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In: Stars and Stripes.

Berlin. Drama of the Reich Capital.

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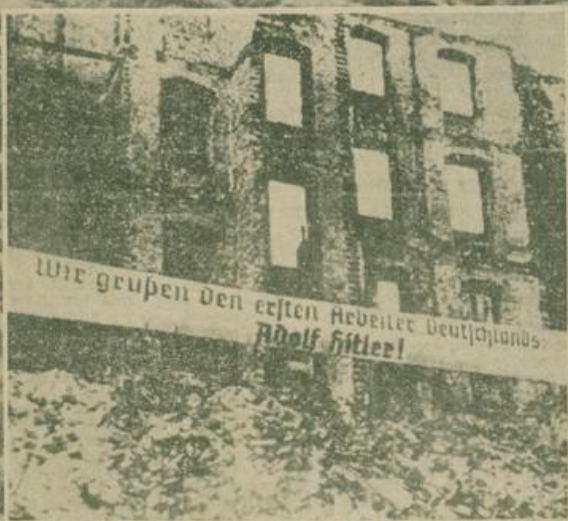
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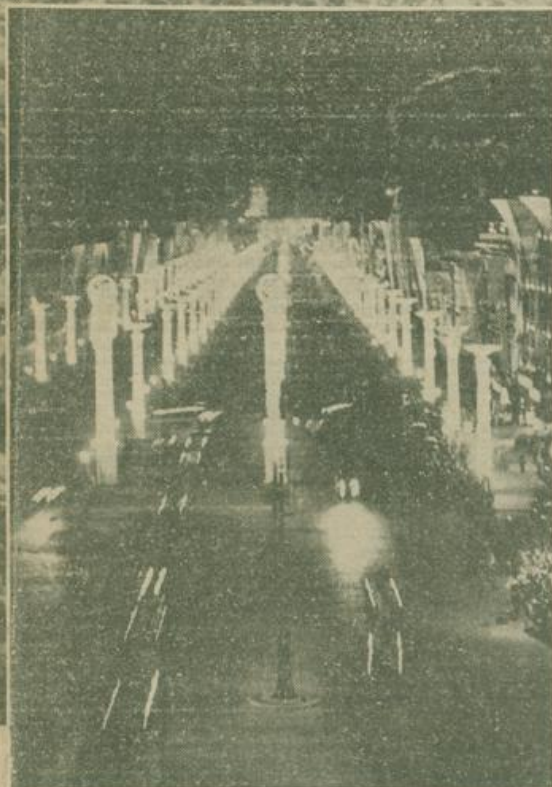
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BERLIN



The impressive night display on Unter Den Linden in Berlin (right) on Hitler's 50th birthday is in striking contrast to today's picture.



Drama Of The Reich Capital

By Sgt. KLAUS MANN
Special to The Stars and Stripes

Former Citizen Of Germany Writes About A City Everyone Is Watching

THE FALL OF Berlin may not immediately or automatically bring about the end of organized German resistance, but it will be the decisive blow to Hitler's political prestige and military power. Most Germans will realize and admit that they have lost the war, once the enemy has occupied the capital. A free German government established in Berlin by Field Marshal Paulus, or some other prominent anti-Nazi, is likely to be recognized by the majority of the nation.

It is true that the Soviet Union would not have been defeated if the Nazis had succeeded in taking Moscow—just as the United States might be able to survive politically and militarily the loss of Washington. But both the Russians and the U. S.—in contrast to Germany—have the dimensions of continents; they command vast reserves of space on which they can fall back if necessary. Neither country depends on any particular nerve center for the maintenance and functioning of its national energies. Germany, however, though less centralized than France and England, depends upon such a nerve center: Germany needs Berlin.

The importance of Berlin has been increasing steadily ever since 1871, when the old residence of the Prussian kings was established as the capital of the newly-founded Reich under the auspices of the "Iron Chancellor," Bismarck.

