

LOWELL THOMAS' BROADCAST FROM LUXEMBURG

April 12, 1945

GOOD EVENING, EVERYBODY:

The word of the death of President Roosevelt reached me only a moment ago, when I came into this radio transmission room at Army Headquarters here in Western Europe. I am stunned -- as are the Army boys sitting around me. Too stunned to broadcast. It's midnight over here -- so only a few of us have heard the sad news. One of our first thoughts, aside from sorrow, is, - what effect will it have on the war? Fortunately, our armies have crossed the River Elbe and are near Berlin. So the President's death should have no effect^{at}/all on the closing moments of the war.

This has been another exciting day for the Allied Forces over here in Germany; a day of historic events. For instance, the city often referred to as

the Athens of Germany, the City of Weimar, home of Goethe and Schiller, and birthplace of the German Republic, in 1919, fell today -- captured by General George Patton's onrushing tanks.

And then, another of Patton's motorized columns swept toward the large industrial city of Halle. I remember Halle after the First World War, when I was over here following the German Revolution. Halle then was one of the centers of violence, a scene of great street battles, stronghold of the Communists. Later, under Hitler, it was wildly pro-Nazi. And now Halle, only a short distance from both Leipzig and Berlin, is a goal of Americans, with Patton's soldiers to patrol its streets, Halle, the home of the German composer, Handel. Some days ago we took Eisenach, the home of Bach. And as I mentioned today, the hometown of Goethe and Schiller fell before the American Armies of which Franklin D. Roosevelt was Commander-in-Chief -- that are rolling irresistibly across Germany.

Perhaps the leaders of the so-called German Resistance Group are right in their latest appraisal of Adolph Hitler. In a small German city into which the headquarters of one of our armies moved today, in the window of the local newspaper we saw a pronouncement by Germans who say they never had any use for Hitler and who are now becoming vocal. It was right beside some announcements by the burgomeister too, making it all the more striking. It said: "Adolph Hitler has proven himself to be the greatest military idiot of all time. He has turned his fatherland into a pile of dirt!" And that was Germans, right here in the heart of Germany, saying that! With American motorcycle police, army trucks, and jeeps racing by, through streets crowded by the staring and bewildered inhabitants.

But what of the armor of the Ninth Army, Simpson's men who reached the city of Brunswick, bypassed it, and then hurried on to Magdeburg, from whence Berlin is the next stop? I have been with Simpson's

Ninth all day, and the official word at midnight over here, less than an hour ago, was, that the flying columns of the Ninth had crossed the Elbe, in the vicinity of Magdeburg, and considerably nearer Berlin. And the unofficial word is that they were trying to get across to the south of Magdeburg, and that the Germans blew up a bridge right in their face. The Germans say so. But there is a wizard bridge-builder with those troops. They call him Tiny Meeker. And they say it would be no trick for him to throw a bridge across the Elbe in less than an hour. So from that you can draw your own conclusions.

The French radio tonight announced that Allied paratroops -- presumably American -- had been dropped in that narrow zone between Magdeburg, capital city of Prussian Saxony, and Berlin -- in fact within twenty miles of what was once the proud city of the Kaiser. There is no official word on this from our own Supreme Command over here.

And where are the Russians, particularly the armies of Marshal Konev? Are they advancing on Berlin, or are they about to meet Patton's Third Army east of Halle? Some of us over here are wondering what agreement there is between our own people and the Reds. We are wondering what liaison there is? We see representatives of other Allied Armies around: French, Dutch, British, of course -- and, Chinese -- but, never any Russians. A line in the air has been drawn. On one side are the American and British airmadas. On the other side the Russian airmen on patrol. Each is supposed to stay out of the air-zone of the other. What does this mean? In a few days now we ought to know.

Our airmen are rapidly occupying some of the great fields built by the Luftwaffe, and, wrecked by the Luftwaffe -- with the help of our own heavy, medium- and fighter-bombers. I stopped at several fields today, including one nearest the Front where the great brick hangars looked like the ruins of Pompeii, minus the lava.

In the dispersal areas around the field were scores of German planes that our fliers had caught on the ground, and smashed -- with here and there pools of aluminum that the fires had turned molten.

I also visited a field where some of the buildings still stood, and over one was carved the following: "Manfred von Richthofen Haus." It was dedicated to the Red Knight of Germany, the Number One Ace of World War One. Now occupied by American GI Joes, who were having a time collecting souvenirs, such as pictures of Richthofen, Goering and Hitler.

