

Vichy. It holds forth the prospect of a full recognition for de Gaulle (in which we are lagging behind Britain and the Soviet Union) and makes possible the operations in West Africa which is the nub of my argument. J. S.]

With the Neutrality Act revised, with our own naval forces growing, with our army reaching the 2,000,000 mark, much bolder decisions are required. The one area of the war in which the relationship of forces is not fully defined happens to be the North and West African littoral. It is our responsibility to the struggle against Hitler to take the initiative.

And if there were any illusions in recent weeks that the local Soviet offensives around Moscow and Leningrad had diminished the urgency of a second front, the terrific onslaught which the Nazis have launched this week ought to dispel those illusions.

Everything we said about the seriousness of the threat to Moscow in the beginning of October holds true today. If the Nazis could encircle Moscow and force its defenders back toward the Volga, our whole national policy of getting help to the Russians would be jeopardized. The war would not have been lost, but winning it would become infinitely more difficult—not only for the Russians—but for ourselves. To face the realities requires a real initiative from America—from ourselves.

JOSEPH STAROBIN.

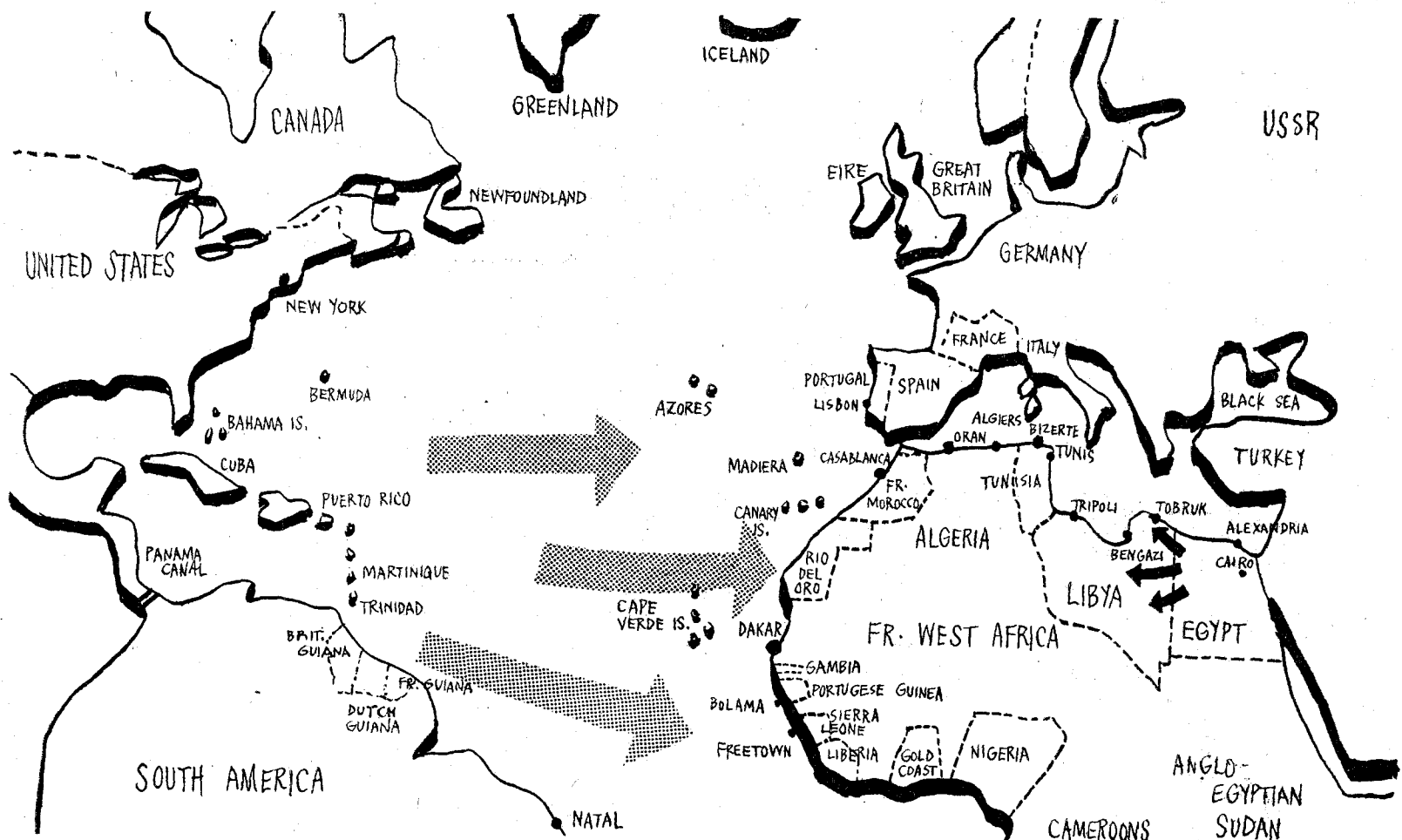
DESERT WARFARE

The problems of fighting in territory practically without food, water, or dwellings. Colonel T. discusses the special difficulties of camouflage and supplies. Britain's coordinated operations between army and navy.

THE peculiarities of desert warfare are embodied in the very word "desert." The desert area is practically devoid of everything. No people, no dwellings, no local resources of food and forage, and above all—little or no water. Days are intolerably hot and nights are comparatively very cold. The absence of dwellings and trees poses tremendous problems in camouflaging and hiding troop concentrations. On the other hand, the openness of the country greatly facilitates aerial observation from which it is almost impossible to hide anything of importance. Where aerial superiority has been achieved, the enemy's patrol planes are simply kept away from the sky over your own army groups. In view of all this the difficulties of supply and cover are the main preoccupations of armies fighting in a desert (not counting, of course, the question of alleviating the suffer-

