

day it is no longer an allied force. The British Navy's burden may, therefore, become desperately heavy, especially since the Italian submarine fleet has become an enemy, and since Germany has won new bases from North Cape to the Pyrenees.

It is clear by now why the British begged for thirty old destroyers from us, and for twenty old torpedo boats. Their naval position from now on will be an anxious one, even without serious danger from the French fleet. At any moment the British Navy will be straining every nerve to repel an armed invasion and to prevent the destruction of its bases by air bombing; but this is not all. By day and by night, in dangerous coastal waters or on the high seas, the British naval crews will have to rise to truly heroic heights to move the supplies without which Britain will die. Britain's floating shield is strong, as the battle of Oran proved, and her heart and soul are sound, as Mr. Churchill's fighting words showed; but the most cruel trials of all still lie ahead.

### THE FRENCH NAVY

Winston Churchill was understating when he said yesterday that the disposition of the French Navy was a "grim and somber" problem. It was, on sentimental grounds alone, the most heartbreaking choice that ever confronted a British Government. Some of the French Navy was safely in British hands, but some of it, including the powerful 26,000-ton battleships Dunkerque and Strasbourg, was in North African harbors, under orders to hurry home. Had this fleet been left untouched by the British, it would have fallen inevitably into German or Italian hands, to harry British shipping and perhaps to inflict "mortal injury" upon British naval supremacy. The British made a hard choice. At twilight on Wednesday they fell upon the French fleet at Oran and all but destroyed it as an effective fighting force.

Whatever bitterness has been caused in France by this tragedy piled upon a vast tragedy, fair-minded opinion will agree that the British were right in what they did. They were not making war on France; they were making war on a powerful offensive weapon which, in the hands of the mortal enemy of France, could be used to help fasten serfdom on the French Republic. They had given France every opportunity to save her ships. They had consented, first, to let France make a separate peace on condition that her warships were brought into British ports for safe keeping. The peace was made; the condition was ignored. They waited a fortnight for French commanders to bring their ships voluntarily into British ports.

Some of the ships came, others did not. It was a hard choice for the French commanders also. Mr. Churchill willingly admitted as much yesterday, when he spoke of "the characteristic courage" of the French Navy and said that "every allowance" must be made for French officers "who felt themselves obliged to obey the orders which they had received from their Government, and could not look behind that Government to see the German dictator." But even at the last, the British were not unreasonable or inhumane. They offered the French admiral at Oran the choice of continuing the fight against Germany and Italy or sailing with reduced crews to British ports, or taking the warships to French islands in the New World, or to the United States for internment, or scuttling the ships within six hours. When all these conditions were refused, the British opened fire. "I leave judgment of our actions with confidence to Parliament," said Mr. Churchill yesterday; "I leave it to the nation; I leave it to the United States of America." He need not fear what that judgment may be.

The French Navy as a whole is no longer a potential threat to British seapower and survival. In their home ports and in Alexandria harbor the British now control at least three French battleships, six cruisers, eight destroyers and more than 200 smaller craft. The immediate British naval problem has not, however, been solved. This is the recurring menace of the submarine and the reduced strength available to the British for conveying supplies and patrolling the seas on anti-submarine duty. Until France surrendered, the French Navy was invaluable to the British in helping to keep the supply routes free of marauders. To-