

## FRANCE AT WAR



*French Press and Information Service*

*French Armored Unit in Action.*

### I—MILITARY OPERATIONS

*As the war in Europe drew to a close with the crushing of German military strength East, West, North and South, as two major fronts were joined and other junctions were clearly foreshadowed, as rumors of surrender flooded the air waves, the land, sea and air forces of the United Nations continued their daily tasks and battles, sometimes meeting stiff resistance, and sometimes defenses that crumbled readily.*

*To the French First Army, on the left flank of the Allied advance, fell the important task of closing south and east into the heralded German inner redoubt. Fighting in extremely difficult terrain, General Delattre de Tassigny's forces moved through the Black Forest and pressed along the Swiss frontier and into Austria. Among their prizes were the cities of Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and Friedrichshafen.*

*Other land fronts, though less prominent in the overall military picture, were nonetheless important. On the West, the successful reduction of the German Atlantic coast pockets was successfully begun. On the South, French troops attached to the Sixth Army Group moved into Italy toward a junction with the American Fifth Army in the Po valley.*

### *Western Front in Germany*

**Advance in Baden** — (French First Army Communiqué) — In the course of the last twenty-four hours forces of the French First Army operating in the Baden plain considerably enlarged the area of their occupation, thus relieving the danger to Strasbourg, and captured twenty localities, among them Tiergarten, Nesselreid, Oberweier and Allmanseier.

In the Black Forest, French troops are continuing their advance over ground bristling with obstacles laid by the enemy. In Wuerttemberg considerable advances were made and French units have reached the important communications center of Nagold, on the northern edge of the forest.

The number of prisoners who fell into French hands in the course of the last three days' fighting totals 5,000. A considerable amount of equipment, including numerous anti-tank guns, was captured.

*(New York TIMES, April 18, 1945)*

**Advance in Wuerttemberg** — (French First Army Communiqué) — Rapidly continuing their advance through Wuerttemberg, French First Army forces took the important communications centers of Freudenstadt, Nagold and Horb. They took 1,800 prisoners yesterday in this region.

South of Pforzheim, following a skillful maneuver, our units encircled a group of 2,400 Germans, who are now surrendering.

In the Baden plain our troops took Oberkirch by storm, capturing the heavy long-range pieces of artillery the Germans had used for the shelling of Strasbourg.

(*New York TIMES*, April 19, 1945)

**On the Neckar River** — (By Drew Middleton) — From the Rhine to the east of Nuremberg Lieut. Gen. Jean Delattre de Tassigny's French First Army and General Patch's United States Seventh Army hammered out gains of five to fifteen miles in the last twenty-four hours.

Poilus smashed into Tuebingen, twenty miles southwest of Stuttgart, and now hold a twenty-mile stretch of the upper reaches of the Neckar River after bypassing Stuttgart to the west. Other French units were thrusting along the road through the Black Forest from Strasbourg to Tuebingen.

Nearer the Rhine, Lahr, seventeen miles southeast of Strasbourg on the edge of the Black Forest, was captured. The French have taken more than 3,000 prisoners in the last two days.

(*New York TIMES*, April 20, 1945)

**Stuttgart Taken** — (By Drew Middleton) — American and French tank columns pierced the German defenses guarding the approaches to the enemy's national Alpine redoubt today and swept southward over the Danube River as the right flank of Gen. Jacob L. Devers' Sixth Army Group, pivoting on Nuremberg, swung forward from ten to thirty miles.

One French column reached the Swiss frontier, another swept into Ludwigshafen to the north while a third reached Sigmaringen, former Vichy government capital. [A dispatch from the Swiss frontier said that the force that reached Ludwigshafen immediately drove forward through Meersburg to the vicinity of Immenstaadt, which forms the northern end of Friedrichshafen "bay" about four miles from the town.] . . .

Stuttgart and Freiburg on the Rhine, thirty-five miles north of Basle, have been occupied by the French First Army, which created a pocket of some 1,000 square miles in the western part of the Black Forest by driving a column south to the Swiss frontier.

(*New York TIMES*, April 23, 1945)

**French Turn Eastward** — (By Drew Middleton) — The French columns on the right flank of the Sixth Army Group's sweep across Wuerttemberg and Bavaria already are turning eastward, evidently with the intention of shearing across the westernmost roads into the redoubt just north of the entrances to the position.

This turning movement was developed by the forces that had crossed the Danube along a forty-mile stretch from Eschingen to Sigmaringen. Some tanks and infantry thrust southward to Ludwigshafen and down the shores of the lake.

