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Over The Rhine To Valhalla.

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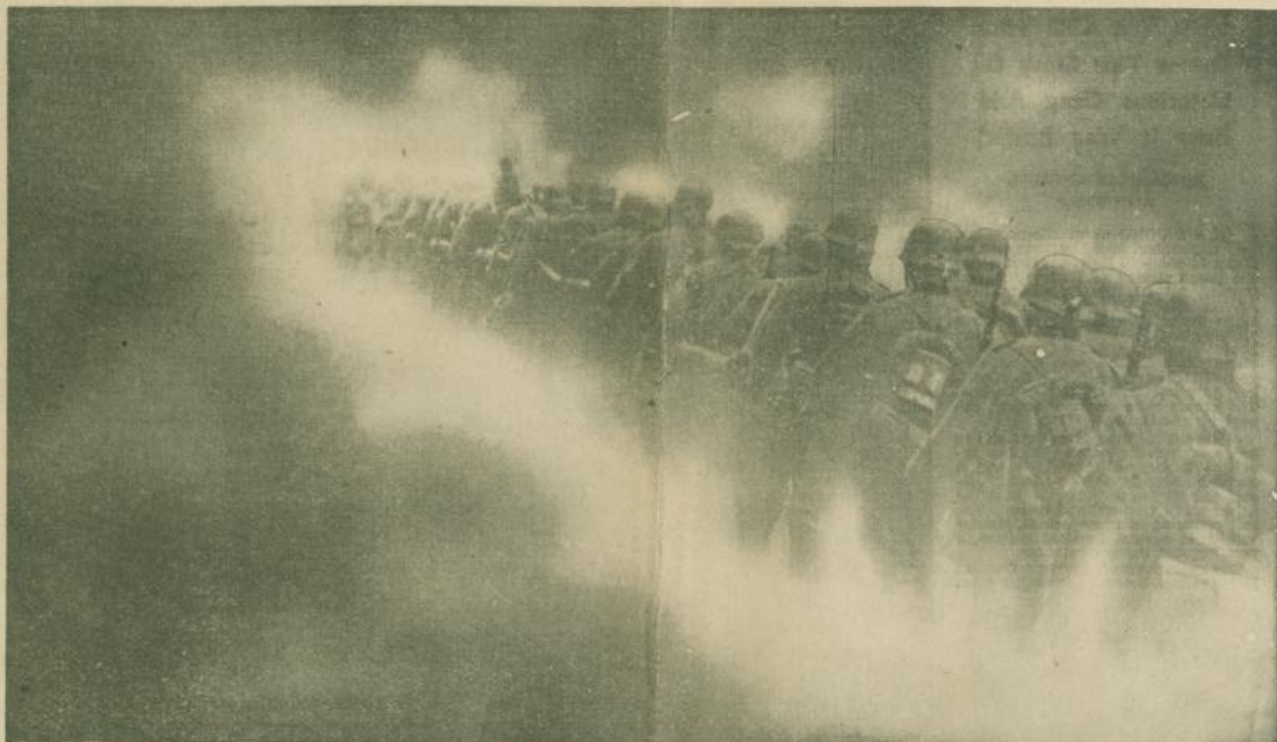
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Will the Germans, like the doomed warriors of Teutonic legend marching to their last refuge in the sky, fight on to the "lost man?"

Over The Rhine To Valhalla

By Cpt. KLAUS MANN
Staff Writer

Great German River Was More Than Military Obstacle To Nation

THE PRESENT development on the western front—our crossing the Rhine and, especially, the fall of the great city of Cologne—cannot but have a profound effect on the German mind. By crossing the Rhine, we are overcoming more than just another formidable military obstacle; we cross something like a magic barrier. For with the Teutonic Watch on the Rhine being overrun, the very heart of the ancient Reich is exposed to invasion.

The Rhine is not only the greatest German river, as well as a terrific natural defense protecting German territory from the Swiss frontier down to The Netherlands; it is also a German myth. To any German, no matter from which part of the Reich he may come, the name *Rhine* is a sublime symbol of patriotism, carrying a profusion of historic memories and legendary suggestions.

In reality, the Rhineland long ago became a highly industrialized area dominated by great modern cities like Mannheim, Coblenz (now the immediate goal of the U. S. 3rd Army), Cologne, Düsseldorf, Duisburg and Essen (where the famous works of Krupp are situated)—powerful manufacturing centers which form, together with the great cities of the near Ruhr Valley (Dortmund, Bochum, etc.), the industrial core of Western Germany and, most important, the irreplaceable arsenal of Hitler's war machine.

IN THE imagination of the romantically-minded German people, however, the banks of the majestic river, despite smoke stacks and furnaces, constitute an enchanted scene filled with medieval castles and picturesque rocks. These venerable banks did, indeed, once witness a colorful and chivalrous kind of life.

