



French and British troops landing on the island of Elba

European

A Civilian's Story (Account given by a French doctor in a village on the Normandy coast) — "We had taken refuge in a pit at the bottom of the vegetable garden. At four o'clock in the morning we had been driven out of a makeshift shelter, and we were lying huddled close to each other (there were six of us, three men and three women), hoping that things would soon calm down, for the night had been particularly awful. Suddenly, one of our neighbors, who had not been able to leave because of his crippled wife, came over to us, with the sick woman, and shouted: The Americans are here. I saw two of them last night, and when I called to them, they said: 'Vive la France!'"

I can't describe our feelings. We couldn't believe it was true. It all sounded so fantastic. That Americans could land at the Pointe-de-Hoc (a steep, high cliff, which had been transformed into a formidable fortress by two years of labor on defense works) seemed impossible. We were afraid this might be another of the Boches' tricks. However, our neighbor kept insisting that he was right, and we began to feel more hopeful. But we could not stand uncertainty any longer. Cost what it might, we had to know. So, we crept out of our temporary shelter, and set out to see whether we could get in touch with any of the Allied soldiers. That was an exciting moment. How would they treat us? Were our Allies really there? Could we be sure that it was they who were attacking the Boches, and were they still holding out? Perhaps the bullets that we heard whizzing past came from their rifles. We just did not know what to think.

Our first two attempts to contact someone were not successful. The third time we caught sight of four German soldiers hiding in the ditch at the side of the road. They seemed to be retreating. One of them fired at us, a dozen shots at less than 50 yards, but no one was hit. The fourth time we came out, they had put a white rag on the end of a stick, but the firing hadn't stopped. We were so anxious to know how things were going, that we went on for another 30 yards or so along the road. At first, we couldn't tell who they might be, but soon the dim shapes which were advancing behind the hedgerows revealed themselves more clearly, and we knew they were Americans. They had really come! We went mad with joy.

After the first wild excitement, a relative calm gave us time to realize what it all meant. We were filled with quiet happiness; now we were free again. The fetters which had bound us each day more tightly, were now broken. This comforting assurance dominated every other feeling."

(French Information Services, London, June 23, 1944)

II—THE ITALIAN FRONT

The advance of the American Fifth Army on the Livorno road is being slowed down at the approaches to the first peaks of the Apennines; Mount Amiata, the highest peak in this region, is in the hands of the Allies. The occupation of the Isle of Elba, completed in 53 hours by French troops under General Delattre de Tassigny, menaces the retreating German troops with a new landing on their right flank. Along the highway from Rome to Florence, the Fifth Army has got as far as the Lake Trasimeno, and the French troops engaged in this sector are to the north of Castiglione Dorria. North of Perouse, which was occupied on June 20, the British Eighth Army is pushing up the Tiber region, through a mountainous terrain where there are no good roads. The French engaged in this sector are south-east of Lake Trasimeno.

The Liberation of the Isle of Elba

Communique from the National Defense Headquarters — After having played an important part in the successes in Italy, French troops gave another proof of their valor by seizing the Isle of Elba in 53 hours.

The Isle of Elba, which dominates the Piombino canal, represented an airport for the enemy's coastal navigation in the direction of the Italian front, and a

source of iron ore by no means negligible. Immediately following its conquest, the coast of the island had been powerfully fortified by the Germans, and protected by coastal batteries and anti-aircraft guns. Over 40 guns, of more than 75 mm. caliber, had defended the north and south coast line. Mines were laid in the entrance to the bays. The island was occupied by a garrison, recently reinforced, comprising over 3000 men. This garrison, which included 2000 Germans, had received orders to resist to the end.

