

June 21, 2020

This Week in History, “Bloody Battle of Okinawa Won,” 75 Years Ago

WWII Weekly Front Pages

17 June – 23 June 1945

The Daily Republican, Monongahela, PA

Ike comes home.



PACIFIC

Americans battered the Japanese on Okinawa by land and air, turning more enemy towns and a few more square miles of the island into a living hell. The 3,000 Japanese survivors backed up a little more toward the ocean under land, sea and air blows. On 18 June the 10th Army commander, General Buckner, was killed by an enemy shell. He was buried with full military honors in the 7th Division cemetery near the beach where the invasion began on Easter Sunday. As the week progressed, scores of enemy soldiers leaped from the cliffs on the island's southern tip. Many surrendered, more than ever before in the Pacific war. The rest waited in caves and foxholes until the Americans fell on them and killed them. There were few left, and the victory was all but won. On 21 June the Battle of Okinawa came to an end, with only small pockets on the southern shore being mopped up. Over 90,000 Japanese had been killed in 82 days of fighting and 4,000 captured. American casualties numbered 36,588, with 6,990 dead and missing. Engineers began the big work of building airfields and bases for future assaults on Japan.

At the beginning of the week, a fleet of 450 Superfortresses dropped nearly 3,000 tons of bombs on four Japanese cities. Some of the fires could be seen as far as 150 miles away as the bombers roared homeward. Bookending the week was a raid on six more targets on 22 June, including the great Kure naval arsenal, and aircraft plants on Honshu. Tokyo, conceding the loss of Okinawa, had become more invasion-conscious than ever, believing that the B-29 attacks on transportation centers, the massing of transports in the Kerama islands and the setting up of a supply command in the western Pacific to be signs of an impending attack.

The Japanese in north Borneo set fire to the rich Seria oil fields, lighting at least 20 wells, as signs increased of more Allied landings upcoming there. American naval units probed beach defenses and continued to clear mines. In the Brunei Bay area, the Australians made slight progress toward Toting, but faced a dead end in mangrove swamps between there and the oil fields. The Sultan of Brunei came out of his hiding in the hills to take his throne again.

## EUROPE

Paris, France was an impoverished city, ridden by inflation and gouging black marketeers. A pair of leather shoes cost \$130, a bathtub \$500 and an ordinary kitchen chair \$20. Even the rich haunted the famous Parisian flea markets in search of second hand linen, furniture and table ware. There were many in Paris who feared that the communists would take over the government, and many more who feared they wouldn't.

The Dutch people were coming back to something near normal perhaps faster than any other on the continent, but the mark of German occupation and the job of rehabilitation had barely begun. Everywhere was hunger and raggedness and the harassments of survival in a country where electricity, coal, gas, soap and every conceivable necessity was strictly rationed or non-existent. Food was coming into the country regularly and the calorie count had risen from April's low of 400 to about 2,000 calories daily, but most of the food was canned goods shipped in from Allied military authorities. Fresh milk, meat and cheese were almost unknown.

## HOME FRONT

The 54-year-old former Kansas farm boy, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, came home to the USA with accolades and parades in Washington, New York and Abilene, Kansas (his home town). A half million well-wishers were expected at the first celebration, comparable to the number who came out for FDR's funeral procession.

The Canadian Women's Army Corps Pipe Band came to Monongahela and captivated several hundred Monongahelans who saw them in parade and heard them in concert. They paraded from First Street to Seventh, then up Chess to the post office before their concert in front of the Federal Building.

Wives and kin of US soldiers serving as occupation forces in Germany would ultimately be permitted to live with them in Germany, General Eisenhower indicated. He said that housing, food and other problems precluded that at present, and that Mrs. Eisenhower would not return with him to Germany in the meantime.

(Photo courtesy newspapers.com, Monongahela Daily Republican)