On one of these rocky ledges, towering 450 feet above the Rhine, an attractive female called Lorelei was wont, by means of her irresistible songs, to lure men to their death over the precipitous brink. An illustrious son of the Rhineland, Heinrich Heine, immortalized the sweet and dangerous witch in a ballad which is still being sung by German children and women, and which still appears in most German schoolbooks and anthologies, even though the poet's name, which happens to be "non-Aryan," had to be replaced in all Nazi-

German publications by the laconic remark, "Author Unknown."

BUT THE greatest, most popular story based on the Rhine is the *Nibelungenlied* (Song of the Nibelungs), of actually unknown authorship. This German epic of the late 12th century is indeed one of the grimmest, most gruesome affairs in world literature—full of fierce battles and violent emotions, dashing knights, sinister villains, angry gods, truculent Valkyries (a kind of blonde-haired, high-bosomed Teutonic Amazon), blood-thirsty dragons, magic swords, treasures hidden on the ground of the Rhine, and such clever devices as the famous *Tarnkappe*, or cape of darkness, which has the virtue of making anyone who wears it invisible.

This was the legend which the German poet and composer, Richard Wagner, used as the basis for his celebrated work, *The Ring of the Nibelungs*,—a colossal musical drama in four parts, ending with the grand and gloomy finale of the *Goetterdaemmerung* (Twilight of the Gods), in which the defeated gods, demigods and heroes withdraw at last from the Rhenish battlefield and return to the peace of death and nothingness—a tragic procession of weary, guilt-laden veterans, marching over the arch of a glowing rainbow. Their last refuge is Valhalla, the mythical hall into which the Teutonic deity receives the souls of warriors slain in battle. Their last glance, as they part from this blood-stained earth, goes down to the Rhine which keeps rolling, as if nothing had happened . . .

WAGNER'S grandiose, if somewhat depressing vision fascinated and profoundly influenced German generations up to the present day. In fact, his work remains the classic expression of a certain typical, very significant German mood and attitude. It is this peculiar, unmistakably Germanic penchant for the tragic, this curious prediction for doom and catastrophe which a shrewd French psychologist and statesman, Georges Clemenceau, had in mind when he observed that all Germans are "secretly in love with death."

What Richard Wagner dramatized

and glorified in the concluding part of his *Ring* cycle was not victory nor even heroic sacrifice for the sake of a sublime cause: it was death as such and as an aim in itself. The Nibelungs failed to accomplish anything with all their battle; they proved nothing with their lugubrious farewell songs; they just kept fighting "to the last man," betraying one another, murdering one another, destroying everything. Then they strode away, into the void of non-existence. They were pompous and triumphant, although beaten, and their last march invariably brought moved applause from a Germanic audience versed in the legends of the Rhine.

AS IS WELL known, Hitler adores and, in many respects, tries to ape the Wagnerian heroes. He has identified himself, in his own muddled mind, with Lohengrin, the "knight in shining armor," for in Hitler's own "House of German Art" at Munich hangs a huge portrait of the Fuehrer on horseback dressed in shining white armor! He has also visualized himself in the role of young Siegfried slaying the wicked dragon of Bolshevism and Plutocracy. But Siegfried's reckless career led to the general disaster of the *Goetterdaemmerung*, with the whole universe afire as a funeral pyre for the fallen hero.

If the neo-Teutonic warriors dreamed of a grandiose Twilight of the Gods as the climax and finale of their devastating deeds—they are now getting in the Rhine what they've asked for—burning cities, tumbling towers and glowing skies. And, in a paradoxical, perverted way, they seem to enjoy it!

DR. GOEBBELS, Reich Propaganda Minister, who certainly knows what kind of talk his Germans like to hear, has for some time been reveling in the most sinister, most gruesome descriptions and prophecies. Deliberately and blatantly he publicizes the agony of his nation, harping on the *Goetterdaemmerung* theme and predicting universal calamities unless the Germans succeed in stopping the advance of the "Bolshevistic hordes from Inner Asia and their plutocratic Allies." At the same time he suggests that already it may be too late for the Teutonic

knights to accomplish such a feat. Yet they must go on fighting.

If there is no victory, there is always Valhalla. In fact, the struggle may continue even in the other world. In one of his recent rhetorical outbursts Goebbels promised the Germans would resist so frantically that future legends will present a ghostly Wehrmacht carrying on the fight, with unshaken morale, in the dark skies of stormy and cloudy nights, after the end of the real, earthly battle.

It could be that the eloquent little doctor and many of his friends, when the day of Germany's final military collapse arrives, would like to get hold of one of those precious devices called *Tarnkappe* and make themselves invisible, rather than venture on new counterattacks in the clouds. But with those convenient, magic hoods pretty difficult to find these days, the desperate Nazi chieftains may actually try to carry out their much-discussed project—namely, to retire with their remaining elite troops to the fortified area of Berchtesgaden and fight it out until the last man. This idea, however fantastic, is quite in keeping with a certain morbidly romantic tradition very dear to the German heart.

