

FRANCE AT WAR

I—THE FIGHTING IN ALSACE

In the light of the victorious Russian offensive in the East certain experts have interpreted Germany's continued struggle in the West as a political maneuver intended, on the one hand, to keep up the fighting spirit of the German troops and thus prevent a collapse like that of 1918; and, on the other, to confront the British and Americans with the presence of the Russians in the heart of Europe. The German hope is undoubtedly based on the idea of exploiting the latent fear of Communism in America and England to create a widespread movement in favor of an armistice before the Allies break through the German lines on the West.

The German offensive launched last December has been shattered and the Allied Armies are advancing along the whole front despite heavy resistance. In the southern sector successive German attacks on Strasbourg and Haguenau during the past three weeks have not been of a nature to cause any modification of the Allies' general strategy.

The French First Army received orders to defend Strasbourg and enemy pressure has been reduced in this sector only to be strengthened farther to the north against the American Seventh Army holding the Haguenau sector above Strasbourg. For political reasons, the Germans are still striving to gain the capital of Alsace; German capture of Strasbourg would be demoralizing for the French people for whom a threat to Alsace is a threat to France.

On January 30 the threat against Strasbourg was averted. The American Seventh and the French First Armies are now mopping up the Colmar pocket.

The War From Day to Day in the Strasbourg Region

Americans Gain In Alsace—January 17—In Alsace, American forces attacking the perimeter of the German bridgehead over the Rhine north of Strasbourg not only redressed the setback inflicted by the Germans last night but pushed their way into the western stronghold of the German pocket at Herrlisheim. This advance, though local and limited, will be regarded with satisfaction, particularly by the French, who have been viewing the bridgehead and its threat to Strasbourg with apprehension for many days.

Militarily, Strasbourg does not seem more important than any other city, but politically it is a far greater prize for either the Germans or the French. As the capital of the lost and regained province of Alsace and the "second city of France," it is a major symbol for France, and its loss might have a painful effect on French morale, already at a low ebb because of the unduly severe winter.

However, French forces holding the city are regarded as sufficient at the moment to counter any German attempt, and today's local victory may hearten pessimists.

(New York TIMES, January 18, 1945)

Attacks and Counterattacks North of Strasbourg—January 18—In the German bridgehead across the Rhine north of Strasbourg equally indecisive attacks and counterattacks continued.

German infantry, backed up by eight tanks, broke out of the northern end of the pocket yesterday and seized the villages of Stattmatten and Bengolsheim, advancing 2,000 yards. They also entered Sessenheim, which then changed hands several times until the Germans finally withdrew their armor with the loss of two tanks.

Again last night the Germans tried to work their way into Sessenheim and finally forced their way into the village today. With six more tanks the Germans in the northern part of Herrlisheim, which the Americans entered yesterday, tried to retake the southern two-thirds of the town. However, they were dispersed and withdrew their tanks from Herrlisheim, which is on the western edge of the pocket, to Offendorf, in the center.

Heavy-caliber German artillery fire has been falling on villages north of Strasbourg today.

(New York TIMES, January 19, 1945)

Germans Widen Front—January 19—The weight of the German drive against the American Seventh Army today came from the west bank of the Rhine north of Strasbourg along a 27-mile corridor leading from the eastern end of the American Maginot Line positions to a point nine miles from the Alsatian capital.

The linking of the German bridgehead forces and troops to the north now gives the Germans a hold of 82 miles on the west bank of the Rhine, while we hold 32—from Gambsheim, nine miles north of Strasbourg, to Gertsheim, 14 miles below the capital of Alsace, and one mile of Strasbourg waterfront. In addition the French hold eight miles of the west bank from Basle to Kembs.

In the area where the enemy is building up his strength this side of the Rhine the average depth of penetration is slightly less than two miles. The deepest point is at Herrlisheim, where the Germans have driven up two and a quarter miles from the river.

(New York TIMES, January 20, 1945)

French Surprise Germans—January 20—With considerable reinforcements of armor, ferried across the Rhine north of Strasbourg, German forces now are making persistent efforts to break out of their narrow lodgment along the river into the Alsace Plain.



