

LOWER RHINE CROSSED ON BROAD FRONT

Record Air Armada Swarms Across North Germany

FLAME THROWERS IN JAP CLEAN OUT



Burned out of their hole by flame throwers of the U. S. 25th Infantry Division, the heads of 23 Jap soldiers lie scattered in a pocket on "Bayonet Hill" near Pusan, Luzon. The hill was named for a soldier killed by a company of heavily armed Japs. U. S. Signal Corps photo. (International Soundphoto)

Scourage Is Worst Ever Laid Down

Air Troops Dropped And Landing Fields Hammered by Bombs

London, March 24.—(AP)—More than 3,500 Allied war planes, the greatest armada ever to cross the English channel at one time, swarmed over northwest Germany today in support of the Allied storming of the Rhine, as possibly 1,500 transport planes and gliders showered a great army east of the river.

It was one of the war's most awe-inspiring aerial operations. The most devastating scourage ever laid down on a single area was exploded on the Ruhr valley in the crucial hours before dawn. Then, 1,900 American bombers and fighters hammered 12 Nazi airfields and carried out searing missions across the battle zone.

Shortly after noon, the German radio warned of another bomber formation heading east. Itly toward the heart of Germany, possibly for the U. S. 15th air force's attack on Berlin.

Many of the parachute troop carriers and gliders—the number would indicate from 20,000 to 30,000 men, the greatest number ever engaged in an airborne operation—swarmed out from Britain and thundered across the Strait of Dover.

No sooner had the parachute troops landed than other planes began the job of supplying them with additional ammunition. The first batch of supplies was dropped across the Rhine at noon by some 250 U. S. 8th air force Liberators.

Thick layers of heavy bombs and fighters streamed continuously across the channel. Then came the gliders with their landing planes, and after them the troop-carrying craft, wing to wing, and bombed after bombed, flying so low that every detail could be seen from below.

Cotton Prices Down Sharply

New York, March 24.—(AP)—Cotton futures opened ten cents a bale lower to ten cents higher, and closed 10 to 30 cents a bale lower.

	Open	Close
May	22.09	22.03
July	21.77	21.72
October	21.17	21.10
December	21.05	21.00
March	20.92	20.87

Middling spot, 22.39, off six.

YANKS EVACUATE CIVILIANS



When the German town of Zweibrücken fell to 7th Army troops, its civilians under escort of York infantrymen were marched to the edge of the town for protection from German shelling. The Red Cross flag is carried for safety against snipers. Note predominance of old men. Signal Corps Radi-photo. (International)

Russians Attacking With Powerful Forces In East

Germans To Fight On To Last Ditch

Decisive Drive On Berlin Has Started, Germans Announce

London, March 24.—(AP)—The Germans said today that Marshal Gregory Zhukov had attacked "with strongest forces" from his Oder bridgeheads as part of a decisive drive on Berlin.

With perhaps 1,200,000 men massed along the Oder and ready to join in a multiple east-west Allied assault to crush the last breath out of the Reich, Zhukov threw six infantry divisions, waves of tanks and a tremendous artillery barrage into the new attack on both sides of Kuestrin, and succeeded in reaching a point only 31 miles from the German capital, German broadcasts reported.

The German high command said Zhukov was attacking from bridgeheads on both sides of Kuestrin, and that the stubborn German defense had taken a toll of 204 Soviet tanks in two days of battle there.

The Germans, who claim still to hold a small part of the old city of Kuestrin, just south of the Wartau River and east of the Oder, despite official Soviet announcements of the capture of the ancient fortress, said:

"The battle for Kuestrin has reached its climax. The Red army is throwing in all its material, regardless of losses of men and tanks. The present offensive must be taken in connection with the long-planned Russian attack on Berlin," Kuestrin has been cut off from all communications to the west for some time. The fortress still is in German hands. Furious fighting continues in this sector."

AMERICAN GRAVEYARD ON IWO



A MARINE GOES OVER THE GROUND of a graveyard on Iwo Jima, beneath whose small white crosses are buried some of the more than 4,000 Leathernecks who gave their lives in the costly battle for the strategic volcanic island. Other Marines (background) are shown paying their respects at the graves of their fallen buddies. (International)

30,000 Paratroopers Drop On Ruhr Plain

Navy-Manned Landing Craft Carry U. S.-British Forces Against Foe

Paris, March 24.—(AP)—American and British assault forces crossed the lower Rhine on a broad front today and fought swiftly into the cities of Wesel and Rees, while thousands of airborne troops dropped onto the north German plain above the Ruhr, in a bold bid for victory this spring.

The Ruhr was caught in a vise between Field Marshal Montgomery's 21st army group and the American first army, swiftly expanding its Remagen bridgehead less than a dozen miles south of the great industrial basin.

Farther south, Lt. Gen. George S. Patton's third army secured its bridgehead on the upper Rhine, and struck ahead on flat country leading 202 miles to Russian armies at the Oder, southeast of Berlin.

U. S. ninth army and British-Canadian troops crossed the lower Rhine in navy-manned assault and landing craft in the darkness of pre-dawn, protected by an earth-shaking artillery barrage and the bombing and strafing of thousands of planes.

Montgomery announced the German commander at Wesel, at the "highest corner of the Ruhr, was captured."

The first identified bridgeheads were at Rees, across from Xanten. Troops captured Bielefeld on the east side of the river.

