

PM

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Yanks Chafing at Bit To Meet the 'Russkies'

They'd Like To Keep Helling It East- ward Till They Do

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WITH THE 1ST ARMY
IN GERMANY, Apr. 27.

—We're still looking for what the GIs affectionately call the "———— Rus-skies." Supply your own best soldierly adjectives.

The aspiration to be the first to meet the Red Army is aired all the way up and down the line, from division generals to the boys in the foxholes. And if the Yanks had their way, they'd hit the first road east and keep helling it eastward till they hit the vodka.

As one soldier from an armored division put it to me:

"This is what the hell we've been pushing across Europe for and I don't want to lose the pie when I practically have it in my mouth."

The Red Army is hardly a needle in a haystack, yet it might as well be, as far as the front in this sector is concerned. A dozen radios from different outfits keep yammering through the ether, hoping to maintain contact with the Russians long enough to make some sense from it, but it hasn't happened yet.

Rumors

Instead, we get rumors. A signal officer sees a cloud of smoke on a faraway ridge; a company outpost thinks he sees flashes at night; a radio operator who speaks Russian imagines he's got a Red Army position, which turns out to be a Yank message center operating a defective transmitter.

Every one of these stories circulates in widening circles until it's common knowledge in KP that Stalin himself with Marshals Zhukov and Konev are due to arrive at the town of ——— at 11:29 tomorrow morning.

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'Russkies'

Instead of listening to the rumors, I decided it was a good idea to go right out to the divisional air section out of which operate the Cub planes which are the eyes of the army. When I got there I listened around for a while to the radio communication system with a Cub that was in the air at the time and was patrolling an area farther east than any plane from this station had gone before.

Lonely

It was so far over enemy lines that Lt. Louis Blomberg of Brockton, Mass., who was piloting the plane with Lt. D. D. Rounds of Minneapolis as observer, called back over his radio:

"I feel as lonely out here as a bastard at a family reunion."

But neither Lt. Bromberg nor Lt. Rounds saw anything of the Russians and the deal I'd made for another pilot to scoot me out to the juncture went blooey.

When Lt. Blomberg's plane came back, Capt. Joseph Peck of Tooele, Utah, offered to send me up on the next routine patrol—so I, too, went Russky-hunting along with Lt. John Hagan of Atlanta, Ga. We spent 90 minutes in the air, much of it over enemy territory, and I saw lots of beautiful countryside. But we didn't see any Russians or much of anything else except red rooftops, yellow roads and green and brown hills in which the crops had been planted and some already were coming up.

The only successful thing about the trip was that nobody shot at us.

While the meeting with the Russians is getting to be a fixation with the GIs, the whole atmosphere here is having its effect on German civilians, too. The Germans have guessed that the Russians are nearby, and they are really scared.

Several Yank units have been shifted in the last few days. My guess: in accordance with liaison plans made by our higher echelons with the Soviet command. But that's only a guess.

At any rate, civilians stand on the sidewalks and watch us move along the highways and they positively have tears in their eyes. There are a few Yanks to whom such a scene is very touching and they say, "Poor slobs, they're sure afraid of them Russkies."

The best answer to that attitude that I heard was from a sergeant at the headquarters of one of an armored division's task force. Said he:

"Sure, them slobs are afraid. They're afraid of retribution, that's what."