Signal Corps Photo

Sherman tanks move along slippery roads to new positions.

These recurrent attacks have been on nothing like the ambitious scale of the German offensive in the Ardennes. In fact, they seem to involve elements of only one or two divisions, as compared to the 25 used in the Ardennes assault. But the fact that they are increasing in strength, frequency and success is attracting increasing attention here.

It is obvious that Field Marshal General Karl von Rundstedt, now falling back in the Ardennes, would prefer to retain the initiative somewhere along the line and delay a resumption of the Allies' main assault as long as possible.

He already holds a large area south of Strasbourg around Colmar which is opposite Freiburg on the upper Rhine. The recent attacks seem to be designed to enlarge a similar area held to the north, to push out into the wider northern portion of the Alsace Plain and to slash across the roads and railways leading through that area into Strasbourg which might then become vulnerable to a pincer attack.

The Plain itself is a level, unwooded area, stretching south some 85 miles to Mulhouse from a point below Bitche along the west bank of the Rhine. It varies in width from 12 to 30 miles.

The emphasis has shifted southward to the area of Bischwiller on the southern side of the Haguenau forest. Through Bischwiller, Haguenau and Saverne, which is 27 miles west of the Rhine on the western edge of the Alsace Plain, run the principal roads and railways into Strasbourg from the northwest, north and northeast, including routes from Karlsruhe, Mannheim and other Rhine cities in Germany to the north. The Rhine-Marne canal runs through Saverne.

An eastward thrust into this area not only would sever these routes but would outflank the positions of the American troops who so far have contained previous attempts to break into the Plain from the north.

The French First Army struck a surprise blow for Alsace's liberation today with a new offensive on a 25 mile front that rolled up three-mile gains 70 miles south of where American comrades-in-arms battled to save the imperiled capital of Strasbourg.

The French jumped into the mounting battle, with the fate of Alsace and Strasbourg in the balance, after tank-led German troops drove United States Seventh Army lines back five miles and threatened to undermine American positions in the northeast corner of France. The assault, rolling out under the cover of a blinding

snowstorm from the Vosges eastward to the Rhine in the Mulhouse area, achieved complete surprise and still was pressing forward tonight against that tough German core known as the Colmar pocket from which the enemy was menacing Strasbourg from the south.

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

French Troops Advance North of Mulhouse —
January 21 — Nor were any points shown on the map tonight for the French Army's continued gains north into the Alsace Plain, where the surprise attack was sprung yesterday along a 25-mile front from the Rhine to Saint-Amarin in the Vosges Mountains.

[The French swept up Reiningue, Kingersheim, Sausheim, Burzwiller, Richwiller, Lutterbach, Pfastatt, Ruelisheim, Illzach, Modenheim and Sennheim, the United Press reported. North of Strasbourg the Germans were balked in attempting to exploit their five-mile wedge driven in the Weyersheim area, but were fighting savagely in Drusenheim.]

Enemy dispositions were upset by the first sharp thrust and the French, moreover, chose to attack parallel to natural defenses that minimized obstacles and the supporting fire they might have encountered. These obstacles are the forbidding Vosges and a series of passes, forest strips and canals between the mountains and the Rhine, nearly all of which run north and south.

It was difficult to see what the French objectives would be. At the very least, the attack is a timely diversion from the offensive program that the Germans have been slowly mounting north of Strasbourg, capital of Alsace, which the French hold and want to keep forever.

(*New York TIMES*, January 22, 1945)

January 22 — The precise progress of the French First Army's advance northward into the Alsace Plain was obscured by security restrictions. Major General Jean Delattre de Tassigny's forces repulsed counterattacks by 20 tanks on their newly won positions, took additional territory in the most important of Mulhouse's suburbs and along the Doller River in that area, made gains in the vicinity of Cernay in the gap northwest of Mulhouse and cleared strong points in Nonnebruch Forest between Mulhouse and Cernay.