The city where that field is located is famous for its Westphalian hams, and pumpnickel. But instead of Westphalian Ham, I dined with some of the doughboys in Richthofen Haus, and we had American pork chops -- brought all the way from the States, and cooked by Pancho Servallos, from Southern California -- from Mexicali; and served to us by Sergeant Joe Dushon from Madison, Wisconsin. After which Captain Leo Lieb from

Hollywood, a cameraman with us, mounted an M.P.'s motorbike, got it running full speed, and couldn't stop it. Whereupon he turned off a German roadway to keep from crashing into Manfred von Richthofen Haus, and landed right in a big vat of liquid tar. You should see Leo. He's still trying to get that tar off.

And now let's hear from Hugh Gibson, who is in touch with all parts of the world, and all the theatres of war, as he sits there in my studio in Radio City.

Yes, there have been historic events over here in Europe today; more news of the victorious advance of our armies. But it all seems insignificant in comparison with the word we have just received of the passing of the President of the United States, the man who has been our nation's executive for more than twelve years -- who has led us in our greatest war -- the greatest war in the history of man.

And now back to the United States.

ROOSEVELT

*Hugh Gibson - Standard Thursday, April 12, 1945.
Sunoco.*

Four hours have now elapsed since the nation, and for that matter the world, was stunned by the news of the death of President Roosevelt. Many people have now recovered from the shock sufficiently to wonder what effect it will have upon two equally critical problems, national affairs and international relations, also upon the war.

The answer is that so far as we can see tonight there will be no change, at least no outward change.

President Truman's first action after Chief Justice Harlan Stone swore him in, ^{at the White House} shortly after seven o'clock ~~at the White House~~, was to give an instruction to Secretary of State Stettinius. That instruction was to proceed with his plans for the United Nations Conference at San Francisco, exactly as scheduled.

In other ways the new President made it clear that he intends so far as lies within his ~~an~~ ability, to carry out the policies and ideas of the man he succeeded. Even before ~~he~~ he took the oath, he sent for the Cabinet and asked them all to remain in office and carry on throughout his term.

In this he was following the ~~R~~x precedent laid down by Theodore Roosevelt when he succeeded President McKinley. T.R., when he assumed the presidency, lost no time in assuring everybody that he intended to carry out the McKinley policies. Of course it is not always easy for a man to adhere to a line of conduct laid down by another when there is a wide difference between them in temperament and personality. As a Senator, Mr. Truman supported ~~the~~ President most of the time, but he never ~~did~~ appear ^{ed} to be one of the most ~~and~~ ardent New Dealers.

Then, of course, a Vice President succeeding to the presidency may be subject to pressures to which his predecessor was immune. We do not yet know whether President Truman will keep on the White House staff. But his first official statement was issued for him by Jonathan Daniels, who has been Secretary to President Roosevelt. The statement was: "The world may be sure that we will prosecute the war on both fronts, east and west, with all the vigor we possess,

to a successful conclusion." President Truman will be sixty-one on May eighth, consequently ^{is} only two years younger than President Roosevelt. His rise to the highest office in the land is one more of those stories that can happen only in America.

In background he was the direct antithesis of the Groton and Harvard-educated Franklin Roosevelt, ^{a rich man's son.} Harry

Shippe Truman began to earn his livelihood as a bottle duster in a drugstore in a small Missouri town, ~~for~~ at three dollars a week.

It was the new president himself who ^{gave the news to} ~~informed~~ his wife, ~~that she had become the First Lady of the Land.~~

She was sitting quietly in her apartment, a modest five-room affair on Connecticut Avenue, when her husband called her and told her that he had become president of the United States. ~~According to the story from Washington, Mrs. Truman was so bewildered that she called the wife of the Manager of the apartment house and asked her to come up. The manager's wife found the new First Lady in tears, completely~~

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A few minutes later Mrs. Truman left for the White House with her twenty-year-old daughter, Mary Margaret Truman, in a White House limousine. They stayed only long enough to watch ~~their husband and his father~~ ^{Mr Truman} take the oath of office as president.

The people of Britain felt the passing of President Roosevelt almost as deeply as the people of his own country. The British Broadcasting Company, in announcing the news, ~~reminded the British~~ used these words:- "It was the President who in the grim ~~ix~~ days after Dunkirk, shipped rifles and vital supplies to Great Britain to ward off what he had already seen as a danger to the United States." The London Morning papers got out extras ~~ix~~ filled with eulogies of the late ~~ix~~ President. The tenor of them all is expressed by one of them that referred to Mr. Roosevelt as Britain's best friend.

~~The Berlin radio characteristically remarked:~~

~~"Roosevelt will go down in history as the man who drove the world into the second world war and sold out to the Soviet Union."~~

It was too late for Winston Churchill to issue any public statement. London expects him to make it before the House of Commons, probably ~~today~~ ^{tomorrow.}

King George's Secretary, Sir Alan Lascelles, woke him up shortly after midnight to tell him the news. The King, we hear, expressed shock and profound regret.

