

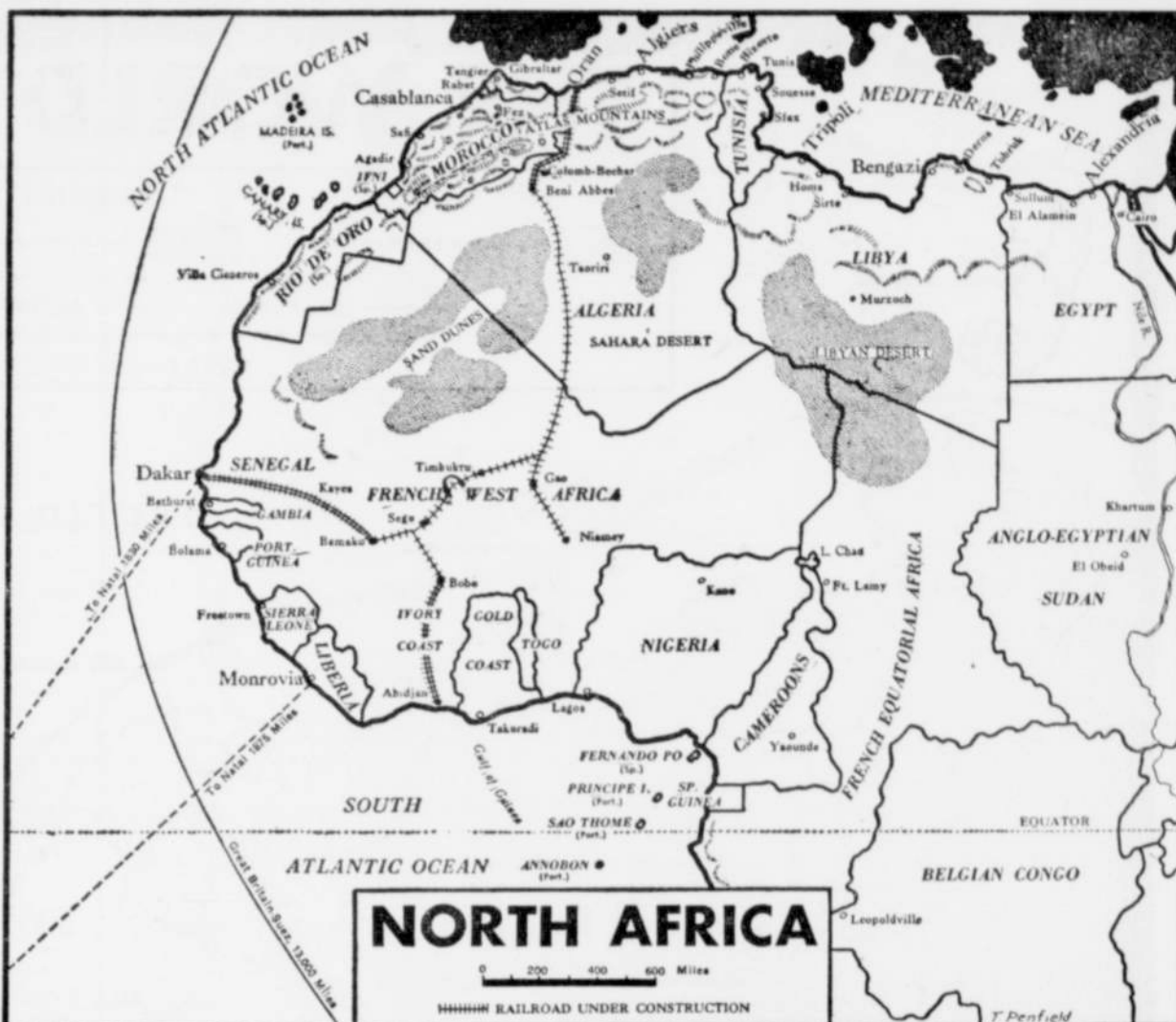
NORTH AFRICA.—The North African expedition will be written in history as one of the greatest single military overseas expeditions of all times. Carefully timed and planned it may change the whole course of the war. Fighting was negligible; it was Blitzkrieg personified. Hitler will not be defeated by the Allied conquest of North Africa, but the act will have given the Allies two tremendous advantages which have been sorely lacking: (1) Protection for Mediterranean shipping, and (2), new bases completing the semicircle of bases around Europe.

Allied air power based on North Africa will in time raise a protective "umbrella" above the Mediterranean shipping lanes and permit safe passage of that stretch of water. When this is a realization the effect upon Japan will be stunning, for then a sizeable force in India can be maintained to give the Chinese real help in driving the Japs from China. This new route will save 8,000 miles and many thousands of tons of shipping. The Middle East can be supplied and its oil brought back to Britain.

