

Holland's Last Stand

By Martha Gellhorn

A Collier's correspondent finds Americans and Dutchmen working hand in hand in the lonely land of Surinam, gathering precious war material in the last outpost of Dutch freedom

WHEN the American soldiers write home saying that they are in Surinam, they get letters back saying that it must be very exciting in Australia or that it must be terribly hot in West Africa. Surinam is the kind of outpost that practically nobody can place.

The Dutch themselves, who own it, spent \$1,600,000 a year on it and forgot about it. Surinam was just 3,000 square miles of matted jungle and stale, coffee-colored rivers, with a capital, a very few so-called towns, a strip of coast more or less chopped free of jungle, 1,900 Europeans who lived there to administer the colony or make money, 162,000 other folk ranging in color from amber Javanese to the soft-black Bush Negroes, gold mines, bauxite mines, cane and coffee plantations, balata trees, other oddments in the way of agriculture and small local industries, and a climate that you just about cannot stand but which you finally get used to.

It lies, hot, unknown and unimportant, between British and French Guiana on the northeast coast of South America. The Atlantic, which is usually gray or blue or green, stretches along the pancake-flat coast and is pure brown mud for twenty miles out. On the south are the jungles of Brazil. By air, Dakar is 1,500 miles away and Miami is 2,323 miles.

The inland country was mapped mostly by guesswork, because no one has been able to survey it. Some of the rivers are navigable for a certain distance into the interior, in case there is any reason to navigate them. There are, in all Surinam, 120 miles of railroad and, since the war, 117 miles of road. If you want to get anywhere else, you can cut your way through with a machete.

You would not think such a country would be interesting to anyone except explorers and those people who collect native music and measure the heads of native tribes. But Surinam is now, since the war, intensely interesting to the Dutch and to us. For the Dutch it is no longer a forgotten colony but the last big piece of land that remains their own and free. For us, it means aluminum from the bauxite mines—an enormous percentage of the aluminum we must have for our war industries.

The Dutch territorial forces and the U. S. Army and Air Forces divide the work, and it is as fine an example of co-operation as you could hope to see. The Dutch have learned from disaster, and nothing any longer seems too bad to be true.

They do not imagine that invasion is a near possibility, but they believe in being ready for anything, including the worst. Dutch officers and men who have



Above: Bayonets and more will welcome any attempt at an Axis landing on Surinam. Mosquito-netted helmets protect faces from insects

Dutch troops aiding U. S. forces in guarding the Zandary air base line up for rifle inspection before Lt. Col. R. L. Wood



PRESS ASSOCIATION

seen service in Europe and the Netherlands East Indies are training a native army. The Dutch do not believe that anything is going on next door in French Guiana except a growing brutality to the convicts, and starvation and intrigue. But they take nothing for granted, they prepare against what could happen, not against what is now happening.

Now, in the flat, blanketing heat, you cannot believe that Axis forces would ever get this far: nor can you imagine a couple of enemy bombers roaring through this hard blue sky. Even though you know it is true, it is hard to believe that the submarine pack, moving south as it is harried down the Caribbean, operates fatally outside the quiet band of mud-colored sea.

But one thing everyone has learned from this war: Anything can happen and no place is too far off. An outpost is meant to guard, warn, put up a fight and delay.

There are not many men and not many tools; they must work with what little they have, making something out

of nothing. Only those who have lived in an outpost can know the strain of this long readiness and this long wait.

You get out of the silver passenger-plane, and you are on a white sand airfield. There are big thatch hangars and the jungle has been pushed back until it forms a wall around the outer edges of the sand. The jungle, called the bush, looks like a solid snarl of green ropes. There are no trees on the field and the heat rises around you in solid layers. You stand, a little sun-blinded with the heat folded around you, and a dry wind picks up the sand and rattles against the white office building and against the gas drums that grow all around the office. A man says, "You better not walk in the sand with those shoes; you'll get chiggers under your toenails. Some sort of local chigger you have to cut out." You are the only passenger getting off and everyone is very surprised that you have done so.

