

PM

SATURDAY, JULY 6, 1940

Seizure Denounced by Petain Government

... Germans Urge Churchill's
Overthrow . . . Britain Suffers
First Dive Bombing . . . Naval
Base Raided



The Admiral Isn't Going Any Place

This is Francis Darlan, commander-in-chief of the French navy. The British took or sank all but a few of his ships when he ordered them to surrender to the Germans. Churchill's speech announcing the capture is printed on Page 6.

France and Germany joined today in recrimination against Britain for smashing the French fleet. German warplanes gave the British Isles their first taste of dive bombing and urged the British people to overthrow Winston Churchill's government.

The British seized, sank or disabled the bulk of French warships to keep them from falling into the hands of the Rome-Berlin Axis, whose armistice terms called for the fleet's surrender. Three battleships were seized in port, three were sunk or badly damaged in a dramatic French-British battle at Oran, Algeria, and one other escaped.

The French government registered an indignant protest through United States Ambassador William C. Bullitt. There was talk that France, under complete German control, might break off diplomatic relations with her former ally. Surviving French warships were ordered to fire on any British ships encountered.

German newspapers raged at Mr. Churchill, calling him the greatest scoundrel in history and warned Britain she would have to answer for "the misdeeds of her premier."

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Seizure Denounced Churchill Tells of Battle

The British Prime Minister gave Commons a colorful account of the Oran battle, first major naval engagement between the French and British since Trafalgar, 135 years ago. (See page 6.) His speech made it clear that French naval power had been smashed to such an extent that remaining French ships, even if captured by Germany or Italy, would not give the Axis sea strength equal to Britain's. This had been one of the prime British concerns since France signed the Compiègne Armistice June 23. It also was of concern to the United States, which has depended on British sea power in the Atlantic while keeping the American fleet in the Pacific to offset Japan's. (See page 8.)

The authoritative British Press Association said it was understood that additional French warships had anchored in Scottish waters today.

Raids on Britain Intensified

The first mass attack of German dive bombers and the first appearance of fast Messerschmidt fighting planes increased British fears that the blitzkrieg was near. (See page 4.) Dive bombers swept down on the Portland naval base yesterday, dropping high explosive bombs. The British acknowledged one auxiliary naval vessel had been lost, but said other damage was minor. British and German planes engaged in numerous fights throughout the British Isles during the day. Four German planes were downed.

The Royal Air Force raided Belgian, Dutch and German air bases. The Nazis discounted the attacks.

France Turns Toward Fascism

Dispatches from Vichy, the temporary capital of France, indicated that Marshal Petain's government was preparing changes in the constitution which would end democracy and substitute a type of Fascism. Pierre Laval, close friend of Italy, was given the task of drafting the constitution. Parliament would be relegated to an advisory position. This seems to mean that Laval would inherit power when the aging Petain surrenders office.

One report said that the French were talking of a Spanish-Italian-French triumvirate to form a new lineup of European powers.

Rumania set up a new government of strongly pro-German, anti-semitic sentiment. King Carol appointed as premier Ion Gigurtu, 54-year-old engineer who is head of the single nationalist party created to lead Rumania more firmly in the German-Italian path. The government published a declaration that it would follow a foreign policy oriented toward the Axis and hinted negotiations might start soon for settlement of Hungarian and Bulgarian territorial claims.

Italians Raid Alexandria

Three persons were killed and four injured in an Italian raid on Alexandria where British and French warships are based. The status of the French ships—whether they had surrendered or not—was unclear, but reports from Egypt said the French had joined in driving off the Italian raiders.

Italy admitted loss of one submarine but claimed success in land fighting in East Africa where the British said they had raided Italian gun positions on the Kenya frontier.

European affairs had repercussions in Mexico where the nation is tense over a presidential election scheduled for Sunday. The government started investigation of charges that Italian Fascists linked with their country's legation were planning nationwide disturbances during the vote. The newspaper *El Popula*, which supports the government candidate, Gen. Avila Camacho, published the charges.

—W. W.

PM

SATURDAY, JULY 4, 1940

British Capture Three French Battleships

... British Open Fire at Oran When French Refuse to Surrender . . . World's Largest Submarine Seized

Prime Minister Churchill today announced Britain had seized the greater part of the French Fleet—about 200 “extremely useful craft”—and fought a naval engagement off Oran, Algeria, with French warships which refused to surrender. Three British battleships led the Oran attack to keep the powerful fleet, fourth largest in the world, from falling into the hands of the Rome-Berlin Axis.

He disclosed that Britain had seized three French battleships, six cruisers, eight destroyers and many smaller vessels including the world's largest submarine, the *Surcouf*.

The French government, terming the attack “despicable,” ordered its warships to fire back and told French vessels serving with the British in the Eastern Mediterranean to head for home at once, using force if necessary to escape.

