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#149 War: European 1939: Europe-Invasion

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France
1944
complete

Paris Freed

It is now "two up," to use President Roosevelt's simile. The capital of France has been restored to the Parisians, by their own stout patriotism and valour. As the exciting details of the coup pour in, the extent of the German debacle becomes increasingly evident. A weak attempt is still being made in Berlin to represent this dramatic reverse in Nazi fortunes as being according to plan, but Goebbels, with all his resourcefulness, will find it impossible this time to conceal the gravity of the situation even from the most deluded of his countrymen. The crowning humiliation is that the successful revolt of the Parisians against their persecutors was started by the police. To what a state of impotence must Himmler's infamous Gestapo have fallen when it was possible for loyal Gendarmes to seize the very heart of the city—the historic Ile de la Cite—and convert it into an impregnable fortress against the oppressors, from which they triumphantly drove them out of every section of the metropolis, assisted by the Forces of the Interior, 50,000 strong, under General Pierre Koenig, the newly-appointed governor of Paris, and "countless thousands of unarmed Parisians," in four days of bloody street fighting, the Allies having succeeded in getting in some artillery to the patriots.

Thus ends, most ingloriously for the boastful enemy, four years of tyrannous occupation. It was the threat of encirclement and annihilation of the German garrisons, presented by the swift advance of the Allied armies on all sides of the capital, which led to the collapse of German morale and the decision to withdraw the remnants of the troops while it was still possible to do so; but this does not detract from the magnificent part which the Forces of the Interior have played in the liberation of their beloved mother city. In the Ile de la Cite is situated the famous Notre Dame, where, it is safe to say, if it still stands intact, another great service of thanksgiving will be conducted without delay, as on the occasion of the

Armistice, when tens of thousands of worshippers thronged the ancient edifice to express the public's gratitude for victory.

Nobly have the French "underground" forces—having now come right out into the open—responded to General de Gaulle's summons to arms. Even before that summons came, they had acted with increasing boldness in the past few weeks. To take but one example. La Voix du Maquis, described as the bulletin of the French Forces of the Interior of the Departement of the Ain, has been selling "quite openly in a large part of southern France," it is said. In view of the contents of this publication, this is a remarkable indication of the change which has come over the situation in recent times. Here is a specimen of pungent humour which must have been particularly unpalatable to the arrogant Nazis and their weak-kneed collaborationists: "Under Vichy we had our breadlines, meatless, fireless and joyless days. Now the Germans announce pilotless aeroplanes. To keep up the series we shall soon have a German-less France, a Hitler-less Germany and a war-less world." A choice piece of Gallic wit which shows how the spirit of France has survived its prolonged tribulation.

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