
XV: LIVES LESS ORDINARY: 1942-1945. Pt. 2. TARGET LEIPZIG

*"For a family stands and falls with the possession of land.
The home (Heimat) on the land holds a family together."*¹

- IN-LAWS AT ODDS -

Two and a half years after arriving in Hamburg, Frau Tyralla, now approaching her 59th, was on the move again. All set to take a break at her daughter's in Amsterdam, she likely arrived soon after her travel permit became valid on June 19th, 1942. According to her *Einwohnermeldekarte*, or residential record, she was entitled up to a year's absence.²

Her son-in-law, a Dutchman from the provinces surely 'delighted' at hosting another German in occupied Netherlands. To his mind, all Germans were arrogant and now that his own family in Zeeland's *Walcheren* peninsula was at risk of being evacuated, he was especially sensitive. An Allied invasion of the continent was expected by the occupiers, and therefore was to be vigorously defended. Fortifications were going up on the site of demolished homes, including that of his great aunt and uncle.³ Could it get any worse?

Frau Tyralla's daughter, Nanny, probably also questioned the timing, not to mention wisdom, of her mother's visit. But for all she knew, it could also be 'farewell,' so she had asked husband, Cor, to agree, although as far as he was concerned, she was being obliged to take responsibility for her beloved mother's welfare again. As if they didn't have their own family privations to deal with! But since visiting her younger daughter, Margot, in the UK was out of the question, *Mama* wished to see at least one of them one last time, in case their days were numbered.

Upon 'Mutti's' arrival (for she obliged her granddaughter, *Kleine Tiny*, to use that moniker rather than 'Oma,' mostly out of vanity), the sights and sounds of Amsterdam will have been all too familiar. German soldiers wandered aimlessly through the streets,⁴ while the police frequently checked identity cards in trains, theatres and other public places. Over seven million new identity cards had been issued to Dutch citizens by the end of 1941,⁵ and had to be produced upon demand (the alternative was one's arrest).⁶ Now Nanny's husband was a *Reich* resident too.

¹ Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau, German conservative politician and *Junker* cited in *Land, Peasant and Lord in German Agriculture since 1800* by Jonathan Osmond. In *Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History* edited by Ogilvie and Overy. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 96. See also en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elard_von_Oldenburg-Januschau

² Pass 3351 v(om) Pol(izei)-Präs(idium) Hamburg von 19.6.42-19.6.43

³ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 53

⁴ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 75

⁵ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Lentz

⁶ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 65 and *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 52

Those new identity cards also made it easier to mete out civil restrictions upon 160,552 full, half and quarter Jews,⁷ and it was they who had to wear the 'Star of David' armband and hang the same outside their homes since May 9th. From June 30th their movement was curfewed from 8 P.M. till 6 A.M.,⁸ while the use of public transport was outlawed. Yet those in the capital took these measures in their stride, some joking about their fate. For instance, the star was nicknamed *Ordre pour le Sémite*, a pun on the German *Ordre pour le Mérite*. The *Waterlooplein*, the main square in the Jewish quarter, grew to be known as the *Place de l'Etoile*.⁹

The first thing Nanny did once she'd met her mother was to issue an apology for the lack of coffee. Reverting to her native German, as they rode the tram she added in hushed tones; *"Even substitute coffee has been rationed since mid-March."*¹⁰

"Oh! Das macht nichts," answered Frau Tyralla, *"The main thing is we are together. Everything is in short supply in Germany too. Potatoes, bread, radishes, vegetables."*¹¹ Toilet paper, tissue paper, paper napkins.¹² You name it. Except rye bread of course. That's a Hamburg staple." She then went on to bemoan the state of the Dutch trains.



Amsterdam's Jewish quarter, the *Jodenbuurt* ('6' on the map on pg. 584), lay to the northwest of Cor's Carré and east of the Amstel. Source: pinterest

"Mama, you've got to watch your mouth here! Consternation for the German occupiers is considerable" Nanny warned. *"Family, friends, neighbours continuously embarrass and remind me that I am German. Don't make it harder for me. Reminders all around: last year zinc coins replaced our copper, nickel and silver coins,"*¹³ and since the beginning of this, Jews from across Holland have been shipped to Amsterdam. The Jewish quarter is a ghetto now.¹⁴ Since May, the Dutch have been forbidden from singing the national anthem, the *Wilhelmus*, and now we cannot fraternize with Jews either,¹⁵ yet Cor has so many Jewish colleagues. Even Dutch labour conscripts are being shipped off to Germany now.¹⁶ It is humiliating." Frau Tyralla must have wondered whether visiting the occupied Netherlands was a wise move after all. *"It's getting harder every month,"* Nanny continued. *"They're feeling the ... shortage now even on the farms."*

Once home, over tea made from old leaves, crushed and re-used, Mama described her relief at not having to put up with another siren or face another bombing raid (something Nanny quickly put paid to). She asked after Ome Biet, their neighbour, the local Jewish plumber. *"Oh they don't even get ration cards,"* Nanny replied, still stuck on the topic of food.¹⁷ She also enquired over Hilda, the Jewish cook who used to come in and help her out when she was first married. *"I've not seen her in a good while,"* replied Nanny, somberly.

⁷ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Lentz

⁸ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_in_Nederland

⁹ A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 81

¹⁰ March 13th, 1942, according to: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1942

¹¹ I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. June 29, 1942. Pg. 89

¹² I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Aug. 23, 1942. Pg. 131

¹³ Dec. 1941. The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945. W. Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 71

¹⁴ A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 80.

See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jodenbuurt

¹⁵ Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 260. N.b. Since June 24th, 1942.

¹⁶ From June 13th, 1942 according to: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1942

¹⁷ The Hiding Place. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 77, 78

Not long after Mutti's arrival, the systematic deportation of Jews got underway.¹⁸ It began with large-scale raids on July 14th,¹⁹ with round-ups of Jews aged 15 - 40 in south Amsterdam, as well as in the central district and the vicinity of Cor's workplace, *Carré*.²⁰ *Ome Biet*, alongside other among Nannö and Cor's close friends and neighbours, were loaded onto trucks and simply disappeared. Captives were sent to work 'under police guard' in Germany, the 'work deployment' deportations leaving systematically in the dead of night and arriving in Auschwitz two days later.²¹ Rumours abounded that the British would bomb Amsterdam's *Centraal Station*, or that the railway workers will strike, or the invasion will begin 'just in time.'²² Another among those who disappeared was Cor's colleague and acquaintance, *Armand Haagman*, the Dutch composer, pianist, director, actor and *revue* artist (see also the textbox overleaf).

Dutch churches protested from their pulpits the following Sunday, July 19th, against the deportations,²³ but a day later, bicycles belonging to Jewish men were to be handed in at either of three locations across Amsterdam, including *Frederiksplein*, close to the Ridderhofs home (see the map on pg. 584 within Pt. 1 of Chapter XV).²⁴ For those Dutchmen still in possession of a bicycle, most now lacked tyres, which meant their riders clattered about town on metal wheel rims, those at least not swathed in cloth.²⁵ Even so, any bikes left on streets and in garages routinely disappeared, more than a hundred thousand during 1942 alone for subsequent German military use.²⁶



Jewish Bike collection:
July 1942, *Frederiksplein*, across the
Singelgracht from the *Ridderhofs*.
Source: *AnneFrank.org*

Further Jewish raids took place in south Amsterdam during the first weeks of August 1942, before they spread throughout the whole of Holland, with many being forced into hiding. For the senior German police officer, Hanns Albin Rauter, stationed in Amsterdam, however, his job couldn't have been easier. On September 24th, 1942, he reported to his direct superior, Heinrich Himmler; "*Concerning the Jewish question, the Dutch police behave outstandingly and catch hundreds of Jews, day and night.*"²⁷

¹⁸ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 260-1

¹⁹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 65.

See also nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_in_Nederland

²⁰ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1942

²¹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 260-1.

See also: *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 81-82

²² *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 82

²³ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1942

²⁴ This was preceded an attempt to seize 'all' bicycles in The Hague and Rotterdam on July 19, 1942.

See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1942

²⁵ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 79.

N.b. Strictly speaking, she refers rather to Haarlem.

²⁶ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 71

²⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 265-6

15.11: For Absent Friends

Nanny and Cor Ridderhof lost more than a few acquaintances when the Nazi's began deporting Jews from the Netherlands. The first trainloads were taken in July 1942, with some first being brought to *Westerbork*, a transit camp originally established by the Dutch in 1938 as a reception centre for German Jewish refugees.¹



Among them was *Ome Biet*, their local plumber, besides *Armand Haagman*, with whom Cor had criss-crossed Holland while supporting Frits Stapper's *revues* in the 1920s. Indeed, it was while working with Haagman on *Lachpillen* in 1931 that he had met Nanny, after which the pair were reunited in summer 1936, when Haagman's '*Relletjes op de Amstel*' (Riots on the Amstel) was brought to Carré (see Chapters XIII, Pt.1 and XIV).

Haagman (real name: *Abraham Coenraad Haagman*) was first forced to move from his home in the *Haarlemmermeerstraat* in Amsterdam-West around May 11, 1942 to Amsterdam's Jewish quarter (or *Jodenbuurt*, east of the city centre), before being transferred to *Westerbork*.² Conditions were relatively good, if crowded. There was a theatre, where Jewish artists performed for the benefit of captors and prisoners.³ He was not the only well-known personality to pass through *Westerbork*, Anne Frank later suffering the same fate, alongside one-time German cabaret and film artiste, *Dora Gerson*,⁴ who had fled to Holland in 1936 (after Stapper had 'discovered' her).⁵

In September 1942, Haagman's inseparable partner, his muse, the revue-artist, *Louissette* (*Lachpillen*, *Relletjes op de Amstel*) turned 60. From a heath nearby *Westerbork* he plucked a sprig of heather and enclosed it with a birthday message written on a red-striped piece of paper, the same kind of double-lined exercise book pages that had earlier included the texts of songs and skits and scenes from revues such as: *Hallo Parijs!*, *Lachpillen*, *Parijs-New York*, *Europa lacht weer*, *Relletjes op het Leidseplein*. The letter, dated September 1st, 1942, noted, "We have never done anything on our birthdays, but since we were always together, that alone was treasure." He hoped that the following year they'd be together again and that God would bring them the luck to have everything "as we wish." He closed with "Happy Birthday, Armand."²

Every Monday, a list of names would be read out detailing those to be deported the following day for unknown destinations in the east. There was an atmosphere of dread. In an extension of what was already happening in Germany, between July 1942 and April 1945 some 107,000 Jewish prisoners were deported from *Westerbork*, chiefly to *Auschwitz* and *Sobibór*.³ Barely a month after he wrote to *Louissette*, Haagman perished on October 8th, 1942 in *Auschwitz*. He was fifty-eight. *Louissette* was not formally informed until November 1946, courtesy of the International Red Cross.²



A fitting memoir to the couple is their short 1923 comic skit, '*Van boerin tot ster*' (From Fishermid to Star), a rags to riches tale that begins in tiny *Volendam* and moves through the big cities, including *London*, *Berlin*, *Breslau* and *Amsterdam* before reaching *Rotterdam*. Relied on as a prelude to their stage performances, it can be seen online courtesy of Amsterdam's *EYE Film Institute Netherlands*.⁶

As for *Ome Biet*, he fared more favourably. Because of his trade, *Micha* was handy around *Westerbork*, *Tiny* told me, despite having played a part in the resistance. '*Dekker*,' Carré's Jewish accountant was another who went into hiding, supported by the theatre.

1. nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kamp_Westerbork

2. Een heidetakje uit *Westerbork*. Jessica Voeten. NRC Handelsblad. May 3rd, 2008. Online [here](#)

3. Books: Letters from Belsen. The Guardian. June 3rd, 2000. Online [here](#)

Upper Image: In better days, reading *Lachpillen*: Armand Haagman is seated on the left while *Louissette* is in the centre with the dog on her lap. Cor Ridderhof stands beneath the arrow while Nanny beams 2nd from right.

Source: *Geschiedenis van de Revue in Nederland*. Dries Krijn. Pg. 98/99

Lower Image: *Louissette* and Haagman as *Krelis* and *Trijn* in '*Van boerin tot ster*.' Source: www.eyefilm.nl

4. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westerbork_transit_camp

5. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dora_Gerson

6. eyefilm.nl/collectie/filmsgeschiedenis/film/van-boerin-tot-ster

For this reason, Amsterdam biographer, Geert Mak, looks unfavourably on the Dutch during World War Two. Although the deportation of millions of people from the Reich and the conquered territories was an enormous logistical undertaking involving large numbers of German civilians, from local town administrators to railway employees, who generally knew what would happen to the deported Jews,²⁸ the Dutch collaborators preferred to see themselves simply as 'transport agents.' "Dutch Railways arranged," he writes "without the slightest objection, special night trains to Westerbork and to the German border where the bill was paid punctually by the occupiers."²⁹

As a result, it was the same trains going backwards and forwards, carrying more than 100,000 deportees without incident. Train 11527 departed Amsterdam CS at 2.16 A.M. and exactly 20 minutes later went the 11539. Amsterdam's municipal transport office also collaborated perfectly and not a single instance of refusal to work or any other protest was recorded.³⁰

While those deportations took place, on August 19th, 1942, the British did attempt a continental landing at Dieppe in France. It was demanded by Stalin, who desperately wished to see a second front opened up in Western Europe in order to remove some of the pressure on the Red Army in the East.³¹ There was certainly sympathy for Russia in Britain, and a feeling that she should not be left to fight single-handedly, which translated into domestic clamour too for a second front.³² But instead of a demonstration of resolve, the landing turned out to be a 'bloody fiasco.'³³ Allied commanders were forced into calling a retreat and much was subsequently made in Germany of the capture of the two thousand prisoners, the "invulnerability of the European coast, new Dunkirk etc."³⁴

Conversely, Germany's need to bring the war on the Eastern front to a satisfactory conclusion was pressing. Its campaign had ground to a halt during the winter of 1941. To make matters worse, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and the USA had formed a united 'anti-Hitler coalition' and were in agreement that Germany should be beaten on the field of battle and forced to accept 'unconditional surrender.'³⁵ On August 23rd, Germany's Sixth Army began bombing *Stalingrad*, en route to the oil-production areas of the Caucasus and as part of its bid to capture the industrial region of eastern Ukraine, the *Donbas*.³⁶

²⁸ *A German Generation*. Yale University Press, 2012. Tomas A. Kohut. Pg. 163

²⁹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 259, 265

³⁰ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 264, 265

³¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieppe_Raid

³² *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 223

³³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dieppe_Raid

³⁴ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Aug. 23, 1942. Pg. 131

³⁵ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy*. German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 307

³⁶ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 288

Heinz
Hinsch,
Nanny's
Dresden-
based
cousin
with wife
Ingeborg,
Irene (5)
and Ulrich
(2) at their
new home
in summer
1942



Although this all might have seemed far from Nanny and Mama now in Amsterdam, their Germany-based family were embroiled. Whilst reflecting on the current state of European affairs, Mama shared scant family updates. All the cousins had been called up, she recalled, although three were fortunate enough to remain in their respective hometowns. Shortly before she left *Hamburg*, she'd received word from *Fritz*, her elder brother who was still nearby Leipzig that his third son, *Heinz* and family, had moved on from their flat in a Dresden suburb called *Loschwitz* to a larger home nearby. They returned to the street where they'd begun their married lives, *Veilchenweg* and now lived in "a very stylish upmarket flat." Number 28 came with a wonderful garden too. Heinz was lucky in that his role in the German war machine was to perform clerical work at Dresden's anti-aircraft tower, while among his brothers, *Frits* worked for the railways in *Leipzig* as a driver, while *Hans*, she vaguely recalled, was tied up with military affairs in *Frankfurt*.

"Second eldest cousin, *Martin*, moved to *Vienna* before war broke out of course." He was most fondly remembered by Nanny. "However, he was enlisted in the Sixth Army, if memory serves me well. According to *Fritz*, he's seen action in *Belgium*, *Paris* and *Normandy* before being part of Germany's invasion of *Russia* the previous summer. That probably means he's committed to the *Battle of Stalingrad* too."³⁷

At this point, *Cor*, who understood some German, couldn't help but weigh in: "Everyone who's fighting for *Hitler* is working for the ruin of *Germany*."

"Tja, vielleicht," Frau *Tyralla* replied, lost in thought.

"Why don't they chuck their rifles in the ditch and go home?" he continued.

"Perhaps because only a lost war will mean the end of the *Nazis*" she opined.³⁸ Nanny studied her mother carefully. She'd never heard her say a wiser thing.

"And what of your sister, *Margot*?" Frau *Tyralla* asked Nanny, hoping to change the subject.

"How would I know?" she responded sadly. "Apart from the paper shortages which has forced its rationing from July 1942 and the disappearance of half the Dutch dailies,³⁹ we can't get letters through anyway," she replied. "We can only pray she, *Johnnie* and *Harvey* are ok. The last I heard they were all in *London*, awaiting his call-up. But that was in spring 1940 before the occupation, the *Battle of Britain* and the *Blitz*. God only knows whether they are safe now and if yes, where they are holding out."

³⁷ To some extent conjecture. We only know *Martin* served in the *Battle of Stalingrad*, which involved the *Wehrmacht's* Sixth Army. See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Army_\(Wehrmacht\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Army_(Wehrmacht))

³⁸ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 79, 81. N.b. July 1 & Oct. 11, 1942

³⁹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 48

While twiddling the knobs on the Ridderhof's radioset, Frau Tyralla picked up a somewhat esoteric German language broadcast station called *Gustav Siegfried Eins*.⁴⁰ "Na, was ist den das?" she asked of Nanny. "Weiss ich nicht," she answered.

But *Mama* was absolutely tickled by GS1's signature tune, which was the same as that of the well-known 'Deutschlandsender,' except it satirically modified the opening line from 'always practise troth and probity' to 'Until your cool, cool, grave.'⁴¹ In fact, it sounded a bit like a secret transmission used for sharing coded messages. "This is GS1 calling GS18," it would say and "Hans meet Johan at the Odeon at 1400 on Tuesday."⁴²

Was the station a spoof, they both wondered. They were even more surprised when they heard its charismatic presenter, 'Der Chef,' deride the war in North Africa⁴³ and in the Mediterranean as nothing but an ill-conceived Nazi Party adventure which had been sapping the German armed forces of their power to overcome the Russians in the East.⁴⁴ A surprising line to hear from a German radio station, they couldn't help but agree.

As for Cor's work at *Carré*, throughout 1942 and on into 1943 the theatre successfully continued to fill seats, not least because Amsterdammers needed an escape from the dark years of German occupation. For those with access to a radio, it anyway became less and less popular since it was a tool for little more than propaganda – just like newspapers and magazines. Cinemas only showed German movies while theatres in contrast offered a safe haven for the Dutch to enjoy a stage act and laugh. But *Carré's* board grew challenged in satisfying both customers and the authorities with its desire to present anti-Nazi-propaganda. Alex Wunnink, Cor's boss, was also forced to host meetings of the 'Winterhulp' national socialist administration aid organization.⁴⁵ Yet despite the challenges, Wunnink always had time for the Ridderhofs, Kleine Tiny's younger sister, Irene, almost three, making her own way to the stage on occasion.



Wide-eyed and goldilocked: Irene Alexandra Ridderhof doing Shirley Temple, cca. 3 yrs old with Carré's boss, Alex 'Baas' Wunnink, cca. 1942-3

⁴⁰ Reception was apparently good in the Mediterranean, Southern Italy and Greece. Naval men who had listened in at sea or at bases in France found that programmes could not be got in the Baltic ports. On the other hand a German communications officer had heard the station in Russia earlier that year in February 1942. Reports from Sweden indicate that jamming there had decreased. Conditions in Switzerland vary ... An *Obergefreiter* captured in a U-boat in July, said he often listened both at sea and at home in Upper Silesia. A Pole who had been in Vienna and Berlin early in 1942 did not think the BBC had a large audience, but said that everybody was interested in the station which opened with the words: 'Hier spricht der Chef.' See: psywar.org/delmer/8200/1001 (citing [British National Archives](https://www.britishnationalarchives.gov.uk/) file: FO 898/51)

⁴¹ An eighteenth century folk song by Ludwig Holz.

See: *WWII Secret Intelligence Activities around Milton Keynes* at: clutch.open.ac.uk/schools/emerson00/soe_gs1_1.html and listen to the callsign here: vintageradio.nl/Radio%27s/ve301dyn_engels.htm

⁴² *Gray and Black Radio Propaganda against Nazi Germany*. Robert Rowen. New York Military Affairs Symposium, April 18, 2003. CUNY Graduate Center. See: bobrowen.com/nymas/radioproppaper.htm#Gustav_Siegfried_Eins

⁴³ The Allies fought their first battle against the Axis powers from July 1-27, 1942 and then between October 23-November 4 that same year. See: wikipedia.org/wiki/El_Alamein#World_War_II

⁴⁴ See: psywar.org/delmer/8200/1001 (sourcing [British National Archives](https://www.britishnationalarchives.gov.uk/) file: FO 898/51)

⁴⁵ See: digitaleetalages.nl/thema/amsterdam/125-jaar-theater-Carré/bezetting--de-jaren-40-45-.html. N.b. Winterhulp was the national socialist organization that had to take over all social assistance provided by the government, private and church organizations in the Netherlands during World War II. See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winterhulp_Nederland.

Although Frau Tyralla couldn't meet *Ome Biet*, she had the chance to meet neighbouring *Tante Lies*, who was 'German' by virtue of her marriage to a Rhinelander. She had two young children and Irene had grown friendly with both. *Paul*, the eldest was her age, while *Mia* was two years younger.⁴⁶ But, life became increasingly difficult for Nanny and her German acquaintances in Amsterdam, as the discrimination over their origins increased. And if it was not she who bore it, then it was *Kleine Tiny* in the classroom, encouraged by her form teacher, she told me.

„But I had a short temper so even those taller than me who dared call my mother a Moff or a Kraut got it. I pulled their hair, pummeled their torsos and sat on their heads. No one was exempt. Once my dad, whom we called 'Pa,' came home and found me wrestling a boy. Wimpy was his name, he was the milk lady's son from around the corner. I had just pinned him to the floor when my dad took me by the scruff of the neck and said: "Young lady. It's lunch time. It's time to go home!" He was having nothing of my antics but I know he was impressed."

Lunch by that time consisted of bread and butter, cheese and jam. *"Open sandwiches, we called them. Salami, had been a favourite, but that was now off the menu due to the rations and all."* From September 6th, entitlement to milk was further reduced,⁴⁷ although that didn't stop *Pierrot*, Tiny's 'barge dog'⁴⁸ from receiving treats on the side. *"Mutti would always say, 'Eat your crust, otherwise your teeth won't be strong.'" But my dog usually got that part. I would slip it to him through the hole in my chair"* she said, with a mischievous look still in her eye.

During *Mutti's* visit there were a host of birthdays to celebrate. Nanny turned 35 in early August, followed by Irene's reaching three at the end of the month. Then it was Tiny's anniversary, she herself reaching double figures towards the end of September, followed five days later by her grandmother on the 27th. Frau Tyralla might have wondered whether she'd live to reach her sixtieth.

Although it was surely the perfect opportunity to photograph the three generations together, such an occasion could not be recalled. More vigorously, Tiny recalls that after turning ten she decided to learn English. Her tutor transpired to be one of those poor souls she typically targeted during her '*Luilak dag*' terror campaigns, which are described in Chapter XV, Pt. 1 within '*SEPARATE LIVES.*' Mrs. Palstra was an English woman married to a Dutchman whom Tiny subsequently likened to the *Last of the Summer Wine's*, '*Nora Batty*,' a fondly remembered sitcom character best-known for her headscarf, curlers, and ankle-ridden fleshbrown tights.

Mrs. Palstra (who also happened to be Jewish)⁴⁹ took particular pleasure from avenging *Tiny*, insisting she not only learn to read but speak as well. Tiny struggled with the English '*Th*,' and once Mrs. Palstra was at pains to illustrate just how to pronounce '*th*' properly – whilst chewing on a mouthful of almonds. You can imagine what happened next!

⁴⁶ Paul is now deceased though his widowed wife, *Ronnie Brouwer*, is a former ballet class-mate of Irene's. The pair remain closely acquainted.

⁴⁷ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1942

⁴⁸ In World War II, the Belgian Resistance relied on *Schipperkes* to run messages between various resistance hideouts and cells, to which occupying Nazi Forces were none the wiser. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schipperke

⁴⁹ All non-Dutch Jews had been ordered to register for 'voluntary emigration' on December 5, 1941. Mrs. Palstra had obviously chosen not to leave. See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941

Not long afterwards, on the night of October 2-3rd, another 14,000 Jews were shipped out of Amsterdam, first to *Westerbork*, then on to *Auschwitz*.⁵⁰ Perhaps it was this tainted atmosphere, combined with empty shops that led Mutti to conclude she'd be better off on home ground. Thanks to favourable weather,⁵¹ the harvest had been good and even a massive festival had been hosted in *Berlin* at which *Hermann Goering* had addressed an enthusiastic crowd⁵² and assured them the *Heimat* would never suffer from hunger and that if need be, the occupied territories would starve at Germans' expense.⁵³

"It's already happening!" Nanny riposted. But after reading that Germany's weekly meat ration had been increased by 50 grams, and the bread ration by 250 grams,⁵⁴ Frau Tyralla didn't hesitate to buy tickets for a return to Germany. She had to wait a month for a seat, but in mid-November, she bid Nanny and her family farewell.⁵⁵ Cor especially breathed a sigh of relief at the departure of his mother-in-law. That was one less mouth to feed and one less headache to bear. But it was Nanny's turn now to wonder whether she would see her mother again.

+++++

Around about the same time that German rations improved, the BBC's foreign language service informed listeners that Jews were being poisoned and shot in Germany, and that gas chambers and crematoria had been constructed near *Krakow*. The news had been shared in a press conference by a New York rabbi who reported that some two million had perished in a Nazi 'extermination campaign.' This was the first reference to reach the outside world, those same BBC reports being broadcast to Germany as well.⁵⁶ Interned Jew, Victor Klemperer, picked up on the news too, referring to Auschwitz as "a swift-working slaughter house" in his diary following the extradition of two prisoners on October 17th, 1942,⁵⁷ while *Anne Frank*, in hiding in Holland wrote as early as October 9th of the Jewish deportations: "We assume that they are killed. The English radio speaks of gassing."⁵⁸ All the world who cared to know, knew. Yet many Germans stuck to the tale long after the war that they had no knowledge at the time.

⁵⁰ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 83.

N.b. It says this, 'according to an official German report.' See also: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1942

⁵¹ In Berlin there were ten days above 30 and 31 above 25. See: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

⁵² In contrast, Victor Klemperer notes on Aug. 6, 1942 that in Dresden: "Cold and rain predominate this summer. The harvest cannot be good, it has no chance to come up, to catch up after the long winter." Pg. 115 while on Aug. 17: "The mood in Berlin is said to be catastrophic, the harvest very poor." Pg. 124. Yet on Aug. 18: "Yesterday's *Dresdener Anzeiger*: "The worst fears' have not been realized,"" although he hastens to add: "beneath the surface gloss reveals a state of extreme crisis." Pg. 125. *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001.

⁵³ According to Jörg Baten, to offset soldiers and their families' malnutrition, come 1942/3, an estimated 45 percent of German grain consumption and 42 percent of German fat and meat consumption had either been stolen from the occupied countries or else produced within Germany by forced labourers. *Anthropometrics, Consumption, and Leisure: the Standard of Living*, by Jörg Baten. In *Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History* edited by Ogilvie and Overly. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 409. N.b. Jews too were shortchanged, their ration cards slated to be withdrawn, but perhaps also because their evacuation to Poland was being stepped up in places like Berlin. *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Oct. 14 and 29, 1942. Pg. 153, 159.

⁵⁴ On October 19th, 1942 although the source is unknown (having checked Klemperer, Fischer, Moorhouse, Richie, Studnitz, Friedrich and Bielenburg).

⁵⁵ Her departure date, according to her Berlin *Einwohnermeldekarte* 'von Amsterdam 16.11.1942.'

⁵⁶ Cca. Nov. 24, 1942. *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 16

⁵⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Oct. 17, 1942. Pg. 155

⁵⁸ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City.* Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 267

That same news must have reached Nanny's 31 year old sister in the UK as well as her Jewish in-laws. But Margot had other concerns right now, and had to focus on herself. Her husband, serving with the Royal Artillery's Anti-Aircraft Batteries was stationed just outside Edinburgh and didn't come home very often anymore. Although she occasionally received news (his mother lived just around the corner), her spouse, *Johnnie Riscoe*, had grown increasingly absent from home life. Already during the spring of 1942 she had begun to wonder whether she really cared and to what lengths she was obliged to keep their wedding vows, given the wartime circumstances. Plenty of others were already being distracted. *Mass-Observation*, which monitored the public's every day behaviour in wartime Britain, reported that 73 percent of Londoners were fond of Dutch military men, 64 percent of Czechs and 52 percent, the French,⁵⁹ which helped contribute to a significant rise in the number of illegitimate births in England and Wales: from 24,540 in 1939 to 35,164 in 1942.⁶⁰ Not surprisingly, London High Court's Divorce Division, which had registered 1,841 cases in the Easter term of 1939, saw 2,273 in 1943.⁶¹

Amy Briggs, a Leeds-based nurse and young mum who kept a diary during the war reports she too entertained male interest, having been encouraged not least by less restrained female friends. As Marthe Watts, a high class courtesan who worked in Devon and London noted; "*Time was short, money was loose and morals were out.*"⁶²

Margot's husband was, however, a popular Jewish comedian who had captivated the British public. He'd quickly recognised radio offered him a grander stage and larger audience than theatre at the time, going on to notch up as many as 22 broadcasts in 1942.⁶³ Not bad for someone recruited to fight the Germans. The *Falkirk Herald* itself observed: "*Riscoe ... frequently takes a busman's holiday during a leave to appear in Music-Hall for John Sharman*⁶⁴ *and in other broadcast varieties.*"⁶⁵ Clearly the well-worn soldiers' phrase "*have a good leave*" had grown to mean something else for him.

"*Never mind me,*" thought Margot "*I'll cope, but what about the effect of his absences on Harvey?*" To her mind it was not right that he should only hear his dad on the radio, but believing discretion to be the better part of valour, she bit her tongue when in her mother-in-law's company. Rae Crowe had little patience for Margot and her dolefulness. It was wartime and after all, she was standing in for Johnnie. "*For better or for worse?*" Margot had often wondered.

Matters momentarily came to a head early that summer, however, when Johnnie made an ill-announced visit. He was on the way back to Scotland from Bristol, where he had just hosted *Workers' Playtime* on June 20th, when he telegraphed Margot to meet him for coffee at the prestigious Queens Hotel, around the corner from Leeds railway station – he didn't have time to stop for longer.

⁵⁹ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 217

⁶⁰ *The Secret History of the Blitz.* Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 213

⁶¹ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 232

⁶² *The Secret History of the Blitz.* Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 233

⁶³ *Johnnie Riscoe.* The Stage. Jan. 7th, 1943. Pg. 3

⁶⁴ John Sharman was 1941's 'King Rat,' i.e. head of the charitable artists' organization, the Grand Order of Water Rats that Johnnie also belonged to. Riscoe had linked up with the 'famous BBC producer' on stage in Chester in early April 1941 after completing his Royal Artillery training. See: *Cheshire Observer.* April 12, 1941. Pg. 6.

⁶⁵ *Variety of Services.* *Falkirk Herald.* February 10, 1943. Pg. 6

"What's all this about then?" she enquired, not sure whether to be excited or worried at this unusual liaison.

"I have evidence you've been unfaithful to me and so I'm calling time on our marriage," responded Johnnie. "You'll need a solicitor to handle the paperwork. Oh, and I also need your consent that 'all legitimate arguments towards reconciliation' have been employed. I've had legal counsel and you can't win. You're best off agreeing."⁶⁶

Margot spent the rest of their liaison in shock.

"So that's how a marriage ends, trying to make ends meet during this damn war," she kept repeating to herself. She couldn't help but think there was more to this than met the eye, Rae's role and influence in particular.

It's a well-worn phrase that "*Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned*," and Johnnie's request appears to have tried Margot's patience once and for all. She was a kind-hearted and generous woman, but not any more. She'd been deprived of Johnnie's company virtually since their liaison in Holland in 1934, and had been financially struggling for almost as long. Johnnie's petition, however, was final and so Margot took to selling off their 'Modern Home of Furniture,' as classifieds posted in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* from June 27th reveal. That would hopefully pay for the solicitor. After the bulk of that had gone, she put a set of surplus carpets plus an oak dressing table on the market, followed by an electric vacuum cleaner at three pounds and five shillings, and two luxury Axminster carpets on July 28th.⁶⁷ She made no secret of her desire not to sell to dealers and was more than ready to bargain, when it came to the carpets, waging: "*GBP 12 buys the pair, or exchange for larger*."⁶⁸ That exchange would presumably lend comfort to her new abode in nearby Sholebroke Avenue, the entertainers' boarding house, where she was now housekeeper and 'concierge,' according to *Kleine Tiny*. Ultimately, however, Margot's reaction played into Johnnie's hands and was just what he required to file the divorce petition at the Royal Courts of Justice at the Strand, the High Court's seat in the County of Middlesex. "*Even better*," mused Rae. "*My son will win custody of Harvey too*."

MODERN Home of Furniture for Sale, seen any time; no dealers. 24, Oak Road, St. Mary's Road, Leeds 7. 29

Cashing in: Mrs. Riscoe grabs a grand!
Source: *Yorkshire Evening Post*, June/July 1942

Whilst Margot sold off the family valuables, Johnnie criss-crossed the country with the 129th Mixed Heavy Anti-Aircraft (M.H.A.A.) Regiment. Until the night of July 13/14th he was at 'Practice Camp' in Whitby, Yorkshire, after which he returned to Edinburgh. Regimental orders a week prior had stated; "*On conclusion of Practice Camp reliefs, the manning of Hy. A. A. [heavy anti-aircraft] sites south of the [River] Forth will be reorganised*,"⁶⁹ which in turn occurred at the end of July. Johnnie was re-

⁶⁶ "Soldiers were not allowed to take steps to formalize marital breakdown without the conciliation machinery having first been put in motion," referring to the 'Final Report of the Committee on Procedure in Matrimonial Causes,' 1947, Cmd. 7024, Paras. 17 and 18. In *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretny. OUP Oxford, 2005. Footnote 271, Pg. 311.

⁶⁷ *Yorkshire Evening Post*. June 27th, July 7th, 16th, and 28th, 1942. Pg. 7. Online [here](#).

⁶⁸ Curiously the last of the couple's possessions appear to have been sold in late 1943, when Flat 1 at Ravenswood advertised a 'Moses basket' and 'baby's bath' alongside a 'mahogany double bedstead and overlay, plus coffee table.' *Yorkshire Evening Post*. December 13th and 21st, 1943. Pg. 2

⁶⁹ Operation Order No.4 of the 129th M.H.A.A.Regiment, dated June 24, 1942. Retrieved from the National Archives; [WO 166/7496](#), Jan.-Dec., 1942.

assigned to the 455th battery and relocated to 'Ratho Camp's' Clifton Hall,⁷⁰ while others were posted to *Dalmeny* and *Merrylees*. The move brought promotion from *Bombardier* to *Sergeant*, the Royal Artillery's equivalent of a Corporal.⁷¹

Before the end of July, Johnnie recorded two broadcasts of '*Workers' Playtime*' on the 22nd and 26th, whilst also delivering his 'Humble Petition' plus 'Affidavit for Dissolution of Marriage' to the Royal Courts of Justice in London's Strand.⁷² On his return, he skipped through Leeds and in a final meeting between himself, Margot and their solicitors, served a copy of the same petition to her, confirmed her identity before proceedings got formally underway.

The summer of 1942 hadn't been easy for Nanny, and neither was it for Margot. The petition disclosed the identity of the chap with whom she was accused of adultery, 'Harry Shear or Shaw.' It also detailed the when and where (information that is regrettably no longer available today),⁷³ although she preferred to muse over the fact that even those allegedly 'in the know' couldn't get his name right. It was a minor detail anyway, since he hadn't even to appear in court. In fact, neither did she, although as the 'respondent' (and he the co-respondent), both were invited to appear within eight days, either in person or via her solicitor, at the Divorce Registry of the High Court to 'answer to' the charges, that is, 'contend' them. If either she or Harry Shear/Shaw did, both sides of the cause would be heard in court, before pronouncing judgment. What she really wanted to know though, was who had spied on her?

What did *Kleine Tiny* recall of Margot's reaction to the accusation, if anything? "*Oh she'd have fought it,*" she readily told me, "*but she hadn't toughened up yet. And she had no money either.*" Margot obviously wasn't aware then that in disputed cases, a husband was due to give security for his wife's costs,⁷⁴ nor that legal aid was available to those whose disposable income (after rent and rates, etc., had been paid) was less than GBP 420 a year and whose disposable capital (not including the house or household effects) was below GBP 500.⁷⁵ This she'd have learned had she visited the *Citizens Advice Bureau*, a brand new network of advice centres dotted across the country, more on which is explained in the textbox overleaf.

⁷⁰ Clifton Main Camp lies 13km west of Edinburgh. See: canmore.org.uk/site/179500/ratho-clifton-hall-mains

⁷¹ Noting a letter Riscoe wrote to the BBC's Variety Dept. on Aug. 13th, 1942 in which he titles himself, Sgt. Johnnie Riscoe.

⁷² Here I follow the logic of A.P. Herbert's satirical novel, *Holy Deadlock*, in which a divorce required six months to come to court and a further six to award the *Decree Absolute*. N.b. With the latter process reduced to six weeks post-war, today the process takes six months. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce_in_England_and_Wales.

⁷³ This is because less than 0.2 percent of divorce case files after 1937 have been kept. Otherwise, the divorce case files would contain petitions, certificates, and copies of the *decrees nisi* and *absolute*. See: nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/divorces

⁷⁴ Referring to para. 159 of the Ruscliffe Report. In *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970* within *Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Footnote 295, Pg. 315

⁷⁵ See: familysearch.org/wiki/en/Divorce_in_England_and_Wales#Matrimonial_Causes_Act_1937. See also: *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970* within *Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 275

15.12: Free Citizens' Advice

Margot Riscoe might have sought a sympathetic ear in one of the UK's Citizens Advice Bureaus, which offered free, confidential support with respect to family problems. Established in September 1939, by 1942 over a thousand had been improvised in a wide variety of locations, including cafes, church halls, private homes, even air raid shelters. Mobile offices also played their part in ensuring people could access helpful advice, e.g. in bomb-damaged spots or where offices weren't available.¹



'Frequently Asked Questions' during wartime included lost ration books and debt as men went off to fight, while others included the tracing of missing servicemen or prisoners of war, evacuations, pensions and other allowances. More recently this led *The Independent* to describe Citizens Advice Bureaus' role at the time as "clearing houses for family and personal problems that abound from war conditions."² Divorce too was a commonly dealt with concern.

But even if Margot was aware she could turn to the CAB for assistance, she might have been put off by the fact that they were run by 'people of standing' in the community who she might have feared shunned her predicament (despite impartiality being one of its guiding principles). In *The Story of The Citizens' Advice Bureaux*, Margaret E. Brasnett writes that the typical bureau might have had the editor of a respected county paper as committee chairman and as treasurer, a local bank manager. That in itself doesn't sound off-putting, but among the members were the manager of the employment exchange, a congregational minister in good relations with all the churches around; a lawyer, a councillor, Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association, the diocesan Moral Welfare Association etc.³

In other words, Margot could have run into an acquaintance of her celebrated husband, her mother-in-law, even someone who simply disliked Germans. Or she might also have been advised, and simply realized it wasn't a fight she could win.

1. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens_Advice; 2. Citizens Advice Bureau 75 year anniversary: Geese too loud? Lost false teeth? We can help! Celebrating seven decades of the CAB. Jack Simpson. *The Independent*. September 6th, 2014. Online here; 3. *The Story of the Citizens' Advice Bureau*. Margaret E. Brasnett. Online at: cab94.tripod.com/orgnising.htm; Image: Citizens Advice Bureau on the move in 1941. Source: independent.co.uk (Getty Images). Top right: the rebranded CAB – without the Bureau. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Citizens_Advice

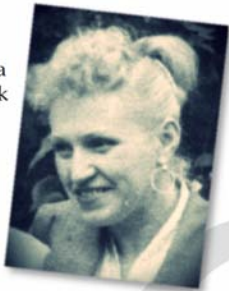
Having disregarded the expensive and time-consuming journey to the Royal Courts of Justice, Margot dwelt on the past weeks, months and years. She wondered whether Johnnie himself had been faithful while away, on Rae's role in the divorce proceedings, and whether she would eventually serve as a witness? She contemplated Hedley Claxton, that flamboyant entertainer who'd visited her in April, plus the mysterious photographer who'd insisted on staying at Oak Road earlier that June, only to be so secretive when she'd tried to make his acquaintance. "I guess they're all implicated, one way or another," she thought to herself. "But a divorce on the basis of a nightcap and a 'kiss'? I really must be unpopular."

Just who was 'Harry Shear,' however? Looking through *Findmypast.co.uk* and *The British Newspaper Archive* yielded precious little about the 'co-respondent.' There was a flyweight boxer from Plymouth, also a Rochdale-based 'Harry Shears,' who graduated a painters and decorators class on Saturday 29 July 1939 according to the *Rochdale Observer*. Then there was an 18 year old errand boy who lived in Chelmsford in 1940. As for Harry Shaw, there are more 'potential suspects,' but none of them more likely. According to *findmypast.co.uk*, there were numerous Leeds-based Harry Shaws born around about the same time as Margot. However, by September 1939

(when the civil register was undertaken) that number had dwindled to three,⁷⁶ presumably called up for service. Among those remaining, two lived on the far side of Leeds, while a third lived in neighbouring Harehills, a few miles from Margot. He was born February 28th, 1912, so was a few months younger than Margot and worked as a Chemical Labourer - one of the so-called reserved occupations.⁷⁷ But although he was single in September 1939 and lived with his mother and brother, by the time Johnnie was called up, all three Leeds-based Shaws had married locally in 1940 or 1941.⁷⁸ One would be hard-pushed then to realistically link any to Margot. Although there were many more 'Harry Shaws' beyond Leeds, including one Private Harry Shaw of Railway Terrace in Copley, Halifax (15km west of Leeds),⁷⁹ it's perhaps most likely he was a foreign soldier or airman, US or Canadian. The name anyway said nothing to *Kleine Tiny*.