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

Seventh Army Withdraws North of Strasbourg —
January 23 — Meanwhile, as pressure on the German pocket around Colmar, south of Strasbourg, increased with a new attack by the French First Army from the north to match its assault from the south, the American Seventh Army was making a limited withdrawal from the triangle formed by the French and German borders west of Karlsruhe. The American troops, which had previously inflicted severe losses on two of the enemy's best divisions in attempts to break into the northern Alsace Plain in that area, pulled back to more advantageous positions east and north of Haguenau, which lies on the southern fringe of Haguenau Forest.

Militarily, no alarm was felt here at the withdrawal.

The territory given up has not by any means the strategic value of that lost and regained in the Ardennes, and it was surrendered voluntarily. It is considered that, so far as French fears are concerned, the defense of Strasbourg, capital of Alsace, has been strengthened rather than weakened by the withdrawal. Alsatian civilians, especially those on the German blacklist, received notice to evacuate with the armies so far as possible.

Another blow in defense of Strasbourg was struck in another French Army attack today somewhere between Colmar and Strasbourg — that is, in the northern extension of the Colmar pocket. The area and extent of attack were not disclosed, but it was noted that fighter-bombers attacked the three villages of Ohnenheim, Elsenheim and Mackenheim, in the area nine miles northeast of Colmar today. Fires were started in all the villages, which presumably were German strong points or concentration centers.

The attack in the southern end of Colmar on an eleven-mile line along the Thann-Mulhouse road and around the towns of Cernay, Lutterbach, Pfastatt and Illzach progressed today after tank-supported German counterattacks were repulsed north of Mulhouse and near Cernay. Three Tiger tanks and other armor were destroyed or captured in these engagements.

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

French Troops Attack North and South of Colmar —
January 24 — To the South something of the extent of the American Seventh Army's withdrawal in the Haguenau Forest sector west of Karlsruhe became evident with the disclosure of three towns where German attacks were made. The withdrawal seems to have extended to a maximum depth at one point of almost ten miles.

And near Bischwiller, five miles southeast of Haguenau, 28 armored vehicles and 200 infantry were dispersed. These points are roughly along the railway and road from Ingwiller through Haguenau to Bischwiller, so the new American line must be somewhere north of this road.

At least 8,000 French people subject to German reprisals were evacuated from this area by train alone before the United States Army departed.

Activities farther south today in the Colmar pocket, which the French First Army forces are attacking both in the north and south, were still obscured by the security blackout. The attack north of Colmar was started early yesterday morning after troops had filtered through the woods in Indian fashion during the night to take up attack positions.

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

French and American Repulse Attacks —
January 25 — Another attempt was made to force a river crossing east of Haguenau, with the obvious intention of surrounding the town, which is in an exposed position on a flat plain surrounded by forests, which shelter any attacking force. All attacks were preceded by heavy

artillery and mortar fire. The successful one cut across the road and railway from Sarreguemines through Ingwiller to Haguenau and on to Strasbourg. The attempt cost the Germans five tanks and fourteen other armored vehicles over last night and early today.

South of Strasbourg the French First Army's attack into the northern part of the Colmar pocket met a series of counterattacks east of the Ill River, near Ostheim, yesterday but they were repulsed without any loss of ground. Local Allied gains continued there today.

At the southern end of the pocket near Richwiller and northwest of Mulhouse, another German attack was also repulsed, and local French advances were reported.

(*New York TIMES*, January 26, 1945)

Alsace Front Line Restored — January 26 — To assist the American counterattacks four small towns behind the German lines near Haguenau were bombed today by the First Tactical Air Force.

French pilots of the same force also swept over the battle areas south of Strasbourg, where the Allied forces, with guns firing, broke into the streets of Houssen, three miles north of Colmar and west of the Ill River today. East of the river in the Colmar woods Allied troops progressed several miles, regaining ground lost to German reaction yesterday at Illhausen and elsewhere in the vicinity.

