

A Letter from CAPTAIN HORACE R. HANSEN, 0-1325088  
War Crimes Branch  
APO 403, c/o Postmaster, N.Y., N.Y.

XIV

Dachau, Bavaria  
8 December, 1945

Dear Folks and Friends,

From the standpoint of personal comfort our zone of occupation in Germany is certainly the best. As it turned out, the British got the Industry, the Russians the food and our forces the scenery. Outside of the large cities, the American Zone is less damaged and the civilians, therefore, less hostile. We have always found good housing for our men and control problems have been less troublesome than in the other zones.

We moved south into Bavaria in easy stages as the Russians were not ready at once to take over all our areas. The frequent moving was a nuisance but it gave us the opportunity to take a good look at central Germany.

Before we left Stendal I tried to get to Berlin, only fifty miles away, without success. At that time we were ordered by our own command to keep out of Russian area and that was the only way to get there. I even arranged a ride in an observation plane one time but at the last minute could not get clearance. So Berlin turned out to be a big bunch of sour grapes for all of us.

Just outside of Stendal was a storage place for jet bombs. In the railyard long trains of flatcars were loaded with them and ready to move when the war ended. The things fascinated us and we climbed all over them for a close look.

To give you an idea of size, three V-1 "buzz bombs", loaded side by side, filled a flatcar, without wings or warheads, these being loaded in a trailing boxcar. One V-2 "jetbomb" filled a flatcar and part of the next one, without its warhead. They were beautifully made and ominous looking. In a nearby building we also saw a jet-propelled fighter, the sleekest looking plane any of us have ever seen.

After this tour our unanimous comment was that the Krauts had certainly beat us to the punch on jet propulsion and that we were fortunate the war had ended quickly. These things outclassed anything we could fire from a gun or put in the air. In quantity and with improvements they would have given us a terrific setback. Seeing those weird weapons and knowing what they could do was a very sobering experience.

Some of the people who believe in rehabilitating German heavy industry should have been with us that day.

It was good to get away from that area. Our outfit handled and screened over 80 thousand prisoners and more countless thousands of displaced persons. Everyone was on edge and dog-tired. We deserved a rest and finally got it. In early June we moved south to Gotha in Thuringia.

This was the first trip I have made on the continent in anything but a jeep or a truck. We had a "liberated" bus with soft leather seats and a quiet motor, almost as good as a Greyhound. The warm sun, pleasant scenery and smooth riding was reminiscent of a vacation trip back home.

The route took us thru the rolling country of Saxony and finally thru the Hartz mountains into Thuringia. The Hartz chain is a dead ringer for the Smokies in Tennessee. They are not as large but just as grand. Pine trees cover them completely and there is the same misty haze around the peaks. Even the blacktop road looked the same. The difference is that in every valley there is a cluster of red-roofed houses, dominated always by a huge church with a high spire. Ox teams pull

the farm wagons and there is a notable absence of roadside inns and billboards.

Nearly every city in Germany has a medieval core, some of it intact. Often you will see parts of the old battle wall and high, stone guard towers arched over the roads leading in. The small archway usually permits only one-way traffic, for in this case as in many others over here tradition apparently outweighed convenience. These people dote on old and ugly landmarks, especially if they are connected with bloody battles or some hobgoblin stories.

Gotha is one of these typical old cities and claims a history dating back to the Stone Age. Its citizens will immediately point with pride to the huge castle of the Duke of Saxony which has a room for every day of the year, divided by wings and sections for every month and week. And they will point to a conservatory where Bach composed music and a church where Martin Luther preached on Sundays.

I stayed quite a while in Gotha and lived very comfortably. Another officer and I shared a house that was nicely furnished even to a grand piano, had flower gardens on all sides and was kept neat and clean by the old lady who owned the place. She was there part of every day, watching and counting every little item. One evening when I was picking cherries in the back yard I turned and noticed her watching me reproachfully from behind a bush.

We made up for a year of discomfort in other ways too. We took over the finest theatre, the music hall and the large indoor swimming pool. Kraut PWs built us baseball diamonds, tennis and volleyball courts. They also made a riding course in the park for our stable of thirty-four prize Wehrmacht horses we brought along from Gardelegen.

Our special-service officer picked up a circus caravan on the highway one day and steered it into town. He had the Burgermeister half crazy scrounging special food for all the animals during the three weeks we kept it there, so we permitted the civilians to attend a few afternoon performances. This circus was excellent and the boys enjoyed it more than any U.S.O. show. There was one act where a five-year old boy did stunt riding on a pony. The moment he was thru and bowed the ring was showered with candy bars. Several attendants had to help him pick it all up. Candy is tightly rationed so this might give you some idea how GIs like circuses and kids -- not excepting German kids.

