing the French troops in action, and had talks with General Clark, commanding the American Fifth Army, General Juin, commanding the French Expeditionary Corps in Italy, and General Alexander, Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean theatre of operations.

*(Commissioner of Information, Alger, March 4, 1944)*





*Under rigid discipline, Maquis recruits in Haute-Savoie learn to ski and to make the most of their scanty supply of arms.*