Troops fought through heavy snow both there and on the Cernay-Mulhouse line at the southern end of the Colmar pocket where they regained the mining village of Amélie (No. 1) in the potash mining district in Nonnenbruch forest which was lost last night in a German attack. They also occupied Cité Graessaegerste in the same sector, two and a half miles northeast of Cernay. The enemy is using tanks to contest the French advances.

(*New York TIMES*, January 27, 1945)

January 27 — Seventh Army patrols made only occasional contact with the Germans, who were thrown back yesterday across the Moder River sixteen miles north of Strasbourg, removing the menace to that provincial capital.

The weather was as severe here as anywhere on the western front, and patrols floundered through waist-deep drifts.

The Allies' communiqué, reporting yesterday's events, said that in southern Alsace the French First Army fought into Riedwihr, five miles northeast of Colmar and six miles from the Rhine.

French forces driving against the so-called Colmar pocket from the south were clearing the Germans from the potash mining area northwest of Mulhouse.

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

January 28 — At the southern end of the Allies' front the attack to eliminate another German bulge, the Colmar pocket, showed the first promise of real progress when at noon today Allied troops of the French First Army closed up to the Colmar canal along a two and a half mile stretch.

There were no reports that the Allied forces, fighting

in continuous snow storms that cut visibility to inches, had crossed the canal but a crossing definitely would threaten to outflank Colmar from the east and begin to whittle down the menacing pocket west of the Rhine. The canal, which runs east from Colmar, was reached after a methodical advance that beat down strong resistance yesterday and overran the villages of Holtzwihr, Jebbsheim and Wickerschwihr, the latter of which is on the northern bank of the canal. The woods to the north of these towns were cleared despite opposition from tanks and other armored vehicles.

At the southern end of the Colmar pocket continuous German counterattacks yesterday failed to dislodge the French forces that had reached a bridge on the Thur River south of Cernay and west of Mulhouse and had entered Gebelfort, a suburb of Cernay. The bridge over the Thur was destroyed by the Germans before they withdrew.

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

French and Americans Reach Rhône-Rhine Canal — January 29 — At the southern end of the Allies' line the French and American forces moving around Colmar mopped up ground already captured today and improved their positions. These forces, which include the American Third Division, and comprise the French Second Corps, reached the junction of the Colmar Canal and Ill River, within half a mile of the eastern outskirts of Colmar.

To the east they also were fanning out toward the Rhône-Rhine Canal and have captured Grussenheim, the most important road junction in the area north of the Colmar Canal and east of the Rhône-Rhine Canal. The Rhône-Rhine waterway runs north and south parallel to the Rhine at this point.

At the southern end of the Colmar pocket the drive to encircle Cernay progressed during the day. French First Corps troops advanced on both sides of Vieux Thann, a small town east of Thann and west of Cernay. This advance is outflanking Cernay to the west and has cut a railway and road leading out of the Bussang Pass in the Vosges to Cernay.

East of Cernay the French continued to prod Germans out of villages in the potash mining area in the Nonnenbruch Forest, having taken the hamlet of Fernand yesterday. North of this forest fierce fighting occurred today in Wittelsheim, a junction of five roads whose capture would imperil Cernay from the east. In this area northwest of Mulhouse, 15 enemy tanks have been knocked out of action since the French attack started January 20.

While moving slowly, the Franco-American attack gradually is reducing the great Colmar bulge and making the German hold on the key points of Cernay and Colmar dubious indeed. The force of the double attack is believed to have forced the Germans to make hasty new troop dispositions. (A Reuter dispatch said the Germans were retreating eastward over the Drusenheim bridge southeast of Haguenau.)

(*New York TIMES*, January 30, 1945)

American Twenty-eighth Division Under French Command—January 29—Not only the Third Division but the American Twenty-eighth Division, which a few weeks ago was fighting through the Huertgen Forest on the former American First Army front, is now under the French command.

(New York TIMES, January 30, 1945)

French and Americans Continue to Encircle Colmar—January 30—The most menacing concentration of German troops on the front—in the sector around Haguenau Forest, on the northern edge of the Alsace Plain—remained quiescent for the fifth successive day.