It is fifty-eight miles from Ludwigshafen to Immenstaad on the westernmost of the main roads into the redoubt. Sigmaringen, reached by the French when

they crossed the Danube, was the site of the Vichy French government maintained by the Germans through Marshal Henri-Philippe Pétain and Pierre Laval. According to reports here both Vichy leaders had been removed farther east before the arrival of the French troops.

The richest geographical prize taken by Lieut. Gen. Jean Delattre de Tassigny's forces during their advance through Wuerttemberg was Stuttgart, capital of the province and a city with a pre-war population of 459,538, the largest German city captured by the French forces thus far.

The French Army captured more than 10,000 prisoners yesterday.

While the main French force was driving south along Lake Constance, another column of tanks and infantry pushed down along the Rhine Valley through blooming orchards to occupy Freiburg. The German pocket lies between these two forces, although it is not likely that any great number of Germans remain in the area. Most of the German Nineteenth Army in this sector was drawn north, to meet the Franco-American drive around Heilbronn, where the enemy suffered heavy losses.

(*New York TIMES*, April 23, 1945)

**Germans in Trap** — (By Drew Middleton) — A greater pocket is in the making for the second corps of the French First Army is moving along Lake Constance toward Constance on the southern shore and Friedrichshafen on the northern side.

Another French column, advancing eastward north of the lake, made seventeen miles to the eastward to reach Kappel and Althausen today.

Should these French columns link up with the Seventh Army forces driving south from the Ulm area a large number of German troops would be trapped.

Other French forces are attacking the eastern face of the Black Forest pocket in the area of Reutlingen. They advanced five miles from the village to a point twenty-five miles south of Stuttgart.

The French First Corps, advancing down the Rhine, made ten miles to Muellheim, fifteen miles north of the Swiss frontier and pushed on. A column of this force pushed five miles into the western face of the Black Forest pocket.

(*New York TIMES*, April 24, 1945)

**Franco-American Advance Engulfs Ulm** — (By Drew Middleton) — Tank and infantry forces are striking southward almost at will on the continuous fronts of the United States Seventh and French First Armies. The enemy line has crumbled in front of Gen. Jean Delattre's French forces.

Three pockets, one at Aalen, one south of Stuttgart, and a third in the Swabian hills, have been created by the Franco-American advance and all three are being mopped up. It is unlikely that they will yield a rich harvest of prisoners because most of the German forces in the area, elements of four divisions, were bottled up in the Stuttgart area and destroyed there. . . .

Ulm, a city of 66,000, is the center of the general advance by the French and American forces. It fell to doughboys of the Forty-fourth Infantry Division and French troops late yesterday. The Americans then pushed over the Danube in a second American crossing of the river, while west of Ulm the Tenth Armored Division fanned out along the banks of the river, reaching Erbach, six miles southeast of Ulm, near Ehingen. . . .

Meanwhile the advance to the south and southeast has continued, with Franco-American forces entering Volkersheim, eight miles south of the Danube.

Yet another French force, striking due east beyond Sigmaringen, has pushed into Dietenheim, Ochsenhausen and Baltringen twelve, fifteen and twenty-two miles south of Ulm respectively.

(*New York TIMES*, April 25, 1945)

**Constance Taken as Black Forest Mopping-Up Proceeds** — (French First Army Communiqué, April 27) — First Army forces took Constance on the evening of April 26. There was no fighting in the town itself, but it was only after hard fighting that [Lieut. Gen. Emile-Marie] Bethouart's troops succeeded. The Command had refused to declare it an open town.

The surrender of encircled enemy forces in the Black Forest and in the Swabian Jura is proceeding. Yesterday we took 6,500 prisoners, including two more generals. Many pieces of artillery were also captured.

More than 50,000 French prisoners and deportees have been liberated by the French First Army since it entered Germany.

(*New York TIMES*, April 28, 1945)

**Advance Continues as Black Forest Is Cleared** — (French First Army Communiqué, April 28) — The progress of the French First Army in the direction of the Bavarian Alps is continuing. The annihilation of the scattered remains of the German Nineteenth Army, encircled by our forces in the Black Forest and the Jura, is practically complete. Seven thousand prisoners fell into our hands yesterday. Considerable booty, including eighty guns, was captured yesterday.

(*New York TIMES*, April 29, 1945)

**French Enter Austria** — (French First Army Communiqué, April 30) — Advancing forty-five kilometers, French First Army forces last night crossed the Austrian frontier in the Bregenz region, penetrating into Vorarlberg. They gained a foothold in the Bavarian Alps through the valley of the Iller River south of Kempten.

On Lake Constance they entered Friedrichshafen after an outflanking movement from the east which brought about the collapse of the resisting forces on the northern bank. Troops of the French First Army captured Lindau.

