

Radio Alert Following Peace Rumor

Briefing by Military Tuesday With Net News Chiefs

By ROBERT K. RICHARDS

DAME RUMOR, helped along her way by a zealous newspaperman and several credulous radio reporters, spread word through America last week that the war in Europe was about to end.

She lifted her hoop skirts and dashed from coast to coast spreading her glorious, albeit phoney, tidings, after a Washington news service reporter had listened to a news conference conducted by Jonathan Daniels, neophyte Presidential secretary. This particular newsman, an INS reporter, wrote part of his story from the facts presented by Mr. Daniels and sucked the remainder from his thumb, an alchemical process not unknown to Washington newsmen. But if his glance penetrated the crystal ball,

that of a West Coast radio newsman shattered it.

Leon Pearson, brother of Drew Pearson, was the INS reporter who heard Mr. Daniels say that the President had asked all military and Government officials who could do so to stay at their desks during the San Francisco conference, to be held in April. Mr. Daniels explained that this was requested by the President in view of the critical situation in the war and because he did not wish transportation facilities and San Francisco hotel accommodations overtaxed.

Misinterpretation

Mr. Pearson, working from this, wrote a story which stated in part that the Cabinet had been ordered by the President to stand by in the light of the critical war situation.

Mr. Pearson's copy was filed and coursed into the newsrooms of INS radio station-clients throughout the nation. In Los Angeles, Henry Orbach, Blue news manager, wrote a

statement for Gil Martyn, newscaster, who put it on his network broadcast at 11:40 a.m. EWT. It announced as "electrifying news" that "President Roosevelt and his Cabinet are preparing for news of victory in Europe." This was on Tuesday.

Earlier on the same day (7 a.m. EWT) INS had received a dispatch from SHAEF quoting Gen. Eisenhower as saying, "... the Germans are whipped." In transmission to the West Coast, according to Barry Faris, INS editor-in-chief, this was garbled and became, "Eisenhower says the Germans have quit". The error was retrieved in 10 seconds, Mr. Faris said, but not before it had been broadcast on the Don Lee-Mutual network. A correction was aired immediately.

Allegiance Repeated

But by this time the damage had been done.

In New York, and in major cities throughout the nation, radio and newspaper switchboards were clogged within seconds.

In New York, several stores were closed for the "victory celebration".

In Detroit, scores called stations to ask, "Is the war over?" One person asked the WJR operator, "Is

Roosevelt dead?" Another chastised the station for failing to carry a broadcast by Churchill and Roosevelt which she insisted was scheduled for 2 p.m.

In Los Angeles, a meeting of the city council was interrupted for a peace announcement. Council members and spectators stood and recited the oath of allegiance.

In Chicago, courts in the criminal courts building were adjourned.

In Boston, newspapers appealed to the Office of Censorship and the FCC in an effort to bring official action against a station which aired the false report.

Held Up Dispatch

In Detroit, Henry Alexander, news chief of WXYZ, Blue outlet, held up the INS dispatch, only to hear it fed through his station's transmitter later by the network.

Newspapers took the bait, too. In the same city, the *Times* carried a two-bank, eight-column streamer: "ROOSEVELT'S ORDER: STAND BY FOR VICTORY".

At 12:35 p.m. EWT the Blue corrected its 11:40 a.m. broadcast.

Tuesday, it is reported, news chiefs of the networks will meet in New York with a select group of military authorities who will give them background information which will bulwark against repetition of such a fiasco. It was not learned whether a similar talk would be held for news service writers and editors.

Reporters Covered Crossing Of Rhine From Plane Armada

FROM Piper Cubs, Flying Fortresses and other aircraft forming part of the air support for the Rhine crossings March 23, radio reporters covered one of the major military operations of World War II. While ship-side reports have figured in many of the outstanding broadcasts of the war, radio's coverage of the Rhine was characterized by a "bird's-eye view," although there were plenty of correspondents slugging along with the troops, and sharing their hazards.