Once litigation began, legal etiquette demanded that the divorcing parties remained apart. With Harvey already living with his grandmother, and Rae clearly siding with Johnnie, Margot probably saw even less of her son. Sadly, the basis of his parents' divorce gave Margot's mother-in-law grounds to further twist Harvey's view of her "*which he took as fact*," Tiny told me. When I asked Johnnie's cousin's view as to whether Rae came between Harvey and his mother, Doreen did not argue. So had Johnnie and Margot's destiny ultimately rested in his mother's lap? *Kleine Tiny* had no doubt as to Rae's involvement in bringing about the divorce and the charge. All Margot could do was look forward.

Margot sporting a 1940s look in 1956.



That summer it became the fashion to peroxide one's hair, usually with a curious streaky-bacon effect, leaving the wearer either skewbald or piebald. Huge clumps of hair in fringes were also in vogue, with the rest of the hair strained back tightly over the ears. Perhaps to boost her self esteem, Margot adopted a similar look, one she wore throughout the 1950s too. Brightly coloured frocks were back in vogue,⁸⁰ while 'nylons' arrived with the first G.I.s in 1942. "*To a generation growing weary of drab, wartime austerity, nylons gave promise of a more feminine, colourful life ahead ... even women who rarely queued for food would queue for them for hours*," writes Norman Longmate in *'How We Lived Then'*.⁸¹

Getting hold of a decent pair of shoes or new clothes was another story, however, recalls UK-based German Jewish actress Lilli Palmer. "*Wartime rationing coupons had cut everybody's wardrobe down to a minimum*."⁸²

Another escape was the cinema and a big hit that summer was *Mrs. Miniver*, starring the delightful Greer Garson. It told the story of a British family and how it survives the war's first year. So popular was it among moviegoers that they lobbied MGM for a sequel that was eventually released as *The Miniver Story* in 1950. Goebbels too

⁷⁶ Findmypast.co.uk reveals those Harry Shaws [born](#) around 1910 in Leeds, Yorkshire and those still around to be [registered](#) in 1939.

⁷⁷ See: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a6652019.shtml

⁷⁸ Eliza Lockwood (born in Leeds, 1918, Q1), in 1940, Q2; Irene Wood (born 1916), married Q1, 1940; and Irene Beresford (born 1921, Q1), married Q3, 1941, according to Findmypast.co.uk [here](#).

⁷⁹ Both *The Yorkshire Post* and *Leeds Intelligencer* refer to a 'Missing' 23 year old Harry Shaw on July 28, 1944. Pg. 5

⁸⁰ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 208

⁸¹ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 252

⁸² *Change Lobsters - And Dance*. Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 3

revered Mrs. Miniver, noting how it “shows the destiny of a family during the current war, and its refined powerful propagandistic tendency [that] has up to now only been dreamed of. There is not a single angry word spoken against Germany; nevertheless the anti-German tendency is perfectly accomplished.”⁸³ About a mile from Margot’s flat, down Chapeltown Road towards Leeds, lay the *Forum Cinema*. I daresay it was that which became a favourite haunt of Margot’s during the ensuing months of uncertainty.

On the other side of the English-Scottish border, Johnnie will have been relieved to hear his petition for a divorce wasn’t to be contended. He could count himself lucky since he’d received free legal assistance, due to his being part of the Armed Forces.⁸⁴ That was because a system of Legal Aid had been set up which, “in an attempt to minimize damage to morale,” made it a good deal easier for soldiers to get a divorce.⁸⁵ All service personnel up to the rank of Sergeant qualified as ‘Poor Persons,’ which exempted them from paying any court fees too.⁸⁶ Whatsmore, the forces’ Legal Advice Bureaux would undertake the formidable burden of collecting the information on which the divorce petition would be based while a ‘Services Divorce Department’ had been established by the Law Society, under the supervision of a formidable, paid, full-time solicitor, to deal with such.⁸⁷

Despite that generous legal counsel, however, Johnnie still had to assemble the necessary evidence; photographs of the spouses ‘and any third party concerned,’ plus any relevant letters or documents to bring the case to court. “But most important was the applicant’s statement” writes legal expert, Stephen Cretney in *Family Law in the Twentieth Century*. “This had to contain a ‘full story of the matrimonial history, which should not exclude hearsay evidence,’ together with relevant correspondence and documents. The focal point of the statement would be the allegations necessary as the legal basis for dissolving the marriage. For example, if the petition was to be based on adultery ... the applicant had to give ‘all known details with dates and addresses, together with the sources of applicant’s information, and the names and addresses of known or possible witnesses who are willing to give statements and to appear in court if required.’”⁸⁸ “The process was ... complex and difficult,” continues the former city solicitor who became an academic lawyer specialising in family law, “requiring for example strict proof that one of the specified ‘offences’ had been committed...”⁸⁹ Just once, was enough, however.

⁸³ Released on 10 July 1942, it went on to win six Academy Awards including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Writing, Screenplay and Best Actress in a Leading Role. See: www.imdb.com/title/tt0035093/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1 and [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mrs._Miniver_\(film\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mrs._Miniver_(film))

⁸⁴ “Many service marriages came under strain. It was not uncommon for a husband to come home on leave to find that he had been replaced in his wife’s affections – and in his bed. Thirty-one year old soldier David Walker arrived home unexpectedly in June 1941, hoping to give his wife a surprise. It seems that he succeeded. Walking into their bedroom at five-o’clock in the morning, he found his wife lying next to a strange man...” Many instances of immoral conduct between Canadians and the wives of English soldiers were also documented, with consequent trouble. *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 269, 189

⁸⁵ *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 311

⁸⁶ Since 1914, a ‘Poor Person’ had been exempt from payment of any court fees, while the lawyer who conducted the case was also not allowed to take any fee. *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 307

⁸⁷ *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 311

⁸⁸ *The Ground for Divorce under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1937 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 252

⁸⁹ Introduction. *The Ground for Divorce under the Matrimonial Causes Act 1937 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Online [here](#).

That August, Johnnie's solicitor delivered another affidavit, this one regarding the 'Place of Hearing,' having requested it take place at 'West Riding Assizes,' the High Court's 'local centre' in Leeds.⁹⁰ Within it, he will have also named the witness(es) he wished to call. He then will have filed 'Form 130 for the Certificate of the Registrar' confirming the proceedings in the cause were correct and the pleadings in order, and awaited the court date. In the meantime, the witnesses were called to the Royal Courts of Justice at Somerset House to testify the truth. That meant more expense for Johnnie, since on top of paying an investigator to spy on and dig up the dirt on Margot, he had to meet the witnesses' travel expenses too.⁹¹



'Before and After.'
Riscoe gathers
source material

Source:
The Stage, Sept. 24th, 1942

To offset those costs, that same month Johnnie wrote the BBC's Variety Department inviting them to book him any week that September.⁹² Having seen a copy of his August 13th letter, it reveals that a week on he broadcast 'Ack Ack Beer Beer,' and in mid-September took that week's leave to perform at London Islington's *Empire* theatre. There he was billed 'The New Star of the Air.' *The Stage* newspaper goes on to report; "First. Mr. Riscoe gives his own entertaining act with deftly handled comic matter filling most of the time: later he makes a brief appearance in compere's role and audiences are evidently pleased to have him on both occasions."⁹³

After visiting the BBC in London and arranging what amounted to a slew of new shows, Johnnie invited broadcast material via an ad in *The Stage* newspaper. He was careful not to have this posted to his home address in Oak Road, but rather his mother's at 'Ravenswood.' All evidence that Riscoe had 'nothing more' to do with Margot.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ The courts of assize, or assizes were periodic courts held around England and Wales that had all the powers of the High Court in relation to divorce. According to the 1920 *Administration of Justice Act*, power was conferred on the Assize judges to try matrimonial causes ... prescribed by the Lord Chancellor (with the concurrence of the Lord Chief Justice and the President). In short, this meant the petitioner no longer need be present in court in London to give evidence. See: *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Footnote 28. Pg. 277-8. The word assize refers to the sittings or sessions of the judges, known as 'justices of assize,' who travelled across seven circuits of England and Wales, setting up court and summoning juries at the various assize towns. The assize system was abolished by the Courts Act 1971. See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assizes.

⁹¹ The 'Poor Persons' scheme made no provision for any reimbursement of out of pocket expenses, such as obtaining the necessary evidence of adultery or travel costs. *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 308.

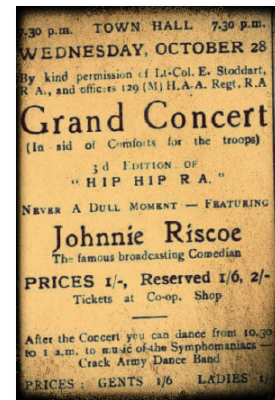
⁹² The letter's copyright is that of the author and is not to be reproduced in whole or in part without their permission and reference to the BBC. Researchers wishing to publish material ... held at the Written Archives Centre must seek permission by submitting the relevant portions to the BBC before publication. For these reasons, a copy of the letter is not included here.

⁹³ *The Stage*. September 17th, 1942, Pg. 3

⁹⁴ *The Stage*. September 24th, 1942, Pg. 8.

N.b. The lack of reference to his mother's name implies she was responsible for Ravenswood. Legally speaking, I suppose Johnnie and Margot continued to 'reside' at Oak Road until they were formally divorced (see also footnote 101 referring to 43D110).

As autumn approached, Johnnie's 455th anti-aircraft battery was moved from 'Clifton Mains' to *West Pilton*⁹⁵ at Edinburgh's city boundary on September 1st.⁹⁶ Although General Pile's Anti-Aircraft Command had been restructured into seven groups from the first of the following month,⁹⁷ Riscoe's Sixth Anti-Aircraft Group stayed put in Edinburgh.⁹⁸ Conveniently that meant he not only remained close to his legal advisors but was able to commit to a "*Grand Concert in aid of Comforts for the troops*" with members of the 129th M.H.A.A. Regiment at *Bo'ness Town Hall* at the end of October. Serving the country was never so good! Billed as the third edition of '*HIP HIP R. A.*' (R.A. for Royal Artillery, of course) it promised "*Never a Dull Moment - Featuring Johnnie Riscoe - The famous broadcasting Comedian.*" Not just a concert, from 10.30 P.M. until 01.00 A.M. it offered a dance too, with music supplied by the so-called "*Symphomaniacs - Crack Army Dance Band.*"⁹⁹



Riscoe's 'Grand Concert' in Bo'ness, Oct. 28th, 1942.
Source: Bo'ness Journal and Linlithgow Advertiser, October 16, 1942

By now Johnnie and Margot will have learned, that on the grounds of the 1937 Matrimonial Causes Act,¹⁰⁰ their divorce hearing would take place at West Riding Assizes in Leeds, on December 2nd, 1942.¹⁰¹ The day of reckoning arrived, and while Margot need not even attend (I daresay she wouldn't have either, had Johnnie's mother done so),¹⁰² how will that occasion have panned out?

Clement Davies, King's Counsel, noted in 1937:¹⁰³ "*...an undefended divorce now takes five minutes, or less than 10 minutes ... There is no speech by counsel. He merely gets up ... and he says:*

"Your Lordship, this is a husband's petition. Mr Riscoe - will you go into the box?"

Counsel then asks Riscoe about 12 or 15 questions, and asks him to identify a photograph. Riscoe then walks out of the box, and ready to walk into the box is the

⁹⁵ Coded 'EDG4' and documented as being unarmed in June 1942. See: canmore.org.uk/site/114453/edinburgh-west-pilton but see also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Pilton

⁹⁶ Operation Order No. 5 of the 129th M.H.A.A. Regiment, dated Aug. 28, 1942. Retrieved from the National Archives; [WO 166/7496](#), Jan.-Dec., 1942.

⁹⁷ See: britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/documents.php?aid=171&nid=2&start=5

⁹⁸ Riscoe is believed to have served at *West Pilton* in Edinburgh until at least November 2nd, 1942. See Operation Order No. 8 of the 129th M.H.A.A. Regiment, dated November 2, 1942. Retrieved from the National Archives; [WO 166/7496](#), Jan.-Dec., 1942.

⁹⁹ Bo'ness Journal, and Linlithgow Advertiser. October 16, 1942. Pg. 3

¹⁰⁰ Also known as *The Herbert Divorce Act* after Sir Alan Herbert, the main proponent of the act. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matrimonial_Causes_Act_1937. N.b. The new act of July 1937 extended the grounds for divorce by incorporating: i) three or more years desertion; and ii) cruelty (in addition to adultery and insanity) while the option of mutual consent remained unavailable. Holy Deadlock. A.P. Herbert. Penguin Books, 1955. Pg. 9.

¹⁰¹ According to the Riscoes' 'Certificate of making Decree Absolute for Dissolution of Marriage,' dated June 22, 1943 (43D110). HM Courts & Tribunals Service. N.b. Johnnie's address was still formally Oak Road.

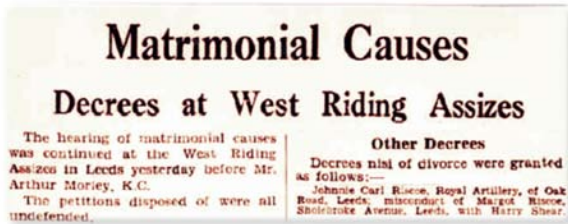
¹⁰² "There was no restriction on the attendance of the public, so that gossiping neighbours could come and hear the cases; and there was no restriction on reports in the newspapers." Citing Claud Miller, a keen reformer and metropolitan magistrate in *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 294

¹⁰³ Based on a speech by Clement Davies, a King's Counsel (KC) on the monotony of divorce cases come 1937 and adapted to the Riscoes' circumstances. Cited in *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Footnote 33. Pg. 278-279. N.b. Another individual, President Merriman, described on Jan. 31, 1945, the prospect of hearing hundreds of undefended divorces as 'appalling.'

agent¹⁰⁴ who served the papers on Margot. The agent goes in and identifies the photograph, and says he found Margot with another man.

"That is the case, my lord," says counsel; "I ask for a decree."

The judge nods his head and says *"So be it"* and it is finished. There is a queue all nicely arranged by the usher so that no time is wasted.¹⁰⁵



"WELL-KNOWN 'STAR OF THE AIR' IN THE BOX!"

Johnnie Riscoe's uncontested petition for divorce was met without a media frenzy.

Source:

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury, Dec. 3rd, 1942. Pg. 5

Satisfied with the arguments put forward, the judge will have issued a *Certificate of Entitlement*¹⁰⁶ to a 'Decree Nisi',¹⁰⁷ which meant the divorce was all but 'granted.' However, a six month interval was permitted so that anyone (for example, the 'KC',¹⁰⁸) who suspected 'collusion,' i.e. where spouses connive to deceive a judge,¹⁰⁹ could 'show cause' that the decree should not be made 'absolute.'

Earlier in this sub-section I have Margot musing over *"a divorce due to a nightcap and a 'kiss'"* and indeed, there were many divorces that were petitioned and awarded on the basis of a chambermaid's less than credible testimony of having served morning tea to an adulterous couple or the recognition of wife's signature in a hotel register. At the same time, however, one can well wonder what degree of bad behaviour actually gave a husband or wife the legal right to leave his or her spouse? This question, raised not by me but by Stephen Cretney, had to be distinguished from the 'ordinary wear and tear of married life', and when it came down to it, wartime could hardly be considered 'ordinary.' Yet according to family lore, Margot's mother-in-law was at daggers drawn with Margot from an early stage in their relationship, the divorce ultimately being as much theirs as Johnnie's and Margot's.

I also found myself wondering, what had Johnnie to gain from divorce? Ack-Ack girl, Vee Robinson, described the period as one where *"Everyone's future was in the lap of the gods and life so uncertain."*¹¹⁰ So wouldn't a 'wait and see' approach have made more sense? Or was someone else already waiting in the wings?

¹⁰⁴ In this case, Margot's mysterious photographer, and *"the essential pin in the machinery,"* citing Alan Herbert. *Holy Deadlock*. A.P. Herbert. Penguin Books, 1955. Pg. 76

¹⁰⁵ Although this may seem an over simplistic reflection on proceedings and the speed with which the case was heard, there had been a huge rise in the number of divorce petitions submitted during the war: From 8,517 in 1939 to 14,887 in 1943 and 24,857 by 1945. This resulted in a huge back-log of cases as many as 25,000 come 1945 – partly because of a shortage of copy-typists owing to the reluctance of women to deal with the sordid subject matter. Ultimately this rise in wartime demand for undefended cases meant there was a real need for a rapid turnaround to ease the burden on procedures. *The Family Justice Process 1900-1970 within Family Law in the Twentieth Century: A History*. Stephen Cretney. OUP Oxford, 2005. Pg. 281

¹⁰⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce_in_England_and_Wales

¹⁰⁷ Nisi comes from Latin and means 'unless.' See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decree_nisi

¹⁰⁸ The King's Counsel was an eminent lawyer appointed by royalty to pass an opinion on the merits of a claim. That individual involved on December 2, 1942, is named Arthur Morley in the news clipping. See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen's_Counsel and discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C4165225

¹⁰⁹ Where, for instance, Johnnie requested Margot to provide the evidence necessary for a divorce founded on adultery and she took a strange male to a hotel and happened to be witnessed in an act of adultery, e.g. receiving tea in bed the following morning by the chambermaid. See also: legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/collusion

¹¹⁰ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 142

Despite the judgment, Margot hung on to Riscoe's name. Whether that was part of a strategy to prove it had never been her will to dissolve their marriage in the first place, or to ensure she'd hang on to Harvey is not known. But according to Alan Herbert writing in 1955, "*everybody looks down on a divorced woman.*"¹¹¹ For Margot, Harvey's custody was the next battle she faced and whether she liked it or not, that would keep her firmly at odds with her mother-in-law, as long as Johnnie remained away.

For now, however, Christmas was just around the corner and the more Margot thought about it, the more she realized it wouldn't be any worse than those previous. She picked up a paper and saw that a group calling itself the *Free German League of Culture* (see textbox overleaf) was putting on a revue entitled *Mr. Gulliver Goes to School* at its Little Theatre in London Hampstead's Upper Park Road. It said: "*These players can laugh at themselves and at their lives in exile – but it is never long before they turn from shooting folly as it flies to strike at the Nazi regime.*"¹¹²



Mr. Gulliver Goes to School was part of the November - December 1943 programme of the UK-based Free German League of Culture
Source: deutsche-digitale-bibliothek.de

In a moment's soul-searching, she found herself looking back and towards 'home.' Not to Leipzig, or to Amsterdam, but to Berlin, the city of her youth and thought, "*That's just for me!*" The revue had just opened on November 28th, 1942 and was said to capture the essence of that Berlin cabaret scene she had once been part of and savoured so much.¹¹³ "*And it's a hop on the train. I'll make a weekend of it in London to celebrate my new life.*"

Throwing caution to the wind when it came to the expense, she returned to her old haunts in St. Pancras, and having managed to procure herself a ticket for Saturday December 12th, reminisced during the show's time-travelling skits, including that set in the pre-war *Hotel Adlon*.

"*I too lived in Berlin, sipped coffee on the Unter den Linden and performed on the city's stages,*" she proudly told those she met as she too turned back time two decades. Which of course left her wondering, "*What has become of Mama?*" the Allies having raided Hamburg again that November. The end of the war still seemed an awfully long way off.

¹¹¹ *Holy Deadlock*. A.P. Herbert. Penguin Books, 1955. Pg. 140

¹¹² *Exiles Laugh at their Woes: Topical Revue*. Observer. Jan. 3, 1943. Cited in *Politics by Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1945*. Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove. Vallentine-Mitchell, 2010. Footnote 29. Pg. 90

¹¹³ *Politics by Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1945*. Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove. Vallentine-Mitchell, 2010. Pg. 83

15.13: The Free German League of Culture – back after internment

Remember the *Free German League of Culture* I mentioned in the Pt.1 side story numbered 15.3? It had been forced to take an 18 month break beginning summer 1940 because the UK interned many of its performers. Well, the *Little Theatre's* programme got back on track during autumn 1941, once camp inmates had been released and made their way back to London. In November that year, it staged a guest performance of two one act plays by the poet and playwright, Bertolt Brecht. In some respects a warm up, the play also heralded a statement of intent, by portraying active resistance to facism.



Throughout 1942 the theatre thrived and on January 30th it hosted a new revue, '*In den Sternen steht's geschrieben/What the Stars Foretell*,' which played until March. A sketch called 'Russian Salad' satirised the 'new Russian fashions' in (refugee) Hampstead, alongside others like 'Silly Sally' and 'Café Continental.'

In April and May, another revue followed suit, entitled '*In Hampstead Heath ist Holzauktion*,' its title alluding to a popular German song, '*Im Grunewald ist Holzauktion*' (i.e. There's a timber auction in the Grunewald) – an "unashamedly nostalgic reprise of the Berlin of the 1920s, featuring songs by such giants of the Weimar theatre as Kurt Tucholsky, Misha Spoliansky and Friedrich Hollander."

Any German in London, particularly one 'schooled' in 1920s Berlin, could have considered themselves fortunate. '*Holzauktion*' was praised as "a real collective achievement" in local émigré paper, *Zeitspiegel*. '*Mr. Gulliver Goes to School*' came next, opening after a five month delay due to a change of lead in November 1942. The league's most successful 'topical revue,' it went on to run for nine months until July 1943 and was eventually seen by over 5000 people. Its skits and songs were performed in English (e.g. *What is a Gentleman?*) and German (*In Deutschland fehlt ein Scheuerfrau*), while a small provincial tour also brought the show to Guildford and Leicester. Gulliver's time travelling drew much positive attention from the English press too.

After reconstructing the Little Theatre in the autumn and winter of 1943, the league returned in early 1944 with another satirical revue, *My Goodness - My Alibi*. It ran for three months, after which the league's artists' moved on to classical theatre. Its last production was in spring 1946, after the league had already been dissolved, following which the theatre was handed over to its 'Amateur Theater Group.'

Sources:

Politics by Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1945. Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove. Vallentine-Mitchell. 2010. Pg. 81-85, 88

Image: October 1923 10" vinyl release of '*Im Grunewald ist Holzauktion*' by the Internationale Novelté Quartet on Victor records. (click the image to listen).

Source: US Library of Congress 'National Jukebox.' Online at: loc.gov/jukebox/recordings/detail/id/9555

#####

- À BERLIN -

Frau Tyralla arrived back in Germany on November 16th, 1942,¹¹⁴ shortly before the *decree nisi* to dissolve Johnnie and Margot's eight year marriage was granted. Without stopping long enough in Hamburg to re-register or notify the authorities,¹¹⁵ she continued on to the capital. Was that down to the fact there'd been another round of raids in the *Hansestadt* a week earlier¹¹⁶ and because her apartment was no longer available?¹¹⁷ Or was she simply taking advantage of a travel permit that was valid for another seven months? Her former lover was in Berlin, and whatsmore, the capital had a record for being safer than Hamburg – during the whole of 1942 it had only seen a single British raid, while the second half of 1941 had seen only leafletting and low-intensity nuisance raids. No wonder "*Berliners were beginning to feel secure, even optimistic.*"¹¹⁸

She rode the same stretch by train that her daughters had in the twenties, across the endless flat North German Plain,¹¹⁹ a route filled pre-harvest with tall grain, colourful fields of purple lupine,¹²⁰ and pastures full of heavy, black spotted cattle.¹²¹ After arriving at the *Lehrter Bahnhof*, she went off in search of *Albert Petzold*, perhaps hoping to rekindle some of the joy she had so fondly experienced at his expense a decade earlier.

It was on November 18th that Frau Tyralla caught up with him. Recently turned 60, he was to be found the west of the centre, in *Berlin Moabit's Wullenweber Str. 9*.¹²² According to the city's *Adressbücher*, he continued to earn a living as a '*Fabrikant*' or small time manufacturer.¹²³ I suppose he may have still produced 'novelties' – he was an inventor of nick-nacks such as tongue scrapers and pipe holders after all,¹²⁴ although between 1933 and 1945, German state ownership of industrial and commercial assets expanded rapidly.¹²⁵ Furthermore, by 1941, almost two thirds of the German workforce were engaged on military orders, so one could just as easily imagine Albert had gone back to producing synthetic materials such as food supplements, as he had during the First World War.

¹¹⁴ According to her second Berlin residential record; "*Abm.(elde)Sch(ein) v(om) 16.11.42 von Amsterdam.*"

¹¹⁵ Frau Tyralla's Hamburg *Einwohnermeldekarte* indicates "*Wegzug/Abmeldung nicht verzeichnet*" (departure/registration not recorded) – perhaps she need not with a one year travel permit in hand.

¹¹⁶ The raid of November 9-10, 1942 sparked 26 fires, claimed the lives of three and injured sixteen.

See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Hamburg_in_World_War_II

¹¹⁷ Although some 150,000 individuals had departed Hamburg by 1943, it was not an exodus on account of the bombing raids but rather for military reasons and/or 'labour' services. The accommodation shortage, however, stood at 6,790 apartments in November 1942, the highest figure that year.

See: geschichtsspuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html

¹¹⁸ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 307

¹¹⁹ See for instance en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_German_Plain

¹²⁰ It flowers at least twice during the summer

¹²¹ *What Will Become of the Children? A Novel of a German Family (1932)*. Claire Bergmann. Camden House, 2010. Pg. 98

¹²² According to her second Berlin residential record; "*Wullenweberstr. 9. b(ei) Petzold 18/11.*"

¹²³ Those same address books did so in 1943 too – the last year the directories were produced.

¹²⁴ An unsuccessful enquiry to determine his occupation was sent to *Amtsgericht Charlottenburg* on May 1st, 2013.

¹²⁵ *Economy and State in Germany in the twentieth century*. Richard Overy. In

Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History edited by Ogilvie and Overy. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 262



Frau Tyralla's environs back in Berlin:
Top left: The stairwell of Albrechtstrasse 5

Top right: Emerging from Albrechtstrasse, one finds the river Spree runs along Schiffbauerdamm while walking the gangway above it brings one to Bahnhof Berlin Friedrichstraße

Below:

Camouflage on the Unter den Linden, where Pariser Platz lies before the Brandenburg Gate, graced by the former American Embassy, the Blücher Palais to the left. Source: ozebook.com



The couple, having not met since 1939, caught up over cups of freshly brewed coffee ground ceremoniously out of beans saved for special occasions. I imagine they discussed family and relationships and bemoaned the black market too.

"Ach. It's just like the turnip winter of 1917!" grumbled Frau Tyralla. "Not to mention the profiteers! 200M for 450 grams of coffee!"¹²⁶

Albert put a finger to his lips and unplugged the telephone. *"Shh! I've no idea who might be listening in. I have my coffee suppliers but I am no fan of the regime, nor the conflict. My influence is waning, and I suspect the powers that be wish to be rid of me. Sooner or later I shall probably end up being arrested."*

"When'll this fruitless war end? My father-in-law thinks a man who loves his Fatherland must not fight for Adolf Hitler."

"He's right," replied Albert. "The slogan of defending the Fatherland is our most dangerous enemy. Every man who lets himself be drafted is prolonging the war."¹²⁷

"So much for a 'Greater German Reich.' It's done nothing to endear my daughter's family towards me," Frau Tyralla remarked despondently. "Anyway, I need to find me somewhere to live."

Since the spring of 1940, Berlin had been suffering a major housing shortage.¹²⁸ However, by December 3rd, 1942,¹²⁹ my great grandmother was fortunate enough to find herself more 'permanent' lodgings, returning in fact to her former haunt in Berlin-Mitte at Albrechtstrasse 5, where she'd lived between 1933 and 1937. En route she'll have witnessed the many main streets, boulevards and military installations strung with camouflage netting, a tactic also applied to some of the city's waterways.¹³⁰

¹²⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Mar. 4, 1943. Pg. 207

¹²⁷ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 83. N.b. Nov. 22, 1942

¹²⁸ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. E. Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 71

¹²⁹ According to Frau Tyralla's second Berlin residential record or *Einwohnermeldekarte*

¹³⁰ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 311

Christmas was made bearable by the special bonuses of 50 grams of real coffee and 75 decilitres of alcohol for adults and of flour, meat, butter, wheat, peas, cheese, sugar and sweet,¹³¹ while that winter turned out to be particularly mild – even if Berlin still saw 29 days of continuous frost from December 24th.¹³² That night, Frau Tyralla visited Albert, where they reminisced into the wee hours and played Christmas records.

But that was practically the end of the good times – for the couple and for Germany. The offensive, which the German Sixth Army¹³³ had launched in the east on September 13th, 1942 to capture *Stalingrad* ground to a halt within days, when all but a few hundred Russians held on.¹³⁴ On November 19th, it was the Soviets' turn to counter-attack the German army lines around the city and by November 23rd, they had their enemy surrounded. Three days later the press talked up "a breakthrough" in the East, south of Stalingrad, but it was not German but Russian. And despite the failed Allied landing at Dieppe in August, that November British and American troops reached Morocco, having defeated the Germans and Italians in North Africa at *El Alamein* in October.¹³⁵ In Churchill's famous words, "*Up to Alamein, we survived. After Alamein, we conquered.*"¹³⁶ By Christmas, the rumours regarding Stalingrad had spread through Berlin.¹³⁷ Long trains around its big stations bore red crosses and carried wounded soldiers.

South of Berlin, Leipzigers were beginning to personally feel the effects of the war too, some 5,000 of its families having lost their fathers to it by the end of 1942.¹³⁸ Newsreels released at the cinema each Saturday became remarkably brutal while hundreds of untrained women started working as nurses.¹³⁹ The tailing off of positive news reports did not go unnoticed.¹⁴⁰ Frau Tyralla's wider family suffered its first loss too – not on the battlefield as such, but following an industrial mishap that had caused a non-life threatening injuring to her brother's 15 and a half year old grandson. *Konrad Hinsch* was busy undertaking his 'war service' in Dresden at a *Bauwerk Schule* when he stood too close to the furnace it was his job to load. His overalls' trouser leg caught fire and although it was put out, his resulting burns were not sufficiently treated. He developed sepsis then a blood clot, otherwise known as thrombosis that went on to become an embolism.¹⁴¹ He died in the morning of Christmas Eve,¹⁴² Frau Tyralla later learned. "*Perhaps it's coming to an end after all,*" she murmured to Petzold on an otherwise quiet New Year's Eve.¹⁴³

¹³¹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 19

¹³² The cold snap lasted until Jan. 21, 1943, the coldest night being -15.4 degrees Celsius on Jan. 12.

See: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

¹³³ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Army_\(Wehrmacht\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Army_(Wehrmacht))

¹³⁴ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 523

¹³⁵ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy*. German Bundestag, 1998. Pg. 307

¹³⁶ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 196

¹³⁷ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 524

¹³⁸ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 48

¹³⁹ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 526

¹⁴⁰ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 342

¹⁴¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thrombosis and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Embolus

¹⁴² Email correspondence with Klaus Hinsch on Sept. 1st, 2016.

¹⁴³ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Nov. 26, 1942. Pg. 170

Adding to the painful memories of that year, his sister, Vera, pointed out in conversation 75 years on, that it was then that she and her bother, Lothar, learned Konrad was actually their half-brother. *"My mother," she told me, "had always wanted to hide this, although father wanted it open from the beginning. They often conflicted over the fact that the truth was never made clearer sooner."*

Konrad's loss occurred soon after the war entered its fourth year. Vera had turned 14 in September and got on with her schooling and training as best she could, alongside her year- younger brother. But while she ought to have been graduating the *Jungmädelsbund* (Young Girls League) and moving into the *Bund Deutscher Mädel* (League of German Girls or BDM), she managed to avoid recruitment. *"It wasn't compulsory,"* she told me simply in spring 2016.

To this point, female league members were engaged in nursing or assisting the wounded off trains but from 1943, they were also involved as *Wehrmachtshelferin*, undertaking paramilitary and military services, serving as flak (anti-aircraft warfare) helpers, signal auxiliaries, searchlight operators, and office staff.¹⁴⁴ At the end of January, Germany's women were actively required to register for possible mobilisation, i.e. home defense,¹⁴⁵ and from February 10th, Leipzig's sixteen year old students were engaged as *Luftwaffenhelfer* and *Flakhelfer* as part of their war service.¹⁴⁶ The Hinsch pair may have remained just under the radar for now, but their Berlin-based great aunt couldn't have failed to notice women were being increasingly involved. Already by the end of 1942, 52 percent of the German labour force was female, compared with 37.4 percent in 1939.¹⁴⁷

Fortunately for Frau Tyralla, female war work was overwhelmingly undertaken by young, single women,¹⁴⁸ whilst many middle-class women evaded it, *"a fact that led to vocal protests from their working-class sisters in the national community."*¹⁴⁹ I bet she couldn't avoid the *Blockwarden*, however, who constantly reminded tenants of women's voluntary efforts by collecting cash for the Nazi welfare organisation, the Winter Relief Fund or NSV. Its members played a valuable role, particularly via its Railway Station Service, in offering advice and assistance to mothers and children, young people, the old and the infirm, whilst dispensing soup and tea.¹⁵⁰ Blockwardens were also renowned for checking you had your poster of Hitler up too!¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_German_Girls#Wartime_service

¹⁴⁵ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 257. N.b. Hester Vaizy notes that female conscription was introduced on Jan. 27, 1943. *Empowerment or Endurance? War Wives' Experiences of Independence During and After the Second World War in Germany, 1939-1948*. Hester Vaizy. German History. The Journal of the German Historical Society. Vol. 29, No. 1, OUP, March 2011. Pg. 59

¹⁴⁶ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 19

¹⁴⁷ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 258

¹⁴⁸ *Empowerment or Endurance? War Wives' Experiences of Independence During and After the Second World War in Germany, 1939-1948*. Hester Vaizy. German History. The Journal of the German Historical Society. Vol. 29, No. 1, OUP, March 2011. Pg. 59. N.b. Her book, *Surviving Hitler's War* is cheap and can be seen [here](#).

¹⁴⁹ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 259

¹⁵⁰ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 260

¹⁵¹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 10

January 1943 saw Berlin's two year calm disturbed by a series of shocks. Early in the year, a Polish sabotage and diversionary squad 'Zagra-lin' bombed nearby *Friedrichstrasse* station. They killed 14 and wounded 27.¹⁵² Then on the sixteenth, the air raid sirens kicked in, although luckily for those in *Mitte*, Allied bombs were few and far between and fell mostly in the southern areas of the city.¹⁵³ Not long afterwards, on January 30th, 1943, English reconnaissance planes encircled the capital once more,¹⁵⁴ clearly issuing an advance warning to Berliners of what was to come.

The capital was Germany's single largest industrial city – a powerhouse containing dozens of gigantic armament factories from AEG to Siemens, Heinkel, Focke-Wulf and dozens of others producing everything from planes and tanks to field artillery and small arms. It also housed the gigantic government machine, which administered all aspects of the war effort and the mass murders. It was therefore the focal point of domestic terror too. Not surprisingly, the Allies believed that if they could take Berlin, they would defeat Hitler's Germany.¹⁵⁵

But the Allies still needed the Soviets' assistance in the East, especially after the 260,000 trapped Germans in Stalingrad (including Frau Tyralla's 34 year old nephew, Martin) were ordered by Hitler to hold their ground.¹⁵⁶ *Ernst Ebeling*, the 51 yr old Colonel serving in the *Wehrmacht*, wrote in his journal on January 31st, 1943; "*In Stalingrad the Germans are bleeding to death for their rulers.*"¹⁵⁷ Street battles ensued as close to a million lives were ultimately sacrificed,¹⁵⁸ in what turned out to be a huge setback for the German army.¹⁵⁹

"The defeat was announced over the radio, and accompanied by funereal music ... To honor those who had fallen in the Russian campaign, a three-minute traffic stoppage was ordered. At the Zoo tram stop, people stood as if frozen, and avoided each other's eyes."¹⁶⁰ A period of three days public mourning followed.¹⁶¹ "*Day after day, for page after page, the newspapers were chequered with little black crosses, each one recording the death of a soldier.*"¹⁶² It was the second major Soviet milestone in the campaign against Hitler, following their success outside Moscow a year earlier. Stalin now knew he would win the war – and without a negotiated peace.¹⁶³

¹⁵² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Friedrichstraße_station

¹⁵³ See: webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/jan43.html

¹⁵⁴ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 20

¹⁵⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 530

¹⁵⁶ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 524

¹⁵⁷ *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945*. J. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 232

¹⁵⁸ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 523

¹⁵⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Stalingrad which notes that among 210,000 Germans, 10,000 remained to fight on, 105,000 surrendered, 35,000 left by air and the remaining 60,000 died.

¹⁶⁰ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 21

¹⁶¹ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Feb. 2, 1943. Pg. 8

¹⁶² *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis*. Christabel Bielenberg.

Corgi, 2011. Pg. 118

¹⁶³ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 524

Suddenly the capital was full of crippled soldiers and women mourning in black, recalling the worst scenes of 1918. Morale flagged both at home and on the fronts. "1943 was different from the earlier years of the war. The dream of victory faded. People now thought about their survival ... The cheering had long gone," writes J.A.S. Grenville, a former Professor of Modern History at the University of Birmingham.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, the invasion of German-dominated Europe from three directions, east, west and south, slowly reduced the flow of resources from the conquered territories, while the persistent bombing of the German homeland disrupted the rationalization drive and placed real limitations on the expansion of production.¹⁶⁵

Martin Hinsch was one of the lucky ones. He not only survived Stalingrad, but he got out.¹⁶⁶ According to the German Foreign Office Press and Information Section's Hans-Georg von Studnitz, some 46,000 wounded soldiers were evacuated by air,¹⁶⁷ Martin among those to return to tranquil Vienna where he was reunited with his wife and family no later than March. His daughter, *Christa*, was now seven and a half while *Wolfgang* had turned nine on February 13th.¹⁶⁸ They were lucky to get their father back, however, the tales he told upon his return sadly remain under wraps.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps during his recovery he tuned in along with the other "young German officers [that] regularly listened with some gusto to *Gustav Siegfried Eins* in Vienna."¹⁷⁰ He had after all moved to the Austrian capital because of his political leanings, and he would most certainly have sympathized with the messages emerging from the BBC's black radio station.

Germany, however, was over two years from surrendering still. Despite the defeat at Stalingrad, Italy's imminent collapse and the isolated hopes of intellectuals like diarist, Victor Klemperer, for a revolution from the inside (even after what happened in 1918), in February 1943, von Studnitz recorded in his diary, "the mass of the people have no idea of the gravity of the situation," which he attributed to "lethargic indifference" and radio deafness.¹⁷¹

Hitler 'led' by retreating to his East Prussian headquarters, the Wolf's Lair, where he nursed his ego. It fell then to *Goebbels* to keep alive the Hitler myth and the promise of victory. Marring an otherwise beautiful sunny spring day, he did so by calling for 'Total War' from Berlin's *Sports-Palast* on February 18th,¹⁷² assuring *das Volk* there would be no surrender before the Allies invaded German soil, as in the First World War. "Berliners now had a clear choice: either fight with everything they had, or perish in a

¹⁶⁴ *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945*. J. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 253

¹⁶⁵ *Economy and State in Germany in the twentieth century*. Richard Overy. In

Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History edited by Ogilvie and Overy. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 264

¹⁶⁶ Of the 90,000 captured and incarcerated in gulags, only 5,000 ever returned. They were either shot or froze after falling from illness or exhaustion during the march through the snowy steppes to provisional camps. *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 524

¹⁶⁷ While the Russians claimed to have taken 91,000 prisoners and 109,000 were feared dead. *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Feb. 8, 1943. Pg. 18

¹⁶⁸ Wolfgang was born February 13, 1934, Christa on October 3rd, 1935.

¹⁶⁹ The Berlin-based *Deutsche Dienststelle* (German Service for the Notification of the Next-of-Kin of Fallen Soldiers of the Former German Wehrmacht) holds a copy of Martin Hinsch's military record, however, it is unavailable to anyone but the next of kin until a given number of years after death have passed.

¹⁷⁰ See: psywar.org/delmer/8200/1001 (sourcing [British National Archives](https://www.britishnationalarchives.gov.uk/) file: FO 898/51)

¹⁷¹ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Feb. 8, 15, 1943. Pg. 18, 23

¹⁷² *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 336

maelstrom so terrible that it would make Stalingrad look mild by comparison." The Times mocked Goebbels' speech "an attempt to achieve 'Strength through Fear.'" ¹⁷³

*"After the call ... everything in Berlin changed. The pleasant life enjoyed until now was replaced by a hard, cold, grim regimen marked by deprivation and terror," writes Alexandra Richie in *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*.¹⁷⁴ Young men and government quarter employees found themselves on troop transports heading for the front. Businesses not vital to the war effort were closed down. Theatres, bars, nightclubs, luxury restaurants and stores which 'offended the buying public' were closed later in the year. Prostitutes were sent to the eastern front to entertain the troops.*

To Frau Tyralla's dismay, no doubt, Berlin ceased to be the city she'd loved so much. She might even have begun to wonder whether she'd have been better off staying in Amsterdam, or even Hamburg, especially because after December 1942 the few air attacks that occurred brought only limited damage, allowing more new homes to be created than lost.¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, *"there was a surge in public morale in the aftermath of what was otherwise an apparently grim message."*¹⁷⁶ And so she too dug in.

