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This Week in History, WWII Front Pages, The Record, Wilkes-Barre, PA

WWII Weekly Front Pages

22 April – 28 April 1945

The Record, Wilkes-Barre, PA

In the heart of the enemy.



GERMANY

At the start of the week, fanatical Nazis were defending Berlin block by block as Soviet shock troops were reported fighting in the heart of the capital. One sixth of the city's area already was in Russian hands, and the

fighting was raging day and night without dying down for a single moment. Three million civilians were packed so closely in underground shelters that they could not sit down and dared not go outside while the tremendous battle took place over their heads. By midweek half the flaming city was in Russian hands, and was cut off from reinforcements. Deprived of outside aid, the German defenders hurled in repeated counterattacks, which had failed at a cost of more than 6,000 dead on Tuesday alone.

Panic-stricken German civilians tried to flee across US First Army lines as Soviet troops neared a junction with US soldiers. Burning villages and columns of refugees told a story of steady progress by the Russians despite last ditch delaying resistance from the Nazis attempting to hold open the corridor between the Elbe and Mulde rivers. On the Ninth Army front before Berlin, the Americans could hear Red Army commanders issuing instructions via field radios, and the sounds of guns from both countries were blending together. It was announced late in the week that the men of Eisenhower and Stalin had met on Wednesday near Torgau, leaving only pockets of Nazis in northern and southern redoubts to be stamped out.

Eight American congressmen walked among the horrors of Buchenwald prison and got shocked eyewitness proof of a Nazi world in which human life was not worth that of an animal. They came at the personal invitation of General Eisenhower, who wanted them to see for themselves the village where decency was torn aside and men died like beasts in one of Germany's worst butcher shops. Each said he was shocked almost beyond belief at what he saw and was told by the prisoners.

Southbound Allied armies leaped the Danube river and reached Lake Constance, 37 miles from Hitler's last stand area in the Alps. The French seized Stuttgart, the most important industrial city of southern German and sealed off thousands of Germans in the Black Forest by ramming to the Swiss frontier. Adolf Hitler's mountain chalet at Berchtesgaden was destroyed by a direct hit from a six-ton "earthquake bomb" as 200 RAF heavy bombers raided the German leader's mountain retreat in an apparent attempt on his life. The Germans persisted in reporting that the Führer was in encircled Berlin, personally directing its defense.

## ITALY

Allied armor was in headlong pursuit of badly disorganized Nazi forces fleeing toward the Po river from Bologna. A partial news blackout was imposed on the progress of American forces, with the names of towns overrun in the chase being withheld temporarily.

## PACIFIC/ASIA

The city of Baguio, Philippine summer capital, was the scene of one of the Pacific war's most desperate last stands. One American column was within 2,500 yards of the once attractive city, and was consolidating for a final push. American troops on Mindanao, the only other remaining stronghold in the Philippines, were pushing north and eastward toward Davao, the most populous city on the island, but were meeting only ineffective resistance.

In the eighth day of an offensive toward Naha, the capital city of Okinawa, infantrymen had driven a wedge into the deep Japanese secondary defenses on the southern part of the island by capturing high ground in the center of the line. The heights were won in an attack which followed a general Japanese withdrawal under heavy shelling. Fleet warships continued their close fire support, knocking out numerous enemy artillery batteries, gun emplacements, and defense installations.

## HOME FRONT

On 25 April President Truman opened a conference of statesmen from 46 United Nations and solemnly dedicated them to the task of forging a permanent peace, to become the "architects of a better world." Prospects for success seemed bright, except for differences with Russia over a new Polish government and Polish

representation in UN councils. There was also a quarrel between Russia and the US/Britain over the chairmanship, which was smoothed over late in the week.

(Photo courtesy newspapers.com, Wilkes-Barre Record)