

The latest from the Western Front tonight is quiet and perhaps reassuring, after the alarming news earlier in the day. (This afternoon's bulletin from Allied headquarters declares ~~that~~ ^{that} the Nazi offensive has made no appreciable advance toward the River Meuse - after the assault on Christmas, which carried the Germans to within a few miles of that stream.) Specifically, we are told that there is, what the bulletin calls - "little change". Also that enemy forces have not pushed to the river, in what is called - "any strength". This ~~is~~ of course might mean that light German reconnaissance patrols have arrived at the Meuse.

Altogether, the latest tonight enables one to breath a sigh of relief - after the heavy tidings earlier in the day. These told how on the night of Christmas Eve, the Germans renewed their offensive with massive power.....

~~offensive with massive power.~~ Previously, their drive had slowed down, and appeared to have stalled. But now the enemy momentum ~~was~~ picked up again.

Today's word is that German Commander Field Marshal Von Rundstedt is throwing into the assault greater forces than we had previously supposed. Instead of counting in terms of German Divisions, armies are mentioned today - Von Rundstedt putting into the offensive two armies and possibly a third. One is an army of armor, the other of infantry, and today disclosed German Divisions ~~that~~ apparently belonged ^{ing} to another armored army.

Driving with violent fury on the night of Christmas Eve, the Germans scored a success of large immediate importance. They closed a gap, and united two spearheads. Previously there had been two German wedges. One to the North and the other to the South, with the American^s holding a gap in between. Now the two spearheads^a bent toward each other, and met, — eliminating the gap. The two prongs of the Nazi

offensive ~~now~~ ^{ing} become a solid front of thirty-five miles.

The American forces continue their slashing blows at the sides of the German salient, with the strategy of cutting into it - the eventual hope being to pinch it off. Of these counter-drives, the one that ~~is~~ attracts the most attention is the American push to relieve the force of G. I.'s ~~is~~ that has been surrounded at the town of Bastogne. Some progress is being made, and wireless reports from the Americans there indicate they are fighting confidently, with high hope. Today great flights of transport planes flew to Bastogne, delivering airborne supplies to the Americans holding out - after days of heavy enemy attacks.

~~offensive now become a solid front of thirty-five miles~~

With his battleline linked up, Von Rundstedt drove toward the Meuse. The latest reports, telling of events of forty-eight hours ago, indicate that the enemy offensive has scored an advance of eleven miles, putting the Germans within four miles of the Fortress of Dinant - on the Meuse. And they are within fourteen miles of the stronghold of Namur, which is on the same river. ~~The most advanced of the towns taken are~~ Celles, Near Dinant, and - Ciney, on the road to Namur. Also tonight's report from Allied Headquarters speaks of the opening of what it calls - "The Battle Of The Meuse." And it describes American Troops - "Fighting with their back to the river."

At American Headquarters there is no belittling the crisis. Tonight's bulletin states outright that the Germans have won a major victory, which has disrupted the Allies' own winter offensive, ~~a victory that will probably grow in scope.~~

All of this has been accomplished by the enemy in the face of overwhelming allied air power and stupendous air action. Today American and British planes waged incessant and devastating warfare against the German offensive. They did so yesterday, the day before yesterday, and the day before that.

Today more than three thousand Allied war planes struck throughout the hours of light to break the back of the enemy drive. American Liberators and Flying Fortresses hit at the communication lines of the German offensive. Seven hundred and fifty British Lancasters and Halifax Bombers did the same. And, as for medium bombers, their number was myriad. This

Air action has been going on for four days, and in that time five-hundred-and-sixty German planes have been shot down, and three thousand, six hundred and seventy ^{German} military vehicles have been destroyed - including tanks.

Yet Von Rundstedt's offensive rolls on, despite all that air action. One line of comment is this - that the effect of blows from the sky are not immediately apparent. They strike most effectively at enemy communications and transport, cutting supply lines. And this is not felt decisively until supplies massed at the front lines begin to run low.

Allied air ^{men} ~~quarters~~ today said that it would ~~take~~ require from forty to seventy-two hours for the massive air action to take effect. In this we can see bright ~~xxx~~ expectation ~~in~~ that the aerial choking of supplies will cripple the Germans, when their front line reserve supplies begin to be used up.

~~Some 15~~
~~One large segment of air action today was the sending of a huge fleet of transport planes with airborne supplies for the American Forces trapped at Bastogne - where the GI's are still holding out.~~

~~We are told that Von Rundstedt's offensive was thought out and planned by Hitler personally. This comes from a spokesman at Allied Headquarters, who~~

One oddity is the adventure of Colonel

Ray Stecker, leader of the Hell Hawk Thunderbolt

Squadron. *Col. Stecker*
He led his planes today in low flying

attacks on the Nazi salient - flying so low that ~~we~~

when they returned, the ground crew gaped at the

condition of the Colonel's plane. Apparently he had

been scraping some farmers' barnyard, because they

removed from the undercarriage, chicken feathers,

lengths of fence wire, and part of a family wash.