First the rations were reduced to 60 percent of the 1939 level: potatoes ran out, clothing ration cards became redundant and women wore shoes made of straw and cork.¹⁷⁷ The city began to run dangerously short on food, despite the cultivation of farming plots. Throughout 1943 soap was impossible to find, while the 'Kohlenklau' or coal thief warned against the waste of heat and light. An occasional easing of the meat ration would occur, i.e. during the final exploitation of the occupied territories, before the Russians returned.¹⁷⁸ And if one was in the know, *Hotel Fürstenhof* between *Leipziger Platz* and *Potsdamer Platz* offered an excellent meal for fewer ration coupons.¹⁷⁹

Then Goebbels added his own brand of terror with a 'Volksmeldedienst' (People's Reporting Service) that was established to have every German spy on his neighbour. Now every secretary, janitor, office worker and charwoman was to report on all patriotic utterances.¹⁸⁰ Some tried to tell him, 'enough is enough,' when, a day after his 'Total War' proclamation, students in Munich daubed the walls with *"Down with Hitler! Long live Freedom"* on February 19th, 1943. Three were arrested on February 20th and on the twenty second, the culprits, Hans and Sophie Scholl and Christoph Probst mounted the scaffold. Yet it took until March 23rd, 1943 for the full story to reach Berlin, via a secret courier. It took even longer for the the story to reach England.¹⁸¹

¹⁷³ A satirical swipte at the 'Strength through Joy' campaign of the 1930s. *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Feb. 20, 1943. Pg. 27

¹⁷⁴ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 526

¹⁷⁵ That is, until July 1943. See: geschichte.spuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html

¹⁷⁶ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 341

¹⁷⁷ From 1943, rations amounted to 1.7kg bread, 0.25kg meat and 125g sugar per person per week. Indeed half those of 1939, bar bread which was about 30% less. *Machern in Zeitgeschichte. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt*. Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V., 2015. Pg. 253

¹⁷⁸ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 94

¹⁷⁹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 36.

N.b. The hotel was (like the Anhalter) destroyed in the subsequent raid of November 22, 1943.

See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel_Fürstenhof_\(Berlin\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hotel_Fürstenhof_(Berlin))

¹⁸⁰ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 528

¹⁸¹ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 93-95

Indelible fortress?
The *Reichsbahn-*
bunker (shown
here in 1987)
which today is a
hip art gallery
offering tours
every other hour
Source:

[Wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Reichsbahn_Bunker_Berlin.jpg)



Another 'fear-inducing' measure which Frau Tyralla couldn't have failed to notice was the huge air-raid shelter which went up at the northern end of *Albrechtstrasse*. Erected by forced labourers, it was intended to shelter up to 3,000 *Reichsbahn* passengers behind walls two metres thick.¹⁸²

Clearly raids were anticipated and on March 1st, January's 'forewarnings' finally materialized when the 'terror bombings' got underway. Most targeted the centre of the city, but what surprised Berliners most was their sheer intensity. Fires fully burned for three days in the western and southern sections¹⁸³ with the destruction claimed to be ten times that of previous raids. The 'cookie' or 'blockbuster' – a 1,800 kg bomb capable of destroying entire blocks saw its advent, heralding 'a powerful thunderous explosion with a pressure wave ... never experienced before.'¹⁸⁴

"The air is smoky sulphur-yellow. Terrified people are stumbling through the streets with bundles, bags, household goods, tripping over fragments and ruins," wrote Ruth Andreas-Friedrich in her Berlin diary.¹⁸⁵ *"All around us in northern Kreuzberg [near Potsdamer Platz], to north, south, east and west, the sky burned red, and the black branches of the trees were clearly visible against the fiery glow."* Streets, houses and trees were covered in a layer of grey dust.¹⁸⁶ And despite all the camouflage, the *Unter den Linden*, a kilometer from Frau Tyralla's flat, was damaged too. At the western end of the linden-lined boulevard, where one finds the *Pariser Platz* before the Brandenburg Gate, the American Embassy in the *Blücher Palais* was also hit. Even Goebbels commented that the centre 'looked a mess.'¹⁸⁷

Nearly 500 civilians were killed in the raid, with a further 2,000 or so injured. In addition, over 100,000 Berliners were thought to have been left homeless.¹⁸⁸ The result profoundly dented the faith of ordinary Germans in the ability of the State – and particularly the *Luftwaffe* – to protect them. Ironical because it occurred in the immediate aftermath of the ceremonial 'Day of the *Luftwaffe*.' Typically, when the air raid sirens sounded (popularly known as 'Meyer's Bugle'), the majority of Berliners simply made for their cellars as opposed to public shelters. *"They were all well drilled,"* writes Roger Moorhouse in 'Berlin at War,' such that *"everybody in a block had a task to fulfil and the cellars were often very well equipped."*¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichsbahnbunker_Friedrichstraße and sammlung-boros.de/bunker-berlin.html?L=1

¹⁸³ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 24

¹⁸⁴ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 307

¹⁸⁵ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945.* Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 91

¹⁸⁶ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 24

¹⁸⁷ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 307, 309

¹⁸⁸ Compare with eye witness claims that 700 were killed and 65,000 rendered homeless.

Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 24

¹⁸⁹ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 309, 316

In April 2016, I went looking for Frau Tyralla's local 'LSR,' namely in the basement of *Albrechtstrasse 5*. Although I was not able to peer inside, the top left photo below suggests residents had a choice of two locations, presumably one for each wing of the house. Although *Berit Neumann*, who is responsible for the building today wrote in an email on June 16th, 2016: "*it is not apparent that this was once [an air raid cellar because]. Traces of the war can not be found,*" it seems hard to imagine otherwise. However, Frau Neumann kindly invited me to take a personal look, when I next returned to Berlin.¹⁹⁰

Those who used the public shelters generally hated the crush and panic they faced each time they wanted to enter, all of which operated on a first-come first serve basis. Often there was an inevitable knot of civilians trying to get in, driven into a frenzy by the wailing sirens (on New Years Day, 1944, for instance, 21 Berliners were trampled to death when the queue was panicked into a stampede by a nearby raid).¹⁹¹ Inside the cellars and bunkers it was seldom easier. The claustrophobic atmosphere was oppressive, the lack of privacy rankled, and there was the all-pervading stench of sweat, urine and halitosis – the inevitable consequence of cramming a large cross-section of society into a small space for any length of time. Panic attacks were not uncommon during the thud of bombs, approach of bombers and heavy air mines bursting one's lungs. Often the raids provoked a fatalistic – even apathetic – attitude among Berliners. "*If it comes it comes. You cannot escape your fate.*"¹⁹²



Top Left:
To the rear of
Albrechtstraße 5, Frau
Tyralla's home,
showing cellars to
the left and right of
the courtyard
entrance.
Bottom left:
Evidence of
yesteryear's Berlin
air raid shelters or
'LSR,' today.
Right:
Awaiting the all
clear.

Sources:
berliner-mieterverein.de/magazin/online/mm0515/051522.htm and *Berlin at War*, Moorhouse

¹⁹⁰ Email: info@hv-schellig.de

¹⁹¹ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 326, 327

¹⁹² *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 330.

Citing *Berliner Aufzeichnungen 1942-1945*. Ursula von Kardorff. Kultgut, 1976. Pg. 76

After the shock of the raid, the war once again settled down into something like the routine of the earlier phase of the conflict. 'Gardens bloomed amidst the rubble.'¹⁹³ There was the novelty of nuisance raiding by RAF mosquitoes, whereby a couple of speedy fighter-bombers would either select a specific target or would attack at random, causing panic on the ground in the process and sending thousands of Berliners scrambling for shelter. But beyond that Berlin saw only a couple of major raids that spring and summer.¹⁹⁴ Goebbels called it the 'twilight war.'¹⁹⁵

Many Germans were wisening up to the country's changing fortunes and chose to tune into foreign radio broadcasts regularly now. In a Nazi Security Service (*Sicherheitsdienst*) report from April 1943, it was noted that many men and women who had been busily working in their gardens mysteriously went inside about five minutes before the regular BBC German language broadcast, which launched in 1938. "*Contemporary testimony confirms that 'listening to London' was widespread and encompassed all classes and almost all political opinions. One foreign commentator estimated that nearly three quarters of German adults listened to foreign broadcasts regularly*" while the BBC estimated between ten and fifteen million Germans every day.¹⁹⁶

There were those who felt that "*If Germany were to capitulate unconditionally today, it would save ninety percent of its fabric.*" However, there was also a belief that "...another Versailles or even a dismemberment would inevitably lead to a third world war after an interval of twenty years." Therefore Germany could afford to barter for a year or so for an "acceptable peace," speculated another of Victor Klemperer's acquaintances, a foreman at Zeiss-Ikon and former serviceman within the Austrian Army.¹⁹⁷

In the meantime, Goebbels continued his race-war against the Jews, raiding Berlin's munition factories on February 27th and forcing their remaining workers onto trucks that took them directly to the trains and on to camps. Others were picked up off the streets or at their homes.¹⁹⁸ Erica Fischer recalls "*The Gestapo stormed buildings and smashed locks, sawed through steel bolts, chopped down doors with axes and climbed through the windows of adjacent buildings. Many Jews went underground. Frightening rumours concerning the fate of those 'evacuated' made the rounds.*" What was left of Synagoge Levetzowstraße following Kristallnacht (three blocks north of Albert's home) became the deportation 'transfer site' from March 2nd-12th, 1943 (as it was in 1941 and 1942).¹⁹⁹

Come the end of that period, some 63 transports and 35,378 of the 66,000 Jews still living in Berlin had been deported to *Auschwitz*. Three months later, the Gestapo closed the office of the *Jüdische Gemeinde*, following Goebbels proclamation on May 19th, 1943 that Berlin was '*Judenfrei*.' He called it his greatest political achievement.²⁰⁰ In fact, over six thousand Jews still lived in the city that June, in mixed marriages and in the underground.²⁰¹ The latter called themselves U-boats.

¹⁹³ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 37

¹⁹⁴ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 317

¹⁹⁵ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. July 4, 1943. Pg. 242

¹⁹⁶ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 209

¹⁹⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc., 2001. Mar. 29, 1943. 141, 211

¹⁹⁸ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 284

¹⁹⁹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 21, 23.

See also: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Synagoge_Levetzowstra%C3%9Fe

²⁰⁰ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 517

²⁰¹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 25, 119

While Berlin was cracking, the Allies were closing the 'gap' in the mid-Atlantic too. Where Allied convoys had previously not been covered by air patrols, and where Hitler's 'wolfpacks' had enjoyed their most fruitful hunting, come May, 1943, more U-boats were lost than Allied ships, which rendered the continuation of U-boat warfare impossible.²⁰² Not only was Hitler's Battle of the Atlantic lost, but the completion of the Allies' North African campaign that same month, ensured its communications in the Mediterranean.²⁰³ Now the alliance could push on into Europe proper.

When on Friday May 14th, 1943, *Deutschlandsender* went off air, it was a sure sign that enemy aircraft were on their way in again.²⁰⁴ As the sirens howled and the guns opened up, Frau Tyralla will have found herself retreating to her cellar in her bed clothes with an overcoat wrapped around her once more. Those endless attacks wore down civil morale while the use of incendiary bombs destroyed property and spawned ghastly stories of people set ablaze or who had been stuck to melting asphalt that resulted in city streets strewn with charred bodies. Carnage was everywhere.²⁰⁵ Although this raid brought little damage to central Berlin, the Allies continued to strike at German communications and industrial centres by air with American bombers flying at high altitude by day, the British by night.²⁰⁶

With the thousand-bomber raids on Cologne, it was the turn of the Ruhr region to endure a five month campaign between March-July 1943, the so-called Battle of the Ruhr.²⁰⁷ Even then, Berliners' "*listened with sympathy, though somewhat incredulously, as refugees from the Ruhr District talked about whole streets on fire and cities that had been totally destroyed.*"²⁰⁸

Hamburg followed. Between July 24th and August 2nd, 1943, the Allies set out to destroy Germany's number one Nazi center, with horrific resulting damage: Sixty one percent of the dwelling places were destroyed with streets blocked with rubble such that fire engines were unable to reach the centre of the fires. Water pipes were ruptured and fuel depots went up in smoke. Frau Tyralla was sure to have been grateful she had not returned to Hamburg after her Holland sojourn. The city was practically wiped out in a 'ball of fire.' More on those raids, which flattened the whole of the northwest of Hamburg, including large areas of Altona and also hit *Hohenfelde* where Frau Tyralla had rented a home until mid-1942 is described in the textbox below.

²⁰² *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 342

²⁰³ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 196

²⁰⁴ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. May 14, 1943. Pg. 66

²⁰⁵ *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945.* J. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 233

²⁰⁶ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 196-197

²⁰⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Ruhr

²⁰⁸ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 125

15.14: Operation 'Gomorrhah'

The Allied raids on Hamburg between July 24th and August 2nd, 1943 had been codenamed 'Gomorrhah,' since in biblical terms, its namesake, along with the city of Sodom were consumed by fire and brimstone after God passed judgment upon them for their vice and depravity. In his treatise, *'The Jews and Germans of Hamburg,'* J. A. S. Grenville asks, "Had the city been punished for its sins?" Below he describes what happened.

"Statistics cannot reflect the horror of those ten days. Charred corpses lay in the streets. The ruins of Hamburg were covered by a cloud of dust through which the sun did not penetrate, and 21,000 soldiers and fireman were overwhelmed by the onslaught. The death toll of 37,000 can only be estimated. Total casualties probably reached 125,000. A wall was built to surround the 'dead districts' of Hammerbrook, Rothenburgsort and Hamm-Süd. Few rescue services attempted to enter some of the worst affected districts and the badly injured, who could not drag themselves out, perished where they lay. The railway stations were gutted, industry was heavily damaged, hospitals and schools were not spared. A city of a million was without running water until mid-August; gas was restored in early September and electricity only later that month. Yet the experiences of those who had left Hamburg to find shelter in emergency accommodation was so dispiriting that, despite orders for them to stay away, the non-working population drifted back. By the end of November, more than 1 million lived precariously once more in the devastated city."

Except Frau Tyralla, who stayed away until April 1946.

Sources:

The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945. J.A.S. Grenville. Routledge. 2012. Pg. 254

Image: The district of Eilbek, some 1500 metres from Frau Tyralla's former home in Hamburg's Wartenau, shown here after Operation Gomorrhah. Source: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Hamburg_in_World_War_II



By now Berliners had realized they were a certain target for a similar attack, especially after bombers bound for the capital turned away to Magdeburg within days of the Hamburg raid, which was followed by one on Hanover. "The fact that one city after the next can be attacked and razed to the ground weighs like a nightmare on the people and makes a considerable contribution to the feeling of insecurity and helplessness," noted a Nazi *Sicherheitsdienst* report.²⁰⁹

That sense of foreboding was worsened by Hamburg's evacuees and refugees who were sent to the comparative safety of the east via Berlin, bringing their horror stories with them. Furthermore, the Hamburg raid occurred at the end of a catastrophic month for Germany, in which defeat at the *Battle of Kursk* on the *Ost Front* coincided with the retreat of the Italian front and Mussolini's resignation. This "strengthened the feeling of heading towards annihilation."²¹⁰ Klemperer described the Italian capitulation which followed as "the most important news since September 3rd, 1939."²¹¹

Public faith in the regime vanished while a horoscope that did the rounds of the capital that summer forecast the worst air raid yet on August 27th followed by a sensational decision in mid-September and that Germany would have a king by May 1944. Berliner, Lutz Ritter, recalled, "Nobody in my circle of friends took the 'final victory' fantasies seriously anymore." Survival and even escape became the prerogative amid a sea of Berliners whose pale faces and red-rings around their tired lifeless eyes and halitosis owing to a lack of dental hygiene betrayed the pressures they bore.²¹²

²⁰⁹ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 318

²¹⁰ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 318, 319

²¹¹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 9, 1943. Pg. 257

²¹² *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* R. Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 343, 344, 345, 346

On August 1st, a week after the firestorm in Hamburg, the RAF dropped leaflets²¹³ on the capital calling all women and children,²¹⁴ to leave the city.²¹⁵ The official reaction betrayed even the authorities' sense of fear. Recalls Ruth Andreas-Friedrich:

*"There was 'A roll of drums in the courtyard....' Men and Women of Berlin! ... The enemy is ruthlessly continuing his aerial terror against the German civilian population. It is urgently desired, and is in the interest of every individual who is not obligated for professional or personal reasons to stay in Berlin – women, children, pensioners, and those who have retired from active life – that such persons move to regions less subject to air attack." Roll of drums!"*²¹⁶

Some diplomats too were ordered to leave, while lorries appeared before every ministry to load furniture and luggage.²¹⁷ With the temperature hovering around 35 degrees Celsius,²¹⁸ the immediate result was chaos. Not only were the railheads jammed with traumatized refugees from Hamburg, but their numbers were swollen by Berliners desperate to get out of the city before the bombers returned. They stormed the train stations and ticket agencies²¹⁹ and something like a million, were evacuated.²²⁰ Thousands more went to visit friends and relatives in the country, taking their possessions and valuables with them for safekeeping. Newspapers advised that *"pieces of paper bearing the exact name and address of the owner were to be attached to furniture, rugs and household possessions."* Anyone who didn't have to remain in the city, headed east or south.²²¹

When *"Berlin was evacuated,"* recalls one of Professor of History, Tom Kohut's interviewees: *"I went to my parents."*²²² Realising there was no return to Hamburg, Frau Tyralla did much the same, after pleading her case to her brother, who now lived in her parents' old home near Leipzig. They hadn't parted the best of friends after their mother had died, but before long it would be a matter of life and death.

*"All the buildings in front and beside me were bombed out. And apart from the terrible raids, the food situation has worsened month by month too. Am I welcome?"*²²³

"For a family stands and falls with the possession of land. The home (Heimat) on the land holds a family together" he answered. *"Although in March, the 27th I think, British aircraft triggered a Notabwürfe (major fire) in Gohlis,*²²⁴ *apart from that, we're safe and well,"* he answered, choosing his words carefully in case the phones were tapped. *"Come."*

²¹³ Erica Fischer on the other hand claims a handbill was distributed on August 1st to all Berlin households. *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 125

²¹⁴ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin.* Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 531.

N.b. Concern was so great that between July 1943 and October 1944, 66 percent of children were evacuated from the West End.

²¹⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin.* Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 529

²¹⁶ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945.* Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 100. N.b. Aug. 8, 1943.

²¹⁷ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. August 6, 1943. Pg. 95

²¹⁸ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 125.

N.b. Summer 1943 saw 37 days above 25 in Berlin, and 9 above 30. See: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

²¹⁹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 126

²²⁰ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin.* Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 529

²²¹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 126, 127

²²² *A German Generation.* Yale University Press, 2012. Tomas A. Kohut. Pg. 114

²²³ The first sentence was indeed expressed by Frau Tyralla. The remainder by and large extracts from: *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis.* Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 125

²²⁴ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig

"Danke sehr," she replied.

"Better a lodger I know, than one I don't," Fritz muttered as his sister hung up.

So Frau Tyralla bid farewell to Albert and said she looked forward to seeing him in good health after the war. She scribbled a note to Nanny on the yellow and salmon-colored army-issue postcards – the only affordable stationary – saying she was bound for Leipzig, where, with a dash of wry Berlin-styled humour she added she hoped to find real, not barley malt, coffee.²²⁵ The postcard never arrived. Perhaps because she dared to add; "in the space of a year Berlin [has] been transformed from the swaggering capital celebrating imminent victory over Russia to a dingy and nervous city."²²⁶

Like so many others, she bypassed the intimidating *Polizei Praesidium*, the Police Headquarters on *Alexanderplatz*,²²⁷ where more usually she would have noted her intent to go to Leipzig.²²⁸ Like her daughters fifteen years prior, she passed through the *Anhalter Bahnhof*, the 'Gateway to the South,' en route to Saxony. She was accompanied by many more refugees bound for Dresden, some wearing little more than their nightgowns and an overcoat.²²⁹ Looking up, she noted the signs of considerable damage. The glass arc of its roof was disfigured with holes from incendiaries and its elegant frontage was sandbagged.²³⁰ She could even see the stars.

Through her years Frau Tyralla had gotten accustomed to being on the go and despite the chaos, she managed to secure herself a seat with the aid of a mysterious gentlemen, a portly chap who didn't look like he lived on ration cards. After exchanging a little chit-chat, she couldn't help but notice the usual yellow and black reminder hanging from the luggage rack; '*Achtung Feind hört mit*' – beware, the enemy may be listening.²³¹

It was not long after my great grandmother left Berlin that 'Bomber Harris' launched the 'Battle of Berlin,' the longest and most intensive single bombing campaign, through which the second world war in Europe reached its nadir. Life à Berlin wasn't quite what she'd expected, necessity forcing a retreat to her roots. But whereas in 1939 the greatest threat to peace had emerged in central Europe, now conversely it looked to be the safest place. What fortune would eventually await her there?

#####

²²⁵ Erica Fischer indicates this was commonly drank in Berlin in summer 1943. *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 108

²²⁶ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 529

²²⁷ A dark red building in the same style as the nearby *Rathaus*, it was a dark and forbidding place, known to Berliners as *Zwingburg am Alex* – the fortress on Alex, or simply Alex, because, after the Nazis came to power, it became a place into which people disappear.

Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 229

²²⁸ There is no indication within her residential record that she went directly from Berlin to Leipzig. She also could have left before August 1943, since her travel permit expired on June 19, 1943. Ultimately we only know that she left Leipzig and the Hinsch Villa for her former domicile in Hamburg in April 1946. Therefore, given the preceding circumstances, departure for Leipzig in August 1943 seems most plausible.

²²⁹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Aug. 17, 1943. Pg. 254

²³⁰ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 201

²³¹ Extracted from Christabel Bielenberg's passage through the *Anhalter* some 15 months later. *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis*. Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 256

- 'STRUCK OF STRENGTH' -

With domestic peace restored at the Ridderhofs' home in Amsterdam following 'Mutti's' departure, her daughter's family readied themselves for another winter. Although that of 1942-1943 was eventually milder in Europe everywhere compared with previous years, it was bitter and grey in Holland.

*"There was little snow," writes Corrie ten Boom, but "the cold came early and stayed late and fuel was scarce. Here and there in parks and along the canals, trees would disappear as people cut them down to heat cookstoves and fireplaces. The damp unheated rooms were particularly tough on the very young and very old."*²³²

Cor, the household head, ensured his family got by, ripping up wood from the road - or smuggling it out of *Carré*. His daughter, *Tiny*, bedridden at the time with rickets and the attendant stomach problems and painful bowed legs that arose from too little calcium and Vitamin D, still vividly recalls how he would chop the wood into small pieces and burn it in their home on a little stove. On January 21st, 1943, milk and meat rations were again reduced,²³³ and by the summer, tea was being made from rose leaves and cherry stems.²³⁴ As meat grew harder and harder to



Where North meets South: *2e Jan Steen Straat*, 92 in 2013 where the sunny side (away from the street) hosted the living room with the kitchen to the left. Above was the Ridderhofs' attic space, now home to rabbits

come by, the Ridderhofs took to keeping rabbits in their share of the attic, albeit to be had only on special occasions. Carefully contained, a drainage system was installed to manage their urine. Of course rats and mice were drawn to the canine residents, and they were typically dealt with by scattering broken glass on the attic floor.

In the two years since the February 1941 strike, the sentiment expressed during the unrest in Amsterdam had spread throughout the country. By now the nation's hope that it might be possible to reach a compromise with the occupying power had faded, and anti-German sentiment intensified, following not only the deportations, but the internment of army officers and the imposition of the Third Reich's institutions on the Netherlands. To many Dutch citizens, resistance became necessary in order to maintain self-respect,²³⁵ and those part of it were further fueled by the German defeat at Stalingrad. But the credibility of that resistance has often been questioned in the ensuing years, alongside Dutch complicity in the Jewish round-ups.

²³² *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 92

²³³ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943

²³⁴ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 98

²³⁵ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 112-113

At the same time, the speeches of Seyss-Inquart during 1943 regarding the Dutch grew into depictions of an 'other' who failed to cooperate in the manner expected of them.²³⁶ Arrests and deportations continued throughout the winter of 1942-43,²³⁷ and on February 6th, students in Amsterdam, Utrecht, Delft and Wageningen were round-up (alongside teenage boys), many being forced into hiding as a result. Universities were forced to close and on March 13th, students were expected to pledge their loyalty to the Nazis (some 85 percent refused).²³⁸

As the occupiers' grip tightened on the Netherlands (including an extension of the working week to 54 hours), massive strikes ensued. On April 29th, a countrywide work stoppage (bar the railroads) got underway that lasted for a week.²³⁹ It was the largest strike against the occupiers, not just in Holland but in all of Western Europe. Writes Jewish Amsterdammer, Abraham Pais, *"The bitter anger against Germans had now risen to new heights."*²⁴⁰

Perhaps the most significant outcome of the strike was its spiritual impact on the Dutch people themselves.²⁴¹ An underground publicist referred to it as *"the greatest event since the capitulation ... For a few moments the fear psychosis was broken and we did not feel like subjects of a terror regime, but like courageous and liberated people suddenly pushed on by an invisible mutual bond."*²⁴²

The German administration recognized the strike proved its failure to win over the Dutch people,²⁴³ and retaliated by declaring a state of police siege, arresting many Dutchmen, executing eighty and killing sixty in random police shootings. With the munitions factories across the border now desperate for workers, from May 4th, 1943, all Dutchmen aged 18 to 35 were obliged to register for placement.²⁴⁴ Countless numbers refused which spawned raids against them. *"Without warning, soldiers would suddenly surround a block of buildings and sweep through them, herding every male ... into trucks for transport. This method of lightning search and seizure was called 'the razzia,' and every family with young men lived in dread of it,"* recalled ten Boom.²⁴⁵

²³⁶ Citing A. Seyss-Inquart: *Vier Jahre in den Niederlanden: Gesammelte Reden* (Amsterdam, 1944) in *The Close 'Other': Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Hollanders and the Hanse*. Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz. Journal of the German History Society, Vol. 31, No. 4. December 2014. Pg. 457-8. N.b. The author especially recommends reading the speeches of 29 May, 1940; 26 July, 1940 and 12 March, 1941 for context.

²³⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 262

²³⁸ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 83

²³⁹ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943

²⁴⁰ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 59

²⁴¹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 117-118

²⁴² *Vrij Onverveerd*. Het Parool. May 28, 1943. Pg. 3

²⁴³ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 117-118

²⁴⁴ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 271 although in *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*, Werner Warmbrunn (Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 75) claims it was May 6th.

²⁴⁵ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 88

Between June and July, around 65,000 citizens were subsequently deported (including over 3,000 students), amounting to 148,000 over the course of the year.²⁴⁶ Many Dutchmen simply went underground or vanished into the countryside.²⁴⁷ To limit the public's movement, the curfew hour was brought forward to 7 P.M. that June (it had already been shifted to 8 P.M. on April 20th),²⁴⁸ and in the meantime, many male members of the NSB were organized into a German SS-officered *Landwacht*²⁴⁹ that subsequently paraded through the streets,²⁵⁰ helping the occupation government forcibly control the population.²⁵¹ It must have been quite a surprise when the Dutch Nazi leader publicly chided their conduct on June 5th.²⁵²

Kleine Tiny's *Ome Dick* had been born in December 1905,²⁵³ which exempted him from forced labour while Cor was himself in his fiftieth year. But among their friends, *Tante Lies*'s husband was one of those called to Germany to work for the railways, as Irene distantly recalls. That meant he was seldom home except on leave.

The authorities grew all the more suspicious of the Dutch and on the look out for resistance fighters. From March 1943, letters had to be delivered to the post office personally which helped identify their senders. Then on May 13th, the Germans ordered the Dutch to turn in all radios.²⁵⁴ The Ridderhofs surrendered their radio set, however estimates suggest one in five remained hidden come the middle of July²⁵⁵—most Dutch typically turning in all but one of their sets.²⁵⁶ The Ridderhofs thereafter got their news via *Carre*.

Naturally Amsterdam's struggling Jewish community remained under siege, as it were. During March and April, 1943, those in hospitals were taken away,²⁵⁷ and on May 20th, they were told to register for deportation to *Westerbork*.²⁵⁸ Because insufficient numbers appeared voluntarily, on May 26th, large-scale round-ups took place in Amsterdam's central district, with as many as 3,000 netted.²⁵⁹

²⁴⁶ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 75

²⁴⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 271

²⁴⁸ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943

²⁴⁹ By October 16, 1943, the *Landwacht*, actually the 34th SS Volunteer Grenadier Division or *Landstorm Nederland*, numbered 2,400 men. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/34th_SS_Volunteer_Grenadier_Division_Landstorm_Nederland

²⁵⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlands#Second_World_War_1940.E2.80.931945

²⁵¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Socialist_Movement_in_the_Netherlands

²⁵² See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943

²⁵³ December 20th, 1905.

²⁵⁴ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 54, 49.

See also: www.godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943.

²⁵⁵ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 118. N.b. After which the number of wired connections (a wired hook-up which channeled programmes into homes via electric circuits) increased rapidly. By Sept. 1944, it was twice as high as it had been in 1941.

²⁵⁶ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 66

²⁵⁷ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 83

²⁵⁸ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943.

N.b. Westerbork had initially been established in 1939 as a central refugee camp for Jews, who had fled Germany. It was managed by the Dept. of Justice. Its name came from the small nearby camp in northeastern Netherlands.

²⁵⁹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 263

Those hauls reached the Ridderhofs' doorstep that summer. On June 20th, 1943, a beautiful Sunday, a substantial group of Jews from *Amsterdam Zuid* and *Ost* were assembled nearby in the *Sarphatipark* (see '5' on the map on pg. 584).²⁶⁰ A familiar sight and sound by now was that of the hated 'Green Police' and their vans which would screech to a halt from which emerged the Dutch henchmen to claim their victims. On every street corner German agents with rifles slung across their shoulders guarded their operations, while the green uniformed soldiers, 'the incarnation of German terror,' the executive branch of the police service, carried out not only arrests and mass raids, but deportations, actions against strikers and also executions.²⁶¹ From July 1st, 1943, it was the turn of those Jews in mixed marriages to be called up for work camp service, with the only means of exemption available to them being sterilisation. That put pressure on two more of the Ridderhofs' acquaintances. First, Mrs. Palstra, Kleine Tiny's English teacher, as well as Jewish family friend, *Hanny*, who lived on one of the floors below their apartment.

I can't really begin to imagine the contempt and shame Nanny, a peace loving 'German' must have felt over her 'Fatherland's' conduct on Dutch soil during that occupation (being British myself and resident outside the UK in the EU is bad enough)! Especially being married to a Dutchman, it must have been enough to want to disown any sense of origin, I'd have thought.

Curfew made it especially impossible to go outside in the summer evenings (a time which for many had been valuable for avoiding preying eyes).²⁶² Recalled Tiny;

"That was indeed a drag. I was part of a gang of girls and we'd hang out with groups of boys. We'd swim in the Amstel when it was warm enough, or go to the pool. I'd ride my scooter about or my bike, which had no tyres like everyone else's. And if it wasn't that, it was hopscotch, marbles. But we had to take care because the Germans would shoot at will.."

And it was not just the Germans one had to take care of. On July 17th, the Americans bombed Amsterdam North, the city's most important industrial area which housed its petrochemicals, shipbuilding and other heavy industries, besides Fokker, which on that occasion was the intended target. The raids missed the factory and instead destroyed or damaged a thousand or so houses and killed 158.²⁶³ On that same date, *Tiny's* cousin, *Dick(ie)* was born to *Ome Dick* and *Tante Rie* in Rotterdam.

²⁶⁰ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 263.

N.b. godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943 indicates 5,700.

²⁶¹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 40-41, 172

²⁶² *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 95

²⁶³ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amsterdam-Noord N.b. A week or so later on July 25th, Amsterdam North was caught in the cross-fire again. See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943

But despite the terror, there were grounds for hope. Following the Germans' capitulation in Africa, the Allies' landing in Sicily and Mussolini's arrest, great joy swept through the Netherlands. The country had begun to believe "*the war was almost over.*"²⁶⁴ That enthusiasm grew following Italy's *volte face* on the battlefield from September 16th,²⁶⁵ those German military setbacks radicalising the resistance movement²⁶⁶ with Amsterdam emerging as its centre.²⁶⁷ An epidemic of *poliomyelitis* that swept the country during 1943, along with tuberculosis, naturally hindered their efforts to campaign for liberation.²⁶⁸

In the meantime, the round-ups of Dutch Jews came to an end, since there were largely none left to pick up. On September 29th, however, there was a 'final' cull, with 10,000 caught and deported, including members of the Jewish council established to identify those to be deported.²⁶⁹ The occasion was particularly memorable for Tiny:²⁷⁰

*"I was in bed by that time with scurvy, caused by too little vitamin C. I had painful joints and was basically worn out. My complexion was pallid, I had scorbutic gums, my teeth were loose and rotting.²⁷¹ I had to cleanse my mouth ulcers with peroxide. It was horrible."*²⁷²

"The Green Police reached our street that afternoon. Conscious of the threat, Hanny and her husband stole upstairs moments ahead of the Germans. He made it up to the attic via the main stairwell and concealed himself within a double wall. Hanny on the other hand only got as far as our floor."

"'Nannj, please hide me,' she whimpered, before rushing into my bedroom, which was sandwiched between the back and front rooms. I was out of bed by this time given all the commotion, while Mum, who was busy rinsing clothes at her washboard in the kitchen, also at the back side of the building, hardly had time to react while our unexpected guest concealed herself between the small washbasin in my room and a blue suitcase we had standing in the corner. Scared out of her wits, she pulled the towel over her head and waited, barely breathing."

"Those green police, they raced upstairs and noisily burst into the flat, mercilessly growling in pursuit of their prey. They kicked my foldable bed up and had almost been hoodwinked when with their parting glance, they spotted the out-of-place towel. They kicked the suitcase out of the way and out fell Hanny. She sure took a beating." Tiny fell silent at that moment. "It's incredible what happened."

"Hanny was dragged out of the flat and was driven together to the street corner with other men, women and children, where they stood, alone and abandoned. But to everyone's horror, Nannj was ordered to leave too. 'You are hiding Jews!' they added."

²⁶⁴ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 60

²⁶⁵ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 197

²⁶⁶ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 59

²⁶⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City.* Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 271

²⁶⁸ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945.* Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 102

²⁶⁹ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943.

N.b. this is not corroborated by nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holocaust_in_Nederland

²⁷⁰ The date is somewhat disputed, Tiny wondering in 2016 whether it might have been autumn 1944, noting "*the Germans were capturing Jews over a very long time.*" However, while the German-Polish Jew, [Heinz Wielek](#), only went into hiding some time during 1944 because of his mixed marriage, the resulting order Tiny eventually received suggests it wasn't likely to have been the third quarter of 1944, since all schools were closed due to power shortages.

²⁷¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scurvy

²⁷² Complete recovery from incipient scurvy can be achieved in less than two weeks, contingent on a resumption of normal vitamin C intake.

She could do little more in that moment than stammer back; *"But I was busy in the kitchen."*

"Fortunately for her they recognised she was not native, and then their tone became more conciliatory. 'Why isn't she in school?' they asked, glancing at me. 'If you were a good German she'd be in a German school!' he pointed out, letting Nanny off on the condition that I attend and be raised a good German citizen. With that, they left us in peace."

Being 'German' appears to have saved Nanny's skin although the entire incident left a bad taste in her mouth. Cor too was incensed after he learned what happened.

"His hatred for the Germans was only heightened and he too began to contribute to the resistance. A pal of his named Stakebrand, who was a locksmith, assisted by cutting master keys for those buildings where Jews were being interned. He would pass copies on to Cor who would then deliver them to those helping the Jews escape."

I was keen to know more, but that was all Tiny could share.

"Naturally he said very little because that would endanger us."

The Hollandsche Schouwburg, formerly a Jewish theatre and now a point of internment prior to deportation

Source: geheugen.van.derland.nl



One of those places Jewish captives were temporarily housed prior to their deportation²⁷³ was the *Hollandsche Schouwburg*, originally a Dutch theatre but deemed Jewish in 1941 by the Nazis.²⁷⁴ It was a little over eleven years prior and in early 1932 that Nanny's sister, Margot, had performed *Hallo Hierheen!* at this very location.²⁷⁵

Curiously, in a remarkable feat of derring-do, forty Jews were indeed set free that September, when the *Schouwburg* was broken into. *Heinz Wielek*, for instance, the 'German' Jewish publicist and critic who fled *Köln* for Holland in the 1930s (see Chapter XIII, Pt.2 and also

Chapter XIV) played a key part in helping with not only their escape but the subsequent hiding of those gathered there for deportation.²⁷⁶ What if Cor had played a role in that break out?

Sadly *Hanny's* husband was eventually picked up, although remarkably he and his wife met aboard the train they were eventually deported on. According to Tiny, they jumped from it somewhere inside Germany, although he died after being shot in the back. *Hanny* managed to flee into hiding. As for Mrs. Palstra, she too was detained and thus, by the end of September, of the 140,000 fully fledged Jews in Holland at the start of the war, most were deported.²⁷⁷ And so like Berlin earlier that May, the city was declared '*Judenrein*.'²⁷⁸

²⁷³ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 108

²⁷⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hollandsche_Schouwburg

²⁷⁵ *Schouwburgen & Bioscopen* Enz. Algemeen Handelsblad. Jan. 3, 1932.

²⁷⁶ See: <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn5/kweksilber>. N.b. His book; *De oorlog die Hitler won* (The war that Hitler won) is about the persecution of Jews in the Netherlands during the German occupation.

²⁷⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 266, 263.

N.b. He adds on pg. 264, "of the 80,000 Jews in Amsterdam, only 5,000 were alive at the time of liberation in 1945."

²⁷⁸ *Anne Frank* herself remained in hiding at *Prinsengracht 263* in Amsterdam until 4 August, 1943

Although the Germans had brought their own police apparatus with themselves,²⁷⁹ they never actually posted more than 60 officers in Amsterdam, according to Dutch journalist, Geert Mak, even at the height of Jewish persecution. *"The rest was done by the Dutch,"* he writes.

*"The Amsterdam tram drivers, police and civil servants, particularly those in the population register office, oiled the wheels of the German machine of destruction. [But] the parts such people played are varied, from service beyond the call of duty to outright sabotage, to obeying orders through gritted teeth ... After the war, an official investigation found that almost half a million Dutch men and women had collaborated with the occupying forces in one way or another."*²⁸⁰ Even if *"The Shoah took place in Germany ... as far as Amsterdam is concerned, the supply lines ... began in the Polderweg, the Olympiaplein, the Nieuwe Keizersgracht and the Elandsgracht."*

Mak neither accepts the average Amsterdammer's ignorance. *"It is beyond doubt that ... not all was well with the 'work-relocation transports' that ran so regularly to the east. Hardly any letters were answered; the fact the sick and the old were taken to the 'work camps' was highly suspicious, and besides these and other signs, rumours about what really happened had found their way back into the city."*²⁸¹ Resistance paper, *Het Parool*, for instance, reported on the existence of gas chambers in concentration camps in September 1943.²⁸²

Having recovered her strength, as instructed, Tiny joined the German-language school that October. To reach it she needed 40 minutes or so and to take several trams and buses across town to Amsterdam's outskirts. It wasn't a pleasant experience. She recalls singing German nationalist songs which despite her bloodline connections, she abhorred. To make matters worse, clothes and shoes became especially hard to find during 1943. Although Dutch manufacturing levels rose that year (and on into the following), industrial production was largely shipped to Germany,²⁸³ so standing a day in line for a pair of shoes came to be the norm.²⁸⁴ Tiny had to make do with coupon-purchased clogs, which became a challenge as winter set in. Furthermore, the street fighter in her saw those clogs turn into 'weapons of war' when she was derided for 'being' German. On one occasion, one of the taller neighbourhood boys took a pitch at her for being 'Aryan' and after despatching the clog in his direction, to her horror saw it split along the side.

"Pa rejoined the loose parts with a metal splint, although it never held firm again and shunted when I walked. An unmistakable calling card when climbing and descending the uncarpeted stairways at Il Jan Steen Straat daily."

As the year came to an end, the light snow which had fallen was the only festive quality of the season.²⁸⁵ Otherwise there was very little to be positive about, going into 1944.

+++++

²⁷⁹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 40-41

²⁸⁰ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 266, 268

²⁸¹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 267

²⁸² See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1943

²⁸³ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 80, 71

²⁸⁴ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 88

²⁸⁵ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 114

Johnnie Riscoe was never short of media attention during wartime, here listed within The Forces radio show 'Music Hall,' through which he broadcast hit tunes like 'Shoe Shine Gal.'

Source (top):
Coventry Evening
Telegraph, March
13, 1943



While Tiny, Nanny and their Jewish acquaintances endured discrimination in Holland, Nanny's sister, Margot, did her best to get over that she'd experienced in England whilst being divorced by her husband. I daresay hearing his twitter over the airwaves wasn't especially welcome either, however, Sergeant Johnnie Riscoe's first 'Music Hall' radio show in early 1943²⁸⁶ was that successful that he was booked to host many more shows,²⁸⁷ together with the comedy/variety show 'Happidrome'²⁸⁸ and the BBC's 'Forces Programme.'²⁸⁹ If you google 'Johnnie Riscoe' images, there's a good chance you'll find that shown left, the songsheet for a tune he plugged within his shows in April 1943 called the 'Shoe Shine Gal.'²⁹⁰

Tiny recalls Margot reacted to her divorce by growing more socially active, which corresponds to the Mass-Observation initiative's charting of women's increasingly frequent pub visits. In its *Bulletin* of February 1943 entitled 'Women in Public Houses,' it reported that young women visited them "lots more now than before the war," largely on account of their earning greater amounts of money.²⁹¹

"Pubs were the only places in wartime London where one could entertain and be entertained cheaply, finding the companionship badly needed during the war." Within them, the barriers of class and nationality were broken down," noted would-be actress, Theodora FitzGibbon.²⁹² Leeds was much the same, Sue Kirk noting; "My mum and her sister used to sing in pubs in the area. It was the local form of entertainment in those days."²⁹³

During 1942 and 1943, popular American culture swept across the country and was a powerful influence on Britons too, in no small part thanks to the arrival of U.S. servicemen. Adds Leeds local, John Drewell, "the first Blackman I ever saw was a U.S. soldier in Leeds City Centre, around 1943. English girls began to be friendly with the Yanks, as they were called, and my own cousin brought a G.I. home to meet the family."²⁹⁴

²⁸⁶ *Variety of Services*. Falkirk Herald. February 10, 1943. Pg. 6

²⁸⁷ *The Stage*. March 11, 1943. Pg. 3

²⁸⁸ The earliest appears to have been Sunday April 11th, 1943 according to the *BBC Radio Times*, Issue 1019, April 11, 1943, Pg 7. See: genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/schedules/forces/1943-04-11 N.b. According to personal correspondence with 'Susannah' at *Genome* on June 2nd, 2017, his contribution was contracted on March 3, 1943.

