WORLD PRESS DIGEST

RUMORS

(Condensed from the article "Troop Transport" by John Steinbeck in the "New York Herald-Tribune")

The ship is heavily armed with cannons. This is a constant reminder to the men that the ship is always in danger of being sunk. However indifferent one may pretend to be, the thought of this never leaves one entirely. There might be U-boats everywhere. At any moment the explosion may come which will send the big ship to the bottom.

A part of every man is in a state of constant tension, listening and waiting. At night little insignificant sounds grow and appear charged with meaning and frightening. The human brain reacts strangely to such tension. Out of its fear it constructs reality and passes this on to others. A troop transport buzzes from stem to stern with rumors, and on all troop transports they are the same rumors, standard troop-transport shockers such as the following:

(1) This morning we were sighted by a U-boat. It spread the alarm to other U-boats by radio, and a whole pack is assembling to cut us off and sink us.

(2) This morning a submarine came up close to our ship. We had trained every gun on it when at the last moment it signaled that it was one of our own.

(3) Something terrible has happened among the officers. (This rumor only circulates among the privates.) No one knows exactly what the crime is, but it is a fact that a number of officers have been arrested and will appear before a court-martial. (This may, of course, be pure wishful thinking!)

(4) The front part of the ship is flimsy and has only been patched up temporarily. It will hold as long as we don't have any heavy seas, but then it will probably fall apart.

(5) Yesterday the German radio claimed our ship had been sunk. Our parents, wives, and friends who know we left on this ship are beside themselves with worry, and we have no means of letting them know we are all well as no news can be sent out.

(6) Some sort of an epidemic has broken out on board. The officers are secretly removing the dead at night.

"I have to go home during the black-out."

("Ric et Rac," Paris)

LIFE FROM VENUS

(Condensed from "Time," New York)

Professor Louis Backman of Upsala University, Sweden, a well-known medical writer, suggested that it was entirely possible that organisms causing recent flu epidemics had come from Venus, Jupiter or Mars.

Laboratory workers have known for some time that bacteria and other living cells can survive extreme cold close to absolute zero (—273.18 C.), the supposed temperature of interplanetary space. But most modern physicists believe that cosmic rays and short-wave light rays (particularly ultra-violet) would destroy any life passing through interstellar space. Professor Backman's hypothesis attacks this objection.

Backman believes it very unlikely that life originated on the earth; he thinks it more probably started in the more favorable atmosphere containing methane and ammonia gases which surround planets such as Jupiter, Venus and Mars. From them, he says, living organisms may have been transported to the earth by meteorites or by the propulsive power of the suns's rays.

"At minus 273 degrees," he comments, "even the most violent chemical reactions

are forced to complete inactivity. No reactions, no life processes can take place; even molecular movement ceases. Without molecular movement, no evaporation can take place. Thus all reactions produced by light rays are precluded, and as the life processes have ceased, the organism cannot be damaged by chemical or physical means."

Thus, Backman believes, organisms riding on cosmic particles or meteorites might fly safely through celestial space. He admits they would meet a great hazard when they hit the earth's atmosphere, where atmospheric friction would heat the particles or meteorites enough to destroy all organisms clinging to them. But he believes that the atmosphere may tear the organisms away from their carriers before they get too hot. Any such free-floating bacteria which came in on the earth's dark side, shaded from the sun, might drop safely to earth.

HERO WORSHIP

(Condensed from "The American Magazine," New York)

In a military training camp for women in Des Moines, Iowa, there was an old noncommissioned officer, a tough old fellow. He didn't like women, especially in uniform, and never missed a chance of making life difficult for them.

The girls were each allowed to have one photograph over their camp beds. One day when I was making an inspection tour with the noncom, there was a photo of him hanging over every bed. He got redder and redder but said nothing. When we were back in the office he asked respectfully:

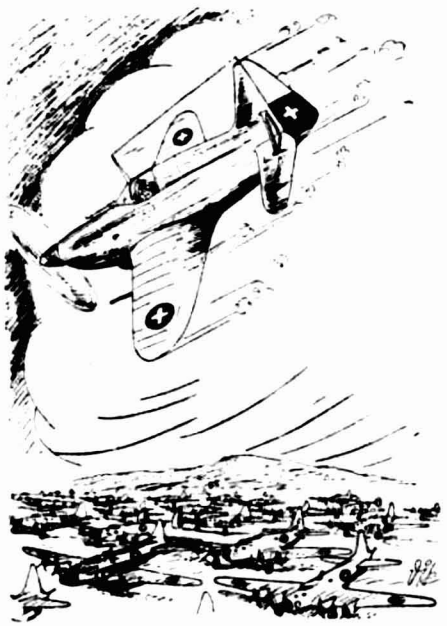
"Do you think, Sir, they really *mean* it?"

