

FIGHT RAGES IN CASSINO RUINS

Fanatical Nazi Gunners Creep Back Into Blasted Town.

(Continued From Page One)

destruction of Cassino as the opening broadside in a concerted allied offensive all across the Italian front.

Official photographs showed that only a few jagged walls remained standing in Cassino today. The only building not demolished was a four-story hotel, the top two stories of which had been crushed by a direct bomb hit.

Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker, commander of the Mediterranean air forces,

watched the bombing from a near-by observation post, along with Gen. Sir Harold R. L. G. Alexander, Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark, and Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers.

"Today we fumigated Cassino," he said, "and I am most hopeful that when the smoke of today's battle clears away we shall find more worthy occupants installed with little loss to our men."

How thoroughly Eaker's bombers had done the job, however, remained to be tested by the attacking allied ground forces. The Nazis still were putting up stiff resistance today for the ruins of Cassino and their defense positions above the town.

The allies were reported in control of part of the town as well as a section along the Via Cassilina to the north.

Not a single allied plane was lost in yesterday's attack on Cassino, but six aircraft were downed in a series of smaller raids on Viareggio harbor, Follonica and San Benedetto.

'I Had Ringside Seat at the Far Edge of Hell' Says Eyewitness at Record Cassino Attack

(Continued From Page One)

the air attack mounted. The sky was filled with the noise of engines and the deadly crash of bombs. Here came a wing of heavies, Flying Forts and Liberators. Almost on their tails more mediums moved in, Mitchells, and Martin Marauders. P-38s and Thunderbolts flitted along their aerial outskirts.

Artillery Starts

At noon the sharp bombing stopped, but that was just the signal for our artillery to begin. Battery after battery found its voice and spoke with deafening authority as steel shells whistled from our hillside across the broad green plain to their mark.

In a jeep piloted by Pvt. Paul Latoski, Auburn, Mich., our party bounced behind a British lorry loaded with cabbages to an advance observation post in a hillside olive grove, 5000 yards as the crow flies—although no intelligent crow would be seen in that vicinity today—from the target.

What we had was a ringside seat on the far edge of hell. It is quite possible that no battle in history—even back in Napoleon's time, when fighting was more compact and easier to see—was more clearly observed than the action at Cassino today.

As we fought our way to the front through heavy traffic, alternately through dust and mud and the color and consistency of melted chocolate bars, bombers came in high behind us, settled down steady on the bomb run, dumped their loads and then swept off in wide arcs, first to the south and then to the north, making U-turns for home. Flak poked up at them feebly (it would not seem feeble on the receiving end, of course), seemingly from the southern corner of Cassino. If there was any fighter opposition it was not visible from where we watched the battle.

Key of German Line

From our clump of olive trees whose leaves shone like dusty silver in the sun, Cassino lay almost due west. It is the key point on this sector of the front and the Germans have held onto it almost with their fingernails against repeated attacks. Americans edged in from the northeast after bitter fighting and occupied approximately one-third of the place on Feb. 2, but the Germans stuck to the remainder of their positions. Just a month ago to the day, American heavies blitzed the abbey standing on top of Monte Cassino, 1500 feet above the town.

This was an attempt to drive the enemy from the monastery which they had unashamedly used as an observation post commanding a superlative view of the whole surrounding countryside. But they set up their observation posts in rubble and stayed on. Then the weather closed in. Today gave Lt. Gen. Mark W. Clark's 5th army and Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker's air force the break they had been waiting grimly and patiently for.

As the communique revealed today, operations called for a "large-scale air effort" for 3½ hours against Cassino proper as part of a co-ordinated plan, with ground forces whose artillery, both British and American, took up the pounding of the German positions at noon. Then the infantry, supported by tanks, pressed forward, exerting "maximum pressure" on the foe.

Smoke Gushes Skyward

That is how it looked on paper. Here is how it unfolded before our eyes:

Smoke gushed skyward from the first bombs of those Mitchells in great gray blossoms, temporarily smudging the view of snow-capped Monte Cassino, rising 5100 feet in the northwest background. That gray was an ugly deathly color, resembling nothing so much as liquid squid squirts in a marine battle. Explosions lashed up through the smoke like flaming swords. Then channeled by bleak stony mountains on both south and north, the sound of the blast hit us as if some giant, standing astride the town, had scooped the noise up in his bare hands and pitched it back across the valley.

