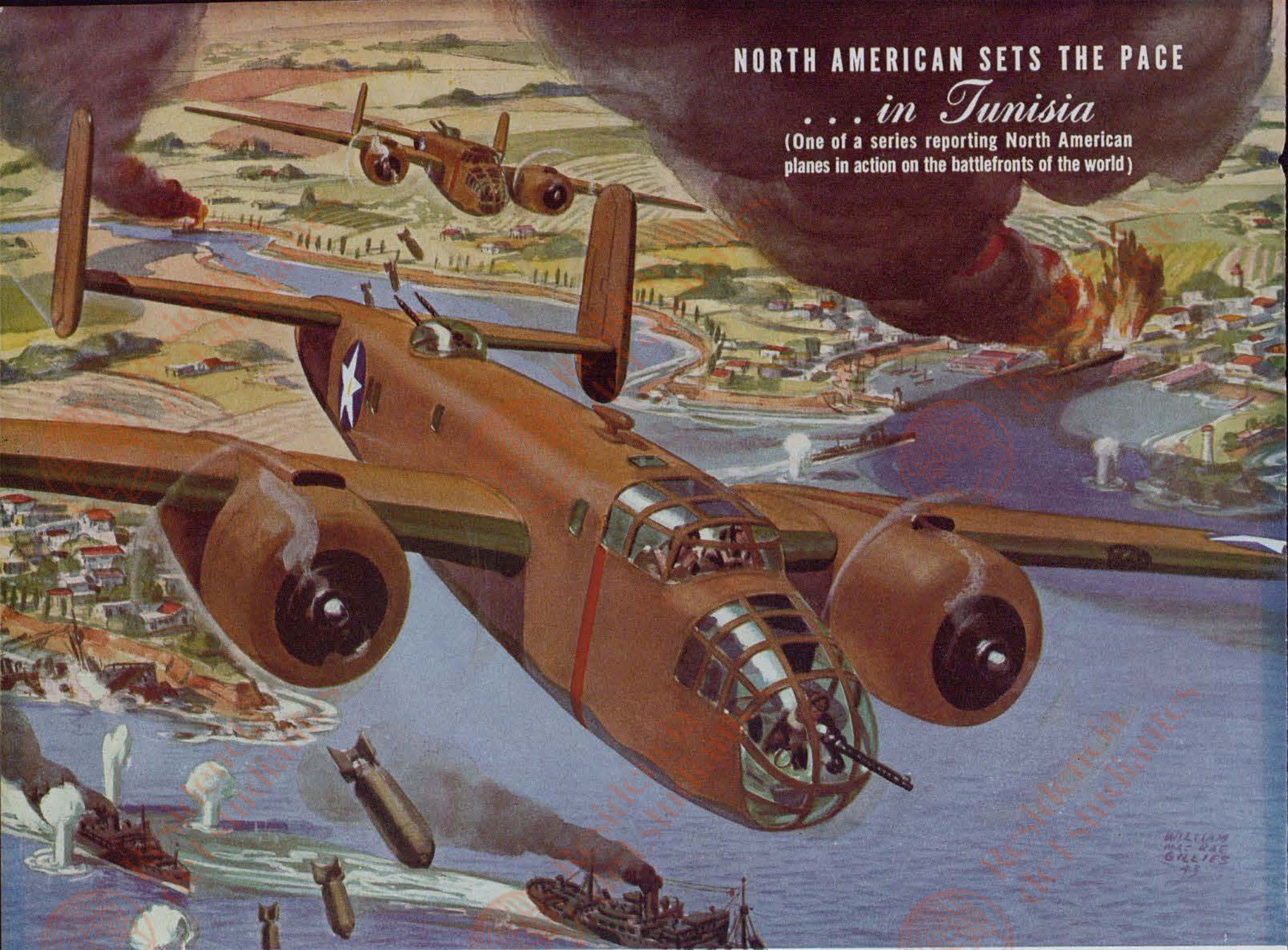


NORTH AMERICAN SETS THE PACE

... *in Tunisia*

(One of a series reporting North American planes in action on the battlefronts of the world)



ESCAPING AXIS SUPPLY SHIPS UNDER ATTACK BY B-25 BOMBERS OFF THE TUNISIAN COAST

B-25 MITCHELL BOMBERS BREAK HITLER'S GRIP IN AFRICA

"IN relay attacks, hour after hour, B-25 Mitchells hit docks and shipping at Sousse, on the east coast of Tunisia . . . The important railroad junction at Hammamet was pounded hard by B-25's . . . Mitchell bombers raked the Tunisian railroad along which Axis troops and supplies have been arriving . . . An aerial cover of Mitchells and fighter planes protected the Americans advancing on Gafsa and tortured the fleeing enemy . . ."

Dozens of stories like these have come out of Tunisia. They place the North American B-25 Mitchell bomber high on the list of causes for breaking of the Axis grip in North Africa.

Now the enemy's power in Africa is broken. Soon the Mitchell and other great American planes will be over Southern Europe and another front will be added to those on which "North American Sets the Pace."

This pace-setting begins in our plants, where thousands of men and women work night and day to make North American bombers, fighters and trainers better, and to turn them out faster. Wherever our planes are fighting, trained North American employees go along to find out how they perform. Reports from these field experts have resulted in many improvements that are

aiding the United Nations around the world.

