

LOWELL THOMAS' BROADCAST FROM CENTRAL EUROPE

April 11, 1945

GOOD MORNING, EVERYBODY:

Over here in Central Europe from where I am broadcasting early this Thursday morning, the one thing we have been talking about since midnight is the word from the Ninth Army Front, from Simpson's advanced armored spearhead, that our troops have reached the city of Magdeburg, on the River Elbe, only about seventy-five miles from Berlin.

Of course the Army officers and men, and correspondents, and radio people here have had other exciting things to talk about during the day, during Wednesday, that is up to midnight an hour ago: such as the news coming in from the Russians, telling of how they have now completely surrounded Vienna; of how Patton's forces have advanced into Thuringia,

beyond the capital city of Erfurt, which they have surrounded; then coming on North to the Ninth Army, the German commander of the garrison in the city of Brunswick where the meek Herrenvolk yesterday seemed to be trying to surrender to Colonel "Doc" McGehee's Thunderbolts circling overhead, we learned today that the Commandant had decided to defend the city, whereupon the Ninth Army simply bypassed Brunswick, hurrying on toward Berlin; and now the word, that they have reached Magdeburg, with Berlin the next stop, just up the road.

Nor is that all the good news. Simpson's Ninth, and, General Courtney Hodges' First Army, have squeezed the Ruhr Pocket, overrunning many more square miles, and giving the hundred thousand odd hopelessly trapped Nazis, and some four hundred thousand slave laborers and the four million German civilians in there, still less room in which to mill around. The word is that the Germans in the Ruhr are running out of amunition.

The question tonight seems to be: Have the Russians launched their drive toward Berlin from the Oder? Hugh Gibson will undoubtedly have some news for you from the Russian armies. And, many of us are wondering whether General Simpson's Ninth Army has a chance of getting there first -- maybe within the next few days. For Simpson's armor, seventy-five miles to the outer city limits of Berlin, is not far to go.

Now about an experience or two at the Ninth Army Front, as I promised last night. Over battered cities and villages, down along Hitler's super-highway, the autobahn, which is exactly like many of our four-lane concrete highways, over German ammunition and supply dumps of all sorts, with not a soul on guard, over railway yards blasted to blazes, above dusty side roads with long convoys of heavily loaded American trucks speeding to the front with an utter disregard for Goering's vanished legions of the sky, the once terrible Luftwaffe, over all this I flew, at treetop level, in a tiny artillery observation and liason plane. Just the two of us, Lieutenant Win Hambleton of Nashua, New Hampshire, at the controls.

Finally, up ahead, we saw smoke rising from the burning German city of Hamlyn, the city of the Pied Piper of Hamlyn, which is south of Hannover, and farther east towards Berlin. Back at Ninth Army Headquarters I had been told that the Thirtieth Division was

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in Hamlyn, still busy driving out the German troops, and that it might be plenty risky coming down in a cow pasture on the outskirts of the Pied Piper's home town. We circled above the gutted buildings, flew through the smoke, and then bumped into a meadow right alongside the Wesser River. Then in a jeep we crossed a pontoon bridge, found Major General Leland Hobbs, who is in command of the 30th Division -- in fact, found him there on the edge of burning Hamlyn, dictating letters to America, answering mail from parents who were asking him about their boys. So much confidence did he have in his men fighting right near by that he could take time to write a few letters to fathers and mothers and wives, at home. He says he answers them all.

The 30th division has a great record. It is one of the few military outfits of that size to receive the much coveted Presidential citation, with each man in the division entitled to wear the new blue ribbon, new in this war, the one with the gold around it.

I had with me the names of several lads in Simpson's Ninth Army, sons of neighbors; and, I had been looking for Albert Johnson, son of the President of Temple University, and Les Ward, one of my own son's pals. And sure enough, to the surprise of both of us, I ran into Les, on the outskirts of Hamlyn. He had just taken five more German prisoners, he and several pals. We talked about home and his family

and his baby son, for a half hour or so, and then I left Les as he headed on towards Berlin. I'm betting on him, and his buddies of the Ninth Army, winning the race to Hitler's capital, the once mighty and flourishing center of the German Empire. Les, with his carbine at the ready was moving that way. And now the Ninth is at the River Elbe - on its banks tonight. It's incredible.

To return for a moment to the headline news: the 17th American Airborne Division today captured Essen, the great industrial city of the Ruhr. The British tonight have only a river between them and the seaport of Bremen, at the mouth of the Wesser on the embattled bank of which river I had landed, farther upstream, in that artillery observation plane. More than a thousand American heavy bombers were smashing Nuremburg and Munich today; while Patton's Third Army entered the German city of Coburg.

Oh yes, and what tales the American airmen have had to relate today! While lending a hand to Simpson's 2nd Armored Division, the one that stormed to the Elbe today, a squadron of Thunderbolts of the 29th Tac, an outfit I've been visiting, shot down seventeen new type long-nosed FW-190s, in a great air battle that lasted an hour -- over the city of Magdeburg -- and over Berlin. With a loss of one of our Thunderbolts. The German airmen had more fight in them than usual, but Lt. Edward Edwards of Lansdale,

Pennsylvania, shot down four, chasing one of them almost to the Russian lines, way to the East beyond Berlin. Ted Tuckley of Watertown, N.Y., got credit for two and a half, and Bob Burns of Charleston, West Virginia, two more.