Since crossing the Rhine, that is, in thirty days of offensive, we took more than 90,000 prisoners, among whom were seven enemy generals. On April 26 alone the number of prisoners taken amounted to 25,000.

(*New York TIMES*, May 1, 1945)



*French Press and Information Service*

*General Edgar de Larminat, Commanding Atlantic Front.*

### **Atlantic Front**

**Reduction of the Royan Pocket** — French Forces of the Atlantic Front, under the command of General Edgar de Larminat, carried out operations to reduce the Royan pocket at the mouth of the Gironde. Preparation in support of ground activities begun by intensive naval bombardment by the French Fleet was continued by French and American aviation. Success of these coastal operations will not only eliminate the last German holdouts on French soil, but greatly aid economic recovery by increasing available port facilities.

**One Mile from Royan** — (Supreme Allied Headquarters Communiqué, April 16) — Allied forces which launched an attack to clear the enemy from the Gironde estuary in France captured Meschers, Semussac and Medis and are one mile from Royan. Gun positions, strong points and other enemy installations on both sides of the estuary were attacked without loss by our heavy and medium bombers in very great strength. Enemy batteries at the mouth of the estuary were subjected to severe bombardment by an Allied naval task force supporting the ground operations.

(*New York TIMES*, April 17, 1945)

**La Coubre Forest Encircled and Taken** — (French Atlantic Front Communiqués, April 17 and 18) — Operations on the Arvert Peninsula are nearing their end, in spite of the heavy smoke and heat generated by the burning forest of Coubre and the successive bombardments of the Bonne Anse redoubt. French forces, with great dash, crossed the forest, and closely encircled this last German refuge.

In Pointe de Grave there was sustained French artillery and air activity.

Since the beginning of operations in the Royan and Pointe de Grave pockets, more than 6,000 prisoners and very considerable booty, not yet counted, has been taken. —

The garrison of the La Coubre fortified position that was encircled yesterday afternoon after violent bombardment by aircraft and artillery and is estimated at 700 men surrendered this morning at 7 o'clock.

With this surrender the combined operations between the Allied land, sea and air forces have ended. These forces, after four days of fierce fighting, have completely liberated the Royan pocket that has been systematically fortified and mined by the enemy.

Early this morning the air force and heavy artillery went into action against Pointe de Grave. Since yesterday the enemy has been holding in this sector only a triangle bounded on the south by a fortified anti-tank barrage running slightly to the south of Soulac and southeast of Neyran. (New York TIMES, April 18, 19, 1945)

**Access to Bordeaux Cleared** — French forces on the Atlantic front cleared all resistance in the Pointe de Grave area today. Bordeaux will be open to shipping once a block of ships sunk across the Gironde River has been cleared.

Colonel Prah! commanded the last German forces was captured today and the fighting ended at 1 o'clock this afternoon.

(New York TIMES, April 21, 1945).

**Ile d'Oléron Stormed** — An amphibious assault, involving American airplanes, Canadian and French ships and French ground forces, was made today on Ile d'Oléron, on the French Atlantic coast, where a German artillery pocket still commands the approaches to Bordeaux, seventy-five miles south, and the port of La Rochelle, fifteen miles to the northeast.

Tonight the French reported they had cleared the southern tip of the island, which is about twenty miles long and five miles wide, and that they had captured the village of St. Trojan and taken numerous prisoners.

The attack on the island started at dawn today when 150 Marauder medium bombers of the First Tactical Air Force swept over in eight waves and dropped 180 tons of high-explosive and fragmentation bombs on the German installations.

French warships, accompanied by Royal Canadian Navy minesweepers, joined in the preliminary bombardment. At 6 A.M. a flotilla of American LCVPS [landing craft vehicles personnel] brought from the United

Kingdom and fishing vessels, both manned by French naval personnel and carrying French ground forces, landed with some measure of surprise and established a bridgehead despite German resistance. French commandos are participating in the operation.

A simultaneous attack was made on the German mainland pocket at La Rochelle by American bombers, who flew 100 sorties during the day supporting the assault on the Gironde pocket.

(New York TIMES, May 1, 1945)

### Alps Front

*French Forces of the Alps Front are continuing their advance through difficult terrain.*

**Advance Proceeds** — (French Alps Front Communiqué, April 24) — Our troops captured fortifications at St. Ours-en-Ubaye. Clearing of the valley which stretches west from the village has been completed. There was no reaction on the part of the enemy and he left in our hands nearly 140 prisoners and three guns.

(New York TIMES, April 26, 1945)

**French Soil Cleared** — (French Alps Front Communiqué, April 30) — On April 29 the last parts of French soil still held by the enemy in the approaches to the Little St. Bernard Pass were liberated. The "Ruined Redoubt" and the "Pic Belleface" were occupied by our troops.