Reviews Capture

Churchill offered this recapitulation on the fate of the French fleet:

Taken over in British ports: Two battleships, two light cruisers, some submarines including the *Surcouf*, the world's largest, eight destroyers and 200 small craft.

Held at Alexandria: One battleship, four cruisers, and some smaller craft.

Surrendered voluntarily: Some submarines.

Battle at Oran: Battleship of *Bretegne* class sunk, another of same class damaged; two destroyers and aircraft carrier sunk or set afire; battleship *Strasbourg* or *Dunkerque* and other unspecified ships escaped to Toulon; French losses very heavy; no British ships damaged as to gunpower or mobility.

In taking over the French submarine *Surcouf*, the largest undersea craft in the world, a scuffle arose due to a misunderstanding, the Prime Minister said, and one British sailor was killed, two British officers and one sailor were wounded, and one French officer was killed and one was wounded. The *Surcouf* was in a British port.

Over 200 Craft

The French battleships, two light cruisers, some submarines, eight destroyers and approximately 200 smaller “extremely useful craft,” most of them lying off Plymouth, Portsmouth and Sheerness were boarded by superior British forces, Churchill said.

“French sailors in the main cheerfully accepted the end of their period of uncertainty and 800 or 900 of them expressed an urgent desire to continue the war.

“A French battleship, four cruisers and a number of smaller ships at Alexandria have been informed that they would not be permitted to leave harbor and thus fall into enemy hands.

“Several French submarines also joined up independently and we have accepted their services.”

Prisoners Released

The Prime Minister disclosed that when the French signed the armistice they turned over to Germany more than 400 German fliers-prisoners.

“Many of them had been shot down by the Royal Air Force,” Churchill said.

Churchill told Commons that the French battleships

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Captured

Dunkerque and *Strasbourg*, several light cruisers and a number of destroyers and submarines and other vessels were at Oran and adjacent ports yesterday when a British officer asked to interview the French admiral.

He presented a document demanding that the French fleet continue to fight against the Germans and Italians or sail with reduced crews to a British port.

"Fight or Sink Ships"

"If these conditions were refused we must require that you sink your ships within six hours," the document said, according to the Prime Minister.

Churchill said that the negotiations continued all day and that the French admiral refused the demands. So, Churchill said, a British battle squadron under Admiral Somerville opened fire at 5:58 p.m.

Describing the Oran engagement Churchill said that a battleship of the French *Bretagne* class was sunk, another heavily damaged, and two French destroyers and an aircraft carrier were sunk or burning.

"The battle cruiser *Strasbourg* or *Dunkerque* succeeded in sailing out of harbor and was pursued by our aircraft, Churchill said. He said that the *Strasbourg* or *Dunkerque* was "hit by one torpedo but was joined by other French vessels, all of which reached Toulon before they could be overtaken."

"The French ships fought with the characteristic courage of the French navy," he said.

"I fear the loss of life among the French and in harbor must have been heavy as we were compelled to use very severe measures and immense explosions were observed."

Some at Large

"The Italian fleet kept prudently out of the way. We shall take necessary steps to maintain command of the Mediterranean," Churchill said. "Some other French ships are at large and it is our inflexible resolve to do everything possible to prevent them from falling into German hands.

"Lies and rumors that we had some intention of entering into negotiation with Italy or Germany should be completely swept out of existence by the very grievous, drastic action we have felt ourselves compelled to take.

"There is no talk here of peace. We shall, on the contrary, prosecute the war with the utmost vigor."

Refers to U. S.

Discussing the British action against the French fleet, Churchill said:

"I leave it to the nation. I leave it to the United States. I leave it to the world and history."

There were tears in Churchill's eyes when he sat down at the conclusion of his speech. His head was bent and his face was flushed.

Members of Parliament rose and cheered. Even the galleries, in which the Argentine and Chilean ambassadors were sitting, joined in the cheering.

Immediately after Churchill's speech Commons went into secret session.

British-French sea fighting overshadowed grim news of the sinking of the British prison ship *Arandora Star*, with loss of nearly 1000 lives, by a German submarine. Most of the casualties were Germans and Italians being transported from England to Canada (page 4).

Rumanian Cabinet Resigns

Rumania faced a political crisis as the government of Premier George Tartaescu submitted its resignation to King Carol. The United Press said the crisis was attributed to Soviet anger over a Balkan attempt to form a bloc under the guiding hand of Germany and Italy.

German and Italian dispatches reported that Marshal Petain's government was drafting a new constitution that would end democracy in France.

Nazi bombers raided Britain in daylight for the fourth successive day.

London sources said Britain was taking a stronger stand against Japan and had turned down demands that the Burma Road be closed as a supply line for Chiang Kai-Shek.—w. w.