

ERICH WEINERT

# STALINGRAD DIARY

FOREWORD BY  
MAJOR J. <sup>JOHN</sup> DUGDALE, M.P.



*John Heartfield*

1946.

I.N.G. PUBLICATION 1/-

**ERICH WEINERT**

President  
of the Free Germany National Committee in Moscow

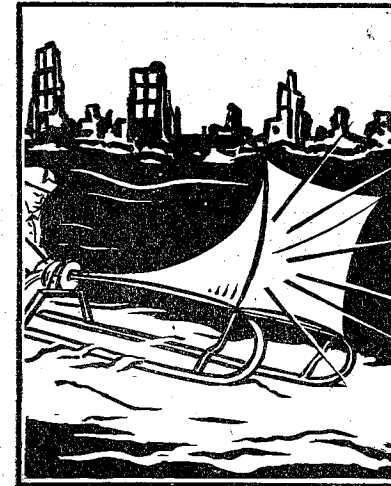
**STALINGRAD  
DIARY**

With a Foreword

by

~~WALTER~~ <sup>John</sup> DUGDALE, M.P.

Translation by EGON LARSEN



Published by I.N.G. Publications Ltd., 9 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Printed in Great Britain by Dorchester and District Newspapers, Ltd. (T.U.), Dorchester, Dorset.

I.N.G. PUBLICATION, LONDON, 1944

## Foreword

“ Stalingrad Diary ” is a remarkable document. It is a translation of an article that appeared not long ago in the “ Internationale Literatur ” and contains a vivid description of some of the last moments of German resistance in Stalingrad. But its main interest to British readers will undoubtedly be the insight into the use that the Russians are making of German prisoners of war.

The Russians realise to the full, first, that there are anti-Nazi Germans and, secondly, that they can play a very useful part in the war of nerves. There are some valuable lessons here for our own military authorities.

**JOHN DUGDALE.**

## Introduction

**I**N 1942, Hitler's Army hurled itself on Stalingrad. Never throughout the long history of war have men fought for so unjust a cause as these Germans who, with all their humanity, their capacity to distinguish between right and wrong destroyed by the poison of Fascism, threw away their lives for German imperialism's dream of world conquest.

In November, 1942, Adolf Hitler, a corporal in the last war, but now “ the greatest general of all time,” gave the order for the 22 divisions of the 6th Army to entrench themselves before Stalingrad. In other words, Hitler himself must take the responsibility for having given the order which led to the encirclement of his Army and the senseless sacrifice of a quarter of a million German soldiers. Not merely did Hitler, intoxicated with his own self-importance, give this order, but he even went on to promise help to his encircled Army, and hundreds of thousands of Germans, as millions still do today, continued, with blind confidence in their “ Führer,” a fight which had already been lost.

Digging themselves into the earth of their beloved Socialist Fatherland, the Red Army, under the ruined houses of Stalingrad, held up the violent onslaught of the Nazi hordes. Then came their counter-attack. Russian guns and aeroplanes rained shells and bombs on the German invaders. Russian heroism and resolution taught the Germans a lesson which was a severe blow to their Fascist ideas about the inferiority of other peoples.

It was from the Russian lines, too, that there came the voice of German anti-Fascists who, through megaphones and mobile radio transmitters, called on their fellow-countrymen to desert to the Russian lines as a first step in their fight against Hitler, pointing out that the true interest of the German people is identical with that of all peoples fighting against Hitler Fascism—to win a speedy and decisive victory against Hitler and German imperialism.

Among this group of German anti-Fascist refugees, a part of that small minority of Social Democrats, Catholics and Communists who have never ceased their dangerous, underground fight against Hitler in Germany itself, was

Erich Weinert. Erich Weinert is well-known in Germany as a poet whose stirring works have so often warned his people against the menace of Hitlerism and whose voice has so many times been heard at workers' meetings calling upon them to struggle against Fascism and war. In 1937, in the Spanish Republicans' fight against Franco, and through him against Hitler and Mussolini, Weinert was the comrade and companion of all those who, in the International Brigades, fought for the peace of the world, and who, victorious and dying, sang his songs in the trenches of Madrid. Before Stalingrad, turning to the German officers and men, Erich Weinert, as a true German patriot in his country's shameful and fateful hour, warned his people, and showed them that the only way out for Germany was to break with Hitler.

Erich Weinert has recorded his experiences of those days of struggle in Stalingrad in a diary. Its pages are a true expression of the deep humanity which inspires the free and united peoples in their struggle against their worst enemy, Hitler Fascism, and which allows Erich Weinert to serve his own and the Allied nations through his propaganda work at the front. We are pleased to have the opportunity of presenting for the first time to English readers Erich Weinert's diary which was originally published at Moscow in German in "Internationale Literatur."

**THE EDITOR.**

## Stalingrad Diary

*December 2, 1942.*

**T**HE General unfolded the large staff map, and explained to us the situation of the German 6th Army at Stalingrad. "Firmly encircled," he said. "It's rather doubtful whether they'll succeed in breaking through again from the west. The ring around this pocket is already 15 to 20 miles deep. But we won't let them have any rest there. They won't have any choice but to capitulate bag and baggage. Even now they ought to realise they haven't a dog's chance. Our H.Q. have tried to bring that home to them. But those in the pocket don't seem to worry yet."

"Leave that to us," I said. "They haven't taken any notice of the Red Army's warnings. Perhaps they'd sooner believe us Germans even though they've been trained to take every word from the other side as enemy propaganda."

"Try your luck," said the General when we parted.

*December 8, 1942.*

We have to cross the Volga south of Stalingrad.

A special chapter in the history of the Battle of the Volga will have to be dedicated to the gigantic feat of organisation achieved by the Red Army in getting across reserves and supplies. There is not a single bridge near Stalingrad across the Volga's many branches. During the ice-free period ferries steam from one bank to the other at dozens of places; and when the Volga is frozen the supply columns cross the ice without hindrance. But at this most critical time the Volga was still full of large ice-floes. In spite of this, enormous quantities of men and material have been taken across. The best passages are under artillery fire and in bombing range. We had to cross twenty miles down-stream.

The nearer we approached the stream through the wooded lowland, the denser was the flow of lorries, guns, carriages, cavalry and infantry from all directions. An immense, swarming military camp had gathered on the shrubby hill above the landing-place. Despatch was slow, for the big steam-ferry took four to five hours for the journey there and back through the crashing ice-floes.

The transport officer, standing on top of the hill, gives his directions: "The three heavy batteries in front!—Teams on the road, close up to the left!—Make room for the ambulance unit!—The guns on the ferry more towards the funnel!—Leave some room for personnel cars to the left!"

Now the column creeps down the hill until the ferry is crowded. It steams through the ice-floes for an hour before it reaches the opposite landing-place. The heavy, wrought-iron mounting of the old ark has been torn by huge splinters. She must have shipped many a bombardment. Today there is not much danger. It is misty, and dense, wet snow is driving over the Volga.

On the other side all the heavy pieces have to be hauled up the steep bank by men and horses.

*December 11, 1942.*

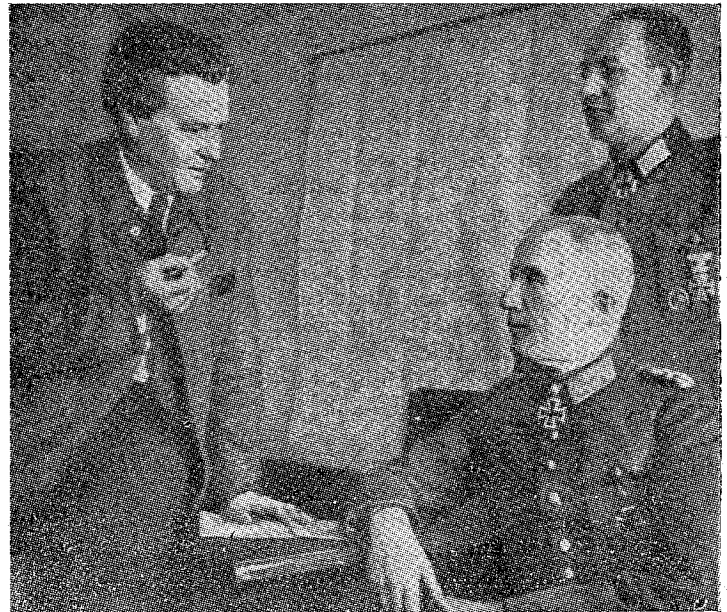
On the right bank of the Volga we pass through Krasnoarmeisk. It was as far as this town that the bandits had pushed forward a month ago. When they could not attain their goal they systematically destroyed everything by bombs and shells and fire—stations, goods vans, residential districts. The industrial district is a chaos of charred ruins, the big new blocks of flats burnt out, roofless, with black holes for windows. The little wooden houses in between are heaps of splinters. This blackened inferno extends beyond the town, well on the road to Stalingrad. The village of Szarepta, surrounded by mighty poplars, lies in the lowland by the river.

We arrived in the evening. Everything was quiet, only now and then a thud from the direction of Stalingrad. We climbed down into a hole somewhere in the forest: and suddenly we found ourselves in underground passages and heated rooms, lit by electric light.