The French First Army forces, including two American divisions, continued the encirclement of Colmar and Cernay, two key points in the Colmar pocket south of Strasbourg—whose elimination may open the way to a drive to cut the pocket in two and drive the Germans back to the Rhine.

French and American units, pouring men and weapons into the bridgehead across the Colmar Canal, which runs east of Colmar to the Rhône-Rhine Canal, threw their weight southward and entered the villages of Wihr-en-Plaine, Muntzenheim and Bischwihr, all on a front of three miles and a quarter to one mile south of the canal.

Directly in front of this drive, which threatens to sweep around and encircle Colmar, American Thunderbolt fighter-bombers today dive-bombed the villages of Urschenheim, Widensolen and Durrenzenzen, destroying 24 fortified buildings. A heavy artillery bombardment harassed the Allied advance.

At the southern end of the Colmar pocket, meanwhile, French forces closed around three sides of Cernay, just east of the Vosges on the Alsace Plain. The ends of the crescent around Cernay continued to close toward each other today. One force crossed the Thur River south and east of Cernay yesterday and moved around the town to the east and north, perhaps assisted by forces that previously had been fighting in Wittelsheim, northeast of Cernay.

Another force that entered Vieux Thann, west of Cernay on the main road and railway leading into Cernay, pressed east today and took Enchenberg and Sadozwiller, only two miles west of Cernay. The French, hampered by snow-covered mines, struck a snag in the German strong point at Enchenberg before they were able to advance.

(New York TIMES, January 31, 1945)

II—REPORTS FROM THE BATTLE FRONTS

On the Western Front

American Newspapermen Remain With People of Strasbourg—Below is a report by Helen Kirkpatrick published in the Chicago Daily News. It was sent from Strasbourg itself on January 6, when the German threat to recapture the recently liberated city was a shock to the people who are well acquainted with German reprisals. The report is a magnificent example of the solidarity of Allied newspapermen with the French people in the firing line.



Signal Corps Photo

French civilians remove a tank trap after their village has been liberated by the Allies.

The Germans' New Years' eve attack necessitated some changes in the disposition of the American Seventh Army forces. For some 30 hours the capital of Alsace, across the Rhine from Germany, was held by two *Stars and Stripes* sergeants and a company of military police.

On Tuesday, January 2, the people of Strasbourg saw the Americans pulling out. To them, for they knew the Germans all too well, this was a sign of disaster. And nobody bothered to explain to them that it was not. They saw officers rushing around hastily gathering things up, smashing captured equipment and generally getting ready to move fast. The word spread. Wednesday morning is now known as the "day of the great fear." Strasbourg thought that the Germans were coming back in and they knew that it would mean mass slaughter. They began piling such possessions as they could in carts and baby carriages. They took to the roads. In Strasbourg the two sergeants heard the order to move but decided to stay put. These sergeants had been editing and publishing the Army newspaper *Stars and Stripes* in Sicily, Italy, Southern France and Alsace. They thought the troops needed the paper and they thought too that maybe Strasbourg needed it at that moment.

All of their staff was ordered out and had to go, reluctantly, and with anger in their hearts. For three days the *Stars and Stripes* was published painfully by the two sergeants, three frontline reporters and a French linotype operator. It came out as one sheet, printed in English, French and German, and it was the only news Strasbourg had.

A Frenchman monitored BBC news in French and German and set it up. The electricity failed often during the night and it was 5 a.m. before they distributed the Army newspaper throughout the city. Because of that, according to the testimony of dozens of Strasbourg citizens, panic was prevented. The *Stars and Stripes* team and the military police made a point of walking around the town just to show themselves. . . . There were a lot of reasons why they could not walk out. There was Lucien, the 14-year-old FFI lad with three Germans to his credit. He became the *Stars and Stripes* office boy when the French Army decided that he was too young to be a regular soldier. He and his family would have been murdered by the Germans. There was 16-year-old formidable Anne Marie from Saint-Dié, whose house was burned when the Germans fired the entire town. She was the *Stars and Stripes*' mascot, and they could not leave her and her mother, who is dying of cancer, and they didn't. And slowly Strasbourg is coming back to life. Saturday was the day of the great return.