One evening I went up to the observatory to take a look at the countryside. From the top I could see the Thuringen mountains on one side, the Hartz on the other, and down the broad valley the town of Weimar and near it the notorious concentration camp of Buchenwald. Looking over this lush scene I wondered again, as so many of us have, why the inhabitants of this peaceful-looking, beautiful country should persist in war and brutality.

Herr Rohrbach, who lives there, (his deceased father was the astronomer) stood beside me and said that he had not known of the mass murders at Buchenwald until he heard the American reports on the radio. Conceivably he was truthful. As we have learned since, the Gestapo and S.S. troops operated these camps in great secrecy. What little information was given publicly stressed that the inmates were criminals or at least dangerous political enemies of the Reich. Little outward evidence was ever apparent. The cremated remains of a man only amounts to a small jarful and not even a jar ever left that place.

An intelligent man, Rohrbach is no less gullible than the average German. He lived in the States before the war doing engineering research, and designed engines for the Luftwaffe over here. He believes implicitly that Churchill sucked us into the war (many claim they never heard that Germany declared war on us), that Germany's only war aim was to piece back together an unjustly severed Reich and this certainly required bridging the Polish Corridor to join isolated East Prussia. When this

brought Britain into the war, "movements" to the west and north were necessary for protection -- offense is the best defense."

Then he went on to say that he liked Americans and cannot understand why "we" should have antagonistic purposes. He felt sure that very soon America would be fighting the Russians, either here or in Asia, to carry on the crusade against Bolshevism. He was quite frank in saying that "everyone and I too" supported Hitler enthusiastically until the tide turned at Stalingrad; that from then on Hitler was blamed personally for the endless bad fortune.

The reason for telling you what Rohrbach said is not that it speaks the mind of an intelligent German, but the mind of most Germans. It is the same from one end of the country to the other and it hasn't been corrected yet. While Goebbels is now condemned more than any other leader, they persist in believing his biggest lies. I am inclined to think that besides being the result of indelible propaganda this state of mind is a natural rationalization of a defeated people. Germans will continue to believe that in the normal course they would have won a "just war" had we not "interfered", unless our reeducation program becomes a lot more effective than it has been.

Gotha is relatively undamaged. The factory and railway section is wiped out but few homes were hit. A few stray bombs unfortunately demolished the opera house and the largest church in town, lending color to the general belief that our bombings were inhuman "terror raids on helpless civilians."

Many of the streets are typically cobblestone, winding and narrow. As you walk along you see an outward appearance of neatness and cleanliness but your nose soon nullifies this impression. Cracks between cobblestones are packed with filth, street sewers are rare, and a different odor exudes from every door and archway, varying only in degree of unpleasantness. These are the streets where you will find the vast majority of working men's families, in Gotha or any similar town in Germany.

Their homes are gloomily alike. Usually two or three stories high, they are tight together in a row along a narrow sidewalk. Almost all are plain stucco, some grooved to look like stonework. A few are painted, mostly in harsh shade of green or brown. Where bombing has exposed the walls you can see that they are made of plain, clay mud held together with straw and twigs, with a coating of plaster on either side. This no doubt accounts for so much musty odor. Only relatively newer houses are constructed of tile and brick.

There are no alleyways and few green back yards. I have yet to see a house equipped with screen or storm windows. Inside there is never a clothes closet and very little plumbing. Central heating is a great luxury and usually only the sitting room and kitchen have stoves. One thing none of us has failed to notice in homes all over Germany is that while most are neatly kept, every drawer and hidden space is crammed with rags and plain junk. Apparently nothing is ever thrown away.

A perch or balcony is a real rarity and the family gets the air by window sitting. When you walk down a street in the evening it is usually buzzing with conversation. Nearly every window has a sitter, gossiping with the neighbor next door or across the street. When we walk by, the chatter shuts off except for the kids who beg energetically for candy and an occasional fraulein who might say something like "hal-low bay-bee."

Even small towns in the country are built up the same way -- unbroken rows of houses next to the main road with no space between them and no front yards. It seems like senseless crowding with so much countryside around but apparently land is at a premium. At least it seems that every bit of tillable ground is growing something.

As everywhere in Europe there is a sharp contrast between the common folk who live like this and the upper classes who have large if ugly mansions and castles on the high ground or edges of town. There is little evidence of a middle class anywhere if you can judge by the way they live.

Speaking of castles (12,000 in Germany in various stages of repair according to a guide book) Thuringia has a large share. On several Sundays we roamed the country and saw many of them. Some were in ruins, others were preserved as museums, and a few more recently lived-in were boarded up. All were on high hills and not easily accessible.