We had dinner with the Commanding Officer. They brought in a German soldier who had come over to our lines.

"Why did you desert?"

"I was on guard duty this morning. There I heard a German voice from the loudspeaker over here: 'I was taken prisoner yesterday. They are treating me well here. You are encircled and cannot get out. Save your skins before the Red Army strikes!' Then I thought of my girl back home,



**Erich Weinert, President of the Free Germany National Committee; General Walter von Seydlitz, President of the Union of German Officers and Vice-President of the National Committee; and 1st/Lt. Luitpold Steidle, Vice-President of the Union of German Officers and Member of the National Committee.**

and suddenly I felt fed up to the back teeth with the war, and we were hungry too. And so I thought, what do I care for their war? I laid down my rifle, and looked back once more, and went over to the Russian sentry, and told him that I was through with them over there."

"If they all had such sound instinct as this Swabian here," said the General, "the whole problem would soon be solved. But they are stubborn."

*December 12, 1942.*

We are billeted on a farm. There is some rumbling in the distance. They are shelling the Volga ferry again.

Prisoners are brought in. But they are all airmen from

Ju 52 transport 'planes, shot down before they could reach the encircled army. Most of them belong to Hitler's élite.

One of them—his father owns a furniture factory in Saarbrücken—tries at first to put on a contemptuous face. His answers are laconic: of course, Germany will win . . . the strongest army in the world . . . in the spring, they'll drive on again . . . the pocket will be relieved by Christmas . . . the Führer keeps his promises, etc.

We don't give up. As he realises that he is talking to Germans who know more about Germany than he does, and as we try to explain to him the situation at the front and the significance of the Russian offensive, he reflects: "I didn't know anything about that. Perhaps you know better. You see, we can only figure out things by what our press tells us."

He becomes interested, and begins to trust us. His artificial mask of contempt, behind which, of course, he is hiding his fears, begins to melt. He starts asking questions. Suddenly he wants to know more.

In the course of our conversation we urge him to explain what made him so sure of the rightness of National-Socialist ideas. He dishes up all his slogans: *Lebensraum*, Jewish world plutocracy, envy of Germany's position in the world, Versailles, etc. He becomes entangled in his own gibberish, and realises it. And when he sees the wretched boat of his intellectual equipment shipwrecked by our objective replies, he holds on to his last straw: "With us, intellectual outlook is substituted by our belief in the Führer."

"That means, you have forgotten how to think?" remarks U.

"Maybe. And when you've been a soldier for a couple of years you stop thinking anyhow."

As he leaves the room he says, "Frankly, I didn't expect to meet Germans over here with whom one could talk sense. I should like to talk to you again. Perhaps one ought to look at things from another angle, too."

Aha!

December 13, 1942.

Yesterday at dusk we drove up to the front line with our loudspeaker van for the first time. We had tested the apparatus during the day, and found out that when there is no wind the human voice can be heard quite distinctly up to

a distance of half a mile. The difficulty is to approach the enemy lines as close as possible in our tall van without being seen.

The night was clear and starlit. A bright moon shone over the white steppe. This made our approach even more difficult. There was no wind at all, and as there was no gunfire the enemy must have heard our motor from far away, and become alarmed. As we were driving behind our front-line, taking advantage of all the depressions in the ground, they nervously began to fire their machine-guns on the other side. White Verey lights were rocketing up all over the place. Our van drove cautiously down a hill into a thick little shrubbery.

The bullets whistled in the twigs. The technicians quietly started their work in the van. A patrol, returning from the front, reported that the distance to the enemy's line was a quarter or a third of a mile at the utmost.

There was no shelter in the neighbourhood. We had to speak from a dug-out which protected us from rifle fire but hardly from mortar and gun fire. The announcer, who had had some experience, said, "We don't get much mortar and gun fire here as a rule. Probably only when they are expressly ordered by their H.Q. Mostly they interrupt us with their machine-guns, but apparently only when they aren't interested in a transmission. The other day, before we put a prisoner on, we announced: 'Now your mate X. wants to tell you something important. If you want to hear him, stop your silly shooting!' And then they stopped."

"That means," said U., "that they want to listen, but to something substantial, not empty phrases which they can't understand."

"They listen to what the prisoners say," remarked one of the reconnaissance patrol. "I'm sure they discuss whether they really risk their lives by coming over to us. The day before yesterday, after the prisoner had finished talking to them, they shouted across: 'Anybody can pretend to be a German. You just show us a live prisoner, and we'll come over, too!'"

The dynamo began to hum. They seemed to have heard that. The firing became more intense. More Verey lights soared up.

We took the microphone into the dug-out. The announcer introduced the speaker. Then U. began his address. "Fellow countrymen over there! Let's talk plain German. There are Germans here, too, on this side, not prisoners, but Free Germans. We have come to you to the front for a single reason: to save the lives of tens of thousands of our countrymen. We want to tell you nothing but the truth which your unscrupulous Nazi officers are hiding from you . . ."

After the first words the shooting stopped. The night grew very quiet. No more Verey lights.

"They're listening," said the Major.

I spoke after U. Our addresses were not short. But nobody over there fired a shot. They were listening. But we had hardly finished and got out of our dug-out when something came howling through the air. We knew that sound.

"Mortars!" cried the Major. "Take cover!"

Now they burst right in front of us, in the depression. They were aiming at the van. But they did not shoot far enough. The last one 100 yards from the van.

We cleared out from our "trough" as quickly as possible. Again the bullets were whistling through the shrubbery. The Verey lights went up.

*December 14, 1942.*

This morning we had an assorted collection of prisoners.

(1) An N.C.O. from Udet's squadron; 20 years old, from Berlin. His father, a high official in a bank. A gigantic fellow, the typical footballer. Had been shot down in his Ju 52 just before he could reach the pocket. Politically, an illiterate. He is for Hitler because someone would have to lead the people anyhow. He does not care what happens after the war provided he can get a job in civil aviation, and plenty of sport.

(2) A metal worker from Leipzig; 35 years old, in the infantry. Taken prisoner during a local skirmish.

"Were you a member of the Labour movement?"

"In the Sport Club 'Fichte.'"

"And after 1933? Did you do any underground work?"

"Why—one mustn't do that."

"Why not?"

"Well, that could get you shoved into a concentration camp."

"Weren't you in touch with your comrades after 1933?"

"No. That was dangerous. I didn't even try to get in touch with them."

"So you've made your peace with Hitler?"

"Well, what else could a fellow do all by himself?"

"But haven't you heard that tens of thousands have been sent to concentration camps because they wouldn't make their peace with Hitler?"

"I had to think of my family."

"That's probably why you went away to take part in the war."

"But we were forced to."

"So the best thing to do is to consent to everything?"

"What else could the likes of us do?"

"And you say you've been an anti-Fascist? You're nothing but a contemptible accomplice of the Fascists. Hitler can't wish for better subjects."

(3) A plumber from Hagen in the infantry, 29. His head is all in bandages.

"You're wounded?"

"I don't even know what's wrong with me. Last night I was sitting in the pill-box with two Rumanians. Suddenly they whispered something to each other, and went out. I thought, they might try and attack me . . ."

"What—you were afraid of the Rumanians?"

"Well, you can't trust those fellows lately. We had to give them a kick in the pants to make them do anything at all."

"Fine allies! But they're a bit brighter than you asses. They don't feel like kicking the bucket for Hitler any more. Well, and then?"

"Just then someone came down the steps, and got hold of me. I started kicking—and from then on I don't know any more. Afterwards I found myself lying in a Russian dug-out."

The facts were that a Russian patrol had tried to get the man out of the pill-box. He had resisted like mad, and so he had to be brought to his senses by a blow over the head.

"Well, the war's over for you now."

"Thank heavens! I hope it will finish soon, and I can go home again."

"What are you going to do after the war?"

"Well, there'll always be work for plumbers. My girl



has got something in the savings bank. So I'll start on my own. Now there's such a lot of bomb damage business will be good for a plumber."

What a character!

(4) A smallholder from the Salzburg district. In the infantry, 30. An emaciated, miserable type with long, untidy hair and beard, in rags, unwashed, and looking like a gorilla; his hands swollen with frostbite.

"How much land have you got at home?"

"Just a few acres. Not enough to live on, and too much to die on. If I hadn't done some odd jobs I could have gone and hung myself."

"But since Hitler things are supposed to have improved in Austria?"

"Perhaps for the big shots. We didn't get anything out of it. Just more taxes, that's all. And now the war on top of everything. But you have to take what God gives you."

What a fellow Job was compared with these people mouthing about God!

(5) A miner from Hindenburg, Upper Silesia; 22.

"What do your mates back home say about the war?"

"They have to go to it for all they are worth. It will be better after the war, they say."

"That is, after Hitler has won the war?"

"None of them talk about victory."

"And how do they expect things to get better if Germany doesn't win?"

"I don't understand much about politics. But as far as I could hear they expect they'll have some say again then, for a change."

"I see. So they have no say now?"

"What's their say now? Go down into the pits, and keep your mouth shut."