IN THE BEGINNING, the political and cultural hegemony of Berlin over the rest of Germany was by no means absolute or undisputed. If the Emperor resided and ruled in the capital, there remained the minor German monarchs—kings, princes, grand dukes—who jealously defended every bit of their independence. In certain parts of the Reich, especially in Bavaria, the sovereignty of Prussia and Prussian Berlin was erudigiously, if at all, accepted.

With the disappearance of the local princes in 1918, Berlin's position became more predominant. Under the Weimar Republic, the Reich capital for

the first time was actually the center of Germany's political, social, cultural and economic life.

That is not to say that the traditional animosities and antagonisms among the various German regions and races disappeared together with the monarchies. Berlin and the Berliners remained unpopular with inhabitants of most other major German cities. Particularly in Munich—at that time the citadel of reaction and obscurantism in Germany—the capital was despised as an international Babel ruled by a rotten gang of bankers and Bolsheviks. If Berlin previously had been disliked by many liberals as the symbol and center of Prussian power policy, it was now hated by reactionaries as the representative of the new democratic State.

HITLER, the Austrian, began his career in southern Germany. Even before Berlin was aware of his existence, he was a local celebrity in the Bavarian capital.

As soon as he came to power, however, it became obvious that his flirtation with Bavarian regional patriotism had been only one of his many demagogic tricks. His most influential backers were not the Bavarian reactionaries but the Prussian Junkers and industrialists. His ideology had its roots, if any, in Prussian militarism and Pan-German imperialism, rather than in southern German provincialism. Munich had just been a stage on the road to power. Berlin was the goal.

It was a cheap gesture, almost resembling mockery, for Hitler to "honor" Munich with the title of "capital of the movement." In reality, there had been, since the establishment of the Nazi dictatorship in 1933, only one German capital—Berlin. The individual German states were to lose whatever independence they had maintained: in fact, they ceased to exist. Berlin was omnipotent. From Berlin, the authori-

tarian government controlled all activities, public as well as private, within the realm of Greater Germany. From Berlin, the masters of Greater Germany intended to control Europe and, finally, the world.

BERLIN WAS NOT a beautiful city. As far as picturesque surroundings and architectural monuments are concerned, the capital of the Reich could not compete with Paris, Rome, Vienna, Prague nor, indeed, with some of the more ancient German cities such as Munich, Dresden, Hamburg or Frankfurt-on-the-Main.

Of course, Berlin too had some lovely districts and some fine old buildings, like the famous Zeughaus (Arsenal) and the stately cathedral. Also, there were impressive squares and avenues: the broad representative gala street, Unter Den Linden (even though it fell short of the glorious Champs Elysees in Paris); the sumptuous Pariser Platz (Paris Square) on which the French Embassy, the swanky Adlon Hotel and the massive Arch of Brandenburg were situated (although it could not be compared to the matchless Place de la Concorde in Paris or to the magnificent Piazza del Popolo in Rome); the busy Leipzigerstrasse and Friedrich Strasse (whose business appeared a trifle provincial in comparison to Wall Street or the London city); the glamorous Kurfürsten-Damm and Tauentzienstrasse, main arteries of the city's new center to the west (whose glamor seemed rather on the phony side to anyone who knew New York's Park Avenue or the grand boulevards of Paris).

But most of the city's residential and business quarters—both proletarian and middle class—were dreadfully devoid of charm and character. The style typical of Berlin architecture was that of the so-called *Grunder Jahre*—the "years of foundation"—the two or three decades following the German victory over

France in 1871 which was one of the most prosperous but also one of the most vulgar periods in German history. Indeed, the physiognomy of Berlin, in all its grandeur and stateliness, had irritatingly vulgar features.

ON THE OTHER hand, it would be unfair to ignore the city's more attribute qualities. Its surroundings, however plain, were not without a certain austere, unassuming charm. Life in Berlin, at the time I knew it, was pleasant enough. There was something crisp and vigorous about the intellectual and physical atmosphere of the place. Berliners prided themselves on their flippant wit, their skepticism, their efficiency, their speed or what they used to call "tempo."