There's been a good deal of discussion in the last couple of hours as to whether Mr. Truman was the thirty-second or the thirty-third president of the United States. The official answer is that he is the thirty-second. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the thirty-first. The confusion arose because Grover Cleveland was President twice, but not consecutively.

Mr. Roosevelt was the sixth ^P president to die in office. He ~~passed away~~ ^{died} under circumstances ~~xxxx~~ such as have not been paralleled since the death of Abraham Lincoln. Ahead of him there still lay a formidable, perhaps the most formidable part of his ~~xxx~~ task in leading the country to take part in a peace

which everybody hoped would be as near a permanent peace as it could be made. He also left uncompleted, though in a state of triumph, two bitter, cruel total wars. Although it looks as though one of them might be almost over, the other will still require the utmost effort on the part of the country to bring it to a victorious completion.

Newspapermen, especially cameramen, have been noticing for some time that President Roosevelt looked drawn, tired, seemed to be failing in health. At his recent press conferences his voice frequently was noticeably ~~noticeably~~ weak. But at ten o'clock this morning he appeared to be quite well and in good spirits; he was posing for his portrait as he sat in front of ~~the~~ the fireplace ⁱⁿ ~~ixxix~~ his cottage at Warm Springs, Georgia, while he was going over a big stack of State papers. At One o'clock he suddenly exclaimed: "I have a terrific headache." A quarter of an hour later he fainted. A Filipino attendant picked him up bodily and carried him ~~to~~ into a small bedroom in the cottage, that was

known as the Little White House. None of his immediate family ~~was~~ was with him, Mrs. Roosevelt and their daughter, Mrs. Boettiger being in Washington, even his personal physician Admiral Ross MacIntyre was in Washington. The physicians in attendance were assistants to Admiral MacIntyre. Mr. Roosevelt never ~~regained~~ regained consciousness until he died painlessly at Three-thirty-five.

Mrs. Roosevelt, Steve Early, and Admiral MacIntyre flew to Warm Springs shortly after receiving the ~~tragic~~ news in Washington. The funeral train will leave Warm Springs tomorrow morning, ~~xxxx~~ arriving in Washington early Saturday. ~~It is expected that the body of the late president will lie in state.~~ Services will be held in the east room of the White House Saturday afternoon. Interment will be at Hyde Park Sunday. Those are all the details that are at hand so far, but we may expect that the 31st president will be buried with full military honors.

Among the tributes ^{published} ~~received at the White House~~ this evening were two from the principal political opponents of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Governor and Mrs. Thomas E. Dewey sent a telegram to Mrs. Roosevelt saying - "Please accept our deepest sympathy in your great loss which will be shared by every American and mourned by all of the freedom-loving people of the entire world."

Ex-President Herbert Hoover said - "The Nation sorrows at the passing of its President. Whatever differences there may have been, they end in the regrets of death. It is fortunate that in this great crisis of war our armies and navies are under such magnificent leadership that we shall not hesitate. While we mourn Mr. Roosevelt's death, ~~wexhx~~ we shall march forward."

President Roosevelt died just as news was ~~fixing~~ pouring in of fresh triumphs won by American armies on the Western Front. If we have time, let us take a brief look at some of the dispatches.

Allied columns

~~That gives us some idea of the speed with which~~

~~the~~

~~the~~ ~~Yanks~~ are rolling on all fronts. They are moving almost

as fast as the rumors about them. According to one of

American
these, ~~Yank~~ paratroopers were only sixteen miles away

from Berlin on the west. But the more authentic advices

Americans
are that the ~~Yanks~~ are only forty-nine miles away from

the capital of the Reich.

The big fact that stands out is that, contrary to many expectations, the River Elbe turned out to be no obstacle at all to speak of. Tank forces of the American

Ninth Army smashed over it and are reported not far from

the suburban area of Berlin, *far from the center.* which extends ~~quite a way out~~

The Second Armored Division of the Ninth. ~~the "Hell on~~

~~Wheels Division",~~ forced the passage of the Elbe near

Magdeburg. Aside from that, there is a news blackout over

the movements of General Simpson's armor.

The Elbe is the last natural barrier the Germans

have to protect their capital on the west. So from now on we may expect almost anything.

Frankly, it looks as though we might soon hear of a junction between the American and the Russian armies. There is no news blackout on the First and Third, ~~they~~ They're tearing across the center of Germany, and are now only nineteen miles away from the border of Czechoslovakia. Patton's armor, in its headlong career, overran Weimar, once the home of Goethe and birthplace of the hapless German Republic.