On the whole front from the Swiss frontier to the sea we forced passage through Alpine passes and in some places effected deep penetrations into Italian territory. Despite very unfavorable weather conditions roads were cut by extensive destruction and wide minefields.

In the region of Col Mont Cenis we advanced beyond Suse and occupied Bussolena, in the Stura Valley.

(New York TIMES, May 1, 1945)

### Indo-Chinese Front

*As Resistance in Indo-China continued against heavy odds, Minister of Information Henri Teitgen declared he was in a position to state that "in addition to military aid from Metropolitan France, being organized in several places, Allied military aid was henceforth assured and on the way."*

**Resistance Continues** — (National Defense General Staff Communiqué) — After a month of hard fighting, during which heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy, our troops were compelled to evacuate Luang-Prabang, capital of Laos.<sup>1</sup> The devotion of its inhabitants to France had been demonstrated when 2,000 volunteered. In reprisal, the Japanese burned the greater part of the city.

(LE MONDE Paris, April 11, 1945)

**Action in Laos and on the Mekong** — (National Defense General Staff Communiqué, April 20) — In Indo-China our troops continue to resist the Japanese thrust in the direction of Upper Laos inch by inch.

<sup>1</sup> Luang-Prabang was always the residence of the Prince and then the King of Laos, while the French Administrative capital was Ventiane, farther south on the Mekong.

A series of clashes took place in the region southwest of Dien-Dien-Phu. Heavy losses were inflicted on the enemy.

On the Mekong River a number of Japanese transport vessels were set on fire by our guerrilla forces.

Two French patrol boats, escaping from Japanese control, succeeded in reaching a port controlled by the Allies.

(*New York TIMES*, April 21, 1945)

**French Resistance Firm** — (National Defense General Staff Communiqué) — After fifty days of fighting against the enemy the French troops of Indo-China, in spite of the enemy's numerical and material superiority, continue to give a magnificent showing of their fighting spirit and their will to continue to resist until the end.

Thus a unit of 200 men made up of Legionnaires and pilots, having received the order to hold up at any cost the attack of a Japanese column made up of 1,000 men that threatened the main group of our forces, made a heroic attack on April 18 on the village of Nam Matay. Although our losses were high, with five officers, fifteen noncommissioned officers and forty-seven men killed or missing, and ten noncommissioned officers and fifteen men wounded, the enemy forces suffered so heavily that they gave up the plan to carry out the encirclement.

(*New York TIMES*, April 29, 1945)

### *Naval Operations*

**Communiqué on Three Fronts** — April 26 — The scheduled bombardments of the Italian coast continue in cooperation with attacks of French forces.

On April 21 the cruisers Montcalm and Duguay-Trouin bombarded the ports of San Remo, Porto Maurizio and Onaglia. Light craft sank six enemy fast launches, and eight others were put out of action during the night.

On the Atlantic front French naval units which carried out bombardment operations against Pointe de Grave fired between 8 A.M. on April 15 and midday on April 16, 236 rounds from 340-mm. guns, 983 rounds from 203-mm. guns, 1,380 rounds from 138-mm. guns and 130-mm. guns and 1,325 rounds from 75-mm. guns, that is, a total of more than 3,900 rounds.

In the Indian Ocean French vessels took part on April 11 in the bombardment of the Japanese naval base at Sabang that was carried out by Allied naval air forces.

(*New York TIMES*, April 28, 1945)

## II—REPORTS FROM THE FRONT

### *On the Western Front in Germany*

**In Germany** — (By Pierre Jarry, French war correspondent with the British Army) — The law of the victor has entered upon German soil. Nazi Germany is crumbling between the western and eastern jaws. . . . Arriving at Cleves we find it deserted, and can readily

understand why the city should be empty. Can one live in a heap of ruins? . . .

In the region of Goch and Calcar the Wehrmacht's resistance condemned the plain to terrible travail. In a defensive frenzy, an army of moles dug trench sections in every little field, every meadow. . . .

Our car stopped. Two priests, one with black hair and the other a redhead, thought we wanted to ask them for directions. They rushed toward us with an eagerness that would have made a Roman hotel porter of the good old days quite jealous. . . . Here are broad-hipped peasant women leaning over their wash, children playing. Old farmers are back at their plows. You find among the men a strong temptation to break down the barriers. The more daring among the women gather at the crossroads, undoubtedly to talk about food. These people do not look at us. It must be said that our English friends are giving proof of their traditional reserve. Each is cloaked in an armor of distrust which is no less impervious for its being immaterial. Never have invaders more completely ignored the invaded. . . .