²⁸⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC_Forces_Programme

²⁹⁰ The recording was copyrighted on February 12, 1943 according to the [online](http://online.catalogofcopyrightentries.org) Catalog of Copyright Entries: Third series. The music sheet meanwhile was dated April 23, 1943.

²⁹¹ By 1943, nearly 90 percent of single women and 80 percent of married women worked for the British war effort – the latter an astonishing statistic, given they were not obliged under the 1941 legislation. See: cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/courses/ww2/projects/women-in-ww2/organisations-page/womens-organisations.htm. In addition, by 1943, less than one in ten women aged between 18 and 40 did not work (usually because of illness), while around eight of the nation's 17 million women, aged between 14 and 64 were in paid work, and another one million had voluntary jobs. See: *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 336.

²⁹² *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pgs. 226, 222 and 194

²⁹³ *The Bombing of Leeds*. WW2 People's War. Sue Kirk, October 19, 2005.

Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/92/a6204692.shtml

²⁹⁴ *War-Time Civilian Life in Hunslet Carr, Leeds*. WW2 People's War. Bill Ross, 'Action Desk – Sheffield.' Apr. 26, 2005. Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/29/a3956529.shtml

Viewing life through the prism of Clark Gable and Joan Crawford, young women's worlds revolved around dance halls, picture houses, cheap perfume, nylons and jazz music. They might have lived in fear of air raids, but large numbers were more influenced by the dirty glamour of Hollywood than by real life. One effect of this was to make crime and immorality deeply fashionable. So bad was the situation come July 1945, that the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a sermon urging Britons to turn away from wartime immorality and sexual indulgence, and to re-embrace Christian living. Instead nearly 45,000 war brides upped and left Britain come the end of 1946 to make new lives in Canada.²⁹⁵

Six months after Johnnie was granted the *decree nisi*, on June 22nd, 1943 his and Margot's divorce was finalized when the decree was made *absolute*. According to Tiny, Margot received nothing financially, and in fact Johnnie could well have pushed Margot for alimony, given that the 'responsibility' for Harvey had been assumed by his grandmother.

Ordinarily, questions relating to custody or maintenance of children are dealt with by a registrar, a sort of junior judge, after a decree of divorce has been pronounced.²⁹⁶ However, owing to Johnnie's absence, there was no case to be argued for now, while his mother's guardianship of Harvey had been effectively cemented by Margot's not contesting her husband's petition nor challenging the court's decision.²⁹⁷ In other words, Margot had already given up her son. In fact, the divorce appears to have been the ideal opportunity to ensure that if Johnnie perished in action, his mother would have the stronger case to remain his primary guardian. Had any of this not been contrived? I began to ask myself.

Under these conditions, I imagine Margot would have liked to put as much distance as possible between herself and Johnnie's mother. However, she had to stay local to see Harvey, which in turn tied her to Leeds, a place she was never very fond of. At least she retained her British citizenship and thus her British passport,²⁹⁸ important because during 1943 identity cards were re-issued with their attendant details on rations while under the rules of wartime conscription she remained exempt from labour service.²⁹⁹ That meant she could continue to work and reside at Sholebroke Avenue (and therefore had space to host 'guests' presumably occasionally her son too). But might she ever have considered an alternative career, perhaps in broadcasting herself, or secret intelligence? An introduction to the BBC's 'German language service' and some related 'career opportunities' for German speakers are described in the textbox overleaf.

²⁹⁵ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 27, 235, 186

²⁹⁶ *Marriage Failures and the Children*. Claud Mullins. The Epworth Press, 1954. Pg. 8

²⁹⁷ To shift the blame to the petitioner, i.e. Johnnie, Margot would have to prove Johnnie was involved with a third party. That would require putting a detective onto her husband and monitoring his actions during the six months subsequent to the decree nisi being awarded – difficult to envisage given his station and movement. And the cost.

²⁹⁸ "...A woman who, having been an alien, has by, or in consequence of her marriage become a British subject, shall not, by reason only of the ... dissolution of her marriage, cease to be a British subject." *British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act*. Part III. General. National Status of Married Women and Infant Children. Para. 11, Pg. 10.

Online at: legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/4-5/17/enacted. N.b. AKA the 'Registration of Aliens Act of 1914'

²⁹⁹ Under the second National Service Act, unmarried women over the age of 30 remained exempt from duty. See: www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/yourcountry/overview/conscriptionww2

15.15: An Alternative Take on 'Margot's' War

During the spring of 1941, 'German' radio station, *Gustav Siegfried Eins* (or *GS1*) mysteriously appeared on short wave radio. Typically it transmitted the same programme for between seven and twelve minutes prior to every hour.¹ The presenter, sounding a bit like an old Prussian military man, perhaps a former member of the *Stahlhelm*, and calling himself 'Der Chef,' railed against the British. He described the King as 'a stuttering fool' but also deplored the corruption and depravity that prevailed within the Nazi regime.



Although not many Germans heard the first broadcast on May 23rd, 1941, "even with an ordinary People's Radio or Volksempfänger, AM (plus the Lower frequency European Longwave), a little cleverness and a short length of wire inserted at exactly the right points thru the back panel" one could pick it up.² *GS1* was in fact a BBC broadcast transmitted from Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire presented as an illegal radio station that German locals were made to think was sent from Hamburg (the nation's Foreign Office's Press and Information Section knew all too well it wasn't).³ The idea behind the 'Black propaganda' service, claimed the producer, Leonard Miall, was "not to win Germans to our side but to turn Germans against Germans and thereby weaken the German war machine." It was quite a success too, since according to the British Special Operations Executive's Stockholm Office, "*GS1 was the most-listened to [sender] in the Third Reich.*"⁴

You'd expect therefore particular interest from the British authorities in UK-based Germans for their foreign language skills. Indeed, Vernon Bartlett, a foreign affairs specialist and journalist had declared as early as 1938 that "German refugees would be a potential asset... [and] that the potential of broadcasting ought to be exploited." Leaflet content preparation was another opportunity.⁵

Some females were eventually welcomed. Take *Margit Maas* for instance, a German refugee that later played the role of a 'medium' in a radio programme called *Der Zenit* which broadcast from March 22nd, 1943, between 8 and 11 in the evening on the Bedfordshire-based *Atlantiksender*.⁶ Her task was to advise of auspicious and inauspicious times to put to sea. She managed the role with some difficulty though because she kept giggling at the complete nonsense she was supposed to be reading!⁷

Another career opportunity might have been the so-called Intelligence Corps in which Margot could have worked as a 'secret listener' of incoming or outgoing transmissions at one of its Wireless Interception (WI) or 'Y-stations'.⁸

Close family members never heard Margot speak, however, of having played any role in Britain's 'Secret War,' so I guess this all remains 'An Alternative Take on 'Margot's' War.'

1. *The Early Shortwave Stations: A Broadcasting History Through 1945*. Jerome S. Berg. Pg. 224. Online [here](http://www.psywar.org/delmer/8250/1001#1941_September). NB: Programme summary transcripts prepared by the U.S. Foreign Broadcast Intelligence Service from September 1941 until Nov. 1943 are held by the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 262 and online [here](http://www.psywar.org/delmer/8250/1001#1941_September): [psywar.org/delmer/8250/1001#1941_September](http://www.psywar.org/delmer/8250/1001#1941_September)

2. 'Gray and Black Radio Propaganda against Nazi Germany.' Contribution by Robert Rowen to the New York Military Affairs Symposium on April 18, 2003. See:

[bobrowen.com/nymas/radioproppaper.htm#Gustav_Siegfried_Eins](http://www.bobrowen.com/nymas/radioproppaper.htm#Gustav_Siegfried_Eins)

3. *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books. 2011. (Entry of March 25, 1943). Pg. 52

4. *Spy Capital of Britain. Bedfordshire's Secret War*. Stephen Bunker. Bedford Chronicles. 2007. pg. 81, 96, 97; 5: pg. 33; 7: pg. 103

6. See: [bobrowen.com/nymas/radioproppaper.htm#Atlantiksender](http://www.bobrowen.com/nymas/radioproppaper.htm#Atlantiksender)

8. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Y-stations

Picture: Sefton Delmer, the man behind *GS1*. Source: [Psywar.org](http://www.psywar.org)

Margot's time with Harvey will not only have meant sharing him with his grandmother but with Johnnie too, who certainly got about the northeast during spring 1943 as his airborne popularity rose. On February 7th he was on stage at Newcastle's Odeon theatre while a visit to Leeds most certainly will have followed in March, when he checked in to *Ravenswood* to follow up on an ad he placed in *The Stage* for submissions of "good solid material for broadcasting."³⁰⁰

Bizarrely, Johnnie also looks to have spent his freetime constructing aircraft models, perhaps together with seven year old Harvey, since that handiwork became part of an exhibition called 'Wings' that was hosted at an Air Training Corps³⁰¹ stand in Sunderland during May. The models were auctioned off as part of a fundraiser (see inset right).³⁰² Prior to this, the public's "Favourite Comedian from Happidrome and Music Hall" returned to the Newcastle stage on Sunday 25th April. The fact that the 129th Regiment had batteries stationed at a camp coded 'TEES' leads me to believe he was among them.³⁰³



"...A blow to masculine pride!"
Nurse D. Taylor bettered her male counterparts in a charity aircraft recognition test

Source:
Sunderland
Daily Echo and
Shipping
Gazette.
May 10, 1943.

Come the summertime, Margot's post-divorce 'haze' recreation with Harvey must have included the annual gathering of young (dancing) people organised by the *Yorkshire Evening News* that took place in nearby Roundhay Park as part of 'Youth Week.'³⁰⁴ There was also 'Ark Royal' week, which ran from June 23rd-July 3rd when Loiners raised 7.2 million British pounds to replace the HMS Ark Royal aircraft carrier that had been sunk by U-boats early on in the war. Thanks to schools' sales drives and a city-wide collection, hundreds of kids brought prams, barrows and bogies laden with jam jars for the fund, thereby smashing the five million pound target.³⁰⁵ Perhaps during one or other of those events, Margot treated Harvey to his first Coca-Cola, after Oxley's Mineral Water Company began producing Coke from a special concentrate in 1943 to serve the American troops in the area.³⁰⁶ There was no shortage of things to do, and in September they might have gone to the annual 'Youth Marches On' show at its Grand Theatre (see image overleaf).³⁰⁷

³⁰⁰ *The Stage*. March 11, 1943. Pg. 8

³⁰¹ The Air Training Corps gave part-time air training to teenagers and young men who might later join the Royal Air Force. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Training_Corps#Air_Training_Corps

³⁰² *Wearside Echoes*. Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette. May 10, 1943. Pg. 2

³⁰³ Newcastle Journal. February 1, 1943. Pg. 2 and [Newcastle Evening Chronicle](#). April 15, 1943. Pg. 2

³⁰⁴ See: mylearning.org/leeds-in-world-war-ii/p-847 and www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=2004116_87336368

³⁰⁵ See: yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/your-leeds/nostalgia/leeds-property-news-the-day-churchill-visited-leeds-and-how-pows-built-houses-in-farsley-1-7258631

³⁰⁶ See: www.culture24.org.uk/places-to-go/yorkshire/leeds/tra28213

³⁰⁷ See: www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=20031112_42225283



Leeds Summers.

Top:
Youth Week (1942),
in nearby Roundhay
Park



Middle Top:
An exhibition stand
of the National
Association of Boys
Clubs in Lewis's
store on The
Headrow.

Middle Bottom: The
annual 'Youth
Marches On' show at
the Grand Theatre in
September.



Bottom:
A Boots lending
library plus
advertising poster



Sources:

Mylearning.org (top);
leodis.net
(middle top); leodis.net
(middle bottom) and
letterpressproject.co.uk
(bottom)

Curiously, lending libraries grew immensely popular during this period, not only in Germany but in the UK too and perhaps Margot and Harvey borrowed books from Boots pharmacies, a major drugstore chain in the UK that had hosted the *Boots Lending Library* since 1898,³⁰⁸ or WHSmith, who had been doing it since 1860.

When she wasn't with Harvey, Margot visited the flicks and maybe saw *The Gentle Sex*.³⁰⁹ Something of a romantic comedy-drama released May 23, it tells the story of seven 'gentle' British girls who 'do their bit' during World War II. They meet at an Auxiliary Territorial Service training camp and after training, perform drill, drive lorries, and man ack-ack batteries.³¹⁰ The film features Lilli Palmer, the London-based Prussian-born actress who in one captivating moment in the film, utters with sincerity and just a hint of a German accent a line that lashes out at the barbarism of the Nazis and betrays her own personal experience. At the same time, *The Gentle Sex* might just have given a clearer understanding of the role women played in mixed ack-ack batteries. That is, if Margot still cared by that time.

Staying on in Chapelton helped bring stability to Harvey's childhood, not unimportant with his father being away. However, soon after the couple divorced, Johnnie's wartime vocation took an interesting twist when he moved to London to join the 'Intelligence Corps.' Part of the British Army, it was formally established on July 15, 1940 with the goal being to gather knowledge on what the enemy was doing, planning and thinking,³¹¹ in lieu of its soldiers' eventual re-deployment to France.³¹²



One of the war's
more memorable
films: 1943's 'The
Gentle Sex'
starring Lilli
Palmer
Source: [wiki/
The_Gentle_Sex](http://wiki/The_Gentle_Sex)

³⁰⁸ The library encompassed 450 branches at its peak. The last 121 disappeared in 1966.

See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circulating_library

³⁰⁹ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 89.

N.b. Another popular film was *We Dive at Dawn*, starring John Mills that was released June 28, 1943. In it, a British submarine is sent after a new German warship (after canceling all the crew's leave). They chase it so far that they have no fuel to get home.

³¹⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gentle_Sex and www.imdb.com/title/tt0035931/?ref=fn_al_tt_1

³¹¹ Intelligence "was critical to the successful conduct of Total War."

Spy Capital of Britain. Bedfordshire's Secret War. Stephen Bunker. Bedford Chronicles. 2007. Pg. 137

³¹² See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence_Corps_\(United_Kingdom\)#Second_World_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intelligence_Corps_(United_Kingdom)#Second_World_War)

In its early days the Corps “talent spotted ... particularly those with languages,”³¹³ as part of its recruitment programme, so it’s somewhat amusing to read in Riscoe’s military record that he apparently spoke ‘Dutch, German and Danish.’ Quite where the Danish came from is something of a mystery, however, according to Nick van der Bijl in his *History of the Intelligence Corps*, when one potential recruit mentioned in an interview that he could interpret the hieroglyphics of the Egyptian pharaohs, the interviewing officer pondered before answering: “Mmm, pharaohs, we have a unit up there, so I’ll post you up there.”³¹⁴ In other words, a smattering of foreign language went a long way. Not surprisingly, Denis Gifford, author of *The Golden Age of Radio*, speculated Riscoe’s involvement in the corps was “because of his knowledge of the Dutch life and language.”³¹⁵

As to how Riscoe was recruited, I learned while researching that the Intelligence Corps’ Special Operations Executive³¹⁶ had a strong presence in Scotland, whatsmore that its “NCOs in civilian clothes frequented clubs, pubs and dances used by off-duty soldiers to identify subversives and agents.”³¹⁷ Since both Queensferry and Edinburgh are mentioned, I suppose Johnnie was either approached at a gig during which he mentioned his time in Holland or indicated his knowledge of Dutch. Or he simply volunteered for a change of scenery, perhaps following a tip off. A chap named W. C. Young, himself of the Royal Artillery, for example, simply “asked for a transfer to the Intelligence Corps on the basis of my languages.”³¹⁸

Riscoe’s engagement by the Intelligence Corps meant he became part and parcel of the Allies’ concerted preparations for their return to Europe, heralded by the so-called Trident Conference that took place in Washington in May 1943. Although some 850 of the corps’ 11,500 men and women were based at ‘Government Communications Headquarters’ in Bletchley Park as part of its ‘Signals Intelligence’ operations,³¹⁹ Riscoe’s destiny was to be with Field Security, the Corps’ most common unit which, as the name suggests, served out in the field. In fact wartime members often claimed their motto ought to have been, ‘First in, last out’ as frequently they were among the first to enter a captured town, secure vital buildings and arrest their opposite enemy numbers, before re-establishing the local administration.³²⁰ HQ Intelligence Corps (Field) was thus formed in Highgate, London in May 1943.³²¹

³¹³ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 26

³¹⁴ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 15.

N.b. Another example included one who professed to speak German, when he knew but 1 or 2 words.

³¹⁵ Obituary: Johnnie Riscoe. *The Independent* (London, England). April 20, 2000. Denis Gifford

³¹⁶ The Special Operations Executive (SOE) units collected information and intelligence.

See: *History of The Intelligence Corps. Second World War.* 2010. Pg. 4, 5

³¹⁷ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 124.

N.b. An NCO picked up Rudolf Hess, just south of Glasgow after his flight from Nazi Germany in May 1941. See Pg. 130

³¹⁸ FSS. *Field Security Section.* Bob Steers. Self-published. 1996. Pg. 62

³¹⁹ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 31.

N.b. This made up around 40 percent of the park’s army personnel, according to the *History of The Intelligence Corps. Second World War.* 2010. Pg. 4. Furthermore, by January 1945, the Intelligence Corps numbered some 3040 officers and 5930 soldiers with 1553 attached officers. (Ibid). Some of the more famous are listed here:

wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Intelligence_Corps_officers

³²⁰ *The Introduction.* March 1996. FSS. *Field Security Section.* Bob Steers. Self-published. 1996.

³²¹ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 139

Sergeant Riscoe's departure from the land of heather occurred on the cusp of the war's fourth anniversary when he was admitted on August 11th (oddly enough his transfer was cancelled the same day before being re-instated).³²² He joined the 'Other Ranks Wing' of the 'Intelligence Corps Depot,' and according to documentation held by the Imperial War Museum,³²³ ought to have began life in the corps at the King Alfred College in Winchester. "Winchester," however, "was just one, in fact, the first, of the many training establishments used by the Intelligence Corps," according to Mr. A. F. Judge, Senior Researcher at the Military Intelligence Museum, which is close to my hometown, in Chicksands, Bedfordshire.³²⁴

Riscoe's induction will have been nothing short of taxing (fun). Intakes of about eighty typically undertook a 28 week course that included three weeks motorcycling cross-country between 0845 and 1830, Monday to Saturday, followed by three weeks learning of the British Army organization and administration, weapon training, drill, physical fitness and obstacle crossing, report writing and map reading. Another three weeks exercising was then completed on the Yorkshire moors before a final intensive fortnight was spent on Field Security at the School of Military Intelligence at Matlock in Derbyshire.³²⁵

However, "recreation was not forgotten, with lorries taking off-duty soldiers to Rotherham and Sheffield either for a night out or a weekend's leave."³²⁶ It's clear Margot's former husband managed to squeeze in his own brand of recreation too, since on Sunday September 12th radio's 'Giggle-O' performed afternoon and evening shows alongside

many other stars just north of Leeds at Cross Flatts' 'Big Top.'³²⁷ After completing his spell in northern England, around the end of October, Johnnie joined the '3 (Holding) Company' where he awaited movement orders. At the end of November, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin agreed in Tehran to open the second front no later than May 1st, 1944.³²⁸ Had Riscoe unwittingly traded the safety of Scotland for what amounted to life-threatening continental military action?

Looking to the
end:
Stalin, Roosevelt
and Churchill
agree the future
of Europe at
Russia's
Embassy, Tehran,
Iran, December
1943



Source: [wiki/
Tehran_Conference](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tehran_Conference)

³²² According to his military record and ACI (Army Council Instruction) 1020/40

³²³ See: Art.IWM ART 15770 1 - 9 at iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/5655

N.b. Other sources also indicate "An Officers' Training Wing was established at Oxford University, with other ranks trained at Winchester." See for example: britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/documents.php?aid=154&nid=22&start=10

³²⁴ Personal correspondence of October 25th, 2016. N.b. "Towards the end of the war, military training took place at Beaumaris in North Wales." *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010*. Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 132-133

³²⁵ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010*. Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 132-133

³²⁶ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010*. Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 133

³²⁷ *Yorkshire Evening Post*. September 11, 1943. Pg. 2

³²⁸ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tehran_Conference](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tehran_Conference)

Aside from agreeing upon the nature of the second front, 'The Big Three' also discussed Germany's borders subsequent to its defeat, plus the fate of those territories east of it.³²⁹ Soviet influence in eastern Europe, namely Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, the annexed Baltic states and Yugoslavia was defined, although Poland was more complicated. Churchill, having warned Roosevelt about Stalin's long-term ambitions in Europe, still saw huge chunks of Polish territory given in exchange for Poland receiving German land up to the *Oder* and *Neisse* rivers. Stalin it seemed got away with promising Poland would be a buffer zone between the Soviet empire and the West – a strong and independent state. Pending victory, the future of Europe had been fixed. Although there was no common policy on how to deal with Germany post-Hitler,³³⁰ the so-called European Advisory Commission (EAC) had been established to make proposals for the partition of a defeated Germany into British, American and Soviet occupation zones.³³¹

Riscoe's training wrapped up before the end of the year and he no doubt received some time off that Christmas. But that will have brought home just how little ground there was left for celebration in the UK, much as was the case in Holland. *"No chance of turkey, chicken or goose – not even the despised rabbit ... There are shops with three puddings and 800 registered customers,"* noted one Londoner, Vere Hodgson, while the weather resumed its place as the traditional subject for complaint: the winter of 1943-4 was exceptionally cold and following the previous seasons' drought, meant green vegetables and potatoes were in short supply as well.³³² Those seeking presents found the stores equally barren. Perhaps the only place Johnnie – briefly reunited with his son – found a decent meal was at Leeds town hall's 'British Restaurant.' Writes Sheila Jubb, *"I was taken ... as a young child ... the meals were very good, especially the sponge puddings and custard."*³³³



"You had to be prepared to stand in a long queue."
Leeds Town Hall's 'British Restaurant' at one of its quieter moments. Aug. 27th, 1942
Source: Leodiscollections.net

On December 31st, 1943, Riscoe will have woken up to find he was 'Struck of Strength' - a purely administrative remark signifying when an individual ceased to be the responsibility of their unit. That meant he was now released from the Royal Artillery and could move to 'Airborne Force's Base 104/1 Pt. I,' part of the so-called Twenty-First Army Group. Although he need not worry about food shortages, on the other hand he was poised to become one of Europe's liberators. His former sister-in-law, Nanny, would have been tickled pink had she known that prospect was afoot. She was only 'former,' because Margot had once been unfaithful although adultery with one person today is deemed insufficient ground to grant a divorce.³³⁴ In looking back on that dismal year of 1943, it would seem Margot ultimately had the strongest claim to being 'Struck of Strength.'

#####

³²⁹ Faust's *Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 556

³³⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tehran_Conference

³³¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_inner_German_border

³³² *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 247, 267

³³³ See: Leodiscollections.net/photo/218

³³⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divorce_in_England_and_Wales

- TARGET LEIPZIG -

While Margot split her time between work and Harvey, Tiny coped with scurvy, and even before Nanny meant 'refuge,' *Mutti* rode overnight deep into German heartland. That August of 1943 she had returned to her and her children's birthplace; Leipzig. It was maybe eleven years since she'd last been home, then to attend her mother's funeral. It was almost twenty since she'd left for Berlin. Yet she arrived just in time for her sixtieth birthday. She'd turned full circle. Was this where her life would end?

These and perhaps other thoughts, nostalgia, trepidation, perhaps also regret, went through her mind as she stepped off the train, over the cross-platform and into the great hall of one of the largest stations in the world.³³⁵ As she swanned through its grand domed entrance she was greeted by that familiar Saxon accent, that adenoidal nasal twang, before exiting to face again the city she grew up in, as yet untouched by the Allies. She'd left Leipzig in the midst of the Golden Twenties together with Albert, initially her lodger, with such optimism. And now she was home. "*Has it really been so long?*" she mused.

"For some reason or other there is something about a Saxon which is considered faintly ridiculous by the rest of his countrymen," wrote English woman, Christabel Bielenburg, in *The Past is Myself*.³³⁶ However, Frau Tyralla considered herself first and foremost Prussian, as her father had, despite his Holsatian origins having been born 35km northeast of Hamburg. Leipzig was also the city where she'd married the Silesian who fathered her four children, that 'lone ranger' from the east with the unusual name she still carried today, '*Tyralla*.' No, she was Prussian through and through, even if 'Prussia' was now consigned to history.

The train had skirted the northern suburb of Gohlis as they arrived, that bourgeois development where her children were born and grew up, beginning prematurely with Nanny in 1907. Her girls had flourished on the US stage with the help of Oswald Büttner. In 1923 he had taken first Nanny, then Margot four years later, to the US with his acrobat troupe, *The Six Rockets*, to tour its vaudeville theatres, after which his son carried on his business in some shape or form once the girls moved to Holland. "*I must look up Oswald's wife*," she thought to herself. "*Anna was her name...*" Theo and Eva, the two children she'd lost, were more painful memories to bear. She'd make amends and pay her respects.

For now, however, she wasn't staying in the city but retreating to the relative safety of the countryside, to her late parents and now brother's home in Wenigmachern, set in peaceful *Muldental* parkland. It had once been her home too, in 1906. She was still no fonder of her brother for having denied her a fairer share of their parents' inheritance but now was not the time to air grievances. A war was on, and the Hinsch villa at least provided safe haven. "*But for how long?*" she must've thought.³³⁷

³³⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leipzig_Hauptbahnhof

³³⁶ *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis*. Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 56

³³⁷ N.b. all the dialogues which follow are imagined, unless otherwise referenced

"Never mind 60, I feel a hundred years old," she uttered as she stepped inside the front door, following the long walk from Machern's railway station. "A decent night's sleep is such a rarity these days what with the raids."

"Welcome home sister, it's nice to see you again too," uttered Fritz.

Moments later they were sat together with Martha, his wife, sipping coffee and enjoying a late breakfast replete with fried eggs, bacon, onion and homemade bread.

"Thank God you have real food. I am sick of the desperate menu one finds in Berlin ... the ration cards ... and malt coffee. But real coffee-beans! Now that's a luxury."³³⁸

"Bodenständigkeit" (rootedness in the soil) he murmured. "No matter what happens, we're inflation proof."³³⁹

"Well, if ever there's a time to fall back on that, it's wartime," she replied. "It's just as in the first world war."

"For the home on the land holds a family together, while fluttering off to the town and leaving one's own piece of land scatters it to the four winds." That well-worn phrase rang in her ears.³⁴⁰

"It's good the Villa remained with Fritz," she thought to herself. She could never live in the country, despite its perks. She was a city girl through and through.



"For the home on the land holds a family together."

Frau Tyralla steps back in time at the crested Machern-baed Hinsch Villa. Pictured here cca. 1906

Frau Tyralla took a room upstairs, which meant if the Russians ever invaded, God forbid, she'd be among the last to be found. There was the attic too, now cleared to minimize the fire hazard, Fritz had said. That was where the Dutch hide their stowaways too. Perhaps the *Russkis* will be too lazy to climb to the top, anyway.

Amidst the deprivation and destitution of the day, a type not witnessed even during the worst days of the depression, it was the small farmers who preserved families,³⁴¹ just as they had during 1917. Nanny's older brother may have been distant and pre-occupied with personal interests – he once played piano at Leipzig's *Gewandhaus*. However, his more noble days and evenings filled with chamber music were well over. Now he managed his smallholding. And a good thing too.

Nanny still felt she was above all that, but the first priority, he insisted, was to get the *Kartoffeln* out of the ground. "The potato harvest is said to be turning out a poor one and a stricter rationing of potatoes to be imminent."³⁴² "We'll make good money on that." So of all places, it was in the vegetable garden that Frau Tyralla set foot in first, which is also where she really got to know her sister-in-law.

³³⁸ Obviously coffee was a black market commodity by this time, and not inexpensive come November 1943. *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story*, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 144

³³⁹ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 104

³⁴⁰ Citing turn of the century German conservative politician and *Junker*, *Elard von Oldenburg-Januschau in Land, Peasant and Lord in German Agriculture since 1800* by Jonathan Osmond. In *Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History* edited by Ogilvie and Overy. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 96

See also en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elard_von_Oldenburg-Januschau

³⁴¹ *Social policy and social welfare in Germany from the mid-nineteenth century to the present*. Peter Stachura. In *Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History* edited by Ogilvie and Overy. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 242

³⁴² *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Aug. 23, 1943. Pg. 255

Martha Rennfranz hailed from Zeitz, just south of Leipzig, although she was not his first wife. Hedwig, whom Frau Tyralla and her daughters had known better, was now in Frankfurt although he could say little as to her welfare or that of their fourth son, Hans, who was also there.³⁴³ She'd scandalously divorced Fritz upon his return from the frontline in 1919, leaving him to put his life back together while she took their sons. "He's not had it easy," she thought. For her part, Frau Tyralla, relayed news from Berlin and Holland.

Fritz coloured their exchange with word about his three elder sons and their own children, plus their whereabouts. Oddly, Fritz mentioned less of his elder son, close by in Engelsdorf, but focused on his granddaughter, Vera.

"She graduated the Berufsschule in May 1943 and is now a trainee at Leipzig's famous Auerbachs Keller, not from where we once lived in Salzgässchen. Her lodgings are at Auerbachs, in the attic above, "boys to the left, girls to the right," she always emphasises. "She works hard, late into the night," she tells me, "but for what?" she always asks."

*"Vera's brother, Lothar, has a year to go at school, though he too has missed out on the Hitler Youth. For the better too, since this year Nazi leaders have begun turning its members into a military reserve to replace manpower depleted due to the military losses."*³⁴⁴

*"Thank heaven indeed," thought Frau Tyralla: "How long will it take to remove the National Socialist filth from these children's heads?"*³⁴⁵

Thanking her brother for breakfast, she retired upstairs for a nap. Although Nanny Tyralla had sought sanctuary in Saxony, her peace was relatively shortlived. Bomber Command's intention was not only to bomb Berlin, but centres east of it in order to aid the Soviet advance on the capital. Orders had thus followed to attack Leipzig, Dresden and other cities, in order to 'cause confusion in the evacuation from the east' and 'hamper the movements of troops from the west.'³⁴⁶

In fact, she had barely arrived when the raids on Leipzig got underway, starting on the night of August 31st, when there was a British raid on Eutritzsch north of Gohlis and Schönefeld.³⁴⁷

"Mein Gott! Nochmals," she exclaimed as Fritz, Martha and she fled into their air raid cellar, here too denoted by an 'LSR' on the outside of the villa. "Bombs seem to follow me wherever I go. Where will it end?"

Although the Italians had already capitulated, the *Wehrmachtsbericht* (daily military bulletin) continued to talk euphemistically of "victorious disengagement without loss" in the south and east.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ The first major raid on Frankfurt occurred just a few weeks later during October 4-5th, 1943. The city was not the target of further significant Allied bombing until six months later when citizens "were totally bombed out, totally burned down," according to one of Tom Kohut's interviewees after "a series of Allied raids on Frankfurt between March 18-23rd, 1944, killed about 1,500 people and left 175,000 homeless."

A German Generation. Yale University Press, 2012. Tomas A. Kohut. Pg. 114-115

³⁴⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hitler_Youth#World_War_II

³⁴⁵ I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Jan. 29, 1944. Pg. 294

³⁴⁶ See: peaceandjustice.freeforums.net/thread/277/life-legacy-winston-churchill

³⁴⁷ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig

³⁴⁸ I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 24, 1943. Pg. 263

The raid on north Leipzig claimed four lives and injured over a hundred.³⁴⁹ Frau Tyralla decided it was time to explore the city, while she still could. Visibly, the centre lay intact but the first thing she noticed was the 500 'Arbeitsmaiden' who were obliged to work on the public transport and for it, earned a mark a day. They'd been doing that since 1942.

Having checked the city's *Adressbücher*, she decided to look up some former acquaintances, including Anna Büttner, the widow of *The Six Rockets'* manager.³⁵⁰ Frau Tyralla was delighted to learn the 75 year old still lived in her second floor apartment in *Grunert str. 10* (lying nearby *Gohlis*, between *Eutritzsches* and *Schönefeld*). As she rode the tram north she could have sworn time stood still. It was back in July 1923 when she'd dropped fifteen year old Nanny off, prior to her departure for the US with Frau Büttner's husband. "It's incredible" she thought "We both left Leipzig soon after, never to return together."

Anna was delighted to see Nanny and over coffee retold her case of *déjà vu*. They discussed life after Oswald and Arno's successes since returning from the US. They exchanged news on her former rockets too.

"Are they still in Holland?" asked Frau Büttner, recalling she'd last seen Nanny and Margot in early 1932 when they'd returned before the eldest married that Dutchman.

"Nanny, yes, in Amsterdam" she replied. "Margot too married a showman. Ein Englischer Jude!" she said, adding that sadly she'd not heard from Margot since the war had broken out. She had lived then in London and hoped for the best. "Both girls have youngsters," she added. "I met Nanny in Holland a year ago. They don't have it easy, what with the occupation." Frau

Büttner wished her best greetings conveyed. "We've some Dutchmen here too," she recalled. "Forced labourers and prisoners of war. There are 30,000 in Leipzig: men from Italy and Denmark too, scattered across some 420 camps in the town."³⁵¹ Did you know that some half of Leipzig's schools have been taken over to serve as hospitals and troop support stations during the last year?"³⁵²

"Reminds me of the last war," answered Frau Tyralla. "Are any of the other rockets still in Leipzig?" steering the conversation back to lighter topics.

³⁴⁹ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 215

³⁵⁰ Born cca. 1868, according to the SS *Orbita's* manifesto of alien passengers sailing from Hamburg to New York on July 23, 1921.

³⁵¹ Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 48. N.b. Leipzig had 300 camps with some 14,000 Prisoners of War by December 1942 alongside some 15,000 kidnapped citizens from occupied states in another 126 camps. By the beginning of 1944 the number of foreign forced labourers had risen to 41,000. Leipzig, 1978. Pg. 86-87. Most will have found themselves working in the 221 (sic, in contrast with the 30 quoted in Pt. 1 on pg. 623) arms-related industries, which by Sept. 30, 1943 engaged 154,119 employees. Of them 43,905 were foreigners, where some 42,000 were housed in over 400 camps. Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 15.

³⁵² Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87

"Ja, natürlich! We haven't all deserted the Heimat!" responded Frau Büttner begrudgingly. "Annedore, who used to be my daughter-in-law is here with son Lester. She's a Pianistin and just west of the city centre at Naundorfchen 7.³⁵³ And of course my son, Arno is here too. He's been in Ludendorff Str. 100-102³⁵⁴ in the Waldstraßenviertel, not far from here, close to the zoo, since 1940. He was the Filmtheater Inhaber of Leipzig's Prisma Palast in the Ostvorstadt, that's Dresdner Straße 14/Antonstraße 1 you know, until 1941. But it's no longer his and these days he gets by as a Kaufmann.³⁵⁵ But the circus did a good trade here last year," she added. "We were visited twice. But not now. The city is in lockdown and all its resources are devoted to the war effort since Goebbels memorable speech."³⁵⁶

Former Six
Rockets'
acrobat, Miss
Lissi, with a
young
Harald
Marenbach.
Leipzig,
Summer
1942 shortly
before
returning to
Köln



"What about the others, Gertrud Tafel and Melanie Geidel?"

Frau Büttner could add little: "Miss Lissi' Hübner and her family returned to Saxony the year before the war started and even though she was a Dresdener herself, they settled into the Krochsiedlung, north of Gohlis, a few kilometers north of your former home. It's a late 1920s/early 1930s housing development.³⁵⁷ As I recall, Friedrich Marenbach had a somewhat important rank in the military and whilst at Wangerooger Weg 25, their second child, Harald, was born. 1940, September 8th, I think. Lissi would occasionally drop by. She'd even left a photograph to her when she departed."

"Lissi was a rebel rouser, you know, very tall in convictions and opinions. She won't accept the flag of the Third Reich and has been arrested regularly for not flying it on special occasions like Adolf's birthday. Friedrich had to return from the front multiple times to bail her out. She also was very active within her means in protecting the many Jewish friends in Leipzig."

"But why do you say was?" asked Frau Tyralla. "Aech, matters grew awkward for them and so Friedrich moved the family back to the original family home near Cologne last year.³⁵⁸ He was convinced that 'uncle' Adolf's dream would end up a nightmare and Sachsen before long would be under Russian occupation."³⁵⁹

Frau Tyralla was sorry to have missed them. Checking the time, she realized she had to be moving and so bid Anna farewell. Back in *Wenigmachern* she wrote Albert and told him of all she'd seen. Since there'd been several raids on Berlin; on August 23rd-24th, on the 31st, and another on September 3rd-4th,³⁶⁰ she was concerned for his well-being. How was she to know whether he was alright? *"Keep in touch,"* she signed off.

³⁵³ Annedore Büttner is listed in the *Leipziger Adressbücher* in 1941, 1942 and 1943 whilst presumably until then she lived in others' homes as a single mum, perhaps with her uncle, who had been local.

³⁵⁴ Today Waldstraße

³⁵⁵ *Leipziger Adressbücher*, 1941-1943.

³⁵⁶ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* *Leipziger Kalender*. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 22

³⁵⁷ The *Krochsiedlung* in new Gohlis was a 1929-1930, sixteen hectare construction project of apartment housing, described in more detail at: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krochsiedlung. It was one of several in north Leipzig, another being the new tenement housing erected in Leipzig *Eutritzs* around 1925 where Frits Hinsch and his family had lived from 1933-1936. Chapter 5 of 2007's *'The Challenge of Urban Democracy: Municipal Elites in Edinburgh and Leipzig, 1890-1930,'* by Michael Schäfer in Robert Beachy and Ralf Roth's *'Who Ran the Cities?: City Elites and Urban Power Structures in Europe and North America,'* Pg. 109 adds a picture whose source is referenced as *City Archive of Leipzig BA 1988/26626*. The book itself is online [here](https://www.bayern.de).

³⁵⁸ Despite May 30th, 1942 having seen Cologne sustain the first thousand-bomber 'Millenium' raid by 1043 airplanes that dropped some 1500 tons of bombs. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Cologne_in_World_War_II

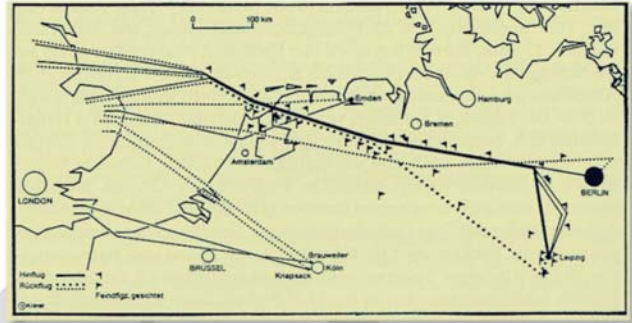
³⁵⁹ Personal correspondence with Harald Marenbach on March 2, 2014 and March 7th, 2014.

³⁶⁰ According to Wikipedia's *Bombing_of_Berlin_in_World_War_II#Timeline*, although Erica Fischer describes one on August 27th that including the characteristic 'Christmas Trees.'

Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 128

Leipzig endured its first major attack on Wednesday, October 20th. Frau Tyralla couldn't help but fail to notice the searchlights soar up into the darkness from the nearby *Peritsch Berg*, outside Machern and to the north (see the map on pg. 777).³⁶¹ In fact, rings of defence had been formed around Leipzig, armed by flak batteries, searchlights and barrage balloons. Flak stations were located close by in *Engelsdorf* too, at the German air base *Flugplatz Brandis-Waldpolenz* some three kilometres to the southwest of Machern, while *Flakkasernen* were also placed in *Paunsdorf* and *Taucha* to its north (both nearby Machern).³⁶²

It was around eight in the evening when the sirens rang out and from nine until ten, *Engelsdorf*, the homestead of Fritz eldest son, wife and grandson, *Lothar*, took its first hits,³⁶³ courtesy of the RAF's heavy four-engined *Stirling*, *Halifax* and *Lancaster* bombers. Codenamed operation '*Haddock*' as early as August 1940,³⁶⁴ the bombers planned to drop their deadly load over the center of Leipzig. A thick layer of cloud, however, meant they instead hit the southern and eastern outer city and suburbs; *Stötteritz*, *Engelsdorf*, *Paunsdorf* and *Sommerfeld*, destroying the *Sommerfelder Kirche*, the neighbouring houses as well as the *Fortuna Palast*, the dance hall-cum-guesthouse to the east of *Engelsdorf*.³⁶⁵ That latter institution was a little over 500m from Frits' family home, to the northeast, while the raid went on to claim the lives of twelve villagers.³⁶⁶ Frau Tyralla reminded her brother she looked forward to meeting her nephew and his kin. He merely muttered a response.



