ARABIAN KNIGHTS

Sayid Idris (left) leader of the Senussi Arabs, is greeted by his troops in traditional manner. Formerly under Italians, they joined Allies recently in Libya.

THE WAR - WEEK — Commentary on Current Events

Superiority Of Allied Air Power Insures Success In North Africa

Four main factors may be said to account for the great Allied air successes in North Africa. They are important because they have never been present before all together. They are important also because when those four qualities can be combined they make possible decisive results.

The four factors were—and are:

1.—Superiority in technical quality of aircraft.

2.—Superiority in numbers.

3.—Adequate ground organization for servicing, maintenance and repair.

4.—Masterly handling of the available squadrons in a balanced offensive.

Added to those essential qualities is the fact that a chain of air bases were available for occupation as the advance went forward westward from Egypt and eastward from Algeria. And furthermore the axis use of their own air forces was distinguished by neither imagination nor initiative. Not for the first time the Luftwaffe was so rigidly bound to its ground forces that it could exploit none of the versatility which characterizes air-power and is so essential for its success.

Let us examine more closely those four factors in success.

In the first place the Allied forces had a marked technical superiority in the aircraft employed. The basis of all air-power is the single-seat fighter and both in Egypt and in French North Africa the Supermarine Spitfire, flown by British, American and Imperial pilots showed that it is the fighter "par-excellence." The Spitfires were able to establish real air supremacy—not merely superiority—and so drive the enemy out of the sky.

Improved Spitfire

Incidentally, a still further improved version of the Spitfire is now in service powered with the new Rolls Royce Merlin Sixty-One motor of greatly increased performance. The result is a high-flying fighter which is not only delightful to fly but supreme in speed and fire-power. This Spitfire is a world beater—and fortunately there are going to be plenty of them.

Of the other types of aircraft which have done so well in North Africa the Hurricane and Kittyhawk fighter bombers, the American Boston, Baltimore and Mitchell medium bombers, and the Halifax and Liberator heavy bombers have been outstanding. To single out but one—the Douglas-Boston III of the British Air Forces, similar to the American A-20C, has performed magnificently and has lent itself to new and brilliant tactics described by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder as "Boston tea parties." In these "parties" concentrated attacks are made by Bostons in close formation against enemy fighter airdromes. The bombs are dropped at 15 yard intervals over the whole target which is thus completely blanketed. Overlaps are liable to be reprimanded.

Quite early in the attacks the Allied forces had built up superiority of numbers over the Luftwaffe in Egypt—estimated at some 600 German and 400 Italian first-line aircraft. The magnificently organized workshops behind the lines made possible the maintenance of the Allied aircraft in action at a constant level. In that respect the enemy failed and, as he retreated, abandoned much of his equipment.

Malta In New Role

The use of parachute troops in French North Africa is another example of the exploitation of the right weapons in the right places. The 1,500 mile flight by the American and British troops under Lt. Col. Edson D. Raff in their Douglas transports from England to Africa must rank as one of the great feats of its kind in this war and of immense significance for the future. In every way the Twelfth Air Force of the U. S. Army, now in Africa, must be congratulated on a fine piece of work which will lead to great things.

How great these things are to be in the near future will depend very much on the air-strength of the United Nations. The axis is likely to try and set up the strongest possible air cover in a triangle over Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Southern Italy—all well-equipped with airfields. The Sicilian Channel between Tunis and Marsala in Sicily is about 90 miles wide which means that strong Allied fighter sweeps would be possible from Tunis in support of concentrated bombing. Furthermore, Malta—which now turns from grim and gallant defence to swift and shattering attack—is only 60 miles from the Sicilian shore. Now at last Malta comes into her own.

The first task is thus to clear the axis neck and crop out of Africa. The next is to establish air superiority from African air bases out over the Mediterranean. The third is to destroy as much as possible of the Luftwaffe on its advanced bases to create the conditions in which successful combined operations can be advanced a step further. The Luftwaffe must be made to fight—the more it fights the better for the Allied cause. Aircraft production in America and Great Britain now outstrips that of the axis by a wide margin. The higher the rate of wastage which can be forced on the axis the quicker will come the absolute air mastery which is the key to victory.

Of the 21,500,000 women between the ages of 14 and 65 in the United States, more than 13,500,000 are employed.

THE BOOK SHELF

OUR HEARTS WERE YOUNG AND GAY

By Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough

Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough went abroad together. This was in the early twenties, and they were not quite in theirs.

"Emily," Cornelia said, "attracts trouble the way blue serge attracts lint." But it was, after all, Cornelia who came down with the measles and a great many complications. Emily did nearly drown a man, but her intention was only to be helpful; and when she hit an English nobleman in the face, it was unpremeditated and in sport. Certainly the shipwreck was not the fault of either of them, though Cornelia has always averred that the mere fact of Emily's being there helped to bring it about.

