

# LOOK OUT BELOW!

By REV. (Lt. Col.) FRANCIS L. SAMPSON

To bring you up to date — Father Sampson, chaplain of the 101st Division, U.S. Army paratroop corps, chuted into Normandy on D-Day and later into Koblenz where he was captured by a Nazi patrol.

## Buzz Bombs ...And Worms

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

We walked for two days after Christmas from dawn till dark without food. American fighter planes looking for targets would sometimes swoop down at us, but we stayed in formation and waved whatever we had.

They would recognize us as Americans, tip their wings and wave, then look elsewhere for something to attack. Often, as we approached a town, it would be just getting a going-over by fighter planes and dive bombers.

We would have to wait at the edge of town until it was over. You can be sure we were not royally welcomed in those bombed villages. I had an air corps leather jacket on.

A civilian spotting this ran up and cracked me in the rear with a shovel. It didn't hurt very much, and after seeing the wreathed house that he returned to, I could scarcely blame him. However, after that, I was careful to wear my trenchcoat over the jacket when we went through towns.

On our march through this part of Germany we saw dozens of V-1 buzz bombs take off from the camouflaged ramps on the other side of the hills that paralleled the road.

With orange flame pouring out of the rear ends, they looked like giant birds with their tails on fire. Not infrequently we could see ten or twelve in the air at the same time. Watching these at least diverted our minds from our aching feet and our empty stomachs.

The first time we saw a V-2 launched from a distance of several hundred yards it frightened all of us. The guards were as scared as we were, for they hadn't seen these before either.

The V-1 buzz bomb is to the V-2 as a 22 calibre shot is to a 155 mm shell. These huge monsters of destruction took off with such a terrific roar that we thought at first that a giant plane was crashing at full speed right on top of us. Then followed a very loud swoosh-shining sound, and we looked up to see a ten-thousand-foot vapor spray begin to dissolve around us as the rocket, still visible many thousands of feet higher, gradually went out of sight.

These rockets climbed more than sixty miles into the stratosphere before they began to descend with supersonic speed upon some unsuspecting section of England. The rockets were about the size of a C-47 plane. Observation platforms, always crowded with civilians, were placed a few hundred yards from the launching sites.

It must have been a tremendous boost to their wavering morale to know that they possessed such a mighty weapon of war. It was a hard blow to our own morale, however, for we could visualize these things dealing death and destruction to our forces at Bastogne and all along the front.

On the second night we stopped at the little village of Boz. Here the townspeople, went all out to feed us as best they could. Every housewife made potato soup and sandwiches, and coffee (even coffee substitutes) were prepared. These people were very kind, and when they found out that I was a priest, they tried to do even more.

I couldn't quite understand why the people of Boz were so different; then one of the women informed us that the town's Catholic pastor had told all his parishioners to do what they could for any prisoners who passed through. I vowed to return to Boz someday, if I could, and thank the people and their priest for what they had done for us.

Many of the men were getting footsores and had difficulty keeping up. We marched till dark and were put in a warehouse; but it was so bitter cold that the guards decided to march us all night rather than have us try to sleep on the concrete floor of that frame building.

At three a.m. we arrived at Koblenz. A more devastated city I had never seen. Another bomb dropped on it would simply have been wasted; it could only have moved the debris from one place to another. This city of about three hundred thousand was absolutely and totally destroyed.

We waited at the edge of the city until the usual morning air raid was over. Then, to our amazement, people by the thousands came out of holes and crevices to go about their business. We tried to make our way through the city, but fallen buildings blocked every street.

Finally, holding each other's hand we had to walk carefully

There was no panic and everything was done with fine order as though it had been a daily habit for years.

The look on these poor people's faces was enough to soften even our own bitterness into something like sympathy and compassion. They regarded us with neither fear nor hatred; nor did it seem to occur to them to enjoy seeing us subjected to a bombing from our own planes.

One of the pilots in our group told me that he had been able to really envision the misery suffered by the poor people of the towns he bombed; he would never have been able to do it. In a plane, he said, it all seemed so impersonal.

Then the American planes came over. Limburg was apparently not their target for that night. They passed over the city dropping only five or six bombs. It is a town that was not forgotten and would be taken care of later.

When we came out of the shelter, we were told that the Limburg Stalag was absolutely filled up with prisoners; I could hold no more, and we must go on. Major Saunders, the ranking prisoner since the colonel was put in the hospital, told the chief guard that we were not capable of walking further. That we must stop here, that we would be glad to sleep in the air raid shelters or in the park — anywhere.

The chief guard went to see the local commandant for instructions. It was three hours before he returned. We were desperate because we were not taken to the Limburg prison camp, little realizing at that time how fortunate it was for us that they had no more room.

Two days after this, New Year's Day, 1945, the German newspapers and radio carried the story of the bombing of the Limburg Stalag. They took great delight in describing how one American plane, flying above the town and nearby camp, dropped five bombs on the prison camp, killing more than sixty American officers.

Nor was this just propaganda. People would not have us; they refused to allow us to stay in the town stables, which had nothing in them but mighty in-viting straw.

They marched us into the park in the town square, and the people came out in droves to ridicule and laugh at us. We was proud to be a member of the "forty-and-eight" group (the "forty-and-eight" means that it can hold forty men or eight horses). And now, difficult as it is to believe, we were sealed in these cars for six and a half days without a single drop of water to drink.