Flight route of Allied bombers on October 20th, 1943. The raid destroyed 1,172 homes, a spot on that of six weeks later. Source: *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* B. Horn

Machern itself was not a direct target although the close proximity of *Flugplatz Brandis-Waldpolenz* meant the area would not always be immune to airstrikes. It's easy to understand why: between winter 1943 and spring 1944 a dedicated *Messerschmitt Me 163*³⁶⁷ fighter-wing, the *Jagdgeschwader 400* (JG 400), was first assembled there,³⁶⁸ while during the same period the *Heinkel He 177*, a four-engined heavy bomber was upgraded.³⁶⁹

³⁶¹ *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt*. Regionalverein Machern e.V, 2015. Pg. 156

³⁶² *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 18-19

³⁶³ *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde*. Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 425

³⁶⁴ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig

³⁶⁵ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 75

³⁶⁶ See: engelsdorf-historie.de/Okttober_43.html. See also: *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde*. Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 244, 350

³⁶⁷ The *Me 163* was a rocket fighter, which as part of the JG 400 fighter-wing was the only military aviation unit of any size in history, to actively use rocket-powered combat aircraft in wartime.

See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jagdgeschwader_400

³⁶⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messerschmitt_Me_163_Komet

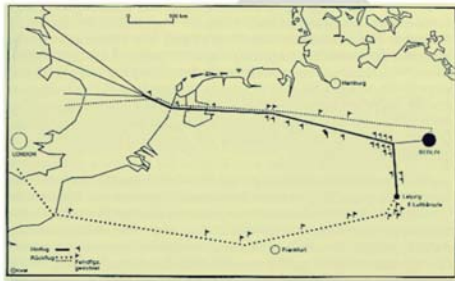
³⁶⁹ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flugplatz_Brandis-Waldpolenz

One has to wonder whether Frau Tyralla knew this before she left Berlin for Leipzig. But the airfield had long been a popular point of interest for Macherners since 1939. According to Willi Schmidt, author of *Machern in Zeitgeschehen*, they'd wander over to admire the *Messerschmitt Bf 109* squadron that had been earlier camped there.³⁷⁰ In Frau Tyralla's freetime, I'll wager she preferred wandering through the community's peaceful Machern Schloss Park. "How long ago was it that I was here with my late husband? And how can it be that my daughters find themselves on the wrong side of the border and are now caught in the cross-fire," she wondered? "It's Faustian. Now even our families are pitted against one another."

In her free time, Frau Tyralla found she'd been able to listen to *Gustav Siegfried Eins* in Leipzig too, although reception varied considerably, the signal jamming being particularly heavy at times. More lately *Der Chef* had begun to advance the view that Germany's only salvation now was peace with the Western powers, as opposed to the compromise with Bolshevism towards which Himmler and his clique had been alleged to be working.³⁷¹ She couldn't agree more.

Der Chef, however, wasn't to stay on the air much longer. On November 18th, he was 'killed off' during that evening's broadcast amidst sounds of a sudden commotion, cries of 'schweinhund' and a burst of machine gun fire. Seemingly the *Gestapo* had finally tracked him down.³⁷² It was a night that also saw the advent of sixteen major attacks on Berlin that claimed many lives and battered the capital almost beyond recognition (see textbox 15.16 overleaf). Frau Tyralla tried then to pick up the English and Russian 'Freedom Broadcasting Stations,' just so as to keep tabs on the war's progress.

Flight route of
Allied bombers
on December
4th, 1943.
Source:
*Leipzig im
Bombenhagel –
Angriffsziel
"Haddock."*
B.Horn



Two weeks later, on the night of December 3rd-4th, just days after the Tehran Conference finished, the Allies completed their earlier failed mission to Leipzig, precision bombing the city with four hundred aircraft. *Von Studnitz* described the attack as "the heaviest single raid of the war."³⁷³ This time the city centre was severely damaged by three separate waves

that started at 3.50 A.M. and spanned 35 minutes. Some 17,000 phosphorous bombs, 87,000 incendiary bombs, 900 explosive bombs and 20 heavy 'airmines' were dropped, constituting some 1,500 tons of explosives altogether.³⁷⁴ The sirens rang until 5.32 A.M.³⁷⁵

³⁷⁰ *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt.* Regionalverein Machern e.V., 2015. Pg. 149

³⁷¹ See: psywar.org/delmer/8200/1001 (sourcing [British National Archives](https://www.britisharchives.org) file: FO 898/51)

³⁷² *Gray and Black Radio Propaganda against Nazi Germany.* Robert Rowen. New York Military Affairs Symposium, April 18, 2003. CUNY Graduate Center. See: bobrowen.com/nymas/radiopropaper.htm#Gustav_Siegfried_Eins

³⁷³ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Dec. 6, 1943. Pg. 144

³⁷⁴ *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild.* VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87

³⁷⁵ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 75

15.16: "Give me four years and you will not recognize Germany:" The Battle of Berlin

"The children were removed from Berlin just in time," before the so-called 'Battle of Berlin,' a week of terror that began on November 18th and rendered about half a million capital dwellers homeless and injured nearly 10,000. Many residents recalled a 'sea of flames,' as whole districts, mainly in the historic centre of the city and to the west, burnt to the ground or collapsed in rubble. "The fact that only 3,758 were killed was testament to the quality of the city's civilian air defences," writes Roger Moorhouse in 'Berlin at War.'



"All the big railway stations are badly hit" recalled eyewitness Barbara Wenzel "Kurfürstendamm and Charlottenburg are in flames." Friedrichstrasse and Unter den Linden were hit again. The Anhalter Bahnhof, through which Frau Tyralla had passed only two months earlier, was so seriously damaged that all long distance trains were re-directed to the Schlesischer Bahnhof (today's Ostbahnhof) – or Potsdam. After subsequent air attacks, large sections of the Anhalter's roof collapsed – or had to be dismantled.

Fortunately Berlin never went the same way as Hamburg, thanks to the capital's wider streets, sturdy brick houses and the precautions that were subsequently taken, such as clearing out attics and removing coal from the storage rooms. Goebbels, however, remained terrified that the city's residents might rise up in protest against the regime. Even if Hitler refused to visit Berlin's ruins, on November 24th, Goebbels drove from his bunker beneath Wilhelmplatz (in Mitte, close to Friedrichstrasse) to his country residence in the west, subsequently remarking: "How beautiful Berlin was at one time and how run down and woebegone it now looks:" Eleven days after the raid, on November 29th, resident, Hans Liebig wrote his wife; "you can hardly breathe in the city for the smoke."

Yet city dwellers did nothing, leaving top Nazis astounded by their compliance. "To keep up the city's spirits, Berliners were given special rations at the end of November – a tin of fish, a can of condensed milk, a half-kilo of fresh vegetables and fifty grams of coffee and tobacco." That was just as well, because further raids arrived on January 2nd, 1944, leading city girl, Ruth Andreas-Friedrich, to acknowledge "we are without water, transportation, or current. The telephone is dead too, and we only learn by roundabout ways whether our friends ... are alive." Frau Tyralla might have well wondered "What of Albert?"

Despite his apparent remorse, Goebbels still fatalistically welcomed the destruction of Germany's beautiful historic cities as a means to finally rid the country of the ballast of bourgeois culture, and clear the way for building new National Socialist cities. Berliners on the other hand took to graffititiing the walls of ruins, commonly daubing Hitler's election slogan from 1933: "Give me four years and you will not recognize Germany." It was that self-confident Berlin wit and cockiness that would help them to see it through, although Alexandra Richie reminds us that "Even in 1944, a murdered Führer would have been a martyr."

Sources: Aimee & Jaguar. Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1996. Pg. 141, 146
Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage, 2011. Pg. 201, 321-324, 333
Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 530, 532, 534, 544
Nazi Germany at War. Martin Kitchen. Routledge, 1994.

The damage was horrific and most pronounced in the city centre.³⁷⁶ Among the sites familiar to the Hinsch's were the *Alte Handelsbörse* opposite their home in *Salzgasschen*, whose valuable stucco ceilings burned completely,³⁷⁷ while the *Krystall palast*, in *Wintergartenstrasse*, the very same street where Fritz's sons had lived during the 1920s and where Nanny and Margot had performed in 1927 now lay gutted.³⁷⁸



Where The Six Rockets once rocked the house. The *Krystall palast* in ashes after the first December raid.

Source:
Leipzig Brennt.
Lehmannstadt Verlag.

³⁷⁶ The university building, the Opera, the main post office, *Museum für Bildende Kunst*, the residential districts, the graphical quarter, part of the university library, the town library (*Stadtbibliothek*) and 80 percent of the trade fair park (whose spacious buildings had been converted into arms factories) besides many monumental buildings in the town centre. *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87. See also: web.archive.org/web/20120728094313/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/dec43.html

³⁷⁷ See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alte_Handelsbörse_\(Leipzig\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alte_Handelsbörse_(Leipzig))

³⁷⁸ See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krystallpalast_\(Leipzig\)](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Krystallpalast_(Leipzig))

Flakscheinwerfer
north of Leipzig's
Augustusplatz, with
Kroch-Hochhaus
(left) and (right)
Neue Theater
(Opernhaus), a short
distance from Vera
Hinsch's workplace
and living quarters.
Source: Leipzig
Brennt. Lehmstedt.



That night also saw the world-renowned *Brühl* suffer, a fire spreading through the furriers' workshops there, which raged until December 15th. Only nine buildings survived the inferno, which firefighters from more than 50 locales around Leipzig, including Dresden, were called in to assist.³⁷⁹ The north side of the street, between *Nikolai* and *Goethe Strasse*, were completely destroyed.³⁸⁰ The city's *Bahnhof* was also damaged, although train services were

restored two days later.³⁸¹ *Kurprinzstrasse*, where Frau Tyralla had grown up, was all but ruins. The west side of that street, the eastern front of *Rosspatz*, the *Panorama*, *Kaffee Bauer* and the *Markthalle* were now little more than empty shells.³⁸² Parts of *Eutritzsch* and *Gohlis* saw fierce fires too, with many tramlines put out of action. Even come March 1944, restoration had only reached 71.4 percent.³⁸³

Vera
Hinsch
tells...
April
2016



Fritz's granddaughter, Vera, was herself in the city at the time. "I took cover in the air raid shelters in Augustusplatz," she told me, where buildings on the north, east, and south sides were decimated (the *Paulinerkirche* on the west side conversely was largely untouched).³⁸⁴ Vera's workstead, the *Auerbachskellar* too survived the raid, Johannes Hartenstein all but confirming this in his account of December 4th, 1943 in 'Leipzig Brennt.' "We sent the refugees who had gathered in the passageway of the *Alten Rathaus*, like troops, into the *Madlerpassage*, where, as the owner of the *Auerbachskellar* had reported, it remained untouched."³⁸⁵ Vera recalled a fire even in the cellar's kitchens, but it was quickly dealt with – the restaurant functioned throughout the war.

According to Victor Klemperer, down the road in Dresden, the raid brought "very heavy loss of life; Augustusplatz: 'a battlefield'; the university destroyed." A week later there were more "ghastly details ... the greater part of the city was destroyed in 26 minutes; university, Neues Theater, ruined; the new hospitals at the Battle of Nations monument gone... Whole streets are said to be flattened, the number of dead..."³⁸⁶ only 1,200.

³⁷⁹ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 78

³⁸⁰ See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brühl_\(Leipzig\)#Zweiter_Weltkrieg_und_DDR-Zeit](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brühl_(Leipzig)#Zweiter_Weltkrieg_und_DDR-Zeit)

³⁸¹ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 91.

See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Leipzig_in_World_War_II.

For reference, see also: Target Leipzig: The RAF's Disastrous Raid of 19/20 February 1944. Alan Cooper. Pen & Sword, 2009. Pg. 92, 94-5, 100, 120 (fires), and Pg. 129

³⁸² Leipzig Brennt. Den Untergang des alten Leipzig am 4. Dezember 1943 in Fotografien und Berichten. Lehmstadt Verlag, 2003. Pg. 17

³⁸³ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 76, 170

³⁸⁴ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 83

³⁸⁵ Leipzig Brennt. Den Untergang des alten Leipzig am 4. Dezember 1943 in Fotografien und Berichten. Lehmstadt Verlag, 2003. Pg. 94

³⁸⁶ I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc., 2001. Dec. 11, 17, 27, 1943. Pg. 274, 279, 281-2

The terror which Germany had brought to its neighbours had now been brought to Leipzigers, while a Jewish legend began to circulate. "In 1938, the Jews of Leipzig were pulled out of their beds at 4:15 A.M. and taken to concentratrion camps; the English recently attacked the city at 4:15 A.M., and afterward all the electric clocks were stopped at 4:15."

Many Dresdeners feared they'd be next. Some 1800 civilians eventually died in the raid, and of 1800 public buildings in the city, 200 were totally destroyed, 630 were damaged, and among 225,000 apartments, some 90,000 were damaged³⁸⁷ and 40,000 destroyed. As many as 131,000 were left homeless.³⁸⁸ Conversely, the industrial areas to the east of the city (beyond which lies *Engelsdorf* and *Machern*) and the west were hardly touched.³⁸⁹ Only minor damage was incurred to the north at *Mockau* and to its air arms industries.³⁹⁰ There remained unfinished business.

Leipzigers were called on by the *Neueste Nachrichten* on December 7th, 1943 to be brave and spirited and to look after one another. Blackout would last from 1702 until 0718. All mothers with young children and the injured were to be brought to relatives or acquaintances, if possible, outside town. Unemployed females (wives too), those old and infirm, and those not involved in the air defence of Leipzig were also told to leave.³⁹¹ Only husbands could stay.³⁹² Some 120,000 residents therefore evacuated,³⁹³ with trains carrying a thousand passengers at a time out of the city. They were brought to less vulnerable places, including *Machern's* neighbouring vicinities of *Wurzen* and *Eilenburg*. Eventually around 288,000 individuals were quartered outside Leipzig come March 1944.



Leipzigers!
Evacuate!
December
10th, 1943.
Source:
*Leipzig im
Bombenhagel.*
B. Horn

For some strange reason it was then that Frau Tyralla's thoughts turned towards her former maid, *Rosalie Hildegard Nagler*. Although it had been a shock when she'd learned in January 1916, after her husband had fallen at the frontline, that he had another son, she grew curious as to his whereabouts. *Johannes Wilhelm Nagler* was born on October 5th, 1915 which meant he was now 25 years old.³⁹⁴ What if he looked like his father? Checking the *Leipziger Adressbücher* she found no trace of his mother, and so abandoned any hope of learning more about him.³⁹⁵ "Was für ein Schade," she thought.

³⁸⁷ Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87

³⁸⁸ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 83, 193

³⁸⁹ Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 49

³⁹⁰ Leipzig geht in die Luft. Die Leipziger Luftfahrt von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. Wolfram Sturm. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011. Pg. 115, 117

³⁹¹ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 58.

N.b. That didn't prevent the further recruitment of some 1750 Flak/Luftwaffenhelfer from high schools and another 200 from middle schools in 1944, as well as girls in Oberschulen für Mädchen and Berufsfachschulen.

³⁹² Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 49

³⁹³ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 177

³⁹⁴ According to Frau Heinrich at the Deutsche Dienststelle (German Service for the Notification of the Next-of-Kin of Fallen Soldiers of the Former German Wehrmacht) there was no record of *Johannes Nagler* (*Herberger*) ever having served in the *Wehrmacht*. Personal correspondence of May 11, 2016.

³⁹⁵ According to research completed on Jan. 15, 2014 by Thoralf Handke of the Staatsarchiv Leipzig, *Johannes Wilhelm Nagler* took the name *Herberger* at an unknown point in time. Having searched the address books through to 1949, "there appears to be no subsequent trace of the man in Leipzig," he adds.

Frau Tyralla mailed season's greetings to Nanny in Amsterdam, recording that while Leipzig's downtown had been reduced to rubble and 40 percent of the dwellings and 80 percent of the fair buildings were destroyed or severely damaged,³⁹⁶ she was unharmed. After a year full of defeats and disasters, she wished a peaceful new year and a successful end to hostilities. *"There'll be new postal regulations too, from January 15,"* she added, *"which means a police control card will be necessary to correspond with foreigners."*³⁹⁷ She did not know how easy it would be to receive the permit. *"At least the weather is not unpleasant,"* she abstractedly signed off.³⁹⁸

+++++

It was during Christmas, 1943 that my great grandmother finally met her nephew and his family. It was then too that news reached them that Martin, Fritz's second eldest had become a father once again. *"At last something positive to celebrate!"* she said. On December 14th, Anna Marie had given birth to Rüdiger in Vienna. Fortunately for the family, the former Austrian capital, now belonging to the renamed *Alpen-Donau-Reichsgaue*, had seen nothing in the way of raids up till then.³⁹⁹ Wrote von Studnitz in mid-February 1944, existence there is as one *"living in fairyland. There is an atmosphere about the place such as I have not encountered anywhere for years. Nobody talks about the war ... The whole town looks more elegant [than Berlin], while the ... Viennese are quite sure they will not be bombed ... The city is ablaze with light until 11.00 P.M. ... the shops ... in comparison with Berlin ... are abundantly full. The antique dealers are earning vast fortunes ... The theatres are sold out. Politically, one follows one's own bent."*⁴⁰⁰ Within a month, however, everything changed, the year witnessing a total of 52 raids that wrought the same destruction seen elsewhere across German cities.

In Dresden, where Heinz and his family were based, raids remained hotly anticipated in the run up to Christmas, with parents encouraged to remove their children from school as soon as possible. The sirens sounded for two hours on December 24th, forcing residents into their cellars and then again on December 29th, leaving residents on tenterhooks as the year came to an end. Berlin was badly hit again too.⁴⁰¹ However, the Saxon capital remained untouched.

³⁹⁶ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig

³⁹⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Jan. 23, 1944. Pg. 291

³⁹⁸ Klemperer rarely remarks upon the weather throughout the winter of 1943-1944, bar a spell from February 18 when he talks of ice and snow and it being minus twenty on February 24 before an 'emphatic thaw' by midday. *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Pg. 297, 299. N.b. Berlin's winter too was mild. It was below zero for (only) 18 days, from Dec. 2-19, 1943, with the coldest only -7.4 on Dec. 7, whilst some 25 days below zero followed from Feb. 15, until March 10, 1944, where -6.3 was the coldest on Feb. 24, 1944. See: luise-berlin.de/bms/bms.txt00/0009gesd.htm

³⁹⁹ The Soviets completed a raid on September 4, 1942, but it wasn't until the Allies had invaded Italy and established an air base in southeast Italy at Foggia that raids on Vienna could be undertaken. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Vienna_in_World_War_II

⁴⁰⁰ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Feb. 15, 1944. Pg. 167

⁴⁰¹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Dec. 11, 25 and 27, 1943. Pg. 275, 281 and 282

With the advent of 1944, "*The race to defeat Germany had begun*,"⁴⁰² its cities continuing to sustain aerial bombardment. But it was not just Germany, the Finns and the Hungarians were given an ultimatum to withdraw from the war should they not want their capitals to suffer the same fates as Hamburg and Berlin.⁴⁰³

Although Hitler claimed in his New Year speech of 1944 that we would "*rebuild our cities, more beautiful than they ever been before*," and that out of the ruins would "*blossom a new German age of magnificent cities*," Greta Wachtel in Hamburg was noted to remark, "*I definitely wasn't the only one who switched the wireless off*."⁴⁰⁴

Following the Tehran Conference, Leipzig had moved up the Allies' agenda, because of its significance to air defence. Therefore, on February 20th, 823 bombers returned to bomb Saxony, almost 300 more than in December and from 4 A.M. to 4.19 A.M., and later during the afternoon of that same day, they hammered residential areas in Leipzig's south and southwest, as well as its industrial areas.⁴⁰⁵

Some 970 citizens died, most of them during the British night raid. Even so, Alan Cooper called it "*The RAF's Disastrous Raid of 19/20 February 1944*," the reasons 'why' being detailed in the textbox overleaf.⁴⁰⁶ Even so, more than 50 percent of the buildings within the music quarter were totally destroyed or severely damaged, including the *Gewandhaus*, the Hall of the Conservatory, the Supreme Court, the university library, as well as many villas (e.g. *Schloss Dölitz*) and residential buildings. The afternoon raid saw severe factory damage, including 65 percent of the *Erla Maschinenwerk*, and claimed the lives of 385 of its employees (including 368 foreigners).⁴⁰⁷ Production was still recovering by May 1944, while other bombed factories were back at full capacity.⁴⁰⁸



Above:

The *Gewandhaus* in ruins. The foyer of Fritz's bourgeois retreat after the raid of Feb. 20th, 1944.

Below:

Königsplatz, just a few hundred metres from where *Frau Tyralla* and her brother grew up.

Source: *Leipzig im Bombenhagel*. B. Horn



⁴⁰² *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 547.

Further reading: *The End (1944-45)* by Ian Kershaw

⁴⁰³ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Feb. 12, 1944. Pg. 291

⁴⁰⁴ *A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story*. Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 166

⁴⁰⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Leipzig_in_World_War_II#20_February_1944

⁴⁰⁶ *Target Leipzig: The RAF's Disastrous Raid of 19/20 February 1944*. Alan Cooper. Pen & Sword, 2009. Pg. 140-164

⁴⁰⁷ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erla_Maschinenwerk

⁴⁰⁸ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig

15.17: What some Macherners saw on February 20th, 1944

Had Nanny Tyralla or her brother, Fritz Hinsch, looked up during the early hours of Sunday February 20th amidst the searchlights they might have seen a bomber explode in the air and crash nearby. The seven-strong crew of the Avro Lancaster II (LL719-EQ-V) bomber that belonged to the 408 Squadron of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) had taken off earlier that evening from a RAF station in or near *Linton on Ouse* in North Yorkshire, about 30km northeast of Margot's home in *Leeds' Chapel Allerton*. It crashed between Machern and Puchau within 'a forested area' that could well have been *Lübschutzer Teiche*, that locale where Fritz' son had his weekend house. Three of those seven remain buried in Germany today.

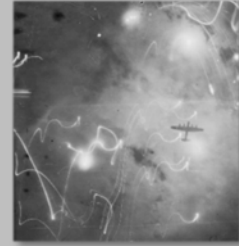
That same night another squadron's crew member had a hair-raising experience when Sergeant Robert 'Bob' Trett was downed near Leipzig in his Halifax bomber. He was part of the RAF's (Ceylon) Squadron 102 (HX185 DY-B). Little did he know when departing RAF Dalton in West Yorkshire (about 50km north of Leeds), however, that it would be 14 months before he would return home. Contributes Jan Kersten;

"This was an unhappy raid for Bomber Command ... When the main bomber force crossed the Dutch coast ... The bomber stream was ... under attack all the way to the target ... There were further difficulties at the target because winds were not as forecast and many aircraft reached the Leipzig area too early and had to orbit and await the Pathfinders. Four aircraft were lost by collision and approximately 20 were shot down by flak. Leipzig was cloud-covered and the Pathfinders had to use skymarking."

Trett, having dropped his load and leaving huge fires burning in Leipzig in his wake, headed north for Brandenburg. En route he was attacked from below by Oblt Becker in a *Junkers 88*, setting his wings on fire. After receiving the order to 'Abandon aircraft' and destroying the radio sets and documents, he baled out. His Halifax crashed near Leipzig and he hit the ground softly in a snow drift. After setting off on foot, he was spotted by a farmer's wife who shouted "*Ah English Fliegerman.*" Thinking the better part of valour was to give himself up, he was taken in by the family who treated his burns, fed him and gave him coffee. A curiosity among the locals, the villagers often stopped by to marvel. According to Trett, he had the impression the family had no time for Hitler and his regime.

Trett was then turned over to the local *Bürgermeister*, whose son spoke a little English and happened to be a part-time anti-aircraft gunner in Berlin. Along with other airmen who were downed at the same time, they were rounded up and taken to a *Luftwaffe* base where some 50-60 crew were accommodated. He was then transported to a *Dulag Luft* interrogation centre in Frankfurt, where he met the rest of his crew bar one. From there they were marched through the town amidst locals' jeers, boos, spitting and hissing and transported 4-5 days to *Heydekrug* in Prussia, about 8 miles from the Lithuanian border. It wasn't until April 10th, 1945 that the camp inmates were liberated, however, after which they arrived back in the UK to a heroes' welcome on April 23rd.

Sources: Target Leipzig: The RAFs Disastrous Raid of 19/20 February, 1944. Alan Cooper. Pen and Sword, 2009. yorkshire-aircraft.co.uk/aircraft/planes/ryedale/ll719.html; backtonormandy.org/component/mtree/air-force-operations/airplanes-allies-and-axis-lost/lancastrer/LL7191944-02-20.html; jankersten.nl/williamuyen/19440219.html and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RAF_Dalton



*"Like little knots of wool,
hang the enemy sky
markers. Now they unroll,
white threads of cloud,
growing longer and longer
until they almost reach the
ground. The wind comes
along, sweeps them into
arcs, tangles them into
graceful scrollwork."*

Source: Berlin
Underground, 1939-1945.
Ruth Andreas-Friedrich
Pg. 208.

Image: The RAF's Leading
Lights. RAF Squadron No
106. Online [here](#).

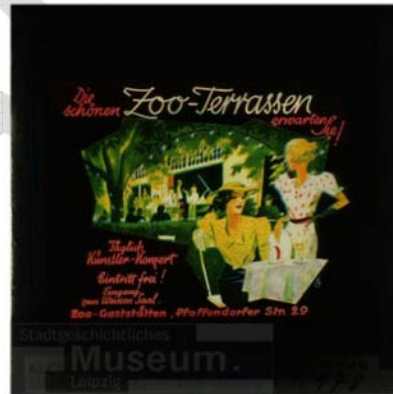
One eye-witness, a young German nursing student (who later married a British soldier), Ilse McKee, described the damage she witnessed, starting with Leipzig Bahnhof after returning from Westphalia to pick up some of her belongings after the raid.

"I was shocked at what I saw. The gigantic hall was just a mass of tumbled-down girders, grotesquely bent metal structures and splintered glass. In order to get out of the station I had to climb over several mounds of rubble, some of them at least six feet high."

She was then stunned by the wilderness of what had once been a thriving city centre:

*"I looked around and I could see nothing but ruins. The big square in front of the station, which was usually so busy, was almost deserted. There were hardly any trams or buses running ... I went across the Bahnhofsplatz up to the Brühl and turned to the left towards Augustusplatz. I stopped and looked around, searching for the spire of the Thomaskirche which should have been quite near, but I couldn't find it... Not a building was left intact. Many had disappeared altogether, others were just hollow, the inside gone. There were hardly any pedestrians now... The whole scene was frightening and unreal. Everything was still."*⁴⁰⁹

Several months respite followed, permitting Fritz Hinsch a sedentary 65th birthday celebration on March 10th, 1944. Meanwhile his grandson Lothar had graduated school and according to Vera, his interest lay in the hospitality business too. He picked up a traineeship at the infamous café Hannes in Leipzig's Musikviertel, boarding at accommodation offered to trainees at Leipzig's Zoo-Gaststätte in Pfaffendorfer Str. Yet even as youngsters aged 15 and up were being recruited to the Luftwaffe as Notdienstverpflichtung (emergency services) and schoolkids were meant to register in their hometown's school for war work, he lucked out. On into 1945, Lehrlinge at Berufsschulen were also recruited as Luftwaffenhelfer.⁴¹⁰ Like his sister, however, Lothar managed to evade that form of 'conscription.'



Like his sister, Lothar Hinsch took to the catering business. Whilst training at the infamous café Hannes in Leipzig's Musikviertel, his digs were with those offered to Lehrlings at Leipzig's Zoo-Gaststätte in Pfaffendorfer Str. 29
Source: [Stadtgeschichtliches Museum Leipzig](#)

During the lunchtime hours of May 28th and 29th, 1944, however, daytime raiders returned to Mockau in the northern part of Leipzig. Now they fully destroyed Halle IV, sixty percent of Halle V and 15 percent of Halle III and claimed the lives of 180. The damage ran to RM 180,712 in costs. Vera told me her parents' home in Werkstättenstrasse was also hit, while neighbouring Paunsdorf saw damage too.⁴¹¹ Frau Tyralla must have feared the bombs were growing too close for comfort - again.

⁴⁰⁹ Target Leipzig: The RAF's Disastrous Raid of 19/20 February 1944. Alan Cooper. Pen & Sword, 2009. Pg. 89-90 citing Tomorrow the World. Ilse McKee. Dent, 1960. Pg. 108-9

⁴¹⁰ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 57

⁴¹¹ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 216, 115, 117, 110

That same attack also approached the northern edge of Dresden and was probably close enough for Vera's cousin, seven year old Irene Hinsch, to hear the distant rumble too. "For a couple of minutes we heard loud humming of propellers and intense anti-aircraft fire" locals reflected, "but again it all passed us by. Dresden remained puzzlingly taboo." The joke going around was that Churchill's grandmother was buried there, or that his aunt must live in Dresden.⁴¹²

Not surprisingly, Irene's recollections of the war, however, were mainly of:

"an unspoilt, peaceful and wonderful childhood. Mother remained busy with the shops and I had no real sense there was a war taking place in quiet Loschwitz."⁴¹³ Although I do remember these dark posters: 'PST! FEIND HÖRT MIT'" with this dark figure in the middle. Those frightened me."



Above:
"Shh! Beware of the enemy within." German campaign poster to remain tightlipped.

Below:

Irene tinkers at home,
Veilchenweg 13



Irene was five and a half when she started school during Easter 1943 and according to Victor Klemperer, school children were well-looked after, having also noted not many months before how it was the Jews who continued to suffer dietary restrictions. "The very little ones and the infants are blooming. Children's food and, above all, full-cream milk, are provided ... up to the age of six."⁴¹⁴

Of school, Irene recalls how:

"Every Monday morning, all the pupils had to meet in the school yard. The smallest ones in front. There was I standing, right arm up. The flag was pulled up and we all had to sing 'Die Fahne hoch' but I don't recall that we were indoctrinated as such. Since I was a child, mother told me, 'you don't have to say 'Heil Hitler' at home.' So except singing in school the national anthem with 'von der Maas bis an die Memel' and 'die Fahne hoch...', the anthem of the Nazi Party, I really was not involved in anything. We learned the basics of writing and maths."⁴¹⁵

Looking more recently through her very first 'Fibel' or textbook, however, she couldn't help but notice"

"it shows how wonderful it is to be a 'Pimpf' - an 'apprentice' for the Hitler Youth and accordingly how nice it will be to be a BDM-girl. Of course I wanted to be a part of the Bund Deutscher Mädel. They wore dark blue skirts, a white poloshirt and my main goal was to wear the neckerchief and the woven leather knot or geflochten. Thank goodness I never got that far - the girls had to be ten - by which time everything was over."

Irene's mother also ran a book lending shop in Schillerplatz, and with Klemperer describing how whole 'libraries' within Jewish homes were being surrendered under pressure from the Gestapo,⁴¹⁶ I wondered whether any of her stock came via homes that Jews vacated. Irene could not say for sure, although she asked the same herself.

⁴¹² I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. May 29, 1944. Pg. 320

⁴¹³ Personal correspondence of March 8th, 2011 and May 26th, 2016 and conversations of autumn 2012

⁴¹⁴ I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Jan. 17, 1943. Pg. 190

⁴¹⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutschlandlied and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Horst_Wessel_Song

⁴¹⁶ I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 7, 1942. Pg. 140. N.b. On Oct. 10, 1942, he reported how "workers from the tax office are removing a vast amount of confiscated furniture, books, etc. from the rooms that have been unsealed" because they "won't be able to take anything to Poland" and because "some Party boss ... needs a nice-looking library for a study." See also Pg. 153

"I never got a complete answer to my repeated questions about her connections with the Jews. The only thing she ever mentioned was that she would let Jewish housewives in front of her in the queue because of the movement restrictions upon them. I am still rather sad not having the opportunity to ask my mother about details she should know."

Six days into June, 1944, the Allies successfully completed the Normandy landings in France. The continental invasion was underway. Wrote Berlin-based Ruth Andreas-Friedrich; *"Everyone is glued to the radio; every soul is a deliberate 'radio criminal,' for no one can be expected, during these hours of decision, not to keep himself informed through foreign stations."*⁴¹⁷

The Allies revisited from the skies too, in a bid to counter the German aerial threat. On June 29th Leipzig's sirens rang out from 8.47 10.23 A.M., scoring 37 deaths in the process. Then came another, larger daylight raid on July 7th, this time rendering significant damage to the *Hauptbahnhof* (a direct hit collapsed the roof above the cross-platform while the western entrance hall was also destroyed). *Engelsdorf* neither got off lightly; Vera's father's former workstead, the *Reichsbahn Ausbesserungs Werk*, its *Kesselhaus* and *Lokwerkstatt* bearing damage.⁴¹⁸ An air raid shelter on the north side of the *Schiebebühne* (its mobile platform) and the *Wagenwerkstatt* (traverser carriage workshop) also succumbed, the attack eventually costing some 185 their lives (including 57 foreigners and 48 employees).⁴¹⁹ With 935 of the city's buildings damaged and 1,080 now homeless,⁴²⁰ the raid was on a par in terms of damaged housing with those of October and December 1943. The *Mitteldeutschen Motorenwerke GmbH* (MMW) suffered worst in the raid of July 7th with the majority of its production facilities destroyed.⁴²¹



Leipzig's *Bahnhof* in ruins. The western entrance hall lays damaged after the July 1944 raids.
Source: Leipzig im Bombenhagel. B. Horn.

As for Vera's parents, bombs hit their living quarters too. But while the third storey suffered damage, the first and second floors remained accessible via one of the three or four entrances. Her father meanwhile was never busier, troop transfers and military transports continuing uninterrupted from Italy via Leipzig and Dresden *nach Osten*, as the Germans sought to shore up their eastern front.⁴²²

⁴¹⁷ Berlin Underground: 1938-1945. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 131

⁴¹⁸ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 111, 114

⁴¹⁹ See: <http://www.engelsdorf-historie.de/raw2.html>

⁴²⁰ Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 113, 215

⁴²¹ Leipzig geht in die Luft. Die Leipziger Luftfahrt von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart. Wolfram Sturm. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011. Pg. 113

⁴²² Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock." Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 215

News of the damage caused by the July raid quickly reached Dresden. *"We had just heard ghastly things about the last heavy attacks on Leipzig and Munich"* the Hinsch's might have conferred.⁴²³ *Leipzig Bahnhof* was hit again on July 20th,⁴²⁴ within a raid that wreaked further havoc on Mockau's air arms industry, this time the *Junkers-Werk*.⁴²⁵ Despite damage in the vicinity of the zoo, including the loss of sixty large zoo animals, Lothar's lodgings nearby remained intact.⁴²⁶

Before the last of those raids hit, and no doubt with an eye on the threat of a Russian occupation of Germany, Goebbels conveyed a political message in the July 9th issue of *Das Reich*. Perhaps in a bid to exploit the uneasy nature of the east-west alliance, he warned the English: *"Ally yourselves with us, because Russia will also overwhelm you!"* Publicly, however, *"the military bulletin continues to obscure, to conceal, to pass over in silence"* the real threat, wrote Klemperer, while Dresdeners speculate whether *"the final German collapse would take place within a few weeks..."*

Following the failed assassination attempt on Hitler on July 20th (which to many only re-asserted his position), the in-house joke at the Klemperers was: *"Hitler must not be allowed to die, he can be used to earn money by taking him around the world in a cage – one dollar to look at him, two dollars to spit at him, three dollars to smack him in the mug."*⁴²⁷

Summer finally arrived during the latter part of August,⁴²⁸ as did Irene's new sibling, *Ferdinand*, on the eighteenth of that month. She herself was now seven and was also celebrated during a christening that occurred amid *"Exhaustingly hot and humid days, for the first time this summer really."* By August 26th, that warm weather had *"lasted for something like a week."*⁴²⁹



Celebrating Irene Hinsch's brother's birthday in early August, 1944

One of Irene's most prominent recollections from that summer is a tale reminiscent of her father's generation at the villa in Wenigmachern, under the ever watchful eye of their grandparents. The owner of the villa in which Irene and her family resided, lived on the ground floor beneath them. However, *Frau Piesold* sternly objected to anyone filching the fruit which fell from the tree in the neighbouring orchard. So under cover of darkness Ingeborg snuck out to bag what she could in those times of austerity, only to find her neighbour, *Frau Heuer*, had the same idea. Having gotten over the shock of meeting one's neighbor and not a landlady in the garden, the pair shared the spoils and a good laugh, all without *Frau Piesold* ever being any the wiser. They'd fared better than Margot and Theo, who had to eat all they'd coveted till they were sick.

⁴²³ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. July 20, 1944. Pg. 335

⁴²⁴ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 50.

See also: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig#März_bis_Dezember_1944

⁴²⁵ *Leipzig geht in die Luft. Die Leipziger Luftfahrt von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Wolfram Sturm. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011. Pg. 115, 117, 108

⁴²⁶ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* *Leipziger Kalender*. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 117-118

⁴²⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Jul. 23, Aug. 4, 7, 9, 1944. Pg. 338-9, 341, 342, 343.

⁴²⁸ Conversely summer seemed to stifle Berlin, with 50 days above 25 degrees and 18 above 30, well above the recent annual averages. See: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

⁴²⁹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Aug. 21, 26, 1944. Pg. 347, 349

It wasn't until August 24th that Dresden finally saw bombs and the attendant columns of smoke in the western part of the city. "On the tram people drew each other's attention to them, but only glances, no one dared speak." However, it was on Sunday October 8th, following an alert that lasted from 1145 until 1330 that the city centre took its first direct hit at American hands. Tram rails were destroyed while the beautiful Zwinger palace gallery was also damaged.⁴³⁰

To Hans-Georg von Studnitz's mind, there was now 'An avalanche of events hurtling downwards with ever-increasing momentum'.⁴³¹ During late August, the RAF had also raided Königsberg (at the extreme range for its planes), the capital of East Prussia, which was said to be 75 percent destroyed.⁴³² As many as 5,000 were dead and 20,000 injured.⁴³³ On Sunday September 10th, central Vienna too suffered a heavy air raid that hit many of its beautiful old buildings and was said to have left the Viennese dumbfounded.⁴³⁴

Germany meanwhile was growing desperately short of manpower. Having stripped factories and offices of able-bodied men and sent them to the fronts, Goebbels continued to fill their places with German women, girls and foreigners. At the beginning of June, the *Luftwaffe* had begun to train women for the first time in anti-aircraft service. "Women's hands on the Searchlights" was the headline that ran in the *National-Zeitung* on June 18th, while a month later Goebbels raised the obligatory working age of females to 50 in a bid to offset defeat.⁴³⁵ That ought to have obliged Vera's 37 year old mother, although with hindsight she laughed at the thought. Perhaps that's one of the reasons the family increasingly spent their weekends outside Engelsdorf, at the family's weekend home in *Lübschutzer Teiche* instead.

On September 6th, it became mandatory for university students to enlist and four days later, Dresden's secondary schools' senior classes were dispatched to factory work⁴³⁶ and the arms industry.⁴³⁷ Some 13,000 forced labourers now put in shifts at Leipzig's *ERLA-Flugzeugwerken*. That same year,⁴³⁸ Leipzig Opera's ballet dancers were obliged to become tram conductors,⁴³⁹ while from November the rolling stock was turned into 'cargotrams' which then had priority.⁴⁴⁰ The measures suggest the mood had become desperate, although Vera, now 16, remained in the employ of the *Auerbachskeller* with Lothar, 15, at *Café Hannes*. Age it seems was on their side.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Aug. 25, Oct. 8, 1944. Pg. 349, 367

⁴³¹ Citing *While Berlin Burns, Diaries 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. London, 1964.

In Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 349

⁴³² See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Königsberg_in_World_War_II

⁴³³ On August 26/27th and 29/30th, 1944. *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 15, 1944. Pg. 358

⁴³⁴ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Sept. 18, 1944. Pg. 204

⁴³⁵ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 161, 148

⁴³⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 10, 1944. Pg. 356

⁴³⁷ There were 37 arms factories and six other firms in Leipzig that hosted facilities for military production.

Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 86

⁴³⁸ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 50

⁴³⁹ All German theatres were also closed from Sept. 1, 1944.

Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 50

⁴⁴⁰ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 50

⁴⁴¹ Vera ought to have been preparing for domestic service as a *Pflichtjahrmädchen*, i.e. to support a mother of one, but she tells me that sort of service was more typically was obliged from the age of 17 (which would only have engaged

You're next!
Announcing
the formation
of the
German
Home Guard
on a Berliner
Litfaßsäule,
September
1944.
Source:
[de.wiki/
Volkssturm](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volkssturm)



Gradually, however, the *Wehrmacht* was pushed back to the greater Reich's frontiers (see the map on pg. 758).⁴⁴² Goebbels then played his last card, calling up the remaining vestiges of a fighting force: boys and men aged 16 to 60 who were generally unfit for military service and who had not previously been drafted. They were to form a National Guard to defend the capital, equipped with obsolete rifles and captured foreign weaponry.⁴⁴³ The *Führererlass*, published on September 25th, called for the creation of a '*Volkssturm*' or 'people's militia' to serve the provinces or *Reichskommissariats*.⁴⁴⁴

Frau Tyralla's thoughts turned immediately to Albert. Would he be called up too? It was difficult to avoid, however, and "*the results were pitiful*," noted Richie, with men having "*no will to fight and die for this lost cause*." Even government staff questioned the decision, alongside Germany's ability to wage a partisan war: "*The individual German is not going to continue as a private war, a war that has already been lost by his government*,"⁴⁴⁵ a notion that neither fits the German national character.⁴⁴⁶ As a consequence, men had to be hauled out of their houses at night,⁴⁴⁷ with the results accordingly parodied in the popular song, '*Die Wacht am Rhein*:'

Lieb Vaterland, magst du ruhig sein, Der Führer zieht die Opas ein
*Dear Fatherland, set your mind at rest, The Führer has called the Grandpas up.*⁴⁴⁸

In addition, the country's nutritional situation grew critical, with the loss of Ukraine's and others' resources.⁴⁴⁹ Since New Years day, 1944, sweet production and other goods containing large amounts of sugar had been forbidden and in the final stages of the war, the 'balcony pig' was joined by the 'roof rabbit' (the domestic cat), which could be served with nettle soufflé, daisy salad, or rose hip soup. Acorn coffee was now encouraged as food rations further tightened.

her from September 1945). By this time, the 'League of German Girls' or BdM (See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/League_of_German_Girls#Wartime_service) was anyway derided as *Bedarfsartikel deutscher Männer* or Commodities for German Men – at least in the German capital.

Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 350

⁴⁴² Alternately, see the map here: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/End_of_World_War_II_in_Europe#/media/File:Second_world_war_europe_1943-1945_map_en.png

⁴⁴³ *A German Generation.* Yale University Press, 2012. Tomas A. Kohut. Pg. 117

⁴⁴⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volkssturm. N.b. Its official existence was not announced until October 18, 1944.

⁴⁴⁵ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Oct. 7, 1944. Pg. 211

⁴⁴⁶ Borne out by the Germans surrender to the Americans in the west, where "the people seem to be pleased to have new masters," precluding the possibility of "any partisan warfare." *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. March 12, 1945. Pg. 261

⁴⁴⁷ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin.* Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 583

⁴⁴⁸ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 351

⁴⁴⁹ Ukraine was occupied until 6 Nov. 1943. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine#World_War_II

Widespread starvation and malnutrition did not occur,⁴⁵⁰ most probably because the black market thrived in spite of increasingly severe punishments. However, those with good connections to the authorities could hold onto their crops and prosper by bartering with townsfolk willing to pay exorbitant prices for scarce foods, while those with money continued to be well fed until the final stages of the war. Nevertheless, a proportion of the 30-40,000 Leipzigers who died during the war lost their lives to vitamin deficiencies, while by 1944, child mortality rates had risen some 150 percent.⁴⁵¹ Misfortune also reached the Hinsch family, when Irene's brother, Ferdinand, died in early November.⁴⁵² Born with a cleft lip and palette, it wasn't adequately treated in good time.

As Leipzigers struggled throughout November and December 1944 with the daily howl of sirens,⁴⁵³ the frequent raids⁴⁵⁴ and omnipresent threat of death and devastation combined with the continuing Nazi propaganda and ideology, private life no longer offered a retreat.⁴⁵⁵ Machern was neither an exception, *Flugplatz Brandis-Waldpolenz* being bombed repeatedly that year by the United States Army Air Forces.⁴⁵⁶ But the settlement itself remained unscathed – a good thing since those from bombed out places in Leipzig were given makeshift accommodation there too,⁴⁵⁷ including the Hinsch villa. Once more it and its parcel of land supported life, although Frau Tyralla found the conditions now a little too cramped for her liking. What with the overhead threats too, she'd had enough commotion for a lifetime.

"Achtung, Achtung. Eine Luftlagemeldung! One hundred, two hundred, one thousand, two thousand heavy bombers are now crossing the North Sea!" interrupted the radio.

According to reports, Berlin was now a 'silent ghost town,' with men desperately trying to evade service, only for Nazi loyalists to turn them in.⁴⁵⁸ Albert was over sixty, but did that count for anything, she wondered? *"At least my brother is too old,"* she thought.

At the end of October the entire Hinsch family had caught their breath, when the news reached them that the Eastern front had been breached. The Allies now truly had Germany surrounded. Where and how would it end? Indeed, worse was yet to come.

#####

⁴⁵⁰ Not in fact until after the war was over, according to *Nazi Germany at War*. Martin Kitchen. London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Online [here](#). Indeed, Elisabeth Wust in Berlin was still able to mail almost two small daily food parcels consisting of sugar, sausage, noodles, bread, butter, cookies, fruit, potatoes and dried vegetables to her concentration camp-based partner in October, 1944. Were Berliners better off?

Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 196

⁴⁵¹ *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87

⁴⁵² Ferdinand Hinsch died on November 3rd, 1944.

⁴⁵³ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* *Leipziger Kalendar*. 1998. Sonderband.

Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 126

⁴⁵⁴ Leipzig's outerlying regions saw three September raids, one in October, two in November and one in December. *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* *Leipziger Kalendar*. 1998. Sonderband.

Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 216

⁴⁵⁵ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy*. German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 285

⁴⁵⁶ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flugplatz_Brandis-Waldpolenz

⁴⁵⁷ *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt*. Regionalverein Machern e.V, 2015. Pg. 154

⁴⁵⁸ Winter/late December 1944. *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis*. Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 211, 213

- 'CORPORAL' RISCOE! TO THE RESCUE? -

As the war progressed, Great Britain turned into a huge Allied barracks, aircraft carrier and naval base. Villages, fields and beaches were requisitioned for the training of U.S. forces and the so-called Twenty-First Army Group⁴⁵⁹ that had been established in London in July 1943, ahead of the Allies' continental return.⁴⁶⁰ The Normandy landings of June 1944, codenamed 'Operation Overlord,' got that momentous occasion underway.⁴⁶¹



The HQ Intelligence Corps and its 'Field Security' sections, to which Johnnie Riscoe belonged, were part of that invasion too, their role being to support the Twenty-First Army Group's 'Counter-Intelligence' by moving in after the front line of soldiers to secure a site. Based on his prior experience (and presumably training performance), Riscoe was appointed a 'Corporal,' which in turn begs the question, what was his specific role, as the Allies returned to the continent and began pushing back the Germans?

At the start of the year, January 5th, HQ Intelligence Corps' 'Field' had moved to 18, Bishopwood Road in Highgate, north London.⁴⁶² It was to be expanded to a thousand men in anticipation of the invasion,⁴⁶³ and on January 19th, responsibility for their training and administration was passed to new boss, Major William Sedgwick-Rough. His remit was to establish 25 'Reserve Detachments,' numbered 1001-1025, whose role would be to reinforce Field Security in contact with, or in pursuit of, German forces. In their ranks were ethnic Germans and Austrians and Jews.⁴⁶⁴ Ten days after arriving in Highgate, Riscoe found himself in the 1021 *Field Security Reserve Detachment (FSRD)*, where he was placed for the next two months. It was annexed to the 1st Canadian Army together with three other detachments; 1015, 1018 and 1020.⁴⁶⁵

A photograph-based card index system was established, detailing every Intelligence Corps member that also referred to those parts of Western Europe which they were familiar with as well as their linguistic abilities. That meant personnel could be directed based upon an array of local contacts in France, Holland and Belgium,⁴⁶⁶ which is where nearly all its members went on to see action. Some were employed as interrogators in the various centres which subsequently sprang up or contributed to de-Nazification duties,⁴⁶⁷ since the corps also led in site administration once military government was imposed in places like Germany and Austria.⁴⁶⁸ It doesn't take much stretch of the imagination to figure where Corporal Riscoe was destined!

⁴⁵⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/21st_Army_Group

⁴⁶⁰ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 130

⁴⁶¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normandy_landings

⁴⁶² *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 139

⁴⁶³ *Some Random Recollections.* W. Sedgwick-Rough. In *FSS. Field Security Section.* Bob Steers. 1996. Pg. 223

⁴⁶⁴ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 139, 140

⁴⁶⁵ *The History of the Field Security Sections, 1939 to 1960.* Military Intelligence Museum archives. Received courtesy of [A.F. Judge](#), Museum Archivist on October 25, 2016.

⁴⁶⁶ *Some Random Recollections.* W. Sedgwick-Rough. In *FSS. Field Security Section.* Bob Steers. 1996. Pg. 223-224

⁴⁶⁷ *The History of the Field Security Sections, 1939 to 1960.* Military Intelligence Museum archives.

Received courtesy of [A.F. Judge](#), Museum Archivist on October 25, 2016.

⁴⁶⁸ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 140

Although Highgate, at the north-eastern corner of Hampstead Heath, is a place of historical interest and thus an affluent locale today,⁴⁶⁹ Field Security's lodgings were less than ideal, houses (and it really was a house) across London having grown bedraggled and neglected,⁴⁷⁰ thanks in part to the light German raids that had continued to dog the capital throughout 1943.⁴⁷¹ According to Sedgwick-Rough, "*The accommodation was drab, especially the dining room,*" at least until "*murals ... subtly and deliciously pornographic ... resulted in overwhelming customer satisfaction.*"⁴⁷²

Not that Johnnie appears to have had much time to admire the art, since, in between "*three-mile runs ... stripped to the waist*" and "*30 minutes hardening exercises,*" he worked his brand of art on stage. On Sunday January 23rd, for instance, he was in Newcastle,⁴⁷³ timing that couldn't have been more fortuitous since the *Luftwaffe's* 'Little Blitz' got underway that same weekend, returning to the capital on January 21st. Meanwhile, London was beset by rumours that it was about to be bombarded by a 400 ton rocket bomb, manufactured in the form of a glider.⁴⁷⁴ The city was again hit on January 29th, after which the German airforce rained incendiary bombs throughout 14 raids that ran on until April 19th, including seven on Westminster.

However, the air attacks didn't stop Riscoe returning to London's theatres either. On February 27th he was part of a charity event, a mammoth gala concert at the *Coliseum*.⁴⁷⁵ Then, in a surprise move, he left Highgate to take up lodgings in Holborn in the City of London. Perhaps the corps' accommodation was really that bad after all? Said his daughter to me in February 2016; "*I can vaguely remember Dad telling me that he stayed at a ... hotel in Store Street, owned by ... a family called Olivelli.*"⁴⁷⁶ Yet for someone preparing to play a part in the liberation of Europe, how exactly were these actions possible? There was another distraction I hadn't exactly counted on. Her name was Violet Terry.



Riscoe's digs were above
Olivelli's restaurant at 35, Store Street in 1944.
Source: tripadvisor.co.uk

⁴⁶⁹ Highgate, for instance, is associated with the highwayman, Dick Turpin and is graced with a collection of largely Georgian shops, pubs, restaurants and residential streets. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Highgate

⁴⁷⁰ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 226

⁴⁷¹ Raids hit on June 17, October 7 and November 7, 1943. *The Blitz. 21 January 1944 - 19 April 1944: The 'Little Blitz'*. Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online at: westendatwar.org.uk/page_id_152_path_0p2p.aspx

⁴⁷² *Some Random Recollections*. W. Sedgwick-Rough. In *FSS. Field Security Section*. Bob Steers. 1996. Pg. 223

⁴⁷³ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*. January 19, 1944. Pg. 2

⁴⁷⁴ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 268

⁴⁷⁵ *The Stage*. March 2, 1944. Pg. 3

⁴⁷⁶ Johnnie's London dwelling was above a restaurant that is still called Olivelli's today, an Italian eatery that was first opened by Sicilians, Rita and Enrico Olivelli in 1934. Back then it had been the go-to venue for nearby Royal Academy of Dramatic Art students and famous London theatre actors of the day (see: ristoranteolivelli.co.uk/our-story), but even since the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the area had been fashionable with 'the Bloomsbury set'; bohemian writers, artists and intellectuals which by the interwar period included E. M. Forster (*A Passage to India*) and Virginia Woolf (*Mrs. Dalloway*) - see: storestreetbloomsbury.co.uk/the-area. Little wonder the restaurant's walls are decorated today with photographs of yesteryear's performers. Maybe even Johnnie's portrait graces them too? (The question was posited to: bloomsbury@ristoranteolivelli.co.uk on July 17, 2017 but no reply was received).

15.18: "Vivacious and Captivating:" Meet the New Mrs. Johnnie Riscoe

Riscoe's bride was certainly no ack-ack girl. Violet Terry was a stage star and revue comedienne in her own right who according to Dennis Gifford, "had been on the stage almost as long as himself."¹ Born Violet Irene Quick on November 16th, 1912, in London Islington to a silversmith and jeweler,² she was just one week short of a year younger than Margot and thus the same star sign. Formerly one half of a singing act called *The Terry Sisters*,³ according to her daughter she started on the stage in an act called 'Terry's Juveniles' with her cousin when she was about fifteen. Graduating to *The Terry Sisters* in the 1930s,⁴ they were joined by a pianist called *Peggy Desmond*,⁵ with whom they regularly performed in London during the early part of the decade,⁶ while at the same time performing in touring shows, such as *Wonder Bar*.⁷



By spring 1942, Terry was being described as a 'Vivacious soubrette in a burlesque show.' After performing *Red Riding Hood* in Chesterfield the previous Christmas/New Year she toured 'It is Always the Women' across northern England, visiting Liverpool, Hull as well as Leeds City Varieties on April 30th (roughly the same time Hedley Claxton paid a visit to Margot). At the end of the year she'd returned to perform in *Red Riding Hood* in Liverpool and in April 1943 was back at Leeds City Varieties with 'Ladies, Legs and Laughter.' In November, she returned with 'Big Ben Strikes',⁸ a show she continued to tour until spring 1944, the adjacent clipping revealing that she was on stage at Lincoln's Theatre Royal a few days before her wedding, the promotional feature describing her as "Vivacious and Captivating" on March 14th, 1944.⁹

For sources, please see the end of Chapter XV, Pt. II

If Margot Riscoe still read *The Stage* newspaper, she'll have no doubt caught her breath after seeing the headline, 'Wedding Bells,' on March 16th, 1944. The



Read all about it! Riscoe re-marries nine months after divorcing Mrs. Source: *The Stage*, March 16, 1944.

accompanying newsbyte read: "Congratulations to Johnny Riscoe, who is to be married tomorrow, Friday, at Holborn Register Office to Violet Terry, revue comedienne, who was formerly of the Terry Sisters." It had only been nine months since they divorced, and yet here he was getting married again! Even if she didn't read *The Stage*, she'll have learned soon enough, her son, Harvey, joining the couple on their big day.

Checking the 1836 *Act for Marriages in England*, it then became clear why Johnnie swapped Highgate for the City.⁴⁷⁷ But exactly how far back did the newlyweds' relationship go? Although daughter, Patsy, told me in mid-2016; "They had a double act on stage and that is how they met..." there is no evidence of a billing that features the pair, suggesting it's less likely they collaborated beforehand. Patsy also conceded "I have no idea whatsoever ... as to how long Mum and Dad knew each other before they married..."⁴⁷⁸ However, there is a revealing line in A. P. Herbert's 'Holy Deadlock,' in which he observes "undefended Petitions for Dissolution [of marriage] ... meant that two citizens ... confessed to the world that they had committed the sin of adultery."⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ Still in force in 1944, Paragraph 6 of the act states: "one of the Parties intending Marriage shall appear personally before the Superintendent Registrar and certify ... that one of the said Parties hath for the space of Fifteen Days immediately before such License, had his or her usual place of abode within the Registrar's district within which such Marriage is to be solemnized." N.b. If we look at the entire timeframe for the marriage, three months notice of the foreseen marriage had to be given, although it could be solemnized and registered within as little as seven days of that notice being submitted. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marriage_Act_1836

⁴⁷⁸ Personal correspondence of July 6, 2016 and telephone interview of February 23rd, 2016.

⁴⁷⁹ *Holy Deadlock*. A.P. Herbert. Penguin Books, 1955. Pg. 104

I daresay the couple's honeymoon was shortlived. Apart from the fact there was a war on with preparations afoot for an invasion of the continent, either side of their wedding day, London had again been attacked. On March 14th-15th, for instance, German aircraft dropped phosphorous incendiaries and high explosives across the capital, while six days later, nearby Paddington Railway Station, four kilometres west of Store Street, among others, was bombed.⁴⁸⁰ More importantly, however, a week before he got married, he was switched to *Field Security Reserve Detachment 1019* on March 10th, which is where he was placed for the next five weeks.

D-day was now approaching fast. The Tehran Conference had agreed the second front would be opened up no later than May 1st, and in lieu of the upcoming Normandy landings, England's coastline between The Wash and Land's End, besides an area around Riscoe's former Scottish haunts, the Firth of Forth, was placed 'out of bounds' to citizens. From April 1st, there was to be no unauthorized travel to/from that zone, with key points and assembly areas' security ramped up in order to prevent unauthorized leakages of information. All leave for British military personnel was suspended with Field Security and their Reserve Detachments put in charge of access to and movement within the 'restricted zone.'⁴⁸¹ That same month, a two day 'Overlord' Conference mapped out the ground floor plan for the continental invasion with the king, Winston Churchill and other members of the War Cabinet being among the select few attending.⁴⁸²

Three weeks later, on April 21st, Riscoe was posted to the *1022 Detachment*, and although its base was Highgate until June, evidence suggests the Corporal might have been moved to Bournemouth shortly after his admission. With Operation Overlord scheduled for June 3rd, the Military ID card pictured at the start of this section was issued on May 4th. Yet the following day, Riscoe was surprisingly placed on a so-called 'X (ii) list.' That meant he was to be considered "*temporarily non-effective overseas/missing during battle/evacuated.*"⁴⁸³ Why?

At the time, Bournemouth was certainly a key site to live fire practice beach landings and assaults, while neighbouring Poole Harbour was the eventual departure point for many of the D-Day ships.⁴⁸⁴ And although Churchill had insisted no-one could leave Great Britain, 'Combined Operations' already reconnoitred the assault beaches⁴⁸⁵ while in neighbouring Devon, 'Exercise Tiger,' had gotten underway on April 22nd. Yet five days later preparations were hindered by a 'friendly fire' incident, while more significantly, on April 28th, 750 lives were lost while an Allied convoy positioned itself for the landing.⁴⁸⁶ So had Riscoe been injured during one of those exercises and 'evacuated' as a result?

⁴⁸⁰ *The Blitz*. 21 January 1944 - 19 April 1944: *The 'Little Blitz'*. Ronan Thomas. 2010.

Online at: westendatwar.org.uk/page_id_152_path_0p2p.aspx

⁴⁸¹ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010*. Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 141

⁴⁸² *50 Field Security Section 1942-1945*. John Green. In *FSS. Field Security Section*. Bob Steers. 1996. Pg. 57

⁴⁸³ See: arrse.co.uk/community/threads/ww2-army-records.82502

⁴⁸⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Bournemouth#Recent_history

⁴⁸⁵ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010*. Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 141

⁴⁸⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Exercise_Tiger

Military personnel typically remain on the X (ii) list until they are classified fit for posting – or discharged by a medical unit, usually after 28 days.⁴⁸⁷ Looking at the calendar that meant Riscoe ought to have been released around June 2nd, the eve of his and countless other detachments' anticipated return to the European mainland. Instead he remained unfit for posting, until finally on June 12th, he was transferred to the 'Y list' and earmarked for medical discharge.⁴⁸⁸ The cause was a duodenal ulcer/duodenitis, which having 'disabled' him '10 percent,' was enough to render him permanently unfit for military service. A day later, on June 13th, his formal discharge and release was completed in Bournemouth and scheduled for July 9th.⁴⁸⁹ He was in fact home before then.⁴⁹⁰



Within days of being discharged from the British Armed Forces, Riscoe was "airborne to millions."
Source: *The Stage*, June 29, 1944

Riscoe was by no means the only entertainer to be 'invalided out' on one of the most celebrated occasions in British and European history. A chap called Donald Peers, for instance, a popular Welsh singer who worked for the BBC and performed in Music Hall (and who was also a witness at Johnnie's 1944 wedding), eventually exited the Royal Army Service Corps in the same way.⁴⁹¹ Demobilisation was, however, the fairy tale ending for Riscoe. Not only could he return to his career in entertainment – on July 8th he hosted *Music Hall*, his discharge having already been publicly announced in *The Stage* on June 29th,⁴⁹² – but he could also begin a new life with his new wife.

Life in the capital was no longer the same, however. It had emptied of its military personnel almost overnight,⁴⁹³ and on June 6th, after three days delay due to unusually bad weather, Operation Overlord sprang into action, thanks to a mighty armada of 4,000 ships aimed at the final defeat of Germany. By the sixth day, some 326,000 men had been successfully landed on a bridgehead some fifty miles wide (less than the number evacuated through Dunkirk four years earlier). The race to Berlin was now underway.

⁴⁸⁷ According to this [online](#) document which also states: "THE X (ii) LIST comprises all ranks evacuated on medical grounds beyond Regimental First Aid Post. Personnel so evacuated cease to be on the effective strength of their units."

⁴⁸⁸ 'Y List. Pt. II. 11/44' appears on Riscoe's military record which typically refers to a soldier being on long term sick leave, notes: <https://www.arrse.co.uk/community/threads/ww2-army-records.82502/> while 'Tochka adds on Apr. 1, 2008 "we have a lot of that in the Int Corps."

⁴⁸⁹ Riscoe's military record: 'Y List. Pt. II. 13/44 13.6.(19)44 & P(oint).O(f).D(ischarge).164/44.

⁴⁹⁰ Formally, after 3 years and 193 days, he was discharged from Army service under 'King's Regulations, 1940, paragraph 390 (xvi)' as "ceasing to fulfil Army physical requirements." See: www.british-genealogy.com/archive/index.php/t-22554.html

⁴⁹¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donald_Peers

⁴⁹² *The Stage*, June 29, 1944. Pg. 3 (both clippings)

⁴⁹³ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 279

Two hundred miles north, Leeds too had emptied of its foreign soldiers although enough representatives of the West Yorkshire Regiment, the Royal Navy officers, the Women's Royal Naval Service and the Royal Artillery remained to parade through the town from Saturday June 3rd in celebration of 'Salute the Soldier Week'. I daresay Margot took Harvey along in a bid to spend some time with her son as well as make the patriotic most of the occasion (despite the inclement weather).⁴⁹⁴ However, the *status quo* which Margot had grown accustomed to was all set to change again.

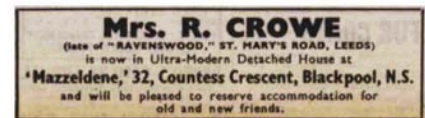


Leeds' Headrow military parade seen from its Town Hall across from Victoria Square, June 3rd, 1944. Source: Leodis.net

According to Riscoe's discharge papers, home was now 12a, Chalcot Gardens in London's NW3, otherwise known as Belsize Park. It lay roughly the same distance from his wife's former home address in East Finchley and from the Intelligence Corps HQ in Highgate. The name 'Belsize,' being derived from the French, *bel assis*, means 'well situated,' and with Hampstead and its "Victorian houses with the maple trees in front,"⁴⁹⁵ not to mention Hampstead Heath nearby,⁴⁹⁶ his was one of 37 houses and flats delightfully situated within that leafy locale.⁴⁹⁷

The stage was thus set for Harvey to join them and the comedian's release, not to mention marriage to Violet Terry, had now tipped the issue of his eventual custody in their favour. Perhaps even more importantly, "*Rae loved her*," recalled Johnnie's cousin, Doreen Tompofski of 'Vi' Terry. The case in turn went to court, and without a legal challenge from Margot (one would have to wonder where she would find the means anyway), the Magistrates Courts ruled in Johnnie's favour for full custody, confirmed Patsy. One can just imagine what her eight year old answered when the metropolitan magistrate asked, "*Where would you prefer to live?*"⁴⁹⁸

Rae wasted no time, however, in acting on the court's decision. Recalling Margot's words, *Tiny* told me, "*his grandmother took him down to London.*" That incident must have occurred soon after eight year old Harvey's school summer holidays kicked in,⁴⁹⁹ because Rae then traded Chapeltown for Blackpool, as *The Stage* newspaper revealed. The 'Capital of the North' it seems wasn't big enough for both she and Margot, and with family matters now resolved, Rae moved her business to 'Countess Crescent,' where accordingly "*Mrs. R. Crowe, (late of 'Ravenswood,' St. Mary's Road, Leeds) ... will be pleased to reserve accommodation for old and new friends*" at 'Mazzeldene.'⁵⁰⁰ Could it have been scripted any better, I asked myself?



Johnnie Riscoe's mother's clientele included readers of *The Stage* industry newspaper. September 7, 1944

⁴⁹⁴ See: www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=2004115_47576541

⁴⁹⁵ Funnily enough, Lilli Palmer, in her semi-autobiographical novel, *The Red Raven* jokes about the popularity of Hampstead with Germans: "*The first German emigrés chose the suburb of Hampstead because the solid Victorian houses with the maple trees in front reminded them of respectable German streets.*" *The Red Raven*. Lilli Palmer. Hamlyn, 1979. Pg. 20

⁴⁹⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belsize_Park

⁴⁹⁷ See: zoopla.co.uk/property/12a-chalcot-gardens/london/nw3-4yb/17211461

⁴⁹⁸ *Marriage Failures and the Children*. Claud Mullins. The Epworth Press, 1954. Pg. 40-41

⁴⁹⁹ Ordinarily he would have gone on to join the *Junior Boys*, typically set for ages 8-11, according to personal correspondence with [Lawrence Brown](#) on November 30, 2016.

⁵⁰⁰ *The Stage*. September 7, 1944. Pg. 6

I couldn't help but wonder, however, what this movement, this constant shifting of homes, guardians, even classrooms would ultimately mean for Harvey? From that point on, he referred to Vi as 'mum,' a role she'll have found herself playing soon enough as Johnnie went straight back on the road, appearing in Leamington Spa at *Jephson Garden Pavilions* during the week of July 10th, and then the *London Empire* during the week of August 7th (despite rocket guns or 'V1s' – colloquially named doodlebugs - raining down on the capital from mid-June). On Sunday September 10th, the couple then collaborated a safe distance away from London (following Churchill's order to evacuate), at *Essoldo* in Newcastle.⁵⁰¹ They followed that with a Christmas pantomime at Liverpool's Pavilion, the pair playing the Ugly Sisters in *Cinderella*, together with 'family friend,' Donald Peers, in the third leading role.⁵⁰²

Claud Mullins, the metropolitan magistrate wrote in his 1954 treatise *'Marriage Failures and the Children'*: "Many people who seek divorce simply ... have no conception of the effect it and the breaking up of the home will have upon their children in terms of defectiveness, delinquency and neglect." That sounds discouraging enough, however, he continues "when divorced parents remarry, the situation of the child may be better or worse, but is usually worse. Children of broken homes ... lack any sound moral foundation." Those perceived risks probably only grew on account of Margot's distance, since "when deprived of a parent who is living elsewhere, a child knows that the parent has left him voluntarily."⁵⁰³ We know the converse was true, but did Harvey?

As for Margot, she must have been left reeling from the loss of her son. Not only was she now without ready access to him, but Leeds now transformed dramatically too. Early on "during 1944 ... Leeds was full of American soldiers"⁵⁰⁴ up to which point it had been "a case of Yanks chasing girls and girls chasing Yanks." The Jitterbug - a dance brought over by American soldiers - was all the rage and girls who "couldn't afford stockings ... painted their legs with gravy browning and took turns in drawing a line up the middle of each other's legs with a black crayon or something similar to represent seamed stockings."⁵⁰⁵ But those good times had all but vanished with the Americans now overseas. To make up for the loneliness, perhaps she curled up with one of 1944's more popular reads, a few of which are described in the textbox overleaf.

⁵⁰¹ *Leamington Spa Courier*. July 7, 1944. Pg. 4; *The Stage*. Aug. 10, 1944. Pg. 2; *Newcastle Journal*. September 6, 1944. Pg. 2

⁵⁰² *Liverpool Evening Express*. December 16, 1944. Pg. 2; *Liverpool Daily Post*. November 2, 1944. Pg. 2

⁵⁰³ *Marriage Failures and the Children*. Claud Mullins. The Epworth Press, 1954. Pg. 32, 46, 57, 42

⁵⁰⁴ *The East Leeds Memories of Gerry Thrussell*. February 1, 2011.

Online at: eastleedsmemories.wordpress.com/category/german-pows/

⁵⁰⁵ *The Bombing of Leeds*. WW2 People's War. Sue Kirk, October 19, 2005.

Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/92/a6204692.shtml

15.19: Novel books and Pulp Fiction á la 1944

No longer surrounded by family nor American soldiers, but with lending libraries close to hand, books may have helped Margot fill the free time she had during the second half of 1944. Among those published that year which might have caught her attention were 'A Showman Goes East - The Story of an Adventurous Journey in Wartime from Piccadilly to Persia' by Carroll Levis. Being a traveler I could imagine the corresponding appeal while Levis it turns out was a talent scout, impresario and television and radio personality to boot.¹ Or maybe she'd had enough of entertainers by then and will have savoured escapist pulp fiction like 'Capri Moon' by Kelman Dalgety Frost.

Should Margot have wallowed in a 'slough of despond,' she might have tried something more profound such as 'Something in my Heart' by Walter Greenwood. He was the author of the well-known northern tale 'Love on the Dole' which became a popular 1941 movie. His latest book was also depressive, set in neighbouring Salford during wartime and reflected on the themes of love and marriage - while on the dole. Perhaps a little too close for comfort but it was the follow-up to that best-remembered-novel and may have offered some perspective at least!²

1. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carroll_Levis and murdochbookshoppe.com/book-details/4970/A-Showman-Goes-East
2. reading19001950.wordpress.com/2017/02/24/something-in-my-heart-1944-by-walter-greenwood



While the lives of our key protagonists quickly took on new directions that summer of 1944, the members of Riscoe's Intelligence Corps detachment pushed on into Europe. During July it journeyed to Arromanches in Normandy, "and then the well-trodden route through Rouen, and Lille, thence to Brussels, where Intelligence Corps (Field) set up its HQ" by September.⁵⁰⁶

Many Dutch men and women meanwhile waited with bated breath for Allied liberation, as an article in the September 6th, 1944, issue of the *Newcastle Journal and North Mail* reveals. At least this piece of reading may have caught Margot's attention and brought her more joy than the 'literary' distractions described above. Entitled 'Holland will never forgive or forget,' the article reveals the author's abundant optimism through his words "now we are preparing to leave Britain and go back to our own country." His thanks was dedicated to the British and looked towards protecting the liberties of the people of Europe "hand in hand."



So near, yet so far. One Dutch journalist anticipates Allied liberation.

Source: *Newcastle Journal and North Mail* Sept. 6th, 1944

⁵⁰⁶ 1011 Field Security Reserve Detachment. F.P.Bowen. In *FSS. Field Security Section*. Bob Steers. 1996. Pg. 210

There were plenty of others who looked ahead to the new order too, albeit with less optimism. In his capacity, the German Foreign Office Press and Information Section's, Hans-Georg von Studnitz, joined Goebbels in warning against Russian dominance of Europe, even the prospect of a 'Third World War,' if matters of justice were not dealt with fairly. In an article published in *Berlin-Rome-Tokio* he wrote:

*"If the future peace is not in a position to reconcile the interests of all the belligerent powers, victors and vanquished alike, then it will not be a lasting peace. And in that case the Second World War will have been fought in vain, as was the First World War before it. The seeds of a Third World War will have been sown, which will germinate as soon as war-weariness has been overcome and a new generation, untouched by war, has taken over from the generation which waged the present conflict. The Soviet Union will emerge as the greatest land power, and the United States as the greatest maritime power ... The idea of a world police force has always proved to be Utopian, and Utopian it will remain ... It is absurd to imagine that a Europe which opposed domination by Napoleon and which has refused to accept German leadership, will be content to acknowledge perpetual allegiance to Moscow ... The moment that Germany is declared to be a political no-man's-land, a common European frontier will at once spring into being between the Anglo-Western and the Russian zones of interest."*⁵⁰⁷

At the time, the view attracted considerable English consternation where it was sharply attacked by Lindley Fraser, a broadcaster for the BBC's German service.⁵⁰⁸ But although it must have sounded like sour grapes or a last desperate attempt to salvage something from the war Germany had waged, his views were akin to Churchill's, who wrote to Roosevelt: *"The Soviet Union has become a danger to the free world."*⁵⁰⁹ Two weeks later, on September 18th, von Studnitz wrote in his diary: *"I fear that we shall not be spared a plunge into the darkest abyss of the Historia Germaniae."*⁵¹⁰ That was a future quite different to Hitler's dream of a 'Holy Germanic Empire of the German Nation.'

With the Greater Germanic Reich crumbling, I can just see Margot glancing upwards *"one September Evening in 1944 [as] about 200 plus Lancaster Bombers flew over, quite low, heading south east to join a 1,000 bomber raid."*⁵¹¹ Liberation was seemingly close at hand for her family in Holland, while her relatives in Germany also anticipated the return of peace. That was at least something to look forward to.

As for the *Intelligence Corps (Field)*, having been refitted in Brussels, it readied itself to support the 2nd British Army and the 1st Canadian Army and their subordinate corps and divisions in their ongoing campaign towards liberation.⁵¹² By October its *Reserve Detachments* were already in the Netherlands, close to *Eindhoven*, in *Weert*.⁵¹³ Of course it had journeyed on without Riscoe, who forfeited his continental comeback and heroes' welcome, liberating his Dutch counterparts, in exchange for being the people's hero: radio's 'giggle-o.' But wouldn't that story have been priceless, had it been realized? He would not eventually return to Holland until 1949.

#####

⁵⁰⁷ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Frontline Books, 2011. Sept. 6, 1944. Pg. 194-196

⁵⁰⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lindley_Fraser

⁵⁰⁹ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010.* Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 157

⁵¹⁰ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Frontline Books, 2011. Sept. 18, 1944. Pg. 203

⁵¹¹ *The East Leeds Memories of Gerry Thrussell.* Feb. 1, 2011. eastleedsmemories.wordpress.com/category/german-pows

⁵¹² *The History of the Field Security Sections, 1939 to 1960.* Military Intelligence Museum archives via [A.F. Judge](https://www.afjudge.com/) 25.10.16

⁵¹³ *Working with the Dutch Resistance and later with 1017/21 FSRD and 7 FSS.* Peter Scopes. FSS. B. Steers. 1996. Pg. 212

- TINY UND IRENE -

Tiny and Irene, not the sisters but the second cousins, were not acquainted. Indeed they knew little if anything of one another's existence, even if they shared the same late great-grandparents; *Friedrich* and *Marie Hinsch*. Both lived under the same oppressive regime, yet were separated by distance and the twists and turns of their parents' and grandparents' migrations. Not dissimilar in character, I later learned, during the war, one had prospered, the other had faltered. But before long, both would find themselves caught up in a maelstrom that would plunge the cities of their birth, Amsterdam and Dresden, toward humanitarian disaster. And as their homes became entrenched within desperate frontlines, one stood to lose freedom, while the other would gain. Was it their possession of well-known Prussian virtues; industry, austerity and determination that went on to ensure their respective survival? Or was it more simply both fathers' determination to see their families live, regardless of the cost? The last pages of this sub-chapter tells their story.

The going got tough for Tiny and her family during 1944. Friends, neighbours and colleagues had been taken away but from the beginning of the year, electricity too disappeared. There were very few coals left to go round. At home, the Ridderhofs relied on candles which Cor made from cod liver oil and floated in water for light.

The winter snow melted by the end of February 1944,⁵¹⁴ which was just as well because by the spring, *Kleine Tiny* "had no shoes." Having 'quit' her German school, she now got around town on the rubber soles she'd sewn onto socks. Soap too was hard to find while folks depended on 'occupation coffee,'⁵¹⁵ a "brew of roots and dried figs," recalled ten Boom of February 1944.⁵¹⁶ By June, the cost of living had risen approximately 50 percent over that of 1938-1939, while the cost of food had risen by about 60 percent during the same period.⁵¹⁷

The electricity shortages naturally caused problems for Carré. Interruption-free shows couldn't be guaranteed, whilst the Nazis invaded the theatre regularly, looking for Jews in hiding or men trying to escape 'Arbeitseinsatz.' As more and more innocent Dutch civilians were captured and taken to prison within those raids, the public began to stay away. On February 2nd, 1944, it was the turn of Dutch-Portuguese Jews (descended from sixteenth century refugees) to be deported to Westerbork and in mid-May, Gypsies and 'a-socials' (the homeless) were rounded up. On July 21st, another round of raids occurred in Amsterdam, ordinary men being sought to fill the ranks of the diminished forced labour in Germany.⁵¹⁸ *Tante Lies's* husband too had to leave, and was relocated together with his family, which obliged his children to school in Germany.

⁵¹⁴ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 128

⁵¹⁵ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 80

⁵¹⁶ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 121

⁵¹⁷ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 82 NB: Because so few other goods were available, however, such an increase did not constitute a severe threat to the Dutch consumer, since a large proportion of the family budget could be allocated to food purchases.

⁵¹⁸ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944. N.b No other raids were reported during the remaining twelve months of the war.

As the prospect of an Allied invasion of the Netherlands grew, the Germans threatened to flood the country – and protect the fatherland. A *Landwacht*, a security regiment nicknamed *Jan Hagel* for their antiquated hunting rifles, began operating as auxiliary police against their own countrymen from March 21st, serving as the Germans’ eyes, ears, legs and arms. A few weeks later, on April 11th, RAF bombs hit the Dutch central population registry at *Kleykamp* in The Hague, where duplicates of all Dutch municipal records were kept.⁵¹⁹

Many Dutch therefore anticipated an end to their suffering, after the western continent’s liberation got underway that June. Those who still had access to wireless sets tuned in to encouragement from British radio. Even the Germans were doing the same. “Churchill, who is not at all boastful and always weighs his words carefully, had declared they expected to be finished in three or four months,” observed Klemperer, bringing great hope to many.⁵²⁰



Above:

The Russian sign reads: “Soldiers! Majdanek does not forgive. Take revenge without mercy!”

Source: Bundesarchiv

Below:

Map showing Soviet advances between August 1st, 1943 and December 31st, 1944, where ‘1’ indicates *Inslerburg* where Margot spent summer 1925

Source: [wiki/Eastern_Front_\(World_War_II\)](http://wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_II))



By the end of the month, the Allies had a million men in France,⁵²¹ their invasion being supported by systematic air raids on German cities and a switch to the tactical bombing of France. Rome too fell in June, while the Soviets launched their own final large-scale offensive on the twenty-second (the anniversary of Hitler’s invasion three years earlier), thereby threatening the borders of German-occupied Poland. A month later, on July 22nd, the Russians liberated the *Majdanek* concentration camp in *Lublin* (‘1’ on the map right), southeast of Warsaw - the first to be discovered by Allied forces.⁵²² On August 1st, the Polish underground took to the streets of Warsaw in an ill-timed uprising intended to coincide with the Red Army’s approach towards the eastern suburbs and the retreat of German forces.⁵²³ Victor Klemperer dubbed liberation “*The Jewish War*,” because one of the Allies first acts was the abolition of the Jewish laws everywhere.⁵²⁴

The Allied forces determinedly pushed on, Berlin (‘2’) being the British goal, with Churchill quoted in the *Dresdener Zeitung* on August 28th as saying: “We must end the war by autumn, otherwise...” However, the Germans at the same time continued to broadcast its propaganda: “*Victory is truly very close.*”⁵²⁵

⁵¹⁹ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

⁵²⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. June 13, 1944. Pg. 324

⁵²¹ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 197, 8

⁵²² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majdanek_concentration_camp

⁵²³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Warsaw_Uprising

⁵²⁴ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 18, 1944. Pg. 359

⁵²⁵ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 1, 1944. Pg. 352

In autumn 1944, Tiny returned to her old school, around the corner in *Tweede Jan van der Heijdenstraat*. Here too, attendance was thwarted by the lack of regular electricity. Soon after, she caught measles (for a second time) and called in sick. Not long before, and perhaps already cautiously optimistic of liberation, the family visited a photographers' studio and made this invaluable 'birthday' portrait of Amsterdam's three belles.



Amsterdam's Belles.
Tiny (12), Irene (4) and Nanny (37)
cca. August 1944

On September 4th, Antwerp, in neighbouring Belgium was liberated and with Radio London next (erroneously) reporting that the southern Dutch city of Breda was in Allied hands, the Dutch National Socialist Movement, the NSB, anticipating the country's fall, fled to Germany the following day. September 5th, 1944 thus came to be known as *Dolle Dinsdag* (Mad Tuesday), because most of the NSB's leadership and the party's organization disintegrated.⁵²⁶ Close to Utrecht, people awaited the victors with flower bouquets in hand. "*We lived in a dream that day.*" National flags appeared, including the *oranje, blanje, bleu* (orange, white, blue – see inset), the royal colours.⁵²⁷

But Dutch enthusiasm proved to be premature. In fact, "*the final and by far grimmest times of the occupation,*" wrote Amsterdam-based Abraham Pais, had only just begun.⁵²⁸ After the American troops crossed the Dutch-Belgian border in South Limburg on September 12th, two days later two US Army divisions freed Maastricht ('1' off-map, right).⁵²⁹ On September 17th, the British put 'Operation Market Garden' into action, its aim being to push along a narrow corridor to Arnhem ('2') and gain control of the bridge across the Rhine ('3,' close to the Dutch-German border), thereby cutting off large numbers of enemy troops from returning to Germany. It was also supposed to allow the British their 'dash' to Berlin by Christmas.



The allied plan for Operation Market Garden showing the foreseen push up to Arnhem in west Netherlands

Source: wiki/Operation_Market_Garden

1
South Limburg and the Maas valley

⁵²⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Socialist_Movement_in_the_Netherlands

⁵²⁷ A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 62.

N.b. The so-called 'Prince's Flag,' first used in the Dutch Revolt during the late 16th century, is based on the Flag of Prince William of Orange-Nassau, hence the name. Used in contexts of national sentiment, it was raised, despite it having been adopted by the NSB as their symbol too. Today the flag remains the basis of the official flag of New York City as well as Albany in New York State. See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prince's_Flag

⁵²⁸ A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 61

⁵²⁹ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

Everything went wrong for the British, who, in their competition with the Americans and Russians, sought to end it their way. Inadequate rations, 'burnt' bridges, and an unexpected rendezvous with some of the German Army's most hardened troops meant just 2,163 soldiers survived from the 17,000 committed. In the process, *Arnhem* was leveled and hundreds of civilians killed. The Dutch resistance, thinking that liberation was at hand, came out of hiding to fight the Germans. But without the anticipated Allied forces' support, hundreds were captured and killed.

