

WHENEVER I read or hear eyewitness accounts of what is taking place in Berlin today I think: "But that's an old story. I know it well."

Then I realize it merely seems an old story, because it's so like something I saw in Rome at the time Mussolini fell.

The end was hastened in Italy because for many months the Italians had faced the fact that whether the Axis won or lost Italy was sure to lose.

The Fascist party fell overnight. It fell quickly and fairly quietly—quietly because the Italian people had almost lost the habit of thinking for themselves.

It took just one bombing and one threat of invasion to bring about the downfall of Mussolini; it may well take hundreds of bombings and actual invasion to bring about the downfall of Hitler, but the result will probably be the same. For that reason it has seemed worth while to tell what took place in Rome when Mussolini toppled. What happened in Rome may possibly be the pattern for what will eventually happen in Berlin.

The third day after the bombing of Rome there was still no water. For three days the work of removing the wounded and dead from the ruins had continued steadily and the end of this gruesome work was not yet in sight.

Just as on the first day, the streets of districts near railroad stations were obstructed by tramcars and other vehicles which had been completely destroyed. Electric-light posts lay on the ground all wound up in their own cables. Cars moved slowly through the scattered remains of buildings and bomb craters.

The number of corpses which were being dug out was increasing in alarming fashion. When coffins gave out, the bodies were carried to cemeteries wrapped in the first thing at hand.

Groups of people stood about staring at everything with curiosity and anger.

They were past being intimidated by the presence of soldiers, officers, guards and Fascist militiamen, and for the first time they spoke their thoughts on Fascism clearly and harshly. As I went by one completely wrecked house, I heard a woman asking where people who had been bombed out would be housed. Another, in a voice shrill with hatred, replied: "That scoundrel will be thrown out and we'll be given shelter in his house."

Clearly the "scoundrel" could be no one but Mussolini.

Free to Speak at Last

In those days there was a great deal of talk about him and Fascism and the Fascists. Walls of the city were covered with anti-Fascism inscriptions. In broad daylight with no attempt at secrecy, members of the opposition would scrawl their insults against Il Duce and party officials on the principal buildings. Epithets that occurred most frequently were: "Assassin! Bandit! Criminal! Cuckold!"

No civilians were taking an active part in the task of clearing the streets of debris caused by bombs. The consensus was that the best way to put an end to many national misfortunes was to expel Mussolini and make peace immediately. So crowds just stood by, passively watching the cleaning-up process, while muttering insults and ironic comments.

In a tramcar fellow passengers assured me that the victims amounted to more than ten thousand. According to them, the government placed the figure at several hundred in order not to throw greater responsibility on itself. Insistently they repeated: "The Allies gave warning that the people of Rome should stay far from railway stations. Why didn't the government tell us that?"

When we reached the first streets of San Lorenzo, the stench of corpses was already noticeable. Work was going on very slowly in order to avoid the collapse of walls which were still standing and the consequent death of people who were alive under the ruins. There was a nerve-shattering sound of moans, calls for help and terrible oaths coming from the wreckage. However, by the time the cellar was at last uncovered, it was generally only to find corpses or to extract human limbs and horribly mutilated trunks. Authorities began chasing away the curious to prevent them from witnessing scenes which provoked anti-Fascist criticism.

I returned to the center of town where the streets were practically empty.

