

# THE STARS AND STRIPES

ITALY

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FOR U.S. ARMED FORCES

TWO LIRE

## Soviets Launch New Offensive South Of Nevel

### Red Army Slays 20,000 Germans; Takes 500 Towns

LONDON, Dec. 20 — The Red Army has opened a great new offensive south of Nevel and only 70 miles from the prewar Polish frontier, the Soviet communique reported today. More than 500 inhabited localities have already been freed in five days of terrific fighting in which 20,000 Germans have been killed, Moscow said.

Frontline dispatches stated that this new Russian advance threatens to outflank Vitebsk, the main German fortress at the northern end of the White Russia front, and that its garrison is faced with being cut off from the rear.

Moscow significantly called this latest drive the First Baltic Front. The Russians are reported to have smashed their way across the railway line from Nevel down to a point 40 miles north of Vitebsk. They were also said to have penetrated westward about 20 miles from the rail line and to be approximately 50 northwest of the Nazi Vitebsk bastion.

This break through battle south of Nevel has been in progress for six days. Reports on the struggle here have been given by Berlin radio but today was the first time that Moscow included news of the fighting in this area in the regular communique.

The strongest German defense lines in Russia are reputed to be concentrated around Vitebsk and its approaches. Bloody encounters have been reported taking place in the forests and swamps south of Nevel. At times, the Soviet communique said, when Russian advanced posts were in danger of being overwhelmed by enemy counterattacks "everybody joined the battle from the colonel to the cook."

Reuters reported that the Germans have dug in tanks damaged in previous fighting and are firing from them behind minefields and barbed wire. The advancing Russian infantry, including Siberian

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## FATHER AND SON



GEN. HENRY H. ARNOLD, commanding general of the USAAF, chats with his son, Maj. Henry H. Arnold, Jr., during the general's recent visit to Italy.

(Army Pictorial Photo through PWB)

## FDR Will Meet Rail Chiefs Again

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20—President Roosevelt has scheduled another conference for tomorrow with railroad union and management committees following a preliminary parley in which all phases of the wage boost controversy which threatens a tie-up of all U.S. rail transport were discussed.

A White House spokesman emphasized that no final agreements had been reached at the first session but said that "it was felt by the conferees that the meeting with the President contributed greatly to a clearer understanding of the problems involved."

A concurrent announcement from the Office of War Information revealed that U.S. rail traffic has been practically tripled in the past two years. Figures released by the OWI showed that passenger traffic in 1943 amounted to 81 billion passenger miles as compared to 28 billion passenger miles in 1941. No statistics were given for freight traffic.

## Senate Gives Nod For Discharge Pay

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 — The House today received from the Senate a bill which would provide discharged service men and women with mustering-out pay ranging from 200 to 500 dollars, depending upon length of service.

The bill sponsored by Sen. Alben W. Barkley (D., Ky.), Senate majority leader, would allow 500 dollars for those serving outside of the U.S. for 18 months or more; 400 dollars for those serving overseas for from 12 to 18 months; 300 dollars for less than 12 months' service abroad; 300 dollars for more than 12 months' service within the continental U.S., and 200 dollars for those who have served less than 12 months within the U.S.

Under Sen. Barkley's bill, one-third of the amount would be paid upon honorable discharge, and the balance in equal installments during the succeeding two months. All enlisted men and officers up to and including the rank of colonel would be eligible for the mustering-out pay.

Congress will adjourn Tuesday and will reconvene Jan. 10. The recess was voted after a burst of speed yesterday in which the matter of farm subsidies, the most pressing legislation remaining on the agenda was cleared away with a temporary compromise.

In the face of its inability to settle the subsidies controversy decisively, Congress sent to the White House for approval a bill which would extend subsidy payments until Feb. 17. Opponents of the subsidy program have been trying to end subsidies altogether as of Jan. 1.

## NOTICE

Chaplains and others in charge of Christmas services and programs for troops in this area are requested to see that announcements of special holiday functions reach The Stars and Stripes office before noon Wednesday, Dec. 22, so that listings may be as complete as possible.

Organizations that have not been regularly receiving The Stars and Stripes, daily or weekly, are advised to arrange for delivery through their Special Service officers.