The "museum castles" are the only ones worth telling about. The Schauenberg at Friedrichroda for example contains armor and mail suits, lances, swords, shields and other relics of the Crusades, Thirty Years' War and the campaigns of Napoleon. The Wartburg at Eisenach, the best preserved and most interesting one I saw, is a storybook castle with battle wall, moat and drawbridge. We saw furniture and other relics of Martin Luther, who translated the New Testament from Greek, and of Wolfgang Goethe, who wrote some of his poetry there. There are also mementoes of Franz Liszt, who played concerts in the festival hall. These places were storehouses of familiar history, but like everything over here that is awesome with age, they spoil the historical value by attaching incredible legends. It is remarkable how grown up people will repeat these fairy stories with almost childlike belief.

By that time in July most of the slave-laborers had been repatriated or housed separately from the Germans in Displaced Persons' Centers. Even after two months of double rations they were so thin as to be readily distinguishable from German civilians. Some were hardly more than skin-covered skeletons when they were liberated.

Caring for these people was the first and major occupation headache. Housing was the greatest problem, especially with so few unbombed homes available. Often it was necessary to put them in Wehrmacht barracks, factory buildings, or even back in the concentration camps from whence they came. For a long time, 10 thousand were still housed in Buchenwald. Many GIs felt strongly that German civilians living in the few remaining dwellings should be made to exchange places with them, but they didn't reckon the control problems.

Many had contagious diseases and required medical care. Food and other supplies could not be furnished efficiently if they were scattered. A few were understandably bent on plunder and violence, and some security was necessary. Many did not want to go back to their homeland because it was in the Russian zone. In one big area a vote was taken and 40 per cent were against repatriation for that reason.

I have been in many of these D.P. Centers and there is little difference between them. Despite efforts of our Army to keep them clean and sanitary, one is as filthy as the next. The Army has been criticized for conditions in some places but it isn't always the Army's fault. The facilities were adequate but these people had no will to improve their lot. Many never washed their clothes or took a bath. Some would relieve themselves in any spot handy at the moment. They were fed and had a bed, beyond that they didn't care.

It was impossible for the Army to play nursemaid to these thousands and to teach them better habits. They had been slaves too long. For years they had been motivated only by the will to keep alive. They moved slowly, rarely smiled and never played. Even preparations to get them home aroused little interest.

I've talked with some of them about going home and their response was never enthusiastic. Those who wanted to go home expected to find families gone, homes ruined, living hard. Some, especially those living eastward, left behind so little in the first place that they don't want to go back. Repatriation committees for each nationality were formed and these committees, made up of their own people, practi-

cally had to push them around to overcome their inertia and get them on the transports.

Despite the Army's order that those who refused repatriation would be treated as German civilians, rations and all, hundreds of thousands of D.P.s are still in Germany. It is a tough problem because we can't force them to go and we really don't want to treat them as Germans. I suspect that a good many simply want to stick around where they can see Americans. Some are still deathly afraid of starvation, so nearly and recently experienced. Others firmly refuse to go to the Russian zone, although they know nothing about it. Actually there is more food there, but they have been saturated for years with anti-Russian propaganda.

Finally we got the order, classified secret, that the Russians would take over Thuringia in one week. Only the staff was alerted, the troops would be informed the last moment to prevent a leak of this news and thus create unrest among civilians. The very next day the American-controlled German radio announced the news, and the race was on.

Every day that week all the roads were jammed with German civilians fleeing southward to Bavaria. From children to old ladies they walked with packs on their backs, pushed overloaded baby buggies or pulled carts, rode on everything from wagons with ox teams to a train of hayracks pulled by a tractor. It looked like a familiar combat scene all over again.

A mass exodus like this really surprised us. We knew they hated the Russians but nothing like this. We knew more certainly that when a German abandons his property it is more than hate that moves him. It is more likely a mortal fear.

The GIs who commented on all this usually said, "I'd be scared too, knowing what I'd done to the Russians."

In two days the Russian advance party arrived to plan their offices, quarters, and occupation details. They came in the queerest looking military convoy I've ever seen. Everything from three-wheeled pickups and jalopies to ambulances and long, black Mercedes limousines -- all German civilian vehicles. There were about fifty in the party and with great seriousness they immediately set about their work. I noticed that the moment they appeared anywhere in town, window shades were immediately drawn.

They came without messing equipment so the officers ate with us and the Ivans ate their emergency rations. I visited the soldiers in their separate billets one noon to talk with them but was more interested in their mess. They had nothing but black bread, margarine and some kind of sour-smelling canned meat. First they cut a loaf in half and scooped out the center. Then they mixed the crumbs with margarine and canned meat, kneading it together with their hands on a dirty table, and stuffed the mixture into the hollowed loaf. They ate it like an ice-cream cone and wiped their greasy hands on their jackets afterwards. Some mess.