Starting at 10 o'clock I counted nearly 200 bombers in 20 minutes, bearing toward the target, with vapor trails streaming behind. Visibility, which was crystal clear at first, was becoming hazy now. A group of B-17s came in and geysers leapt perpendicularly around the railroad station. Behind it on the south edge of Monastery hill, you could see the Rapido valley stretching, a peaceful picture with a clean cumulus cloud floating high above. That scene will change soon enough when the ground fight gets rolling that way.

At 11:46 a pack of Marauders rode in high. It looked as if they had the target on a hairline. Now smoke was beginning to crawl up that desolate jagged hill toward the monastery itself and the whole area was covered with grime as if somebody had dumped a cement factory on it.

Nazi Artillery Answers

German artillery started up and planted white plumes along highway 6, winding out below us toward Cassino. Their fire just then was brief.

Through the battle thus far had stood La Rocca, a ruined castle on a rock jutting out from the north side of the main monastery hill and itself an observation post. Suddenly it was drenched with black smoke and flame.

The weather began to clear again as a warm breeze brushed the clouds away. Chalky lines of buildings lay under a maelstrom of explosions in the center of the town.

Back of the station, highway 6 emerged again, rolling on into the Aurunci mountains. German traffic moves east toward the front on that side. Allied traffic moves west toward the front on ours, over the same road.

At 12 o'clock the air attack finished. A headquarters announcement said that it was the heaviest load of bombs—perhaps more than

1400 tons—ever unloaded on one square mile of earth in a tactical air raid.

Throbbing Drum of Sound

But now the whole world became a throbbing drum of sound. Our artillery barrage began. "To make those krauts keep their heads down and allow our infantry units and tanks to move in," one officer said.

Under our feet a Newfoundland guncrew was sweating with a British 25-pound artillery piece that cracked the line like a triphammer every time it fired. Pvt. Joe Day, bombardier of St. Johns, admitted that it was a little different from cod fishing off the banks.

In such an unreal world the little reality of the living is drowned in sensations of fear and awe. You see a spectacle but your mind cannot quite track through the thunder. You munch a cracker and cheese as dry as sawdust, and wash it down with something unidentifiable out of somebody's canteen. The sun feels bright and friendly beating down on the back of your field jacket.

Then, through fire and smoke and

a cauldron of sound flies one lonely lark, fluttering past the naked branches of oak trees in tragic bewilderment.

From the hills and from the valleys the guns thunder on. Now the process is reversed and you can catch the slamming noise before you see the bursts of explosives yonder across the plain.

Only the Dead Sleep

You wonder fleetingly what sort of ungodly bedlam the center of Cassino is like, how the Huns are taking it. There will be no easy sleep for the men camped out on the hillside and in the gulleys of this sector tonight. No easy sleep except for the man who fell today.

Now, without any particular reason there flashes to your mind a brand new white signboard, painted with red letters which you saw on a building en route to the front. It said in English, "Catholic mass Sunday and Wednesday, 6:30 p. m."

You have to stand with your mouth open like a fish to let your eardrums do a little compensation action. Through the din William McDermott, of the Cleveland

Plain Dealer, shouts and it comes like a whisper. "I always thought Hollywood overdid this sort of thing."

Ahead, the observation plane dives into a towering fountain of smoke. "That's ours, isn't it?" somebody asks. "We hope," somebody else replies.

Now the artillery dwindles and infantry and tanks are on the move. We cannot tell the outcome of the action. We cannot see more from here. This story is just one fragment in a crazy, stirring mosaic of war.

On the short way back from our olive grove, while the guns are still going strong, you see units ridiculously playing volleyball. An Italian girl in a red blouse steps carefully through the ruts of the road, balancing a wicker basket of laundry on her head. Over the edge of the hill an Italian peasant is spading his garden.

Back at headquarters a fresh sign on the bulletin board says that tonight's movie is "Lady Takes a Chance," with Jean Arthur.

RETURN TO BATTLE AREA

PEARL HARBOR, March 16 (U. P.).—Adm. Chester W. Nimitz and Lt. Gen. Robert C. Richardson Jr., commander of the Hawaiian department, were back at their Pacific headquarters today following a series of conferences at Washington.

ELLIOTT ROOSEVELT'S WIFE ASKS DIVORCE

(Continued From Page One)

Roosevelt was agreeable to Roosevelt visiting the children at all reasonable times and hours.

Mrs. Roosevelt's attorney, Robert K. Hanger, said that he would send Col. Roosevelt waiver of contest papers for his signature.