IF THE Germans continue to listen, and give credence, to the songs of their cynical old siren in the Reich Ministry for Propaganda and Enlightenment, they are likely to be lured to their death—just as were the unfortunate sailors who followed the voice of Fraulein Lorelei.

But there will be nothing poetic about this tragedy. There will be no rainbows, no Wagnerian music, no applauding audience, no Valhalla—only disillusionment, bitterness, misery, and ever-growing destruction.

The decisive question is whether the Germans, following the dubious pattern of the *Goetterdaemmerung* myth and Dr. Goebbels' diabolical advice, will actually drag out this terrible finale of the war drama to the bitter end. We can only hope that the shock of the present events, both in the West and East, may have a sobering, enlightening effect on that blinded, hypnotized nation and that they may notice, not without surprise, that the twilight of their own false gods and idols does not mean the beginning of universal darkness but, on the contrary, the fresh colors of dawn—promising a new day to all men who prefer the sound, joy, and duties of life to the sinister fascination of death and aimless tragedy.

From The CID Files Comes This Story Of Notorious Gang And How It Was Busted

By Sgt. DEAN BOSWELL
Staff Writer

ON A Waning warm afternoon last September, four American soldiers and a 16-year-old Italian cruised along the broad stretch of Highway 7 near Capua. All of the Americans were AWOL; their transportation was a stolen weapons carrier. One of the men was sporting the bars of an American lieutenant and carried a German machine pistol. Another wore a staff sergeant's stripes and carried a U. S. caliber .45 pistol and an Italian Beretta. The others were similarly armed, except for the Italian youth.

Along the highway came the Cadillac sedan of a Polish general, its sole occupant a sergeant driver. It was a simple matter for the American "officer" to halt the car. At gun point the driver was forced out and robbed. The loot consisted of money, coins, jewelry valued at several hundred dollars, a revolver, and the general's car.

The enjoyment of driving a Cadillac lasted briefly, because a few miles down



This handy collection of firearms of American and foreign make is only part of the arsenal which, together with loot, was uncovered by Criminal Investigation Division agents when the Lane gang finally was rounded up in Rome. Note the MP brassards, the troop movement sign and the officer's cap, used by members of the gang to cover up their criminal activities.

Smashing the LANE Gang

the road, the "lieutenant" wrecked the stolen machine, abandoned it and rejoined his companions who were tagging along in the much slower weapons carrier. Together the group drove on until they came to the Garigliano River bridge, check point of the MPs on Highway 7.

HERE THE marauding group forced the lone MP, at gun point, to surrender his helmet, brassard, whistle, gun, belt, and leggings. Then the weapons carrier sped away toward an unknown destination. Shortly thereafter, two MP motorcycle patrolmen searching for the group were ambushed and once again, at gun-point, the weapons carrier marauders forced the MPs to give up their brassards and weapons. To avoid pursuit, the gang riddled the tires of the motorcycles, leaving their riders helpless and stranded.

On the same night, an Italian police officer and a companion were stopped on the now crime-gripped highway by a group of soldiers posing as American MPs. A leather bag containing four thousand dollars, the policeman's weapon and other valuables were taken from the unsuspecting civilians.

Numerous reports of hold-ups, assaults and terrorizing tactics were being reported daily to the Criminal Investigation Division of the Provost Marshal General's office, and to the various local provost marshals. Pin-pointing of the various reports and a breakdown of stories of eye-witnesses and victims revealed that a gang or gangs were operating on the highways from Rome to Naples, and on the highways leading north from Rome.

A survey of the August complaints revealed that eighteen persons were victims of the armed bandits; one case involved assault. The loot amounted to almost 5,000 dollars in cash. The first complaint in September revealed that the gang had now expanded, a victim having reported being robbed of 1,250 dollars by three Americans and five Italians. The second week in September brought an additional sixteen robberies.

THE GANG was getting "bolder" in their holdup attempts. On September 13, four American "policemen" and

three civilians stopped a carload of Italians, making off with a loot of 200 dollars and the tires from the car. The people in the car were forced to dismount, undress, and then ordered to run; their tormentors shooting at them as they fled. One of the hold-up victims was injured in the shooting. Two hold-ups of civilian trucks netted another 300 dollars to the gangsters' purse. Numerous other armed robberies were reported by civilians; the loot in these cases amounting to another 300 dollars.

All crimes reported were thoroughly analyzed and a comparison of methods used by these armed bandits were studied closely. On September 25th, a soldier was killed near Naples after stealing a jeep from an ordnance battalion. The soldier had disarmed an MP gate guard and attempted to take an officer hostage. He was identified as a fugitive from the stockade. A leader in the crime band had paid off his final sentence, but the authorities did not know this at the time.