After dinner one night I invited one of the Russian officers to my quarters for a visit. He was intelligent, spoke fair English and said his home was in Vladivostok. He played the piano well, if loud, and like most Russian soldiers drank cognac like water. His tunic was loaded with medals, and after some egging on my part, he explained that several were for major battles including Stalingrad and five were for wounds. Despite all this combat he still wanted to get in the fight with the Japs. He was chewing gum vigorously all the while and when he was leaving asked, "Do you have some new gum? I chew this one for two days."

When our troops left Thuringia, civilian fear was terrific. They gathered around, watched us load the trucks and asked a lot of questions, like, "Do the Rooskies stay long?... Come you back?... Don't some of your soldats stay here?" The large

square where we assembled the trucks for convoys was ringed with red-eyed frauleins. Non-fraternization was still strictly enforced and the embarrassed GIs were studiously avoiding any sign of recognition. My jeep driver, an admitted "Kaseenova", saw one, then two frauleins he knew, edging closer and said, "Gees, I'm getting otta here", then ducked behind a big truck.

This trip took two days, southward thru most of Bavaria to an old town on the Danube called Vilshofen, near the Czech-Austrian corner. It was beautiful the entire way -- hills, valleys, neatly kept forests, lots of villages along highways and rivers, picturesque inns and houses.

Here and there was evidence that the National Redoubt was more than a paper idea. On one railroad siding was a train of armored cars bristling with AA guns; on another a train of three tremendous railroad guns camouflaged over with canvas to look like box cars. In many forests were tanks and artillery pieces. In the sides of big hills were storage caves and underground factories.

The most noticeable wartime mars on the landscape were the dozens of small concentration camps, usually adjoining a small factory set against a hill or in a wooded valley, fairly well concealed and a little apart from a nearby village. The obvious intent here was to decentralize industry and avoid the bombings. The small Tagers, we learned later, were sub-camps of the "mother-camps," like Buchenwald, Nordhausen and Dachau. Some of the sub-camps still housed some D.P.s, and all of these were decorated with anti-fascist signs and national flags. I was surprised to see several all-Italian camps.

Every sub-camp was alike -- a group of low, green barracks packed with three-tier wooden bunks encircled by double barbed-wire fences with guard towers in the four corners. We've noticed that German civilians keep a discretionary distance away from the occupied camps, even to the point of abandoning nearby houses and farms.

Life in Vilshofen was a pleasant interlude, at least for me. I had a nice apartment overlooking the Danube with maid service and beer delivered to the door. August weather is very pleasant there and we did some swimming in the Vils (the Danube is dirty and brown), horseback riding in the hills, took some jeep trips around the country and boat rides on the Danube.

Vilshofen is a typical Bavarian village. Everyone lives and works the old-fashioned way. The men wear leather shorts and white stockings, fancy jackets, Tyrolean hats with a big feather or brush, and smoke long, curved pipes. The women, especially on Sundays, wear long, bustled skirts, bright blouses and shawls on their heads. There is a beer hall in every block and all day long children are carrying big pitchers of brew home to thirsty parents. Farmers on the edge of town use ox-teams, cut grain with a hand scythe and thresh it with a flail stick.

The large catholic church (1513) was, as everywhere in Bavaria, the center of activity. People streamed in and out of it from early morning till night. The big guard tower (1811) was at the other end of the cobblestone street and housed a small slaughterhouse. At the shop doors between were always queues of women with ration books. On the hill next to the town was a huge monastery, recently an SS headquarters, now a hospital. On the high cliff across the Danube was a medieval castle, slowly falling apart. Beyond the stone-arch bridge over the Vils is a picturesque old lumber mill, a scene for many photographs.

Into this quaint and peaceful place came G.I. Joe. He didn't disturb the quaintness too much but he didn't do so well with the peace. In less than a week the place changed tune, tempo and appearance.

Along all the streets were big, bright signs for "Barber Shop", "Motot Pool",

"EM Billets", "MPHQ", etc. In the square next to the church, trucks parked and motors growled day and night. Military traffic was constant and civilians were hard put to cross the street. Ox-teams were routed down side streets. The "Perpetual Night Club" in the center of town gave out hot music from noon to midnight, competing with radios blaring out of open windows in the billets. Darkness always brought on a lot of street singing -- good, loud street singing.

The park needed a new bandstand, so the boys put up a dilly. It really was a big stage, painted bright blue with a ten-foot Petty girl on either side. USO shows and swing bands played there on Saturdays and Sundays and drew as many civilians as GIs.

The frauleins always showed up en masse, most of them dressed in skirts short enough to invite arrest in the States. They came, I guess, because they liked hot music (verboten here for six years) or because they seem to have the habit of gravitating around GIs. The old folks came too, and kept coming, despite their frequent remarks that the music was vulgar and lacked Kultur.