Berlin was an inordinately ambitious city—always vibrating, quivering with somewhat hectic pretensions and aspirations. An upstart among the great capitals of the world, she tried frantically to outdo all the others. Everything in Berlin had to be *Kolossal*—parades and pleasure, business and culture—everything had to be "bigger and better" than anywhere else.

UNDER EMPEROR Wilhelm II, Berlin managed to be more imperial and more imperialistic than any other metropolis. During World War I, she was the most martial, most hysterically chauvinistic capital. After the collapse of 1918, she abandoned herself to apocalyptic moods. Always given to excesses and exaggeration, she now revealed, as it were, in depravity and utter wretchedness—parading her prostitutes, beggars, criminals and sexual degenerates as she had previously paraded her goose-stepping grenadiers. *Bigger and better!* The Berlin of the inflation period demonstrated that it could produce bigger and better vices, bigger and better misery, bigger and better despair than any rival inferno.

With the stabilization of the German currency, the capital gradually regained its psychological equilibrium. During the following years, Berlin assumed a more mellow, more mature cosmopolitan aspect. The period from 1924 to 1931—from the end of inflation until the time shortly before Hitler's coming

11 February, 1945

into power—was perhaps the most promising and most successful one in the history of the city. Visiting foreigners found the post-inflation, pre-Nazi Berlin stimulating and enjoyable. Culture flourished in republican Berlin. Friends of music were greatly impressed by the symphonic and operatic performances.

Berlin's university and various scientific institutions were frequented by scholars from all over the world. Literary connoisseurs agreed that literary life in the German capital was on a high intellectual and aesthetic level.

Students of social conditions were interested in the elaborate and powerful setup of Berlin's labor organizations. Artistically-minded visitors found an abundance of museums and exhibitions; gastronomes appreciated the delicious food served in certain high-class Berlin restaurants (the most famous of which, Horcher, was later to become the favorite hangout of that fat glutton Goering); erotic experts relished the saucy elegance and the sturdy charms

It was Berlin's immoderate, frenzied ambition to become the hyper-metropolis, the super-capital of the supermen, the city of cities, indeed, the queen and center of the universe. That is why Berlin accepted Hitler—why the Berliners followed the sham Messiah who promised them might and glory—*Bigger and better! Kolossal!*

Kolossal, indeed! Berlin, once lively and animated, became sterile and dull. The intellectuals, scholars, artists were driven into exile or they were killed or silenced or corrupted. Pogroms instead of progress! Persecution instead of prosperity! Berlin witnessed the burning of books, the suppression of labor unions and political parties, the outrages of the Gestapo. The capital of the Third Reich was the scene of unspeakable horrors.

THE DRAMA of Berlin is approaching its grim climax. What the city experiences now, what she has been experiencing during the past year is tragedy in the fullest, most exact sense

of the term—the inevitable and inexorable punishment of diabolical pride and ambition. Berlin—torn, ravaged, starving, freezing, blacked out, crammed with refugees, in a state of panic and disintegration—pays a terrible price for its rampant arrogance and aggressiveness.

Will the city ever recover from the nightmare of its present ordeal? Will it be reconstructed to become the capital of a new purified and pacified Germany? Or will the center of German life be shifted to other regions—with Berlin remaining in ruins, a pathetic monument to its own shame, a warning example to future would-be conquerors?

Nobody knows. But one thing is certain: the fall of Berlin, its utter disgrace and destruction, is an event not only of far reaching political and military significance but also of vast moral implications. The day on which columns of the victorious Allies march through the streets of the German capital will teach a terrible and necessary lesson, not only to Berliners but also to Germans in general. The spectacle of Berlin's humiliation will make them understand that violence doesn't pay, and that he who tries to conquer the world by means of blitzkrieg will perish by an even bigger and better blitz.