They were young and foolish and their hearts were gay. They laughed at nearly everything but they cried, too, at England, and the sight of France, the Eiffel Tower and Joan of Arc. They had been brought up to know about such places, and sure enough they were true, and Cornelia and Emily were there to see them.

They were every young American girl on her first trip abroad. They discovered and they owned Europe, or such part of it as they awkwardly cantered over, and they adored almost everything they encountered. Such things as they did not adore they hated. They would not have known enough nor how to be bored. They longed to be considered worldly but they were not of the world; they were on top of it.

Our Hearts Were Young and Gay . . . By Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough . . . Dodd, Mead & Company . . . Price $3.00.

VOICE OF THE PRESS

SAVE THE YOUNG PIGS

Lowering the mortality rate in young pigs is the greatest single step toward meeting the bacon production objective of 675,000,000 pounds set in the new British agreement. In fact, this may be the only assured means of achieving the goal.

Too many young pigs are lost each year — almost invariably through ignorance rather than carelessness. Lack of iron, resulting in anaemia, worms and disease germs are common causes of serious losses in young pigs.

—Winnipeg Tribune.

—o—

LOOK IT UP, HITLER

"Granting that Herr Hitler feels all the admiration for the music of Richard Wagner he professes, its still a cinch bet one of the composer's works is never played or mentioned in his presence. That's his 'Rule Britannia' March which he wrote and sent to the London Philharmonic Orchestra for performance in 1840."

—Detroit Free Press.

—o—

WE DON'T BELIEVE IT

One o' our readers claims to of overheard the followin' dialogue:

Buyer—"How about a little butter?"

Dealer—"We ain't got none."

Buyer—"Oh, go down in the cellar and have a look aronud."

Dealer—"I can't."

Buyer—"Why not?"

Dealer—"Cellar steps are blocked with cases."

Buyer—"Cases of what?"

Dealer—"Butter."

—Starbeams.

—o—

COLD-BLOODED

Japanese airmen have deliberately bombed Red Cross hospitals in the South Pacific. That's just another double-cross by the Japs.

—Windsor Star.

—o—

THEY GO UNDER

Lloyd's of London is now [illegible]ed in offices 50 feet under[illegible]nd. Yes, they're the underwriters.

—Hamilton Spectator.

—o—

MATTER OF OPINION

Dad gets more pleasure out of a made-over dress than mother.

Kitchener Record.

Air Depots Built In African Jungle

Emergency Landing Places In Wildest Part of Africa

A great many planes have been flown from the British Isles to the Middle East, but thousands have been shipped from the United States to ports in West Africa, reassembled, and then flown to their bases. President Roosevelt stated a long time ago that the Allies had a huge assembly base somewhere down the coast of the Red Sea from which planes, guns and supplies were sent to the Egyptian front.

* * *

An officer of the Royal Air Force who has arrived in New York revealed that there is an assembly depot in a jungle in Western Africa from which thousands of planes, shipped from the United States, have been flown to the North Africa fronts. It became necessary to establish African depots after the fall of France which made the Mediterranean route dangerous, and this, the largest of the plants, is 6,000 miles from the theatre of war. The place selected was only a tribal hamlet on the fringe of a forest along the coast, but it had a good harbor. Thousands of natives were rounded up, and with the aid of army engineers, they built, deep in the hinterland, what is one of the best equipped air depots in the world. There is a journey of about 4,000 miles through some of the wildest parts of Africa before reaching the edge of the Sudan desert, and engineers had to hack their way through in order to establish emergency landing places where planes could refuel and be serviced. There were not even paths through the forests. In order to win the co-operation of the natives the word was spread that if they found any airmen who are forced down, rewards would be paid in gold for conducting them to the nearest emergency field.

* * *

The R.A.F. officer, who has flown the route himself, says it is one of the most interesting, and perhaps most terrifying territories in the world. The land below teems with lions and other wild animals, and if airmen came down in certain places a bag of gold would not be much use to them. When the planes reach Khartoum the worst of the trip is over, but a 2,000-mile stretch of sand remains, and the monoony is only broken by seeing an occasional Arab tent, or a camel caravan.

SCOUTING . . .

The Chief Scout for Canada, His Excellency the Governor-General, has announced the week of February 21-27 as Boy Scout Week in Canada. The opening feature of the observance will be memorial services for Lord Baden-Powell on February 21, the day prior to the birthday of the Founder of the Boy Scout Movement.

* * *

A few Boy Scouts of Liverpool, England, opened a Service Bureau to give information in the much bombed city. It proved so successful that the police, when confronted with a problem adopted the habit of telling people "Go to the Scouts about it." The service has been extended and three Scout help centres are now in operation.

