

II—THE ITALIAN FRONT

In the drive toward Florence the Allies have reached the last line of German defense before the Appenines. After the American 5th Army occupied Livorno, it moved on to Pisa, where minor engagements are still taking place, and from Pisa to Florence which is now under attack. French troops under the command of General Alphonse Juin are moving up the road from Siena to Florence. Part of the British 8th Army moving toward Florence has made important gains despite heavy German counter-attacks. In the central sector the British Army has by-passed the rail center of Arezzo; despite strong enemy assaults they are advancing on the west bank of the Tiber. In the Adriatic sector the British have advanced beyond Ancona. Polish troops were still fighting in the streets of Senigallia on July 31.

(French Press and Information Service, New York, July 31, 1944)

Reports from the Italian Front

After the bitter mountain battles for the capture of Cassino, where for weeks, Germans and Allies struggled in attacks and counterattacks without any apparent tactical results, the offensive of May 11th, the march on Rome, Siena, toward Pisa, Florence, the conquest of Elba were victories that completely changed both the battle front, and the very attitude of our troops. Once again Frenchmen knew the joy of victories which erased the humiliation of France's defeat. They know that the last phase of the war has begun. The reports of French correspondents bear witness to the spirit of these victorious, no longer merely resisting troops. Here are some of these reports:

Lieutenant Jacobsen's Odyssey in Elba (From war correspondent Jean Pontacq) — The Elba campaign lasted only three days, but was full of feats of heroism. Among the many stories I would like to tell, I believe one in particular deserves first place.

When André Diéthelm, Commissioner of War, attended a solemn ceremony near Marina-de-Campo on June 22, one of the five officers who received the Legion of Honor, a Lieutenant, stood out because of the white bandage around his neck.

"Lieutenant Jacobsen, in the name of France, and by virtue of the powers delegated to me, I invest you as Officer of the Legion of Honor."

And everyone heard the citation in which Lieutenant Jacobsen's story was summed up in a few words: landing on Elba June 17th at 1 a.m. he led a surprise attack on a battery at Enfolà, overcoming powerful enemy defenses after gaining, with his men, the foot of a cliff the Germans thought could not be scaled. Despite the fact that the enemy was given an alert, he immediately led his men in attack. They destroyed three 152-mm. guns, two 88's, two 20-mm. machine guns and killed 20 Germans, including two officers. Then Lieutenant Jacobsen succeeded in reembarking his men under can-

non fire and, wounded in the neck, arm and leg, himself remained with one of his noncoms who 'couldn't swim. Finally, taken prisoner by the Germans, he succeeded in escaping before being placed aboard a boat that was to take him to Italy. . . .

(LA MARSEILLAISE, Alger, July 8, 1944)

An Excursion into the Middle Ages (From war correspondent Marcel Chouraqui) — When I entered Siena a few hours after our troops, why did the memory of Bruges come to torment me? . . .

August 15, 1939 . . . as I saw then, the Miracle of the Blood of Christ performed beneath the steeple in "the dead city," yesterday, before the city hall of Siena, I saw the funeral cortege of Italian martyrs for liberty. But whereas at Bruges under cover of religion, under pretext of Flemish nationalism I saw and heard the French Revolution attacked, yesterday on the Piazza del Campo, this great tribute to the victims of the Germans was a festival of liberty, a liberty regained thanks to the French. . . .

Nevertheless Siena remains for me the same dead city as Bruges. The tall 13th-Century palaces, the Cuomo Lombard, the Casa di Santa Caterina, the four story houses have lost none of their impassivity, despite the troops, despite the cheers of the populace. . . .

On entering Siena, not very anxious, of course, to take this war as a tourist, I felt that we had taken a new step. Naples was the east . . . Rome, of course was Rome, eternal Rome. . . . But Siena . . . took us almost instantly toward northern Europe. . . . The guns could thunder nearby, the convoys could round the city to bring new men into battle, Siena was at peace in war, the Middle Ages visited by the internal combustion engine. Our century clumsily honored its past. Our soldiers, respectfully hatless before the wealth of art treasures, were less touching than the ridiculous and enormous posters which proclaimed: "Artistic monument, not subject to military requisition."

(ALGER REPUBLICAIN, Alger, July 11, 1944)

Advancing Northward, They Are Marching Toward France (From war correspondent Marcel Chouraqui) — We can't deny it any longer, we are fighting a different war here. Our soldiers feel it and know it. There have been two main spirits in this campaign, one of south of Rome, the other of north of Rome.

Everything bespeaks it, everyone talks of it: climate, nature, terrain, inhabitants, fighters. Sitting around, the men talk about that last winter at Scappoli: "This isn't as dangerous as Scappoli. Remember the bridgehead?"

For we French had our bridgehead, in a loop of the Garigliano. Let's talk a bit about that bridgehead, kept secret for a long time, but tremendously important in the history of this drive to Rome which carried us 250 kilometers north of the Italian capital and is not yet through! . . .