"The worst moment for us," said one of the American sergeants, "was the day we went around with the people of Strasbourg and helped them take down their French and American flags. We were so ashamed that we couldn't look each other or the people in the face. And they were ashamed and unhappy, too. After all, you can't blame them. Look at the way the Germans treated

them when they were here. They knew what would happen if the Germans returned. It would have been one of the greatest massacres of this war and that's saying something."

(Chicago DAILY NEWS, January 6, 1945)

With French Pilots in Holland — (By André Foucher, war correspondent) — A cold, damp northern light had descended on the airfield and on the surrounding houses. But in one of them, in the Royal Air Force mess, all was gay and lively. It was Christmas Eve and when their last mission had been completed the airmen had all hastened back to their barracks to freshen up. They were all there, clean shaven, in their dress uniforms, assembled around the Christmas tree decorating the living room.

The majority were French, for in the RAF wing whose ground crew was entirely British, only one of the four squadrons was formed of British pilots.

Although their life was entirely one of war, which has left its stamp on the men and the country, they intended to give their Christmas the solemn spirit it deserved. Thus the unit's Chaplain, a Frenchman, had been entrusted with the difficult task of getting supplies. He had succeeded and that night French champagne allowed them to toast the glory of Allied aviation and the success of their future raids.

At dinner time, the officers left for the non-commissioned officers' mess for, according to English custom, the officers were to wait on their men.

Then it was time for Midnight Mass. Every man, bundled into his leather flight jacket, crossed the countryside covered by a mist rising from the canals. A Flemish church loomed in the blurry night through which we silently walked. Although its walls were intact, the windows had greatly suffered from bombings, and a cold wind blew between the pillars.

However, some figures were already gathered in the nave and we hurried to join them. The traditional ceremony followed which, with such a background, had a particular solemnity that night. The Wing Chaplain then spoke to his comrades of this war in which they are engaged, of this war that must be ended as soon as possible and in which it is essential for everyone to prosecute the task that has been undertaken until the very end. His words were grave but confident in the victory which, that night, seemed to them nearer than ever.

When we emerged from the church, the mist had lifted and we walked silently through the starlit night. But I am sure that my neighbors, after a fleeting thought of those they had left behind, were already thinking of their next mission. Their work, all their life was there. And during those hard days of the German offensive, they felt the heavy responsibilities that weighed upon them.

Next morning they quite simply took to their planes without giving one second to the thought of the mortal dangers they would encounter.

(LE TEMOIGNAGE CHRETIEN, Paris, January 5, 1945)

On the Atlantic Front

100,000 Germans Hold Atlantic Positions — Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, January 10, (AFP war correspondent) — Figures on German garrisons in the Atlantic ports are as follows: Lorient, 25,000; Saint-Nazaire, 35,000; La Rochelle and pockets on either side of the mouth of the Gironde, 40,000, making a total of 100,000 Germans now holding these three sectors of the French coast.

North of the Loire — General Farmbacher, who was formerly stationed at Brest, and managed to escape with his staff before the fall of the city, is now in command of the Germans holding out north of the Loire. He has organized a powerful fighting force composed of small groups from the most varied services including customs officers and sailors. But the strength of the German garrisons is owing mainly to the anti-aircraft units, which had made of Lorient and Saint-Nazaire extremely important anti-aircraft defense centers.

In addition to these ports, the Germans are also holding the islands of Groix, Belle-Ile, and Noirmoutier off Saint-Nazaire, the islands of Ré, Oléron off La Rochelle, some other small islands and the Quiberon peninsula. But French artillery is active and greatly hinders communications between the Germans entrenched on the continent and those settled in these small isolated pockets.

How important are these centers of enemy resistance?

The Lorient pocket covers a territory of 32 kilometers in length and 10 to 20 kilometers in depth. At Saint-Nazaire, the enemy holds a sector whose perimeter is 75 kilometers to the north and 40 kilometers to the south of the Loire.