* * *

A group of British Boy Scouts, anxious to do their bit in purchasing war bonds, organized a mole hunting expedition. They skinned the moles, sold the skins and invested the proceeds in bonds.

* * *

Twenty Scottish Wolf Cubs were waiting outside a theatre to see the movie version of Rudyard Kipling's "Jungle Book." Nearby was a crippled sidewalk artist. The Cubs went into a huddle, reached a unanimous decision, turned the movie money over to the cripple and went home without seeing the picture. Their good turn for the day was done.

* * *

A Jewish contingent of the United States Army has made a donation of five pounds to a British Boy Scout Troop which extended the facilities of its Scout Hall to the unit for religious services.

* * *

A former Patrol Leader of a Northampton Boy Scout Troop, now in the R.A.F., has formed a Boy Scout Troop in Iran. The troop is operating smoothly despite language difficulties. All orders have to be passed on to the boys through an interpreter.

* * *

Eight months ago the Medical Officer at Lansdowne Barracks, Ottawa, asked Boy Scouts to provide the centre with used medicine bottles. Since that time Ottawa Scouts have provided thousands every month. The military centre has not had to purchase one bottle, and an official reports a cash saving of $205, the amount spent in medicine bottles during the same period the year before.

THE UNCONQUERABLES

By E. K. in The Christian Science Monitor

They were twelve young, very young Frenchmen, mostly from the Norman and Breton coast. When the war started, they all volunteered for the French flying forces and became student-pilots in one of France's air schools. They were eager to fight against the hereditary enemy of their country, but France broke down and the students were dismissed. Yet the twelve would not return to their homes. They decided to continue the struggle against the Nazis on their own.

* * *

General de Gaulle's appeal to the French had reached them, and in their secret meetings the young men resolved to join the Free French army. They borrowed money from their parents and friends and bought a small nine-ton sailing vessel, the "Buhara." They installed an outboard motor, purchased some food, and on a cold foggy winter day set out to sea, hoping to reach England. Soon the motor broke down, and the small coat went adrift. When dawn rose, the craft was overtaken by a German patrol-boat and the young men were arrested.

* * *

When they returned to port, and were led to prison surrounded by German soldiers, the town people watched from their thresholds, grim and sad. The trial before the German military court was summary. The German judges offered mercy to any of the young men who were willing to denounce the instigators of their flight. All refused! The Nazis sentenced the oldest of them to be executed, and the others to hard labor for lifetime. None of them flinched.

When they were brought back to prison, Jean M. and Pierre D. who were sentenced to die, were separated from their comrades. When evening fell, a song was heard from their cell:

Mourir pour la patrie,
C'est le sort le plus beau,
Le plus digne d'envie . . !

It was Pierre who sang with loud voice. A prison guard brought a letter to the others who sat in gloomy silence watching the first gleam of daylight breaking through the small cell window. They recognized Jean's handwriting:

Dear Friends and Brothers: Tomorrow at dawn, about 5 o'clock, we will be told that our petition for clemency was refused, and an hour later we will have left this life. Before we fall beneath the German bullets, we will stand hand in hand and cry, "Vive la France!" You, like us, have committed the crime of loving our country. We pay without regret the price of our patriotism . . . And you, dear comrades, in time of hope and ill fortune, remember us and be worthy of us. Pray for our dear France and for us, too, and tell the truth everywhere.

Adieu
Jean M.

* * *

Both were shot at dawn. They died as they had lived, courageously. The ten others were sent to German concentration camps in France. They are still there, living under Nazi iron rule, abused by ruthless Nazi hangmen. Yet neither they nor their murdered comrades have been forgotten. French underground papers have published their story, and their names have become a symbol of French resistance against Nazi oppression. Thousands and thousands of French youth are willing to follow their example.

The "Rock"

A rock and not much more, a chunk of limestone two and a half miles long and 1,550 yards wide, Gibraltar controls the Mediterranean for 500 miles.

War Shortens Men's Shirttails

The United States War Production Board has shortened the nation's shirttails to insure an adequate supply of the visible parts of these garments and ordered, for similar reasons, sweeping reforms in pyjama styles. Pants-cuff fans and zoot-suit addicts were deprived of further opportunity to indulge their fancies along those lines.

The board ordered from two to three inches taken off men's and boys' shirts made after Dec. 15 and estimated that this will result in an annual saving of several million yards of cotton and other fobrics. More than 10,000,000 additional shirts will be manufactured from the material saved, it said.

At the same time, the order imposed a general simplification program on men's and boys' pyjamas, effective Dec. 15, which will save enough material to make 2,200,000 additional pairs of pyjamas.

LIFE'S LIKE THAT — By Fred Neher

"Do I look like a person who stops every time a strange man whistles at me?!!"

POP—Talking Turkey — By J. MILLAR WATT