The only people who get off planes here are Army personnel or civilian engineers working for the government. The

airline manager takes you to town in his car. You drive through the Air Forces camp, where there are duckboards over the sand between the buildings, most of the time. You see men coming back from the showers with a towel wrapped around them and wearing good solid shoes (the chiggers again); you see a jeep looking as if it were afloat on a sea of sand; you see men in khaki with sun helmets or forage caps, walking briskly from one identical boxcar to the next.

There is a bareness and a hard, final, end-of-the-world quality about the camp that makes it seem unreal. Later, when you have been there often, you stop seeing it and just feel happy to be there. The officers sleep in barracks, as do the men; the officers' club is a wooden building with ten easy chairs (of the least easy, cheapest variety) and some card tables and a bar; the officers' mess is separated from the men's by an unpulled sheet. The C. O. is twenty-nine and the squadron commander is thirty-one and it is a very fine outfit, all of it. They have the planes to fly and to keep in repair; they



Wings over the WORLD

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"That Their Sufferings Will Not Have Been in Vain"

by **THE LEADER of FREE ITALY,**
CARLO SFORZA
(*former Italian Foreign Minister*)

What kind of post-war world are we fighting to create?

Pan American has presented answers to this question by such leaders of thought as Dr. John Dewey, Dr. Hu Shih and the Archbishop of Canterbury. Here Count Carlo Sforza, former Italian Foreign Minister and now leader of the FREE ITALIANS throughout the world, tells you what he sees—for the future.

THESE ARE TIMES when certain problems, once faced, are rapidly solved. During two thousand years, philosophers asserted that slavery was a "law of nature"; and yet more was done towards its abolition in the half-century around the American Civil War than in the whole preceding Christian era.

That is why I declared, in a recent speech at Montevideo, that the first duty of a free Italy will be "*ardent support of an organized world with no more place for the anarchical independence of the nationalistic States.*" I was not surprised when this statement met with cheers from Italians who had assembled to meet me from all parts of Latin America.

What is true for Italy, which has bitterly learned the folly of aggressive wars, is equally true for America. No American should forget that in the coming world even

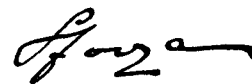
the Ocean will be no more than a big river; and that, if only for that, the era of isolation is gone forever. Those who cannot see this are like certain *dannati* in Dante's *Inferno*—people walking eternally with their heads turned backwards.

The highest duty of the present generation of Americans is to fight in order to make impossible a repetition of the Nazi-Fascist plot against peace. This American duty was foreseen by the Declaration of Independence when it stated in 1776: "*... that whenever any form of Government becomes destructive [of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness] it is the right of the People to alter or to abolish it.*" In Jefferson's mind, "*right*" meant "*duty*"!

War always means suffering. But our sufferings in this "toughest of all wars" will not have been in vain since we are beginning to learn:—

- (a) INDIVIDUALLY: that Liberty is a right which must be won anew by the common people in each generation;
- (b) NATIONALLY: that the previous complete independence of Nations must cease. They must submit to a superior international law which will make it impossible for peaceful nations to be again at the mercy of adventurers. Never again must it be possible for a Nation, having first destroyed Freedom at home, to prepare satanic aggression behind its closed frontiers.

We must resolve that frontiers will no longer mean what they meant up until 1939. I foresee a Peace Conference at which we might agree to draw in frontiers very lightly—with a pencil and not in indelible ink.



THE DAY THAT VICTORY is earned by the United Nations, aviation must be ready to demonstrate that it is a great constructive, as well as a great destructive, force.

Air transport travel costs will, we believe, be brought within the reach of common men everywhere. Two weeks' vacation in Italy? Certainly, since Rome will be only 16 hours from New York by air. Round-the-world air cruises in two weeks? Nothing will prevent them when Victory comes except the barriers of habit and disbelief.