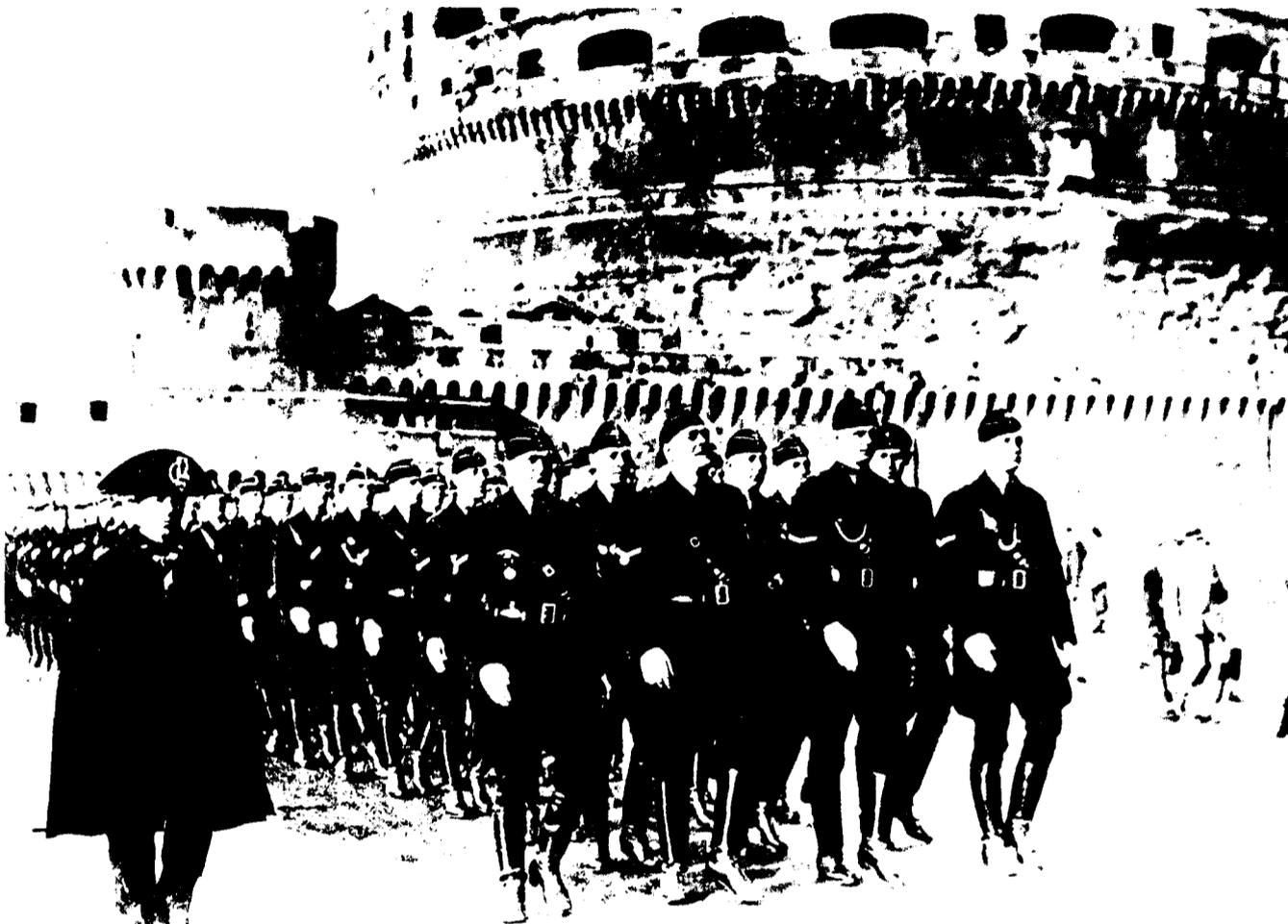
The few people I saw wore a look of fear. Everybody was apprehensive as to what the next hours might bring. They expected another bombing, and many were sure that the Allies would invade the peninsula within a week. Rome continued to be a dead city all that Saturday afternoon and also Sunday morning, when news began to spread that a meeting of the Grand Fascist Council had been going on for several hours. Some people stayed by their radios anxious (Continued on page 75)

THE NIGHT IL DUCE FELL

By Boguslaw Kuchyinsky, as told to Alice-Leone Moats

RADIOED FROM MADRID

A translation and adaptation of a story by Boguslaw Kuchyinsky, a well-known Polish writer who escaped from Poland after the German invasion and ended up in Rome, where he was able to remain through the intercession of friends in the Vatican. He left Rome by plane after the surrender of Italy



Rome was quiet while Fascism died. Italians waited and watched, subdued by long acquaintance with the strong Gestapo detachments stationed in all their cities

EUROPEAN

On the morning after the great news, joyous Italian mobs surged fearlessly into Rome's streets, commandeering cars and busses for triumphal tours of the city

WIDE WORLD



Embarkation Point

BY VICTORIA LINCOLN

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN GANNAM

Almost everything was for sale at the bazaar in the old Maine village, but Ginny brought home something that wasn't exactly on the market

THAT summer, vacationing alone at the Knights' farmhouse, Mrs. Calhoun began again to wake early for the first time in years. She would lie in bed, rested and expectant, listening to the conversation of orioles and catbirds outside the window, fully conscious from the first opening of her eyes, and no longer huddling backward from the pressure of morning into the comfortable ambiguities of her dream.