Our conversation became interesting. This young miner, upon whom there dawned probably for the first time in his life some idea of the political connexion between things, soon revealed a sound worker's understanding. His instinct had saved him from the mental deformation which had made many young workers susceptible to Fascist phrases. In the heads of most of them the rubbish of drummed-in slogans

was impenetrable. Here we reached solid ground with our very first soundings.

(6) A Bavarian lieutenant, leader of an engineering battalion, 22, a dry office type. He drove his car into our lines by night, and claimed to have deserted after having read in a leaflet that the situation in the pocket was hopeless. However, he probably crossed our lines by mistake and hopes to get better treatment as a deserter.

"Weren't you afraid we might shoot you?"

"That I've never believed."

"But that's what your propaganda tells you every day."

"I don't believe what they say; not me."

"So you don't believe Hitler, either?"

"I don't believe a word he says any more. You see, I'm a small employee at the National Debt Administration with many years' service to my credit. When Hitler came we were told that the efficient ones would be given civil service status. But only those young gentlemen whose dads had sent them to College where they passed exams got it. Now they look down on us, and we old dogs remain employed at our last rate of pay until we become unfit for work, efficient as we may be."

"So if Hitler had made you an official you would have agreed with him?"

"Well, that would have been a different matter."

A hopeless case.

*December 16, 1942.*

Last night we made our fourth transmission from the southernmost point of the pocket. Tiresome climbing across a frozen gorge. The van followed by a detour; it had to pass a hill under fire. A unit of tommy-gunners occupied the terrain in front of us to prevent unpleasant surprises. The technicians dragged the loudspeakers down the slopes as near as possible to the enemy lines.

We had taken the young miner from Upper Silesia—the Russians called him already "Our Franz"—out with us for the second time. He had written an appeal to his mates on the other side, which he transmitted now.

Over there they had heard our engine. That alarmed them; they were especially afraid of tanks. Their machine-guns rattled without a pause.



"Franz," I said to our prisoner as we were sitting in the dug-out, "What d'you think they'd do with us if we just went over to them and said, 'Listen, pals, can't we talk sense for a change? Do you blockheads really want to wait until the Red Army blows you to smithereens?' What would they say?"

"Ach," said Franz, "those in the pill-boxes, they'd listen to you. But I'm sure there'd be some blackguard who'd run back to H.Q. at once."

"And they wouldn't listen very attentively, would they?"

"Not likely," Franz smiled.

Our "criers" returned. They are courageous young Red Army men who creep up to the enemy's lines every night, and shout through the megaphone slogans and news they learn by heart during the day—most of them know hardly any German. Many of them have not come back.

We began to transmit. U. spoke about the changes in the war situation. He spoke for some considerable time. Not a single shot. The enemy were listening. Franz called upon his mates not to wait any longer; they would have nothing to fear over here. "Those who want to die for Hitler and the German armament kings," he shouted into the microphone, "may stay where they are until they are blown to hell. But the others should get together and send us a delegate with whom we can arrange about the surrender."

Not a shot.

We paused for a moment.

Someone shouted into the dug-out: "They're sending up two red Verey lights over there. That means they've heard us, and want us to go on."

I began to speak with all the power of my conviction. "The pocket has been cut off now for three weeks. Not a soul can help you from outside. It's only a week till Christmas. Those at home can't sleep for anxiety. . ." And a half-improvised poem to finish off:—

#### THE GATE TO LIFE IS OPEN

Have you entirely lost your head?  
No living soul shall leave this plain.  
You're rotting here among the dead,  
You'll never see your homes again.

From Stalingrad there's no salvation,  
No hole to hide you any more,  
No time for long deliberation,  
So, hell, what are you waiting for?

Your trench is cold, with dread you're shaking.  
You'd lie no colder in your grave.  
And yet you could at home be waking  
From all war's horrors sound and safe.

Are you entirely godforsaken?  
Why don't the bosses go and die?  
Why don't you stop it and awaken?  
Why should you be the victims, why?

Out of the trenches! Drop every arm!  
No need to waste one more life!  
Those who surrender shall come to no harm  
And go back to their home and wife.

Still not a shot. "I wonder why the officers don't order firing to interfere with our transmission," remarked U.

"The officers!" smiled Franz. "As soon as it's dark they go far back into their dug-outs, and play cards or drink schnapps. They can't hear us at all."

"But there must be some Nazi informers among the men—why don't they report it?"

"Ach, they'd just as soon listen."

A few minutes after we had finished they started their nervous shooting again. The sky filled with white Verey lights.

At midnight a small door opened in the dark gorge, letting out a chink of friendly light. "Here's regimental H.Q.," said our guide. "The Comrade Major wants you to join him for a snack."

The regimental C.O. was a lively young man, a peacetime Stakhanovite in a foundry. We sat on our bunks around the coarse wooden table. The menu consisted of soured herrings with onions, fat bacon, cabbage and rissoles. The little stove was smoking in rivalry with our pipes and cigarettes.

After the meal someone began to play the accordion

softly. Everybody joined in. The sentry outside peeped in with a happy smile.

It was then that I remembered the letter of a German lieutenant which we found in the mailbag of a 'plane we had shot down. It was addressed to a friend at home. It said: "Been looking forward to champion stag party in your cosy bachelor's retreat, but Christmas leaves have gone west now. Rotten situation here, as you'll have heard. Besides, I'm bored to death. Sometimes we arrange a stag party at our M.O.'s carbolic digs. Great hoarder *in alcoholicis*. Perfect sod as far as genital and faecal anecdotes are concerned. By no means inferior to our late arch-swine . . ."

The *Herrenmenschen* as torchbearers of civilisation!

December 18, 1942.

Last night's address at the front-line near Yagodni:

"Fellow Germans! I am speaking to you from the other side, a German like yourselves. I am not a prisoner of war, but a Free German who is allowed to say what he thinks. You over there aren't allowed to do that. I'm sitting here with some of your pals who got fed up and went over to the Russians. They keep asking me: What will become of Germany? Will there be another 1918? But, friends, why did things get so bad after 1918? Because the people continued to let those rule them who had made the war and exploited them. And it's the same gang of rascals who have started this war to rob the whole of Europe. The only difference is that today Hitler presents as *Volksgenossen* the very same fat carrion kites, the Krupps, Voglers, Rochlings and so on. I'd never have thought that our nation could be fooled like that for a second time. Germany's happiness depends on the people's will to finish off for good those parasites and their brown protectors. I should also like to return to a free and clean Fatherland where the people is the master. But that Germany has to be fought for. You can take the first step towards that end. You must stop this fatal war. But the longer you go on fighting the whole world the more difficult it will be to convince the world that our nation does not deserve the contempt which Hitler has brought upon it. The Russians will drive you out of their country. The sooner you lay down your arms the better for

our people, and the more reasonable will be the terms of peace for Germany.

"Now your mates, the prisoners over here, ask me: how can man by himself revolt? He would only be put against the wall. But, hang it all, there are hundreds of thousands who think on the same lines, and who have shown their courage against guns and tanks a hundred times—there must be among them some boys with the necessary guts to give the signal for action, to make an end of all your hangmen and informers! Stop shooting—none of those who refuse to lay down their arms will escape from the encirclement. Help yourselves! Then you will help to save our country from catastrophe. Remember what you owe our people and your wives and children! Only slaves obey their oppressors. We, the Free Germans, expect action from you."

December 21, 1942.

Last night we were back again at the place west of Yelshanka, from which we had transmitted without interference three days ago. But hell was let loose yesterday. The day before they had received considerable attention from our artillery, so perhaps they feared an attack now; or maybe their C.O. had ordered them to interrupt us.

Whilst we were playing music from a record all the machine-guns began to rattle. This continued during the transmission of the "Latest News." Only after U. had started his speech, and had shouted: "Whoever is shooting over there must be afraid of hearing the truth!" the firing stopped, as if by agreement. Everything remained quiet, apart from some machine-guns nervously coughing in the distance.

When I addressed the officers the calm broke. Their mortar shells rained down on us. The shooting started from all directions.

The sentry shouted into our dug-out: "Three red Verey lights over there! That means alarm, danger of attack. Now they all have to come out of their shelters and man the trenches."

"All the better for us," said U. "Now there are more of them to listen to us. We'll wake the officers up properly from their dug-out snooze."

When the fire ceased for a moment our instructor yelled into the mike: "Silence! If you don't stop that damned row at once, if you fire another shell at us you'll get something from our heavy calibres on your blooming heads that you won't know whether you're coming or going!"

All of a sudden the shooting stopped. Not a shell any more. The rest of the transmission was undisturbed.

*December 22, 1942.*

### THE CHRISTMAS LEAFLET

I'm coming from the heavens high.\*  
My message is no Goebbels lie.  
I bring no propaganda stunt,  
I bring the truth quite frank and blunt.

This is the truth: the day is near  
When no one Hitler's might need fear.  
How happy he who at that time  
Can hear the bells of freedom chime.

Your doom is certain, soldiers all,  
For now the final blow will fall.  
Shall it this Christmas be your lot  
At Stalingrad to die and rot?

Those back at home with heavy heart  
Pray that the war no longer part  
The children from their fathers dear.  
They want them home, they want them near.

But if you come and join with us  
They'll know that father's caught the bus  
That brings him home all safe and sound  
When Hitler takes at last the count.

