

Washington Digest

Yanks Fight Way Down Fairy-Like Moselle Valley

Patton's Troops Push Along Old Roman Pathways in Land of Forest, Lake and Ancient Turreted Castles.

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American history, I believe, has begun to repeat itself as the Allies start to write the last chapter of the European war.

By the time this is in print I hope General Patton's boys (the Third Army), pushing down the winding valley of the Moselle river, have captured or at least invested Trier, key city of the defenses of the Eifel. As they progress across those ancient highways or down the deep valley of the twisting Moselle river where Roman legions, equally as homesick, once marched in the opposite direction, they will be retracing the steps of the victorious American army which moved eastward to the Rhine in the last war. Then as now, it was the American Third Army which occupied the ancient city of Trier at the close of 1918. It left in 1923.

I may be wrong in my premonition, but I believe that this approach to the Rhine, which only an American army ever used to enter Germany as victors, will be the thorn-ougar of the victors of 1945.

This country of the "Eifel," north of the Moselle and west of the Rhine, is of particular interest to me for I have invaded it twice, peacefully to be sure; both times before World War I.

Secluded Villages Sprinkle Countryside

The Eifel is a stretch of terrain of volcanic origin, of some bare and bleak hills and some tiny, secluded villages. It is also a country of towns on beautiful lakes and rivers, in valleys with the terraced "morningside" (where the sun touches first) on which vineyards have grown since the Romans first planted them in the early centuries before Christ.

Part of the Eifel was "remote" even when I visited it. On the modern highways, many of which follow the old Roman routes, there were resorts favored by tourists. But there were lonely villages which breathed an age forgotten by the "modern" Germany of 1912 when I first saw them. There were tall crags crowned by the ruins of medieval monasteries and castles, there were quaint and comfortable inns, there were meandering mountain paths, walled by thick fir trees beneath which I slept in my "Iodendfabrik" cape, resting on a thousand year old mattress of pine-needles, dreaming of goblins and kobolds.

In a moment I'll take you up to see an enchanted castle that might have come straight out of a Maxfield Parrish painting or an illustration from Grimm or Anderson.

But now, let's get back to March, 1945.

As this is written the fighting has been along the western rim of the Eifel, which is really the western rim of the German frontier from south of the River Roer to the city of Trier. Trier is 69 miles from Coblenz on the Rhine.

The fighting has consisted of the parallel advance of columns along a 50-mile wide front. Patrols first move into the hills overlooking the valley villages. They secure the high points so their artillery can dominate valleys, up which the infantry advances on the villages which are its objectives, protected by the artillery in the hills.

It must be remembered that all along the German frontier stretches the Siegfried line. Therefore, the Americans have to advance against its fortifications and will have to do so perhaps halfway to the Rhine. This means that pillboxes and other fortifications have to be taken as the Americans advance.

Tanks cannot be used in this rough country. It is the old-fashioned, catch-as-catch-can fighting, with rifles, grenades, dynamite, flame-throwers and hand grenades.

Rugged Terrain Calls For Close-Up Battle

In these early stages of the American push the fighting has been in sharp contrast to the first army's move along the Roer river toward and into the Cologne plain. Once the Roer was bridged and tanks could cross, armor could come to the aid of the doughboys who were scrapping it out in the villages and towns where each house was a

fort. On the flat plain the use of armor is an advantage, but in hilly country, since possession of the heights is gained, artillery can dominate the objectives below toward which the foot-soldiers are moving.

There are plains in the Eifel, too, but it would seem that the chief arteries of advance would be along the valleys and the roads the Romans once used in their advance in the opposite direction.

It was westward, the course of Caesar moved when he conquered the Treveri, the tribe from which the Romans (Treves or French) gets its name. The Roman legions marched in 56 B. C. By 14 B. C. they were fortifying Trier. Today the famous, blackened height of the Porta Negri, the city's Roman gateway, has been bastioned with modern fortifications. The ancient brick basilica in the town and the resistance fountain (Petersbrunnen) will be remembered by thousands of American veterans of the last war. Trier, seat of the electorate, became a center of monastic learning in the Middle Ages.

Let us hope some of the landmarks will be preserved and when our bombers smash the bridges across the Moselle, the ancient buttresses remain intact as they have these two thousand years. Perhaps they won't have to be bombed, but rather the destruction of buttresses than one American life. Remember what Bismarck (of all people) once said of a piece of foreign soil? A square foot of it was not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian Grenadier.

