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NAZIS DRIVE TOWARDS MEUSE; ALLIES LASH AT ENEMY FLANK

Reds Closing Trap On Nazi Forces In Budapest

Russians Gain On Wide Front

LONDON — (AP) — The Axis garrison in beleaguered Budapest faced entrapment today at the hands of Russian forces who, a Soviet communique said, have cut roads of retreat to the west after a swift 25-mile advance in three days.

At the same time other Red Army troops were reported to have stabbed seventeen miles inside western Slovakia and captured the rail junction of Leva (Levice), only 65 miles east of the Slovak capital of Bratislava and 98 miles from Vienna.

The threat to the Budapest garrison was mounted by troops of Marshal Feodor I. Tolbukhin's Third Ukraine Army, which overran the important enemy strongholds of Szekesfehervar and Bicske, respectively 32 miles southwest and seventeen miles west of Budapest.

CUT RAIL LINE

In the advance the Russians drove the enemy from 160 populated places, the Soviet war bulletin said, and seized a nine mile stretch of the main Budapest-Vienna trunk railway between Bicske and Budapest. Only seventeen miles now separates the tips of the pincers the Russians are closing around the Magyar capital.

Tobukhin's vanguards were reported within seven miles of Budapest's city limits.

Leva, meanwhile, fell to Marshal Rodion Y. Malinovsky's Second Ukrainian Army, smashing westward above the Danube some 50 miles northwest of Budapest.

While Malinovsky's main body pressed on beyond Leva on the road to Vienna, a part of his force fanned out northward into the Slovak mountains in an effort to trap German units fighting far to the east in the exposed Lasone-Kassa sectors.

The Soviet communique said the two Russian armies had captured 4,630 Germans and Hungarians in the past three days.

Berlin, meanwhile, reported without confirmation from Moscow that a big Soviet Winter offensive was entering its sixth day in Western Latvia, where some 20 German divisions are trapped. German radio commentators told their listeners not to be surprised if the whole Eastern Front erupts.

Santa Claus Played To Hungry Children

America's 4th War Christmas Finds U. S., Rest Of World In Sober Mood

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

America's fourth wartime Christmas found the nation in a sober mood today with its attention focused on the western front, where American troops have halted, temporarily at least, the German Winter offensive.

Around the world the members of America's armed forces who were not immediately occupied with fighting celebrated the holiday. Some of them were with new-found friends in Allied countries. Others played Santa Claus to hungry, frightened children of wartorn villages.

President Roosevelt and Pope Pius XII led world leaders and the men and women of the Allied nations yesterday in prayers for a lasting peace.

The President's Christmas message was broadcast to the armed forces over the world in connection with the annual ceremony of lighting the national community Christmas tree on the White House lawn.

"We cannot say when our victory will come," he said. "Our enemies still fight fanatically. They still have reserves of men and military power. But, they themselves know that they and their evil works are doomed. We may hasten the day of that doom if we here at home continue to do our full share."

"We pray that that day may come soon. We pray that until then, God will protect our gallant men and women in the uniforms of the United Nations—that He will receive into His infinite grace those who make their supreme sacrifice in the cause of righteousness and love of Him and His teachings.

"We pray that with victory will come a new day of peace on earth in which all the nations of the earth will join for all time."

POPE'S MESSAGE

Pope Pius declared that those nations responsible for the war should be punished, but added that the peace settlement "should not impose any perpetual burden" on the losers if new wars were to be avoided. The pope said that the future peace rests on the recognition of the principle of unity of all nations and the family of peoples.

Later the pontiff celebrated mass in St. Peter's. It marked the first time in 75 years that any pope had celebrated a public Christmas Eve midnight mass there. Since 1869 this mass had been a private one for the cardinals, the diplomatic corps and the King's family. The great cathedral was crowded by a throng estimated at 100,000.

King Haakon of Norway in a broadcast to his people from London last night held out the hope of early victory and liberation before another Christmas.

He said that all he could offer his people this Christmas was faith and confidence in the future and the belief that "we shall celebrate next Christmas together in a free country when it will once more be the festival of home and peace."

In Chungking Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, in a radio message to the churches of China, called on the churches

See CHRISTMAS on page 8

Two-Minute News Roundup

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Western Front

Allied Supreme Headquarters in Paris sends word of only one German advance in the fighting in Belgium, this morning's communique tells of forward elements of the German armies moving westward toward the Meuse River near the towns of Marche and Hotton.

Very heavy Nazi attacks directed northwest of this area have been successfully held.

Previously, aggressive enemy patrol action had been reported all along the Western Front.

