

'OCCASIONS WHEN RUSSIANS LOST 500,000 AT A TIME'

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Berlin, May 10—A Russian general estimated today that in saving their country and marching to triumph in Berlin the Russians had lost between 12,000,000 and 15,000,000 dead, about half soldiers and half civilians.

"There were times," the general said, "when we had to lose 500,000 men at a time to save the army itself."

At 10 minutes past 12 midnight Wednesday, Central European time (6.30 p.m. E.D.T. Tuesday), Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, deputy supreme commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force, rose from his seat beside Marshal Gregory Zhukov, Marshal Stalin's second in command, and turned to Field Marshal Keitel, the German legate.

"Have you received the document of unconditional surrender?" he asked. "Are you prepared to sign it and execute its provisions?"

Keitel, the Junker of Junkers, fixed his monocle in his left eye. He held up the document impatiently to show he had received it. And he said, "Yes, it's in order. I'm prepared to sign."

At 15 minutes past 12 Keitel took the glove off his right hand and signed the document which ratified and strengthened the unconditional surrender of the German power already given by Admiral von Friedeburg at Reims 23 hours before.

Nazi Colonel Weeped

And this time it was in the ruins of Berlin. The ceremony which ended the war at Reims in France had taken place in a technical school. By a strange coincidence the ceremony in Berlin which confirmed the surrender was also held in a technical school—this time in the Karlshorst suburb of Eastern Berlin. The technical school in Reims was chosen because it was the headquarters of the Allied Supreme Command. The Russians chose the technical school in the Berlin suburb because it was almost the only big building they could

find that was not destroyed.

Air Chief Marshal Tedder and Marshal Zhukov signed on behalf of the Grand Alliance. Keitel signed for the beaten foe. Tears ran down the cheeks of his tall handsome aide, Lt.-Col. Karl Brehm. But if Keitel realized that this was a historic moment he gave no sign. He turned to his weeping aide and said in our hearing: "You can make a fortune after the war writing a book about this—'With Keitel in the Russian Camp.'"

"Keitel is still Prussia," murmured an American officer. "He is not finished. He is just taking a rest."

Under the military medals and ribbons on his chest Keitel wore the "Order of Blood" or "Golden Party Emblem" that Hitler had conferred on all field generals as opposed to staff officers. By wearing that medal, in the opinion of a British general present, Keitel was saying: "I come here as a Nazi as well as a Prussian."

Elaborate Banquet

The Germans left the room. An elaborate banquet was immediately spread in the conference room—a banquet that ended only when we left to go to our aircraft at 6 o'clock in the morning. And the famous Russian prosecutor Vishinsky said in a brilliant and bitter speech that "when those men left this room Germany was torn from the pages of history. But we shall never forget and we shall never forgive."

Marshal Zhukov's strong, stern face relaxed into a smile. But it seemed that the Russians were no longer separating the sheep from the goats, the Germans from the Nazis.

Perhaps it's because some of us observers of these solemn historic events have hardly slept a wink in three days and three nights that we feel bemused and in a dream. But really, is all this true?

Hear Churchill's Voice

We were in Berlin. We heard "God Save the King" played on

the Tempelhof airdrome. We had seen the fourth largest city in the world in utter ruin—run too appalling and frightening to gloat over, with the fires still burning, and a smoke pall hanging over the dead city, and the few wretched German civilians sitting like scarecrows in their heaps of rubble to watch the British, American and Russian flags go by. We had been at Alamein and Stalingrad—and now in Berlin we heard on the radio the voice of Winston Churchill saying the German war was over. . . .

Four Dakota aircraft carried the Allied delegation to Berlin. The delegation included Gen. de Lattre de Tassigny, commander-in-chief of the French army. There were eight war correspondents.

We left Reims early Tuesday morning. We landed at Stendal airdrome on the west bank of the Elbe to wait for the German delegation coming from Flensburg on the Danish-German frontier and for the Russian fighter aircraft which were to escort us to Berlin.

The Germans arrived first. Field Marshal Keitel was received by Maj.-Gen. Kenneth Strong, a British staff officer at Allied Supreme Headquarters, who has been the arranging genius of all these long-drawn-out and delicate negotiations. Then there was a roaring in the sky and the Russian fighter escort arrived; and we took off for the flight to Berlin. . . .

"Wait till you see," he said. "The Chancellery, like all the rest of Berlin, is kaput. Nothing but rubble and dirt. Wait till you see."

We drove north toward the heart

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149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
RUSSIA
INVASION
BERLIN
DRIVE

of Berlin, and what we saw is, I repeat, too appalling for gloating. We saw the fourth city of the world in such complete and overwhelming ruin that I really doubt how it can ever be rebuilt.

Multiply by 1,000 times the obliterated sections of London's East End, or the area around St. Paul's as they were the morning after they were destroyed—still burning and smoking, with nothing but jagged edges of brick and stone against the lurid sky—and you have Berlin.