There was a lot of entertainment, but only for off-hours. Ever since V-E Day the troops had followed a rigorous training schedule. The Jap war was still on and preparation for that different style of combat was being worked out on all kinds of terrain all over Bavaria. There were a lot of wide-eyed German farmers wondering and rumoring over these spectacles. One day there was a full-scale maneuver, supported by a lot of fighter planes flying low down the Danube to the Southeast. There wasn't any question about it now. The civilians gathered and chattered excitedly all over the place. "At last it is true! America is fighting the Bolsheviks and the front is at Vienna!"

Most of the troops were resigned to going to the Pacific, but all of them hated the training after so much fighting here and hoped they wouldn't need to go. GIs fanned their hopes with the increasing good news of Jap losses, but they were distressed and sore about one big part of the picture -- the wave of anti-Russian feeling being whipped up in the States. Most of them had met Russian soldiers and liked them, or had heard them approved by other GIs. All GIs who fought the Germans and knew they were tough have the greatest admiration for the way the Russians bowled them over. They have a natural feeling of comradeship for any soldier who shares the danger and helps them win the battle. And the Russians had done a lot of helping. They expected that the Russians would do more helping against the Japs.

The GIs talked about it constantly and wrote sizzling letters to Stars and Stripes which in turn published editorials trying to tell people back home they were getting off base. Typical outbursts by GIs at that time ran like this: "Whose going to fight the Russians? Not us, by God!" -- "Are they going nuts? Now they'll screw up the works so Russia will never help us with the Japs." -- "It's those goddam old Bundists got a hand in this." -- "Can't they see that Jap agents are cooking up that deal? What suckers!"

Those of us who have dealt with Russians over here know that they like and respect us, probably more than any other nationals. They show it and we can feel it. At the same time when you do business with a Russian you will find him brusque, direct and maybe even a little ill-mannered. He knows what he wants, goes after it and often shows the Eastern bazaar habit of asking for more than he expects to get. Our kid glove diplomacy is entirely out of his line and he doesn't understand it.

It is easy to get sore at a Russian's adamancy. But it doesn't help matters to call him names in the newspapers, for despite his crusty manner, he is sensitive to offense. To deal with him it is necessary first to understand that he considers America the most powerful nation on earth, and more important, that he knows all other nations regard its intentions as decent and just. He would hesitate a long



time before taking a false position before us. Understanding that, the way to deal with him is to take off the kid gloves and adjust ourselves to his methods.

The main thing is to make the Russians conscious of our world power at every meeting. For example, when President Truman went to Potsdam with "a loan application in his pocket", as the newspapers said, we thought this was exactly the wrong thing to do. We also think it is wrong to say that "tolerance" will bring us to mutual understanding, because Russians are more apt to look on such demeanor as weakness. If our position is right we don't have to be tolerant. All that is necessary is to get used to the idea of driving a hard bargain at every turn. The Russians don't respond to sentiment or platitudes, we've found that out over here.

After a while the Jap war looked so good that the troops started talking of nothing but going home. Then out of a blue sky the radio announced the dropping of an atom bomb on Hiroshimo. There was almost complete disbelief until Stars and Stripes carried the story the next day. Almost everyone stopped work to talk about it. It stirred up the greatest excitement we have had over here, since the crossing of the Rhine. The excitement was especially sweet because it counted us out of the Jap war and going home soon was a real possibility.

Those of us who were in the Siegfried Line in October '44 recalled that Kraut planes dropped leaflets threatening our complete annihilation with atomic bombs. Several times after that they threatened the same thing over the radio. It was so utterly fantastic that none of us even thought about it. Stars and Stripes I remember carried only a short, comical story about it on a back page. Looking back now, it may well be that they were close to having it, and that only a good bombing somewhere stopped them.

When the Jap war ended, most of the training stopped and the letdown was something like letting air out of a balloon. The commands were hard put to keep the restless troops busy. A lot of study courses were started but GIs were interested only in going home and having some fun in the meantime. In a citizen army like ours, enough griping by the troops usually gets them what they want, so a lot of entertainment, sports and furloughs were arranged. USO shows poured in. Baseball and football, big league style, was a great success, and GIs had first-class vacations in the best resorts in Europe.

I took advantage of the lull and had some trips myself. On one I went thru several towns in Czechoslovakia. The change in crossing the border was interesting. Buildings and towns looked poorer, more ill-kept than in Germany, but the people smiled at us, and Czech and American flags hung everywhere. We had been used to seeing dead-panned Germans so long it was a refreshing experience. The Czechs are thoroughly pauperized but they have a good spirit, and at the time were busy kicking the Sudeten Krauts out of the country with considerable spirit.