Allied aerial operations in support of ground forces continued in very great strength yesterday. Aerial action began with the first rays of daylight. Enemy troop concentrations and fortified positions as well as lines of communications were heavily hit. Targets ranged from the battle lines all the way to the shores of Lake Constance.

Fighting on the Italian Front was sharply curtailed by a heavy snow fall. Troops of the United States Fifth Army are said to be firmly entrenched in their newly-won positions east of Monte Belmonte.

Russian Front

The latest Soviet communique sends word that the Red Army has taken 4,630 Axis troops in the past three days. Red Army units now stand only 98 miles from Vienna. Other Russian forces have almost completed the encirclement and isolation of the enemy garrison in Budapest.

Berlin radio continues to claim that the new Soviet Winter offensive is now under way in Latvia. Berlin says that the Latvian offensive is now in its sixth day.

Greece

Fighting continues in Greece. Yesterday the left wing ELAS leaders challenged the right of the British to intervene in the Greek crisis and restore law and order.

Today British units captured the main refrigerating plant for Athens after heavy fighting in the port of Piraeus.

Pacific Front

All is not Christmas in the Pacific Theater. In the air Liberators and Superfortresses carried out a two-way attack on Iwo Jima of the volcanoes. Good bombing results were reported.

Liberator bombers commanded by Lt.-Gen. Harmon hit Weleai in the Carolines, Marine Corps fliers attacked Japanese positions in the Palau and Marahall Islands.

In the Philippines the conquest of Leyte is drawing to an end. General MacArthur sends word that American troops are rapidly closing in on the port of Palompon. Great quantities of enemy materiel including artillery has been taken.

Home Front

The OPA has expanded the nation's rationing program to insure equitable distribution of scarce food supplies.

Beginning Dec. 31st about 85 per cent of all meats will be rationed. Beginning at one minute after midnight tonight many canned vegetables go on the ration list.

At Brunswick, Ga., shipyard workers have begun to put in their five work hours today. It is designed to be a Christmas present to the boys overseas.

Fight Rages In Athens

ATHENS—(AP)—British troops in the port of Piraeus captured the main refrigerating plant for the Athens area today after a stiff fight during which the plant was damaged.

Meanwhile, tank-supported British parachute troops increased their hold on the western quarters of central Athens.

These operations came after the right of the British to intervene to "restore law and order" in Greece was challenged by leftwing ELAS leaders.

In a message sent to Lt. Gen. Ronald M. Scobie, British commander, the leftists again demanded the establishment of a Greek Government "of common confidence" as a prerequisite to laying down their arms. They agreed to a cessation of hostilities only on condition that followers of other volunteer militia organizations be disarmed.

The note, dispatched in reply to a British memorandum of Dec. 16, failed to alter materially the original stand of ELAS leaders and seemed to hold no hope for an immediate end of the civil strife that has been wracking the country.

The British said that ELAS forces had been cleared from approximately half of Athens, but the Leftists were strongly entrenched in warehouses and port buildings at Piraeus, where a fresh detachment of Indian troops was landed over the week-end under the guns of British warships.

In northwestern Greece bitter fighting continued between ELAS forces and rightwing troops of Gen. Napoleon Zervas, with the rightists reported suffering heavy casualties. After four days of fighting Zervas' EDES were said to have been reduced from 12,000 to between 4,000 and 6,000—partly due to desertions.

5th Army Front

White Christmas On Italian Front

ROME—(AP)—A heavy snowfall stalemated ground operations on the Italian front yesterday, Allied headquarters announced today, giving a respite to American Fifth Army troops who spent the previous day battling off German counter-attacks on their newly won positions east of Monte Belmonte.

Air activity also was sharply curtailed, but Allied fighter-bombers attacked an enemy airdrome northeast of Vicenza, destroying fifteen aircraft and damaging two others aground. Other fighters also strafed German transport, but heavy and medium bombers were grounded.

Hand Is Torn Off

Mystery Explosion Injures Youngsters

A mysterious explosion on the front steps of the residence of Mr. and Mrs. G. M. Cook, six miles out on the Park Road, early last night caused serious injury to two small Cook children.

Donald Cook, aged eight, suffered the loss of his right hand and his sister, Ida Marie, aged five, sustained a gash on the leg which required six stitches to close.

At the Cook home this morning it was reported that attending physicians had said the wounds could not have been caused by a bursting firecracker as there was no evidence of powder burns. On the other hand, tiny splinters of wood were found in the wounds. The front steps of the house are of brick, and these splinters could not have come from them.