Closer to the Rhine the houses are all still deserted, all with white flags. And all the civilians live underground. Thus the problem of relations between the two groups doesn't really arise. I entered a church while mass was being said. Never have I heard so sad a litany. . . . There was a unanimous dispiritedness, deeply instinctive, a collective bleating of neurasthenic sheep. . . . How easily they accepted the yoke! How easily they bowed to the new law! It is true that this law, everywhere posted on small white cards in two languages is very severe, and is strictly applied by the British Military Government officers. . . .

As is known, the Allies have set 1,200 calories daily as the minimum to be provided German civilians, and this will be reached easily in an agricultural region like the former Duchy of Cleves. And it must not be forgotten that Germany has large stocks of foodstuffs. You even find cartons of noodles or bars of chocolate taken from packages sent to French prisoners. . . . The British Military Government officers have been able to channel local food supplies not only to large German centers but first and foremost to prisoners of war, laborers and deportees of all nationalities saved by the Allied offensive. Yes, order reigns in the Rhineland.

Official reports bear out the impressions of the tourist-war correspondent. The Nazis had declared that wherever the enemy advanced he would be exposed to the attacks of the German "maquis." Thus far, there have been practically no violations of the regulations issued by the Military Government. Of course, it must be borne in mind that only a small part of the population was willing or able to disobey the evacuation orders issued by the Nazi leaders before their flight. The head of the German Solvay Company, for example, left his assistant to deal with the victors. . . . It is also important to remember that we are on the left bank of the Rhine, in that Rhineland of peasants, lower



French Press and Information Service

*Action in a Town in Alsace.*

bourgeoisie and Catholics which has always been but moderately nationalistic. "When we are on the other side," my guide said, "things will not go so well."

The freshly liberated Frenchmen I saw, all of whom were most proud of the tricks they had played on the "master race," stressed the incredible absence of any reactions on the part of the mass of Germans. They react but slowly, and then with a stupid brutality. . . . Slavs, who did not feel it necessary to hide their sufferings beneath an ironic modesty, spoke to me of the collective insanity which seemed fated to seize the German herd when it was left to itself. . . . I entered a convent where Poles are bivouacked. A young woman of Warsaw, whose eyes were sadly fixed on her questioners, intoned the martyrdom of her country in a harsh voice. . . . Italians, covered with ecchymose spots, were equally unrestrained in uttering their hatred.

Who committed these crimes? A handful of depraved police? No. Germans from all over Germany, the German herd armed with sub-machine guns or whips. The German herd which is unable to disobey the law personified by Prussia and all Prussians. . . .

(LA BATAILLE, Paris, March 29, 1945)

*French Marines in Action in Alsace* — Although this report by an Ensign deals with events that are already old, we are publishing excerpts from it because of the interesting details it gives concerning the manner in which the Germans were surprised during the advance of our troops on Strasbourg, details which may help give an insight into the debacle east of the Rhine.

The four battalions of the Armored Marines Regiment were, as usual, distributed among the divisional units. Each detachment thus had its tank destroyers, each column its marines, and all the villages of Alsace remember seeing the big tanks with naval names roll by with red pompom caps perched on top. . . . Leaving the mountains, the plain of Alsace appeared in the sun. The marines moved on Wangen, then Marlenheim, ours after one and a half hour's fighting. . . . Soon word came down, and was confirmed, that our division was in Strasbourg; Colonel Rouvillois had reached the bridges.

The morning of that same rainy day, Rouvillois' column had left Dettwiller about 7 a.m. Without slowing its pace, overrunning enemy resistance along the way, it reached Brumath, where the bridges had not yet been mined. It moved on Strasbourg and reached the Schiltigheim district at 10 o'clock. Life was proceeding normally, they even saw a German soldier make the people of Strasbourg clear the way for the tanks he thought were friendly.

The squad of marines soon arrived at the Kommandantur. No one fully understood what had happened. A few shots were fired by a Sherman which played hide-and-seek with German trucks around and about the houses. In the confusion, cars ran head-on into our troops; one of our tanks thus seized a general and three of his staff officers. They reluctantly allowed themselves to be disarmed, and the general summoned up all his arrogance to prevent our men from searching him. "General, general," he shouted, pointing to the

yellow stripes on his trousers. "Advance anyway," ordered the marine, pushing him ahead with a sub-machine gun in the back.

In a few minutes several hundred Boches had gathered. The officers, in elegant dress uniforms, showed a certain skepticism, but did not let their disgust become too apparent to the dirty, sweaty sailors and soldiers who were drinking in this moment of revenge.