Marlene Dietrich was among those Allied soldiers who "*advanced as far as Holland,*" although she and her fellow freedom fighters were themselves detained by the "*many more V1s and V2's ... being dropped than ever before.*"⁵³⁰ The Nazis' unpiloted V1 aircraft-bombs, having been talked up in the German press since June,⁵³¹ had been followed from September 8th by V2's, 12-ton steerable rockets with a one-ton warhead that flew at 4,000 miles per hour and began to rain down from launch sites in Holland⁵³² not just in the border areas but on Antwerp, Paris and London.⁵³³ About 500 per month of the world's first ballistic missile eventually got through.⁵³⁴

With the British effort struggling, the exiled Dutch government in London set out to aid the offensive by ordering a railway strike to aid parachute landings of Dutch intelligence services. However, their cause was hindered by further reductions of electricity from September 19th,⁵³⁵ and as the Allies' western campaign ground to a halt, Germany chose to reject surrender once again. Even if "*they know that the war is lost, and allow city after city to be destroyed, [they] ... gain another few weeks or months for themselves,*" Klemperer observed.⁵³⁶ In an attempt to sway the Germans, the English ramped up their information war: "*The balance of forces between the Allies and Germany is now 10:1 in terms of men, 40:1 in terms of airplanes,*" together with "*Go into the open, our new bombs go right down into the cellar!*"⁵³⁷

Operation Market Garden was eventually called off on September 25th, having failed partly due to "*credible intelligence being rejected*"⁵³⁸ alongside an underestimation of the remaining enemy still camped out at Arnhem (subsequently dramatized in the 1977 movie, *A Bridge Too Far*). With that, the prospect of a swift victory vanished and as a result, millions of Dutch had to endure nine more months' hardship. The British meanwhile, as much as Churchill disliked it, fell in line with the Americans. I imagine Nanny and Cor's nerves must have been shredded, although Tiny recalls nothing of their expectation or the failure of Operation Market Garden. Perhaps they'd dared not hope, although Margot, watching from a distance, must have felt the end were closer.

⁵³⁰ Marlene Dietrich. *My Life*. Translated by Salvator Attanasio. Weidenfeld and Nicholson. 1987. Pg. 192

⁵³¹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. June 19, 1944. Pg. 326

⁵³² *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 61

⁵³³ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

⁵³⁴ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 61

⁵³⁵ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

⁵³⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 15, 1944. Pg. 359

⁵³⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Sept. 29 and 19, 1944. Pg. 365, 360

⁵³⁸ *Sharing the Secret. A History of the Intelligence Corps. 1940-2010*. Nick van der Bijl. Pen and Sword, 2013. Pg. 152

The majority of the Netherlands was thus to remain occupied, with the western part of the country, encompassing Amsterdam, Rotterdam and the Hague, gaining the unfortunate moniker, *Festung* (fortress) *Holland*. The Germans returned in number and now acted on the assumption they occupied enemy territory, facing in turn a hostile population willing to give aid to the enemy whenever possible.⁵³⁹ Already on September 21st they began demolishing harbour installations in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam,⁵⁴⁰ while the levels of killing and cruelty rose sharply.⁵⁴¹ At the *Vught* prison camp, authorities executed more than 700 of its male prisoners and evacuated those remaining onto freight trains towards concentration camps in Germany.⁵⁴²

Thereafter the majority of factories ceased operations for lack of fuel, transportation means and workmen, unwilling to endanger themselves by appearing in public. Rationing too was carried out on the local level, which meant quantities depended on supplies to hand. In the northeastern part of the country, a ration of 1300 calories was introduced (the average till that point had been between 1500 and 2000).⁵⁴³

Carré was another victim of the rationalization drive, closing its doors in September 1944, which meant Kleine Tiny's father stayed at home. They played cards to pass the time while she offered puppet shows to her girlfriends. If thoughts turned to her mother in Germany, Nanny rarely mentioned her or wider family, recalled Tiny. Perhaps because any expression of concern would have fallen on deaf ears.

The food situation grew worse in the western Netherlands, when the German administration retaliated to the Dutch-ordered railway strike, embargoing all food transports⁵⁴⁴ as well as blockading fuel shipments to farm areas. With electricity already hard to come by, thanks to coal no longer being available from South Limburg, the occupiers cut off the gas in Amsterdam.⁵⁴⁵

By late October, the prospect of real famine was already apparent and efforts were undertaken to establish a central soup kitchen in Amsterdam. Within two weeks, reports of the first casualties of hunger in the capital came in. At the same time, the south-eastern (*Maas* valley territory) part of the Netherlands became one of the main western battlefields (together with the south-western part, the *Walcheren* peninsula and *Beveland*), making the transport of existing food stocks in large enough quantities nearly impossible.⁵⁴⁶ Although the Allies had pressed on into Cor's birthplace by November 8th, the densely populated provinces north of the great rivers (*Rhine*, *Waal* and *Maas*) remained affected by the embargos. In early December, the Germans finally cut the Rhine's dikes, flooding the municipalities of *Betuwe* in central eastern Holland, further hindering any Allied advance.⁵⁴⁷

⁵³⁹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 14

⁵⁴⁰ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

⁵⁴¹ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 62

⁵⁴² *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940-1945*. B. Moore. Arnold, 1997.

⁵⁴³ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 71-2, 79

⁵⁴⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_famine_of_1944

⁵⁴⁵ Beginning October 26, 1944. See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

⁵⁴⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_famine_of_1944

⁵⁴⁷ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

With the gas, electricity and heat turned off, the Dutch grew cold and hungry. In late November, Amsterdam's *Vondelpark* was closed to visitors after starving citizens had cut most of the trees for use as household fuel. Ten days before Christmas, the use of electricity was then forbidden in both the western provinces of North and South Holland. Thousands of starving city folk; women, children and the elderly trekked into rural areas in search of food, whilst the evacuation of undernourished children to families in the eastern part of the Netherlands where food was less scarce got underway.⁵⁴⁸

On December 24th, 1944, Christmas Eve, the Germans ordered the mobilization of all able-bodied males in North and South Holland, a follow up to efforts that already had gotten underway on October 7th in Utrecht, Amersfoort and Kampen and in Amsterdam on November 15th. Military patrols then formally began hunting men aged between 17 and 50 for *Arbeitsinsatz* in Germany.⁵⁴⁹ Although that should have meant all Ridderhof males were now in line for call-up, as Kleine Tiny remembers; *"All my dad's family avoided being conscripted. Ome Dick [39] stayed on at Schiphol Airport, while Rotterdam-based Adriaan [42] was, I suppose, 'too old.' Emsay (54), who lived in Amsterdam Zuid was already sick. Even my dad, at 50, was considered too old. Luckily."*

Business life was almost at a standstill. Most Amsterdammers no longer worked, or if they did, it was only for a few days a week. The schools were closed too. *"Amsterdam became a cold, dark city"* writes Geert Mak, and like many Dutchmen, Cor stood his bike up in the living room and pedalled it to generate a little light via the dynamo. *"Another trick was to point battery-operated light bulbs at mirrors,"* Kleine Tiny told me. *"Not a single tram was running. Schiphol and the harbours were destroyed by the Germans, who then proceeded to steal half the city: wharves, buses, trains, machines, factory stock, tramway carriages, bicycles, textiles, everything that might be of some use was taken away. Neither post nor telephone worked any more, the rubbish collection was terminated and the sewers overflowed."*⁵⁵⁰ Christmas 1944 must have felt no less than an apocalypse and another year's end with little to look forward to.

+++++

As the Germans turned the screws on the Dutch in the west, so too did the Russians on the Germans in the east. On October 19th, the first Soviet troops had crossed the eastern frontier, bringing with it disastrous consequences that wiped out almost all traces of German ancestry in the region.⁵⁵¹ Eye-witness accounts collected and published by an East Prussian named *Hans-Dieter Hundsdoerfer*, who had fought for the *Wehrmacht* and was later captured by the Allies in France in 1944, make for telling reading. A handful of excerpts are included for context within the textbox overleaf.⁵⁵²

⁵⁴⁸ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

⁵⁴⁹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 274.

See also: www.godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1944

N.b. Warmbrunn adds that the largescale raids were only disguised as labour draft since they were rather security measures, the German military knowing that arms had been dropped by the Allies and after recent experiences in France and Belgium, it was feared that the forces of the interior might aid Allied troops at critical moments.

The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 56-57

⁵⁵⁰ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 274

⁵⁵¹ *A Terrible Revenge. The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans, 1944-1950*. A.M. de Zayas. St. Martin's, 1994.

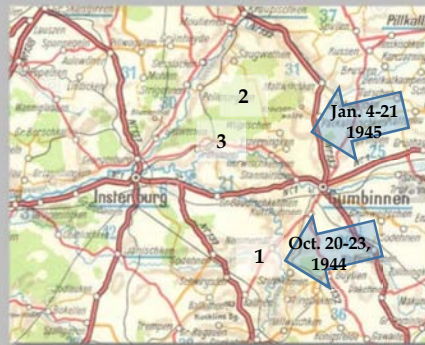
⁵⁵² Having attended the same university as *Hans-Dieter's* daughter and learnt he put his (and others') experiences in the short print-run book: *From East Prussia to North Yorkshire*, I explored the parallels between him and Margot.

15.20: Take Revenge without Mercy!

Way back in summer 1925, Margot had spent a couple of months in *Insterburg* in East Prussia (see also '1' on map on pg. 698). Yet between October 20th and 23rd, 1944, "the sky in the east turned red from flames" wrote the town's last *Bürgermeister*, Dr. Gert Wander.

"The sound of artillery fire was ever stronger, the streets with fleeing people and vehicles, were blocked by cattle and horses ... Children who had lost their mothers and also foals, were aimlessly roaming in the streets of the town. The station itself was surrounded by thousands of people from the overrun border districts, who were terrified, sitting on their few belongings and waiting for the possibility of transport by train."

Worry was rife as news of terrible atrocities from the neighbouring villages such as *Nemmersdorf* (see '1' on the map above right) reached *Insterburg*, while photographic archives today illustrate just how gruesomely the Russians indeed took "revenge without mercy!" It was less like 'liberation' (as the Russians and their post-war puppet governments liked to portray it) and more like ethnic cleansing. However, the frontline around *Insterburg* came to a standstill and was even thrown back in a few places, some locations like *Nemmersdorf* being re-taken on October 23rd, resulting in a nervous wait over the following months.



"In the first weeks after the October events, the trains for Mohrungen [Prussia] and Saxony were overfilled, mainly with older people and women with children ... The schools were closed without exception and the teaching staff, if they were not called up to the Volkssturm or otherwise directed, were put on leave ... Men not in the Volkssturm were ordered to leave for the rural area." As elsewhere in Germany at the time, "anyone who doubted the final victory or the strength of the Eastern front was a defeatist and pessimist against whom they [the administrator's henchmen] would act in the strongest terms."

"By the beginning of November, every thinking person could recognize that the early breakthrough of the enemy was not only possible but probable..."

Christmas was celebrated quietly, apart from a few bombs that injured people on the day before but in a hopeless mood, full of sadness as it would perhaps be the last one in *Insterburg*. The men of the *Volkssturm* spent Christmas in trenches in the *Eichwalder* forest [to *Insterburg*'s northeast – see '2'] and the area of *Feldbeck-Luisenberg* ['3' to the forest's south, *Gross Trakinnen*, today *Seljony Bor*]."

On January 14th, 1945, Germany's military bulletin then reported the beginning of a new East Prussia offensive by the Soviets. Up to the last minute, "the train service to *Koenigsberg* was ... maintained." The day before, "the ticket offices were swarming with people ... The goods station was filled with beds, bed frames, settees and armchairs etc. ready for loading ... Items were sent from *Insterburg* but never got further away than East Prussia."

Come the evening of January 20th, only the *Insterburger Volkssturm*, some army personnel, Police, Fire Brigade and First Aid service, and a handful of men remained, while the following night, its eastern boundary fell into enemy hands. *Oberleutnant Matzigkeit* described the final getaway on the evening of January 21st, 1945 after the Russians forced their way into the town:

"The night was bitterly cold, it had snowed and in various places there were snowdrifts. The roads were slippery and icy. Riding our bicycles was out of the question, we had to push them. The march continued in silence. We were very depressed, we were fleeing. We had lost hope. We men had tears in our eyes."

Sources:

From East Prussia to North Yorkshire. German Ex-Prisoner of War 81G 505975. Hans-Dieter Hundsdoerfer. Old Hall Publishing, 2006. Appendix: *The Last Days of Insterburg*. Incl. the memoirs of last *Bürgermeister* Dr. Gert Wander (Pg. 189, 194, 195, 197, 198, 200, 203, 206); *Oberleutnant Ottenburg* (Pg. 204); the railway official, A. Cartarius (Pg. 205), and; *Oberleutnant Matzigkeit* (Pg. 213)

Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 563

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemmersdorf_massacre

Image: Massacred German civilians who chose not to flee the Soviet Army on October 21st, 1944 in *Nemmersdorf*, 20km southeast of *Insterburg*. Source: Bundesarchiv

Map: *Insterburg-Gumbinnen*, 1936. [alamy.com](https://www.alamy.com)

See also: www.wiilectureinstitute.com/stories/beck.htm for another eye witness account of the events of autumn-winter 1944

While the Russians liberated Nazi victims on the ground, the Allied Air Forces continued to rule the skies. By November 24th, Vienna's stations, barring the *West Bahnhof*, had been put out of action while the Danube's bridges had been all but destroyed. Air raid alarms were commonplace and from Vienna's outer districts to the diplomatic quarter, damage was ubiquitously severe. "*Large cars, filled with exiled politicians, sweep through the streets*" wrote von Studnitz, whilst "*In the shops there is nothing to buy except black ties.*"⁵⁵³ Nanny's cousin, Martin Hinsch, must have pondered whether to stay in Vienna or flee with his family. He chose to wait, hoping I suppose for a compassionate occupier.

Deeper into Nazi Germany, at the Hinsch Villa outside Leipzig, the year had begun "*grey, cold and unfriendly while citizens waited hopefully upon the imminent end to the madness. Fear, distress and misery were omnipresent in Machern also,*" recalled Willi Schmidt, a local who had himself served as a combat soldier in the east.⁵⁵⁴ January and February was largely raid-free for Leipzig, although *Flugplatz Brandis* remained a target throughout 1945.⁵⁵⁵ Still the air raid sirens resounded, ten times in *Engelsdorf* between January 18th and February 15th.⁵⁵⁶ At Fritz's wife's birthplace southwest of the city in *Zeitz*, its oil plants saw damaging raids on January 16-17th, 1945.

In Dresden, home to Tiny's second cousin, the Saxon capital too finally faced its first daytime raid during the middle of January, when *Friedrichstadt* to the north of Irene Hinsch's home was bombed. The central area around the *Hauptbahnhof* (see the map on pg. 715) was also damaged. "*How long will that railwayhead remain intact?*" the locals must have wondered, perhaps mulling evacuation. The Allies' attention remained concentrated on hindering troop transport movements to the east and therefore rail hubs remained in their sights, especially those in middle Germany; Dresden, Chemnitz, Leipzig and Berlin. Again the English warned the Germans, yield or the raids will "*become serious.*"⁵⁵⁷

Irene Hinsch's father, Heinz, was growing nervous. "*He never wore his Swastika and hated his uniform*" recalls Irene. "*He would throw it on the floor when he came home from work in disgust at what was continuing and at what was to come.*" Even today the distinct odour of the leather lining of his helmet and his belt buckle remain with Irene.

Key targets began to fall elsewhere. On January 17th, Warsaw was finally taken by the Allies, followed by *Łódź* and *Kraków* to its east and south, two days later. A day afterwards, the Russians pushed across the Silesian border and on January 22nd, 1945, they reached *Gross Strehlitz*, about 50km northeast of the Tyralla homesteads in *Radstein*.⁵⁵⁸ By January 31st, they had reached the present-day east German border, the *Oder*. It wouldn't be long before Dresden, 75km further along, would be within Russian sights.

⁵⁵³ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Nov. 24, 1944. Pg. 222

⁵⁵⁴ *Machern in Zeitgeschichte. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt.* Regionalverein Machern e.V, 2015. Pg. 154

⁵⁵⁵ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flugplatz_Brandis-Waldpolenz

⁵⁵⁶ *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde.* Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 214

⁵⁵⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc., 2001. Jan. 16, 1945. Pg. 393-394

⁵⁵⁸ *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945.* Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Jan. 22, 1945. Pg. 234

Was this still a 'strategic withdrawal'?⁵⁵⁹ Huge swathes of Silesian refugees fled to Berlin, fleeing the advancing Russians with tales of terror and torture, and 'Russian syphilis.' It was the Germans of the east who suffered most for the politics of Hitler, wrote Alfred-Maurice de Zayas in *A Terrible Revenge. The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans*.⁵⁶⁰

The Tyrallas too soon found themselves caught up in the mayhem, according to my distant cousin, Gerard, even if they expected that being 'Silesian' first and 'German' second brought them some kind of immunity. We'll pick up specifically on Margot and Nanny's cousin, Josef, who inherited their Silesian grandparents' family farm, as well as Gerard's own family's tales that followed, in Chapter XVI.

Dresden too filled up with Silesian refugees from January 25th, convincing Klemperer "*the end is rapidly approaching*."⁵⁶¹ That same day, German Foreign Ministry Press Attaché von Studnitz bemoaned the estimated "*three million refugees [who] have fled from the eastern provinces and are choking roads and railways alike. The streams of refugees are interfering with military operations, disorganizing the lines of communication from which some counter-stroke might be launched, and are denuding the East of its German population*."⁵⁶²

That was the goal of course, while the confusion⁵⁶³ exposed the growing fractures within German society. "*They lost the feeling of superiority*" said one Jew as "*Loyalty to the Führer started breaking apart at the seams*."⁵⁶⁴ In Berlin, youngsters' well-heeled "*Heil Hitler*" was now being rebuffed with a curt "*Good day*."⁵⁶⁵

From February 4th to 11th, 1945, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met in the Crimea at Yalta, to agree on the future organisation of a post-Nazi Europe as well as establish an agenda for governing post-war Germany.⁵⁶⁶ All three leaders ratified an agreement regarding the post-war occupation zones for Germany, with the demarcation line between the Soviet and other zones (along the borders of the old states or provinces of Mecklenburg, Saxony, Anhalt and Thuringia - see the map on pg. 781), being based on a British proposal dating back to January 15th, 1944. The rationale at the time of its drafting, had been to give the Soviets a powerful incentive to see the war through to the end.⁵⁶⁷ At the same time, the Allies' agreed that the people of Europe would be able "*to create democratic institutions of their own choice*," within the framework of the so-called '*Declaration of Liberated Europe*.'⁵⁶⁸ Roosevelt, however, had already decided to leave the messy business of running eastern Europe to its new ally, the Soviets.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁵⁹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Jan. 20, 1945. Pg. 394

⁵⁶⁰ *A Terrible Revenge. The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans, 1944-1950*. A.M. de Zayas. St. Martin's Press, 1994

⁵⁶¹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Jan. 25, 1945. Pg. 396

⁵⁶² *While Berlin Burns. The Diary of Hans-Georg von Studnitz 1943-1945*. Hans-Georg von Studnitz. Frontline Books, 2011. Jan. 25, 1945. Pg. 236

⁵⁶³ See: peaceandjustice.freeforums.net/thread/277/life-legacy-winston-churchill

⁵⁶⁴ *From Hell to the Promised Land. A Boy's Daring Escape from a Nazi Concentration Camp*. Sam Silberberg. 2011. Pg. 93

⁵⁶⁵ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 226

⁵⁶⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yalta_Conference

⁵⁶⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Development_of_the_inner_German_border

⁵⁶⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yalta_Conference

⁵⁶⁹ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 556

At the same time, the Americans and Soviets announced their intention not to link up in the capital city but rather in the area around Leipzig and Dresden, with the 'prize,' the taking of Berlin, being granted to the Russians. In part, this was because America was convinced the Germans would create a stronghold in Bavaria.⁵⁷⁰ Churchill, stuck in between, struggled to hold sway, which meant that for Kleine Tiny and her family, the Allies' circumvention of Holland would see Dutch liberation left to the last.

As the Allies converged on the heart of the German war machine, the so-called 'Hunger Winter' unfolded in the Netherlands. *"At the end of December, the frost came, ushering in a period of severe starvation. Until the beginning of February it remained savagely cold, and because the IJsselmeer froze [in central Holland], the last supply routes [to the west] for food were cut off."*⁵⁷¹ Essentials were now below subsistence levels. They were half those in the UK and during the first quarter of 1945, ration coupons officially provided one with 969 grams of bread and 1kg of potatoes per person per week – although neither guaranteed that you would be able to find that in the stores. With the black market running out of food too, dogs and cats joined the menu.⁵⁷²

Some 18,000 Dutch men, women and children eventually starved to death that winter, although some estimates put the figure as high as 30,000.⁵⁷³ Nanny and Cor's 12.5 years wedding anniversary at the end of January, normally a keenly celebrated occasion, got overlooked. Instead Cor joined the thousands of other men who went into the deserted countryside on bicycles, with rickety carts, old leather handbags or prams, and on shoes made from wood, to barter food from the farmers – usually a few potatoes or a cauliflower. The wheels on his bike, long without tyres, had to do, while a hosepipe held its panniers in place. However, the ingenuity was in the false bottom that helped hide potatoes, butter and grain when crossing Amsterdam's boundary.

Tiny's father would sometimes trek as far as Germany, a hundred kilometres east, sleeping at the same farms where stowaways now lived. The jewellery Nanny had inherited from her Prussian grandmother – a necklace and some earrings – was now traded for food. Bed sheets and other commodities too proved valuable. *"Mum would always buy more matches than she needed and was always well-stocked with bed linen ... handy because money was worthless by that time."* Such trips took days, which meant those left behind anguished over the fates of loved ones, especially with a travel ban in place not to mention the risk of being picked up for slave labour, a fate tens of thousands eventually suffered.⁵⁷⁴ Others simply fell by the wayside and died⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷⁰ Cca. March 1945. *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 553

⁵⁷¹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 274

⁵⁷² *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 63

⁵⁷³ *America, it's also our history! An exhibition of the Museum of Europe*, 2011. N.b. Abraham Pais cites 15,000 deaths in northwest Holland alone. *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 63

⁵⁷⁴ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=505#1945

⁵⁷⁵ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 64

Kleine Tiny too got out and did her bit, pulling wood and rubber from between the tram rails and around the drains in the street. "Then when the Germans came along you had to scat," she told me. As many as 20,000 small trees were pulled down across Holland too, and once the Jews had been rounded up, their homes also became targets for wood. Floors, staircases, beams, everything that would burn was taken away, some 4,600 houses being utterly destroyed as a result.⁵⁷⁶ Little wonder one could see signs on some house doors warning: 'This house is inhabited.'⁵⁷⁷



Holland's 'Hunger Winter' of 1944-1945 led Amsterdam's youngsters to prise the wood from tram rail ties to use as fuel

Source:
Cas Oorthuys/
Hollandse Hoogte.
thecorrespondent.com

To save a few florins, one also had their pets put down. For *Kleine Tiny* that meant putting 'Pierrot' to sleep on a date that remains with her to this day: February 21st. Ironically, no sooner had she said farewell, her father returned from another trekking foray. "Quick, nip down the vets and bring him back," he urged. It was too late. *Tiny's* dog had been put down moments earlier.

Behind closed doors, food was cooked over their small stove fueled from woodchips. "That was used for boiling up sugar beet, normally used as cattle feed, to create a thick, brownish, sweet syrup that would be poured off in a pan," reminisced *Tiny*. "That was the good part" recalled a neighbouring Amsterdammer.⁵⁷⁸ "We also ate the residual mush which was collected and cooked into a sort of a loaf with a bit of flour. That was done over a pan of boiling water, again fueled from woodchips. Pa would first feed myself and Irene, then mum, then himself." Other Amsterdammers got by on worse; fried tulip bulbs, candle fat plus the thin, indeterminate soup from the communal kitchens.⁵⁷⁹

I wondered whether *Kleine Tiny's* mind ever drifted towards her German relatives, given the hardship they were causing the Dutch. "Not at all" said *Tiny*. "Mutti was distant, she didn't endear herself to us. She was farthest from my thoughts. I cared more for my cousin Ans and her parents, which is where we'd spend weekends in better times. My concern, my parents' concern, was for our immediate relatives in Amsterdam and Holland. My German heritage rather meant toil, strife, discrimination. I had scarce affinity for Germany, never mind time to think about family there. As for Margot, we guessed she was safe. There was so much going on in Holland to have to be wary of, we didn't have time to think of much else."

+++++

⁵⁷⁶ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 274

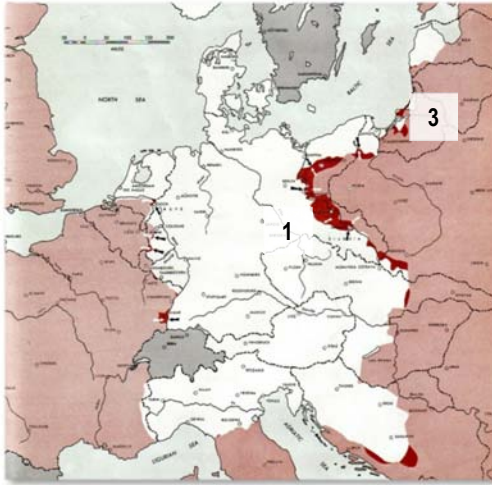
⁵⁷⁷ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 63

⁵⁷⁸ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 64

⁵⁷⁹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 275

Frontline status
at the time of
the Dresden
bombings.
White areas
were held by
Germany,
those rose by
the Allies,
while bright
red reveals
Allied
advances

Source: wiki/
Bombing_
of_Dresden



A fortnight or so before Tiny put Pierrot to sleep, the Allies announced during the Yalta conference that Russia would take Dresden ('1'). That message had been received loud and clear by the city's authorities on February 9th and three days later, everything was ready for the city's evacuation, the city's bridges having also been mined.⁵⁸⁰ With the Russians' nearby, soldiers too had begun to desert. Some 700 were arrested, with Nazi orders calling for any found to be begging for food, much less a bed, were to be refused and chased away if persistent.

But in what has become a controversial move to this day, Russia's western Allies pre-empted the Soviet arrival by reigning chaos from the skies during the night of Tuesday to Wednesday, February 13-14th. Tiny's five years younger second cousin, Irene, now seven and a half, lived 'across' the Elbe in *Loschwitz* (see '1' on the map overleaf). She has no problem in recalling the evening's events very clearly.

"I lay awake in bed when I heard the radio announce, 'Planes over Halle-Merseburg.' We all fled to the cellar, originally used for potatoes, coal etc. At around 10 P.M. we heard the rumble of bombers and the whistles as they dropped their payload over Dresden. After the first raid, we returned to our flat. Fortunately, just one curtain was smoldering (windows were left open during raids to stop them from shattering). Thanks to the buckets of sand and shovels we kept in the attic, the incendiary that had hit us was easily put out. The Loschwitzer Kirche fared worse. I can neither forget the 'Burning Christmas trees,' as we children called them, the illuminants that were typically dropped by the high-flying pathfinder planes. They served as markers to the carpet bombers that followed.⁵⁸¹ The saddest sight, however, was away in the distance towards Dresden, where I saw houses burning. At that age, it was a kind of macabre spectacle."

Victor Klemperer lived in one of those houses. He too vividly described his experience:

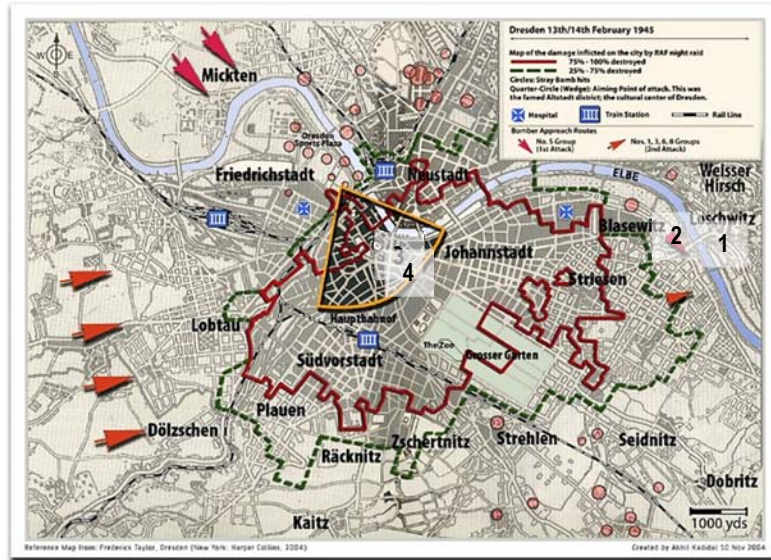
"We sat down for coffee at about half past nine on Tuesday evening ... then a full-scale warning sounded ... We very soon heard the ever-deeper and louder humming of approaching squadrons, the light went out, an explosion nearby ... I do not know how often it was repeated. Suddenly the cellar window on the back wall opposite the entrance burst open, and outside it was as bright as day. And then came the all clear. Fires were blazing at Pirnaischer Platz ['4' below], on Marschallstrasse, and somewhere on or over the Elbe. The ground was covered with broken glass. A terrible strong wind was blowing. It was after midnight."⁵⁸²

That constituted the first attack, which can be seen in the map below indicated by the pink arrows. But there was more to come, as the orange arrows reveal.

⁵⁸⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Feb. 9-10 and 12, 1945. Pg. 401-2, 403

⁵⁸¹ An impression of the view looking down on those flares from above, can be seen in textbox 15.17 on pg. 740

⁵⁸² *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc, 2001. Feb. 13-14, 1945. Pg. 406-7



The allied attacks on Dresden, February 13-14th, 1945, where the red arrows show the first attack, the orange, the second.

1. Irene Hinsch's home;
2. Hinsch family stores included a *Leihbücherei* (lending library) in Blasewitz, another nearby in Tolkewitzer Straße, and a third in Johannstadt – see '4';
3. Victor Klemperer's impound in Zeughausstrasse
4. Pirnaischer Platz

Source:
peaceandjustice.freeforums.net

Irene again: *"The second attack came three hours later, an unforgettable screaming noise."* Explosion after explosion followed after some 300 tonnes of incendiary and high-explosive bombs had been dropped. In the centre of Dresden, *"all around everything was ablaze."*⁵⁸³ *"There were bombs which even burnt in water"* she recalled. Not daring to wait, Irene's mother took off with her and her brother, 'Ulli,' for Pillnitz, six kilometres southeast and upstream of Dresden. There one of Ingeborg's clients ran a *Kinderheim*.⁵⁸⁴ *"Walking away from our flat, I could still see the Loschwitzer Kirche burning. There were buildings burning along our walk that night, probably bombs which went the wrong way. Mother 'marched' us onwards. It had begun to rain, which made the ground soft and wet,"* she recalled.

The following morning, Ingeborg returned alone to Dresden to check up on her stores in Blasewitz and Johannstadt. That in turn required crossing the Elbe, and as luck would have it, although an incendiary had partially destroyed the *Loschwitzer Brücke*, it remained passable, thanks to a few brave Dresdeners who prevented its destruction by the retreating *Wehrmacht* (today a plaque commemorates their act of bravery).⁵⁸⁵ At that moment, however, the Americans launched their third *Bomben Angriff*. It lasted about half an hour, Victor Klemperer recalling: *"After a few steps I heard the ugly hum of an aircraft above me coming rapidly closer and diving."*⁵⁸⁶

Ingeborg ran for cover under the bridge, where she was fortunate enough to run into Heinz, who was heading home, having been released on *Bomben Urlaub*. Explains Irene, *"they met quite by chance. Allied bombers returned late in the morning with these horrible phosphorus bombs and as people hid under the bridge, fate intervened to ensure they bumped into one another there."*

⁵⁸³ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc, 2001. Feb. 13-14, 1945. Pg. 406-7

⁵⁸⁴ Today, as then, Pillnitz is famed for its Baroque castle and park which was used as the summer residence of the House of Wettin, the Saxon royal family, until 1918

⁵⁸⁵ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blaues_Wunder

⁵⁸⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc., 2001. Feb. 13, 14, 1945. Pg. 411

Surviving the raid and successfully crossing the Elbe, the couple found their *Leihbücherei* or lending library in Blasewitz's Schillerplatz miraculously still stood. But their second store in neighbouring Tolkewitzer Straße 8, the one that sold office stationary, and third, which sold paper, pencils and easy-to-read books and lay closer to Dresden's center in Pfotenhauer Straße in Johannstadt, had been bombed to the ground. Nothing remained. *"That was hard to take but mother's greatest regret was having left her gold watch, which needed to be repaired, out on the table the day before. Her typewriter was another prized possession that was lost in the raid."*

Heinz called his father. Having seen the glow of the burning city on the horizon, Fritz, relieved to hear the family were safe, proposed he move them to the villa. The Hinsch's fear of the Russians was paramount to anything else, and even though the Soviets' arrival had been delayed, given the stories of rape, pillaging, violence and theft, there was no doubt in his mind the family had to get out. So Ingeborg was to deliver Irene first, and then Ulrich. Dresden was in chaos by this point:

*"Building after building was a burned-out ruin. Down here by the river, where many people were moving along or resting on the ground, masses of the empty, rectangular cases of the stick incendiary bombs, protruded from the churned up earth ... The dead were scattered across our path. Farther from the centre, some people had been able to save a few things, they pushed handcarts with bedding and the like or sat on boxes and bundles. Crowds streamed unceasingly between these islands, past the corpses, the smashed vehicles, up and down the Elbe. A silent, agitated procession."*⁵⁸⁷

The horrific destruction of Dresden beyond its Altstadt, as seen here looking southwest from its Rathaus in late 1945

Source: en.wiki/Dresden



Besides the resulting carnage, the raid clearly disrupted the evacuation. However, Dresden's needless bombing still sits on the conscience of the British and the Americans today,⁵⁸⁸ for it marked the erosion of one last moral restriction in the bombing war. As the map on the previous page shows, over ninety percent of the city centre was destroyed,⁵⁸⁹ including the splendour of a centuries-old civilization.⁵⁹⁰ Estimates suggest between 25 and 35,000 lives were lost,⁵⁹¹ many of them refugees, including both Silesian, and Sudeten from Czechoslovakia.⁵⁹² An

Upper Silesian woman employed by the Reich's railroads, for instance, was entrusted with the evacuation of the children of railway employees. She left Oppeln (30km northeast of Radstein) and arrived in Dresden on February 13th.⁵⁹³ The belated and unnecessary nature of the raids also led Soviet and East German commentators to allege the bombing was an early move in the cold war.⁵⁹⁴

⁵⁸⁷ I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc., 2001. Feb. 13, 14, 1945. Pg. 410

⁵⁸⁸ A few weeks before the end of World War Two, Winston Churchill drafted a memorandum to the British Chiefs of Staff: "It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing of German cities simply for the sake of increasing the terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed ... The destruction of Dresden remains a serious query against the conduct of Allied bombing." Online at: peaceandjustice.freeforums.net/thread/277/life-legacy-winston-churchill

⁵⁸⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Dresden_in_World_War_II

⁵⁹⁰ Berlin Underground: 1938-1945. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 204

⁵⁹¹ Others range from 22,700-25,000. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Dresden_in_World_War_II

⁵⁹² As many as 200,000 had made their way to Dresden by early 1945. Source unknown.

⁵⁹³ A Terrible Revenge. The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans, 1944-1950. A.M. de Zayas. St. Martin's, 1994.

⁵⁹⁴ Preface. Martin Chalmers. In I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Pg. XV.

It took a few days for Ingeborg to gather up from home what was important before she collected Irene and joined the convoys of homeless, poor people pulling loaded handcarts, with bits and pieces found under ruins in cellars; trucks, some transformed into homes with ingenious straw roofs; occasionally a small vehicle or a buggy being towed by the first.⁵⁹⁵ Irene was touched by the solidarity farmers showed, putting out food and milk for the refugees. She recalls that she and her mother then put down for the night at a place called *Meusegast*. "Mysterious, because I remember this funny name."⁵⁹⁶

I had to wonder why they went via *Meusegast*, which according to the map right (see '1') is in the opposite direction to Machern ('3'), some 100km northwest of Dresden. I suppose Ingeborg decided after collecting Irene in Pillnitz ('2') that it would be wiser to cross the Elbe at Pirna, after which they could join the main long-distance route that ran between Saxony and Bohemia, the *Kulmersteig* and the *Alte Dresden-Teplitzer Poststraße*.⁵⁹⁷ Presumably this route offered better chances for roadside assistance - certainly the 'northern' route via Meissen was clogged with easterners reports Klemperer. It also meant they could safely bypass Dresden without bumping into the advancing Russians. Irene is inclined to agree.



Irene Hinsch's approximate trek
from Dresden to Machern via Pirna, February 1945

"By crossing the Elbe near Pirna we avoided the potential dangers from a return to Dresden."⁵⁹⁸ But she also offers another theory. "Mother perhaps had wanted me to be together with our *Pflichtjahrmädchen*,⁵⁹⁹ or Nanny, Liesel Baumgärtel, who lived 'somewhere' in the *Erzgebirge*, at the border with Bohemia, having already been sent home by my mother."

As they turned northwest for Machern, walking mostly, but hitching rides with passing vehicles whenever possible, they observed the many poorer *Sudeten* refugees who walked in the opposite direction, having decided to return to their *Heimat*, in an attempt to save their homes - and avoid the Russians.⁶⁰⁰ I had to wonder whether Irene and her family had any hope of returning?

⁵⁹⁵ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Feb. 19, 1945. Pg. 416. N.b. This refers to the site along the highway north of Dresden to Klotzsche.

⁵⁹⁶ The name *Meusegast* probably derives from *Mužigost*, the first name given in a Slavic gazetteer. It may also derive from *Mušegozd*, an Old Sorbian word for 'fly/mosquito forest.' See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meusegast

⁵⁹⁷ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meusegast

⁵⁹⁸ Personal correspondence with Irene Hinsch on Sept. 13th, 2017

⁵⁹⁹ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pflichtjahr

⁶⁰⁰ Klemperer's own journey, for instance, took him to *Falkenstein im Vogtland*, also in the *Erzgebirge*, after a stop at family in Pirna. His goal, however, was Bavaria.

I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. March 7, 1945. Pg. 426-7

"Not really. Although we had 'booked' ourselves some land to build on, which was to have become ours once the war was over, my father sensed the Russians would be around long after. That was the end, as far as we were concerned. There was to be no going back. The bombing changed the course of our lives forever," Irene recalled melancholically.

It was in fact thirty seven years before Irene revisited 'her' home in *Veilchenweg* in *Loschwitz*. But I couldn't help but think that bombing also galvanized the family into action, something which might not otherwise have happened had the Russians attacked and occupied the city.

+++++

Young Irene and her mother reached the Hinsch villa just two days after having set out, where they found not only her grandfather, but Frau Tyralla I imagine too. *"Yes, but by that time the house was full of refugees – women, 'Flüchtlingskinder' and old people," she reminded me. "Regulations ordered that one person was allowed to occupy so many metres of space and any redundant space was to be made available to refugees – most typically the Sudeteners, who had been firm supporters of Hitler, but probably East Prussians and Silesians too."* So regarding my great grandmother, Irene could only add; *"Since there were so many strange people in this house, I can't answer whether I met grandfather's sister."* That dashed my hopes of hearing her own reflections on Frau Tyralla.

As for Opa Fritz, he was an 'old man' by that time, who by all accounts was old-school Prussian. *"Did he say very much at all during your time in Machern?"* I asked. *"No,"* sighed Irene. *Much like his sister, "he was 'distant.' But his wife was a very kind person to us children. So I mostly conversed with her."*

Irene described to me the layout of the house. *"The lounge was to the left of the front door while beyond and to the rear was the dining room and kitchen. Both faced a well-kept garden, reached via the steps at the rear."* With its trees, chicken, ducks, hens and one or two goats *"it was paradise."* That certainly reminded me of Nanny's fond memories of the villa.

"Oh, there was plenty of entertainment," added Irene. *"But I lived in fear of the geese and their big eggs! Tante Martha took no such issue with them, however, and when it was time to eat, she would hoist the goose on to the chopping block and chop off his head."* She was uniquely remembered for the way she served ham too. *"She'd cut very thin slices, 'Marthascheibchen,' we'd call them."* I realized then how fortunate I was to be able to document these memories of the villa and to add them to those (not dissimilar) tales my grandmother herself shared.

Allied bombers visited the Hinsch's and their many lodgers a little over a week after his granddaughter and her mother had arrived, and Irene distinctly remembers the *LuftSchutzRaum* which lay beneath the villa, denoted by 'LSR' signs. Although she adds *„we never had to hide in the cellar in Machern."*

Soon after lunchtime on February 27th, a heavy US-British raid known as 'Thunderclap' blitzed Leipzig's town centre, the *Musikviertel*, as well as the south, east and north of the town.⁶⁰¹ The area around the *Hauptbahnhof*, including many wagons and switchgear was severely damaged while rail services too were disrupted. Over a thousand lives were lost while as many as 30,000 souls were left homeless. Power supplies were also disrupted for ten days, because coal could not be delivered while other utility supplies, such as water, were also affected.⁶⁰² The damage to the railway lines came at a particularly poignant moment, since a fortnight earlier the city deported its last 169 Jews to *Theresienstadt*.⁶⁰³

Irene neither ran into her cousins, *Vera* and *Lothar* in *Wenigmachern*, nor their parents for that matter, although it wouldn't be long before they too were forced to leave the city for the *Muldental*. During 'Thunderclap,' damage to *Vera's* lodgings forced her to move into her brother's digs at the *Zoo-Gaststätte*.⁶⁰⁴ At the same time, *Lothar's* workstead, *café Hannes*, was hit and forced to close, which left him jobless.⁶⁰⁵ Tram services out to their parents in *Engelsdorf* were also affected by the raid,⁶⁰⁶ while allied bombs drew close to their home in *Werkstättenstrasse*, striking *Klingerplatz* about 600 metres away.⁶⁰⁷

Three weeks respite followed until the evening hours of March 7th, when many towns across Germany were again attacked. Firebombs saw nearby *Eutritzsch* and the *Hauptbahnhof* burn well into the next day this time, while the *Zoo-Gaststätte* saw significant damage too, forcing *Vera* and *Lothar* to retreat to their parents' abode. Over nine hundred people lost their homes in those raids, while meeting points had to be set up across town to help people find one another.⁶⁰⁸

Dog fights between German fighters and Allied aircraft filled the skies over *Gohlis* and *Eutritzsch* during the early afternoon of March 16th,⁶⁰⁹ Irene particularly recalling the aluminium tinfoil strips which were dropped to distort radio transmissions and disrupt locating devices. For her they were fun playthings whilst *Ingeborg* too drew blessings from the sky thanks to the undated rose-colored ration tags that were dropped by the Allies. "Reisemarken,' as they were called, were especially for refugees who couldn't easily collect rationcards, allowing them to obtain food on the move. But until the German shops became aware those the Allies dropped were counterfeit, [mother] would disappear off to Dresden and cash them in for butter."