I'm coming from the heavens high.  
Lay down your weapons, is my cry.  
I tell the truth quite frank and clear.  
Woe to the man who will not hear!

\* First line of a German Christmas carol.

*December 23, 1942.*

With a new Army Group at Vyerkhne-Tsaritsinski, a rather idyllic village in the middle of the steppe, situated in a valley with old willows and poplars.

All through the night the Ju 52s were flying into the pocket; the A.A. guns were thundering away, but the Nazis took advantage of the clouds. It did not help them, though, because those which had not been hit outside the pocket got a warm welcome over their own airfield from our fighters. One of the Ju 52s was forced down in our vicinity by fighters yesterday; it had been carrying many mailbags. Letters from Germany.

I wrote a leaflet:—

"Fellow countrymen! Officers and men! I am speaking to you as a German who cares about Germany's fate as much as you do. But I consider Hitler's war the biggest catastrophe for our people and country, for this war has been a blessing only for the greedy gentlemen in Berlin. Our people does not get anything out of it but suffering and death. The sorrow and tears of German mothers and children are immeasurable.

"I have here a pack of letters from Germany. One of the ten transport 'planes which are shot down each day should have brought them to you. It is heart-rending to see the anxiety for your lives in all these letters. But there is yet something else to be learned from them: at home they know better than you that Hitler cannot win this war any more. They begin to realise whom you are fighting; they see the 'home-front soldiers' sitting at well-laid tables while you are refused leave sometimes for years.

"Let's pick out a few letters! There is always the same complaint.

"A woman from Raine writes to her husband, Lance-Corporal Hermann Brüning (Fpn. 13887): 'In October last year you were wounded, and now again. There was never such injustice as today. One dare not even think of it. Certain people get their leave and the others mustn't even grumble.'

"A woman from Nedelhoven writes to her husband, Lance-Corporal Johannes Wassong (Fpn. 09879): 'Oh sweetheart, it's no use thinking about anything, or one gets

bother about anything. Now's the time. We'll stay here on our own.' Only one of us began to moan. But we told him a thing or two. I said: 'But we won't come with empty hands. We've got two heavy m.g.s here in the stable. The Russians will be glad to have them.' There was no chance during the night. We waited till the dawn. Then a Russian patrol approached cautiously along the houses. We came out of our stable, and shouted: 'Hallo, Russ!', and put up our hands and waved a handkerchief. They came nearer and wanted to take us away with them. 'That's not all,' I said, and ran into the stable and pulled out the two m.g.s; I pointed at them: 'For Krasni Armi!' The Commander patted me on the back and said: 'Thank you.' That's how it was. And that's how we came here."

The six were an engineer from Duisburg, a carpenter from Düsseldorf, a motor mechanic from Bielefeld, a labourer from Aachen, a driver from Osnabrück, and a clerk from Cologne, all in their early twenties.

The General asked us to ask them where they had got the idea to desert, and whether they had not been afraid of bad treatment from the Russians.

"How we got hold of the idea?" the man from Duisburg laughed. "Why, we aren't daft! We've seen for a long time there won't be a happy ending to Hitler's war. And they can't impress us any more with their propaganda. Whole regiments would scam if so many boys in the *Wehrmacht* hadn't got cold feet."

Hitler had concentrated his crack troops at Stalingrad. It is interesting to study from which social strata and provinces this élite had come. I have read more than a thousand letters written to those at home by the encircled soldiers. There were very few big towns among the addresses: out of these 1,000 only 15 were addressed to Berlin, 4 to Bremen, 5 to Leipzig, 2 to Chemnitz, 11 to Breslau, and not one to Hamburg. This means that Hitler had collected his most devoted units from the small towns, the villages, from the ranks of the peasants, the white-collar workers, the small traders, the artisans, etc.

*December 30, 1942.*

At dusk they brought along a German sergeant-major captured yesterday. He had been in the army for 12 years. He entirely agreed with Hitler's war.

"Aren't you glad that the war is over for you?" we asked him.

"On the contrary. I hate to be away from my unit," he said.

"So you would like to be back with your company?" asked the Russian Colonel.

"Certainly."

"Have you been shot or maltreated here?"

"No."

"If you should happen to return to your unit, would you tell them that?"

"I should tell them the truth."

"All right. Go back to your company. You have our permission. We'll show you a safe way back tonight. Now, aren't you glad?"

For a minute or so the Hitlerite hero looked at us helplessly. His "I am!" sounded somewhat thin.

"It's agreed then, isn't it?" said the Colonel.

All of a sudden the man lost his self-control, and said in an almost imploring voice, "I beg permission to stay here. I should like to return to my family after the war..."

"So you do feel safer here than over there?"

"I do."

That's their readiness to die for the Führer!

*December 31, 1942.*

#### LEAFLET FOR THE ENCIRCLED ARMY:— SOLDIERS, NOT ANOTHER SHOT!

There you are, you fools—are you proud of it?—

In the Stalingrad kettle and stew.

Who is going to get you out of it?

There's only one answer—you!

To Live! that's your holy duty today,

The homeland will need you all.

Your life's not your own to throw away,

Surrender is honour's call.

They led you on and told you things wrong  
Till they left you, facing your doom.  
The vict'ries they boasted loud and long,  
Are gone and disasters loom.

For the end, German soldier, is not so good,  
The end is bitter and sad.  
Do you really want to swamp with your blood  
The Steppe of Stalingrad?

But just as you are beginning to feel  
The ring of iron and blood,  
All Germany soon will be ringed with steel—  
One larger Stalingrad.

Then out at last will run Hitler's sands,  
Our homeland then shall be set free  
And you will need your living hands  
For that better Germany.

January 2, 1943.

There is some news from different armies that German soldiers are coming over to our lines singly or in groups, at one point even a whole company with their lieutenant. But these are only sporadic incidents. Why don't the others believe us?

We ask the newly-captured ones: "Why aren't there more of you?"

"They still think they'll be rescued in the end."

"That's what your Paulus promised you already for Christmas; and when it didn't come off he assured you it wouldn't be later than the New Year. Don't your mates know how far the front has moved away from their pocket?"

"No. The officers tell them the pincers aren't closed. At first they said: It's only a matter of days. Now they're saying that the other pockets have been opened, too. The 16th Army has held out for more than a hundred days. Everybody is told that they'll then be relieved and that they'll all get leave."

"But if the Red Army strikes now—what then?"

"The officers say that the Red Army is much too weak for that, or it would have attacked long ago."

"That's a dangerous game they are playing with you. What's the food like now?"

"They're starving. Seven ounces of bread a day, sometimes only five. Thin *Ersatz* coffee for breakfast, two pints of it; a pint of water-gruel with a few beans or peas for supper. Sometimes a scrap of horse-meat. They'll soon have eaten up all their horses. As soon as a horse breaks down they all pounce on it. Within five minutes there are only bones and bowels left."

"What are their quarters like?"

"Cold dug-outs, heated only for a few hours a day. There's no wood."

"And what about winter garments?"

"Only for a few of them. The majority have summer coats and leather boots, thin cotton gloves, and scarves. Hardly anyone without frostbite."

"How long do you think they'll stand it?"

"I'm sure more would like to come over, but they're afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Of being shot here. Or at least that they'll starve to death. The officers keep saying that the Russians have nothing to eat because we've occupied all their granaries. Or they're scared of being sent to Siberia where they would die. Or of being kept here for years after the war as forced labourers to build everything up again."

"But we've talked to you so often, and we've told you in our leaflets that you shouldn't believe those damned lies!"

"They say it's just enemy propaganda. The officers said that they were not real Germans talking to us, that it was a bluff—just gramophone records."

"Don't they discuss the question whether they shouldn't take the risk and give themselves up?"

"Oh yes, they do discuss it quite a lot."

"And why don't more come over?"

"They say: 'All right, we'll go if the officers give us the order to capitulate.'"

"Perhaps they don't come because they still believe Hitler might win the war?"

"Yes, many still do. They say we've had bad luck here. The Russians always get the better of us in winter, but in the spring we'll advance again."

They don't seem to see sense before we use our guns instead of our arguments.

Have all our words been spoken in vain?

January 4, 1943.

Today I tried to arouse the conscience of those in charge over there. The leaflet read:—

"To the officers of the German *Wehrmacht*! The hour is near when the life or death of those in your charge will be decided upon. The Führer's H.Q. have not left you in doubt about the hopelessness of the situation at Stalingrad. Your men are starving and freezing.

"All the Red Army's proposals for an honourable capitulation have been disregarded. Tens of thousands of young Germans will meet a senseless and inglorious death if your conscience does not compel you in this twelfth hour to lay down your arms before the Red Army is forced to annihilate you.

"We are speaking to you as Germans. We are here at the front facing your lines. We don't want to make propaganda, and we are not interested in your political views. We are guided only by our duty towards the German people, first of all towards tens of thousands of German mothers, wives, and children: our duty to do everything to save their sons, husbands, and fathers from senseless annihilation.