The trip into Austria was less interesting if more scenic. There isn't a hair's difference between an Austrian of Bavarian and the way each lives. In fact, Austria (Ostreich) means East Reich, and the people are strictly Krauts by nature despite their claim to separate nationality and culture. But the Alps and the pine-rimmed lakes there are something to rave about.

Incidentally, in our investigation of the Mauthausen concentration camp at Linz, Austria, we discovered a sub-camp where the Nazis made counterfeit money of all countries in Europe, including English pounds. Near the end of the war the SS dumped the plates and presses into a lake and murdered the technicians, except fortunately for a few (now witnesses) who escaped. Anyway, as a result of so much phony currency, Austria, Czechoslovakia, and other countries have called in all existing currency and issued deposit credits, against which no one can draw more than a certain amount each month in new-type currency. This outlaws all the old money, checks inflation, and the black market as well. The rich boys cried bloody murder and communism but there was no other alternative.



In September I left Southern Bavaria and went to Bayreuth in the extreme north, next to the Russian zone. Bayreuth is famous here as the seat of the late Kingdom of Bavaria (the beautiful palace is half kaput now) and as the home of Richard Wagner, his festival house and great symphony orchestras. We enjoyed a lot of concerts in the festival house (best acoustics I've ever heard) until a checkup revealed most of the musicians to be former Nazis. Now there's little more than a quartet left.

The back end of Wagner's house, "Wahnfried", is bombed out, but his daughter, Winifred, manages to live in the front end and guards his two grand pianos like a hawk. About thirty feet away in sharp contrast to the graceful old house is a streamlined building erected for Hitler to stay in during the week he attended the festival each year. This was our officers' club, the finest one I've seen over here. We had a cocktail lounge, two sitting rooms, cabaret and stage -- dancing and floor show every night of the week.

On the edge of the city on a high hill was a "Hitler baby farm", a huge, modern maternity hospital. Some German nurses, still there and now employed as charwomen, told us that the place had been operating to capacity during the last six years. About 40 per cent of the mothers were unmarried and they, as well as the married mothers, received a stipend and certificates of appreciation from the State.

Ironically, this hospital is now loaded with American soldiers, an ever increasing percentage of them VD cases. Lifting of the ban on fraternization had sent the case load up like a fever chart. The reasons are simple enough. The ratio of German females to males is  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 (according to MG) and German morals are the lowest in Europe, after ten years of what approached free-love.

After sixteen months over here I finally got a leave -- nine days in the Riviera. The plane left Munich and flew over Innsbruck, the Brenner Pass, to Genoa, then along the coast to Cannes. I'll probably never see more beautiful sights from the air. First the Alps with winding, green valleys and rivers between, then the strikingly blue Mediterranean, its sharply rising shores clustered with white and cream buildings gleaming in the sun. I almost broke my neck and my camera taking it all in.

After the cold rains in Bavaria, that warm sun was out of this world. Jim and I got a luxurious room in the Carlton with a balcony overlooking the sea, a stone's throw away. Push the buttons next to your bed and the Oui, Oui Monsieus will do everything but carry you down to dinner.

The routine, if any, was something like this: Sleep all morning -- lunch -- loaf on the beach, take time out from looking at Mademoiselles in their two-piece, too small "bathing suits" and have a quick dip, or go sailboating -- cocktails on a terrace in trunks -- dinner dance, without mademoiselle only if you can run fast enough -- a walk on the promenade -- dance on a seaside terrace till two.

We found time to take only three trips -- a launch to some of the islands, an all day "rest cure" to Eden Roc and a long ride thru Nice to Monte Carlo. The last night we saw Maurice Chevalier at the Provençal Terrace. Same old sailor straw over one eye and lower lip sticking out. On request of some Army nurses he sang "Mimi" and "Louise".

The Riviera is a place to dream about. Palm trees, beautiful homes and hotels, the blue sea in front and the mountains behind. It's the one bit of scenery I've seen over here that can't be duplicated or excelled in America.

With time on their hands the GIs were starting to take more notice of events at home. The news that caught their eyes the most was the flood of requests for loans and assistance from almost every country in Europe. All wanted meat, coal, petroleum, tractors, railroad equipment, plus loans running into many billions. Already

much of the stuff was on the way over and the loan requests were already being negotiated.

At the same time the GI was reading about the new war debt total, a fantastic figure, about shortages at home of meat, coal and clothing, about high prices and unemployment, and he was thinking about the high taxes he would pay for years to come. After winning the war for these beggars, the folks back home were going to give them ill-afforded necessities.