At noon, the marines received orders to move on the bridges. They left with Triumphant in the lead, followed by Malin II, Terrible, Fantasque II. The first was a command armored car, the other three tanks. Field gray soldiers appeared on all sides. They began to understand and hurried toward Kehl, most of them with their guns slung over their shoulders, and all carrying heavy baggage as if they were going on leave. Some even went in the other direction, and stopped petrified when they saw the marines. Guns fired without stop, the men disturbed by the presence of civilians whom they were striving to spare. A bicycle messenger was hit squarely, however, and fell in the gutter.

German vehicles coming from the rear tried to get around the column; some succeeded and disappeared toward Kehl. Close to Kehler Platz a horse drawn column was caught in terrible disorder: a few volleys took care of the drivers, and Triumphant turned left to go around. A shot sounded at the right, a 75 mm. anti-tank gun camouflaged in a newspaper stand had fired. Missing the first two tanks, the projectile hit Terrible forward, piercing the armor, passing between the legs of the radio operator, ripping his chair cushion and smashing into one of the motors. Terrible, unable to move, fired and destroyed the enemy. Malin II ran ahead into another 75 covering a crossing, parallel to the gun in the news stand. The gunners raced to their weapons to face it around, but not quickly enough, for Malin II fired first, and that was the end.

The two undamaged tanks then joined Triumphant, and, Malin II in the lead, came up to the bridge. On the other side, lurking along the canal, was a German tank: "Turrets left! Set direction! Elevation zero. Load! Aim! Fire!" The volley went off in a second. The Boche, hit squarely, began to smoke: three men escaped, two went down under machine gun fire. Meanwhile, Terrible, almost useless now, put off part of its crew to disarm prisoners. Boches were coming out on all sides trying to reach the Rhine, but the damaged tank blocked their path. Losing all hope of reaching Kehl, they surrendered by the score. Thus three marines on foot took 180 Boches, including 15 officers.

A half-hour later, the gunner who remained in the tank saw a crowd of Germans coming, their hands raised. Behind, some Boches were firing an anti-tank gun, and had to be dispersed with machine gun fire. But too late. They had had time to fire and Terrible was hit and exploded. Its crew, luckily uninjured, joined the rest of the squad with all their prisoners. The two who had just escaped the explosion volunteered to go aboard another Sherman two of whose men had been



*French Press and Information Service*  
*French Paratrooper.*

wounded. They went off, their Sherman was hit by an anti-tank shell and, still unhurt, our two lads came back to seek employment: they had been blown up twice in an hour.

Up front the situation was confused. The Germans had steadied, and we had to give up hope of taking the Kehl bridge by surprise. Night fell softly. The squad took defense positions before the bridge over the arm of the Rhine. There was firing all night, alert followed alert, but the next day the whole world knew the Leclerc Division was in Strasbourg and would stay there.

*(VOLONTES, Paris, April 4, 1945)*

***French Paratroopers in the Liberation of Holland*** — (By war correspondent Mirslan Gander with the Canadian First Army) — The airborne force which speeded up the liberation of northern and north-eastern Holland consisted of two battalions of French paratroopers of the Special Air Service under British command. Practically all this territory is now again in Allied hands.

The paratroopers were dropped on the nights of Saturday and Sunday, April 7 and 8, in a triangle formed by Groningen, Voeverden and Zwolle. They caused the wildest confusion among the enemy forces.

Following extraordinary adventures and exploits unsurpassed in the service to which they belong, the majority of the men were relieved by advancing land forces after holding out in small pockets for four or five days.

An airborne officer who described the operation to me today could hardly find words to praise their splendid combat spirit. "We planned to relieve them after seventy-two hours," he said, "but owing to the difficulty of bridging land forces, we didn't make contact with some for a week. They kept on fighting, and we kept receiving cheerful and most optimistic messages from them by radio. I am proud to have been associated with them."

The operation was planned and carried out in eighty days, an unusually short time for an airborne "show." Half the French parachutists were regular soldiers who had fought in North Africa and France. Others had been recruited from the Maquis.

(*French Information Service, London, April 18, 1945*)

**In the Black Forest** — (By war correspondent Roger Baschet) — The French First Army penetrated into Germany through the roughest terrain on the front. Tanks, mule trains and infantry moved rapidly into the Black Forest, which had seemed an impenetrable fortress. The tricolor floated from trucks and gun barrels. A miracle could be read in the wondering eyes of liberated prisoners throwing themselves into the arms of the soldiers and crying "Merci!" Goebbels' propaganda had proclaimed the downfall of our army. Now the Germans saw well equipped and gay fighting men, perhaps sworn to destroy everything, but gentler at the first tears. In a few weeks we have assumed anew the role of conquerors, while the enemy, in defeat, returned to his well known servility. Bottles of wine were voluntarily brought up from cellars, the word "liberation" was on many lips, demonstrations of friendship abounded, and the only danger we still face is to be fooled by the meekness and wailing of a people whose fanaticism cannot die in a day, and which still conceals many arms, to judge by the small quantity resulting from requisitions.

