

Reds Take Kharkov from SS Divisions

U.S. Counter-Attack Shoves Panzers Back

Crack Nazi Tankmen Pushed Six Miles In the South

Striking back in their first big armament battle of this war, American tank combat teams smashed Rommel's veteran panzers back six miles in southern Tunisia yesterday under an umbrella of fighter planes.

At the same time advance elements of the British Eighth Army advanced to within 40 miles of Medenine, the "Verdun" of the Mareth Line, following their capture of Ben Gardane, first town to fall to the victorious army since it entered Tunisia.

The continuing steady advance of the Eighth Army evidently prodded Rommel to throw one of his best tank divisions into the assault upon the Americans at Gafsa in an effort to prevent a junction of the Eighth and First Armies.

On a high plateau between Faid and Subeltia, where chariots once raced in combat in the days of Carthage and Hannibal, a furious tank, infantry and artillery battle raged, with Gen. Eisenhower's forces trying their strength against Hitler's desert panzers.

Americans Leave Gafsa

In the south, the Allied line bent back as the American and French withdrew from Gafsa, but if the Americans win the battle raging around Sidi Buzid, Rommel's southern arm will be in an exceedingly dangerous position, the Associated Press reported from North Africa headquarters.

American and French forces evacuated Gafsa without contacting the enemy, who occupied the town about 4.40 PM Sunday.

A competent source said: "The American position is considered fairly satisfactory."

The Germans were reported to be about 12 miles west of the Faid pass.

Gen. Eisenhower, who had been at the front since early in the battle, was reported last night to have returned to headquarters.

Furious Air Battles

Panzer units of the German Afrika Korps, in whip-lash attacks under the cover of Stuka dive-bombers, earlier had swung the American troops back from the southern Tunisian front and seriously threatened Feriana and Sbeitla.

Aircraft of the U.S. Twelfth Air Force swarmed over the enemy's forward areas, attacking numerous ground targets of troops, convoys, guns and supply dumps. American fighter planes destroyed two German fighters and damaged three others without loss to themselves in breaking up a raid on an advanced American airfield.

From an American Air Force source it was learned, Associated Press said, that there were not enough Allied fighters available yet to maintain continuous protection against the Stukas over the whole southern sector, but the enemy was nevertheless suffering heavily from widespread intensive raids by American airmen behind their lines.

First Big Action

The tank battle brought the American armored forces, some of which were in their first major tank action in this war, against an elite Nazi panzer division who had been re-outfitted with the newest tanks and guns in Tunisia.

The Germans threw into the battle at least 100 tanks, which fought through the day under frequent dive-bombings.

In a desperate effort to knock out an advanced American air base in Tunisia, the Luftwaffe bombed and strafed the field, but American Spitfires brought down

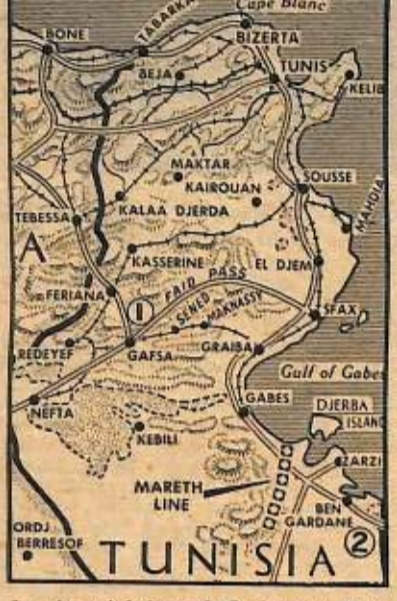
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Gestapo Takes Over Police In Bulgaria, Turkey Hears

Himmler's Gestapo has taken over control of the Bulgarian ministry of the interior and police, closed the frontier between Turkey and Bulgaria and cordoned off a whole quarter of Sofia following two assassinations in Sofia, according to United Press messages from Ankara, Turkey.

The second person assassinated, Berlin radio said, was a high Sofia police official, shot yesterday morning. Gen. Lukov, former Bulgarian war minister, was assassinated near his home Saturday, apparently by members of a clandestine revolutionary and sabotage organization, because he favored Bulgaria entering the war against Russia.

Africa Battle Scene



In the vicinity of Gafsa (1) U.S. troops drove panzer units back six miles, while Eighth Army took Ben Gardane (2) on road to Mareth Line

U.S. Planes Hit Sicily, Naples

Forts From North Africa Bomb Palermo, Libs Visit Port Again

ALLIED HQ, North Africa, Feb. 15 (delayed) (AP)—American Flying Fortresses attacked Palermo today in the first raid on Sicily by the Allied air force in North Africa.