Staggering Sight

The R.A.F. and the R.C.A.F. have dropped a total of 45,000 tons of bombs on Berlin and the U.S. air forces have dropped about 20,000 tons. Now we saw the result, and what we saw is the most staggering sight in the world.

As we flew low over the wooded lakelands west of Berlin I recognized the great Olympic stadium. I recognized nothing else because we flew into a pall of smoke. But we were all astounded. Even from the air we could see that Berlin was destroyed.

Air Chief Marshal Tedder was received on Tempelhof airdrome by Gen. Mallinen, Zhukov's chief of staff.

The flags of Britain, Russia and the United States, held by three Russian officers, floated in front of the guard of honor. There was a deep silence for a few seconds. The band struck up and there on Tempelhof airdrome we heard the strains of "God Save the King," the first national anthem to be played. It was followed by "The Star-Spangled Banner" and the Russian national anthem. The guard of honor, consisting of three companies of Russian guards, marched past Tedder and his delegation in magnificent if melodramatic style.

Field Marshal Keitel, Admiral von Friedeburg and their aides watched a scene that was unforgettable for us and doom for them and the things they stood for.

"Wait Till You See"

A procession of 40 cars, most of them "liberated" from the Germans, left Tempelhof for Marshal Zhukov's headquarters. We had hoped that the crowning triumph of the war would take place in Hitler's chancellery, but when I mentioned this the Russian General Berzarin, commandant of the Berlin garrison, laughed.

We drove to the Place Belle Alliance and then turned east along the Frankfurter Allee, the main street running east through Berlin. It made us shudder. We saw there what could happen to civilization and will happen if there is another war.

Russians Pay Tribute

The Russians have paid many warm tributes to the Allied air

forces which destroyed Berlin. The best expression of this appreciation was given by Gen. Mallenin as he drove down the Frankfurter Allee with Air Chief Marshal Tedder. "Look," he said, "someone was here before us."

The eight-mile route to Zhukov's headquarters in the suburb of Karlshorst was lined by Red Army Guards and by Russian women soldiers. . . . We passed buildings still burning and a number of German Tiger tanks and several Russian tanks wrecked in the ferocious 11-day battle in the streets of Berlin. To see Berlin you know at once that the last stand of the Nazis in their capital was a suicidal and mystic frenzy. There was nothing here to fight for but chaos and the body of Goebbels.

I shall long remember the German civilians—old men, children and women—whom we passed on the way. A few did lift their heads in interest when they saw the British and U.S. flags with the Russian. But most of them were indifferent scarecrows. There were few of them. We saw no more than four or five thousand. The Russians told us there were roughly 2,000,000 people left in the city of the original 5,500,000. "Where are they?" we asked. "They have built caves for themselves in the rubble," said the Russians, "and they're afraid to come out."

We reached the end of our journey, and Marshal Zhukov came out of his headquarters to greet Air Chief Marshal Tedder.

Zhukov is thick-set with a large head and strong, heavy features. Except for his uniform, he looked more a politician than a soldier. He reminded me somewhat of Daladier. Yet this man has proved himself one of the most bold and imaginative captains of history.

Now in a schoolhouse in Berlin—the largest city ever to be taken by storm—he received the Western Allies and sat down with them to take the unconditional surrender of Germany.

Delicate Questions

The preliminaries lasted 10 hours. There was no important problem to solve. But there were many details of formality and certain delicate questions of precedence . . .

Talking to Air Marshal Tedder a few minutes before the end, I recalled that I had first met him at a dreary place called Babaa in the western desert during the retreat to Alamein.

"I remember that day," said Tedder. "But even then you know there was never the slightest doubt. We were sure Germany was beaten even then."

And then at 11 o'clock British time, when the free world was dancing in the streets, we went in to see

the final affirmation of defeat here in the ashes of Berlin.

After the signing I was talking to Gen. de Lattre de Tassigny, who had signed for France. Remembering that Clemenceau had written in his will that he wanted only one soldier at his funeral and that soldier de Lattre de Tassigny, I remarked: "I wish Clemenceau could have been here tonight."

"That is a good and true thing to say," he replied, "and especially interesting right now. I have just learned that Clemenceau's son, Michel, has just been liberated by the Americans."

Marshal Zhukov was the master of ceremonies at the banquet which marked the victory . . . In one of his many speeches the marshal said: "Our ally Great Britain has suffered much and fought gallantly. During that fight she has produced some famous war leaders. I lift my glass now to the great Air Marshal Tedder, aide to Gen. Eisenhower. Look around Berlin and you will agree with me that the Germans will remember for a long time his technical and operational skill. Let us drink to him, and to continued success for the British nation, and to the continuing friendship between Great Britain and the Soviet Union. That friendship is necessary for the future of mankind."

149

WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
RUSSIA
INVASION
BERLIN
DRIVE