

# Cruising with Covey

By

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The other night I had the privilege of visiting the Free French Cadets who came aboard last week, and the stories they told of their lives thus far make fiction weak by comparison.

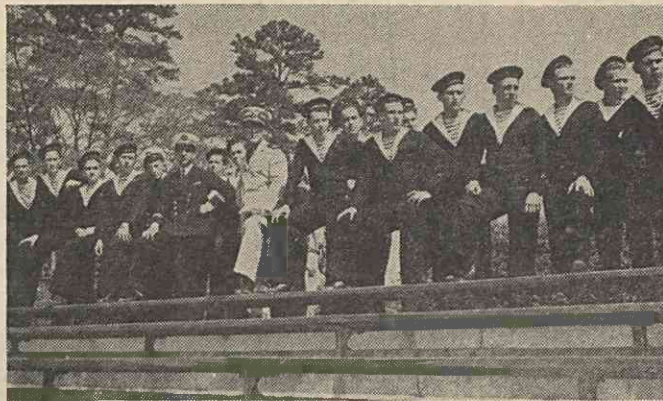
Led by one officer, Lieut. (jg) Jean Polfrit, the group is thirty-six strong, eight having been Chief Petty Officers in the French fleet, three having been petty officers first class, and the balance having served as seamen or cadets in French academies.

Sitting on a bunk, surrounded by a dozen or so of the eager lads, I learned that twelve of them had lived in France under German occupation, and the hatred they felt for the Nazis blazed in their dark eyes. They said that in France today every man and woman over seventeen has to go to work in a factory in France or Germany if they hope to keep their ration books, without which no item can be purchased. The twelve lads who escaped from France had been notified to report for work, and rather than do so they risked their lives in the attempt to get to North Africa to join the Free French.

Telling of rationing over there, they said that the coupons issued by the Germans have these values: ½ lb. of black bread per week, ¼ lb. of meat per week, ¼ lb. of butter per week, and men over eighteen working in factories get coupons good for six packages of cigarettes per month. However, they said that often the merchants did not have even the small amounts the coupons called for, and they had to go without.

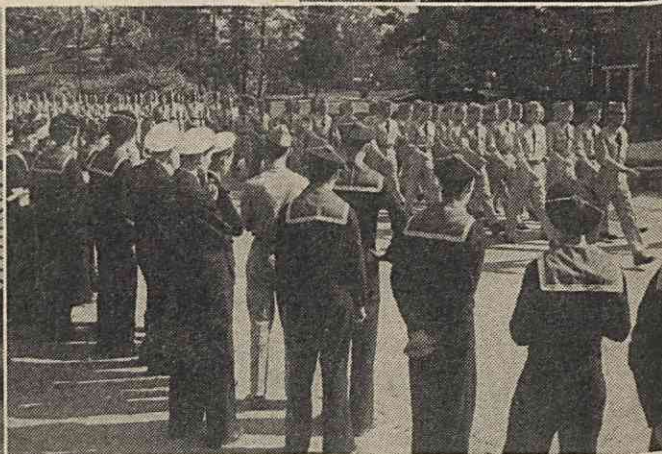
Going further, they told of how the population is underfed, overworked, and that hatred for the Germans is apparent everywhere. The jails are filled with men and women held as hostages, and many times they have seen as many as fifty Frenchmen lined up against a wall and shot down for refusing to divulge the name of someone who had killed a Nazi.

After they had escaped from France, the boys were thrown into prisons in Spain, and forced to work like common convicts. They were poorly fed and slept on the ground with only one blanket for protection from the bitter weather.



## Free French

Anxious to get a crack at Germany again are the 36 French Cadets who arrived here last week for special training. All have served with the French fleet either as Petty Officers or Seamen, and their present training marks the beginning of their study in the United States. For more details read "Cruising With Covey" on this page.



After arriving in North Africa, where they met the rest of the crew that is now here, they all attended a French Officers' School for five months. Later they came to the U. S., landing in Norfolk, Va.

Twenty of the group spoke English well enough to go from Norfolk directly to Dallas, Texas, and according to their understanding, the balance were to attend a civilian university in this country to learn more English. They said they were surprised to find themselves here, still under strict discipline and undergoing physical training. The boys say that the physical training is difficult for them because they have not had a sufficient amount of food for the past few years, and that they dislike the military track and obstacle course very much, but like

to play the various games.

When questioned about their liberty, they remarked that it was far too little, but that everyone treated them very well. They said the American girl was different from their French girls in that they aren't as romantic, and that they have several dates in the same day.

It seems that the boys miss their wine more than anything else. They say that the French people are a wine loving nation, and that the American coffee does not give them the lift that they need. They also miss mail from home, none of them having heard from their parents since 1942, and none of their parents know where they are at the present time.

When I asked them for a direct comment for publication, they

asked me to please tell everyone—and I quote—"We are glad to be here. Chapel Hill is a beautiful place, the people treat us fine, and the American Cadets are like our big brothers, giving us a great deal of help. We like America as far as we have seen it, and will be glad when we join our American friends in active battle."

Summing it all up, I found that the French Cadets like it here, they are anxious to get ahead into flight training, they miss their wine a great deal, and they have a great deal of affection for the other cadets. They are a clean-cut, vivacious group of lads, young, eager, determined, and gentlemen in every sense of the word. They are learning English rapidly and will undoubtedly some day make Adolph Schickelgruber rue the day he was born.