Without loss the Fortresses rained bombs on Palermo's docks, scoring a direct hit on a large merchant vessel, which burst into flames, and starting a large fire at an oil tank area.

The dry docks in the northeast section of the port were also hit and other bomb bursts were seen in the northern and northwestern areas of the harbor.

Libs Hit Naples

CAIRO, Feb. 16 (AP)—In another smashing raid against Naples harbor United States Liberators scored direct hits on two merchant ships and left large fires burning at dusk yesterday.

A communique issued here said: "Liberators of the Ninth United States Air Force attacked shipping in Naples harbor at dusk yesterday. Direct hits were scored on two merchant vessels and large fires started along the water front."

Col. C. H. Barth Is Appointed Chief of Staff for the ETO

Thirty-nine-year-old Col. Charles Henry Barth, General Staff Corps, has been appointed Chief of Staff in the European Theater of Operations, it was announced yesterday.

Col. Barth's last appointment was as assistant chief of staff, G-4, of the U.S. Army Forces in the Middle East, under Lt. Gen. Frank M. Andrews, new commanding general for this theater.

A native of Leavenworth, Kan., Col. Barth attended Princeton University for two years before his appointment to West Point, from which he graduated as No. 1 in his class in 1925. His father was the late Brig. Gen. Charles Barth.

In 1936 Col. Barth was ordered to Rock Island, Ill., for River and Harbor duty. There he was engaged in lock and dam construction on the Upper Mississippi River, a project that entailed the expenditure of approximately \$65,000,000.

He was graduated from the Command and General Staff School in 1940, and immediately was sent to the Panama Canal Zone as assistant supervising engineer on the construction of the new locks paralleling the regular canal waterway. In addition, before being ordered to the Middle East, he organized and directed the civilian defense program for the entire Canal Zone area.

He is married to the former Miss Doris

St. Nazaire Battered by Forts, Libs

Second U.S. Raid in Two Days Swells Offensive Against U-Boats

American bombers smashed at the German submarine base of St. Nazaire on the western coast of France yesterday and boomed the tempo of the Allies' round-the-clock aerial offensive to a new high.

Coming 24 hours after Eighth Air Force Liberators had planted bombs across the docks and shipping at Dunkirk Monday, the raid marked the first time that American bombers have struck at the Germans in Europe on successive days since the initial all-American raid of the war last Aug. 17, on Rouen.

Yesterday's raid came just one day short of the six-month anniversary of the Rouen mission, when 12 bombers carrying the white star went to France and came home without a casualty.

Six planes of the formations of Flying Fortresses and Liberators which pounded the harbor at St. Nazaire yesterday were reported missing.

There were no immediate reports on the number of enemy planes shot down. The American planes ran into heavy fighter opposition after they had spilled their bombs on the sub pens and installations and then had to fight their way home until well over the Channel.

Fighters Give Support

RAF and Allied fighter squadrons carried out supporting and covering operations. "Visibility was good," a communique issued jointly by Headquarters, ETOUSA, and the British Air Ministry said, "and bombs were seen to burst in the target area, where fires were started."

The raid, which took the bombers to the far western shoulder of France, on the Bay of Biscay, followed night bombings of Belgium and Western Germany by the RAF.

Yesterday's mission to St. Nazaire was the third Allied onslaught against the much-battered sub base in four days.

Returning pilots reported for the first time "rainbow-hued flak" over the target as well as the stiffest sort of fighter opposition.

"It was my lucky day," said 1st Lt. Don E. Stockton, pilot, of Redmond, Ore. He brought his bomber back with a hole in the rudder two feet wide and six feet high. One waist gun had been silenced, a nose gun was out of action and both tail guns had been disabled.

S/Sgt. L. C. Gordon, of San Fernando, Cal., said his bomber was 20 minutes on its way home before an enemy fighter aircraft attempted to close. "He circled around us and then made the mistake of

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Capital of Ukraine, Long in Nazi Hands, Falls to Swift Blow

Soviets Rout Two Tank Divisions, Motorized Unit and Infantry to Take Key City; Battle Scene Since October, 1941

By the United Press

Kharkov, Russia's greatest industrial city and railway junction of the Ukraine, was captured by the Russians yesterday after being in German hands since Oct. 28, 1941.

A German SS corps, comprising two tank divisions, a motorized division and several infantry divisions, was routed in the fighting that brought it back into Russian hands.

Kharkov, biggest industrial city in the Ukraine, with a population of nearly 500,000, is the key to the rich Ukraine. Cast iron, sugar, tobacco and brandy are the most important of the town's products.

