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SPAIN ATTACKS FRANCE WITHOUT WARNING

In a surprise move, Franco has ordered his army into Southern France, with key positions already occupied. France now looks ready to fall a second time.

With a sudden onslaught from the Pyrenees Spanish Infantry and Armour quickly off-set the French defenses south of Toulouse and Bordeaux.

Reports from northern Spain had already warned the French that the Spanish were building up forces, but the French high command expected Franco to hold off his attack until the Spring, by which time the French would have another 3 divisions in the south, however, Franco did not wait, instead he attacked in the dead of winter.

The initial assaults came from around Barcelona and San Sebastian, with the 1st Armoured Corps, composed of a division of armour and 2 of Motorised infantry smashing through the light picket lines of the French 4th Corps.

As the French moved forces to counter the attack, news came to Orleans that the Spanish had landed troops at La Rochelle, effectively in the French rear. In response to this move the French southern reserves were committed to holding the Spanish Infantry Division in La Rochelle from breaking out into the French rear area. This move permitting the Spanish to occupy the city of Toulouse without a fight, as the French command chain in Orleans collapsed under the strain.

Events then moved quickly, with Spanish troops pressing on towards Marseilles and Bordeaux, Free France declared war on Spain, forcing the Spanish 6th Corps, the local garrison in Tangiers to ready its forward defenses.

As this news started to filter through Europe, news came in of a naval action of Marseilles, as the Battleship Dunkerque and a squadron of Destroyers attacked the combined Spanish Fleet. The ensuing action was rather one sided, with the range of the Dunkerque's guns and the age of the Spanish ships playing towards the French, within 25 minutes the Spanish had lost the cruisers, Canarias, Mendez and Navarra, together with 12 destroyers.

The remaining 3 cruisers and 16 destroyers ran south towards Valencia, only to encounter the French Mediterranean Fleet, which quickly dispatched the remains of the Spanish Fleet. The French did not have it all their own way though, the Provence being sunk by a lucky strike from Spanish aircraft out of Barcelona.

By the 15th the French had managed to retake La Rochelle, the 31st Division successfully pushing the Spanish light division out of the city, the French Fleet providing close support to the infantry.



Spanish Troops outside Tangiers

As the city was taken the French destroyed the merchant craft and the support equipment of the Spanish effectively cutting off any means of supply to the isolated troops.

Further south news came that the Spanish had been held outside of Bordeaux, thanks in part of French bombers, whilst the drive by the Spanish Armour was blunted by the French Mountain Corps and held at the Rhone.

As the month closed news also came that the French 4th Corps had successfully opened a gap in the Spanish lines, pushing the 5th back towards the border, a local victory of great national importance.



French Fleet engages the Spanish Fleet off Valencia.

Merchant Losses Mount

German u-boats continue to add to their successes as the British start to run out of war-ships.

The Royal Navy has spent the past 12 months in a state of constant war in various theatres throughout the world, but now perhaps she is feeling the strain.

A concerted effort by Germany to cut British Trade appears to be underway and the Royal Navy appears powerless to prevent the Germans from succeeding.

This month alone, some 300,000 tons of allied shipping and a dozen destroyers have been eliminated by the efforts of the German U-boat command. As in the Great War, the Royal Navy appears powerless to prevent such losses. Should this rate of loss continue, or worse, increase, it could be the end of the British war effort.

All Calm in Russia

With winter holding the forces of Communism and Fascism in its grip, neither was able to cause the other harm.

An attempted breakout by the German 41st Corps from Zhitomir was thwarted and Russian Artillery managed to keep a few of the Germans awake, otherwise the region slept through the winter snows.

CCP Breakout

Troops and Artillery of the Japanese Army attempted to pummel the remains of the CCP forces in northern China.

However their plans may have been destroyed as elements of the CCP garrison made a stunning breakout to the west, in an effort to both lap around the Japanese flank and pull fire way from the stronghold, it is believed that fighting continues.

More air raids on France

The RAF continued its policy of bomber strikes on strategic targets in northern France, this time they did not have life all their own way.

Although reports are contradictory, it would appear that the RAF bomber forces successfully hit the airfields around Le Havre and the port of Le Havre.

However the escorting British fighters reported encountering a new variant of German fighter, unseen in the west. Its speed and agility is reported to have easily outpaced the Spitfire MKIIs of the Royal Air Force, causing at least 30 kills, with only 5 or 6 losses for the Germans.

As yet the Luftwaffe has not announced if this is a new variant of fighter and if so what its designation is, we wait in anticipation, perhaps the air war has heated up!

Portugal joins Allies

In a shock announcement the Portuguese Government, long believed to be pro Fascist, has declared war upon Japan, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Lithuania and Bulgaria, joining the Allied alliance in the process.

Lisbon states that the declaration is in two parts, firstly against the Japanese for their illegal occupation of Macau, and secondly, against the Axis Alliance in an effort to maintain Portuguese home security, aware that Spain is unlikely to declare war on the allies, thus maintaining Portuguese independence.

News in Brief

With the world drifting to a temporary peace, due to poor weather on most continents, the Chronicle here reports what it has been able to find.

Large Italian Convoy arrives in North Africa, believed to be carrying German and Italian relief forces.

Japanese quell opposition in all but two Chinese cities. Malaria spreading through Singapore, up to 32,000 may have died. Japanese unable to control situation.

Russians end rationing, Stalin calls this a day to celebrate.

Khartoum held by Italians, over 14,000 civilians displaced at gun point by Italian Army.

Norway, Sweden and Denmark sign joint declaration calling on Germany to refrain from supporting Spain, declaration also calls on Spain to return to her own borders.

United States announces largest ever trade surplus. President declares that there is yet more to come.