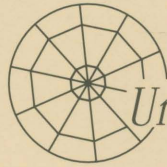


Gatherings

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All the Nazi News...

While allied airplanes bombed German cities into acres of rubble, German newspapers continued to publish the daily news. The besieged citizens still needed to know what was happening even as their own world was reduced to mounds of devastation—and even if what they read did not reflect reality. Users of Waldo Library may travel back in time to those grim years and follow the events as reported.

One of the most intriguing titles is the *Hamburger Zeitung* of which the Library has a nearly complete run for the years 1944 and 1945. An examination of this paper reveals several intriguing aspects of the journalistic policy that dominated publication. One of the most striking facts is that the paper, during the last months, weeks, and days of World War II, reported little local news. Even though Hamburg experienced some of the most concentrated air strikes, and was damaged beyond anyone's expectations, no one would know this from reading the paper. Rather, the newspaper is full of news from the front line and the latest commentary from the Fuhrer. Other sections covered sporting events, offered crossword puzzles, and outlined upcoming radio programs. Ironically, the news from the front often included a map that indicated the movement of the forces on the eastern and western fronts. If the residents of Hamburg followed the maps day by day, they could not help but be aware of the ever closer encirclement of Germany by allied troops. That fact, however, was not mentioned in the accompanying articles.

The small amount of local news that reached publication was usually found on the back page of every issue. Long lists of "those who gave their lives for the Leader, the People and the Empire," i.e., der Fuhrer, das Volk und das Reich are included—a grim close-to-home reminder

regardless of whatever else could be gleaned from the earlier pages. On May 2, 1945, the paper announced Hitler's death with a byline of "Farewell to Hitler." The next issue is an undated broadside "extra" with a proclamation from the major of Hamburg announcing that he has surrendered the city to the advancing armies; he urges that the citizens of Hamburg not resist the soldiers when they arrive. The British entered Hamburg on May 3, 1945.

Another newspaper in this unique collection of Nazi memorabilia comes from the Channel islands, Guernsey and Jersey, and an almost complete run from 1940 to 1945 exists. These small islands were the



German City Devastation

only part of Great Britain that was ever occupied by German troops. On June 19, 1940, the *Evening Press* announced the fall of Cherbourg in France, and that children and British soldiers would be evacuated from the islands. By June 22, the newspaper relays the local government's orders to the people not to resist if the island is occupied. On the back page, the paper gives helpful hints on how to calm fears, as for example, to "take up gardening and dig! dig! dig!"

One of the islands was bombed on June 29th, but, by the next issue of the *Press*, the Germans had landed and the paper is now a reflection of official German communiques including a time change (back one hour to conform with the continental use rather than British), and the value of the German Deutsche Mark. Future issues include the official German version on the conduct of the war, but also reflect the fact that life on these islands, at least, did not change radically under foreign occupation.

The preceding paragraphs describe only two sources from the twenty-some Nazi newspapers that Waldo Library holds for the period 1933-1945. The material found in this collection is extremely important since it provides a very different perspective on World War II than Americans usually can obtain. There is special research value for students and faculty not only for the political/military information that is printed, but on the social and cultural life of Germany during this critical period. An example of the latter use is the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, a photo magazine that provides many examples of Nazi art; the library holdings cover 1933-1944.

Other materials in the collection give valuable insight on the German armed forces. Military manuals, uniforms, and insignia as well as official publications of the army, navy, and air force are found.

Continued on page 6

All the Nazi News...

Continued from page 1

One of the most poignant and memorable items is a collection of 346 snapshots. Some are official photographs of Hitler, but others are obviously taken by German soldiers while at the front; often their comments are found on the back—personal notes to family and friends.

This remarkable collection of Nazi war memorabilia, books, and newspapers is the donation of two different benefactors whose gifts to the library complement each other. In the last few years, Professor Emeritus Howard Mowen and Edwin W. Polk, alumnus of 1937, have donated books, newspapers, pamphlets, photographs, and other items about Nazi Germany to the University Libraries. Mowen, a professor in WMU's History Department from 1949 to 1982, served in the European Theater both in Italy and Germany. In 1952-53, he received a Ford Fellowship to study abroad and, during this period, he began to collect German newspapers. Originally he perceived them of value for his classes in modern European history since they brought the view "from the other side" to the discus-



The Nazi Collection

sion—thereby balancing students' understanding of what occurred. Polk, although not teaching history, became fascinated by his own experiences during World War II when he served as skipper of a PT boat in the South Pacific. After the war he remained active in the naval reserve until his retirement in 1978 from the Detroit Public School System. His war years were never forgotten and prompted him to collect military books, newspapers, and

other materials from the Germany that no longer existed, but whose actions had changed the world, society, and civilization forever. From these two has come the Mowen and Polk collection—a recollection and resource of immense value to now and future researchers. Inquiries about use of the collection should be directed to Beatrice Beech, Rare and Cistercian Book Librarian, Waldo Library.

B.B.

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Dwight B. Waldo Library
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-5080

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