

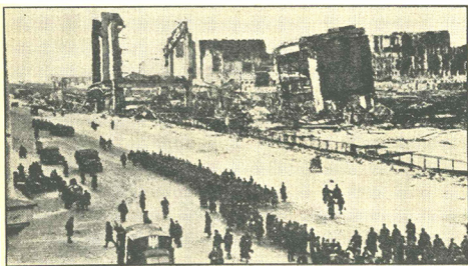
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Their Own Bitter Pill



Example at Warsaw: *When the Poles refused to surrender Warsaw without a fight in 1939 the Germans threatened to make an example of it. These two photographs show what the Nazis meant. At top, Russian and Polish soldiers march through one of the streets. Below, a family returns home. For all practical purposes Warsaw was destroyed.*

Berliners with an ear cocked to the cold east wind last week could hear in the distance the drums of doom: The heavy roll of Russian artillery along the Oder River. By night, flares from Soviet planes bombing the Berlin-Frankfurt highway lit up the eastern horizon.

The great battle on the eastern front was flooding within sight and sound of the German capital. And, with the Nazis still in undisputed sway, one of the world's half dozen largest cities and the Reich's greatest single industrial center prepared for a siege on Stalingrad lines. Bomb-damaged buildings were dynamited and their rubble was piled up into barricades; wide ditches were hacked in the frozen ground of suburbs; machine guns went up at intersections. Anti-aircraft guns were sent to the Oder River front and Volkssturm battalions took over many of Berlin's defenses.

The city that Hitler had once planned to make the most beautiful in the world was warned by the Führer's own newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*: "Berlin in this struggle will not stand behind Warsaw, Leningrad, and Moscow. We have to remember Clemenceau's motto that he would fight in front of Paris, in Paris, and behind Paris."

Berlin, February, 1945

The Nazis apparently planned to erect three defense lines in Berlin. The first would follow the super-highway that twists around the city. The second would be based on barricades in the suburbs. The third would encompass the heart of the capital—Potsdamer Platz, Unter den Linden, the Wilhelmstrasse, the parks, palaces, and public buildings representing the triumphs of Prussianism from Frederick the Great to Hitler. And Berlin should make a strong fortress. The majority of the buildings are of stone, and numerous lakes and canals provide military barriers.

Meanwhile, hordes of refugees from the invaded regions to the east continued to pour into Berlin. The Wehrmacht told them to stay where they were until transport to the south and west could be improvised. In the ruins of bombed buildings thousands of deserters were rumored to be hiding. The subway ground to a stop when coal for current ran out. Food rations were cut.

In the midst of this misery and disorder a terrible blow from the sky fell on Berlin. On Feb. 3 some 1,000 American bombers, escorted by 900 fighters, in 45 minutes dropped a blanket of 2,072 tons of bombs on the center of the city. The fighters swept on east to the Oder River, where the pilots could see the Russian guns all along it pouring shells into the Nazi lines. Stockholm correspondents reported that thousands of refugees in the packed city were killed in the raid.

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