**IF IN SUCH A SITUATION AN OFFICER HOLDS IT MORE HONOURABLE TO DIE RATHER THAN TO SURRENDER, HE IS FREE TO DO SO. BUT HE MUST NOT ASSUME THE RIGHT TO FORCE UPON HIS MEN AN ATTITUDE WHICH CONTRADICTS THE COMMON PEOPLE'S SOUND CONCEPTION OF HONOUR.**

**DO NOT MISUSE THE TRUST WHICH YOUR MEN PUT IN YOU BY HIDING FROM THEM THE DANGER OF THEIR SITUATION!**

"We expect you, as German officers, to realise your responsibility towards our people. Do not forget that after the war you will return from captivity to a new Germany

where the people will call you to account for the lives of those entrusted to your care."

January 5, 1943.

In the village of Ilyovka, near Kalach, since yesterday.

I wrote some more leaflets as last warnings. The Red Army command, we learn, will send Paulus an ultimatum in a day or two. Then the kidgloves will be off. And if that man is not completely out of his senses he will accept. Although his subordinates may not have a clear picture of the situation, he ought to know that relief is now an impossibility.

January 7, 1943.

At last our propaganda seems to affect the nerves of the pep-talkers over there. Up to now we have never found the word "propaganda" in any German order. But here we have a regimental order of the day for Christmas, containing these words: "Yet the Russians will never succeed in getting the better of us, neither with their propaganda nor by force of arms." Today we saw an order by the commander-in-chief, Paulus, himself, warning his men against the Russian propaganda. And there is the following passage in the order of the C.O. of the 669th Grenadier Regiment, of the 3rd January: "... carrying out certain propaganda in order to raise the level of the moral power of resistance; this is necessary not for counteracting the Russian propaganda which is very intense just now, but to stiffen the morale of the troops."

January 9, 1943.

The ultimatum has been sent to Paulus. And has been refused.

I spent the whole night at the wireless station, transmitting the text of the ultimatum for the encircled army. From 4 to 7 a.m. we radioed the request that Paulus should send his plenipotentiaries to the Marinovka-Platonov road to meet the Russian plenipotentiaries.

The German radio engineers heard our transmission, and forwarded the message to their commander-in-chief. At 9 a.m. sharp the plenipotentiaries appeared at the point we had fixed, but only to declare that they had orders not to negotiate.

Now we have to tell the soldiers themselves about the ultimatum.

*January 11, 1943.*

The reconnaissance unit of the division yesterday found a suitable spot where, as we believed, the enemy had concentrated large forces, south of the village of Marinovka which lies in a corner of the pocket protruding to the south-west. There the contours of the front line make it possible to cover a broad salient with our loudspeaker transmission.

After dusk our loudspeaker van advanced behind the sheltering railway embankment between Kalach and Karpovka. To get to the dug-out from which we were to transmit we had to cross a sector under enemy fire; this meant some miles' strenuous walk through the deep snow of the steppe. The sweat was pouring down our bodies under our fur coats, in spite of the icy night. Those over there were shooting at us with tracer bullets, but too high.

The technicians with the loudspeakers crossed the embankment, and advanced across the sector exposed to the enemy, up to 400 or 500 yards' distance from the German lines. At eleven o'clock we were ready for the transmission.

The night was clear and there was hardly any wind; the sound must have got across easily.

I read out the ultimatum and the honourable conditions of surrender several times. Then I followed up with the last appeal by the commanders-in-chief of the Red Army, in which the soldiers were informed that Paulus had rejected the ultimatum. "Your fate lies now in your own hands. Send your delegates with the flag of truce! Get out of the trenches and dug-outs with your hands up! Those who offer resistance will be killed. Your lives depend on your common sense; the decision rests with you."

Once more we told them not to believe their officers, and that we were really Germans who did not want to mislead them by propaganda, but who had no other intention but to tell them the truth. If they would listen to reason not a single German in the pocket would have to lose his life from now on; but it would be too late tomorrow.

They did not shoot; they were listening.

Even after the transmission, when we returned across the steppe, there was only a little firing.

*January 12, 1943.*

It is too late. The offensive has started. Marinovka, where we had directed our transmission only yesterday, has already been taken. We hear from other sectors of the front that everywhere wedges have been driven into the pocket.

We have to take advantage of the break-through at Marinovka immediately. We decide to go to the occupied village in the evening, and to speak at night when there is a lull in the operations, to the troops in their new positions, which lie in a semi-circle round the village. The first blow might have brought them to their senses.

We start in the evening, through a slight snowstorm. The passage across the newly-occupied terrain is somewhat dangerous. Although the mines have been removed from the roads there is always the risk of missing one's way in the drifting snow, and of running into a minefield. We are advancing very slowly. Every now and then the van has to stop until the patrol has scouted another few yards of the road to the village. We arrive at Marinovka at nine o'clock.

The place is in ruins. The Nazis must have been thrown into utter confusion; they have left without their lorries and panzers. Most of the buildings are in shambles. We have to climb over debris, partly covered with snow, in the dark to get to a suitable dug-out. They have left us their dug-outs nearly intact.

The technicians have no easy task to drag along the loudspeakers across unknown terrain. We cannot start with our transmission before midnight. The snowstorm has stopped, the weather is getting favourable for the transmission.

In the meantime we called on a regimental staff in a nearby dug-out. The C.O. and his deputy did not take off their earphones for a moment. Orders and reports were pouring in without pause.

"What's the enemy up to? Are they digging in? When did they leave those positions? Any movements observed at point X? Has the firing ceased? Keep your eyes open!"

The atmosphere in the dug-out was tense and lively. There was something like a serene seriousness on their faces. We were advancing. Hitler's crack 6th Army was being annihilated.

We are transmitting. Over and over again the same



entreating words: those who refuse to lay down their arms will not get out of here alive. The first blow has been struck. The liquidation of the surrounded force is only a matter of days.

We cannot tell whether the soldiers have heard us in their confusion. But we know that some units in a neighbouring sector came over to us at dawn. U. has spoken to them. One group of 15 men and another of 60 with their lieutenant; they had arranged for an organised surrender. When asked if they knew anything about the ultimatum they said that they did not. In their opinion no soldier would go on believing in help from outside if the Red Army's blows continued. And none would fight to the last bullet; they would sooner surrender.

A captain, they said, had told his men that German guns were already thundering near Karpovka.

The guns are thundering—one can hear them. But they are not German ones.

We waited in our dug-out till 4 a.m., until the apparatus had been fetched back. The Red Army men were asleep. Some were sitting propped up against a wall, chatting.

"Next week we'll be in Stalingrad," said one of them. They were all full of happy confidence.

So far I have not seen any Red Army man or commander grumpy or fed up with the war. Even in times of severe setbacks and hardships they do their duty calmly and courageously, without grumbling or hanging their heads.

One can often hear them talking softly about their homes—

"When the war is over, little brother, you must come and see our *kolkhos*. Then we'll have a fine drink together. And our Tolya—that is, if he's spared—he'll play the *garmoshka*; he's very good at that."

"And my wife would like to meet you, I'm sure. She's a teacher. She's had a son in the meantime. You'll be surprised when you see our factory! We have a sanatorium, too, down on the river, in the forest. You can have a grand swim there; it's like spring water."

The other day I asked a German prisoner what his mates were saying about the war.

"If only this bloody mess was over!", that's all you can hear them say," he replied.

January 14, 1943.

Karpovka. The offensive is making enormous strides. We hear that the western part of the pocket has already been cut off by a giant wedge between the northern valley of the rivulet Rossoshka and Karpovka. Dimitrievka, Atamanski, and Karpovka taken by storm. Only the other day the commander of a reconnaissance unit south of the pocket showed us on the map the German positions near Karpovka and the concrete fortifications along the railway to Shirnokleyevka. Taking them would be a hell of a job, he said. The Nazis did not have the ghost of an idea that the Red Army could overrun Karpovka from the rear.

Signs of panic everywhere. The Nazis leave everything as it is, and do not even care about their sick and wounded.

The large, spacious village of Karpovka looks like an enormous jumble sale. Overturned guns, rammed panzers, abandoned lorries blocking the road wherever one looks. They tried to throw their loot on to the lorries which were still in working order, but dropped half of the stuff. They have left even their m.g.s. There are dumps of cartridges, shells, and bombs everywhere. Their dug-outs, reinforced with rails and pit props, have been "built for eternity." Here they intended to hibernate without interference. They had no time for arson. They had to get out too quickly from their warm holes in the ground. Now they have to walk through the snow to Stalingrad. For some of them their boxes and cases must have been too heavy for this trip; outside, on the road, they threw them away. Heaven knows where they had stolen all that stuff: bales of clothing material, linen, silk, preserves, soap, caviar, etc. They certainly have not parted easily with all that. It had been packed ready for Christmas leave. Just wait, you marauders, soon you'll call yourselves lucky if you save nothing but your skins!

A troop of prisoners is shuffling along the main street; they have been cut off at Marinovka and Atamanski. Half of them have frozen feet and are limping.

"Well," I accost them, "is the Red Army too weak to get the better of you?"

They look at me with bewildered eyes in filthy faces. "It was dreadful, sir," says a tall fellow with wild, black patches of beard. "Never in my life I'll forget that drum-fire. I don't even know how I got out."