In the hope that our men can march the rest of the valley unmolested as their fathers did, let's turn up the valley where the Eltz River pours into the Moselle, not far from the Rhine.

(I quote from my diary, April 2, 1912.)

"We started out on foot, the only means of locomotion... the old village with its plaster houses, the crooked, cobbled street, the old trees... along the meadows, past the mill and across the stream and the huddle of houses which cluster about it, up the enchanting valley wooded with beech and birch, the hurrying Eltz below, and the green meadows, underfoot the brown leaves that fell last fall and will lie like those beneath them undisturbed until the ones still green cover them. Down a dip in the path and across a stream until the somber ruins of 'Trotz Eltz' appear. (Trotz means against.) It is the relic of a fruitless effort to destroy the real castle of Eltz below. Moat, tower and buttress were built with the sole purpose of destroying a rival, (just as the modern artillery seeks to take the height to destroy those below)."

"Then up the path until suddenly, as if the ascent were planned by the architect who built the poem in stone below, the fairy castle of Burg Eltz, turret and tower, pinnacle, portal and drawbridge appear."

That is the end of the quote, as we say on the radio. May it be the beginning of new dreams of a more glorious world, of which some day the valley of the Moselle will be a part.

The deaths of many semi-prominent Nazis, notices of which are appearing in the German papers (one man died at two different places on two different dates) are taken to mean that the alleged late and unlamented gentlemen have either escaped to neutral countries with a new identity or have become someone else at home.

However, it is also pointed out by persons familiar with conditions in Germany that it is highly probable that a number of real deaths which are unreported are likewise taking place. In the first place, the concentrated Allied bombing on localities where high officials congregate (Berchtesgaden and Nuernburg) is bound to catch somebody some time. In addition, various "inside jobs" are probably getting rid of a number of persons.

Negroes constituted almost one-tenth of all the employees on the federal payroll as of March 1, 1944. However, they were disproportionately concentrated in the lower grades.

BARBS... by Baukhage

A broadcast from Tokyo said that the Japanese fleet would be only too glad to grapple with the American navy. Sounds like grapple-sauce to us.

You will be glad to learn that a children's music school has been opened in Novgorod, Russia, with classes in piano, violin and accordion.

Explosive Ben Malar, secretary of the radical People's lobby, calls the Yalta conference "a compromise with intelligence" and says that "only ignoramuses of the New Deal and the Old Deal can see much but a threat of World War III in its encyclical." Conservative David Lawrence also dislikes the Yalta decision, which leaves the middle-of-the-roads fairly happy.

This Sign Proves No Idle Jest



Since men of the Black Watch regiment of Canada heard of the speed of the Red advance into Germany, they are cautioning their comrades with signs, as above. Meanwhile, the "Ladies From Hell" are putting on a good show themselves and have mopped up much of the strategic Siegfried defense hub of Goch.

Twin Powered Hockey Players



Pete Long, left, and his twin brother, Frank, who provide the power on the Pasadena Panthers' Bearcat line, come to grips with Connie Hill of the Hollywood Wolves, right, in a recent ice hockey clash. They are said to be the first twin powered hockey players in this country. They have proven a big factor in the Panthers' scoring record.

Indication of What Is to Come



As marines wipe out Jap airfields within 700 miles of Tokyo on Iwo, the clearing of Manila bay for American ships continues and pattern of two-way thrust on Nippon grows steadily clearer. Some observers consider the thrust up from Iwo to be the quick way, but others insist the smash must come from the South China coast and Formosa. Many observers seem to think that all indications are that the Japanese islands will be conquered before attempting direct combat in Asia.

Dragon's Teeth Prove No Barrier



Infantrymen of the 90th U. S. division demolish part of the dragon's teeth of the Siegfried line in Habscheid, Germany, as they move to the front. Most of the barriers were made of reinforced concrete, but had little effect on the forward march of American troops. TNT and new tank guns were able to clear the way without great difficulty.

March of Death G.I.



Survivor of the harrowing "March of Death" on Luzon, M/S Chester A. Konka works out his 90-day furlough in Detroit aviation plant. He says, "Take it from one that knows, I'll stand by the Red Cross, it's a really great organization. It did a lot for us on the islands."