ing of the troops because of heat, sand storms, etc.).

Supplies, especially water, are the central concern of the advancing force. Cover and camouflage are the main problems of the defending force. These rules, of course, do not apply exclusively to either case. Because desert oases provide both water and cover, the key operative lines in desert warfare still follow the caravan trails linking these oases. Be they the legions of the Pharaohs, Antony, Alexander, Napoleon, or von Rommel and Cunningham, be they on foot, on camel-back, or in tanks—troops have to fight from waterhole to waterhole. Up to the days of motorization many a desert battle was lost not because ammunition gave out, but because the troops had no water left. The soldier's last gulp from his water flask in the desert may provide a no less dramatic subject for a paint-



British offensive in Libya plus the American occupation of Dutch Guiana, coupled with the "resignation" of General Weygand, raise the problem of control in French North and West Africa. British tank forces have taken Bardia and passed Tobruk on their way toward their first major objective, Benghazi. Nazis are probably rushing planes and men and tanks via Sicily, and will undoubtedly use the Tunisian base of Bizerta. American extension of lend-lease aid to the Free French forces brings into view a possible struggle for Dakar. The Free French control Equatorial Africa, while British and Portuguese bases would make possible a thrust up the West African coast. Note strategic position of the Azores, Madeira, and Cape Verde Islands.

ing than "The Last Cartridge of Sedan." This writer well remembers that in the desert battles in which he participated a quarter of a century ago, casualties at times could be broken up thus: thirty percent from enemy fire and seventy percent from the effects of the sun.