500-Mile Armada

One of the former, NBC's John MacVane scored what appears to have been scoop with the first broadcast from the east side of the Rhine March 26, at 9 a.m. "Heroine" of Mr. MacVane's coups was the U. S. Army mobile transmitter "Jig Easy Sugar Queen". JESQ was the first mobile unit used to transmit broadcasts from the Normandy coast, and has followed Gen. Eisenhower's armies into German soil. From the same transmitter MacVane was heard Saturday, 1:45 p.m. with a description of a tour of the Remagen bridgehead from the west side of the river. NBC's *Army Hour* on Sunday, March 25 included recording made on a plane, describing airborne troops jumping into Germany.

Herbert Clark, coming in from Paris on the Blue Network at 7:47 a.m. Saturday, March 24 claimed for his network the first broadcast announcement from Europe of an all-out Allied launching across the Rhine, pointing out that CBS was beaten to the gun by 30 seconds.

A carefully worded message from Clark had tipped the network off to open at 7 a.m., an hour earlier than usual.

In the lead plane of a 500-mile long air armada Paul Manning, WOR-Mutual, recorded a description of the airborne invasion of Remagen. Disc was flown to Paris and heard on Mutual Saturday, March 24 5-5:15 p.m. Descriptions of 9th Army crossings recorded in Piper Cub planes by UP's Ray Conger and Chris Cunningham came in on MBS at 10 a.m. and noon respectively the same day.

Dick Hottel, one of the nine correspondents CBS had on the assignment, was forced to parachute to safety when the Flying Fortress in which he was accompanying the First Airborne Army, burst into flames just east of the Rhine. Hottel jumped after the plane turned back across the Rhine, flew back to a transmitter to broadcast for CBS. Edward R. Murrow, CBS European chief, rode a British bomber towing a glider. Bill Downs, who came in Saturday 2:48 p.m. from some point in Germany rode "pig-a-back" in an American Thunderbolt fighter up and down the entire Rhine front.

Charles Collingwood, came in from Paris at 7:01 p.m. Friday with news of Third Army crossings and at 7:48 a.m. Saturday March 24 with news of the 9th Army crossings. Winston Burdett, CBS, with First Army, may have been east of the Rhine when he broadcast Tuesday 8-8:15 p.m., reporting "orders to strike east and keep rolling".

MBS Plans to Present Allied Officers And Officials From Berlin on V-E Day

LEADING with a special program from Berlin, featuring Allied staff officers, plans for which are necessarily rather indefinite at present, Mutual has lined up a score of proposed programs for V-E Day.

Another program, *Home Front Rededication* consists of interviews with James Byrnes, director of War Mobilization and Reconversion; Basil O'Connor, Red Cross chief; Paul V. McNutt, WMC chairman; Maj. Gen. Lewis B. Hershey, director, Selective Service System; James A. Krug, WPB chairman; Chester Bowles, OPA administrator; Claude R. Wickard, Secretary of Agriculture; Henry Morgenthau Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, and others.

Other Washington programs planned for V-E Day are: A quarter-hour program with Chiefs of Army and Navy Chaplains; interviews with Senators and Congressmen; a special Navy program with Secretary of Navy James V. Forrestal, former Secretary Josephus Daniels and top-ranking admirals.

Victory Salute

From New York, Mutual will broadcast a musical-dramatic *Victory Salute to the Armed Forces*, a special program by Morton Downey, and a religious period with clergymen from various churches. A *Surrender Day Salute* from a major

Naval base will be broadcast from Rochester, N. Y.; the Detroit Symphony will present a special V-E Day concert; Hollywood is also preparing a victory presentation; Dwight Green, Governor of Illinois, and Edward J. Kelly, Mayor of Chicago, will speak from that city.

Pickups from Times Square in New York, Hollywood and Vine in Hollywood, and similar central spots in Chicago, Cleveland, St. Louis, Washington, Denver and Morgantown, W. Va., will be made during *Main Street America*, which will also broadcast the Liberty Bell from Philadelphia and the chimes in the Peace Tower in Ottawa.

These programs, arranged by Tom Slater, MBS director of special features, will be augmented by pickups from Mutual correspondents abroad, supervised by John Whitmore, director of news.

Other networks have not announced their V-E day plans in any detail. CBS will broadcast an hour documentary program written and produced by Norman Corwin, which has been rehearsed and is all ready to go, and has in preparation a half-hour documentary show on the Pacific war, emphasizing the fact that the end of the German war does not mean that the fighting is all over. NBC is considering a special musical program conducted by Arturo Toscanini.