Liberate France! That was the simple but poignant objective each soldier of the French Expeditionary Corps

set for himself when he took up his arms again. That task falls on others today, but the duty remains the same. And who knows if we too may not soon be in France. All roads lead to Rome, they say. Many roads can lead to Paris.

The German retreat in Italy is so rapid that many think it not unlikely that the first Frenchmen to set foot once more in Europe, along with the first Frenchmen to join General de Gaulle, may enter France by land. . . . For the moment our duty is simple: the objective is to the north, always to the north. Yesterday we took Siena. Perhaps tomorrow we shall take Florence.

(ALGER REPUBLICAIN, July 15, 1944)

The American 88th Division and the Goums (By Lieutenant Eve Curie of the "Volontaires françaises." French Front, Italy, July 18, Delayed): I am back from a visit to our American neighbors of the 88th Division, which has been fighting for so many weeks on the left flank of the French Corps. From French Headquarters to the American sector the distance is not great. . . . We reached the command post of the regiment installed a few hours before. . . . With the colonel and the younger members of his staff was Major General John E. Sloan himself. . . . At once he greeted me charmingly in his quick animated manner . . . before leaving the room he added: "Go and see my regimental commanders. . . . Ask them what they think of the French."

A few more miles on the road and we stopped at a house in another Italian village. In a dilapidated room, the command post of the regiment, five men in fatigue uniforms carry on a quiet, attentive conversation. One of them who bends over a map is Lieutenant Colonel Joseph B. Crawford, the youngest Colonel of this division. . . . His regiment is the one which protected the left flank of the French Corps from May 21 to May 29 during the difficult progression across Mounts Ausoni and Lepini. In the boldly advanced positions, they had to win together or fail together. They won.

"We have learned many things from the French," said the young Colonel. "For instance, we learned to use artillery power en masse; also how to progress in very rough country and to fight always on the heights." There is not much time however for conversation. . . .

Our jeep covers one more mile. Now we are with another regiment, one that fought alongside the French at the start of the Garigliano offensive. . . . Colonel George C. Fry who was out on reconnaissance, then entered the command post. . . . We heard of Monte Calvo where the battalions were attacked on the flanks, where rations, medical supplies, ammunitions had to be dropped by parachutes. . . . He spoke of the French in direct words indeed.

"Why do I like fighting with the French? I will tell you. Because they are always there. When I am told they will advance up to such and such a line on my right, I just know they will get to that line at the assigned time. I don't have to worry for my own

doughboys. There is nobody I would rather fight with than your people."

It just so happens that I spent the last few days with Moroccan troops and with Tabor's Moroccan Goums — with the very officers and men who fought alongside General Sloan's 88th. It can be said in complete truth that the prodigious march of the 88th from Garigliano to Rome and from Rome to Volterra is something which has filled with respect everybody in the French Expeditionary Corps. Our liaison officers with the 88th keep on mentioning the American outfit as "their division."

(New York HERALD TRIBUNE, July 24, 1944)
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Rome, Our First Victory (Excerpts of a letter from Colonel D. of the French Expeditionary Force) — July 7, 1944 — Since 11 p.m. on May 11, we have made great progress amid such conditions as we could never have hoped for on June 18, 1940. Winning one success after another, we crossed the Garigliano river, made famous by Bayard; then we reached Latium and arrived in Tuscany. What a deep feeling of joy and pride we had when we were allowed to march into Rome! We pushed on to Siena where we were among the very first to receive a deliriously enthusiastic welcome from the friendly crowds who were overjoyed to have at last regained their liberty, and to see our flags flying victorious.

Mass was celebrated in the Cathedral. It was a stirring occasion. We were profoundly moved to hear the cheers which greeted the arrival of our commanding officers, General Juin, General de Larminat and General de Monsabert, and to see the parade of our troops who had been in the midst of the fighting the day before. We could not help thinking of the welcome we would soon receive when we finally set foot again on our native soil.

Moments like these are a consolation and a reward for all the delays, bad luck, and misery we have suffered. I am both happy and proud of the path I have chosen which, up to now, has often appeared so ill-fated. I must confess that I feel a certain satisfaction in having been able to make my modest but wholehearted contribution to the liberation of our country, by sharing the fight against a treacherous and savage enemy.

(French Press and Information Service, New York, July 31, 1944)

A French Medical Unit Honored — General Mark W. Clark awarded a citation to a French Medical unit for the perfect accomplishment of its duty. The following is the text of the citation:

"Medical Unit Number Two is awarded the Fifth Army Badge and Clasp for services rendered during the month of April, 1944. This unit was often faced with grave difficulties and made an unequalled record of invaluable service rendered to the Fifth Army. Its devoted care greatly reduced the suffering of our wounded."

(Commissioner of Information, Alger, July 17, 1944)



French patrol filing through ruined Acquafondata.

Acme Photo

French soldiers with German flag captured at Pontecorvo.

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