

# THIS WEEK IN HISTORY - THE EVENING NEWS, HARRISBURG, PA

WWII Weekly Front Pages

4 March – 10 March 1945

The Evening News, Harrisburg, PA

Tokyo is ablaze.

## WESTERN EUROPE

Early in the week, elements of the First Army's Third Armored Division and vanguards of the 104th and Eighth Infantry Divisions broke into the streets of Cologne and struck for the center of the city without meeting serious opposition. First accounts from the front indicated the bulk of the German garrison had already fled across the Rhine and only scattered Nazi rear guards were left in the ruins. On 6 March burned-out Cologne fell, almost without a struggle.

General Patton's Fourth Armored Division had slugged its way to heights overlooking the Rhine north and west of Coblenz after racing 60 miles in 59 hours. The general had sent his tanks slashing through to the Rhine on a salient hardly wider than a trail, surprising the Germans so much that they quit before it occurred to them to reduce the salient. Muddy roads hampered the push more than German opposition. This spearhead and another by the First Army threatened to trap thousands of German soldiers in the Eifel Mountains.

In an almost incredible stroke that apparently caught one of Germany's most vulnerable invasion gates completely unguarded, the Americans had captured intact the vital Ludendorff bridge at Remagen. The US established a bridgehead and First Army troops were fighting eastward from it.

## PACIFIC/ASIA

US Marines completed the capture of four-fifths of Iwo Jima by 5 March. More than 15,000 of the original 20,000 in the enemy garrison had been wiped out, but the remainder were fighting to the death for the shrinking

strips of the north and east coasts of the island still in their hands. Stiffened enemy resistance reduced Marine gains to between five and a hundred yards in a day. Hand-to-hand fighting with bayonets, grenades and even knives swirled through clouds of sulfurous steam rising from crevices in the volcanic terrain. American dead through the first 13 days of the battle totaled 2,050, while nearly 13,000 Japanese dead had been counted.

On Monday, ten Superforts hit Tokyo in a follow-up to Sunday's raid by nearly 200 B-29s. The raiders dropped demolition and fire bombs on the Japanese capital between 12:30 and 2:30 AM local time. At the end of the week, the heaviest Superfortress raid yet made on Japan, by 300 aircraft, had left fifteen square miles of war factories, business houses and other buildings in the heart of Tokyo in flames. Among the many affected structures, the imperial palace was set afire and blazed for 17 hours before it could be extinguished. Tokyo radio said that the Americans were preparing for an invasion.

The US Navy's Task Force 58 destroyed more than 728 enemy planes and sunk more than 152 ships in 21 days of operations against the Japanese. The final score was made during 5,266 combat sorties, including 2,593 over the Tokyo area.

Fighting was raging in Mindanao in the Philippines as US assault troops had landed on the southwestern tip of the island on Thursday. Preceding the invasion, over a hundred tons of bombs were showered on Japanese personnel areas, fuel and supply dumps.

## EASTERN FRONT

The Red Army had speared to the network of Baltic lagoons at the mouth of the Oder River north of Stettin, a big port already under artillery fire and threatened by a Soviet frontal push. The Red Army had started a powerful offensive aimed at Berlin and was storming the Oder River defense line 30-odd miles east of the capital, including hammering the defenses around Kuestrin, key citadel on the east bank of the river. By 8 March the Russians had broken across the Oder, carving out a bridgehead 10 miles deep, and had stormed westward to within 27 miles of Berlin.

## HOME FRONT

The War Manpower Commission announced that it would transfer nearly eleven thousand workers from less essential jobs to work in top priority plants in the critical Philadelphia area. The workers would be made available by reducing employment ceilings in the non-critical industries.

A non-English speaking German prisoner, one of a contingent of 93 from the Indiantown Gap Military Reservation camp employed at a tobacco warehouse in Lancaster, was reported to have escaped. The nineteen-year-old was dressed in blue denim work clothes stamped with "PW" when he fled through a fire door. Authorities were searching the Lancaster area for the escapee. The next day, he returned voluntarily to his barracks without divulging what he had done on his single day of liberty.

(Photo courtesy newspapers.com, Harrisburg Evening News)