Some crowded around us, and began a doleful lament: "If we had had an idea how we were being tricked by the high-ups! The Russians will slaughter you, that's what they told us every day. Otherwise we should have stopped firing long ago."

January 15, 1943.

The offensive is going forward rapidly. The pocket has already been cut into several pieces. In some sectors they are said to defend themselves desperately, in other places they abandon everything, and disappear after the first bombardment.

We have advanced to Zineokovski. Our army is pushing towards the Stalingrad circular railway in a long wedge.

The chaos is immense. On all the roads, in every farm-yard abandoned cars are standing, some packed with staff material. The Red Army men have begun to unload the rubbish so that they can use the cars themselves; and now the files, copy-books, and staff correspondence are whirling through the village with the icy winter wind. German newspapers and illustrated magazines are fluttering over the steppe. The whole street is dotted with undispached letters from the post station, pay-rolls, military books, yellow-backs, picture postcards, service regulations, H.Q. orders, decrees, German paper money. Tanks are advancing over biographies of the Führer, works by Rosenberg and Ley, and other junk: the flotsam of stranded lives and hopes.

Red Army men are rummaging in this *kultur* debris, laughing. Many of them have learnt some German at school.

"What on earth is 'Wesensschau germanischer Verinnerlichung'?" I am asked by one of them who is skimming through a pompously printed volume.

"My dear comrade," I reply, "this is a new language which I can't translate even into German, to say nothing about Russian. It's Fascist gibberish."

And amidst all this jumble the dead are lying, grotesquely twisted, their mouths and eyes still wide open with horror, frozen stiff, with their skulls torn open and their bowels hurled out, most of them with bandages on their hands and feet, still soaked with yellow anti-frost ointment; emaciated men whom death had spared on their hospital shake-downs. Those were the frost-bitten, the invalids and

dying about whom nobody cared when the flight began. There they are, the wretched knights of the crooked cross, driven into the promised lands by wine- and beer-bloated prophets. And the wind of the foreign country is boxing their blood-stained ears with the files of the propaganda units.

When the Nazi troops retreated, the abandoned cripples wanted to hobble after them, and thereby got into the gunfire of the advancing Red Army.

Someone has stuck one of the little staff flags lying about in their hundreds and showing a white death's-head on a black ground, into the breastwork of a trench filled with corpses. *In hoc signo!*

January 16, 1943.

I am crouching with a captain in a very small and dismal dug-out in the gorge of Yablonova. The dim little pane above the door gets blocked up with snow every now and then. The small stove, pieced together from oil-cans and gun-cartridges, nearly suffocates us with its smoke. We prefer to hang about outdoors during the day in spite of a temperature of 30 degrees below zero.

On the way from Zineokovski to this place the sight of the steppe valleys had become more and more appalling. Everywhere panzers, motor-cars, guns, some of them intact, some bombed into a state beyond recognition. Smashed motor-cycles, field-kitchens, ammunition boxes, and among them frozen carcasses of men and horses, twisted in their death-struggle.

The crows had already pounced upon one of the dead lying further up on a hill, and were fighting for his eyes.

"When you come back again, sweetheart," I read in a letter from Frankfurt I had picked up on the battlefield, "then I won't stop looking into your dear, kind eyes. In them I will forget all the misery of these dreadful years."

We found one of the surviving Hitlerite soldiers in a branch of the gorge. He looked at us half crazed. Our army surgeon had just been bandaging his feet.

"What's the matter with you?" I asked him.

"My feet are half-frozen. There were three of us here when our troops left. Nobody cared about us; not a piece of bread, no water, no firewood. One of us was very sick;

he died yesterday. My other mate said, 'They've gone, now we must try to get one of those lorries. If the Russians catch us, that will be the end of us.' So we crept out of the dug-out. Suddenly there was a bang; the other fell. I was so frightened, I went back into the dug-out. The Russians came in the evening."

*January 19, 1943.*

We arrived at night at the former airfield of Pitomnik, the centre of the ring which had surrounded the Nazis. In the faint moonlight we thought we had come to a village. But then we noticed that what we had believed to be cottages were actually abandoned panzers and lorries—thousands and thousands of them.

Early in the morning we went up an embankment, and looked down on an incredible panorama: as far as the eye could see nothing but panzers, lorries, cars, guns, machine-guns, tractors, covered wagons, remains of airplanes, stores, ammunition dumps; panzers, caved in like tins; eight-tonners, burnt down to their iron skeletons; guns, burst open; and in between, corpses of men and horses, and all that immense jumble of war, from gun-cartridges down to shaving-brushes.

*January 20, 1943.*

The enemy are still clinging to the circular railway, ten miles west of Stalingrad. The din of battle makes the air vibrate.

This morning the General invited us to breakfast. While we were eating we heard excited shouting outside. We rushed out, the Red Army men were all pointing to the sky, crying: "It's burning, it's burning!" A Ju 52 had been hit and was flying low over the field, smoking and roaring. It had tried to land on the former airfield, but had found nothing that looked like an airfield.

After a few seconds it burst into flames, went into a spin, and crashed. None of the crew had been able to bale out.

An hour later there were again excited shouts: another bird searching for his old nest. Out of the clouds there appeared a Junkers, and circled at a height of about 2,000 feet. A.A. guns were thundering from all directions. The sentries grabbed their tommy-guns, and started firing.

It had hardly described a semi-circle when a huge, white

flame flashed out of its port engine. It was burning. The pilot was apparently trying to land quickly, but after a moment the machine toppled over and sputtered down. It blew up with a mighty explosion, sending up a column of smoke 150 feet high. An ammunition transport had been blown to atoms.

A third one came at noon, but it smelled a rat and turned tail. However, when it had almost disappeared in the haze a thick pall of smoke emerged from it. This one won't have got back to Rostov either.

As the Nazis are still clinging to the railway before Stalingrad, we intend to go up to the front line tonight.

*January 22, 1943.*

The staff is moving up after the advancing troops. The pocket is crumbling. The Hitlerite 6th Army has concentrated at the edge of Stalingrad proper, and at Gorodishche. There is continuous thunder and lightning over the steppe. Hundreds of guns are making a deafening noise.

The nearer we approach Stalingrad the more terrifying grows the spectacle. Wherever one looks, are relics of what was once a crack army. Along the roadside are crouching and lying those who have collapsed and perished from the cold. They had not been able to keep pace with the retreating troops, and were left in the lurch. One has collapsed at the foot of a road sign, embracing the post: "To Stalingrad."

In the gorge leading to the outwork of Gonchara, hell must have been let loose yesterday. The whole of the ravine is full of disabled and burnt-out panzers and lorries, some of them lying upside down. Armoured plates and exploded guns block the road; and again everywhere corpses and remains of what were once human bodies. The tanks and guns of the Red Army had to force their way at dawn through this collection of scrap iron.

Many corpses have been flattened and ripped to pieces by caterpillar treads and wheels. Artillery and lorries are pushing forward through the defile. It is difficult to make one's way across the mass of debris and corpses.

On a hilltop we meet a column of prisoners, Germans and Rumanians. Behind them some frost-crippled men are hobbling along, their feet wrapped in sacking. With a horri-

fied look in their eyes they implore the others not to walk so fast—they are frightened they might be left behind to freeze to death in the steppe.

“If you had surrendered on the 9th of January,” I tell them, “you could have been driven to the prisoner camp in one of your own tens of thousands of lorries!”

They hobble along, lamenting.

Behind us, in the ravine, our guns are hammering at the last bulwark of Stalingrad.

*January 24, 1943.*

A terrible snowfall has set in. The steppe gets more and more treacherous. The cars sink into the snow holes. At dusk we move on to Gumrak. The Nazi garrison in Stalingrad has already been cut in two.

We arrive at Gumrak in the dark, in deep snow. On our way we saw some of the immense soldiers' cemeteries, tens of thousands of wooden crosses, neatly put up. Living-space!

The abandoned German staff shelters are scattered over the snowed-in steppe, some distance from the village. It is difficult to find the entrance by night, in the drifting snow.

We enter a shelter which must have been left in headlong flight by its former occupants only a short time ago. The small stove, which had been fed with coal, is still tepid. Some sort of thick wallpaper has been nailed to the walls. They had apparently made themselves comfortable here for the long winter to come. There are easy chairs, stolen from Stalingrad flats. The tea things are still on the table. They have left their brushes, mirrors, shaving sets, Eau-de-Cologne bottles and other jumble on boards fixed to the wall. What language must have graced their lips when they were hunted out of their nests by the Russian shells!

A Red Army man comes at midnight and reports: “I took 400 Germans to Gumrak. They surrendered to our patrol when we called to them to lay down their arms. There were 14 of us.”

*January 25, 1943.*

I went to Gumrak in the morning. Some of the buildings which had been hit by German bombs yesterday were still burning. The whole countryside was nothing but ruins and corpses. Last night's snowstorm had partly covered up the

horrible scenes. Bare skulls, feet and hands were sticking out of the snow here and there.

In a ravine we found the dead bodies of Russian prisoners of war, almost without clothes, lean as skeletons, their skin already black and brown, dumped down in a heap. They must have been lying here for some time already, starved or tortured to death.

Troops of prisoners were marching along everywhere.