Detailed Account of the Expedition — The expedition was carried out by French forces, supported by British Commandos, the Royal Navy and the American Air Force. After a diversion made by the Navy north of the island, during the night of June 16-17, the landing troops reached, before the dawn of June 17, the Marina di Campo beach, in the middle of the south coast. They met with a powerfully organized German defense, based on concentrated mortar and rocket artillery fire. Moreover, one of the batteries on the north coast, that of Cap Denfola, which dominated the island diagonally, made it impossible from the very beginning to land any materiel. After two unsuccessful attempts, it was decided to land on the little neighboring beach of Nercio, to the east of the Campo bay. This landing permitted a skillful infiltration across the slopes of the Tambone mountain at the same time as the shock battalion overran the battery of the Campo beachhead. However, the Nercio manoeuvre proved insufficient to break down enemy resistance at Marina Di Campo. Supported by naval artillery, the "Tirailleurs" launched the attack on this fortified beach, which was taken, after a hard engagement, at 4:00 a.m. on June 17. During the night it was possible to unload artillery pieces and vehicles at Marina Di Campo, and with this bridgehead established, operations could develop in three different directions, with the dawn of the next day, June 18. The shock battalion scattered for action in the western part of the island, which it finally took in the course of the same day (June 18). In the center, the Senegalese advanced to the north, on Porto Ferrajo, in spite of difficult terrain, and under violent enemy fire. Towards the end of the morning, they were stopped on the defense line, 2 kilometers south of Porto Ferrajo. However, at 2:00 p.m., with the aid of naval and ground artillery, the French troops pierced this line of defense, and in the evening the capital of the island was in our hands.

End of Operations — On the morning of June 19, the northeast part of the island was, in its turn, completely cleared of the enemy. Operations ended at 10:30, in complete success: 1800 prisoners, two-thirds of whom were Germans, including 35 officers. Over 500 dead and 200 wounded lay on the ground. French and American pursuit plane and bomber groups took part in the operations. The French Navy, in its turn occupied the neighboring islet of Pianosa.

The results obtained are due in a great measure to the tenacity and courage of our troops, and also to the brilliant strategy of the High Command which chose the cover of Nercio as a beachhead, and a spare beach to encircle the key position of Marina Di Campo.

(Commissioner of Information, Alger, June 22, 1944)

Results of Operations on the Isle of Elba — "In the course of mopping-up operations on the Isle of Elba, 48 cannons, over 100 machine guns, thousands of individual weapons and important stocks of provisions and munitions have been taken from the enemy. The enemy's losses are 500 dead and over 2300 prisoners. On the French side they amount to 250 killed and missing. At the conclusion of the operations which have taken place, it is fitting to pay special tribute to the extremely effective participation of the British Navy and the small landing vessels of the American Navy, as well as to the support lent by the American Air Force at the side of the French flight formations."

(Communiqué of the General Staff of National Defense, Alger, June 28, 1944)

With the French in Italy — Excerpts from Carey Longmire, war correspondent of the *New York Post*:

Algiers, June 26 — The man who planned the powerful flanking attack in Italy which started on May 11 and resulted in the cracking of the German lines and the capture of Cassino, is Gen. Alphonse Juin, leader of the French Army Corps in Italy. This is the report given me by U. S. and British officers who said that they considered Gen. Juin one of the greatest military tacticians in the world.

Early this year, the Allies made two supreme efforts to smash the German fortress position at Cassino by almost frontal assaults. Thousands of lives were lost by American, New Zealand and Indian regiments which battered away in the face of the commanding German artillery on the mountains behind the town. Gen. Juin at that time wanted to flank Cassino from the mountains.

Finally, the top Allied commanders agreed to his plan to shift the 8th Army to the Liri Valley, the 5th Army to the coast, and the French to the mountains between. Juin's forces raced through the mountains, catching the Germans by surprise and the flank attack succeeded. Cassino finally fell and now the Germans are falling back north of Rome.

I met Gen. Juin at his field headquarters recently. He is a chunky, mustached, blackhaired man who speaks rapidly between puffs on a cigarette. He wears a black beret bearing the five stars of the highest-ranking French generals. He dresses in an ordinary American GI uniform with black shoulder patches also bearing five stars. He was wounded in World War I and his right arm is almost useless.

He had just finished talking with Gen. Marshall. And the U. S. chief of staff had apparently given him good news about the role of French troops in the Battle of Europe, because Juin was in excellent spirits.

(NEW YORK POST, June 26, 1944)