

DID YOU KNOW

That, despite pledges that American boys would not be sent outside the Americas, we may invade Africa?

OUR AFRICAN OUTPOST

PROMISE

"I repeat again that I stand on the platform of our party; we will not participate in foreign wars and will not send our Army, Naval or Air Forces to fight in foreign lands outside of the Americas except in case of attack."
(President Roosevelt, campaign speech at Philadelphia, October 23, 1940.)

PROSPECT

"And that threat extends not only to French North Africa and the western end of the Mediterranean, but also to the Atlantic fortress of Dakar, and to the island outposts of the New World - the Azores and Cape Verde islands."
(President Roosevelt, "Unlimited Emergency" speech, May 27, 1941, as reprinted in the New York Times, May 28, 1941.)

"Assurance that such outposts in our defense frontier remain in friendly hands is the very foundation of our national security and of the national security of every one of the independent nations of the New World." (President Roosevelt, Message to Congress on Iceland, July 7, 1941, as reprinted in the New York Times, July 8, 1941.)

PRELUDE TO
A.E.F.

In his message to Congress on July 7 announcing the occupation of Iceland, the President also said that U. S. forces had been sent to Trinidad and British Guiana to forestall any Nazi attempt to employ the pincer strategy to the Western Hemisphere. (New York Times, July 8, 1941). Manning the Trinidad and Guiana bases is one thing. The many justified doubts concerning the necessity of including Iceland in Hemisphere defense (See Did You Know #7) do not apply to bases guarding the Caribbean and the northeastern coast of South America. But the President did not limit himself to Hemisphere bases in his

message, any more than he did in his subsequent press conference. He said: "It is essential that Germany should not be able successfully to employ such tactics through sudden seizure of strategic points in the South Atlantic and in the North Atlantic." (New York Times, July 8, 1941.) The President's failure to restrict those points in the Atlantic to points in the Western Hemisphere has led to the widely-voiced inference that occupation of Iceland is a prelude to occupation of Dakar in west Africa, and of the Cape Verde, Canary and Azores islands by force, if necessary.

FAR-OFF
DAKAR

Bases in the fjords of sub-Arctic Iceland are essential to Hemisphere defense only by a stretch of the military imagination (See Did You Know #7). It takes an even greater stretch to include Dakar and the Atlantic islands. Dakar is a steaming, squalid, hurricane-swept tropical port in French Senegal which is loyal to Vichy. It is situated on the Cape Verde peninsula on the western bulge of Africa. It has docking facilities for a score of ships, a coaling station, an oil depot, an airfield, a seaplane base and a small navy yard. Because it is only 1,700 miles across the south Atlantic to Pernambuco and Natal on the bulge of Brazil, and because planes of an Italian air line make that crossing regularly, interventionists dramatize Dakar as the point from which an immediate invasion of the Western Hemisphere would be launched should Hitler gain outright control of it. Accordingly, the interventionists cry constantly for the U.S. to seize Dakar - 3,750 miles from the tip of Florida.

INVASION
BASE?

The interventionists ignore the military facts about Dakar. It is not a suitable invasion base. Seizing it would be a major military venture. An invasion of Brazil, as all the military experts agree, could not be accomplished without first defeating the U.S. Navy, and the U. S. Air Forces to gain control of the sea lanes. If such an attack were to be launched from Dakar, it would mean that Dakar would have to have a naval base capable of supplying and repairing the combined fleets of Germany and Italy plus whatever is left of the French fleet and a large part of the British fleet; it would also mean that Dakar would have to have an air base capable of supplying and repairing a huge fleet of bombing planes - perhaps thousands - with range enough to cross the 1,700 miles to Brazil with bombloads and return to Dakar.

NAVAL
BASE?

Dakar has no such naval base as would be required. There is a single naval drydock, capable of repairing - one at a time - ships up to 10,000 tons. (Major James Ross, Christian Science Monitor, Weekly Magazine Section, June 21, 1941). That means that Dakar could repair one damaged cruiser at a time - or one Nazi pocketbattleship. Dakar cannot repair more than superficial damage to battleships (the 35,000-ton French battleship "Richelieu", torpedoed in the summer of 1940 in Dakar harbor has not yet been repaired). Damaged battleships, and most lesser ships, would have to limp all the way back to northern Europe to bases 3,000 miles from Dakar. To make Dakar into an important naval base would take years. Navies are tied to their bases. The further they operate from their bases the less efficient they are. According to some estimates they lose 30 per cent per 1,000 miles. One weakness of the British fleet today is that many of its ships must cross the Atlantic to U.S. ports to find adequate repair facilities. A Nazi base at Dakar would be dependent on the steel mills, the electric equipment factories, and the whole industrial complex of northern Europe, 3,000 miles away.