I replied that this was obviously an epidemic of mass infatuation. The noncom had himself transferred.

PROGRESS

(Condensed from the "Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung," Zürich)

The note by which orchestras tune their instruments is high A. The accepted pitch of the high A was fixed at the International Tuning Note Conference—the things people think of!—in Vienna in 1885 at 870 single or 435 double vibrations. Hence the C major in the *Meistersinger* overture is sounded at the same pitch all over Europe. In America the standard pitch may be a little higher, so that it is possible to hear the *Meistersinger* overture over the radio from there in C sharp major.



Swiss Pilot over a Swiss aerodrome full of damaged US bombers:
"Were am *I* supposed to land?"
("Nebelspalter," Rorschach, Switzerland)

Hitherto, when there was no tuning fork, there was often an argument, for example among the players of a quartet, as to how high the A was to be. The Swiss postal administration has done away with this predicament. In Switzerland you now simply ring up "Information" and ask for the standard A to have the correct pitch sounded to you over the telephone. From now on, violinists can no longer increase the brilliance of their tone by tuning a little too high, and singers whose voice cannot quite get up to high C cannot cheat any more either.

BED- AND BATHROOM STATISTICS

(Condensed from "Time," New York)

The John B. Pierce Foundation of Manhattan, a housing research group, investigated the bedroom and bathroom habits of Americans. Findings:

After getting into bed, 22% of husbands read, 12% talk to their wives, 7% listen to the radio, 3% pray, 2% smoke, 2% eat, 2% get up to close the window, 50% say

they do nothing. Of the wives, 29% read, 11% talk, 8% listen to the radio, 5% pray, 3% think, 2% smoke, 1% eat, 1% get up to go to the bathroom, 40% do nothing. The average husband is ready for lights out after 19 minutes; the wife, after 14 minutes.

87% of husbands and wives sleep in a double bed, but 42% of the wives think twin beds would be preferable.

In summer, 70% of wives sleep in nightgowns, 24% in pajamas (10% more switch to pajamas in winter), 1% in shorts, 5% nude.

Favorite sleeping position of wives: on the stomach. About half of the women said they slept with an arm or leg hanging over the edge of the bed.

63% of wives usually dress and 72% undress in the presence of their husbands; 20% never do either. Of those who do, 6% are embarrassed.

80% of wives do not lock the bathroom door while bathing, but of those who do, nearly half lock it even when no one else is home.

M.A. of Oflag

(Condensed from "Svenska Dagbladet," Stockholm)

"You announce your intention to go in for an examination in a certain subject. Your application is sent to England, and after some time you receive your examination papers and put down your written answers under the supervision of the officer in charge of studies at the camp. The papers are sealed and sent back to England for marking. And, again after some time, you receive the decision: passed or failed. There are hundreds of students who can boast after the war of the curious degree of M.A. of Oflag B (Oflag, short for *Offizierslager*=Officers' Camp) or whatever the camp may have been called," reports the Swedish YMCA secretary Gunnar Jansson in a survey of scientific studies among British prisoners of war in Germany.

The climax of the dinner: "We shall now draw lots to see who will get the egg."