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This comes from a spokesman at Allied headquarters, who

adds that the Hitler thinking and planning was done at the time when Der Fuehrer was rumored to be either dead or sick ~~or insane~~ or insance. Hitler was in seclusion, devising ~~in~~ what the dispatch from American headquarters calls "a brilliant, audacious and yet simple operation". Hitler turned his plan over to Von Rundstedt and told him to carry it out. And this Von Rundstedt has done efficiently.

This account goes on to say, while the German drive has scored a great victory, it has, in a basic sense misfired. Von Rundstedt's aim was to press farther toward the north, and drive to Antwerp, for a major allied disaster. But the German wedge was deflected southward, in a direction in which decisive results cannot be achieved. The German hope is now to establish a line along the River Meuse, and stand there on the defensive ^{so} we are told.

Now a word from Stan. of Cal.,
and then more stirring news.

Paris had an air raid tonight, just to complete the alarm of the civilians of liberated countries behind the fighting front. Nazi planes, flying in the darkness, dropped charges of high explosive that had Paris reverberating, Not much damage, and only a few casualties are reported, but the Parisians are described as having been *thrown into* consternation -- because of the first air attack that Paris has had since the early days ~~of~~ of the liberation of the city.

RUSSIA

Today Soviet Forces drove into Budapest, Capital of Hungary, and in bitter house-to-house fighting advanced for a mile and a half -- pushing toward the heart of the city. With the Russian encirclement complete the Germans are making a stand street by street. The Germans today made a last-minute attempt to evacuate as many troops as they could. They commanded ^u ~~all~~ ^{ered} public and private automobiles in Budapest in an attempt to sneak through the shell-blasted corridor. But that was foiled, and all that remains now is what looks like a bitter-end battle before the capital of Hungary is captured.

GREECE

This afternoon's word from Athens indicates that there was indeed a conspiracy to blow up British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. *The* dynamite plot discovered was meant definitely to get Churchill together with Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, British Commander in Greece General Scobie, and Officials of the legal Greek government.

They were in the Great Britain Hotel, which is the headquarters of General Scobie. Churchill and Eden, upon their surprise arrival in Athens, took up residence in the Hotel. And soon afterward sixteen-hundred-and-eighty pounds of dynamite was found in a sewer, at a point under the front of the hotel.

An investigation shows that just before Churchill's arrival in Athens, the explosive was not there. This is stated by a British Patrol, which traversed the sewer. In fact, the patrol, just before Churchill's arrival, placed a barbed wire barricade

across the section leading to the Hotel. The barbed wire had been cut - so as to permit the passage of the ones who placed the dynamite.

~~There were indications that the dynamiters had not yet completed their task of placing the explosive. Wires to detonate it had been set, and the British Patrol that discovered the deadly charge followed the wires. Some distance along the underground passage, they found another case of dynamite, which apparently had been dropped in a hurry - presumably by conspirators, who had been frightened away as the patrol approached.~~

It is noted that the underground passage is at such depth that plenty of dynamite would be required to wreck the hotel. The amount found, sixteen hundred and eighty pounds, would have been enough probably to have brought down the front of the building and the first floor. Apparently the conspirators thought more would be needed, and were bringing more.

SUBSTITUTE FOR END GREECE

Shortly after discovery of the dynamite plot to blow up Churchill, the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, and British Mediterranean Commander General Alexander went into a conference with Greek leaders, ~~xxxxx~~ representatives of various parties. Delegates of the left wing ELAS showed up - one of them - the Secretary of the Greek Communist party.

The British Prime Minister gave the Greek party leaders some forceful Churchill oratory, and told them that Great Britain had no other interest than the establishment of a democratic government in Greece. He urged the ELAS to accept the terms set forth by General Scobie, British Commander in Greece - terms requiring the armed bands of the ELAS to turn in their weapons.

Talks by other British chieftains followed, and then the Greek leaders were left alone. At Churchill's suggestion, the British withdrew and left the Greeks to thrash things out among themselves.

The whole thing had a melodramatic quality. The meeting of British and Greeks was held at a secret place in Athens, and Churchill delivered his oratory in the light of dim oil lamps - while the booming of guns reverberated, the continuing cannon fire of the Greek civil war.

GENERALS

We hear that General Eisenhower may receive another promotion - after his recent elevation to the rank of General of the Armies of the United States, a five star General. Word from London is that the ~~Ym~~ British may make Eisenhower an Honorary Field Marshal. It would have to be honorary, because an American citizen is not permitted to accept any such actual rank from a foreign nation.

Honorary, apparently, would be all right.

So with royal ceremony Eisenhower of Texas may be presented with a Field Marshal's baton by His Majesty, George the Sixth. But it would sound odd - Field Marshal Eisenhower. The sound would be equally interesting, and a bit repetitious, if the high British rank were presented to our American chief of staff, he to be called - Field Marshal Marshall. Almost as duplicative as if the millionaire ^{Chicago} publisher were to ^{turn soldier and one day} become Field Marshal Marshall Field.