Marshes cover the greatest portion of this sector and that explains the critical food situation. As for the La Rochelle pocket, its boundaries are extremely vague; it extends approximately over 24 kilometers up to the mouth of the Charente, and over 40 kilometers south of Pointe de Graves. These figures are approximate, for the greatest portion of this sector is held by isolated advance posts.

All these German garrisons are defended by artillery and appear to be well supplied. Undoubtedly, large reserves were stocked in the ports and, in addition, it is believed that the Germans are supplied by air.

Large railroad guns on the Quiberon peninsula bombard the Breton coast. American and French forces counterfire but the FFI are mainly responsible for containing the Germans on the Atlantic coast. The Allies have equipped and armed them as adequately as possible but in this very severe climate many are those who are still fighting without sufficient clothing and blankets. American officers who recently visited these advance posts were extremely impressed by the high morale and courage in face of hardships of our Breton FFI.

Additional Information — The situation had already been described in our newspaper, but we are now able

to give additional information which censorship has heretofore prevented us from publishing.

The above dispatch does not mention the Dunkerque pocket on the Channel coast where twenty thousand Germans are entrenched, protected by floods they themselves brought about and by powerful artillery.

In all these pockets the Germans are supplied by amphibious and land planes. Four airfields seem to have been reconditioned in the Atlantic pockets. By air route the besieged men receive mail, newspapers, propaganda tracts, drugs, officers and highly specialized personnel. In addition, there are strong reasons for believing that the Southeastern pockets are supplied by ships sailing from a neighboring country. Under the cover of night they enter and leave our waters and as yet we have not been able to interfere. It is equally extremely difficult to intercept the land and sea planes flying from the Reich and a few reasons can explain why: there are no night pursuit planes, no long-range anti-aircraft guns. These planes fly above the sea at high altitude. Once their mission has been completed, they rise above the water and only cross over France once they are above 10,000 meters.

Communications Ensured — On the other hand, communications between the Atlantic pockets are ensured by fast PT boats and probably by submarine. Communications with the Dunkerque pocket are probably maintained by sea from the northern coast held by the Germans, either from Holland or Germany proper.

The German command clearly does its utmost to keep those virtual prisoners from feeling as isolated as they believe they are and boosts their morale by daily repeating that they are accomplishing an important mission in blocking the best French ports.

Public opinion cannot understand why this cancer is tolerated on French soil. However, the reasons are simple enough. When opportunities were lost at the time of the lightning August and September offensive, the Germans were enabled to entrench themselves powerfully. From then on, the heroic FFI fighting on all these fronts had to be content with containing them, since they lack the necessary arms to attack.

To dislodge the Germans from these sections of the Atlantic wall now strengthened by five months' preparations would require a major effort from the navy, the air force and armored units. This equipment would have to be withdrawn from the Rhine front and the time is perhaps not favorable.

Evacuation of Saint-Nazaire — The evacuation of civilians from the Saint-Nazaire pocket announced yesterday, is the second operation of this sort. The first time, in November, only 25,000 French people agreed to leave the encircled territory. According to information obtained in Nantes, 175,000 people wanted to remain to try to save their possessions. Though evacuation is not compulsory this time a large number of our com-

patriots will again probably prefer to remain in the territory under German control. The Germans want our people to leave and even provide all facilities; to have more supplies and to exercise a more rigorous control, they prefer to remain alone.

(*LE FIGARO, Paris, January 12, 1945*)

French Sailors on Guard — After the landing in Normandy all the scattered sailors from Brest were rapidly reorganized into regularly constituted companies. They participated in the capture of Conquet and later of Brest. A small detachment reestablished order in the island of Ouessant; a larger force mopped up Benodet and Concarneau. In the Lorient region, five companies formed around a nucleus of Navy firemen from Lorient and Nantes, are at present the only force strong enough to contain the enemy; two other companies are holding the Caudan sector; a third, the Rhuys peninsula; a fourth, La Vilaine and a fifth is in reserve at Vannes in Morbihan. A battalion of 450 men is stationed on the La Rochelle front and there are still 300 men before Royan.