The petition charged "the defendant, disregarding the solemnity of his marriage vow and his obligation to treat the plaintiff with kindness and attention, about a year prior to their said separation, commenced a course of unkind, harsh and tyrannical conduct toward the plaintiff which continued with very slight intermission until the plaintiff finally separated from the defendant on or about Oct. 1, 1943."

Visited Family in August

Col. Roosevelt last visited his Dutch Branch home near Ft. Worth last August, while on leave from the North African theater.

Mrs. Roosevelt declined to make a statement, referring all inquiries to Hanger.

Texas law provides a divorce suit must be on file 30 days before any

final court action can be taken, Hanger explained.

The Roosevelts were married 11 years ago, just five days after Elliott's first wife, the former Elizabeth Browning Donner, daughter of a Philadelphia steel magnate, obtained her final divorce decree in Reno.

Call Him Individualistic

Roosevelt's first marriage lasted only 18 months and at the time of the divorce the couple had an 8-month-old son.

Elliott, described as the most individualistic of the President's sons, was an advertising executive and owned and operated a large ranch in Texas. Prior to his entrance into the army shortly after the outbreak of the war, he had served as vice president of an airline, aviation editor for a newspaper chain and also had organized a chain of radio stations in the Southwest.

The Roosevelts have three children, Chandler, 9; Anthony, 7, and David, 2.

WALES STRIKERS RETURN

CARDIFF, Wales, March 16 (U. P.).—The South Wales miners' federation estimated today that about 90 per cent of the strikers had returned to the coal pits and many of the 10,000 men still out were reported drifting gradually back.

L. S. AYRES & CO.

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CAMPFIRE GIRLS

... on their

32nd Anniversary

"SERVE BY SHARING"



Send him what he asks for in 'most every letter...

That special picture of his Special girl.

Large Proofs Submitted No Appointment Necessary

PHOTOREFLEX STUDIO EIGHTH FLOOR AYRES

STAY WITH YOUR JOB IN Fighting SHOES!



MEN'S SHOES SECOND FLOOR

MATRIX SHOES by Heywood

"YOUR FOOTPRINT IN LEATHER"

You're in there fighting, too, on the home front, when you put in those ten-hour days. And you know you can take it a lot better when you get rid of that "my-feet-are-killing-me" feeling. You will get rid of it, too, the moment you step into a pair of our famous Matrix Shoes by Heywood.

They're the only shoes you don't have to break in, because they're the only shoes that are molded curve for curve to follow the sole of your foot. No wonder our customers swear by them—not at foot.

Keep in fighting trim by getting a pair of our Matrix Shoes at the first opportunity.

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CHECKS TO MAKE YOUR GARDEN PAY

- A. Short-all, 3.98
- B. Jumper, 5.00
- C. Pleated all-around shorts, 3.00
- D. Checked gingham shirt, 3.98
- Also plain skirt to match shorts, 3.00
- Striped and plain T shirts, 1.25
- Sizes 34 to 40.

It will be fun to give more time to that Victory garden in pretty, comfortable play clothes. In Joshua Bailey shirting with checked gingham trim and shirt. Wash and wear beautifully. Sizes 10 to 18. Navy and red, copen with blue and white check.

Fun Shop, Fourth Floor

Perky Pajamas

Tailored by "Eastern Isles"

Crisp cotton pajamas plus smart tailoring—plus piquant piping contrast—plus short sleeves—plus drawstring waistline. Makes the sum total of a pretty pleasant night life created by Eastern Isles. Rose or blue. Sizes 32 to 40.

2.25

Cotton Lingerie, Second Floor



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Assists in Market O Gasolin

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But the counter- outsmarted them some coupons, the parts of which had by OPA.

Bogus gasoline, lated in all large one of the most- tion setups to ap scene since the tion, secret serv

In many cases established out listed by black tect certain gas actors who serve agents, they rev- vestigations point as the origin c stamps, but Chil- primary distribu added.

Although Assi- ice Chief James Washington tod- of coupon coun- was its second m- tion, the protec- dent being No- cated that staff Indianapolis of wide-scale pros- this area.

So far, OPA- preme authority- tion of coupon- and unless the- mented by addi- appears that th- time, with sec- serving in advi-

Shad Polier, a- secret service- appealed from- for funds with- dence against b-

"No other- agency in the- break down cr- funds to buy e-

National sec- sold their alm- gasoline black- criminal direct- profits from bo- were tempted- currency count-

Meanwhile, J- OPA enforce- Indiana distric- public co-oper- outcropping of- personnel short- ally impossible- wide black me- complained.

"We have o- for the 91 cou- district. We h- selves too thin- in this racket,"

CITY HALL

FACE E

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