## Planes Of 15th Hit Germany; 5th Army Imperils San Vittore

### Algiers Radio Says 8th Army Fights Way Into Ortona

The Boche "winter line" was being dented in several vital spots yesterday under continual pounding from the 5th and 8th Armies.

The 5th Army yesterday was threatening the strongly fortified village of San Vittore six miles south of the Cassino pass which guards the inland road to Rome. But ahead of the plucky Yank infantrymen were the same terrain difficulties and defenses which the doughboys had to overcome in capturing San Pietro after three days and nights of fierce fighting.

New Zealand troops of the 8th Army, according to Radio France in Algiers, yesterday fought their way into Ortona — one of Field Marshal Kesselring's twin fortresses on the Adriatic coast and the last town of any size before Pescara.

At the other Boche stronghold of Orsogna, 12 miles inland, British troops and tanks were reported to have reached the town following their capture of the village of Consalvi six miles away. The Germans were meeting every British advance with slashing counterattacks, Reuters reported.

Although there are indications that the Germans are falling back they are making a stand at every hill before giving ground. In the northern part of the 5th Army front, troops advanced about two miles against keen opposition. The French troops fighting in this sector for a mountain pass are being resisted very strongly.

An Allied Force communique announced that since the start of the Sangro battle, the 8th Army has knocked out 43 German tanks including 30 Mark IV tanks—the heaviest German tanks used so far in Italy. They weigh 22 tons and are mounted with a 75 mm. gun.

It also was disclosed that the

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### Mission Is First Into Reich Proper; Augsburg Blasted

ALLIED FORCE HEADQUARTERS, Dec. 20—The Allied threat to bomb Germany from two directions almost simultaneously materialized yesterday when heavy bombers of the 15th AAF roared over southern Germany to bomb military objectives at Augsburg and the railroad at Innsbruck.

In launching their initial blow from the Mediterranean at an industrial city within the boundaries of pre-war Germany, B-24 Liberators escorted by P-38s travelled to the most northerly point reached from this theater. Augsburg is

From England, BBC reported that Flying Forts were over northwest Germany this morning and that B-26 Marauders were over northern France in force. Fighter escorts on these raids shot down ten Nazi planes and six Allied planes failed to return. Further indication that the Allied air offensive is continuing unabated came tonight when BBC disclosed that all German stations had gone off the air suggesting the possibility that the Reich was undergoing another raid.

35 miles northwest of Munich and about 100 miles north of the Brenner Pass.

At the railroad yards at Innsbruck, which include important junction points from western Austria and eastern Germany leading south into Italy, B-17s escorted by P-38s made the heaviest attack. Innsbruck was bombed for the first time on Dec. 17.

Aroused by the opening of the "second front" from the air, the Luftwaffe sent up the largest fighter force in recent weeks. The

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## Front's Busiest Phone Relays Directions For Artillery Fire

By Sgt. RALPH G. MARTIN  
(Stars and Stripes Staff Writer)

ON THE 5TH ARMY FRONT —The frontline's busiest field phone was ringing again.

The sergeant answered it, jotted down some notes quickly and then handed it to the major.

"Here's the shellrep, sir."

The major read the notes carefully, walked over to the wall maps and made some calculations and then he yelled across the room, "Hey Stoops, have you got anything at the XYZ position?"

Stoops was Pvt. Daniel B. Stoops, a former tobacco salesman from Chambersburg, Pa.

Stoops fingered swiftly through his complicated-looking files.

"Yes sir, here are some flash and sound reports and a couple of photographs."

The major busied himself over the detailed reports, checked over the photographs, then looked at

the reports again. After that he handed a slip of paper to the sergeant, T-4 Peyton Auxford, a former New York advertising man. Auxford picked up the phone, gave some terse, specific instructions to somebody at the other end, and reported to the major.

"They should be firing within three minutes," said the major. "You'll be able to hear them from here."

Three minutes later the big guns started booming.

"I think we've got them this time," said the major to the small group. "I think we've really got them."

Maj. Walter Thomas, Huntsville, Ala., was talking about a big concentration of German artillery, only a few miles away. The major, who used to be a pharmacist, (Continued on page 4)

## 'Winter Line's' Outskirts Now In Hands Of Yank Infantry

By Sgt. MILTON LEHMAN  
(Stars and Stripes Staff Writer)

WITH THE FIFTH ARMY, Dec. 20—The outskirts of the German "winter line" in Italy were in American hands today. In terms of towns captured, yesterday's communique announced that the village of San Pietro, north of Highway 6, had been taken by American infantry troops. Today fierce fighting was reported near San Vittore, about two miles north of San Pietro and of Highway 6.