We saw new tractors coming here (14,500 coming the papers said) and GI farmers recalled how the folks had written that even parts were not available for the old tractor at home. Coal poured in here and GIs heard of short bins at home. Worse than that, French and Belgian miners refused to work for lack of some "agreement". German mines were only partially operating and cages were full of prisoners. Forests on all sides and idle men everywhere. Tons of meat coming and letters from home said even weiners were hard to get.

Some of these donations look senseless and the GIs are bitter and sore about it all. They think that our relief machine is rolling in here without a gear shift or a brake, and that someone besides politicians had better come over pretty quick and take a good look.

They also think that the money loans ought to be made a little at a time and not in billions at once. I remember one hot discussion about this when an officer said, "The folks don't seem to realize that every dollar sent here costs actual labor back home. They toss our money around like it was free, and they know damned well they won't get it back." Another officer added, "What's it all for? So they can live in the comfort they're accustomed to?"

Some necessities and some loans are undoubtedly needed. Europe is in the doldrums and the new, uncertain governments provide little leadership for the reconstruction task. Our own military government seemingly has no polickey either and is fast being regarded as a bungling organization. So altogether, for lack of leadership and intelligent marshalling of manpower and tools for reconstruction, everybody over here is queuing up for relief. At Uncle Sam's storehouse, of course -- hell, he's got plenty of everything.

Allot of us when we get home and out of OD's are going to do some talking about this goofy setup. Meantime we hope that some technicians and experts with common sense get over here and begin to give you the real facts. It is highly discouraging to have gone thru a war with such high hopes for a good future, only to see the occupation job going to pot, everybody dipping in our purse and our prestige being frittered away.

Then on top of all this we read with utter disgust how England, France, Holland and others are right back at the old game -- maneuvering, pushing, even fighting to grab all they can get all over the world. We often wonder what we fought the war for and what has happened to the Four Freedoms, the Atlantic Charter and other solemn pledges. Apparently they are now relegated to historical platitudes.

You may not appreciate how these soldiers feel. Perhaps their thinking is too simple, direct and objective. But I can assure you that they feel terribly let down.

With this sour overtone in the world scene, the occupation job in Germany is doubly disagreeable. It is like a vacuum here, a routine seemingly limited to watching and guarding, issuing passes and ration books. In this important, formative period of occupation the only visible policy is a long list of civilian prohibitions. We see nothing of any plan permitting Germans even to provide for their own necessities. On the contrary, many things we do actually frustrate such activity.

For example, the de-Nazification program closed flour mills, clothing and shoe factories, and the like, because the owners were Nazis. No provision is made for re-opening them and they stand idle, badly as they are needed. It was known for months that there would be inadequate fuel for the winter, but the wood-cutting program wasn't started until fall -- too late. MG detachments are filled with inept personnel who duck responsibility and pass the buck. In a zone in Austria, one MG detachment replaced another five times in less than three months, with utter confusion, while in the adjoining Russian zone reconstruction progressed smoothly. Such examples could be listed endlessly, and it all adds up to the conclusion that we are probably the world's worst occupiers.

After watching the occupation from one end of the country to the other for over a year, I have a few other conclusions. Germany is destroyed to the point of prostration. The people are docile, obedient, bewildered. They fear doing anything, even necessary things, until specifically ordered by the proper authority. They lack the temperament for democracy, are politically irresponsible, and if given full opportunity, would probably botch the attempt by profusing dozens of political parties, worse than in France and Italy. The Church cannot do the job of rehabilitation as some insist, in fact, even now it is not teaching the simple, obvious lessons. Economically and morally, Germany needs complete re-education and constant guidance, perhaps for a generation. The four-zone plan of occupation, each zone administered differently, is already a bad beginning.

The endless discussion of "good and bad Germans" is purely academic. As individuals there are countless good Germans, but as a nationalistic mass they are arrogant and treacherous. They like good order, which, in their experience means a society where each has his superior. In their continuing misery they will again hope for another Bismarck, Kaiser of Hitler to bring order out of confusion and to avenge their misery. If that means war again, the most exemplary "good German", like Paster Niemoeller, will not ask if the war is just, but will volunteer instinctively. Niemoeller, the great Church man and world-famous Anti-Nazi, volunteered for the U-boat service in 1939.

The long, tough occupation job should be turned over to interested career people as soon as possible. The troops here now have no stomach for the job, are sick and tired of Europe and want to go home.

Fortunately, I was spared occupation duty. In September I was ordered into prosecution of war crimes, went to Munich then to Dachau. A Colonel was going home on points so I landed in the plush seat as chief prosecutor for the Eastern District.

The Dachau concentration camp is now the central cage for the Eastern District and over 30,000 war criminals and SS troops are here now. In made-over factory buildings we have three court rooms, administrative offices and a 400 bed "hotel" to accommodate witnesses. I have a staff of officer-lawyers and researchers and some forty translators and typists investigating and preparing cases for trial.

