

Nazi Losses Are Heavy in Ortona

Algiers, Dec. 28 (AP).—The Germans threw a fresh division into the mud and blood of the Italian front today in a desperate effort to halt relentless Allied attacks which are prying the Nazis loose from their grips on the road to Rome and on the flaming, flattened port of Ortona, on the Adriatic Sea.

(Tuesday's German High Command communique said Nazi troops had evacuated the ruins of Ortona and had taken up new positions northwest of the town. It claimed they inflicted heavy losses on attacking Canadian forces. Hours afterward there was no confirmation from Allied Headquarters.)

Fourteen German division (perhaps 200,000 men) now are known to be engaged in the fighting across Italy. Yesterday the enemy employed great numbers of flame-throwers all along the 8th Army front and literally established a wall of fire before Canadian infantry and tanks fighting forward in the northern outskirts of Ortona.

The latest division to go into the line was the German 334th, a reconstructed unit. The original division was smashed in Tunisia.

City a Shambles.

A field despatch by William Stewart, Canadian Press war correspondent, said German troops still clung Monday to a few buildings at the city's edge after a solid week of house-to-house fighting, but were being gouged out methodically. Ortona, now a shambles, was a town of 9,000 before the war swept through its streets. It is 11 miles down the Adriatic coast from the major port of Pescara, main objective of the 8th Army's drive up Italy's east coast.

Both Canadian and Indian troops on the 8th Army front were re-

ported inflicting heavy casualties on the Germans and taking many prisoners. The Canadians turned back one enemy counter-attack west of Ortona in which they killed 100 Nazis and took 30 prisoners. This Canadian column was threatening to cut off the German retreat up the Ortona-Pescara coastal road.

Allied Headquarters announced that Lt.-Gen. H. D. G. Crerar now commands the Canadian Corps in Italy and that the 1st Division fighting in the Ortona region is part of his corps. His appointment was first announced at Ottawa Sunday night.

Consolidate on Samucro.

American troops of Lt.-Gen. Mark Clark's Anglo-American 5th Army looked down from the last dominating heights of the Samucro mountain range into the streets of the fortified Village of San Vittore, six miles east of Cassino, and prepared for another vicious battle to wrest this key point on the Via Casilina—the main highway to Rome—from German hands.

After ousting the Nazis from the last two peaks on Samucro and firmly consolidating their hold on this important feature, American patrols pushed down the southwest slopes to learn that San Vittore was elaborately defended from that side, as well as from its Liri Valley approaches. The village must be taken before Clark's troops can move on toward Cassino, which is 70 miles by broad highway from Rome.

Southwest of Castel San Vincenzo, near the centre of the Italian front, a fierce battle was reported raging for a ridge called Catanella Degli Mainardi. Other Allied troops seized a height in the Monte Morrone range north of Alfedena. French Moroccan troops were reported attacking an important height "to which the enemy is clinging tenaciously."

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
ITALY
INVASION
CANADA
ARMY
ORTONA