

HERO OF BUNA
Capt. Boettcher (left) speaking from Australia



In previous issues on this page we have been telling the story of Captain Herman Boettcher, hero of Buna. Below we reprint an interview with him which was given at the "News of the World" program on April 7th (8:00-8:30 p.m.) We received a copy of the broadcast through the courtesy of Columbia Broadcasting System. The reporter is George L. Moorad.

MOORAD: Some of the most savage fighting of this war is going on tonight in the dark malarial jungles of New Guinea. And we have at this microphone the Sgt. York of the Pacific, the man who has been called the toughest jungle fighter of them all. He's 32 year old Capt. Herman Boettcher, formerly a San Francisco State College student. Boettcher was born in Germany, emigrated to America in 1881; fought with the Loyalists in Spain and came to Australia as a buck private. For outstanding gallantry in the New Guinea campaign, he was raised in 17 days from Sergeant to Captain and Battalion Commander. Holder of the Distinguished Service Cross and Purple Heart with cluster, he is just recovering from gunshot wounds and malaria.

"Captain, you were leader of a party which split the main Japanese force on Buna Beach . . . Boettcher's corner, we called it. How did you find our boys as fighters, say, compared with Spain?"

BOETTCHER: Fighting is a business everyone has got to learn. We went down to the beach with 30 green men, but in three days they were knocking the pants off . . . Japanese Marines veterans of China and Malaya. Every country has brave soldiers, but I think, of course, the Yanks and Russians are tops.

MOORAD: Well, how about the Japs?

BOETTCHER: They're brave . . . sometimes very foolish. Apparently they had been told to use a little bridge across a lagoon, and we shot them off like sitting ducks. They could, of course, have safely lain down, but they had to wait for orders.

MOORAD: Did you try to take prisoners, Captain?

BOETTCHER: Of course. The Japanese will have to surrender eventually . . . and we're trying to teach them early. In the long run, it saves the lives of all men.

MOORAD: You've had a lot of war, Capt. Boettcher. Don't you get tired of it sometimes?

BOETTCHER: Very much. But I've been fighting Hitler since 1939, and perhaps I have a better reason to know what Fascism means. My younger brother is in a Nazi prison-camp. They never got up to me. I'm an American.

MOORAD: Well now one more question, Captain. I believe that an unusual thing about your story is that during all of this fighting in New Guinea you were not an American citizen.

BOETTCHER: Yes. I've been trying for 12 years to get my final papers and broke my residence requirements by fighting in Spain. But this time I hope it will go through. And, believe me, that means a lot more than any medal ever could.