Miss Margaret Cook said the two children were seated on the steps and they had not been shooting firecrackers but shortly after 6 P. M. there was a loud explosion and the children rushed in screaming. The boy's right hand was terribly mangled and it was amputated at Memorial Hospital.

The girl, with an ugly gash in the leg, was taken to the Presbyterian Hospital for treatment.

HAS NO FIRECRACKERS

Since the children had no firecrackers of their own, Miss Cook said it was thought the boy may have obtained one from a playmate or someone had tossed one from a passing automobile. But the statement of the doctors that the wounds were not caused by firecrackers and the fearful explanation of Donald that he had not fired any explosive indicated that the injury must have come from some other source.

Chief Henry Severs of the County Police said that a full investigation of the mysterious accident would be made by officers of his department.

Mr. Cook, who has been employed on the construction of a dry-dock at Wilmington, had just come home to spend Christmas with his family.

Superforts Lash Tokyo In Christmas Day Attack

Leyte Campaign Nearing End

By LEONARD MILLIMAN
Associated Press War Editor

Scouting Superforts gave Tokyo a blazing Christmas in the wake of a heavy naval and aerial bombardment of the Bonin Islands on the southern approaches to the Imperial capital, Japanese broadcasts reported today.

About a dozen "enemy cruisers and destroyers" shelled the Bonins for about two and a half hours around mid-day Sunday (Japanese time) the broadcasts said. The Islands, unnamed in the report, were simultaneously bombed in a series of air attacks.

Early this morning three B-29s, the radio said, poured incendiaries on Tokyo, Yokohama and Shizuoka prefecture southwest of the capital.

Earlier, American commanders announced Superforts joined in the seventeenth consecutive daily raid on Iwo Jima in the Volcano Islands and Philippines-based American bombers made their second daylight raid on Manila airdromes.

CAMPAIGN NEARS END

The Philippines land campaign appeared to be turning into a rout as the U. S. 77th Division closed in rapidly on Palompon, last Japanese strong point on Leyte, killing 2,400 more Japanese and capturing great stores of materiel including tanks, artillery and thousands of shells.

Behind them the 32nd Division, First Cdismounted Cavalry, and the 11th Airborne Division which joined in the knock-out blow to the Yamashita line, where cleaning up isolated pockets of Japanese remaining in the Ormoc corridor.

With the fall of Leyte looming Nipponese intensified their suicidal aerial attempts to break up the growing American air base on Mindoro Island, almost on Manila's doorstep. Twenty-seven were shot down Saturday and Sunday.

STRIKE AT MANILA

Leyte-based Liberators made their first daylight strikes at airfields near Manila on these same two days, catching the Japanese by surprise both times. The big bombers knocked out 50 to 100 Japanese aircraft on Clark Field while Yank fighters shot down eight of the nine enemy interceptors that got off the ground. Twenty-five more Nipponese planes were wiped out the following day on Manila's Grace Park airport.

Other American bombers sank or damaged 21 small Japanese ships in two days and dropped Christmas greetings to liberated Filipinos.

About 50 Superforts joined Liberators in Sunday's raid on Iwo Jima, Nipponese airport island 750 miles south of Tokyo. Heavy explosions were set off, but no big fires were started, largely because there's little left of Iwo Jima to burn.

Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, five star admiral commanding Pacific naval forces, arrived on Guam, warning "the tough part of the war is still ahead us" and "we may expect the bitterest kind of opposition from the air as we advance to the homeland."

Big Transport Plane Crashes

HARRISBURG, Pa. —(AP)— A twin-engined C-47 Army transport carrying 27 persons crashed on Roundtop Mountain in a heavily-wooded section about three miles west of New Cumberland Airport shortly before 5 A. M. today. Fifteen injured were brought to Harrisburg General Hospital where attendants said they understood "eight or nine" had been killed.

Hospital officials said, without amplification, that most of the men were suffering from fractures and burns.

Men aboard the plane were reported homeward bound on Christmas furloughs.

German Drive Gains Ground In Belgium

American Forces Launch Vicious Counter-Attacks On Wide Front

PARIS — (AP) — Strong German tank columns and infantry units jabbed westward into U. S. lines in Belgium today, a front dispatch declared, and Supreme Headquarters disclosed the Nazi push had knifed near a town only fourteen and one-half miles from the Meuse River.

Headquarters, which releases information 24 hours late under a security news lag, reported German tanks and troop-carrying vehicles had reached points between the Belgian towns of Marche and Rochefort, the latter only fourteen and one-half miles from the Meuse.

