

Olympic Stadium. On top of the Victory Arch flies the French tri-color put up by the French July 14th last. The Reichstag and the Kroll Opera House are completely demolished.

You get a sickly feeling of nausea from the stench of body decomposition and the devastating wreckage all about. You see old women on the street faint from malnutrition. You never see a smile on the face of a Berliner.

Later we motored to Potsdam. Here too is entire destruction. Kaiser Wilhelm's palace is demolished. When the Russian guard standing on duty at Sans Souci, the palace built by Frederick the the Great, refused us admittance, we tossed him some cigarettes and continued unmolested into the palace. It is undamaged. In the courtyard we saw huge trucks—the Russians were removing the contents of Sans Souci. Everywhere you hear the Russians have looted Germany as no nation has ever been looted before.

Terrible Conditions in Russian-held Territory

It is difficult to find anyone who knows exactly what is going on to the east of Berlin as this region is in the hands of the Russians and travel is positively forbidden to the Allies. I pause in the diary to include some authoritative reports which came to me from Count von Preysing, Roman Catholic Bishop of Berlin. I learned the following:

The situation between the Elbe and Oder rivers is intense. There are about 8,000,000 persons in the woods and on the roads without any supplies—no food, medical care, etc.

Great numbers of women are infected with gonorrhoea as the result of rape. Hundreds die of dysentery and typhoid fever. From one Silesian refugee group of 2400 persons, more than 1000 died. In the forests around Berlin dozens of corpses are hanging from trees. More than an entire generation of Germans have become prisoners of war in the hands of the Russians.

Another report from Count von Preysing on the situation in Koenigsberg: Plunder, destruction, cruelties, starvation everywhere. Claims the Russian soldiers took even the shoes and clothing of the Germans who were then expelled or imprisoned. Russians plundering entire territory.

Another report from the same source on East Pomerania:

Forty per cent of the landowners and almost one-half of the peasantry fled before the Russians. Of the remaining population three-quarters were killed, deported or put in prison.

The Count's report contains the testimony from Frau von Zitzewitz of Buetow about her own personal experiences—husband killed, daughters raped and family robbed. This woman says the Russians on the whole are relatively well disposed whereas the Poles behave like wild animals. The Poles drive the German population out of the occupied territories, ransacking, raping and killing. She claims relations between the Russians and Poles are very tense.

Much darker is the picture east of the Oder. All of the priests of East Pomerania were deported. It is assumed they are toiling hard in some work-camp. The civilian population of Berlin was frequently plundered by the Russians. A large number of women were raped and infected—a considerable part of the Russian soldiers had venereal diseases.

The report continues: The Church today, after three months of peace have passed, enjoys no more freedom under the Russians than during the Nazi regime. The Russian military authorities support the Communist party, which does not as yet show its anti-Catholic, anti-Christian face, but tries to place obstacles in the way of the Church wherever possible.

Another report states—during the battle and siege of Berlin the Russians, on the whole, respected ecclesiastical buildings and the clergy; sacking and burning of churches was the exception.

Another report—of the Episcopal Chancellery of Berlin—states that during the Nazi regime three priests of Berlin were executed for alleged political crimes, four died in prison while many others

have been imprisoned. Estimates that the destruction of church property in Berlin is fifty million. (The report does not say whether marks or dollars. I assume marks, valued at twenty million pre-war dollars.)

A German physician's report: "The condition is almost unbearable—increasing death rate; spreading disease; starvation, which medical science can no longer combat. The hospitals are crowded with sufferers many of whom show symptoms of extreme starvation. Adults weighing about seventy pounds are no rarity."

In a radio address by the Rev. Peter Buchholz on July 20, 1945, anniversary of the Generals' Putsch, he describes his experiences in the House of Horrors, the Berlin prison, where he performed his priestly duties for the last twenty years. He bitterly attacked Hitler and the Nazis. He referred to them—"those who spoke of God and meant themselves . . . Eternal justice was trampled on and with unequalled injustice thousands of our best fellowmen were imprisoned, tortured and murdered."

Father Buchholz told of his experiences among those sentenced to die, such as the simple woman condemned to death because she dared to write her son at the front—"It can't last long—this murder will end some day." And also the young girl student "who sacrificed her life on the gallows like a saint of yore."

The priest dedicated a portion of his testimony to the men who died during the wave of terror following the attempt on Hitler's life July 20, 1944, including Field Marshal von Witzleben, Major General Hoepner, Major General Stieff and other members of the general staff. He met and talked to these commanders before Hitler issued specific orders depriving his victims of religious ministrations.

He also mentions Dr. Goerdeler, Count Moltke and some of the eighty-five persons executed in the prison in connection with the attempt on Hitler's life.

Father Buchholz continues: "The Lord is crying—maybe for our country and our people who so blindly hailed the man—hailed almost like a God—a man who thought he might secure

his Reich for a thousand years by brute force and blood . . . Then came the end, the final judgment. . . . ”

Occasionally a stray traveler who gets through the lines from a Russian-held region says that the Russians remove everything humanly possible from buildings, even down to the wash bowls, the bath-tubs, doorknobs, toilets, etc. They strip the factories completely. After having stripped the factories they detonate, and say it is a casualty of war.

One hears explosions continually in the outskirts of Berlin. You are told that these explosions are the Russians demolishing factories. One authority reports the Russians stripped a large electric bulb manufacturing plant outside of Berlin of all of its inventory and machinery, then demolished the factories. The city has no electric light bulbs at present.

Berlin is truly a “dead city.” Clammy atmosphere and stench of death exist everywhere. Words cannot describe the horrid and pitiful existence of its people.

More Observations in Berlin

From Potsdam to Harnack House for dinner, stopping to inspect the Press Camp at Zehlendorf. In the camp is an impressive British poster addressed to troops called in Africa “The Desert Rats.” The poster read: “If You Do Not Wish To Be A Desert Rat, Drink The Water In Berlin And Become A Sewer Rat.”

The Olympic Stadium has been wrecked. In the last days the Nazis tried to take off in their airplanes from the wide boulevard Hitler built from the Brandenburg Gate to the Stadium.

Passing a garden close to the Press Camp, we were told that what was grown there last week had already been harvested and that the ground today is planted as a truck garden. The Germans, if possible, do not allow an inch of land to remain idle over night. The Russian officers begin work at 6 p.m.