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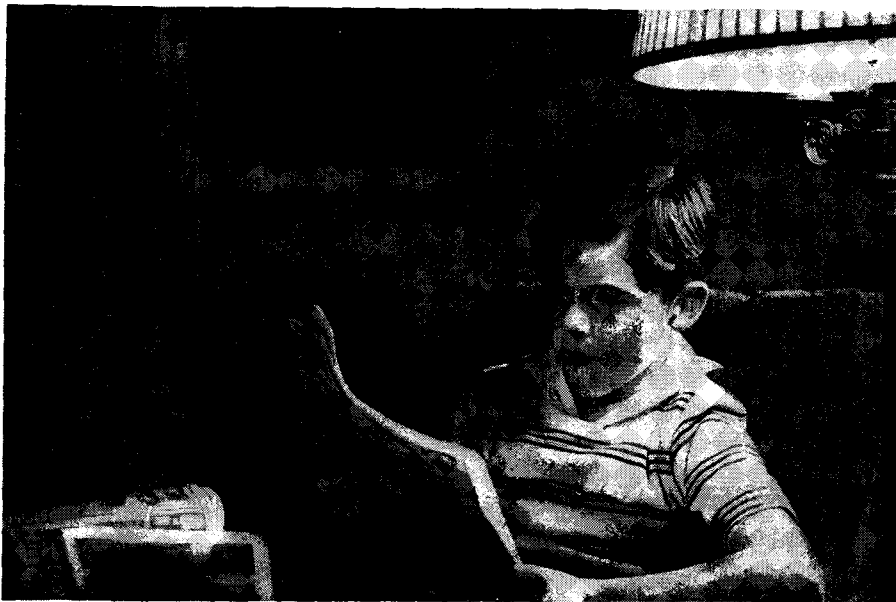
Today, of course, everything that we can offer—120 million miles of over-ocean flight experience, trained personnel and service to over 60 foreign countries and colonies—is at work for the government and military services of the United States.

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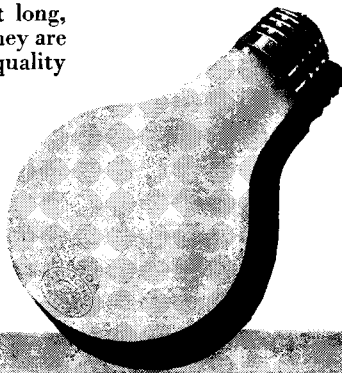


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have the sand and the heat, a movie, couple of radios, something to drink, one another to talk to, canned food, and they know what a good station it is, except that everyone would like to be where the action is. The camp has the goodness of all real places. But that comes from the men who are there and the way they handle their work and their lives.

You pass the sentry at the camp gate and are on a new narrow road made of bauxite clay, bright red and swirling with dust. After an hour or more of good solid bumping you get to the capital, and it is wonderful. Paramaribo is shabby and needs paint; wooden houses with fretwork balconies line the dusty streets. There are shops everywhere: Javanese cobblers, Hindu drygoods shops, Chinese restaurants, Dutch department stores, a bar saying, "Drink California Fruit Wine, the Best," a store saying, "Jonas Home Industries," where you can purchase every local product from preserved tarantulas to honey and Bush Negro combs.

Capital by the Jungle

The small women of the East—Javanese and Hindu—pad around barefoot in the dust; there are colored policemen in green uniforms; a lovely white lady on a bicycle, with a wicker basket on the handle bars holding her chubby blond son; Creole women, enormous under their starched dresses, with baskets balanced on top of their bandannas; American soldiers; an occasional staff car; an occasional shining black limousine; the Navy station wagon; government clerks with white suits and brief cases; girls who have Malay and Chinese and Negro blood (which makes a handsome mixture), dressed as nearly like the last movie magazine as possible. The town has everything; it comes straight from a book about how a city at the edge of the jungle, lying along a flat brown jungle river, ought to look.

There is one hotel and when the soldiers have two days' leave they come to town and stay in this hotel. They sit in the lobby and listen to the radio and drink beer; at night they go to the movies or play poker. These wild and varied pleasures are all obtainable at camp; but in town there is always the chance they will meet somebody new. And if they meet somebody new they can talk about their home town and what they used to do there, and a little later they can take from a breast pocket the now dog-eared snapshot of wife or girl or child and show it to the newcomer.