While communiqes were directing their attention on the vital highway leading to Cassino and eventually to Rome, and military staff members were estimating the remaining distance to Cassino at six miles, Allied troops both north and south of the highway to Rome were fighting their battle of high hills. In this battle, the names of towns are incidental

to the fighting and the towns themselves are falling only when the high points surrounding them are made untenable to the Germans.

In one division sector north of the road to Rome is Mt. Pantano, part of which was occupied by Allied infantrymen after six days of bitter fighting. German counterattacks during this six-day period were constant and stubborn. They were beaten off with heavy casualties on both sides.

In another mountain mass south of Pantano, an Allied infantry unit battled for nine days to take a high point south of the hill town of Mastro Giovanna. Seven days of this battle against the well-prepared German defenses (Continued on page 3)

## Tito's Partisans Step Up Adriatic Coastal Drive

CAIRO, Dec. 20—Partisan forces under Marshal Tito today were tightening their grip on Yugoslavia's Adriatic coastal areas despite bitter resistance by the hard-pressed Germans.

Latest dispatches indicate that heavy fighting was continuing in the vital Plume and Split sectors. The Yugoslavs are also operating in strength on the Hungarian frontier area, between Belgrade and Zagreb, in Northwestern Bosnia and in the area of the Serbian frontier.

Reports reaching here said that Partisan pressure had forced the Germans to send their supplies to the Aegean front by a roundabout route through Serbia and down the Struma River valley, a detour that is both costly and slow.

Allied observers believe that the partisans, with the aid of Allied air forces, now operating in close conjunction with Marshal Tito's forces, are holding down as many German divisions as are employed on the Italian front. They say the Germans are making an all-out drive to counter Partisan blows but the war is costing them heavily in men and materials, especially in shipping in the Adriatic.

Added to the actual warfare in Yugoslavia, is the threat of an Allied invasion with southern Italy, now well in Allied hands, as springboard for the attack.

## Vichyites Warn Invasion Is Near

LONDON, Dec. 20—Leading French collaborationists met at Paris yesterday to make a final appeal to the French nation to unite against terrorists and declare war on the Allies, the German-controlled Paris Radio said today.

Marcel Deat, French fascist leader, told the meeting that "French militia will take up arms against Anglo-American forces when they land in France." He added that the militia will be strengthened and will eventually become the backbone of the French police forces.

Deat's address was seconded by Philippe Henriot, former rightwing deputy, and Jean Paquis, Paris radio commentator, both of whom warned that the day of invasion is drawing near.

## U.S. Bombers Hit Jap-Held China

CHUNGKING, Dec. 20—Medium and fighter bombers of the 14th USAAF have hammered Japanese shipping and installations in recent widespread sweeps over central and southwest China, Indo-China and off the south China coast, it was announced today.

In the Tung Ting Lake area in central China, Mitchells started big fires in a raid on a Jap base at Owchikow, 60 miles northeast of Changteh, and destroyed an enemy bomber and fighter on the ground in an attack on a Jap airfield near Changteh. Warhawks strafed troop-carrying sampans and Jap troop trains in the same sector.

Other B-25s, operating over the South China Sea, sank an 1,100-ton Japanese freighter and shot down an enemy bomber. Fighter bombers divebombed the railroad station at Laokay in Indo-China and strafed shipping on the nearby Red River.

## Tunisian Launched

WILMINGTON, Del., Dec. 20—The destroyer Tunisian, which was built for the French Committee of National Liberation, yesterday went down the ways at Drake Corp. shipyards here.

## Letter From Mother Ends 2-Year Silence

WITH THE AVIATION ENGINEERS, Dec. 19 (Delayed)—Pvt. Stanley Palinski of Brooklyn has received the "best Christmas gift of my life" — a letter from his mother in Poland.

It was the first word he had been able to obtain from his mother in more than two years. The letter was transmitted through International Red Cross channels.

Palinski has a brother in the British Army. His other brother died in the defense of Warsaw.