(*L'AUBE, Paris, April 23, 1945*)

**French Cross the Rhine** — (By René Payot, Swiss journalist) — In the night of March 30-31, at 3 a.m., Lieutenant Bouda of the X Infantry Regiment, landed with eleven men on the east bank of the Rhine, after rowing across the river near Spire. It was the first time since the days of Napoleon that a French uniform had crossed the Rhine.

Others followed, and today an army small in numbers but with splendid spirit, after conquering Baden and part of Wuerttemberg, entered Stuttgart and crossed the Danube on a 60 kilometer front. These exploits were of the miraculous, for the crossing of the Rhine had to be improvised in order that, in keeping with General de Gaulle's desires, the French might march along with the Americans who had already occupied Mannheim. All General Delattre de Tassigny's audacity was required to attempt the operation without artillery preparation, without airborne divisions, and with some fifty boats, not of the latest model. In the sphere of tactics this operation constitutes a military accomplish-

ment that will live in history. In five days, four divisions, one of them armored, crossed the river and took Karlsruhe, capital of Baden.

Their ardor was such that the commander-in-chief had on several occasions to check the advance of General Guillaume, who was wounded at the head of his troops, in order to conform to the instructions of General Eisenhower. Despite the fatigue incurred in hard combat for Belfort, the Vosges and Colmar, the army was electrified. Battalions of former FFI rivaled in zeal with units from Africa. There was a regiment from Paris under the command of Colonel Fabien which truly performed deeds of valor. It is but simple justice to speak of the exceptional merit of the French First Army, an elite organization where, within a strict hierarchical framework, there is a great spirit of comradeship. This must be said all the more because, when its purely military mission will have been completed, it will have to serve as an occupation force, settle a thousand administrative questions for the native population. . . .

Only France is in physical contact with Germany. In her interest and in that of the continent, therefore, it is essential that she have a firm and lasting policy in the regions in which her troops will be stationed. At present the inhabitants of the Palatinate, of Wuerttemberg and Baden are giving clear signs of being dazed. One of them said, seeing General de Vernejoul's armor pass by, "But Hitler assured us that France was beaten in 1940 and that her army no longer existed." What does this mean, if not that the army must continue to restore French prestige. This is necessary, for the Germans are responsive to any display of force. They can already be seen saluting the officers in their villages with the very greatest respect.

(*FRANCE-SOIR, April 24, 1945*)

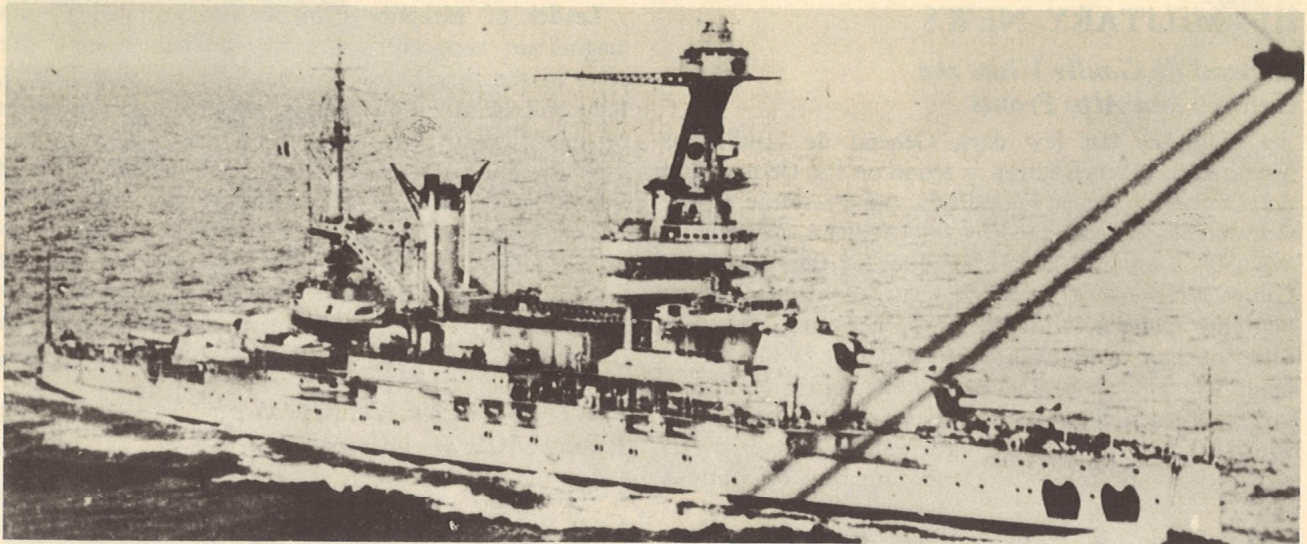
### **On the Atlantic Front**

**The Offensive against Royan** — (By Jean Eparvier) — It was to clear the port of Bordeaux that the French people might be able to eat next winter that the offensive against Royan and Graves was launched this Saturday morning.