"She's lovely," you say.

"Yeah," smiling, and the picture goes back into the breast pocket.

The lobby is dark and soiled; the matting is torn on the stairs, the tablecloths are spotted; everything needs paint; the food is awful. It is a dreadful hotel, run by wonderfully kind people, and we all liked it very much. It was the center of excitement; you have no idea how much goes on where nothing happens, where there is nothing to do, where everyone knows everyone else; in a place that does not even offer an escape to the country because the country is bush and you cannot walk four feet into it. You cannot imagine how jolly and good a place can be even if the mosquitoes ("Union mosquitoes," the ensign said) come out at five P. M. and settle on your arms and neck and legs, mosquitoes as big as ducks armed with knives. Everyone has to make some sort of life, and everyone does; you have a lot of friends in Paramaribo.

At five in the morning you are wakened by the Dutch army. On the square, white noncoms are drilling native troops.

You do not understand the orders but you can lean out of your window and watch the small Javanese and Hindus, stepping along with wooden, concentrated bodies. It is cooler at five anyhow and you might as well get up. It is all very cozy and boarding-school at the hotel, with two showers at the end of the hall for everyone. The censor is sick, across the hall, so you stop in to see if he needs any more books; you bow politely to the consul as you pass each other going to the showers, the soldiers (unequipped with dressing gowns) duck their towel-clad bodies into their rooms when anything female passes; you can exchange badinage with the Navy (which is also getting up) on your way downstairs.

Downstairs in the lobby is a tired-looking young Air Forces major, who has not been able to sleep because he had a bed with a mattress and some sort of springs. "Just couldn't get used to it, after all this time," he says sadly. You watch the Dutch army through the window. "Those boys sure work," he says admiringly. And how they work! The Marines have turned tankists; every officer, no matter what his previous service was, is now responsible for drilling and training a certain number of raw native troops (and for doing his other work besides). They work all day, and at night the lights burn in the Territorial Command offices. They work with that fierce and patient determination that the Dutch had in Java. Anything that will keep the rain off is good enough quarters.

And they have wives and children in Holland, and they do not hear from them. They write via the Red Cross through Switzerland, and if they get a letter back it can tell them nothing, but as long as a letter comes in the known handwriting it means that the wife, the child is alive. It is just the handwriting that counts; an empty envelope would be proof enough. Meantime they work. They are a tough race. And it is wonderful to see what the Americans have done to them; the solid, thoughtful formality of the Dutch gets blown sky-high under the impact of these quick-talking, quick-laughing guys from home.

The War Comes First

Of course, here as everywhere in the Caribbean, American money has capsize all local economics. Wages and prices rocket up, there is a labor shortage because of all the war construction; the Americans being in a hurry and having the money will pay what is asked to get what they want. Someone will one day have to tidy this up. It certainly cannot go on as it does. But that is not the concern of the American soldiers or officers, nor is it now especially the concern of the Dutch. The war must be won first. The Dutch think the Americans are okay and the Americans think the Dutch are okay, and what social customs the Americans do not understand they laugh at, and the Dutch treat American oddities with understanding and laugh too.

We went up to the biggest bauxite mine by boat, the only way to go. Being lucky, we got a ride on the Army crash boat which patrols the river. The river is coffee-brown, like all the others, and winds through walls of jungle. We stopped off at a Bush Negro village, as there was an officer along who had never seen one. He had thought it would be something like a native village by a waterfall in a Dotty Lamour movie. He was not prepared for the smell. The Bush Negroes rub themselves with rancid oil, and that, combined with sweat and the nonuse of soap and whatever smell they naturally have, makes an odor (shall we

say?) which is pretty nearly unbearable.

The village came out to see us and cluster round. Bush Negroes are small, the men with well-developed shoulder muscles (from paddling native canoes and lumbering) and with spindly legs. The women are small, too, and after they are fifteen years of age, they are old and increasingly ugly. They wear tattooing on their faces, between their breasts and on their backs. This tattooing is short black marks cut and burned into the flesh. They wear little flat sacks tied around their necks to keep off evil spirits, and a piece of checked cloth wrapped around them as a skirt, and they part their hair as if they were cutting a pie, in segments from the crown of the head, and they are full of giggles.