View Of Berlin's Famous Cathedral

of Berlin's well-bult, well-dressed and often rather easy-going girls.

BUT UNDER this smooth surface of urbanity, there remained always some dark, ominous element—a secret tension, a dangerous, if hidden, undercurrent. Berlin never seemed to be quite satisfied with its status as a prosperous, normal civilized capital. She wanted to be more! *Bigger and better*—that's what she wanted to be!



By A Staff Writer

WITH THE 5TH ARMY

THE RED ARMY long ago pledged a march on Berlin. In fulfillment it has unleashed the mightiest offensive of this war. Today the specter of Soviet armies fighting on the soil of the Fatherland and closing in on Berlin has become a terrifying reality for the German people.

What is the reaction of the German soldier on the other side of the firing line in Italy to Soviet successes? Does he concede defeat is inevitable? Is he ready to lay down his arms?

This is what four typical German prisoners of war had to say at a divisional POW cage on the 5th Army front. All had been taken prisoner less than 18 hours earlier. Each volunteered his comment.

JOACHIM is just 19, blond, blue-eyed, plink-cheeked, sharp-nosed. A Catholic from the south German city of Augsburg, he was captured on the first anniversary of his induction into the Wehrmacht. In civilian life Joachim was an electrician, but the army made him an antitank gunner and later sent him into the line as a rifleman. His boots and long, green coat are almost new and remarkably neat.

"When we were last out of the line, I heard the Russians were near Breslau," he said. "Since then there has been no official news, no news from German sources. They tell me now the Russians have gone much further. Is our eastern front broken? I do not know. If the Bolsheviks are on German soil, things will be very hard."

Nervously, Joachim wet his lips. For a long moment he paused. Then, looking straight ahead with tired young eyes, he declared: "What can we do? We will do as we are told. If we are told to fight, it is our duty to fight on."

HANS, THE LANCE corporal, was 38 and a beaten man. He had been the first to surrender after the patrol fire fight. Stubble darkened his face; his tattered uniform covered a home-knit blue sweater, and a green scarf covered his head. Hans was from Breslau. He had been a chauffeur for a provisional official until there was no more gasoline. Then he became a clerk. For a long time he was not inducted

when his throw of the rope fell short of the island, but the second succeeded. From then on it was routine, passing the ferry back and forth from shore to island by the ropes. Capt. Zeff, the last to leave, was seen to be loading something into the raft. "Shovels," he answered when questioned. "They're damned hard to get."

ORDINARILY, broken machine guns and a non-functioning interphone on a tough mission might lead to trouble for a B-25 gunner, but S-Sgt. Norman L. Lawrence of Brooklyn, N. Y., credits such a combination with saving his life.

In a recent mission over a German-held rail bridge in northern Italy, the veteran tall gunner found his weapons silent when he tried to test fire them before his ship went in on the bomb run. Frantically Sgt. Lawrence tried to put the guns into operation but the left gun refused to fire and the charging handle had broken off the right one. He turned to the interphone to call the pilot. The phone was dead.

Sgt. Lawrence hurriedly crawled through to the radio compartment and used the interphone there. He was instructed to go back and try to repair his guns, checking communication wires

on the way. He was halfway to the tail compartment when an explosion flung him against the side of the plane. A second burst lifted the ship above the formation. With one engine shot out, the plane was maneuvered over the target, dropped its load and headed for home.

Back at the base the group surgeon took one look at the rear turret and inquired, "Where's the body?" There were more than 120 holes in the compartment. Lawrence had luckily left!

THEY CAN'T break up the team of Head and Foote. They fly in the same B-25 Mitchell of the 321st Bomb Group—S-Sgt. Guthrie H. Head of Andalusia, Ala., turret gunner, and Sgt. Lancel H. Foote of Bristol, Conn., tail gunner. They joined their group at the same time, flew their first combat mission together and have flown together on the same plane ever since.