The Yanks of the Seventh are now fighting in the approaches to the Bavarian mountains. There they are meeting the stiffest opposition of all. It took them all of nine days to capture Heilbronn. Today they also took Schweinfurt, a great center of ball bearing factories.

In the north, the British Second, under Sir Miles Dempsey, have begun the final assault on Bremen. Other columns have also forced the passage of the Aller River, for a drive on Hamburg.

AIR WAR

~~At this late date,~~ The Ninth Air Force in Europe has just achieved one of the most spectacular air exploits of the whole war. It happened while the heavy bombers were grounded, both the U.S. Eighth and the R.A.F.

A formation of eleven Thunderbolts of the Ninth Air Force, led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul Douglas of Paragould, Arkansas, paid a visit to Leipzig. As they approached the town, they passed over an airfield to the west of it, and there they found sixty German planes nicely lined up. Those sixty were duck soup for the Thunderbolts. After they had finished their job on that field, they flew over Leipzig and hit another airdrome to the east. There they found three hundred German aircraft.

All in all, they smashed at least seventy-four and damaged eighteen, without any loss to the Thunderbolts.

STIMSON

~~Mr~~ Secretary Stimson today was actually out and out optimistic, for the first time, I believe. He told his press conference that the Allies had ~~just~~ broken up the Nazi defenses in the west, reduced them to powder. The German soldiers continue to surrender in large bodies, the Wehrmacht is disintegrating.

Mr. Stimson was ~~was~~ skeptical of the much heralded stand the Germans were expected to make between the Elbe and the Oder. The Secretary pointed out that at some points the distance between the two rivers is only seventy-five miles, and what is left of the Wehrmacht in that corridor has virtually no production centers to rely on.

Mr.
In collaboration with [^]Stettinius, the War

Secretary made it public that some seventy thousand ~~and~~ *American* prisoners of war are ~~ix~~ being treated with the utmost neglect and ~~careless~~ *brutality*. The two Secretaries are quoting

from good authenticated instances, ^{which} ~~which~~, they say, are coming to light every day, instances of deliberate ~~neglect~~ ^{neglect} and cruelty. The atrocities are proved by the pitiable condition of the American soldiers as they are liberated, and he added that the American nation should not forget ~~in this~~ ^{in this}.

Mr. Stimson told the country today that since last June, the Allies have taken one million, six hundred thousand Nazi prisoners in the west. Of those, our own armies took one million, two hundred thousand.

Our own casualties as of this date are eight hundred and two thousand, six hundred and eighty-five in the Army; ninety-six thousand, seven hundred and five in the Navy. Incidentally, the personnel of the Navy has now reached the astonishing total of three million, two hundred and eleven thousand, two hundred and seventy-three. Of these, ninety thousand, four hundred and eighty-seven are Waves and Navy nurses.

PACIFIC

Another Superfortress raid on Tokyo. Three fleets took off from Saipan today. On the way, a formation of Mustang fighters took off from Iwo Jima to escort them. They bombed the western section of Tokyo for two hours, and even went as far as Koriyama, a hundred and ten miles to the north, where they hit Japanese factories.

Apparently this was the biggest land-based airmada that has yet struck at Japan, containing even more B-29s than the four hundred that raided Tokyo and Nagoya last Saturday.

The Japanese themselves report that eighty carrier based planes raided northern Formosa, and down south twenty Liberators bombed Makassar. As for today's raid on Tokyo, it was also marked by new tactics employed by the Superforts. The ~~big~~ planes carried out deceptive maneuvers in the air, to mislead the Japanese before finally coming in with their bombs.

On Okinawa, the fighting has become as grim as it was on Iwo Jima. The Japanese in the south are making an all-out stand, and it is going to need the full force of American fire power plus a smashing attack from our own shock troops, to drive the enemy out.

The Japs are getting a bombardment from all sides, from the fleet at sea, from heavy land guns on Okinawa, and from the nearby islands. The ~~units~~^{men} of the Seventh Division are having a hard time advancing south along the east side of the island. The Nipponese are making no attempt to withdraw. Quite obviously it's another struggle to the death, which will end only with the ~~extermination~~ extermination of the Japanese garrison.

The Tokyo radio claimed that the suicide attack of Japanese fighters has resulted in the sinking of one of our cruisers last night. Of this, our own high command says nothing. One broadcast from Tokyo reported that the

RETAKE

Commander-in-Chief of the Mikado's combined fleet had said to all his officers and men that they are now facing the moment when the rise or fall of the Japanese nation will be decided. He told them that the Allied naval force, including the British, now operating in the Pacific, are more than fifteen hundred warships of different sizes.

and so