

Sunday, April 29, 1945

Wehrmacht in Final Hours of Resistance

U. S. Soviet Juncture Seals Doom Of Germany; More Linkups Imminent

By SELWYN JAMES



Red Army veterans, who helped turn the Nazis at Stalingrad, then fought their way across Europe to Berlin, raise the Red banner over a house in the German capital.

The end of the German Army's organized resistance is a matter of days or even hours. While fighting by fanatical groups of Nazis may continue in isolated pockets for some weeks, the Wehrmacht under the German High Command is all but finished.

The historic juncture between the U.S. and Soviet armies has severed Germany into three crumbling segments.

The Third Reich which Hitler once told the world would rule for 1000 years, is gasping its last.

The Allies are pressing relentlessly from all points of the compass on the Nazis' Alpine redoubt. A second and third meeting between the Western and Eastern Allies may already have taken place. At last reports the Soviets had plunged to Rathenow, due west of Berlin and only a few miles from the Americans along the Elbe River at Tangermunde. To the south, Gen. George S. Patton's tank columns, sweeping across the Austrian frontier, were in field radio contact with the Soviets.

More Wehrmacht officers are deserting Hitler. Lt. Gen. Kurt Dittmar, the German High Command's chief radio spokesman, has surrendered to the Yanks. Lt. Gen. Heinrich Kirchheim, captured recently by the Americans, broadcast his second appeal to all German generals to quit.

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President Truman, Marshal Stalin and Prime Minister announced the junction of the Americans and Soviets which occurred at Torgau, 75 miles southwest of Berlin. Patrols made the first contact at 10:40 a.m. Wednesday. The junction in force was effected Thursday at 10 a.m. The U. S. A. heard Stalin's voice for the first time when his announcement was broadcast throughout the nation by CBS.

For the Red Army it was the triumphant conclusion of a 1400-mile fighting journey from Stalin-grad; for the Americans it was the end of 635-mile road from the Normandy beachheads.

All three Allied leaders emphasized that the war must continue until complete victory.

Said President Truman: "The last faint hope of Hitler and his gangster government has been extinguished."

Said Marshal Stalin: "Our task and our duty are to complete the destruction of the enemy."

Said Prime Minister Churchill: "Now the task will be . . . the rooting out of Nazi power and the subjugation of Hitler's Reich."

German resistance appeared to have collapsed completely in the juncture area. The roads west of Torgau were choked with thousands of panicky German soldiers.

The U. S.-Soviet meeting split Germany into three fast-shriveling islands of resistance centering around the North Sea ports, Berlin, and the Alpine redoubt in Southern Germany and Austria.

Anglo-American Armies:

Front dispatches said Patton's forces entered Austria without firing a shot. The fall of Regensburg, Dnubea River fortress some 75 miles northwest of the border crossing, preceded the invasion. As the U. S. tanks rolled into Austria they picked up the voices of Soviet troops in the Danube valley calling them by radio.

On Gen. Patton's right flank, the U. S. 7th Army under command of Lt. Gen. Alexander M. Patch, swept through Alpine foothills to outflank Munich less than 40 miles distant. Gen. Patch's advance covered a 45-mile front, and reached to within 28 miles of the Austrian frontier in a threat to the Nazi redoubt from the northwest.

Far to the north, the great port of Hamburg was topping. Captured Bremen was a hollow, ruined frame. Thousands of Germans in this area were fleeing from the British to Danish soil and perhaps eventually to Norway to make their last stand.

Soviet Armies:

Berlin is shattered and burning. By the week's end the Russians had driven into the center of the devastated city from all directions. Moscow reports said the Nazis had withdrawn into a four-square-mile area in the Tiergarten sector, which includes several government build-

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ings. The great Tempelhof air-drome had been captured, depriving Hitler of his last escape route if he is still in the encircled city. Late Friday a Berlin broadcast said the situation had "become still more critical."

The Russians said the fighting was even more fierce than that at Stalingrad in 1942. Nazi resistance centers in the rubble and bombed buildings were systematically blasted by Soviet artillery, and individual fights raged on staircases of homes, on balconies and roofs of buildings still partially standing.

Outside Berlin, the Soviets captured Potsdam, Spandau and Rathenow.

Above the German capital, Soviet forces lashed out along the Baltic coast, battering some 16 miles to seize Prenzlau, 28 miles southwest of Stettin, in a drive toward the British in the Hamburg area.

At the same time, the city of Wittenberg, 25 miles downstream from Torgau where the U. S. Soviet junction came, was captured after a drive up the Elbe.

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