We found three German Army surgeons at the guardshouse of the village. They had not known where to turn, and had waved to the first Russian tank they saw.

They were surprised and glad about their humane treatment.

“Don't you think,” our instructor asked them, “that the last tens of thousands at Stalingrad would certainly lay down their arms if they knew they would be treated the way you have been?”

“I am absolutely sure of that,” said one of the doctors. “One should do everything possible to save them.”

“Would you like to help to save your countrymen?” the instructor asked them.

“Of course. But how?”

“Tonight at dark we are going up to the front line where we can talk to them with loudspeakers. You are doctors and officers; your authority with the soldiers is great. Wouldn't you like to tell them how you have been received here as prisoners?”

Now, however, the three heroes lost their courage. One of them excused himself with a sprained foot, the other one felt queer, the third one began to croak and said he had such a cold that he could not make himself understood anyhow.

A whole nation of heroes.

*January 27, 1943.*

The prisoners are pouring in from all directions: limping and shuffling ghosts in rags. This is what Napoleon's grenadiers must have looked like after they had crossed the Beresina. The most difficult problem now is how to accommodate and feed these shipwrecked men until they can be transported further back. The stronger ones are being sent on the way to Karpovka, to the rendezvous point, with a loaf of bread tucked under their arm. The distance is 17 miles.

The weaker ones and those suffering from frostbite have to be put up in all available dug-outs and sheds. The provision of food for these thousands is creating great difficulties, especially as the transport vehicles cannot make their way through the snow so easily.

Three of these spectres in rags and tatters pass our shelter. The Commander asks them in. "There, have a hot drink!" But they are staring at the two loaves of bread on the shelf. The Commander notices it. "Take the bread with you," he says, and gives it to them, "we've got enough bread. You came here to rob us of the bread we need for our existence. But we're giving some to you poor wretches instead."

The three tear off pieces of the bread at once and gulp them down so eagerly that they almost choke.

*January 30, 1943.*

On our way we pass again through Karpovka. Now it is already 30 miles behind the front. And life has come back again. A fortnight ago it was dead and empty; now it is swarming with people. The peasant women have returned to their homes, and begun to repair them. The winter sun is shining cheerfully. The children are skating on the pool where a dead German is still lying. They have taken the seats out of the destroyed motor-cars and are coasting down the slope, yelling. There is a twitter like in the first days of spring when the swallows return to their old village.

When summer comes the women will sit in front of their houses again, and look up to the clouds. But their children's children will still tell of those five months of horror under the fist of the Nazi murderers.

At dusk, when the village street was full of life, suddenly a Heinkel roared down from the sky, skirted over the roofs at a height of 30 feet, firing all its machine-guns. People said that it was already the third day it had been doing this—tearing over the peaceful villages in senseless rage like a horsefly whose nest has been destroyed.

I was sitting in my billet when I heard the bullets hit the house. When I rushed out to see what that swine had done, I found our guard lying lifeless outside the door. A stray bullet had hit his chest. Only ten minutes before he had been

sitting with me at the stove, to warm himself up, talking to me about his home in the Donets Basin.

When the woman doctor arrived he opened his eyes once more; then his head dropped backwards.

An old, bearded peasant had been looking on. Suddenly he opened his mouth as though he wanted to shout, wildly beating his chest; then he raised his fist, and shook it in frantic fury.

It was only one single word he was crying out hoarsely: "Mestj—revenge!"

It is ten years today since the Fascist disgrace descended upon Germany. This afternoon Goering shouted his cry of anger and anxiety into the world.

But he cannot drown that old peasant's husky word.

# Editor's Comment

“DISCUSSION Across the Trenches” is neither well-written fiction nor journalism. It is a literal transcription of many “Nächtliche Gespräche von Graben zu Graben” (Nightly Conversations from Trench to Trench) which have taken place on many sectors of the front between German soldiers and representatives of the Free Germany National Committee and of the affiliated Union of German Officers in the Soviet Union.

In 1942, before Stalingrad, Weinert and his friends were only a small group fighting against the flood of Hitler chauvinism. But the crushing defeat of the 6th German Army at Stalingrad had a sobering effect on the prisoners-of-war and, to a limited degree, in the German rear. The German survivors of Stalingrad were shocked by the lack of responsibility with which they had been driven toward certain death. The recklessness of Hitler's strategy and the inevitability of a German defeat were at last brought home to them. At last they realised that if Germany is to live, Hitler must die, and that German hands must play their part in freeing the world from Nazism if Germany is to win back the respect of the other nations which she forfeited through her participation in, or toleration of, the revolting crimes of the Fascists. Only the German people themselves by fighting against the bloodstained Hitlerite gang and its backers can save themselves from being dragged down into certain disaster by them.

The realisation that the only way out was to fight against Hitler and all he stood for led in the summer of 1943 to the formation of the Free Germany National Committee in which the new enemies of Hitler united with those who had always fought against him in dedicating themselves to the fulfilment of this task. The President of this committee, which has untiringly devoted itself to propaganda and organisational work in many units of the Army and in ever-widening circles in the German rear, is Erich Weinert. The re-education of the Germans, begun by their reverses on the Eastern battlefields, has been continued through the work of German anti-Fascists at the front and in the prisoners-of-war

camp. Today these German prisoners-of-war, freed from the Hitler myth, are in the process of becoming new men. They constitute already a force which is being used to re-educate those Germans who are in the Nazi Army fighting still against the progress and freedom of the world.

But the warning voice of the Free Germans has not yet evoked from the German people the response which would free them from the chains with which Hitler has bound them to his regime. The German people are still fighting with Hitler against the Allies and against their own German interest. Every day—and these fateful days are numbered—that the German people continue to follow the Nazis makes it more difficult for them to find their way onto the long road which leads to a new, democratic, peace-loving Germany, able to take its place, with the help and under the control of the Allies, in the family of nations.

We publish in the following pages “Discussion Across the Trenches” as an example of the kind of work which is being undertaken by the Free Germany National Committee. If this work only succeeds in saving the life of one Allied soldier, then we feel that it has not been in vain.

# Discussion Across The Trenches

*Report from Lieut. Gerhard X., Representative of the Free Germany National Committee at Front Sector Y., to Erich Weinert, President of the Free Germany National Committee.*

ON November 27, 1943, the prisoner-of-war, N.C.O. Walter S., Infantry Regiment 00, Division 01, spoke on my behalf to the German soldiers of Infantry Division 01 from a distance of 25-30 yards. A discussion developed during this address. The German soldiers asked Walter S. several times to bring along Lieutenant X. himself as they would "believe him more." Later the German soldiers said that they had heard about the Free Germany National Committee, and knew who its leading men were.

When I had received this report I went at once to the front sector in question. In the early hours of November 5 we decided to let N.C.O. Walter S. speak first, and then I should begin to talk. Walter S. had hardly started when rifle and m.g. fire flared up, and hand grenades were thrown. Then I came forward. I tried to rivet the German soldiers' attention by telling my name and rank. I succeeded, and had a discussion with several groups of German soldiers, lasting for about two hours. I herewith report the approximate wording of the discussion.

## THE DISCUSSION

X: This is Lieutenant Gerhard X. speaking, representative of the Free Germany National Committee at Front Sector Y. I ask you to be quiet and stop shooting. I want to say a few words to you.

(All became quiet, and I spoke for a quarter of an hour about the Free Germany National Committee, the letter from the President of the Committee to the German soldiers, etc. It was absolutely quiet when I asked):

X: Did you hear me?

Reply: O.K., go on.

(I spoke about the situation of Army Group Y. When I told them that Gomel, too, had now been taken by the Russians, they interrupted me): That's not true. We don't know anything about it.

X: You don't know anything about it, but it's true all the same. And they'll go on hiding it from you for some time because otherwise you would become aware of the great danger in which you are now.

Reply: That's interesting.

X: You must not shut your ears any longer. You must use every opportunity to find out what your situation really is, and then draw your own conclusions.

Reply: We'll do that all right.

X: Study all the material you can get. The National Committee's manifesto shows you the way. Erich Weinert, the President of the Committee, has addressed an open letter to you in No. 16 of our newspaper. Read everything, spread information, and then act.

Reply: But we haven't got any material. Give us some!

X: But haven't you heard about the National Committee?

Reply: Oh yes, once we read one of your newspapers. But do give us more!

X: I'll take care of that at once.

(We fired off a packet of leaflets.)

German Soldiers: Lieutenant, why are the Russians firing? We're not, are we?

X: That was no fire, that was a packet of leaflets. Did you get them?

Reply: No. It's better you bring them yourself. We guarantee that nothing will happen to you, on our word of honour.

X: Wait a minute.

(I was not allowed to cross over to the German lines. But we sent at once for more newspapers and leaflets. In the meantime I continued the discussion.)

X: What part of Germany do you come from?

Reply: From the Rhineland and Westphalia.

X: Then you've got specially tough luck. Here at the front you are in a desperate situation, and your families at home are exposed to those terrible air-raids.

Reply: Yes, we know.



X: Then you shouldn't put up with it any longer.

Reply: That's easier said than done!

X: But we're showing you the way out. How are you getting on with your officers?

Reply: Oh, all right.