## Veteran Mariner Knows His Quads

Lt. Cmdr. Harry W. Ross, 55, Washington, took time off yesterday from his duties as a navigating officer for the U.S. Maritime Service to set a few lines of type for today's issue of The Stars and Stripes.

"Yes, I may be a jack-of-all-trades," said the white-thatched mariner as he smiled at the group of composing room workers who had gathered round to see if the gold-braided man in blue could really operate the machines.

"But, as I remember it," he added after a moment, "Ben Franklin had a few nice things to say about fellows like me. Keeps a fellow from getting in a rut."

If Cmdr. Ross gets into a rut after all these years, it will be of his own making. Born in Seguin, Texas, he learned about the graphic arts at an early age by helping on a local paper put out by his family on a hand-operated press.

He joined the Navy in time to sail on the roughest-the-world cruise of 16 battleships in 1907-09 ordered by President Theodore Roosevelt to show the Japs that trifling with the U.S. Navy wouldn't pay.

In 1931, Sir Hubert Wilkins, the famed Australian arctic explorer, made the polar trip in the submarine Nautilus. Sir Hubert's chief officer and navigator for this daring voyage was the sailor-newspaperman from Texas.

"We didn't quite make the North Pole," Cmdr. Ross said. "Think we came to within 390 miles of it, the closest any ship, under or over water, has ever been. Cold? It was rather chilly."

After the polar trip, he worked in the composing room of the Washington Star and later the U.S. Weather Bureau in Washington. In 1940 he took an indefinite leave of absence to go back to sea. Since then he has made seven trips into the Mediterranean, the last being climaxed by the German air attack at Bari Dec. 2.

Cmdr. Ross has two sons in the service, both sea-faring men. He met one recently on a chance visit to the Coast Guard in Italy.

## Sailor Offers GI His Rubber Boots

T-5 Thomas Quann, of Parker, Va., who in Monday's issue of The Stars and Stripes said he wanted a pair of rubber boots for Christmas, will have his wish come true if he gets in touch with Spec. 1-C William Blankenship.

The next time T-5 Quann comes to Naples he can reach his sea-going Santa Claus at 53044. Spec. Blankenship saw the request in Camera Comments and promptly called The Stars and Stripes to offer his rubber boots.

If Mike R. Nosko will call at The Stars and Stripes we'll be glad to give him two packets of studio portraits he had taken in Sicily last summer. Sometime during the process of getting Nosko's photographs brought to Italy, his address was lost so it was impossible to mail the pictures to him.

## HANDLE WITH CARE



AN AMERICAN paratrooper removes a German anti-personnel, S-type mine. Detonator prongs are visible. (Army Pictorial Service Photo through PWB)

## Pilots Wear Jingle Bells For Second Xmas Overseas

(Special to the Stars and Stripes)

AT AN AAF FIGHTER BASE IN ITALY, Dec. 20—Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle!

Sleek AAF Warhawks are substituting for the one-horse shay these days as the theater's newest and most distinctive "decoration" is flown into action over the 5th Army front with a merry tinkling that heralds the approaching Christmas.

Jerries down below, grimly dodging cascading bombs, can't hear them jingling, those bells tied by vari-colored ribbons to the left shoulders of the Warhawk pilots of a battle-toughened fighter group.

Perhaps, too, the roar of the motors of their modern one-horse shay drowns out the merry little tinkle for the pilots, but they know they are there, and they grin.

It all started out as a gag, but now it's beginning to mean something.

The idea came to Capt. R. G. Brown of Baltimore and Washington in a moment of sheer inspiration. He had the unwitting help of the folks back home, especially the missus, who's residing at 128 St. George Road, Ardmore, Fenna.

Eyeing the Christmas packages from home, Capt. Brown noted the vari-colored ribbons, picked up the small bells that came with one package, and started humming "Jingle Bells." Then he got busy. As some would say, he'd been inspired.

He cut some ribbons into proper lengths, tied on a couple of bells, hitched the result onto his left shoulder loop, and strode into the mess.

"This is the new 'S.O.C.' decoration," he announced, giving his left shoulder a twist. The bells tinkled.

"The what?" chorused his fellow officers.

"Why," exclaimed Capt. Brown, "haven't you heard? This is the new decoration, Second Overseas Christmas."