("Hufvudstadsbladet," Helsinki)

SKYWAY FLIVVER

(Condensed from "Life" and "Time," New York)

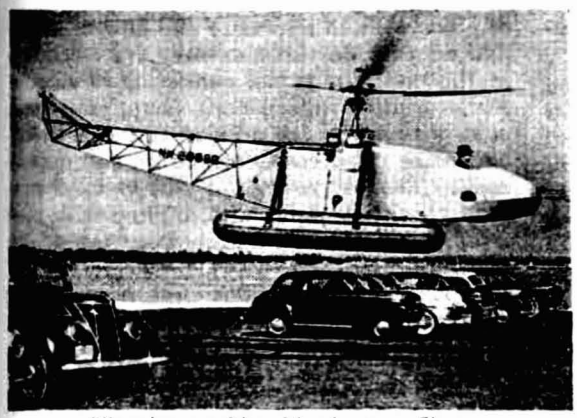
Along the 761-mile airway between Stratford, Connecticut, and Dayton, Ohio, farmers in the fields in the summer of 1942 saw a strange craft skittering overhead. It had no wings. Its spraddle-legged landing gear hung gauntly from its snub-nosed body. Above the fuselage whirled a shimmering set of paddles, like a busy egg beater. On an open frame at the tail whirled another but smaller airscrew, in a vertical plane: even the tail surfaces of the what-is-it were busy.

But its designer, onetime big-plane builder Igor Sikorsky, knew that fellow airmen no longer regarded the helicopter as a product of aviation's lunatic fringe. His helicopter works on a different principle from de la Cierva's autogyro. The autogyro uses a 200-hp airplane engine which turns a propeller in the nose of the ship, impelling it forward but not up or down. On top it has a rotor which turns automatically when the plane is in motion, but the autogyro cannot lift unless the ship is already moving forward. The helicopter, with mechanically operated rotors, can hover in a stationary position off the ground, ascend and descend at any speed, stop, back up, go sideways or forward. The small rotor at rear is used only for steering.

In spring 1943 Sikorsky's craft got formal recognition, when the Army Air Force announced that it had ordered some helicopters for military use. The Army, for obvious reasons, did not tell just how far its interest in the helicopter went. But Igor Sikorsky knew, and what he knew seemed to satisfy him.

The helicopter had been simplified and made as comfortable as any small commercial aircraft. Two years ago, Sikorsky's dream-craft was an uncovered, bony collection of tubular steel and whirling props. Orthodox airmen eyed it askance as Sikorsky, with a too-small fedora perched sedately on his bald pate, dropped down into Connecticut sand pits and flew out again, or started to land on the hangar roof, skipped off it and landed on the apron in front. In tests, the Army found that it would do all that Igor Sikorsky had promised and more. It can hover so steadily that once an army

man let down a ladder, got out on the ground, got back and pulled the ladder in after him before the pilot sent his craft aloft again.



Sikorsky parking his skyway flivver

The Sikorsky Aircraft division of United Aircraft Corp. at Bridgeport, Conn. is now operating the first helicopter production line in the U.S., and probably in the world. In the last eight months, Sikorsky has produced 30 helicopters for the Matériel Command of the Army Air Forces. The ships have been tested in Burma, evacuating wounded from the jungles; in patrol work along the Atlantic coast; in Alaska.

Now coming off the production line is the company's XR-4. By fall this will be replaced by a later, heavier-load-carrying model, the XR-5. Powered by a 450-h.p. Pratt & Whitney motor, the XR-5 carries a pilot and passenger in tandem, flies faster than 110 miles an hour, has a range of some 400 miles.

The helicopter can land safely almost anywhere. With floats it can land and take off either from water or land. If its engine fails, the helicopter can land without power, unwinding earthward at leisurely speed. It can travel through murky weather at low speed, stop, back up or go sideways when it comes up to trees or buildings. It is easy to fly and, except for the danger of collisions in the air, close to foolproof.

Other air designers were thinking of aircraft as competitors to the train and the ocean liner. Sikorsky had some reason to believe that he had developed the competitor to the automobile.

But helicopter fans who see themselves hedgehopping home in the postwar sky have still to hedgehop one major obstacle: the cost. The price per helicopter may not fall below $5,000 for some time after war's end. Actually Sikorsky men see their first postwar market as "feeders" to airline, and for short-flight air "bus lines." Bus lines see this too. Already 70 of them have filed applications with the Civil Aeronautics Board to operate helicopter bus lines.

CONFERENCE

(From "Time," New York)

When Japanese planes bombed Humboldt Bay last June, a three-star admiral and a two-star general were caught offshore in a small powerboat. The admiral bawled an order to get away from the beach; the general shouted to get back to shore.

The enlisted helmsman stopped his craft, folded his arms and firmly demanded: "Make up your minds."

After one of the quickest joint staff conferences on record, the Navy set the course.