I asked one serious-looking savage what they thought of the war.

"War?" he said, very puzzled.

"You know," I said, "all the fighting that is going on."

"No, no, no," he said; "we no fighting. We do nothing bads."

"Not you," I said; "the war in Holland."

There was grave thought for a while. Then the type said, "We sorry for Missy Wilhelmina."

"Why?"

"She cannot go home."

That was as far as I ever got on the subject of the war. Beyond the queen, whom they regard as a personal friend if not a near relative, the Bush Negroes are as innocent about war and politics as they are about life, love and clothing. They are very nice, amiable people, if you like savages, and I am told you can get used to their smell.

When the Bush Negroes' ancestors were brought here as slaves two centuries ago they escaped. These descendants never paid taxes, never obeyed rulers other than their own, never grown dependent on the white man. They set out to be free men and so they have remained.

Close-up of a Bauxite Mine

The lieutenant and I did the bauxite situation up brown, in no time at all. He showed me the mine. It looked like an open gravelly field, dug at, chewed, plowed: a mess. You picked up some of the clayey mud, reddish with white streaks in it and it crumbled in your hand. We looked at it. The driver looked at it. "That's what we're here for," he said with resignation. He came from Alabama, I think. The plant was the same thing: it looked like a collection of silos and barns, red with dust and silent. A soldier marched steadily around.

"Interesting?" the lieutenant said.

"Oh, very." We did not get out of the command car.

"You've seen the river?"

"Yes."

"We've got the skin of an eighteen-foot boa in the P. X.," the driver said.

The day before, with the major and this driver, I had gone over the narrow road to Albina, which is the Dutch frontier post opposite French Guiana. Albina is a row of faded houses facing the silent river and French Guiana. It is a trading post—gold and balata are paddled down in native canoes from the upper reaches of the Marowijne.

On the Dutch side of the river, near Albina, there are Javanese and Aruwak Indian and Carib Indian and Bush Negro villages. (The Caribs were all drunk as goats that day, either lying in their hammocks or sprawled in the shade under their thatched roofs. They had had a bang-up funeral and you could smell the cassava brew on their breaths. They were friendly and embarrassed and not working and very, very tight.) Across

the river is the penal colony of Saint Laurent. It looks quite pretty until you get there. Just in front of the French pier there is the rusty hulk of a German freighter, which was sunk there in 1923 when the captain (like the Caribs) was feeling fine. Little trees have grown up on the lopsided deck. Behind these little trees are two little machine guns pointing across to the Dutch.

Behind the dock, two convicts are sawing wood. They look seventy, and are probably about fifty years old; their bodies are all bone, with the arms no bigger than your wrist and the ribs like the ribs of starved horses. The men's stomachs are bloated on the skinny, sick bodies. They pant out numbers to each other: One, two, one, two, trying to pull the heavy saw through the hard wood. There is no one else to be seen.

The Walking Skeletons

The Dutchman who got me in (I was a tourist from Paramaribo wanting to buy convict-made trinkets) warned me not to speak English, so we spoke ungrammatical German loudly and everything was fine. We passed convicts in red-and-white-striped suits and straw hats, dead-faced, starved men, walking slowly as if they had no strength to walk faster.

One wall of the prison faces the river and is considered escapeproof. On the town side, there is an iron fence, ten feet or more high, iron rods tipped with spikes. At dusk the guards come out like hunting dogs, armed with Mausers, and range up and down the street in the shadow of the trees across from this fence. If anyone comes near the fence, they shoot. The guards have faces suited to their work; it is a horrible town. You would not think a town could really look like starvation and cruelty and loneliness and the slow rotting of wood and men, but that is what it looks like and feels like.