But wait, you haven't heard the half of it. Over the city of Halle a particularly aggressive and famous Mustang Fighter Group, fourteen of them, spotted twenty-five or more ME 109s and FW190s, above them -- with the German fliers having all the advantage. But the Mustang pilots dropped their bombs and belly tanks and up they climbed to take on the Germans. Yes, and Captain Earl Brushwood of Moultrie, Georgia -- page Jimmy Melton! destroyed twenty of the Nazi planes, damaged six, and then raced back, unscathed, to their base, to celebrate. Six hundred and forty-one German planes have been destroyed by that P51 outfit, the Pioneer Mustang Group they are called.

Yes, the war over here is sure moving at high speed; and if it isn't all over but the shouting, and some mopping up in the mountains of Bavaria, before long now, then I'm the Pied Piper of Hamlyn! So long, and back to Hugh Gibson in the U.S.A.

WESTERN FRONT

Hugh Gibson - Standard. Wed., April 11, 1945.
Sunoco.

(P.T. on from abroad 7 mins.)
Rupenbourg.

Good Evening, Everybody:

At half-past-eight this morning, at a point a little south of the German city of Brunswick, an American Brigadier General spoke up with a brisk remark. He was the commander of the Second Armored Division of the Ninth Army, Brigadier General Isaac D. White. They call his outfit, "Hell-on-Wheels", and he made the promise that his tanks would reach the River Elbe by nightfall. He vowed that by sundown his armored units would be in the city of Magdeburg, on the last important riverline before Berlin.

That might have seemed a rash boast, for it was fifty-five miles from Brunswick to Magdeburg on the Elbe, and fifty-five miles is almost incredible going for armor in battle. But Hell-on-Wheels made it. After their commander's jubilant promise, they started east in the most sensational sweep of the war. At only one place they ^{were} halted -- and only briefly. This was at the huge Goering Steel Works, where some fanatical Nazis were entrenched. It didn't take the tanks long to smash ^{resistance.}

BOOK X 100-1000

And General White's division reached Magdeburg and the Elbe as the day closed -- at eight-thirty Central European Time. Here is a ^{cheerful} ~~late~~ sidelight. Brigadier General White was promoted today to Major General -- good hunting, General!

Late word is that still another American column has reached the Elbe -- and is only fifty miles from Berlin. And we hear that the assault on the line of the Elbe has already begun.

Still farther south, Patton's Third Army is driving, but we don't know much about that, because of a security blackout. There is no indication whether Patton's armor is moving to the northeast toward Berlin, or southward into Bavaria -- in a thrust against the mountain bastion, where die-hard Nazi forces plan to make their last stand.

One report today was that Hitler has been deposed, his place taken by Himmler, the chief of ^{the} Nazi terror. Another ~~xx~~ which was voiced in the London House of Commons was that Hitler ~~xxx~~ has been killed.

And still other reports picture the Nazi fanatics fighting among themselves. There is insistent word of a prospective uprising in the parts of Germany the Nazis still control, and one story tells of executions of German air force officers, including a general, to forestall an outbreak.

In just a moment we will hear Lowell Thomas speaking from Luxembourg, but first, a message from Standard of California.

Mr. Gibson: Thank you Lowell, we'll be listening
to you again tomorrow. And now....

AIR WAR

The strategy of the air war today reflected the new rapid turn of the military situation -- the collapse of German resistance in the West. A dispatch from headquarters tells us that Allied air power has switched its mass attacks to a line separating enemy forces in North Germany from the South German mountains, where the Nazis plan to make their last stand.

RUSSIA

In the final downfall of the Nazi, one essential feature will be a ~~xx~~ crash-through of the Soviet armies on the East -- where they are only thirty-eight miles from Berlin. And ~~ixxi~~ indications are that a Russian break-through is already beginning. Moscow intimates that in the final drive on Berlin, a foremost and spectacular part will be played by the ~~traditional~~ Russian Cossacks. And this would fit in with the Russian sense of the dramatic to have the final coup de grace administered by the wild riding horsemen of the Russian Steppes, the Cossacks.

The Soviet capture of Vienna is being completed. From the German side comes word that the Red army has opened a new offensive west of Vienna and is striking up the Valley of the Danube toward the Austrian city of Linz. That is in the direction of Munich, capital of Bavaria, and Hitler's nest at Berchtesgaden. A Russian offensive along that line is of pointed meaning with reference to the Nazi plan for a final defense in the ~~xxix~~ south German mountains.

ITALY____

The purpose of the new Allied offensive in Italy was stated today as an attempt to crack German forces before they can fall back through the Alps to join the die-hard Nazis in their last defense in mountainous strongholds. We hear that there are probably now in Italy more organized German divisions than there are on the Western Front. German morale in Italy is good, and has not been greatly affected by the disasters on ~~the~~ the Western Front. So the fact is that collapsing Nazi Germany has a powerful and efficient army in Italy.

PACIFIC

In the campaign for Okinawa, American troops today completed the capture of a small but important island. This bit of land, called Tsugen, dominates Nakagusuku Bay, on the east coast of Okinawa. American landings encountered only moderate resistance.

On Okinawa, savage fighting continued today and little progress was made against the powerful defense line from shore to shore just north of the town of Naha. One dispatch today stated: "The Japanese have now opened a powerful bombardment, with field guns and mortars, and progress was almost impossible."

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And now, Hugh James.