The sand storm is also one of the horrors of desert warfare. Only practically air-tight shelters will provide protection from its effects. And an air-tight tent, shack, or box car is no picnic ground when the temperature reaches 130 degrees F. There was a time when the writer's outfit lived in trains of box cars for a couple of months in one of the Central Asiatic deserts (200 feet below sea level) in midsummer. At night a southern sand storm would blow until dawn. All the cracks in the cars had to be sealed with raw cotton and rags. Inside the cars the temperature was such that paraffine candles would stand up only for a few minutes and then practically melt. These candles had to be placed in a pan with water to keep them usable. We would take out one candle at a time, light it with great trouble, and enjoy its light for ten minutes. Then it would have to go back into the water in a highly molli-fied state. Of course, things have changed a lot since then (we did not even have any sun helmets). Army dress has been improved and rationalized. Refrigeration is widely used. There are not only air-conditioned cars, but even air-conditioned tanks.

Nevertheless, take the work of aviation mechanics. Planes come back at sundown and have to be overhauled and inspected overnight. A sand storm starts blowing. The mechanics have to work under the protection of tarpaulins because a pinch of fine sand in an open cylinder will surely spell disaster for the fliers. The same holds true for armored vehicles. Just imagine what working under these conditions means.

ALL TYPES of troops may be used in desert warfare. But nowadays moto-mechanized troops and aviation are the most effective, although their work is far from easy. The former suffer from the combined heat of the sun and their motors, and their vehicles suffer from the wearing effects of the sand. The latter suffer from the difficult flying conditions prevailing over the desert as well as from the "air pits" formed by the ascending columns of hot air.

Special tasks face the army engineers. They, in addition to their usual duties, have to organize water supply, build automobile roads, and establish airdromes. If artificial water supply is not properly organized, the whole operative plan is handicapped by the need to move along lines where water holes are present rather than along lines which would be best tactically. The initiative of the commander is thus stymied.

Winston Churchill has very aptly compared desert warfare with naval warfare. In both

categories of war, positions in the strict terrain sense are practically non-existent. The only position that counts is one's position in relation to the location of enemy forces. In the desert armed forces and groups can move in all directions, like ships at sea. Lines of communications are almost as fluid in the desert as they are at sea. It is almost as unimportant to capture a row of dunes in the desert as it would be to "capture" a wave on the high seas. Battles in the desert are primarily battles of annihilation. It is often unimportant in what direction the running battle moves, as long as the enemy is being destroyed. In the desert one may easily win a battle moving toward one's own rear.

Because of the lack of protection afforded by the terrain, desert battles usually take less time than battles fought in normal surroundings. They often last only a few hours. This is their other similarity with sea battles. However, conditions of terrain and climate apply more or less equally to both sides battling at this time in Libya. Britain, German, and Italian alike are thirsty and hot. Natives may suffer slightly less from the heat, but they are just as thirsty as the Europeans.

IT IS in the following two respects that the British imperial forces have a great advantage over the Axis forces. The British have numerical superiority in men and material. And in the Royal Navy the British also have both a powerful and ever-present guardian of their northern flank and an elastic and "unseverable" line of supply. This numerical superiority obtains on all sectors of the front which, judging by the length of its base (Sollum—Giarabub), is about 150 miles long. The effects of the navy, however, are limited, as far as the protection of the imperial flank is concerned, to a coastal strip as wide as the range of the biggest gun of the biggest British man-of-war. As far as supplies are concerned, the British navy can make its effect felt along a wider strip of coastal territory. Such a strip would be about as wide as the reach of the imperial mobile units' own supply apparatus, or about 100 miles.

Thus we see that of the three operative lines the British can use—the coastal route, Bardia-Tobruk-Derna-Bengazi, enjoys the full advantage of the cooperation of the British navy; the middle road, Capuzzo-El Mekili-Bengazi, enjoys partial naval cooperation; and the inland route, Maddalena-Bab-es-Serir-Agheila, has to be supplied by purely land means.

In conclusion it may be said that all the above considerations may be well and good, but that the main thing is numerical and material superiority over the enemy, desert or no desert. This, in a way, is clearly demonstrated by the calendar of the Libyan campaigns of a year ago.