The section of the road between Marche and Hotton, within twenty miles of the Meuse, had been the enemy's previous point of deepest penetration in this sector. Rochefort is 5 1-2 miles southwest of Marche. Headquarters did not locate the specific positions reached by Field Marshal Karl Von Rundstedt's hammering counter-offensive.

Associated Press Correspondent Kenneth L. Dixon reported this morning that the Germans were sending powerful tank and infantry patrols in probing jabs westward into Allied lines.

While the Allies maintained fairly solid lines on the northern and southern flanks of Von Rundstedt's main penetration, he said, tank-supported enemy infantry units managed to push forward along the center in considerable strength.

German planes were out in strength again during the night, field dispatches reported. Skies were clearing this morning and Allied planes roared out to the attack.

TANKS STOP ATTACK

Dixon reported that American tanks beat off several strong Nazi assaults last night at points on the penetration rim. At least at one point, the dispatch said, U. S. artillery spotted an enemy concentration of infantry and tanks and laid down a heavy barrage, breaking up a counterthrust before it formed. In another area American patrols found 34 burned German tanks and 200 enemy dead.

On the southern rim of the German drive, he added the Americans are running into steadily increasing resistance, and are "being forced to beat off several tank-supported counter-attacks in order to make headway."

The communique also confirmed that American troops had scored gains into the southern flank of the German drive. The Americans have cleared the Germans from the Luxembourg town of Heidescheid, four miles north of Grosbous. (This would indicate a possible two to three-mile advance since previously the Americans were reported to have pushed their lines one to two miles north of Grosbous).

An earlier front dispatch covering developments up to late Saturday morning indicated that the American counter-attack had halted the German offensive, at least temporarily, and had driven four dents into the enemy's southern flank along a 25-mile front. The Americans appeared to have lifted the menace from the city of Luxembourg.

BITTER BATTLE RAGES

A mile and a half north of cleared Heidescheid the Germans hurled tanks and infantry into a sharp counter-attack near Tadler, and headquarters said "Heavy fighting resulted."

The Americans hit into the German advance south of by-passed Bastogne, Chaumont, a village six miles south of that city, was cleared and fighting raged as the enemy counter-attacked.

Six miles more to the south the Americans pushed in from the Liege-Arlon road, driving three miles northeast of Marbeange to Bigonville.

On the Third Army front Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's forces gained 300 yards in the Saar-lautern sector, on the east bank of the Saar River.

Berlin Says Fresh Troops Enter Battle

LONDON.—(AP) — The German High Command declared today that both the Americans and Nazi had thrown fresh forces into the great Winter battle in Belgium, and asserted the Germans had won further successes yesterday.

The German communique declared a "concentric attack" had been launched against surrounded Americans holding out in the Belgian road hub of Bastogne.

On the northern rim of the front, the broadest bulletin said, American attacks between Rissenborn and Stavelot were broken off "after yesterday's defeat."

Strong U. S. assaults are continuing, however, against the southern flank of Field Marshal Karl Von Rundstedt's wedge into Luxembourg, it added.

Germans Extend V-2 Offensive

LONDON.—(AP)—Berlin assertions that Manchester had been attacked by Nazi "long range weapons" coincided today with an official British disclosure that the Germans have extended their V-bomb offensive to northern England.

The twin developments recalled reports that the Nazis have been working at top speed with plans to crown to complete V-2 rocket launching sites in Norway.

It was unclear from reports whether the Germans were employing V-1 flying bombs, rockets or both in their latest attacks.

Assaults Renewed

Allied Bombers Hit German Spearheads

LONDON—(AP)—Waves of Allied bombers and fighters swept out from Britain today to renew their assaults upon the German spearheads in Belgium and Luxembourg despite reports from the front that the skies were clouding after a 48-hour stretch of good weather.

Flying Fortresses of the United States Fifteenth Air Force from Italy also were reported attacking the Reich from the south. German radio stations declaring bomber formations were over Austraia and heading north.

At noon headquarters of the U. S. Eighth Air Force in Britain announced that "heavy bombers are over Germany."

Approximately 1,000 Allied planes took the air over the Western Front yesterday in support of ground troops battling to stem the German counter-offensive, it was estimated unofficially. Back approximately 13,000 sorties in five days.

Allied losses yesterday were 39 bombers and 31 fighters. On Saturday Allied losses were 46 bombers—including eight heavies and 26 fighters.

German plane losses for the two were put at 330, but this was only a fraction of the damage wrought by the Allied airmen.

WEATHER

Partly cloudy today, tonight, Tuesday colder with showers.

Temperatures at 9:45 Today: 39
High and Low Last 24 Hours: 51, 31
Sunset Today
Sunrise Tomorrow