"All the way back to Dresden?" I asked, more than a little astonished.

⁶⁰¹ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig#Januar_1945_bis_Kriegsende

⁶⁰² *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 126-7

⁶⁰³ *Lest We Forget: Growing up in Nazi Leipzig, 1933-1939.* Rabbi Shlomo Wahrman. Mesorah Pubs Ltd. 1991. Pg. 136

⁶⁰⁴ The date has not been confirmed but in her treatise on Leipzig, Birgit Horn adds "a large number of Leipzigers lost their apartments and their personal belongings. Most by this time had been bombed two or three times." *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 159

⁶⁰⁵ See: anton-hannes.de/anno1900.php

⁶⁰⁶ *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde.* Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 306

⁶⁰⁷ *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde.* Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 244

⁶⁰⁸ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 128, 160

⁶⁰⁹ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalendar. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 129

"Oh yes, definitely ... I remember very clearly my mother being very proud of herself to act against the law to get food for her family." Perhaps the distance seemed less daunting when she returned with Ulrich by her side, despite the roads being full of thousands more refugees, fleeing the eastern territories, as they themselves had done, in search of accommodation.⁶¹⁰ *"On top of all this, mother was pregnant again,"* added Irene.

Meanwhile the Allies closed in on central Europe, the Saxon 'link up' was just weeks away now. Despite bad weather, Allied bombers hit Leipzig's *Hauptbahnhof* once again on April 6th, whilst starting numerous fires across town that claimed another 367 lives and rendered 20,000 more homeless.⁶¹¹ The next day, covert listeners could hear English radio broadcasting: *"This is England, this is England"* and that the Russians were in Vienna⁶¹² while *"the English are marching on Hannover, Brunswick, Leipzig and Bremen."*⁶¹³ Martin Hinsch and his kin decided to sit out the Russian occupation of Vienna.

Wenigmachern may have been a good stretch from Leipzig, but Irene and her mother had to contend with low flying English and American *Jäger bombers* (*Jabo* for short) or 'Tief-flieger'⁶¹⁴ that shot indiscriminately at citizens going about their business, workers in fields, even passenger trains.⁶¹⁵ *"You could see the face of the pilot,"* recalled Irene, who while walking one day from school with her mother along *Machern's Schausee*, encountered one such low-flying plane. Instinctively Ingeborg pushed Irene into the ditch and smothered her. Mischievously, Irene thought it had something to do with the red polkadot headscarf she wore.

According to family lore, Frankfurt-based *Hans Hinsch's* wife, Luise, was less fortunate in a similar incident while she was aboard a train. As Christabel Bielenberg writes, Allied pilots *"had brought 'engine busting' to a fine art. A whining dive, a burst of fire, and the punctured steam kettle drew slowly to a forced stop ... Others could make several bosh shots and the passengers in the front carriages then had to jump for it, darting backwards and forwards across the rails and crouching for protection behind the train."*⁶¹⁶ Luise's injury was not fatal but stomach wounds and damage to her abdomen rendered her unable to bear further children.

⁶¹⁰ *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt.* Regionalverein Machern e.V, 2015. Pg. 155

⁶¹¹ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 130

⁶¹² In fact Vienna was taken by the Soviet on April 13th, 1945, according to:

godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=505#1945

⁶¹³ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945.* Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 239

⁶¹⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strafing#World_War_II

⁶¹⁵ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. May 29, 1945. Pg. 320. N.b. Not long afterwards, on April 21, 1945, Klemperer described how Tief-flieger shot two girls and a team of oxen that were ploughing fields in Bavaria. See Pg. 462.

⁶¹⁶ *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis.* Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 199

Frits and Veronika Hinsch might have hoped they were by now over the worst, but the Allies were relentless, saving the last of their bombing raids especially for them it would seem. During the early evening hours of April 10th, English planes returned to finish what they started on April 6th. The Leipzig railheads, the *Reichsbahn* repair shop (RAW), Engelsdorf's freight station as well as the marshalling yards at Mockau were all in their sights. From six till eleven in the evening, some one hundred bombers dropped 500 tons of explosives and fourteen tons of fire bombs.⁶¹⁷ Tracks, workshops and residential buildings were devastated.⁶¹⁸ The *Lokwerkstatt*, the *Wagenwerkstatt*, the *Kantine*, and the *Lehrwerkstatt*, all part of the outer yards, were left unrecognizable, as the adjacent image shows,⁶¹⁹ meaning that some 85 percent of the factory had been destroyed. Some 200 civilians died, including railwaymen, workers and one hundred prisoners of war.⁶²⁰



Leipzig Engelsdorf goods yard, following the April 10th, 1945 raid. Looking east toward *Sommerfeld*, it shows *Güterbahnhofstraße* to the left of the footbridge (centre) and the RAW workshops to the right, beyond which lay the Hinsch's home in *Werkstättenstraße*.

Source:
Royal Air Force footage of
11 April 1945 at:
engelsdorf-historie.de.

A neighbour, young Ursula Ackermann, who lived in an apartment within sight of the Hinsch's 'red houses,' described what she saw that day:

"It was almost six in the evening when we gathered in Klingerstraße [several hundred metres to the east of the Hinschs]. Mother had just put supper on the table when the sirens began to wail. My duty was to open all the windows. As usual, I checked the sky. It could not be possible! Directly above we saw 'Christbaum' ['Burning Christmas trees'] marking the bombers' path with their usual pyramid-form. Frantically, we ran for the cellar. Again we listened to the disturbing collapse of buildings, the smoke from bombs and their dull thud on soft ground. Usurped, speechless and full of fear we held our heads. There was only one thing we could think of: 'Will this raid get us, or the next?'"

"Finally there was quiet. And then the 'all clear.' We crept out. Everywhere there was glass, earth and wood. The cellar door blocked our exit, but our house still stood. It had been a perfect escape. The bombs had fallen elsewhere. Every balcony was full of soil, fences and roofing material. Windows were shattered and the roof almost totally covered. At the same time the first folks emerged from the roten Hausern: distraught, dirty - some without any possessions. They knew bad news. Two of their houses were totally destroyed."⁶²¹



Werkstättenstraße 'after the raid.' The two last foreground buildings (#5/#3 and #1) were destroyed in April 1945 and not rebuilt. Today a free area, it today serves as a parking lot.

Sources:
Engelsdorf Bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde.
Tino Hemmann and
europese-bibliotheek.nl (text)

⁶¹⁷ *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde.* Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 244, 427. See also: engelsdorf-historie.de/hist_8.html

⁶¹⁸ See: www.engelsdorf-historie.de/index1.html

⁶¹⁹ See: www.engelsdorf-historie.de/raw2.html

⁶²⁰ *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde.* Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 190, 245, 427

⁶²¹ *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde.* Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 427

The Hinsch family home was one of them. “Kaputt!” Vera told me.

Fires burned in multiple places while horses that had stood in the firefighters’ stalls at the railyard now lay dead, ready to be cut up by starving locals.⁶²² Some 280 homes had been fully destroyed in Engelsdorf, 140 heavily damaged and 1500 damaged to the extent they had to be temporarily evacuated. Vera’s family had nowhere else to go except their weekend house in *Lübschutzer Teiche* (‘2’ on the map overleaf).

The Sacrifice of the Death
Marchers.
Spring 1945.

“At this spot on April 14th a
17 year old girl could walk
no further. She collapsed
and was immediately shot.
Unknown to Machern’s
residents, she was buried in
the cemetery.”

Source:
Machern in Zeitgeschehen.
Willi Schmidt.



It was the beginning of the end and those in positions of authority knew it. Two days later the Nazis shot 53 anti-fascists, having already taken the lives of the 25 that had been imprisoned in the Leipzig Police HQ (*PolizeiPraesidium*).⁶²³ The day after, April 13th, the word was that the Americans were outside Leipzig.⁶²⁴ That led the authorities to ‘death march’ its forced labourers in an endless column east, to where, nobody knew (nor dared ask).⁶²⁵ The following day they passed through Machern and if one looks carefully along the main road, a memorial plaque to a young girl that perished passing through can be found.

On April 15th, the Allies’ bombing campaign was finally called to a halt. Ground forces took over, American panzers entering *Engelsdorf* from the north between the sixteenth and seventeenth.⁶²⁶ It wasn’t long before they approached Machern too, in this case from the south. Fortunately, thanks to the sharp talking of some courageous older men, the youngsters manning the two anti-aircraft positions nearby Machern at the *Peritsch Berg* (‘1’ on the map below, just across the fields and woods from the Hinsch villa (‘3’) and that to the south of the railway line) were successfully put off from shooting at the Americans.⁶²⁷ Irene well recalls that “Machern, like Nepperwitz to the east, hung out white sheets”.

⁶²² Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde. Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 435

⁶²³ Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87

⁶²⁴ Elisabeth Wust’s diary of April 13th, 1945.

In Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 237

⁶²⁵ Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V, 2015. Pg. 154

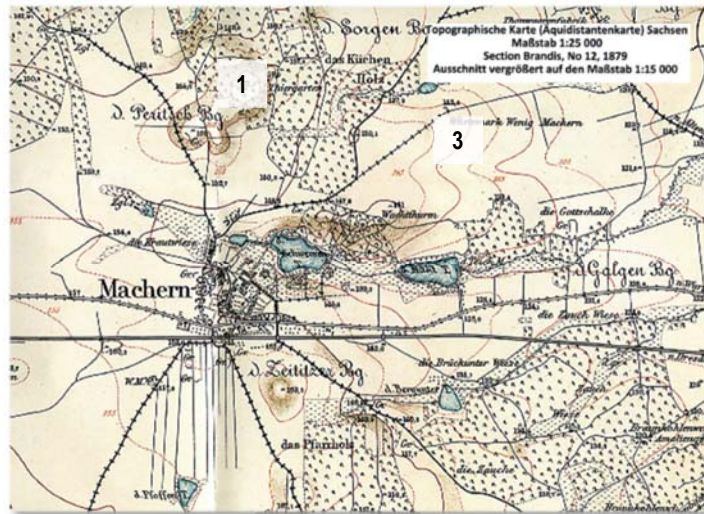
⁶²⁶ Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde. T. Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 245, 307

⁶²⁷ Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V, 2015. Pg. 155-156

Not every one of the neighbouring administrations was as pragmatic as Machern's, however. In nearby Eilenburg (some 5km north of Machern), for instance, its defence forces were ordered by its mayor, a resolute Nazi, to hold the town at all costs. So when American troops approached the community which now stood at 30,000 thanks to the influx of refugees,⁶²⁸ it remained under heavy artillery fire for three days and three nights. As a result, ninety percent of the town centre was destroyed along with 65 percent of the buildings and the lives of two hundred. The American army conversely suffered almost no losses. In fact, Eilenburg ended the war with the unenviable claim of being one of the most heavily damaged cities in Germany.⁶²⁹

Irene remembers that battle vividly because it brought her one of the few memories she has of truly close contact with *Opa Hinsch*. She was sat in the living room with him, looking through its north-facing arc shaped window, listening and watching the American artillery batter the town. As they observed the scenes from afar, he explained to her what was happening. It was a rare moment of intimacy and with that, they bonded. After that, she no longer felt uncomfortable in his company. Machern fell silent on April 21st.⁶³⁰

Leipzig meanwhile had already fallen to the Americans on April 18th, which garnered a characteristically unsympathetic response from Goebbels who broadcast; *"Dreimal Pfui auf Leipzig! She'll be the last German city to be rebuilt after the war!"*⁶³¹ until static filled the airwaves. The Americans' arrival suited Vera, however, who remained busy at work in the *Auerbachskeller* when they arrived. The Anglo-Americans had also reached Dresden, several days earlier, in fact, on April 15th.⁶³² But for the moment, Irene could only await news of her father's whereabouts – and hope it was good.



Machern and its environs:

1. Peritsch Berg
2. Lübschützer Teiche (off-map)
3. The Hinsch villa. N.b. The nearby reference to 'Wüstemark Wenig Machern.'

Source:
Brandis 1879
map 'No. 12'
within Machern
in *Zeitgeschehen*.
Willi Schmidt.



The day the
Allies took
Leipzig:
A burning US
Panzer Tank.
April 18th,
1945.

Source: wiki/
Geschichte_der
_Stadt_Leipzig

⁶²⁸ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eilenburg#Einwohnerentwicklung

⁶²⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eilenburg

⁶³⁰ Machern in *Zeitgeschehen*. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V, 2015. Pg. 156

⁶³¹ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 51 and *Engelsdorf bleibt! Die Geschichte einer mitteldeutschen Gemeinde*. Tino Hemmann. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2009. Pg. 428

⁶³² Elisabeth Wust's diary of April 15th, 1945.

In *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 237, 238

That April of 1945, food supplies grew especially sparse in Germany, Elisabeth Wust in Berlin referring to a new ration card system having been introduced on the ninth that saw butter replaced by lard, a max of 2000 grams of bread per week and 250 grams of meat, 65.2 grams of cheese, 800 grams of marmalade or 335 grams of sugar, and 100 grams of *ersatz* coffee.⁶³³ The food supply, however, was insufficient to meet even such modest amounts, although this still compared favourably with Holland where the bread ration in April was 400 grams per week plus 1kg of potatoes. Deaths from hunger there reached a new high in March, some 1,600 lives lost from that and the cold.⁶³⁴ Only Allied food drops the following month and the distribution of Swedish food and medical supplies to deprived areas, helped offset the escalation of the disaster.⁶³⁵

"A nation that yields to tyrants, loses more than life and property before the light goes out."

Memorial to Dutch resistance fighters executed by Nazis at *Weteringplantsoen* (today H. M. van Randwijckplantsoen).

Source: [J.M. Luijt](#)



Even after Leipzig and Dresden had fallen to the Allies, Holland's occupying forces held out to the very bitter end. *Kleine Tiny* recalls how they enforced the sense of fear and terror by brutally responding to troublemakers, or when one of their men was killed by snipers. On Monday March 12th, Tiny found herself in the wrong place at the wrong time. She was walking down the *Weteringschans* (between the *Leidseplein*

and the *Frederiksplein*, marked as '4' on the map on pg. 584), when there at a small open space called the *Weteringplantsoen*, thirty resistance fighters were summarily executed at a makeshift site.⁶³⁶ It was a tit-for-tat response to the death of a *Sicherheitsdiensts* (SD) agent (part of the German security service) at the hands of the resistance. Passers by, which included Tiny, were made to witness the execution. She told me she managed to slink away, but the corpses were left lying where they had fallen, "until some courageous *Amsterdammers* covered them up with a Dutch flag."⁶³⁷

The following day, the thirteenth, Queen Wilhelmina symbolically set foot once more on Dutch soil in *Zeeuws Vlaanderen*, the southernmost region of the province of Zeeland in south-west Netherlands. At the beginning of March, Allied troops had finally crossed the *Meuse* in the east and taken the evacuated North Limburg towns of Roermond and Venlo, while ten days later, on March 23rd, The British Second Army crossed the Rhine at *Rees* and *Wesel* in western Germany. On April 12th, the Canadians launched the second Battle of Arnhem and come the fifteenth, the Allies had finally cleared it of the enemy – seven long months after the failed British attempt.⁶³⁸ Still, battles continued to rage on the ground across Holland while Allied drops aided the liberation and nutrition of the Netherlands from above. The Germans ridiculed those attempts in return and continued resisting surrender. Come the end of the month, however, freedom was finally within sight.

⁶³³ Elisabeth Wust's diary of April 10th, 1945.

In *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 236

⁶³⁴ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 275

⁶³⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dutch_famine_of_1944-45#Food

⁶³⁶ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/H.M._van_Randwijk

⁶³⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 279

⁶³⁸ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=505

"Sunday April 29th was an unforgettable day for all who were then living in Amsterdam," writes Abraham Pais. While Germany was still negotiating an armistice that had not yet been agreed, the Allies chanced fate and led an air drop of food in western Holland.⁶³⁹ There was no certainty that the German guns would stay quiet, nevertheless "Everybody was on rooftops, waiting for the planes to come. [Then came] the very large, low-flying bombers. Everybody wept." By early May, 1,400 Flying Fortresses and 180 British Lancasters had dropped 1,200 tons of food in the Western Netherlands.⁶⁴⁰

Hitler helped conclude the Allies' campaign by committing suicide on April 30th, followed by Goebbels, thereby deserting all those loyal to them. There was to be no Austrian redoubt, and the German capital, having been bombed around the clock since February 3rd, fell to the Soviets on May 2nd (see the chapter's final textbox overleaf). News of the Führer's death was published that same day, leaving a good many Germans numb with shock as their world collapsed and an uncertain future awaited. That evening the British marched into Hamburg, and although *General Weidling* ordered the capitulation of all German troops,⁶⁴¹ it wasn't until May 4th that the Nazis agreed to surrender in the Netherlands.

General Blaskowitz, however, who was in command of the *Wehrmacht* in the Western Netherlands, was having none of it, leading Field Marshal Montgomery to order the Dutch resistance to abstain from military activities to avoid any further bloodshed. Blaskowitz signed the surrender documents two days later, on May 6th, with Germany's surrender taking effect on May 7th, once the peace agreement was signed. *Festung Holland* was free.

The Dutch flag had anyway been hung from every window come May 5th, 1945, while the *Wilhelminus* played on the liberated radio day and night. There was still time, however, for one last unsavoury incident. On May 7th, a handful of stubborn Germans shot into the festive crowd at Amsterdam's Dam Square, sending folks scrambling. Nineteen were killed and 117 injured.⁶⁴² Even at *Centraal Station*, the Gestapo and resistance continued to exchange gunfire. 'Riscoe's' Canadian Army finally arrived on May 10th, bringing food and a genuine return of much welcomed peace, while the citizens of Amsterdam gave them an emotional welcome.⁶⁴³ *Kleine Tiny*, her parents and sister, *Irene*, joined in the celebrations too.

⁶³⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operations_Manna_and_Chowhound

⁶⁴⁰ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 122-123

⁶⁴¹ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 605

⁶⁴² See: amsterdamredlightdistricttour.com/amsterdam-on-may-7th-1945-the-shooting and en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dam_Square#Dam_Square_shooting.2C_1945

⁶⁴³ See: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=505

15.21: The End of the 'Thousand Year Reich'

On March 18th, 1945, Berliner, Elisabeth Wust, wrote in her diary *"The signs are mounting that the Thousand Year Reich is coming to an end."* The term *'Tausendjähriges Reich'* had been popular during the Nazi era as it suggested by its millennial connotations that Nazi Germany would last for a thousand years.



That era, however, would be over within three months of February 3rd, 1945, the date the U.S. Eighth Air Force began bombing Berlin around the clock. They began by attacking Berlin's railway system, a mass attack that was so dense it caused a city fire spreading eastwards from the city centre, driven by the wind, over the south of *Friedrichstadt* and the northwest of neighbouring *Luisenstadt* (including Frau Tyralla's former late 1930s flat in *Dresdener str. 77*). The center and *Wilhelmstrasse*, south of her wartime Berlin flat, was also destroyed. The fire lasted for four days and until it had burnt everything combustible in its range to ashes. Only once it reached large waterways, thoroughfares, and parks that it could not cross did it cease to advance. Because the raid took place in daytime, the death-toll amounted to just 2,894, although the number of wounded stood at 20,000 while 120,000 were 'dehoused.' *"Berlin resembles a frantic ant colony,"* added Wust, while Ursula von Kardorff was not alone when she asked after witnessing the smouldering *Alexanderplatz* in the east, *"Why is there no revolution?"*

Another big raid followed on February 26th which left 80,000 homeless. *"The lights go off three times a day and even in the evenings,"* Wust lamented. Scores of British RAF Mosquitos then turned their attention on Berlin, bombing it 36 nights in succession from the middle of March. Despite the airborne campaign, 'LSR' air raid shelters, denoted in streets and on many walls came to be humorised as *Lernt schnell Russisch* instead of *Luftschutzraum*, because of the much anticipated Russians arrival. Those still alive come the end of the month will have seen as much as 16 km² of the city was simply rubble. Estimates of the total number of dead in Berlin from all air raids now stood at 20,000 to 50,000.

Yet Berlin was to be defended to the bitter end, and although extra rations were distributed, most had other things on their mind as *'Fortress Berlin'* geared up for the final siege. Within a fortnight, wrote Wust, *"All places of work are shut down, the streetcars and subways aren't running, all streets are closed off. Almost all shops are closed."*

As a million and a half Soviets arrived (to face some 80,000 troops, about half of them *Volkssturm*ers), shells blasted through walls, tanks rolled over gardens and cemeteries, and fired blazed unchecked. Morale varied among these myriad units – some were very determined, others actively sought a way out of the *impasse* – especially *Volkssturm*ers, even while men and boys were still being dragooned left, right and center.

The Soviets were made to fight for every street using heavy artillery, tanks and lines of troops, their *Katyushka*, a multiple rocket launcher mounted on the back of army trucks, striking particular terror into German hearts. They called it the *Stalinorgel* – Stalin's organ, thanks to its trademark howling wail. Thousands of civilians died in these massive barrages which saw houses shake, bricks and roof tiles fell and window panes fly out. Streets and buildings which had survived the Allied bombing raids were finally reduced to rubble, and as the Soviets moved towards the government quarter from all directions, Berlin became an unrecognizable maze of twisted metal, shattered buildings, piles of rubble and dead bodies. By the end of April, the city had become the site of indescribable carnage. Electric light, water and gas had become abstract concepts.

On May 2nd, 1945, the Soviets finally claimed the German capital, ceremoniously raising their flag over the *Reichstag* in a moment famously photographed and shared the world over. Thereafter, the city became a sea of crime, violence, rape and murder, ceasing only a week later once peace was announced.

Sources:

Elisabeth Wust's diary entries of Feb. 4th, Feb. 28th, March. 18th, April 25th, 1945. Cited in Aimee & Jaguar. Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1996. Pg. 229, 233, 235, 140; I Will Bear Witness, Volume 2: A Diary of the Nazi Years: 1942-1945. Victor Klemperer. Modern Library, 2001. Feb. 5th, 1945. Pg. 400; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Berlin_in_World_War_II; Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage, 2011. Pg. 350, 356, 360, 363, 373, 365; Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 587, 592, 593; en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Raising_a_flag_over_the_Reichstag

Not three weeks prior, on Tuesday April 24th, as more and more refugees streamed past the Hinsch Villa, on this occasion it was Allied soldiers who knocked at the door. *"The Americans were looking for young men, Nazis," Irene recalled. "But when they saw the house filled with youngsters and older folk, the soldiers lowered their rifles and left the family in peace."*

The following day, in an historic moment, the Americans met the Russians at the banks of the *Elbe* in *Torgau* ('1' on the map right), northeast of Leipzig. The American news sheet, *Nachrichten*, reflected on the handshake between their respective commanders, before the Americans withdrew westwards, in line with the Yalta agreement.



The Allied zones of occupation in post-war Germany. Red highlights the Soviet zone and purple the zone from which American troops were bound to withdraw to according to the Yalta agreements up to what is today known as the heavily shaded inner German border.
1. *Torgau*, 30km northeast of the *Hinsch* villa;
2. *Hamburg*
3. Close to *Dessau*

Source:
[en.wikipedia/Allied-occupied_Germany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allied-occupied_Germany)

It was perhaps too close for comfort, but the Americans remained in control of *Machern*, up to the river *Mulde*. Any transfers were blocked, which meant the trains that ran from Leipzig ended their journey at *Bennewitz*, about six kilometres to the east of *Machern*. Almost daily curfews, notices, orders and arrangements followed,⁶⁴⁴ rather like that which *Tiny* had experienced since occupation.

A day after the peace agreement ended World War Two, it was *Irene's* turn to receive a pleasant surprise when, there before her, stood her father. She told me he'd been a stowaway in the *Villa's* attic for several weeks. By that time, *"everybody was in true despair,"* she told me.⁶⁴⁵ I can only suppose those last weeks of the war spent up in the roof meant her father shared more than a few conversations with *Frau Tyralla*. Unfortunately *Heinz* passed away in 1985, so I can only surmise what exchanges took place;

"We'll live in the attic like rabbits for the next few days until freedom comes" *Frau Tyralla* said gloomily to *Heinz* after his arrival.

*"A fine Führer it is who allows all of Germany to go up in smoke because of his crackbrained schemes. His top party officials are bolting as far and as fast as they can. The German Volk can die, for all they care, and it is dying,"*⁶⁴⁶ responded *Heinz*, who was still cursing the loss of his home, family business and livelihood in *Dresden*.

⁶⁴⁴ *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V., 2015. Pg. 156*

⁶⁴⁵ Personal correspondence with *Irene Hinsch*, May 22, 2016

⁶⁴⁶ *Elisabeth Wust's diary of April 15th, 1945. N.b. The original actually says 'basement' and 'rats' not 'attic' and 'rabbits.'* In *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 237, 238*

"You know, you can get over the loss of possessions. But it's the human hurts you can't let go of,"⁶⁴⁷ responded Frau Tyralla in a wistful, philosophical moment. "And at least you have your family. During the last war, not long after your little brother was born, I lost my husband. And yet who can tell me whether 'my' Albert is still alive in Berlin? Or my daughters in Holland and England for that matter? Be thankful for what you have, young man. And hold on to them dearly. I for one no longer want to have anything to do with this Germany, thank you very much. Not this one."⁶⁴⁸

It was all over. For many it was an opportunity to look forward once more and embrace the future, rather than fear it. But by this point, the prospects for the likes of Irene were vastly different from those of her second cousin, *Kleine Tiny*. Indeed, a long road lay ahead towards a reconstructed and united Europe.

- WINNERS AND LOSERS -

"A world collapsed along with the Third Reich in 1945, a world in which [Germans] had flourished for the most part."⁶⁴⁹ Take Leipzig, for example. Although the first trams might have been running in the centre again by April 27th, at the end of the war, half its industry lay in ruin while its number of operational enterprises had fallen from 16,154 to 1,761.⁶⁵⁰ An estimated 35,000 Leipzigers perished, some 5,000 in bombing raids,⁶⁵¹ while around 40 percent of all homes were destroyed or damaged,⁶⁵² some 16.7 percent in 1945 alone.⁶⁵³ Suffice to say, during this world war, Germany had been violently humbled.

"No family was without its tragedy," wrote Corrie ten Boom.⁶⁵⁴ My great grandmother had always said that Nanny and Margot's cousins died at the hands of the Russians. However, this research has shown the Hinsch's survived the war relatively unscathed (notwithstanding the loss of youngsters; Konrad and Ferdinand, and the non-life threatening injuries to Martin as well as to Hans' wife, Luise). Rather, the family's losses were of a material nature; Heinz and Frits losing their homes – in Heinz and Ingeborg's case, enterprise too.

As for the Hinsch's cousins, Margot's world was certainly transformed, having 'lost' her family (in a way not dissimilar to her mother's brother during the previous war). And while Nanny's collective remained intact, she was largely forced to conceal whatever was left of her German identity. Fortunately none of the Hinsch cousins' children lost their fathers. As Irene Hinsch wrote in a memoir published in early 2000, *"father appeared from time to time in this strange uniform, but he remained the father, which was, after all, the most important."*⁶⁵⁵ Tiny and Harvey's education was of course

⁶⁴⁷ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989.

⁶⁴⁸ Elisabeth Wust's diary of April 10th, 1945.

⁶⁴⁹ *In Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 236

⁶⁴⁹ *A German Generation*. Yale University Press, 2012. Tomas A. Kohut. Pg. 146

⁶⁵⁰ *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87

⁶⁵¹ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* *Leipziger Kalender*. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 215

⁶⁵² *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 51

⁶⁵³ *Leipzig: Geschichte der Stadt in Wort und Bild*. VEB, Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, Berlin, 1978. Pg. 87

⁶⁵⁴ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 217

⁶⁵⁵ 13. Februar 2000 - ein besonderes Gedenken in unserer Gemeinde. Irene Hinsch.

Online at: kirche-loschwitz.de/archiv/berichte_13Febr.htm

disrupted, as too was their German second cousins. Yet it was to be in Leipzig, Germany, that the war brought a good part of the family back together, in that place of their birth and/or upbringing.

In this respect, migration once more became a hallmark of the family's existence. However, Hinsch movements this time around were first and foremost to preserve life and well-being. Frau Tyralla, after travelling to Amsterdam had returned to her former home in Berlin, only to be forced on to her roots in Leipzig, where she rendezvoused with not only her brother but members of his family as they themselves fled both destruction and terror. But beyond Germany, Margot too had left London, in a bid to find a safe haven from the bombing raids, in West Yorkshire. For now, however, Frau Tyralla had no notion as to whether her daughters and their families had survived. Not to mention Albert.

+++++

Like Muriel Green recording in her Women's Observation diary, perhaps all members of our family will have asked themselves come the end of hostilities, whether the *"world has learned the lesson of war this time?"*⁶⁵⁶ *"Will our children's children know the horrors that my generation has known in the same way that our parents knew before us?"* We may not have forgotten those horrors, but at the same time we shouldn't stop reminding ourselves of the signs that portend to their repetition.

The human cost of the war was intolerable: Not only did 5.3 million Germans who were directly involved in the conflict lose their lives,⁶⁵⁷ but some 600,000 of its civilians also died,⁶⁵⁸ whilst millions more lost their livelihoods when they were forced to flee their *Heimat*.⁶⁵⁹ Six million European⁶⁶⁰ Jews also perished as a result of Nazi ideological policies, five to six million ethnic Poles and other Slavs (including Ukrainians, Belarusians and Serbs), besides Roma, homosexuals, and other ethnic and minority groups, for whom estimates run as high as another five million. There were also seven million Russian and Ukrainian military men, whose lives also came to a premature end, plus some nineteen million Soviet civilians, bringing the total to around 40 million.⁶⁶¹ That is why Germany remains one of the staunchest defenders of the European project, described by Chancellor Merkel in 2017 as *"a work of peace,"* because it has the least propensity to forget what nationalism leads to.

By comparison, 'just' 326,000 British Forces' personnel and civilians killed while another 350,000 were wounded or badly injured.⁶⁶² Dutch losses were obviously fewer, numbering the sum of the hunger winter (i.e. 30,000) plus the 105,000 Dutch

⁶⁵⁶ Muriel Green's Diary. Thursday May 4, 1945.

In *Wartime Women. A Mass-Observation Anthology 1937-1945*. Dorothy Sheridan. Phoenix Press, 2002. Pg. 241

⁶⁵⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II#Casualties_and_war_crimes. N.b. Willi Schmidt claims 6.3m. *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V.*, 2015. Pg. 156

⁶⁵⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II#Casualties_and_war_crimes. N.b. Willi Schmidt claims 1.2m. *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V.*, 2015. Pg. 156

⁶⁵⁹ *Machern in Zeitgeschehen. Ein Heimatbuch von Willi Schmidt. Regionalverein Machern e.V.*, 2015. Pg. 156

⁶⁶⁰ Other authors speak of six million European Jews too and 20-30 million deaths overall.

Let me Whisper You My Story. Moya Simons. A&R, 2010. Pg. 129

⁶⁶¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II#Casualties_and_war_crimes

⁶⁶² *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 84

Jews who perished and left Amsterdam's Jewish quarter a ghost town,⁶⁶³ alongside the victims of bombing raids, executions and/or workcamps. That brings the total to cca. 206,000. However, the Netherlands had the highest death rate of all Nazi-occupied countries in Western Europe, some 2.36 percent per capita.⁶⁶⁴

Not all Germans had been nationalists of course, which means there were many innocent victims within the Third Reich too, most of whom will have breathed a huge sigh of relief at the end of the war. Indeed, an acquaintance of Lilli Palmer explained to her when she returned after the war there had been relatively few nationalists. According to Joel Sayre, in his introductory note to *'Berlin Underground,'* he attributes much of Hitler's success to Germans' *'Pflichtgefühl: "an old Prussian ... degenerate sense of duty,"* which he describes as a typical *"argument put forward by those who did not really like the Nazis but played along with them because 'after all, it's Germany.'"*⁶⁶⁵ There was also a third category, the opportunists.⁶⁶⁶ As long as German nationalism had continued to be nourished by success – the regime held strong. But come its failure at the end, almost every German had lost something.

Whilst the country that brought us the Third Reich has accepted its violent past, the Dutch have rather struggled to come to terms with the war and German occupation, because of its tolerance, even compliance, with the regime. While *Anne Frank* may have given them the diary of a spirited heroine, at the same time the country *"aided, inadvertently but with great efficiency, in a systematic effort aimed at eradicating their country's liberal heritage,"* noted Russell Shorto. As a result she leaves behind a *"thorny reminder and a cause for soul-searching."*⁶⁶⁷ For many others, the conclusion was more straightforward: point the finger at the Germans, for they are never to be trusted again. For Nanny, that meant covering up her accent and hiding her German origins (something she struggled with much more than Margot). Cor on the other hand was now revered a hero. *"He was a fantastic father, a real wonder dad,"* *Kleine Tiny* told me.

By the end of the war, the average 14 year old girl in Holland was one stone lighter and two inches shorter than before it.⁶⁶⁸ Yet *Kleine Tiny's* own trials and tribulations, like most other Hollanders, were soon forgotten when it all came to an end. *"Ahead of the liberation there was great anticipation. It was amazing. Then when it happened there was a party-like atmosphere. Young girls were jumping on the tanks. There was singing and dancing in the streets. Music was playing everywhere. Flags of all sizes were flying,"* she told me in June 2016. *"My sister, Irene, celebrated too. She was not quite six and with her Shirley Temple locks she quickly won the soldiers' hearts, receiving chocolate and chewing gum too."* Today *Bevrijdingsdag* (Liberation Day) is celebrated there every May 5th.⁶⁶⁹

+++++

⁶⁶³ Some 32,000 are estimated to have survived. *Amsterdam. A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 299. N.b. the estimate is 35,000 of the 140,000 known Jews in Holland at the start of the war or cca. 75 percent. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_the_Netherlands#The_Holocaust

⁶⁶⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlands_in_World_War_II

⁶⁶⁵ A Note. Joel Sayre. In *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. x

⁶⁶⁶ According to Kurt von Molo, a film-industry cutter and a member *"of the honorable elite that left Germany by choice, not because they had to."* *Change Lobsters - And Dance*. Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 252

⁶⁶⁷ *Amsterdam. A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 299, 313.

N.b. for instance, 75 percent of French Jews survived the Nazi period.

⁶⁶⁸ *The Hunger Winter*. BBC documentary. Online at: bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0137xb7

⁶⁶⁹ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_Day_\(Netherlands\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberation_Day_(Netherlands))

Returning to England, Margot's husband's absence, his divorcing her and their son's subsequent removal to London ought to have left most ex'es in a state of nervous collapse. Not Margot, however. Whereas a married woman used to be economically and financially dependent on her husband,⁶⁷⁰ Margot was working even before she'd divorced. As with many other wives of soldiers, income had been a foremost concern – and remained so, recalled *Kleine Tiny*, with "*Johnnie showing little interest in her after the war too.*" Divorce was not atypical during wartime and Margot remained at the Sholebroke boarding house in Chapel Allerton, miles from her nearest family. But she shored up valuable experience that would be of great benefit later on down the road. In April 1945, meanwhile, the Johnnie Riscoe Variety Agency was established in London's Leicester Square,⁶⁷¹ after which Riscoe formed a double act with his wife.

Margot's son, Harvey, might have gained a fresh start but what consequences would arise from being separated from his mother? In *'Marriage Failures and the Children,'* Claud Mullins writes: "*Juvenile crime increased heavily in 1940 and later, when so many fathers were away from home in the armed forces,*" adding that "*most delinquents are male.*"⁶⁷² Would he settle, now that he finally had his father and a 'mother' much loved by his grandmother?

I confess to wondering why Margot chose to remain in Leeds, given that she was never fond of the place. "*Most likely she'd have more chance of seeing her son without meeting Johnnie and Vi,*" *Tiny* surmised. With Johnnie's mother having departed, she could certainly be herself, despite Harry Shear never being heard of again. In Margot's shoes, I might well have contemplated returning to Amsterdam, if not to her mother's aid in ruined Germany. "*No, that never really entered her mind,*" *Tiny* told me. "*It was a long time since she'd left and Margot was far too 'English' by that point. England's tempo and sense of humour appealed to her. She liked to be flirtatious and because England was more open to that than Germany, she preferred to stay.*"

Not that it was easy for Germans across the UK. At the end of April 1945 a film of the *Belsen* and *Buchenwald* atrocities was shown in London's news cinemas. Crowds queued for hours, watched in shocked silence and left without applauding or even passing casual remarks. In Kilburn, close to South Hampstead, a woman of 55 urged a *Mass-Observer* to watch the film. "*It'll do you good. It'll make you think.*" It had made her sick and angry, she said. "*I don't think we could ever be hard enough on the Germans; their behaviour is more like animals.*"⁶⁷³ Later that year a London-based landlady could be heard saying: "*The war is over, but we still hate those bastards and anything that reminds us of them.*"⁶⁷⁴ Perhaps Loiners were more hospitable to Germans than Londoners, the city having suffered far less. At least the Archbishop of Canterbury was on Margot's side, imploring Britain to "*be kind to the Germans*" as its citizens congregated under flags, bunting and 'welcome home' signs⁶⁷⁵ to celebrate 'Victory in Europe' (VE) Day on May 8th, 1945.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷⁰ See: bl.uk/sisterhood/articles/marriage-and-civil-partnership

⁶⁷¹ *The Stage*. April 19, 1945. Pg. 3 and March 1, 1945. Pg. 2

⁶⁷² *Marriage Failures and the Children*. Claud Mullins. The Epworth Press, 1954. Pg. 44. N.b. 85 percent is later cited.

⁶⁷³ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 310

⁶⁷⁴ *A Bicycle Story*. Edith Riemer. In *Tales of American Life*. Paul Auster (Ed.), Faber and Faber, 2001. Pg. 46

⁶⁷⁵ *War-Time Civilian Life in Hunslet Carr, Leeds. WW2 People's War*. Bill Ross, 'Action Desk – Sheffield.' Apr. 26, 2005. Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/29/a3956529.shtml

⁶⁷⁶ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 328

End of war celebrations in Leeds, May 1945.

Top:

A group of civilians and servicemen with an effigy of a noosed Adolf Hitler along Leeds' Briggate.

Online [here](#).

Left:

Many street parties ended with a celebratory 'end of war' bonfire - a rare delight for young and old.

Online [here](#).

Source: Yorkshire Post Newspapers



Perhaps the most special sight that month was one that had not been seen since September 1939: that of illuminated windows and fairy lights following the end of the blackout era. In London, neon lights returned to Leicester Square on May 7th while the face of Big Ben lit up and its chimes rang out.⁶⁷⁷ A public holiday was declared on May 8th and 9th. In Germany, blackout was over from May 12th while in Holland, Tiny recalled:

"The end of blackout was something special. We could remove the masking tape mounted on the windows in giant X's and take down the black curtains - although it still took a while for the power to be back up and running."

Finally, the lights were back on, heralding a new dawn across Europe. For millions of Germans, however, the sky was already tinged red. Ultimately, the winners were few and far between, as far as our family was concerned.

#####

Sources to textbox 15.18: "Vivacious and Captivating:" Meet the New Mrs. Johnnie Riscoe

1. Obituary: Johnnie Riscoe. Denis Gifford. *The Independent*. April 20th, 2000
2. Data courtesy of Findmypast.co.uk, while at the time of marriage her home was 140, Sylvester Road in East Finchley, according to her and Johnnie's District of Holborn Marriage Certificate, RTA 232491
3. Of interest is the fact that Vie's sister had not long before gave birth to a son on January 23, 1942 in Stafford called Patrick Fyffe, who later became one half of the famous comedy duo, Hinge and Bracket, according to its-behind-you.com/doubleacts.html while his elder sister, Jane (born February 6, 1937 in Stafford), went on to become an opera singer and actress. See also: theguardian.com/news/2002/may/15/guardianobituaries1
4. *Grace, Beauty and Banjos*. Michael Kilgariff. Oberon Books, 1999. See: www.michaelkilgariff.co.uk/grace.htm
5. See a 1940 British Pathe clip at: britishpathe.com/video/peggy-desmond-2
6. *The Era*. April 27, 1932, July 27, 1932, 1934 etc. according to the British Newspaper Archive
7. See: calmview.bham.ac.uk/Record.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&id=XMS38%2F5266
8. Aforementioned dates according to the *Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald*. January 9, 1942. Pg. 7; the *Liverpool Evening Express*. March 6, 1942. Pg. 3; the *Hull Daily Mail*. March 31, 1942. *The Stage*. April 30, 1942; *Liverpool Evening Express*. December 19, 1942. Pg. 3; *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*. April 3, 1943 and November 16, 1943. Pg. 5
9. *Lincolnshire Echo*. March 14, 1944. Pg. 2

⁶⁷⁷ *Wartime Women. A Mass-Observation Anthology 1937-1945*. Dorothy Sheridan. Phoenix Press, 2002. Pg. 230-231. N.b. According to Amy Briggs diary, blackout was over in Leeds as early as Nov. 9, 1944, which caused her to complain because "people passing in trams and buses can see into the surgery."