

Soldier Tells of Paper 'Published' at Oflag 64

By Lt. David A. Englander

Lt. Englander, a former New York newspaper man, went overseas last June as a combat photographic officer. Wounded and captured at Aachen, he was interned at Oflag 64, Szubin, Poland. Liberated by the Russian advance in January, he hitchhiked across Poland and Russia to Moscow and flew home from there.

HUNGER FOR NEWS is a constant craving of the American prisoner-of-war, second only to his hunger for food.

At Oflag 64, in Szubin, Poland, officer prisoners of Hitler were, ironically enough, able to appease their desire for news much better than they were able to satisfy their stomachs.

Almost every afternoon, the communique of the German High Command was announced over the camp's public address system. At other times of the day, news summaries, bulletins and comment were similarly broadcast over the loud-speaker.

Copies of the leading German newspapers, dailies and weeklies, arrived regularly, many of them official Nazi organs. Magazines (also Nazi) were plentiful.

Larry Allen Founder

Working with this material, a staff of former newspaper men, plus several enthusiastic amateur journalists, turned out the *Oflag Daily Bulletin*, modestly admitted by its publishers to be "the best English-language daily in Germany." Official motto of the Bulletin was "Freiheit und Weiss Brot" (Freedom and White Bread). This was our twist to the *Voelkischer Beobachter's* motto of "Freiheit und Brot."

Larry Allen, Associated Press war correspondent who was captured at Tobruk in 1942, was the founder and original editor of the Bulletin, under the supervision of the camp S-2, Lt. Col. James Alger. When Allen was repatriated in June, 1944, his job was taken over by Lt. Frank Diggs, a veteran of North Africa and Sicily and formerly on the *Washington Post*.

Special feature writer for the Bulletin and occasional Sunday editor was War Correspondent Wright Bryan, associate editor of the *Atlanta Journal*, wounded and captured in France in September, 1944.

Initial step in turning out the paper was to render the news into English. This was done by a staff of translators headed by Lt. Seymour Bolten, a young graduate of New York University who had an excellent faculty for digging a good news story out of the jungle of German propaganda.

From notes penciled on odd scraps of paper by Bolten and his staff, Diggs and I would write the copy for the Bulletin's two daily news editions, feature page and Sunday edition. Each "edition" consisted of a single sheet, cut to standard size from paper donated by the Y.M.C.A.

This page was ruled into five or six columns and made up in highly professional style by Diggs, who hand-lettered the stories in ink, while Lt. Kenneth Goddard, art editor, did the same for the feature page.

Heads composed by Diggs and myself were printed in by Lt. Tom McGee of Illinois, a Ranger officer who had been a professional letterer. Photo coverage was obtained via pictures clipped from German papers by versatile Goddard, who doubled as picture editor. Another embellishment that was tremendously popular was daily maps of the war fronts drawn by Lts. Charles Posz, paratrooper, and George Durgin, tanker, on information supplied by Bolten, the staff's one-man reference library.

The Bulletin's morning edition, culled chiefly from newspaper stories, appeared about noon, while the evening "radio" edition, written around the broadcast communique, was posted about 7 p.m. Each sheet, along with the feature page, was tacked onto a wooden board and hung on a wall near the camp office where it remained for 24 hours.

Avid Reading Public

Edition time always found an avid reading public waiting patiently at the "newsstand" for the paper to be published. The Bulletin did yeoman work in keeping up camp spirits and was commended by the senior American officer as one of the top morale factors.

To avoid censorship, we kept our stories straight and factual, devoid of editorial comment. Fortunately, news through most of '44 was good, often overwhelmingly good, and our tone was naturally buoyant and optimistic. In this we differed from the German writers, who described every Allied advance as a successful German "disengagement" or "planned withdrawal."

German propaganda provided most of the few laughs we found in our tedious prison existence. One day the German newspapers distributed in the camp carried a big picture of Adolf complete with moustache. I wondered whether it was just a coincidence when I saw those men who had received copies

disappear into the latrine gleefully carrying the page with the Fuehrer's picture on it.

The Germans tried to edify us with the mouthings of Lord Haw-Haw and Berlin Sally. There was an occasional laugh in their rantings, especially their imprecations against a weird whipping boy called the "Judo-Bolshevistic-Imperialistic Conspiracy."

Heaviest propaganda barrages were released against the Jews, the Soviets and Americans, in that order. The grotesquely illogical nature of their anti-Semitic tirades was illustrated by the stories that appeared in two different papers on the same day.

One story featured a picture of a Jewish soldier captured on the West front. The legend that accompanied it said, in effect: "Why was this Jew taken prisoner? Because he got tired of the fighting and gave himself up, like many other Jewish prisoners."

The second story said: "Jewish soldiers avoid combat duty. That is why we have taken so few Jewish prisoners." *Sic!*

The German Press

Despite the violence of their copy, drab and stodgy make-up was characteristic of the German dailies. Dr. Ley's tabloid *Der Angriff* was somewhat livelier than most, featuring screaming editorial exhortations splashed in headlines across the front page and underlined in red ink. This device was frequently used by the other dailies.

The magazines, on the whole, were much livelier and more impressive in format and photography. They were, however, hopelessly addicted to blowing up 35 mm. color frames to full-page size. The fuzzy images they produced—and proudly published—were sometimes weird beyond belief.

Their best job was *Signal*, a "slick" monthly which was all things to all nations in about 35 foreign languages. The English edition was a smooth job which pompously described the grandiose plans Hitler had for the construction of a Greater Europe.

That Hitler's business partners in the construction of this Greater Europe were losing faith in its durability became evident in the advertisements by means of delicate hints, particularly by manufacturers of airplanes and optical goods, that after the war they would be very glad indeed to resume selling their goods to "friends" abroad.

Crudest propaganda effort of the Nazis was a monthly called "O.K." initials for the "Overseas Kid." Half the paper was given over to poems, articles and bits of fiction by Allied prisoners of war who had been beguiled into submitting contributions. The rest of the sheet comprised obvious propaganda pieces written in an awkward slangy style. The late President Roosevelt and other leading Americans were denounced as the instigators of the war.

Bonham Appointed

Washington, D. C., May 14—

Appointment of Howard Bonham, until recently national director of public relations for the American Red Cross, as vice-chairman in charge of public relations, has been announced by Chairman Basil O'Connor.

Bonham was for seven years a writer and editor on southwestern newspapers and with the Associated press prior to joining the Red Cross in 1931.

Commission Rules On Severance Pay

CHICAGO, May 15—The Daily Newspaper Commission directed that severance pay shall be computed on the basis of the highest weekly pay received by an employe during the year previous to his discharge, in issuing a directive order covering a dispute case between the *Massillon* (O.) *Independent* and the *Massillon Newspaper Guild*.

Severance pay, according to the Commission, is not to be paid to an employe upon his voluntary resignation, but upon dismissal, and he is to receive cash severance pay in a lump sum equal to one week's pay for every 10 months or major fraction thereof of his service with the Independent. The maximum payment is not to exceed 16 weeks.

The Commission also directed that accrual of severance pay credits shall be considered as having begun on the date when the employe commenced his service with the Independent, even where his actual employment may have commenced prior to the purchase of the paper by Earl J. Jones Enterprises, Inc.

In a wage dispute between the Cleveland Newspaper Publishers Association and the Cleveland Photo-Engravers Union, the Commission directed an hourly scale of wages of \$1.766 for day shift, \$2.035 for second shift and \$2.178 for third shift.

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