In the redoubt commanded by Rear Admiral Michaelis (who at the end of 1944 replaced Colonel Paul Raun, considered too soft by the German commander-in-chief of the Atlantic pockets) there are about 17,000 Germans. Half will probably surrender as soon as they can, while the others seem resolved to pursue a policy of suicide. They have powerful concrete fortifications, part of the Atlantic Wall, and reinforced in the last eight months with extremely thick minefields and 300 guns, aside from those which may have escaped observation.

Powerful forces have been placed in line to attack them. The FFI have received more advanced training and have been given more experienced officers. In addition to French artillery, naval and air units, there will be American and perhaps English naval dive bombers.





*French Press and Information Service*

*French Battleship Lorraine.*

The three attack units are the Medoc Brigade, operating at Pointe de Graves, the Gironde Division and the Cleron Brigade. These three units are under the single command of General de Larminat, attached to the Sixth Army Group under General Devers.

The means to be employed are extremely powerful, for the terrain, cut by swamps and watercourses, does not lend itself to strategic maneuvers. It will be necessary to move with the utmost speed and power, that the Germans may realize that resistance is useless.

*(LE FIGARO, Paris, April 15-16, 1945)*

**Royan Liberated** — General de Gaulle reviewed the victorious troops in liberated Royan. They were massed in the wide Mathes plain, the heroes of the 40th Zouaves who stormed the fortified heights of Balmont, whose flag is decorated with their new Croix de Guerre; the 158th Cuirassiers; the 50th Coast Artillery; the Spahis, the Dragoons and even civilians in the threadbare fishermen's clothes of the naval auxiliary force that moved into action with sub-machine guns. General de Gaulle awarded General de Larminat the insignia of Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor, and decorated other officers and men. The soldiers marched past in ruined and deserted Royan.

*(Ministry of Information, Paris, April 24, 1945)*

**French Navy in Action**

**Atlantic Front** — On April 16, French warships carried out further and effective bombardments against Pointe de Grave. The naval force under command of Rear Admiral Rue included several large French warships supported by a British minesweeper squadron and a squadron of Latécoère planes. Several war correspondents were on the warships. The heavy units and light craft expended two thirds of their ammunition supplies. The sweepers neutralized many mines in the field of operations. The General Commanding-in-Chief congratulated the ships which took part in the operations. Mop-

ping-up operations are continuing. German Admiral Michaelis and his staff were captured.

*(Ministry of Information, Paris, April 19, 1945)*

**Battleship Lorraine in Action** — On the Atlantic Front, French troops including naval landing units, supported by naval aviation, continued their advance on Pointe de Grave. The ships participating in the naval bombardment which supported this advance included the battleship Lorraine and the cruiser Duquesne. Five of the British minesweepers engaged in this operation were manned by Canadian crews.

*(Ministry of Information, Paris, April 20, 1945)*

**Action off Italy** — French naval units were extremely active in Liaison with French troops along the Italian border. A light force consisting of the cruisers Gloire, Duguay Trouin, the destroyers Tempête and Trombe and the destroyer leader Tigre carried out shore bombardments. A light force had two sharp night engagements with enemy motor torpedo boats, two of which were sunk.

*(Ministry of Information, Paris, April 20, 1945)*

**Role of the Navy** — Royan is liberated, Pointe de Grave taken, and only the sectors of La Rochelle, Saint Nazaire, Lorient and Dunkerque remain in German hands along the French coast. The battle in these sectors will be like that at the mouth of the Gironde. The Navy will again have a large part to play. Its bold operations lent effective help. Mention should be made of the valiant conduct of the French sailors who stayed at their action stations Sunday for 24 hours without interruption. Engineers in the choking heat of the engine room, gunners closed in their turrets. This single-minded zeal offers proof of the restored unity of our Navy, in action on all the seas: in the Atlantic, in the Pacific with the Richelieu, and in the Mediterranean where, in recent days, cruisers and destroyers once more shelled the Italian coast and destroyed light enemy vessels.

*(Ministry of Information, Paris, April 24, 1945)*