All of us pitched in to prepare the Dachau case now being tried by a team from central headquarters that has worked on it since last May. Meantime my section has been working on other concentration camp cases -- Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Flossen-berg -- and other atrocity cases which occurred in this District. We hope that when these are tried and recorded the "doubters" back home will believe and remember.

While this big job has been going on I have tried several cases involving atrocities against Americans, which we are anxious to clean up first. Most of these were against members of the Nazi Party, Gestapo and Kripo for murder of surrendered fliers, and resulted in death sentences. After investigation and preparation work months ago, it is a personal satisfaction to me now to be in on the payoff.

Our trials are models of fairness and give the defendant every opportunity for defense. The court is a military commission of high-ranking responsible officers. The defendant is represented by a civilian lawyer if he chooses, and in any event by American officer-lawyers who are bound to produce all witnesses and evidence he requests. The court interpreter assures that every word is translated into German for the benefit of the defendant. The trials are well-attended by German civilians, mostly from Munich, who also hear full reports on the radio. There is no question that Germans are impressed with the fairness of these trials, a result which we are anxious to obtain for its historical value.

Like most units here, ours is short on personnel because of redeployment. We have had to hire a good number of civilians, mostly DPs, to fill in. The best of the lot are five Germans with an interesting background. They were secretaries to Hitler who were taken at Berchtesgaden and held here as material witnesses. When the work got too heavy to handle, I put them to work as translators and typists. They are all well-educated and are loyal, hard workers. Since I have gotten to know them better, I use two of them for my dictation.

They have each written lengthy and detailed statements for our files on the entire time they acted as secretaries, and on my suggestion are going to collaborate in writing a book on Hitler's official life. We believe their accounts to be trustworthy because a close check on their personal history shows that they were chosen only for intelligence and their ability as linguists and recorders. Secrecy was assured by keeping them under guard.

Some highlights of their statements: They worked in shifts and followed Hitler like a shadow. He wanted every word he uttered recorded for posterity, believing implicitly that he was a man of world destiny. He never chewed a rug, and went into a rage only to impress his listeners, usually in a critical situation. Only twice in staff meetings did anyone speak up against his orders. Both times it was Jodl and he was promptly squelched by a good raging each time. In the bomb attempt on his life on 20 July 1944, Hitler's pants' leg was burned off, arm bruised when the table flew upward and his hearing so affected that he had extreme difficulty using the telephone ever afterward. (The secretary present in the room at the time is still half deaf). Hitler was not a homosexual, showed normal affection toward Eva Braun. He did not consult astrologists. Since the invasion, the closest Hitler came to the front was Hamburg, when the fighting was still in France. Most of the time he was in Berlin or Berchtesgaden. In early April, 1945, he ordered all "Auslanders" (concentration camp inmates) to be liquidated, to keep them from falling into our hands. He functioned normally until Himmler double-crossed him, on the occasion when he ordered 80,000 SS troops from the West to the Redoubt and Himmler sent only one-third that number. From that day he refused to talk with Himmler, he knew his power had slipped, and from then on started to go to pieces. He became bent-over, his face was always red and his hands shook constantly. He took many pills and received regular injections of drugs. Dr. Reynitz last took Hitler's dictation in Berlin on 22 April 1945 and says he was all but a dead man then. All five secretaries believe without doubt that Hitler is dead, basing their assumption on the story told by the sixth secretary. They knew him well, and knowing him especially as being anything but clever, feel instinctively that he would not be chosen for a ruse artist in any plot. Furthermore, it was his normal shift.

Of all the bizarre things that have happened to me over here, having Hitler's secretaries take my dictation concerning prosecution of Nazis tops them all. There's one more goofy touch to this. Prince Leopold of Prussia, nephew of the Kaiser Wilhelm, was a political prisoner in Dachau and is here as a witness in the trial. I had dinner with him one night and told him about the five secretaries. He was highly excited and wanted to see them so the next day I had them all together in my office. He questioned them carefully as to who and on what evidence he was condemned to Dachau. He got some leads which he is going to follow up when he returns to Austria. So I help German royalty avenge itself too.

If I weren't so busy, life in Dachau would be quite pleasant. I live in the former SS Kommandant's mansion, have a maid (altfrau) and chauffeur. We have a nice officers club, a wonderful mess and a lot of entertainment available in Munich ten miles away. The Alps are only a short way south but so far I have been able to make only one visit to Berchtesgaden and one to Garmisch. The snow is staying on the ground now and it's almost as cold as it would be in Minnesota.

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

H.R.H.

P.S. After looking at this stack of unanswered mail, some of it with whiskers, I have lost the will to attempt replying. Anyway I'll be seeing you soon, probably next month.