

were left. It had become a pure animal struggle for life, not only the life of to-day, but the life of to-morrow. Under such conditions a pair of shoes may be all in all. But, in general, everybody did everything he could to help, and in one or two districts they were able to keep the fires within bounds. But in most of them nothing was achieved. During the first bombardment, which ended at a quarter past nine, the sirens sounded again at eleven. At that time we were all fighting the flames, and all of us without exception felt our knees give way.

Next morning Berlin was a mad sight—whole streets were destroyed. Water mains were broken, ambulances lay half burned out. The whole Tiergarten was razed. Columns of smoke blackened the sky and burning cinders fell everywhere. The whole city was a cemetery of houses and furniture. A soldier who was with me, when he saw all the district round the Zoo, the Eder Hotel and Luisestrasse in ruins, cried out "My God, it is worse than Stalingrad."

In the midst of the ruins Berliners walked past, going to see the ashes of their homes, or to write upon what was left of the walls pathetic chalked notes: "Peter, all are safe," or, "Erica, where are you?" The atmosphere was unbreathable. The houses burnt till they fell to pieces, right down to the cellars. People went past dirty, covered with coal dust and with their old gas-masks on again. It was like a procession of unbelievable figures in a story of Wells, walking in a dead city. In many districts there was no water. The gasometers had exploded, and there was nothing to eat but some soup warmed up in booths established for the purpose, and often this came to an end before one's turn came. The bombardments were continued the two next nights and, with all that tragedy behind, they have gone on uninterruptedly until to-day.

The bombardment in itself is something beyond description, and its results are overwhelming. Always at nightfall one stays waiting, with a terrible belief that "they are going to come." You don't sleep, communication is stopped, and factories are abandoned. The whole city lives in the streets, people trying to cadge something to eat amidst their acquaintances, saving a coupon that has escaped the fire, or a half-scorched skirt, to try and make a new article of clothing out of it. Bands of tragic ragpickers move about the city.

Naturally, the bombardments have, in a curious fashion, excited the lowered morale of the public. Those who have suffered damage look upon those who have not yet received, as it were, a proper supply of bombs as though they were accomplices of the United Nations. This is a curious psychological condition which has given rise to more than one quarrel. I have often assisted at conversation of the following style: in a lift the liftman greets a fat gentleman, "Good morning, Herr Muller," as he leaves the lift, then he turns full of wrath to us and says, "Look at him, fatter every day. Can it be that he is a spy?" What is symptomatic in this business is that it should be so easily ascribed to Herr Muller that he should be engaged in clandestine affairs. It is now suspicious in Germany not to have grown thin.

This illogical and unreasonable discontent with someone who manages to keep his personal frame in being is multiplied a hundredfold in the case of someone who still keeps his house in being. But it is understandable. Everything has been lost; there are no clothes, no money, nor merriment of any kind. All anybody has before him is a problematic repayment by the nation some day. Yet there is Hans, who has still got his four walls. Hans is a companion, and for that reason a sort of little rival every day. The man who has suffered all the damage grows irritated, and in the end uses some rough or impertinent expression to the man who has suffered no damage. The results are that quarrels and fisticuffs have become a perfect plague of Berlin life.

The number of victims in the bombardments is relatively small. Incendiary bombs are more or less harmless as far as human life is concerned. Houses begin to burn in the top storey, and it generally takes two days for them to burn completely. In this way those who dwell in them escape and also save their furniture. But the evil is that the furniture necessarily has to be put into the street, where it gets burnt through more bombs or is ruined by water.

The attacks in general have been endured with a high morale. Really one could only speak of panic during the days which preceded the catastrophe, because that was when the spectre of Hamburg weighed upon everybody. The day that Goebbels advised the evacuation of Berlin there really was some collective terror. Trains were unbelievably crammed. Old men, sick persons, children were thrown on to the floor and lay there under the feet of the other travellers. The story of what had happened in Hamburg grew and grew, with all the terror added to it which comes to anything happening at a distance. None the less, many of the Berlin evacuated returned home again, and the people's nerves quietened. The psychological moment had passed.