The topic of rank appears also in the news from the Philippines, where General MacArthur, together

with other top ranking American commanders, has been made a five star General. In MacArthur's case, the question was one of insignia -- where ~~he~~ would ^{he} get the five stars.

Recently conquered Leyte Island is not equipped to provide the ornaments of high rank, and the new MacArthur insignia required five stars to be set in a circle. They managed to pick up a Filipino silversmith, but he had no silver. Whereupon MacArthur's officers came to the rescue and chipped in with silver coins, Australian, Dutch and Philippine. The silversmith took the coins and did a rush job, a skillful job too - turning out a glittering handmade insignia for MacArthur to wear as a five star General.

PHILIPPINES

The American attempt to knock out Japanese air power in the Philippines continues with new blows against Jap flying fields on Luzon. Forty -three enemy planes were destroyed or damaged in a raid on Clark Field near Manila. And that raises the total ~~of~~ to two-hundred-and-twelve, that many Japanese planes destroyed or damaged since Sunday.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS

A most American visit of Santa Claus this holiday season is to be seen in Rome -- where hosts of children today were all shined up - bright and clean, and had a sweet taste in their mouths. All of this - thanks to Kriss Kringle in the form of an American Army officer, who provided gifts of soap and candy.

Last September, Major John Hinkel of New York, who had been wounded in the bitter fighting at Cassino, wrote home to his wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Joan Hinkel, and to a group of other relatives and ~~fm~~ close friends - the same letter to each, twenty letters in all. He told them how, being stationed in the Eternal City, his sympathy had been stirred by the plight of children there - wretched and bedraggled.

"I want you to beg, borrow or steal", he wrote, all the candy and soap you can for my kids this Christmas. These kids are mostly of very poor families; and poverty in Italy today", he explained, "is synonymous with misery, tragedy and suffering to an extent unappreciated by Americans. Most of these

kids", he went on, "especially those born in the past five or six years, have never tasted candy".

Did the family and friends respond? Well, their response was only a ~~tiny~~ part of it. The twenty letters passed from hand to hand, all over the country. Individuals and organizations answered the appeal.

One Catholic Church contributed a ton. ^{And one} ~~The~~ Protestant church mailed ^{almost} ~~three-fourths~~ of a ton of sweets alone.

It is estimated that for a hundred thousand children in Rome this Christmas time means a good bath, and an abundance of candy - thanks to the American Army Officer Santa Claus, who provided a Roman Christmas celebration so very American.

ENGLISH CHILDREN

One recent phenomenon to be noted over in England has been the return of children from the United States. When Britain was under the bombs of the German blitz, thousands of youngsters were sent for safety to the United States. And now they have been going back, some fifteen hundred having ~~ix~~ rejoined their parents

to date. So what is the reaction of the juvenile British mind, after several years in America? (~~A woman news correspondent of the United Press undertook to find out, and she tells us that British children, back home, miss a lot of things they had in America.~~)

Corn on the cob, for example, a five year old boy is quoted as saying: "Corn on the cob is the most wonderful thing in the world, and next to that is maple syrup".

Another young fellow says that he misses banana splits, which he first discovered in an American corner drug store.

A fourteen year old boy, who spent four years on a farm in Connecticut and who has now returned to

the wet and foggy winter of southern England, says:-
"I would walk all the way to Scotland just to see some snow again".

An eleven year old lad whose father is an Oxford professor, misses the funny papers and the books of comic strips. Back home at Oxford, he says:-
"I have mostly to put my mind to Latin and mathematics".
But he is permitted to see an American comic strip book now and then - even at Oxford.

A small girl who lived in New York, tells what she liked most of all in America. "Hotel elevators, and the hooting of horns", says she.

So ~~there you~~^{we} have a cross section of what America means to British children who were sent over here to escape the blitz -- corn on the cob, maple syrup, ~~banana~~ banana splits, snow banks, comic strips and the hooting of horns.

CHAPLIN

In the Charlie Chaplin case, the Hollywood Courtroom was today treated to another of those turns of drama that of late have decorated the career of the one-time master of motion picture comedy and pathos. The jury, called upon to determine whether Charlie Chaplin was the father of Joan Barry's child, was allowed to make a close comparison of the faces of Chaplin and the little girl - to see if they could detect any inherited resemblance. While Joan Barry held the child up before the jurors, Charlie Chaplin was called to stand before the jury box, so that a close look could be had. Though, on previous days of the trial, Chaplin had become excited and emotional, he was calm and expressionless today - as he stood there, letting the jury compare his face with that of the little girl.

After that bit of dramatics, the lawyers for Joan Barry rested their case - and Chaplin's attorneys began to call witnesses to prove that

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somebody else, not Charlie Chaplin, might have been the father.

All of which gave an added point to a wisecrack I heard at Movietone Newsreel the other night, when Film Editor Freddie Ahrens remarked that the theme song for the Chaplin Case should be - "Is You Is Or Is You Ain't My Baby!" ~~And a h-u-t-t-~~

But Hugh here is our musical expert.