T-SGT. HANK PRICE of Houston, Texas, a flight engineer with a 12th Air Force fighter group, only wanted to gas up the little Aeronca when he climbed into it. He was taxiing the plane down the runway when he looked out and saw the ground five feet below the wheels. A 55-mile gale

'We Do Our Duty'

German In Italy Fights On Despite Berlin's Imminent Capture By Soviet Armies

because he has three children—4, 7 and 13 years old.

"Five days ago, our communique in the division paper told us Breslau was threatened. Last night the American infantrymen claimed the Russians are only 48 miles from Berlin."

Hans' voice broke. He began to cry. He reached into his pocket and extracted a faded brown photograph of his wife and children and fondled it between sobs.

"The war is lost," he blurted. "It is lost, yet one has to do one's duty. Believe me, I would rather be home with my family but one has to do one's duty. There is nothing else to do but to do your duty."

PUG-NOSED FRANZ had the long, curly hair of a woman. He was just 18, a hand-tool maker from the Bavarian town of Ulm.

"I knew there was a Russian offensive but this news of Breslau and the rest is new." His head twitched as he pondered each word. His voice began to break.

"It will have serious consequences... Russians on German soil. They must not reach my home. I do not know. If only I knew, have we strength to hold them?" Hans stared unseeingly out the window, his Adam's apple jerking up and down.

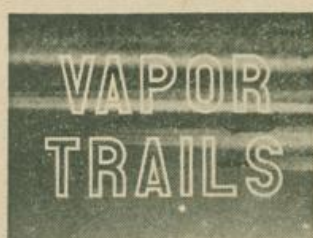
"We have asked ourselves why we are fighting in Italy and not against the Russians at home, but a soldier must do his duty."

MANFRED, the 18-year-old farm boy from Nuremberg, resembles the Max Schmeling of 15 years ago. He is square-faced, dark-haired with small pointed ears. He still wears his white camouflage suit.

"Eight days ago I heard the Russians were in Silesia. It will be a simple problem for the German Army. For one I am annoyed that I am in Italy and not fighting the Russians. I think perhaps we cannot hold out much longer in the war."

"It is my duty not to desert. It is my duty to stay and fight until I am told it is time to stop fighting."

It came from the lips of each, the affirmation that a sense of duty keeps a beaten people fighting. Unless he is told to quit, the landsman will fight on until his army crumbles around him. And because his Nazi masters face only disaster if they surrender.



A RUBBER raft, carried in heavy bombers for emergency landings at sea, saved the day recently for five GIs of a bomber squadron and four civilian laborers stranded by a flash flood in one of Italy's rivers. The group was loading sand from a bar when an upstream dam broke. They spent a cold, rainy night between two raging torrents and at dawn the water was still rising.

Other means failing, Capt. Samuel T. Zeff of Modesto, Calif., squadron adjutant, jumped into a pneumatic raft to which two large ropes had been attached and set out several hundred yards upstream. The first try missed

had lifted the little ship into the air. Since brakes were useless against the wind, Sgt. Price, who learned to fly in 1933 as a civilian, opened the throttle and took off. He landed again after circling the field. "From now on," he says, "I won't taxi down that strip unless there's a 200-pound GI on each wing."

WHEN THE electrical mechanism controlling the pitch of the propellers went out a few minutes before reaching the target at Odertal, Germany, S-Sgt. Andrew J. Machuga of Denver, former medic and now an engineer-gunner on a B-24, proved that he is as adept at patching up bombers as he was patching GIs.

The Liberator, though rapidly losing formation speed, went on to bomb the objective alone, then turned for home, a straggler and sure mark for enemy fighters. At best, the crew knew they were due for a ditching in the sea at the rate the four uncontrolled props were eating up fuel. Machuga did some fast thinking, ripped wire from his electrical flying suit and connected the prop governors with the upper turret power unit. With prop control restored, there was just enough fuel remaining for the Liberator to make home base.