THE ROLE of leader of the gang was taken over by a swaggering, hoodlum-imitating farm boy, seven times convicted as an AWOL and at that time an escapee from a 20-year sentence by general court-martial. From here on, the gang assumed the title of the "Lane Gang." "Robert Lane" is an alias which the CID used in listing the nefarious activities of the gang leader.

Bragging Robert Lane, who billed himself as "public enemy number one," moved his headquarters to Rome. About that time the Lane gang included nine regular members, four of which were members of other Allied Forces. Together with these soldiers, there were always a number of civilian hangers-on. The gang's hangouts included a civilian home, a restaurant, and a bar. There were plenty of girls.

WITH A headquarters established, the gang once again resorted to a series of crimes. Sixteen armed robberies were reported during the first two weeks in October. In each instance, the hold-up men were described as "soldiers wearing MP bands." October 10th saw the owner of a Rome wine shop shot and killed in the robbery of his store. Eight other civilians were victims of the robbers who obtained some 750 dollars and valuables.

The first break in the case came on

the 19th of October when a soldier who had been injured in a jeep accident was found to be in possession of a tommygun and a pistol. Intensified interrogation disclosed this soldier to be a member of the gang.

Undaunted by the arrest of one of its members, the gang continued their operations. On October 21st, an armed robbery of an apartment in Rome by soldiers posing as MPs netted a loot of 300 rings valued at 3,000 dollars. The following day two jeeps were reported stolen in the vicinity of the hold-up.

Close checks made by both the Special Investigation Branch of the British Army and the Criminal Investigation Division were slowly drawing a net around some of the members of the "Lane gang." The British SIB was now working in conjunction with the American investigation agents because information on hand revealed that some of the members of the gang were believed to be British deserters dressed in U. S. Army uniforms.

TOWARD the latter part of October, agents working on the case recovered the valuables belonging to civilian victims of the wine shop robbery. The gun which was used in the killing of the wine shop owner was also found; it was immediately sent to the CID crime laboratory for a check by ballistics experts. A few stray members of the gang were picked up at various times by authorities. Civilians who had been victims of the gang aided in identifying these men.

Shortly after the recovery of the loot from the wine shop robbery, information was received that the gang was planning to take a civilian "for a ride" because he was too friendly with one of their girls. Criminal Investigation Division agents and members of the British Special Investigation Branch surrounded a Rome cafe at noon on October 31st, and after a short wait arrested four gang members as they arrived in a taxi.

Interrogation of the arrested men revealed that Lane had once again evaded the dragnet. Lane missed the trap only because he had decided on a trip to Naples, and an attempt at grabbing 800 dollars belonging to a dead comrade. The four arrested men were found to be "big fish" in the gang. The following day saw the arrest of another member of the gang; and two days later, a lone agent apprehended Lane upon his return from Naples.

STRANGELY, of the six gang regulars brought into custody in the cleanup, only one had any large amount of money—900 dollars. Gang leader Lane who had made as much as 1,000 dollars a night; who had perpetrated a large number of robberies, given lavish presents to prostitutes, and who carried three billfolds, had only 18 dollars when arrested.

With the Lane gang behind bars, statements quickly led to the arrest of the Italian accomplices.

But in the Central MP station, where the men were held pending transfer to a permanent stockade, the minds of the corrupted AWOLs were working "overtime." A plot began brewing and on Christmas Eve, it boiled over with the escape of Lane, two of his henchmen and five other prisoners.

Military authorities threw out a quick dragnet to prevent regrouping of this notorious bunch and immediately recaptured three of the men. Two days later, Lane and his second in command were surrounded in a civilian apartment. When the two refused to surrender, the CID and SIB agents accompanied by MPs crashed the door to an apartment, and discovered the two men huddled and cowering inside a closet. Although dressed in civilian clothes and with their hair freshly bleached, Lane and his partner were quickly recognized by the men who for four months had studied their description and mannerisms.

The sixth man in the break was taken into custody on December 31st, and the remaining two fugitives were apprehended on January 8th.

RECORDS in the Lane gang case show that five members were long-time AWOLs from infantry organizations; seven were AWOL from replacement depots and two were escapees from stockades. Lane once was assigned to a unit, but along with being AWOL seven times he seemingly never found time to join it.

The gang, convinced it could outsmart the Army, looked forward to a thrill-packed existence crammed with crime, wine and women. Lane alone had some premonition of the future. "I'll shoot any CID agent on sight!" he once vowed. Instead, when the chips were down, he cowered in a closet and crime-wise investigators of the CID and British Special Investigation Division were able to reach once more for their well-worn "Case Closed" stamps.