

November 1944: World War II at 80

Progress on all fronts

By Ronald P. May

The month of November saw progress across all the fronts of the war.

In Northern Belgium, British and Canadian forces focused their efforts on opening the key port of Antwerp.

Antwerp is 55 miles inland from the North Sea. The city and its port had come under Allied control back in September, but the long estuary approach to the city's port had still been under German control.

On Nov. 1, Operation Infatuate began with British amphibious landings on Walcheren, a former Island, at the mouth of the Scheldt estuary in the Zeeland Dutch province.

By the end of the month, British and Canadian forces had cleared the estuary approach from German forces, and it was fully open all the way to the port of Antwerp for Allied shipping.

Once the estuary and port at Antwerp were open, war supplies reached advancing Allied troops much sooner than when transporting the cargo from the port at Cherbourg, France.

Back in the U.S.

Nov. 7 was Election Day in the United States. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt easily won an historic and unprecedented fourth term as president.

His continued presence in the White House ensured consistent and competent leadership as the U.S. entered its fourth year in the war.

Action in France

Meanwhile, in eastern France, General George Patton's Third Army crossed the Moselle River on their advance toward Germany.

Patton's forces had pushed 400 miles across northern France following the Allies break through the Normandy region.

Their speedy advance



The US Third Army, 378th Infantry, makes its way along the outskirts of Metz, France, on Nov. 17, 1944. (U.S. Army Center of Military History courtesy photo)

across France outran the Allies ability to supply them, especially with fuel for the vehicles well behind them and the bulk of fuel getting sent to the Netherlands for Operation Market Garden.

This critical shortage of fuel forced the Third Army to halt near Metz, France, and allowed German forces to strengthen their defensive line around the city.

By mid-November, Patton's forces entered Metz and engaged German forces in combat.

After a few days of fighting, the 3rd Army took control of the city. However, German resistance from isolated forts in the area continued.

Local casualties

PFC Hobart Wayne Cox of Ashland Township in Morgan County was among the forces fighting at Metz, France.



COX

Cox attended Eminence High School and soon became a farmer and employee at Oscar Patrick.

He married Lois Appleby on Dec. 6, 1941, one day before the attack at Pearl Harbor.

Cox enlisted in the Army in August 1942 and was as-

signed to Company K, 378th Infantry, 95th Division.

After arriving in Europe in August 1944, Cox and his division were attached to Patton's Third Army. Cox lost his life on Nov. 10 during the siege of Metz. He was 30 years old.

His body, temporarily buried in the military cemetery at Limey, France, returned to Indiana in July 1948, and he was buried with military honors at Cloverdale Cemetery.

Two other Morgan County men lost their lives in action around France in November.

First Lt. Emmett E. Martin of Martinsville died in combat on Nov. 12 at the age of 26 in an undisclosed location.



MARTIN

Martin, who attended Martinsville High School, enlisted in the Army in 1938. He served as a sergeant in Company K, 151st Infantry and was later commissioned a second lieutenant in March 1943 after completing officer candidate school in Fort Benning, Ga.

He married Margaret Gowin of Indianapolis in January 1944. She was a widow 10 months later.

Martin's body was returned to Indiana in July 1948. He was one of 112 other Hoosier deceased, including Hobart Cox, who were transported from Europe on the Army Transport Oglethorpe Victory, which brought back to America 4,383 deceased service members.

After arriving home, Martin was buried in Centennial Cemetery in Martinsville.

Pvt. Loren C. Rutan of Martinsville was also serving in France with the Third Army in November.



RUTAN

He died on Nov. 8, 1944, at the age of 24. Rutan began his Army service in November 1942, five months after marrying Marie Payne.

After his training in Colorado, he served for a time as a bodyguard for President Roosevelt.

Rutan was deployed to Europe in June 1944.

On Nov. 8, he was reported missing and, shortly thereafter, was reported as killed in action in France.

His widow, Marie, later was awarded his Purple Heart for his wounds and death in France.

A year later, in 1945, on the anniversary of his death, his

mother wrote a remembrance poem in memory of him that was printed in the Nov. 8 edition of the *Daily Reporter*:

Loving and kind in all his ways.

Upright and just to the end of his days.

We little thought when you left home

That you would return no more.

To our hearts there comes a longing

Dear Loren, if you could only come home to us again.

We do not know what pain you bore.

We did not see you die.

We only know you passed away.

And could not tell us goodbye.

— sadly missed by mother, brother and sisters

England pummeled

France and Germany were not the only places suffering from war in Western Europe during November.

England was back in the crosshairs of Germany.

This time, it was Germany's newly developed V-2 rockets that were hitting English cities.

The "V" referred to a vengeance weapon, and it lived up to its name.

The first long-range guided ballistic missile, the V-2s were first launched into England and Belgium in September 1944, resulting

in more than 9,000 civilian and military deaths.

By November, the Germans had improved the accuracy of the weapon and an average of eight V-2 rockets were hitting England every day.

November saw 2,754 Londoners killed by the V-2 and another 6,500 injured.

There was no defense that was effective in stopping the weapon once it was launched.

Pacific Theater

In the Pacific Theater, November marked the first time that B-29 Super Fortress bombers, taking off from the Tinian Naval Base in the Northern Marianas, reached Tokyo in bombing missions.

The first site to be bombed was the Musashino aircraft plant on Nov. 24. Other sites included Japanese port facilities and industrial areas.

The bombing of Tokyo continued periodically for the next 9 months, until Aug. 15, 1945, when Japan finally surrendered.

Next time: December 1944.

Learn more about Ronald P. May and his books at <https://ronaldpmay.com> or contact him by email at ron@ronaldpmay.com. Check out his videos on YouTube at: World War II History & Stories with Ron May.

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