I had talked with escaped convicts in Albina. They said that since the Vichy government, the authorities were simply wiping out the convict population, by starvation and overwork and punishment. The prisoners estimate that, once the punishment starts, a man can live about three months. Since the Vichy government, half the prisoners in the penal colony of Saint Jean de Maronie (about 700 men) have died. Seeing Saint Laurent, that afternoon, I wondered that anyone could escape from these guarded morgues-for-the-living. The prisoners who escaped came to join De Gaulle's forces, but it's a long way from Surinam to West Africa, and there is no transport for them. They do odd jobs and wait and hope and are grateful to the Dutch, who treat them like men, and not like fierce animals who must be tormented before they are killed. French Guiana is a shameful country and always has been and it is worse now.

The soldiers were listening to the radio as usual, in the hotel lobby at Paramaribo. The President is talking about what victory will mean: the Four Freedoms: "Freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want, freedom from fear."

One of the soldiers said, gravely, seriously, "Just freedom would be enough."

And, of course, without thinking about it or talking about it or bothering to know it, that is why they are here—and why there is an outpost, this or any other.

So you beat off the mosquitoes and call for another drink, and a boy says, "You know how it would be in Georgia now? Say . . ." And then they are all started.

THE END

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The suitcase was full. There were four pairs of dungarees, an overcoat, shoes, socks, and three caps marked with a swastika

THE SERVICE FLAG

By Ben Ames Williams

ILLUSTRATED BY WALLACE MORGAN

Her heart was as big as all outdoors, and by her lights, too much was too little to give to her adopted country

IF IN the late winter or early spring twenty-three years ago you had driven north along the coast of Maine, and if chance had led you to leave the Atlantic Highway and make a loop toward the coast about twenty miles from Bath, and if at a certain four corners by a small white schoolhouse you had turned aside to drive down to the village of Easterly Cove, you would have passed, a mile or so from the schoolhouse, the barn where that winter Marm Schwefel lived with little Kurt.

Strangers passing there unwarned were apt to check and stare. For in the end of the barn toward the road there

were two windows hung with neat white curtains, and in one of these windows there hung a service flag of the sort which people used to fly during the last war, and this flag bore four gold stars.

Those who saw the flag for the first time sometimes exclaimed in wonder; but then they were apt to fall silent, looking back respectfully as they passed, finding it deeply moving that people so poor they must live in a barn had still been rich enough to give the lives of four sons to their country's cause.

MARM SCHWEFEL was born in Bavaria; so she was a German-American, or as people said in the last war, a hyphenated American, or—even more scornfully—a hyphen. Fritz Schwefel came from Bavaria to the United States in 1889, and somehow turned northward into Maine, and went to work for old Ethan Wentworth; and when he had saved enough money he sent for Sophie,

the sweetheart he had left behind. Ethan was an embittered old man, hating all his relatives; and Fritz and Sophie tended him, and when he died he bequeathed to them the farm.

Sophie was a compact little woman, chunky and strong and brave. She bore Fritz four sons and two daughters, not counting the daughter and the son who died as babies. The daughters who grew up, married and went to far cities and seldom returned; but of the four sons only Kurt, the second, was married when in 1917 the United States went into the World War.

Kurt and the other boys all went away to war. They did not wait for the draft, but went together to the recruiting station in Bath, after a family council in which they and Fritz and Sophie had agreed, with no dissenting voice, that they should go.

After they were gone, Mrs. Jeff Penrod told Mrs. Schwefel that she should put up a

service flag with four stars, and she did so.

During the months that followed, Marm Schwefel carried her cross to Calvary. In December, the War Department notified them that their youngest son, Hans, had died of influenza in France. It was again at Mrs. Penrod's suggestion that Marm Schwefel bought a bit of gold cloth and neatly cut out a star and sewed it over one of the stars on her service flag. In January, Kurt's wife, who lived with them, gave birth to Kurt's son and died. Marm Schwefel sewed two more gold stars on the flag in June. In August, a lightning stroke killed Fritz and set the house afire. Only the luck of wind and rain and the combined efforts of every man in the neighborhood saved the big barn. They were able to get a few sticks of furniture out of the house, and the first thing Marm Schwefel saved was the service flag.

Neighbors were quick to offer Marm

(Continued on page 42)