Roughly, the British advance from Sidi Barrani in Egypt to El Agheila on the Gulf of Sidra (some 400 miles) took exactly two months (Dec. 10 to Feb. 9, 1941). Around March 1 German panzer units and other

troops appeared on the scene. Bengazi, which had been taken by the British on February 8, was recaptured by the Germans on April 4. After that it took the Germans only ten days to race to and take Sollum on the Egyptian border (it had taken the British seventy days to advance from Sollum to Bengazi, with the help of the navy which the Germans lacked completely). On the other hand, it had taken the British twenty-six days to capture Bardia early in 1941, while this time it took them only five days to take it. All this shows that the important thing is to have definite superiority in numbers and equipment.

This superiority the British now undoubtedly have. They have probably some fifteen divisions, of which at least three or four are armored. They have the best American light and medium tanks (13½-ton and 28-ton), as well as some of the newest American fighters and bombers.

Against them the Axis has no more than fourteen divisions, of which only 1½ or 2 are "reduced" German panzer divisions, and 2 probably German motorized divisions. The rest are Italian.

It is probable that the Axis Command has not put all of its troops in the advanced positions on the Egyptian border and that only five or six Italo-German divisions are being annihilated now in the triangle Bardia-Sidi Omar-Tobruk. After this battle is over, it may be expected that the British will be able to match the tempo of von Rommel's march of April last and reach Bengazi in the first week of December. They should greet the year 1942 on the border of Tunisia.

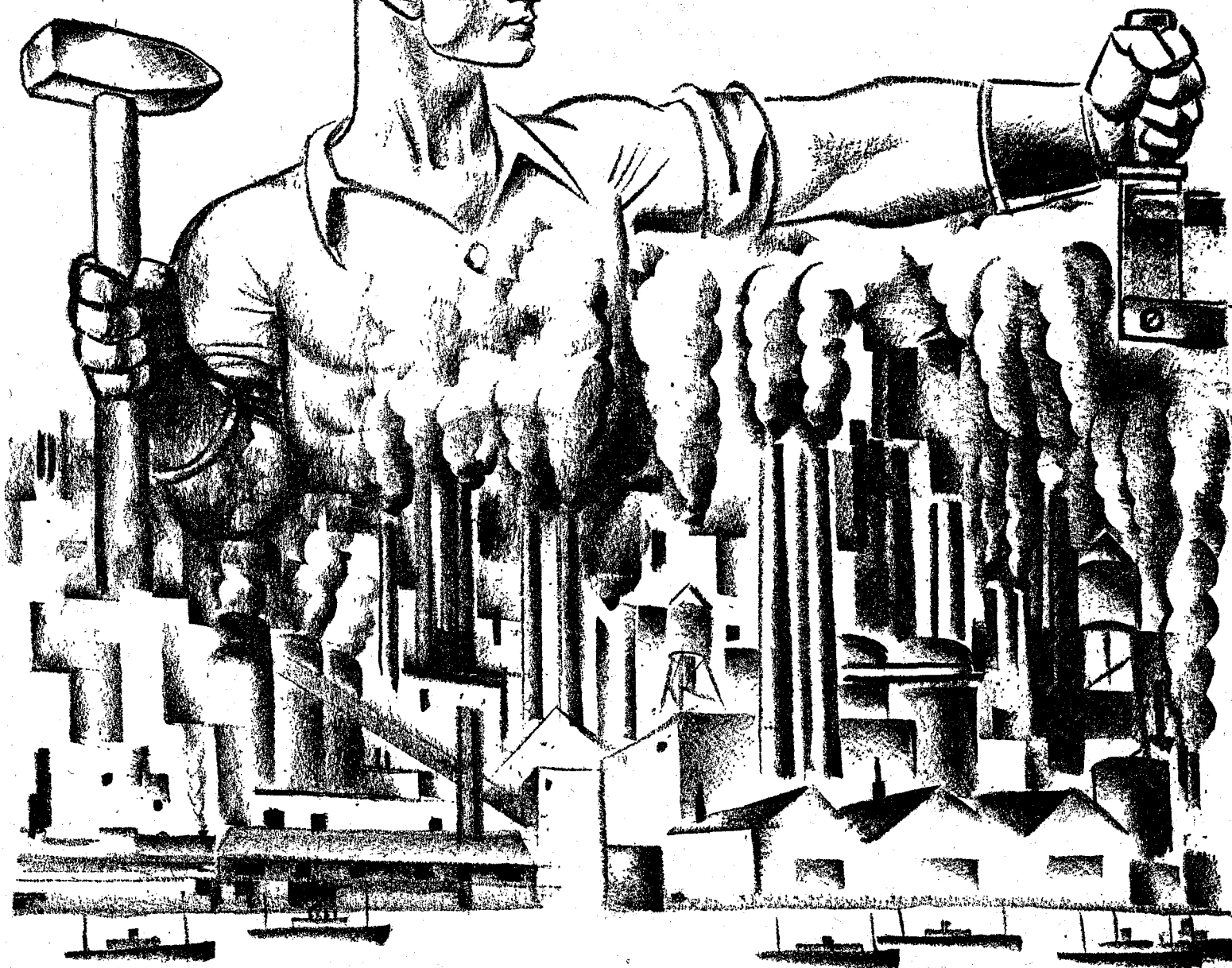
WHAT IS THE EFFECT of the Libyan campaign on the German-Soviet front? As far as the fighting on land is concerned—the effect is for the time being limited, because even if the Germans could afford to move troops away from the Eastern Front they would not be able to get them into Africa now. As far as the air is concerned, it is possible that the Germans will move some Luftwaffe units from the Eastern Front to Africa. They will probably send into battle all they can spare from Italy, Sicily, the Balkans, and the so-called western front.