CHILDREN AND WAR

(Condensed from the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung," Zürich)

According to the statistics of the International Association for Children's Aid, there are 152 million children up to the age of fourteen in the belligerent and occupied countries of Europe, including Russia. So far, very little has become known about the influence of war on their mentality. Yet there are a few observations which may be stated.

In total war, the life of virtually every child is in danger, and its soul is constantly exposed to heavy wear and tear. Most observers consider the disruption of family life responsible for the chief damage done to the child. Many a family will, of course, be restored after the end of the war; but it is an open question to what extent the damage suffered can be remedied. On the other hand, thousands of children will remain without family and without roots. Many do not even know their names. They will have to live under a new name, without parents, perhaps in a foreign country or even on a different continent.

It has been stated that many children find it harder to be separated from their families than to live under bombs. The happier and better balanced a child was in its own family, the more easily will it fit into its new surroundings. There is perhaps

no better proof of the strength of family ties than the reports about children who, night after night for many months, calmly slept in subway stations in spite of the noise made by the trains, while, when evacuated to a peaceful rural home, but among strangers, they were miserable and nervous.

Contrary to many expectations, children do not seem to suffer particularly under bombs, provided that the adults around them keep their heads. We are told of five-year-olds who, at the start of the air raid, take their picture book, follow their mothers to the shelter, and become engrossed in their book as if nothing had happened. Of unusual interest is the example of a three-year-old German boy. There had been air raids and bombs ever since he was born. He calmly let himself be awakened, dressed, and carried to the cellar, where he always had a cheering effect on the other people present. Never did he show the slightest trace of fear. But one day, when he was playing with other children, one of the bigger boys put on a mask and, advancing toward the child, howled in a changed voice: "I am the bogyman!" For the first time in his life the child showed fear. The next time the siren sounded he screamed: "The bogyman is coming!" and, crying as if his heart would break, was not to be calmed. After that he was always afraid of air alarms. The latent fear which no alarm and no explosion had been able to rouse had been wakened by a childish game which appealed to the child's imagination, while the real danger from outside had found no echo in his soul.

RATIONS FOR THE SHIPWRECKED

(Condensed from the "Svenska Dagbladet," Stockholm, and "Neue Zürcher Zeitung," Zürich)

Medical experts of Harvard University have discovered that dextrose (grape sugar) can to a certain extent replace drinking water for shipwrecked people. Almost all the space available in lifeboats for the storing of provisions is taken up by water, as a human being can remain alive for 30 days without food but only a few days without water. The Harvard experts claim that experiments with human guinea pigs have shown that persons replacing part of their water consumption by dextrose keep in better physical and mental shape than persons who had to get along on a reduced water ration without dextrose.

The medical laboratory of the US Navy has also produced new rations for shipwrecked persons in the form of tablets which can be consumed even when the mouth cavity is entirely dried out. The daily ration consists of three different tablets weighing altogether 140 grams: one tablet of citric acid to stimulate the flow of saliva and to provide the necessary fruit content in the diet; one tablet consisting of sucrose (cane or beet sugar), corn sirup, and citric acid with some fat added; and one tablet consisting of sucrose, corn sirup, and malted milk. The old ration for shipwrecked persons consisted of biscuits, malted-milk tablets, pemmican, and chocolate, taking up far more space and weighing about 300 grams. The new rations were tried out by 18 volunteers, who spent four days on rubber rafts in the Gulf of Mexico and lived exclusively on these rations during that time.

BOYS WILL BE BOYS!

(The following two photographs are reproduced from the "Svenska Dagbladet," Stockholm)

American MT-boat in the Pacific, painted to resemble a shark

Prime Minister Churchill inspecting invasion troops whose helmets bear the magic formula AAAO. You would never guess it, but the three A's stand for "anywhere, anytime, anyhow, "and the zero for "nothing else counts"

COINCIDENCE

(Condensed from "Das Reich," Berlin)

A German officer was traveling in an express train on one of the main lines. During the journey a military patrol checked up on all the passengers. The officer also showed his papers. The leader of the military patrol, himself an officer, got a surprise when he saw the other man's military pass: as luck would have it, the pass belonged to the patrol leader's brother, who had been a prisoner of war in Canada for a year. The American spy, who had landed on German soil from a plane, was arrested.