

Free France

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FRANCE AT WAR

I - FIGHT AGAINST MAQUIS BROADENS

Far from being localized in Savoie, operations to suppress underground Resistance are being extended to every region where any Maquis groups have been organized. The Militia and Gestapo work together. In order to terrorize people, and in an attempt to destroy the solidarity existing between the population and the patriots, punitive measures have grown more violent and spectacular. Courts-martial are in session daily, and executions follow within 24 hours. The inhabitants of large cities literally live in a state of permanent terror. Resistance remains unbroken, acts of sabotage continue, and the patriots reply to the executions by reprisals. The regular police and public opinion are becoming more and more outraged by all this horror and persecution. The press of neutral countries and the reports reaching London contain little more than long lists of arrests, executions, and reprisals. The following are a few of the most recent:

Gestapo and Militia Share the Task

The violent campaign begun by Joseph Darnand in Haute-Savoie, at the end of January, was also carried out simultaneously by the Gestapo in all the large cities of France. In Vichy, three Jews were struck down by the German police in broad daylight; arrests of generals and well known people are reported every day. After conversations between Darnand and General Stuelpnagel, the Francs Gardes and the militia have established quarters in twenty permanent centres in large towns of both the northern and southern zones, including Paris. These have been specially created for the French police troops. In Paris the militia will occupy the building which formerly belonged to the communist party.

(French Information Services, London, March 4, 1944)

Vichy Attempts to Starve Maquis

In an attempt to conceal the growing activity of the Maquis, special

measures are being taken to ensure the protection of stores of food supplies. According to an official circular, all prefects are asked (1) to point out warehouses where food supplies are kept, and the plants run by private companies which need to be constantly guarded; (2) in order to ensure an efficient guard, to requisition watchmen — after a careful police investigation of their records — from among the men employed by the companies; (3) to make an application to the local occupation authorities so as to obtain permission to unseal the premises where arms are stored, and to provide these guards with guns.

(French Information Services, London, March 4, 1944)

How the Courts-Martial Function

(French frontier- AFI)— Concerning the functioning of the new courts-martial, Joseph Darnand explained that they can be called on the request of a superintendent of police for each particular case; but the superintendent does not know where the court may meet, nor the names of its members, since these are selected by Darnand himself, and their names are not given out.

(FRANCE, London, March 11, 1944)

One Month's Bag for the Gestapo

During February, 1944, the French police alone arrested several hundred "terrorists", and killed at least 21 in the fighting. French militia courts-martial meted out, from January 25 to the end of February, 47 death sentences which were carried out immediately. In January and February, the Germans court-martialled and shot 66 men.

(ZURICHER ZEITUNG, March 18, 1944)

Arrests and Searches

Radio-Vichy announced on March 9, 1944, that a number of arrests had been made all over France during the preceding 24 hours. For example, in Brittany nine persons were arrested; in the Côte d'Or, 15; and in Marseille, two.

(Radio-Vichy, March 10, 1944)

Mass Arrests

The French police have arrested 110 persons in the northern departments of France alone. The accused are charged with attempting to re-establish a French communist party.

(SVENSKA, March 15, 1944)

According to an official French statement from Dijon, 220 terrorists were arrested between February 11 and March 15, in the province of Burgundy.

(PARISER ZEITUNG, March 18, 1944)

On January 7, about 2 a.m., four Waffen SS. men presented themselves before the gendarmerie at F... (Gironde). "We have come about the V... affair," they said, after gaining entrance. "How many of you are there in the barracks?" The orderly on duty replied, "Five." Orders were given to get all the men together. The gendarmes came downstairs and one of the Waffen SS. asked, "How far have you got with that V... affair?" The staff-sergeant of the gendarmerie explained that the men who had killed V... had not yet been apprehended. The Waffen SS. asked which police department was taking charge of such cases, and the staff-sergeant gave them all the information they asked. Then all the Waffen SS. except one left. The remaining one said, "This business has lasted long enough," made all the gendarmes line up against a wall, and fired a burst of sub-machine-gun fire at them. Two gendarmes were killed, the staff-sergeant and two others were wounded. The Waffen SS. departed, leaving behind a scrap of paper on which he had written, "In memory of V..."

(French Information Services, London, March 4, 1944)

The Gestapo and Darnand's militia have started large-scale round-ups in Paris, and thousands of people are stopped and searched in the streets. Parisians carry brief cases, bags, and parcels in order to delay and confuse the inspectors.

(AFTONBLADET, March 22, 1944)

Disturbances in Clermont-Ferrand Region

Following an attack on the militia in Clermont-Ferrand, curfew was ordered throughout all the communes of the region, and in Clermont-Ferrand, Chamaliers, Royat, and Beaumont from 9 p.m. to 5 a.m. Restaurants, cafés, and bars must close at 7.30 p.m., and theatres, cinemas, and café-concerts are closed until further notice. During curfew hours all traffic is prohibited.

(MONITEUR, March 9, 1944)

Executions

Patriots in Grenoble sent an ultimatum to the Germans demanding that 300 hostages be set at liberty, and threatening large-scale reprisals if their demand was refused. The Nazis refused to comply with the terms of the ultimatum. A few days later the Grenoble barracks blew up killing 220 German officers and soldiers and wounding 500 others. Following this the departmental leaders of the Resistance movements "Combat", "Franc-Tireur", and "Libération" were arrested, and shot by the Germans.

(FRANCE, London, March 3, 1944)

Nine French patriots were executed at Lille after being accused of attacks and sabotage, and 41 patriots were killed in a battle with the police at Périgueux.

(STOCKHOLM TIDNINGEN, March 9, 1944)

In the afternoon of March 2, the Germans hanged 17 labor draft evaders on the Montpellier road at the entrance to Nîmes. These men had been captured in Lassale in the Gard department. Each body had a notice hung on it which said, "Thus end terrorists."

(French Information Services, London, March 11, 1944)

II - THE FIGHTING IN ITALY.

French Artillery Repulse Enemy Attack

Communiqué from Allied General Headquarters: Intense patrol activity is reported on all three fronts (Eighth Army, Interior, and Fifth Army). Battles have developed in the course of which prisoners have been taken. On the main Fifth Army front two powerful enemy patrols were beaten back by French artillery fire.

(L'ECHO D'ALGER, March 13, 1944)

French Repulse Surprise Attack on Colle-Apate

From a military commentator at Allied Headquarters: "On the Fifth Army front, in the course of a single engagement, the Germans were repulsed by French troops, after they had attempted a surprise attack on Colle-Apate, two and a half kilometres to the east of Terelle."

(ECHO D'ALGER, March 14, 1944)

A Regiment Which Has Never Retreated

(Interview with a French soldier wounded on the Italian front and transferred to a hospital in Alger.) "This officer, Lieutenant X, told me how he was wounded. 'The French artillery had prepared our attack by a terrific bombardment; but to deceive the enemy, it had fired on all the lower levels and not on the heights. We marched all night in silence and without lights, carrying ammunition on our backs. We reached Scapoli at six in the morning. It was still dark. We felt our way along, and crept right up to the enemy. I got within 20 yards of them. They were chopping wood. There was a woman with them, an Italian who had thrown one of their sheepskin capes over her shoulders and who was counting on sharing their breakfast.

"At 7 o'clock the signal to attack came through. By 7:15 there were no Heinies left, and we took up our positions on the plain. That is how the San Pietro slope was captured. But once that battle was over we still had plenty of shooting to do. It was never-ending — a queer kind of fighting. Not a day passed without our having to drive off