Not 'Destructible'



Lt. Alexander Vraicu, East Chicago, Ind., shown aboard a carrier as he had just returned after being shot down over Luzon. He was picked up, after his forced landing, by guerrilla bands who aided him in returning to ship.

Admiral of Texas



Admiral of the Navy Chester W. Nimitz, in charge of present operations in the Pacific, in his college days was described as "a man of cheerful yesterdays and confident to-morrows." He is a big favorite with the navy enlisted personnel.

Premier Assassinated



Shortly after he had asked the Egyptian parliament to declare war on the Axis, Premier Dr. Ahmed Maher Fasha (above) was assassinated. He was pro-British.



HOW HALSEY BOMBED FILIPINOS

Adm. William F. "Bull" Halsey tells this dramatic story about the invasion of Luzon.

"Just before we went into Luzon, I called all the Filipino stewards and messboys on my flagship together. I showed them a map of Luzon and pointed out the Japanese positions that MacArthur had told me not to shell for fear of hurting some Filipino civilians.

"I told them that the only way to get the Japs out would be to shell these key points."

"One of the messboys stepped forward and said that the marked-out positions included his home. I asked him if he thought we should shell it.

"Is that the only way to get the Japs out?" he asked me. I replied that it was.

"Then if you don't mind, sir," the messboy told me, "shoot the so-an-so's out to hell."

"We shelled those defenses, we killed a few Filipinos, but we got all the Japs."

ARMY SPEED UP

Senators studying the military picture have learned that the army ground forces command has been quietly cutting down on the training given to infantrymen before going into front-line action.

Infantrymen are now sometimes being shipped overseas without any advanced training. Some now find themselves in the front line only six months after having donned uniform. It is still longer than the average in the last war, however. Meanwhile, men are being yanked out of the air corps and services of supply and transferred to the infantry. Already supposed to be well-seasoned, they get an additional seven weeks' training and are then moved outside the country as replacements.

One new departure from practice in the last war is that few divisions have been withdrawn from action in their entirety for a thorough rest. Instead, once a division is in the line, it receives replacements, but no real vacation, for months. Congressmen returning from the war front have criticized this policy to army higher-ups.

General Bradley has tried to move green divisions into relatively quiet sectors for seasoning, but his intelligence hasn't always been able to gauge what the enemy considers a quiet sector.

LABOR MANAGEMENT

The scene is the lobby of Washington's fashionable Mayflower hotel. A modest, businesslike, gray-haired man walks over to the house phone, picks it up.

"Room 633," he says, and then after a brief pause, "Eric, this is Bill, shall I come up?"

The conversation is between the representatives of two one-time bitter foes, AFL Bill Green and the U. S. Chamber of Commerce Eric Johnston, preparing to spend an evening together discussing the mutual problems of labor and management. When Johnston first became president of the U. S. chamber, he immediately called on Green and Phil Murray, suggesting closer cooperation in the public interest. They have been good friends ever since.

FRANCE AND THE BIG THREE

Those who sat at Roosevelt's elbow during the Yalta conference give a new slant to the reasons why sensitive General De Gaulle was not invited to join the big three. They say that neither the President nor Prime Minister Churchill had any objection to De Gaulle's presence, but felt rather neutral about it. Stalin was the man who opposed it.

Stalin, according to those returning from Yalta, pointed out that this was to be primarily a military conference and France was only playing a minor role in the war. Since the Big Three were bearing the main brunt of the war, Stalin said he saw no point in having De Gaulle sit in on a conference concerned largely with military strategy.

The Russian war chief was quite definite and repeated the point that if the Yalta conference were concerned primarily with political and economic postwar problems, it would be different. But when military matters were being discussed, he just didn't want De Gaulle around.

Then to clinch his views, Stalin recalled that France surrendered to Germany early in the war, and refused to turn over the French fleet to the British as per treaty.

CAPITAL CHAFF
Contributions to senatorial campaigns in 1940 were only \$787,000, compared with \$1,495,000 in 1944. Expenditures were \$1,139,000 in 1940 compared with \$1,702,000 in 1944.

¶ Lt. Will Rogers Jr., former congressman, and son of the late great humorist, is writing to friends with a German typewriter. His unit captured a typewriter factory in St. Vith which was turning out machines for the Germans. With his own portable loom, Rogers adopted a German machine.

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