The Kharkov area was the scene of the most continuous fighting of this war, lasting almost without ceasing from August, 1941. The initial German attack on Kharkov was opened on August 24, 1941, and the city was captured two months later. In the winter the Russians launched an offensive, but six German divisions held on to the Kharkov area and drove back all the Russian assaults.

Fierce Street Fighting

The communique announcing Kharkov's fall said: "On Feb. 16 our troops, after a violent attack which passed into fierce street fighting, occupied the town of Kharkov."

In the fighting for Kharkov our troops routed a German SS corps consisting of two tank divisions, "Adolf Hitler" and "Reich," the motorized division "Great Germany" and also a number of German infantry divisions and special detachments.

The operations for the liberation of Kharkov and the rout of the enemy in this area was carried out by our troops under the command of Col. Gen. Golikov."

More Cities Threatened

On the Donetz Basin front the city of Taganrog, on the northern shores of the Sea of Azov, was threatened by the Russian forces advancing from Rostov. The advance of the Russians on the northern flank of the Donetz Basin also continued. Fifty inhabited localities were captured in 24 hours.

The great Nazi base of Orel, where Hitler has concentrated his largest forces south of Moscow, was increasingly threatened following the capture of Droskovo junction, only 50 miles southeast of the city, from which five vital roads radiate.

The German high command communique yesterday said: "In the Kharkov area Russians, using far superior forces to ours, attacked positions held by our stubbornly fighting divisions. In fighting with enemy units which had penetrated into the outskirts of the town, 20 tanks were destroyed." The communique made no claim that the penetrations had been frustrated.

Nazi Arson Gangs

In the approach to Taganrog, next city on the northern shore of the Sea of Azov, west of Rostov, a Russian force swept round Rostov from the north and cut the railway between Rostov and Taganrog.

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Landing Barge Building Ahead

BOSTON, Feb. 16 (UP)—Construction of huge infantry and tank-carrying barges for use in the opening of a European front are now 20 days ahead of schedule, high naval officers revealed in Boston today.

One Boston yard has completed its quota of barges which included a new type with bows that open like barn doors, letting tanks roll off into action, correspondents touring the yard were told. Each barge carries a large number of tanks.

The journalists found that the new American Aircraft-carrier Lexington is almost ready for delivery to the Navy, 19 months after her keel was laid.

The 19 months taken to build and fit the new Lexington is about half the time that the job would have required before the war.

Destroyers are being completed in the yard in 12 months instead of the 32 months allowed for their construction before the war.



Col. Charles H. Barth Speer, of Englewood, N.J., who now resides in Highland Falls, N.Y. A brother, G. B. Barth, also a West Point graduate, is a colonel in the field artillery.

Reds Say Foe Rushed 31 Divisions to Front

Thirty-one new German divisions have been rushed to the Russian front since Jan. 31, according to a broadcast from Moscow, replying to reports abroad that German divisions were being withdrawn from the front because of Anglo-American pressure elsewhere.

It was stated that 19 infantry and three artillery divisions had arrived several days ago, and that of nine further divisions believed to be on the way six had already been identified from prisoners taken in recent fighting.

Of the original 22 divisions, 11 came from Germany and 11 from France, Belgium and Norway, Moscow said.

15 Jap Vessels Blasted by U.S.

American Navy Loses Cruiser Chicago and One Destroyer

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16—Two Japanese destroyers were sunk and 13 others probably sunk or damaged, while the United States lost the heavy cruiser Chicago and a destroyer, in a week of furious sea and air fighting in the Solomons beginning on Jan. 29, the Navy Department announced today.

The battles took place after large Japanese naval concentrations were spotted by U.S. reconnaissance planes. Apparently the Japanese were protecting the evacuation of their last troops from Guadalcanal, the Navy said.

The Chicago, a 9,300-ton cruiser completed in March, 1931, sank after two attacks by torpedo planes on successive days, the second as she was being towed to port.

A summary showed American losses as one cruiser and one destroyer sunk, three motor torpedo-boats lost, 22 planes lost. Japanese losses were two destroyers sunk, four destroyers probably sunk, and six destroyers, one corvette and two cargo ships damaged and a total of 60 or 61 planes brought down. These were "all known losses," the Navy said.

U.S. Sought Battle

"During the latter part of January, United States reconnaissance planes located heavy Japanese fleet units, including battleships and aircraft carriers in the waters between the Truk and Solomon Islands," the communique said.

"Simultaneous reports were received of large groups of enemy destroyers in the islands and an unusually heavy concentration of enemy aircraft at all of the Japanese bases in the Solomon islands and New Britain area."

"It appeared possible the Japanese fleet might accept decisive battle. Subsequent events indicate, however, that the enemy was solely concerned with the evacuation of troops from Guadalcanal and interference with United States troop transports which were landing soldiers on

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