AIR BASE?

Dakar has no such air base as would be required, nor does Hitler have bombing planes of the range required to bomb Pernambuco. ("Strategy of the Americas," Fleming MacLiesh and Cushman Reynolds, p. 210). There is an air port at Dakar where there may be as many as 100 French planes (Major James Ross, *ibid.*). For the defense of Dakar they could be reinforced by German planes flown down from Europe (Colonel Frederick Palmer, *Washington Star*, June 18, 1941).

SUPPLY LINES

If an attack were to be launched against the Western Hemisphere from Dakar, there would have to be a ponderous supply line from Europe down the coast of Africa - down the nearly 2,000 miles from Gibraltar to Dakar. The bulk of supplies would have to come by sea. The motor road connections from North Africa to Dakar are poor and inadequate (Major James Ross, *ibid.*). Only a trickle would come by air. The old French imperial dream of a trans-Sahara railroad is still a dream. If the Western Hemisphere were under attack, that supply line would be vulnerable to long-range U. S. submarines, surface raiders and carrier-borne planes.

ADVANTAGE OUT

Occupying Dakar is another matter. Since Vichy has shown no discernible inclination to turn Dakar over to the U.S., and since Dakar forces, in September 1940, repulsed an attack by Free French and British forces, occupation obviously could be accomplished only by force. If the threat of Dakar to the Western Hemisphere has been magnified out of all proportion, so has the ease with which it could be taken. For us to send an expedition there would mean that all the problems of supply and communications which would beset an enemy attacking the Western Hemisphere would beset U.S. forces. In addition, it would mean accomplishing the most difficult of all military operations, landing on a defended hostile shore. All the advantages would lie with the defenders.

DAKAR AND DIE

In the *Washington Star* of June 18, 1941, Colonel Frederick Palmer noted military analyst and war correspondent, wrote as follows: "To send over an expeditionary force in increments to Dakar ... would be an invitation to massacre in detail. We shall see that our initial force to Dakar should not be less than 100,000 men. With them must go tanks, guns, ammunition, food and all kinds of engineering transport and maintenance equipment. 400,000 tons of shipping would be too modest an estimate for an expedition that might require 100 ships, and a powerful naval escort, inclusive of all types from destroyers to battleships.... What a spread of targets, like a flock of ducks in flight over a hunter's head, when the dive-bombers and torpedo-carrying planes, with the aid of submarines, loosed their blitzkrieg on these 100 ships for the last 200 or 300 miles before they were even in sight of the African coast!... Suppose half our ships did reach the harbor at Dakar, after silencing the defense batteries. There is insufficient pier space for even 20 ships, and we should still be under bombing attack. So we would be if we tried to establish a beach-head by dribbling men and material ashore in open boats. If we went south to Freetown, British Sierra Leone, we should have to advance through tough tropical country to Dakar, while from French North Africa to Dakar there are available roads for enemy reinforcements which enable quicker transit than for us over 3,400 miles of ocean....

There is also talk of taking the Cape Verde islands. These very small islands would be bull's-eye targets for bombers, based on the African coast 300 miles away, while we were making our landing, leveling volcanic rock for air fields and setting up hasty defense. In any plan of hemispheric defense,

both the Dakar and the Cape Verde adventures had better wait until we have a well-equipped and fortified base on the coast of Brazil to cover our side of the Atlantic."

THE ATLANTIC
ISLANDS

Everything that is true strategically of Dakar is true of the island groups in the Atlantic which are even less well prepared as "invasion" bases than Dakar. But occupying and holding them is another matter. Colonel Frederick Palmer has dealt effectively with the problem of the Portuguese-owned Cape Verdes (see above). The Canaries, owned by Spain, are less than 300 miles from the coast of Rio de Oro, Spain's big colony in Africa, and only 700 miles from Lisbon. They could be bombed out from bases in Portugal or Rio de Oro. The Portuguese-owned Azores, a favorite among the interventionists for U. S. seizure, would be as difficult for the U. S. to hold - provided the U. S. could take them - as Bermuda, 650 miles off Norfolk, Virginia, would be for Hitler. The Azores are 2,750 miles from New York, 2,350 miles from Puerto Rico, only 785 miles from the Portuguese coast.

FOREIGN
OPPOSITION

Certainly Spain, supporter of the Axis, would resist any attempt by the U. S. to occupy the Canaries. What Portugal's attitude would be has been made clear by two recent protests to the U.S. government. Portugal protested a call for occupation of the Azores and Cape Verdes made on the floor of the Senate early in May by Senator Claude Pepper of Florida. Portugal also protested President Roosevelt's allusions to the Portuguese islands in his speech of May 27 (New York Times, June 11, 1941).