Now, too, she smiled all the time she was dressing. She would spend a comfortable ten or fifteen minutes at the mirror as she had used to do, five years ago, brushing her soft, light hair, noticing happily how her skin, darkening with the sun, made it look blonder. She would take her lipstick and fill the natural outline of her pretty mouth with care, and sit, idly happy, waiting for the color to set before she kissed the blotting tissues and smiled once more at the print she left upon them. Then she would touch her hair again, with the natural grace of a happy woman, a gesture of infinite promise, and go down to breakfast singing. For on the table by her bed was the picture of Captain Sherry Calhoun, now overseas.

Thus, circled in heavy silver, the deliberate charm of his one-sided smile fixed unchanging under glass, Sherry Calhoun fulfilled his husbandly duties as he had never done in the flesh. It had been a bad match.

"Oh, that's Sherry Calhoun's wife," they had said for five years; "that's poor little Mrs. Calhoun." Sitting in a corner through countless gay country week ends, she had been poor little Mrs. Calhoun, colorless, conveniently forgotten much of the time, but still there, to be stumbled over occasionally, embarrassing as an unspoken reproach.

She had been little Ginny Tuckerman, a small-town belle on her first thrilling visit to New York, when she met and married wayward, graceless, philandering, cold-hearted Sherry Calhoun. The marriage was a source of irritated bewilderment to Sherry's friends, and, indeed, after the first few weeks of it, to Sherry himself. She had a small trust fund, certainly not enough to interest a man who lived on his friends as easily as Sherry did. And her soft, inconsequential beauty fed on admiration. You have all known these gentle, pastel women who are so easily quenched.

But even in the simplest creatures the individual life dies hard. In Sherry's world she had been defeated and destroyed daily; but the deathless center of personality that is in all of us had continued to put out its dogged, unknowing shoots, to live unrecognized behind the soft, neglected face, in the chair at the rainy window out of the contract players' way, in the quiet, unending shame.

Indeed, she had grown into a certain distinction. Love and the slow death of love, never put into words or clearly realized, a marriage that had meant the loss of her young girl's narcissistic happiness

and the shame of disappointed womanhood at one blow, these odd and unhappy advantages had carried her, somehow, past her mark. And now, this summer, she was beginning to catch up with herself.

She began to wake early, and with that waking a new quality touched Mrs. Calhoun's manner. It became relaxed and aware at once. There was nothing in it so coarse or simple as invitation, yet, seeing her, a man of experience might have surmised that it could do no harm to throw out a little discreet feeler or so—nothing that could startle or offend her, but an experimental word, a lingering pressure of the hand—on the chance, you know, just on the outside chance.

"I tell you," said Miss Knight to her brother, "I'm glad that picture of her husband shows he's such a handsome feller, or I'd feel that girl needed watching."

"She seems a quiet, well-mannered enough young woman to me," replied her brother, slowly.

As he went out into the cow barn he kept on thinking of Mrs. Calhoun, kindly and seriously. It had been quite clear to him from the minute he helped her into the house with her coats and luggage that she was essentially unattached. The picture in the frame might be as handsome as all get out, but Mrs. Calhoun was quite alone, and he knew it. And with the profound gentleness which was Mr. Knight's peculiar gift and wisdom, he hoped that she was going to be happy.

He watched her now, as she came out into the farmyard after breakfast, a huge striped purse under her arm. Her appearance pleased him impersonally, just as you might be delighted with the feast-day finery of a peasant. It was unfamiliar to him, with the gay clothes, the professionally arranged hair, the painted nails, the delicate, artificial make-up, so citified and different from the appearance of both kinds of country girls—the good ones and the bad ones. But to Mr. Knight the unfamiliar was not, automatically, either suspect or ludicrous. He was by nature a highly civilized person.