X: Are they prepared to fight with you against Hitler for the salvation of Germany?

Reply: We'll find out when the time comes.

X: But the time has come. This is the twelfth hour.

Reply: Ever heard of blockheads?

X: I'm afraid I have. Your blockheadedness will bring you to ruin.

Reply: Oh no, we'll see to that all right.

X: And you'll have to. You have greater tasks before you than to lose your lives in senseless battles.

Reply: Don't worry, sir.

(Some Veray lights went up.)

X: What's that?

Reply: Nothing. You ought to know that; you are a lieutenant, aren't you?

X: Yes, but I'm a Flight-Lieutenant, from the second squadron *Ob. d.L.\**). I have been a prisoner-of-war with the Russians since July 6, 1941.

Reply: Well, well, the gentlemen from the *Luftwaffe* . . .  
(Laughter on both sides.)

X: Talking about airmen: have you already heard about the latest massed attacks of the British and American airforces on Berlin and Bremen? A thousand American heavies over Bremen by daylight! As an airman I can imagine what that means. I told you I was doing long-range reconnaissance work. As far back as spring, 1941, even single machines could hardly cross the English coast by day—and now: a thousand American 'planes over Bremen! This is significant for the change of the situation, and it's terrible for us. It mustn't go on like this any longer. But while Hitler stays on it will not only go on but get worse and worse. You must help with all your might in the struggle for the elimination of that war criminal.

Reply: But the Americans had very heavy losses.

\*) Long-range reconnaissance.

X: Not too heavy for a daylight attack. Besides, they have great reserves.

Reply: But what about their air crews?

X: They've been flying only for the last six months. Our *Luftwaffe*, however, has been flying for more than four years.

Someone interrupted: Where are the newspapers?

X: Yes, they'll come in a moment.

(I wanted to pause for a short time, but the German soldiers called):

Hallo, Lieutenant, are you still there? What's life like for a prisoner in Russia?

(I gave them a short account of prisoners' camps, the food and accommodation, work and recreation, and care of the health. Besides, I mentioned the Camp Groups of the Free Germany movement).

Reply: That's not a bad life.

X: First of all, we know that we shall return safe and sound to our homes after the war. If we come to the front, however, we do it to help you, to show you the right way, because we are true German patriots; because for us German soldiers and officers it is a holy duty to help Germany in this fateful time with all the means at our disposal. But you, too, must not remain silent either, or the world will lose faith in our German people, and you will all be held responsible as accomplices for these war crimes. You must act.

Reply: Don't worry about us.

X: But I do. Day after day is going by, and you don't act, you allow the disaster to become bigger and bigger. You all know what's the matter at the front and back home, and you don't move a finger.

Reply: Why should we know everything?

X: You can if you want to. Keep in touch with me, send a mate over here from time to time, and I'll inform you about everything.

Reply: Where are the newspapers?

X: They'll be here in a minute. By the way, in No. 19 you will find an article by Walter von Seydlitz, General of the Artillery, Major-General Lattmann and others on the occasion of the anniversary of Hitler's crime at Stalingrad. Do you know what Stalingrad was?

Reply: From the German press.

X: Then you don't know. (I continued with a short account of the Stalingrad disaster.)

Reply: What happened to the prisoners from Stalingrad?

X: When necessary they were taken to P.o.W. hospitals. They all got special food. Everything possible was done for them. Now they fight with us in the Free Germany movement. All that is in store for you if you don't act in time—starvation, cold, misery—all that they had to suffer only because Hitler gave his crazy order to hold out. And you'll get the same order if you don't finish him off before. You must not comply with such senseless orders.

Reply: We're just little men, what do you want us to do?

X: But you men have the weapons, you've got the power. If you resist, the officers are helpless. Demand of them with all your might that they oppose Hitler's orders, and that they join you in the fight against him.

Reply: That's easily said.

X: Yet it is possible if you have the will. And if your officers don't act, act yourselves! Save your lives for yourselves, for your families, and for the fatherland. You will be wanted in the struggle for the liberation of our land. You must not perish senselessly. For many of you, honourable captivity is the only remaining way out of the dilemma. The first necessity is the preservation of the lives of so many German men. You will all return safely home after the war. Germany will sigh with relief when she learns that you have opposed Hitler's order to hold out, and that you will come back home sound after the war. Think of this while there's time.

Reply: We'll do the right thing. And we'll refer to you.

X: I'm always at your disposal. As a representative of the Free Germany National Committee it is one of my duties to look after all officers and men of the German Army who have become prisoners. I have visited many of your mates in field hospitals or transit camps. I have been able to meet many of their little requests. Thus, friends, I'll always be at your disposal.

German Soldiers: Sir, is the material coming along? We'll be relieved soon.

X: Presently; it's being fetched. I say, have you got your winter equipment already?

Reply: No; but neither have the Russians.

X: Oh yes, they've got it all right, and so have we. I've received everything.

Reply: Why do you ask? Do you want to bring us winter clothes?

X: Not likely. But here, in captivity, you'd be taken care of in this respect too.

(Meanwhile the material had been brought.)

X: Hallo, friends, here are the newspapers and leaflets. Tell me, what's the best way to get them across?

Reply: Come and take them along! Our word of honour, nothing will happen to you. You want to make propaganda, don't you? Or we meet halfway, and you give the stuff to one of us.

X: Well, let's do it this way: you don't shoot, I come forward a few steps, and we throw the stuff over to you.

Reply: O.K., we won't fire, but you mustn't shoot either. We'll have to look out where the packet falls.

(I went over the top and advanced a few steps. I walked upright, about 20 to 25 yards from the German trench. I noticed some stir, and heard them say in an undertone: Don't fire—nobody is to fire!)

X: Friends, can you see me?

Reply: Yes, of course.

X: But I can't see you.

(Thereupon three German soldiers climbed out of the trench and advanced a few steps. I could see their faces. They were unarmed. I was just turning back to ask for the containers with the newspapers when a German soldier shouted in a flurry): Lieutenant, get down! An officer is coming.

X: Make a sign when it's all clear again.

Reply: O.K.

(We kept quiet. After about 15 minutes a Verey light went up, and five rifle shots were fired.)

X: Hallo, all clear?

Reply: It's all right now. You can go on.

X: Look out—leaflets! (We fired off a packet; it came down too far to the right.)

German Soldiers: More to the left. We didn't get that one. (Another shot.) Missed again . . . No, wait a minute, we've got it.

X: Well, friends, to come to an end: now you know that I'm the representative of the National Committee at a major sector of the front. I've got much work to do and many duties to fulfil, and I must leave you soon. But I have a pal as a substitute here, N.C.O. Walter S.

*Reply:* All right.

X: If anything happens, or you want information, wave a white flag by day, and Walter S. will come over.

*Reply:* Please repeat what we are to do. (I repeated everything.) Agreed.

X: Now, let's draw the conclusions from our discussion today. You must form an Army Group of the Free Germany movement. Study all the material you can get, and enlarge your group. See to it that you are always in touch with me or my substitute. Send a representative over here, as a liaison man. We must use every opportunity to talk to each other. Anyone of you can see the representative of the National Committee over here at any time. You mustn't let yourselves be killed without rhyme and reason—therefore you must act. Do you promise that?

*Reply:* We do.

(Suddenly there was a sharp voice from about 20 yards' distance at the right-hand side): What do you take us for—puppets? (At the same time I was fired at by a tommy-gun. I was able to take cover. I waited a few minutes, then I said): I've been asked what I take you for. Well, I'm taking you for true patriots of our country, for brave German soldiers, and I believe that you don't want to plunge yourselves and our people into a catastrophe. If I took you for puppets I shouldn't waste my time talking to you, for our fight needs real men. I am greeting you as my comrades-in-arms, and I hope you will do everything to end this senseless war at last. Till we meet again, comrades!

*Reply:* All clear now. Till we meet again!

◆ ◆ ◆

In the early morning hours of December 6th, N.C.O. Walter S. spoke to the German soldiers. We wanted to find out if they were going to keep in touch with him as promised. This they did. Walter S. talked to them for a while, and threw them a great quantity of leaflets, newspapers, etc. The German soldiers promised to distribute this material cautiously and wherever they could.

(Signed) Lieutenant Gerhard X.

# I.N.G. PUBLICATIONS LTD.

(ANTI-NAZI PUBLICATIONS ON GERMAN AFFAIRS)

DIRECTORS  
F. W. ADAMS  
S. O. DAVIES, M.P.  
D. FURNESS  
COUNCILLOR J. SILVERMAN

TELEPHONE No.:  
HOLBORN 3851.

9, GT. TURNSTILE,

HOLBORN W.C.1

June 1st 1944

Ivor Montague Esq.,  
Swinton Street  
W.C. 1

Dear Mr. Montague,

Enclosed please find a copy of "Stalingrad Diary" for which you were kind enough to translate the poems. I want to state once more how grateful we are to you for this translation as it helped us a lot.

I have to apologize for sending you this copy with some delay the reason being that the second delivery of "Stalingrad Diary" were withhold by Peter Paperson for 10 days and all our deliveries had to stop for this time.

Yours sincerely

*The Director*  
for I.N.G. Publications Ltd.