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B-25 MITCHELL



P-51 MUSTANG



AT-6 TEXAN



NORTH AMERICAN
Sets the Pace!

staff showed signs of staleness, he would take them to small towns in France, Holland or Belgium where there was nothing to remind them of London and to put them back in old thought patterns. He once flew them to Switzerland and held a story conference on a scenic train as it was hauled up a mountain by cable. When pressure of time prevented foreign travel, he has taken them away from the studio in search of new taverns. One day he and four associates chartered a 250-passenger steamer and held an all-day session on the Thames. Hitchcock had bad luck at first in finding scenic cures for mental fatigue in America. Just as a landscape began to start a new train of ideas, a soft drink, gasoline or pill sign came along and threw him back into the rut. He has recently discovered that the billboard people have overlooked Death Valley. No other place equals it for brain recreation, according to Hitchcock.

The assistant director on Hitchcock's first picture was Alma Reville. After they had been coworkers on several pictures, they were married in 1926. They have continued ever since as a writing team. Their thirteen-year-old daughter Patricia won enthusiastic critical notices when she appeared on Broadway last year in *Solitaire*. The Hitchcocks lead a simple home life, the complete opposite of legendary Hollywood existences.

In England, Hitchcock gradually became the acknowledged leader in the most difficult department of the movies, the mystery melodrama. Masterpieces in this class are the rarest thing in pictures. The highest quality of cinema brains is needed for a thoroughly satisfying mystery. It calls for an almost impossible combination of action, horror, comedy and romance, plus an almost impossible blending of suspense and surprise with plausibility. Scores of directors can make good epics, but Hitchcock is the only proved master of the mystery, and he has reached the heights only twice—in *The 39 Steps* and *The Lady Vanishes*.

The average mystery film is good for half an hour and then goes to pieces. It is easy to get the characters into hair-raising jams, but hard to get them out again. It takes infinite patience and ingenuity to keep the mystery from turning into a farce, burlesque or amateur theatricals in the last two or three reels. The mystery is the one branch of the art in which Hollywood has made a poor showing. Like the rider who cussed out the horse that bucked him off, Hollywood scoffs at mysteries. Spy and detective thrillers are generally turned over to the Grade B departments as material for quickies, on the theory that they are sure to be bad, so they may as well be cheap. The effort to keep a thriller plausible throughout is too brain-racking, and the usual recourse is to cover the holes in the logic by slapstick and rattling action. Even Hitchcock, who has made the closest approach to ideal mysteries, says life is too short for perfection in this field.

A Weighty Personality

"Perfection is the prerogative of writers," he said. The writer, according to Hitchcock, can afford to be a perfectionist because of the cheapness of his materials. Flaubert could work on a novel for six years because it cost only a few dollars' worth of ink and paper. A producer or director, with a cost sheet running into thousands of dollars a day, can't agonize forever over the fine points.

Hitchcock is primarily a character creator. He contrives somehow to maintain the consistency of his characters while putting them through the intricate mazes of spy melodramas. It is easy to fit wily men and dolls into compli-

veloped characters into them. Hitchcock's task looks simple at the start, but the trouble begins when the creatures of his imagination become wayward, capricious and difficult. They get too independent for the plot. As the story is rewritten for them, the action is thrown out of gear, and climaxes refuse to come off. The director and his writers have a hard time arbitrating the quarrels between characters and incidents.

Hitchcock's greatest American success was his first American picture, *Rebecca*, made for David O. Selznick. One of the director's triumphs was the fact that it was generally called a Hitchcock picture. Pictures produced by Selznick are usually called Selznick pictures; *Gone With the Wind*, for example, was never known as a film directed by Victor Fleming, but always as a Selznick production. The *éclat* of Hitchcock's avoirdupois and personality had a good deal to do with making his name register above that of his famous employer. *Rebecca* began with a battle because the feelings of the two men toward literature were totally different. Selznick regards the author's text as sacred; Hitchcock regards a book as a source of vague hints for a picture; he often winds up by throwing away everything but the title. Selznick was the boss and had his way. The director regarded himself as handcuffed and straitjacketed by enforced respect for the printed word, but he succeeded in illuminating the picture with some of his most brilliant directorial touches. Hitchcock and Selznick performed a rare feat of hypnotism in this picture in making a first-rank star out of Joan Fontaine, whose earlier performances had lacked interest and animation. It took \$80,000 worth of preliminary photography before the two Svengalis were able to develop the gifts the young actress had been concealing.

Background for Horror

The first spy melodrama that Hitchcock made in this country was *Foreign Correspondent*. Walter Wanger, the producer, had nothing to start with but the title and the idea of a spy thriller with an American newspaperman in Europe as the hero. Hitchcock mentally reviewed his travels in Europe and chose Holland for the scene of the picture.

As he thought of Dutch-windmill landscapes, he said, "We'll have the hero see a windmill turning against the wind. He'll know that's a Nazi signal."

The plot was quickly built around that idea. *Foreign Correspondent* was full of stirring scenes, though lacking the finish of his British-made masterpieces. His other Hollywood productions were *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, *Suspicion*, *Saboteur* and *Shadow of a Doubt*, recently made for Universal.

Shadow of a Doubt, a psychological murder tale, was filmed from a story written by Gordon MacDonald. He used the town of Hanford, California, as the murderer's lair. Hitchcock switched the scene to Santa Rosa, California, because Santa Rosa had the quiet and peaceful atmosphere which he likes as a background for horror. There was no joy in Hanford over the insinuation that it was not an ideal setting for a dark and bloody mystery. One Hanford newspaper threatened Hitchcock with bodily harm in revenge for the insult.

For years Hitchcock has wanted to make a picture with all the action taking place on a lifeboat, starting with a dozen survivors from a wrecked ship and ending with two. Regarding the idea as unlikely to attract the public, he filed it away in his mind with other fascinating but uncommercial themes. The war, however, has made abrupt changes in public interests. Hitchcock is now working on *Lifeboat* as the first of a series of pictures which he is to make for the Twentieth Century-Fox Corporation.

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