Eventually North Africa will be fringed with Allied airfields, and planes based upon them will rain death from the skies upon Southern Europe until it is softened up enough for a blow at the vulnerable part of Europe. The bases in North Africa will unquestionably be used as jumping off points for Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica, Italy, Southern France, Greece, Crete, and perhaps the Balkans, accompanied by invasions from British ports.

A great deal has been said about the importance of Dakar. Only 1,830 air miles from Natal, Brazil, it has been a constant threat to the security of our Atlantic position. As an Allied base it will immeasurably strengthen our North Atlantic sea lanes and relieve the submarine menace in this area. There is no evidence that German submarines have used Dakar as an operating base, but in Hitler's control Dakar would be the equivalent of adding many new vessels to his submarine fleet. In Allied hands Dakar will cut thousands of miles from the route used for air-borne plane deliveries to the fighting fronts. It will serve as a great dispersal point for all kinds of military equipment—an advanced supply base such as established by the Allies at a secret Red sea point. The facilities of Dakar are superior to those of any West African port. The harbor is deep, well protected, and with a drydock, seaplane bases, vast petroleum storage tanks and all the other installations of a first-class naval base.

The Trans-Sahara railway has been a French dream since 1879. The section between Colomb-Bechar and Beni Abbes was completed in 1942. By 1946 it is scheduled for completion to the major river ports of Segou and Gao, tapping the vast Niger valley. The gap between Bamako and Beni Abbes is 1,500 miles. The route is largely over desert lands of shifting sands where few bridges and tunnels are required. Hitler may have dreamed of using this road in his plan to conquer South America from Dakar, and thence move northward to the United States. Now the Allies may reverse the plan.



RUSSIA.—From the icy shore of Barents sea to the snow-covered crags and peaks of the Caucasus Russia fights on a 2,500-mile long front—the longest continuous land front of World War II, and one which offers little except weather in the way of a natural defense barrier. The rich Ukraine and the iron, coal and manganese districts of the Crimea and Donetz Basin have been lost to the Germans, but the Russians fight on with the resources developed in the equally rich Magnitogorsk region. It is true that Russia has lost all of the rich wheat land of the Ukraine, but the Russians have demonstrated before that hunger does not rapidly weaken their will to resist. The loss of the Ukraine was serious, but not fatal.

Unless the Red army can be annihilated it is difficult to see how Russia can be defeated by a Germany which must guard stolen countries from the North Cape to the Mediterranean. Russia's great wall is the Ural mountains, and Russia's back is far from that wall. Russia can retire hundreds of miles. Can Hitler extend his already thin lines that distance? But Russia is determined not to retire. The Russians are peculiar in this way—a peculiarity Hitler fails to understand. "They are licked," he said a year ago, "why don't they quit?"

Roughly Germany has conquered and holds but 10% of Russian soil. Contrary to public opinion the 90% still held by the Russians is rich in natural resources and probably adequately machined. From all reports morale was never higher. The invasion of North Africa has given her relief to some measure—perhaps not as much as the Russians desire, but at least the definite assurance that greater things are on the way.



SICILY.—For many months both Germans and Italians have been battering Britain's lifeline through the Mediterranean with planes based upon strategically located Sicily. From these Sicilian fields bombers have shuttled across the 60 miles of water to blast the British base at Malta. An air-borne army has undoubtedly long been held here in anticipation of dropping in on Malta at the opportune moment. But the solid defenders of Malta have never weakened. Instead they have exacted a terrible toll of Nazi planes and pilots.

The Germans, realizing that any Allied hope of invading the soft underside of the Axis through Italy must include capture of Sicily first, have probably heavily fortified the island and garrisoned it well. Trapani, Siracusa, Catania, Messina and Palermo are all bases with good airfields. Out of them operate Axis submarines and small surface craft. Scattered over the island, which is only 125 miles long, are innumerable concealed air bases Italian in name only.

The geography of Italy forces her to be ready to defend herself from many directions, but also gives her many geographical advantages. To Sicily, Mussolini has given the task of preventing an invasion of Italy from the south. Sicily fitted well into the offensive scheme of empire which Mussolini had outlined for his country previous to the collapse of Italian armies in Egypt and the subsequent infiltration of German troops.

In World War I Italy waited until 1915 to see how events would fall. Convinced then of Allied victory, and under promises of territorial gains, Italy entered the war and received a terrific pounding from Austrians and Germans, culminating in a disastrous defeat on the Piave river. In World War II Italy was equally cautious and did not enter the war as Germany's ally against England and France until it was apparent to her military leaders that France was already shaking on her heels from German assaults. There are good reasons for this Italian caution. Italy is a poor nation with many people and little wealth. She has millions of soldiers, but little coal and iron to make weapons for them, and little will to fight to the finish. Her coast line is long and her food supply is dependent upon other countries. Italy's chief ambitions were to build a new Roman empire around the Mediterranean sea, to open the English-held door to the Atlantic at Gibraltar and by conquering Egypt and the Sudan to link up Ethiopia with Italy.