"Morning, Mrs. Calhoun," he said. "Headin' for the bus?"

"Good morning, Mr. Knight. Yes, I am."

"Could drive you down to the bus stop, if you want to set on the steps and wait a little spell, maybe five minutes. I'm takin' some eggs over to Wes Parker's."

"Thank you," she said. "I'd like to, Mr. Knight."

THEY rolled down the drive and into the deep-rutted white dust lane, toward the state highway. Sumac and flowering elderberries flanked the road; chicory, Queen Anne's lace and bouncing Bet stood in the ditches. The air above their heads was laced with the bright, bounding passage of goldfinches.

The ocean was to the left of them, hidden now by the lay of the land, but there, filling the air, making it at one time lively and soft.

Mrs. Calhoun drew a deep breath. "I love it here," she said. "I love being near the ocean."

"Yep," said Mr. Knight. "Good for folks."

He turned down U. S. Route 1. "This street goes all the way to Floridy," he said. "Know that?"

Mrs. Calhoun laughed, nodded her bright head. "When the war's over, Mr. Knight, suppose you drive me the whole length of the street."

"Weather like this, there's nothing I'd like better." He paused and added gallantly, "Or any weather."

She smiled at him, enjoying the comfort of his impersonal male kindness, as she had enjoyed the sun and the feeling of the sea. She did not feel that she had to answer him and there was a long, relaxed silence before he spoke again.

"First Christian Church is having a bazaar this afternoon," he said. "The summer folks always take it in. I'd go if I was you. Nice way to get acquainted."

"I don't care much about seeing people."

"You would, if they was the right kind. Everybody needs friends. You go."

SHE turned in her seat and looked at him with childish directness. His long, plain face was turned straight ahead, his blue eyes on the road, but the smile was meant for her, the encouraging nod.

"You go on," he said again. "You're too young not to be doing more for people than you are, and being more mixed up with them." He paused and grinned suddenly. "And old enough not to make a fool of yourself, I guess."

But it was just of this that Mrs. Calhoun was not at all sure.

"Mr. Knight," she said, abruptly, "I have the funniest feeling about this summer. As if I never noticed how I felt, or even acted like myself, till now. I'm very happy all the time, but I feel sort of queer and new. I've been wanting to tell someone that. Do you think I'm crazy?"

They were approaching the four-corners. Mr. Knight slowed down the machine.

"Well, now," he said, "don't know's I see what you're talking about, to tell you the truth. You don't appear to be crazy, though." He laughed. "Anyways, if I was you, I'd go to that bazaar. Real nice class of folks there, make you real nice friends."

He opened the door and helped her out, smiling at her huge handbag, her pretty hair, fixed up so fancy and citified.

Poor girl, he thought suddenly, if her husband had been a good man, she'd have loved him. She's the kind.

"Now you go," he said again, smiling seriously. The bus was visible down the road, and he got back into the car and drove off, taking the eggs to Wes Parker's.

Mrs. Calhoun got into the bus, oddly flattered and excited.

I guess maybe I will go to that bazaar for a while after the show, she thought. Not that I'm likely to get talking to any people. But it sounds sort of attractive. I should have worn my hat. Out here, though, I guess it won't matter much.

The day, once this decision was taken, became unlike other days, vivid and simple, slanting toward its objective. In the ten-cent store she bought shoe white, nail polish, two sample-sized lipsticks. Then, filled with an unfamiliar longing to communicate with friends, with women, she bought post cards and took them to the post office where she wrote to hostesses she had barely known.

"Dear Lora," she wrote, "I wish you were here to smell this nice salt air, it is



lovely here, best ever, Ginny;" and, "Dear Alice. This is the First Christian Church where I am going to a bazaar this afternoon, best wishes, Ginny Calhoun."

Coming out of the post office, she found herself face to face on the steps with a very young man in Army uniform. He was a big, handsome boy, with a smooth, heavy-featured face, and he looked at her closely, his clear, rather blank eyes widening and then drooping in an admiring calculation