In comparison with the Eastern Front the Libyan campaign so far is a relatively small operation with some thirty divisions involved, as compared to five or six hundred divisions in the East. But it is better than nothing at all. Furthermore, it may assume importance when the British reach Tunisia and get into position for an attack on Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica—the stepping stones for a smash at Italy. The Libyan campaign may end up at the Brenner Pass. But the Brenner is still 2,000 miles away. If Libya is a "second front," it is only a "second best front," but a front which has great possibilities. In the meanwhile, the Red Army and Navy has to hold the Nazi tiger while the British twist his tail.

COLONEL T.

THE MEANING OF THE CIO CONVENTION

HUGO
GELLERT



A drawing by Hugo Gellert, from the UAA Victory Calendar

The representatives of 5,000,000 working men and women unite on the paramount issue of foreign policy. Philip Murray's stature. An estimate of the meeting by A. B. Magil.

Detroit.

THE big sign outside the city hall read: "Welcome President Murray and Delegates of the CIO National Convention." It wasn't always like that. I can remember the days, not so long ago, when labor men were welcomed with blackjacks and jail sentences in this motor city. And now for the first time the whole of official Detroit, including that part of it which constitutes the Ford empire, and all of the people of Detroit could shake hands with the CIO. For Detroit is just about the biggest CIO town there is,

and there's a new look in the eyes of men and women who only yesterday were frightened and little against the towering open shop.

But the 500-odd delegates to the fourth convention of the CIO had come not so much to rejoice in victories won as to set their course for days to come—days of storm not only for labor, but for the common folk everywhere. A man named Hitler was hovering over the world, threatening to make the universe into one vast open shop, with gunmen and spies hunting down all who dared speak

up for a decent wage and a bit of freedom. And so, whatever organizing the CIO would do in the future—and there were millions still to be brought into the union ranks—there was one main organizing job that the labor movement had to tackle in order to live and grow: the job of organizing the defeat of Hitlerism. There were some who didn't see it that way. There were even a few men of power and influence in the councils of labor who were inclined to tolerate and connive with the Hitler stoolpigeons in