A French crew on a Royal Navy MTB seized the German steamship Rostock which had already been captured in 1940 by the Elan, then recovered by the Germans during the occupation. The Rostock is now part of the French fleet.

These sailors are on guard all along the coast. On December 24 Lieutenant Gaillard, liaison officer with headquarters of the Aunis forces south of the Loire, was killed on a mission on the Sables-d'Olonne front.

(*FRANCE LIBRE, Paris, January 12, 1945*)

III—MILITARY NEWS

Lieutenant Colonel Pouyade Tells Story of Normandie Squadron

At a press conference on January 10, 1945, Lieutenant Colonel Pouyade, Flight Commander of the Normandie-Niemen Squadron told the group's story:

The Normandie Squadron was formed in Syria in 1942, on the initiative of General de Gaulle. Equipped with Jaki pursuit planes, its crew was formed entirely of veteran pilots and mechanics of the campaigns of France, Britain and Tripoli. During the same year, General de Gaulle and General Valin, then commander of the Free French Air Force, decided to send 14 pilots and 15 mechanics from the Squadron to fight on the Eastern front. After crossing Africa, Iran, the Caspian Sea, and the Ural Mountains, they finally reached Moscow at the end of November. The pilots spent the winter months training under Flight Commander Tulasne.

In March 1943, the Squadron was ordered to the front in the Orel region. From March to July, before the Russian offensive, it continued its training as pursuit escort. In July 1943, the pilots, then numbering 20, fought beside Soviet Unmicheks in the Orel battle. They completed 138 missions, shot down 19 enemy planes and damaged others.

On July 17, 1943, Flight Commander Tulasne was killed in action. In August, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Pouyade, the Squadron was re-equipped with Yak-9's and fought in the battles of Bryansk and Spas-Demensk.

In September the Squadron participated in the battle of Smolensk, and after Orsha added 11 victories to its honor list. The Squadron was relieved in November 1943, with a record of 77 official victories, nine probables and 15 planes damaged. During the winter of 1943-1944 the Squadron was named "Normandie" and it returned to the front in May.

In July, it joined in the Vitebsk, Orsha and Minsk operations, and in August assisted the crossing of the Niemen and the capture of Mariupol. Marshal Stalin cited the Squadron, and four of its pilots received the Soviet Red Banner decoration.

In October, the Russian offensive in East Prussia and the reappearance of German pursuit planes — which had not been seen since early in 1944 — allowed the Squadron to increase its list of victories to 199 official, 26 probables, 28 planes damaged, more than 30 locomotives, 100 cars, 300 trucks destroyed.

On December 2, 1944, in accordance with Red Army practice, the Squadron was authorized to add to its name that of the battle in which it had won special distinction, and was renamed "Normandie-Niemen."

Since January 1945, Lieutenant Marcel Albert — who recently shot down his 23rd German plane — and Lieutenant Roland de la Pouape, have been decorated as Heroes of the Soviet Union. Although some of the Normandie Squadron's heroes are today on leave in France, most of the Squadron is still in East Prussia where it is carrying on the fight.

(*Ministry of Information, Paris, January 16, 1945*)

Air Force Victories

As of January 1, 1945, pursuit units of the French Air Force have won 1,087 official victories and 309 probable victories.

French airmen fighting in Royal Air Force Squadrons have won 65 official victories and 25 probable victories.

The Normandie pursuit Squadron has scored 199 victories, the Alsace group 87, and the Lafayette group 67.

(*Ministry of Information, Paris, January 23, 1945*)

Soviet Embassy Receives Airmen of Normandie Squadron

On January 27, the Soviet Embassy in Paris held a reception in honor of the airmen of the Normandie-Niemen Squadron, now on leave. A number of Russian and French dignitaries, among them the Minister of Air and General Catroux, were present.

(*Ministry of Information, Paris, January 29, 1945*)

French Naval Action Off Italian Coast

Communiqué released by the French Naval Mission in the United States: French Naval vessels are now fighting off the Italian coast. The cruisers Montcalm,