Between 20,000 and 30,000 parachute troops of Lt. Gen. Louis Brereton's Allied first airborne army beated to earth behind German lines. This was the third and perhaps decisive crossing of the Rhine. All arms of the Allies participated.

Winston Churchill, at Montgomery's headquarters when the offensive was launched, declared:

"One the river line is pierced and the quest of German resistance broken, decisive victory in Europe will be near."

Montgomery told his troops: "The enemy has been driven into a corner, and he cannot escape. The complete and decisive defeat of the Germans is inevitable."

The Rhine was crossed with small units in at least seven places. By noon, some bridgeheads had been secured nearly two miles inland into the heart of Germany, leading to the south door of Berlin over ideal tank country. One of the first British units across was a tank regiment.

Washington Thinks End Of The War Is At Hand

Washington, March 24.—(AP)—The German army is expected by top Washington officials to begin disintegrating soon.

This is the basis for a widely-held belief that the European war will be won in the next few weeks, except for large-scale mopping-up operations.

There is hope, but no real expectation, that Germany will surrender. Despite multiplying peace feeler reports, it is possible to state authoritatively, that none of the approaches thus far made is regarded here as coming from any person capable of surrendering Germany.

U. S. Carrier Planes Bombing Jap Bases

U. S. Pacific Fleet Headquarters, Guam, March 24.—(AP)—Tokyo radio said today that American carrier planes were bombing the big naval and air base at Okinawa, in the Ryukyus, midway between Japan and Formosa, carrying the assault into the second straight day.

Admiral Nimitz offered no confirmation of this in his official report today, which disclosed loss of the battle carrier Bismarck Sea in the escort carrier Bismarck Sea in the battle for Iwo. Nimitz' report also increased from 575 to 731 the bag of enemy planes during carrier attacks earlier this week on southern Japan.

Tokyo said 230 planes, presumably from Vice Admiral Mitscher's task force 58, which crippled Nippon's home fleet and heavily damaged major enemy naval air station Sunday and Monday, opened up on Okinawa yesterday afternoon. Okinawa is 400 miles southwest of Kyushu, prime target of the earlier attack.

Such a two-day raid damaged 17 Japanese warships in hideouts of Japan's inland sea, and smashed the big naval air stations at Karoya, Omura and Saeki Sunday and Monday. Today Nimitz said sky fights between the enemy home-based air force and the carrier planes raged on through Tuesday and Wednesday.

Only Week Remains To Settle Coal Row

Deadline Saturday, But No Signs Show Now of Agreement

Washington, March 24.—(AP)—Only a week remained today for John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers to agree on new wage contract terms with the nation's soft coal operators.

Negotiations resumed with little evidence of any progress toward reaching a compromise on Lewis' demands, which include a 10-cent per ton royalty payment to the union for a worker security fund.

So far, Lewis has declined to discuss the possibility of extending the existing contract beyond its March 31 expiration until some agreement could be achieved. He has held firm, too, on whether he will call the miners out on strike. They will be pulled next Wednesday or whether they wish to strike.

At about this same critical stage in its 1943 negotiations, labor Secretary Perkins made a personal plea to the conferees for a special effort to get together.

The talks yesterday resolved to discussions within a sub-committee. This group was scheduled to report any progress made to the full conference this morning.

Navy Will Be Transferred Into Pacific

Washington, March 24.—(AP)—There will be no partial demobilization of the navy when Germany is defeated, says Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King, because "all naval forces are required to prosecute the war in the Pacific."

King, chief of naval operations and commander-in-chief of the fleet, said: "It is the intent to shift to the Pacific all naval power now devoted to the war in Europe and in the Atlantic as soon as may be. This shift must be made as expeditiously as possible, to the end that the war in the Pacific may be brought to a successful conclusion at the earliest possible date."

King emphasized that "it is most important for the people of the country to understand clearly that the navy must use every ounce of its strength to hasten the end of hostilities against Japan. Any half-hearted measures will result in prolonging the war and increasing the loss of American lives."

Demobilization of army combat troops is not expected to obtain any substantial proportions. Some will be demobilized since troops now stationed in Europe cannot all be demobilized against Japan, for geographical reasons. Troops moving through this country to the Pacific will receive furloughs.

Fighting Men Feel End Is Coming Soon

Generals, GI's Alike Are Of That Opinion; Morale Is Very High

BY WES GALLAGHER.

On the Rhine, March 24.—(AP)—Fighting the most bitter battle ever planned by American and British soldiers, elements of three armies were making amazing progress today after crossing the Rhine by a combination of skill and guts.

To get a ringside view of the greatest coordinated attack ever staged on the western front, I followed the doughboys and Tommies from their secret assembly areas to the Rhine over moorland roads, watched the attack develop from a front-line regimental command post, went across the river, and finally took a flight in a cab airplane for 2,000 feet high over the great Rhine for the air drop by thousands of parachutists and glider troops.

There is not a man, American or British, from generals to privates, who does not feel that

(Continued on Page Two.)

Economy Is GOP Aim In House Drive

Washington, March 24.—(AP)—A \$200,000,000 economy drive was aimed today by House Republicans at the \$833,991,932 Agriculture Department appropriation bill for the 1946 fiscal year.

Its major objectives are elimination of approximately \$90,000,000 in cash and borrowing authority earmarked for the Farm Security Administration's rural rehabilitation loan and grant program, and \$59-

(Continued on Page Two.)

WEATHER

FOR NORTH CAROLINA. Partly cloudy and continued warm today, tonight and Sunday.