In less time than it takes to tell, Capt. H. L. Davidson of 20 Foster Drive, Des Moines, Iowa, was jingling around with his "decoration," and the idea spread like wildfire.

Soon, all the officers who could qualify—and there are plenty who can in this battle-scarred outfit—were proudly wearing their decoration, or were frantically diving into newly-arrived Christmas

packages hoping against hope that someone back home had sent them some little bells.

It was all a lot of fun, especially when some visitor inquired what it was all about.

"Our newest decoration," they'd say importantly. Then, after a pause, and with a grin, "Second Overseas Christmas."

But the boys now are beginning to wonder if the decoration, conceived as a jest, hasn't already taken on a more significant meaning.

Capt. Brown went on a mission the other day. Jerry's flak was pretty terrific, and the captain and his Warhawk were bounced around plenty. But when he returned to base, he was safe and sound, and so was his one-horse shay.

## YANKS HOLD LINE'S OUTSKIRTS

(Continued from page 1)

which included rock-reinforced dugouts and interlocking machine gun fire, resulted in a stalemate for both sides. At the end of this time, the battalion commander found one weak spot in the enemy's defense and directed one of his companies to attack it. Two days later, the Germans were forced to evacuate the entire defense of this sector.

Both battles, in which American troops have gained their objectives after days of plugging and heart-breaking losses, represented little distance in immediate terms. But these actions, coupled with others like them, have resulted in the beginning of the first German withdrawal along the front in several weeks.

The frontlines in Italy today showed a marked contrast to their condition of a week ago. Patrols from many battalions probed more than ten miles ahead in many places without meeting resistance, although other patrols meet counter-fire shortly after leaving their outposts. It was perhaps too early to tell if the resisting German forces represented a strong defense or were merely delaying parties, designed to stay the Allied attack until the new German defense line was ready to receive it. During the day, German artillery continued to pound Allied artillery positions and where Allied patrols

## Poles Expected To Sign Pact With Russians

LONDON—The Polish government-in-exile is expected by some quarters here to take action shortly on the implied invitation from Russia and Czechoslovakia to sign an eastern Europe mutual-aid treaty. Moscow and the Czechoslovak government-in-exile signed early this week a treaty whose provisions are open to all nations in eastern Europe which have been victimized by the Nazis.

Czech statesmen quickly indicated that they would like to see Poland sign, and Polish officials announced that they would consider the invitation. Consideration was postponed, however, when the prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile fell ill in London.

Poland's relations with Russia and Czechoslovakia have been none too good in the past, but all three nations have a common meeting ground in the losses they have suffered at the hands of Germany. Some observers believe that the whole future of Europe might be greatly stabilized if the Poles, Czechs and Russians could establish friendly relations.

The treaty between Russia and Czechoslovakia is aimed at blocking any further eastward march by the Germans. It calls for economic collaboration and specifies that no signatory shall interfere in the internal affairs of another. It is felt that this last provision will go far to remove Polish objections to signing the pact.

## Dutch Soon To Aid In Anti-Sub War

LONDON, Dec. 20—The first all-Netherlands naval air squadron to serve with the British Fleet Air Arm will soon take part in anti-submarine operations, the Admiralty announced today.

The squadron, now completing raining in Britain, is equipped with Swordfish aircraft. Most of the officers are men who escaped the Netherlands East Indies when the Japanese invaded.

The group is commanded by a 27-year-old officer who transferred from the Merchant navy several years ago.

met German outposts, the fighting was bitter.

In the hills which the 5th Army forces have taken, the German intention to peg their "winter line" south of Cassino was seen time after time in the deeply-entrenched foxholes, many of them ten feet deep and reinforced with rock and timber, and in the caves blasted out of the rock-bound peaks. Italian civilians in several frontline towns have reported that they were required to help build these entrenchments for the Germans over a month and a half ago. These entrenchments have stood up against some of the heaviest American artillery and aerial blastings.

But now, as the weather cleared this week, 5th Army infantry forces have pushed their way into these German defenses, outflanked many of them and forced local retreats. The extent of these retreats today appeared to point to a new German "winter line" several miles to the north.

If the German local withdrawals pointed to a new defense line, frontline commanders did not place their hopes too high. As one of them remarked:

"You drive them out of this hill, and there's one ahead. You drive them out of that one and there's always one more. As long as they supply the hills, we'll have a fight on our hands."