This seems incredible, but there are more than four hundred witnesses to the fact. We took turns sitting in each other's laps, for there was no room to sit down. Our hunger during these first three days seemed more than we could stand.

All I could think of was my Aunt Millie's rolls and homemade bread and bacon and eggs at 521 West Sixth Street. The minute couldn't seem to stop talking about food. Everyone became very irritable at times, but, generally speaking, the men took this hunger trial in stride.

We would take turns relieving through a sort of port hole near the top of the car to scrape snow off the roof.

The train stopped once for several hours in the city of Gelsen to repair the tracks that had been bombed the night before. Someone called for a woman walking by to bring us some water. We threw our helmets out to her to bring it in. She came back carrying the water and had a fourteen-or-fifteen-year-old boy helping her.

She had just reached us when the chief guard saw her. He ran up, dumped our water on the children and mothers with a push. The boy went down to the other end of the car to hoist up the water quickly, but he was



Bastogne's main street Christmas morning in 1944.

not quick enough. By this time we were a bunch of college men enjoying a shower after a vigorous day of skiing.

The two of them pushed the boy against a brick retaining wall and gave him a beating. This sounds hackneyed and like a stereotyped Hollywood version of Nazi tactics. Had someone told this to me a couple years before, I would have laughed at such propaganda.

New Year's Day I held what passed for a service in our crowded car, and every man present made resolutions which I believe will be more lasting and carry more weight than the usual New Year's resolutions. As for myself, every Christmas and New Year since then has meant so much more to me than it ever did before.

After the third day I didn't feel quite so hungry, and the last few days didn't bother me at all. This was the case with the other men too. It seems that you can actually get used to going without food.

It seems like a strange thing, but it is a fact that the more difficult and trying the circumstances are, the higher the morale is.

Eating, that almost forgotten experience, was next. They brought in buckets of soup, cabbage soup with a few turnips in it and lots and lots of little worms.

We were given nothing to eat out of a few men had canteens, and those with neither of these, in desperation for fear they would be left out, used a shoe. Our stomachs were not able to hold it down long, but it felt warm and good as long as it stayed with us.

I will never forget the sight of one grumpy, naked soldier standing in the corner; he looked

at me. I said the final goodbye to the dead, who were left as boards.

We were all terribly weak, of course, and it was all we could do to walk the four miles to Stalag IIA, our home for the duration of the war. On the way we ate fistfuls of snow. It tasted better than ice cream.

Immediately upon arriving at the Stalag we were sent to take showers and to be deloused. The shower brought our spirits up immediately. Looking at my own body, I could scarcely believe that it was mine.

Normally heavy men looked skinny; thin men looked like skeletons. We had to laugh at each other, for we certainly were a sorry-looking lot. To have heard the laughing and kidding going on in that shower room you would have thought

## Prelate Describes Employers' Role

Milan — (NC) — Businessmen should work to promote social progress, Cardinal Montini of Milan told Catholic exhibitors at the Milan Fair.

Speaking on the dangers in Marxist and Liberal economic theory, the Cardinal warned businessmen against yielding to state control.

THE RESULTS of giving into "statism," he said, led to "the overthrow of everything which centuries of civilization have taught and handed down to us, of everything which you businessmen have so skillfully and patiently created."

At the same time, the Cardinal said, "one must admit that the economic laws are not the supreme ones nor are they inflexible." He said that Christianity demands increasingly improved social justice and added:

"It is far easier to speak of the solution of social questions to the working classes than it is to do it because 'to them the solution promises improvements, but of you it demands sacrifices.'"

Cardinal Montini said: "Practice the effort of Christian love — not paternalistic, but brotherly; not weak, but wise; not sentimental, but positive — a

## New Churches Show Gains

Washington — (RNS) — Church construction totalled \$67,000,000 during April, topping the same month of 1953 by \$6,000,000, the Departments of Commerce and Labor reported here.

The April upsurge brought total construction activity by churches to \$277,000,000 for the first four months of 1959, an increase of 9 per cent from a year ago.

Construction by the non-public schools dropped a little during April, totalling \$40,000,000 compared with \$42,000,000 a year ago. It is still running two per cent ahead of the level of the first four months of 1958, however.

## Daily Mass Calendar

Sunday, May 10 — Sunday after Ascension (white), Gloria, 2nd prayer of St. Anthonis. Creed, Preface of Ascension.  
Monday, May 11 — St. Philip and St. James, apostles (red), Mass as formerly on May 14, Gloria, Creed, Preface of Apostles.  
Tuesday, May 12 — St. Nereus, St. Achilleus, St. Donatillo, St. Pancratius, martyrs (red), Gloria, Preface of Ascension; Vt.  
Wednesday, May 13 — St. Robert Bellarmine (white), Gloria, Creed.  
Thursday, May 14 — Mass as Sunday (white) except 2nd prayer of St. Boniface, no Creed or feast of St. Boniface, martyr (red), Gloria, Vt.  
Friday, May 15 — St. John Baptist de La Salle (white), Gloria.  
Saturday, May 16 — Vigil of Pentecost (red), no preliminary ceremonies as formerly; Mass: Gloria, Preface and canon prayers of Pentecost.  
Vt. — Votive or Requiem permitted.

## Priest Advertises Baptist Rally

Wheaton, Md. — (RNS) — The other day a resident of this populous suburb of Washington, D.C., took his automobile to the garage for repairs and was dismayed to hear that the car would have to be left all day.

"Gosh," he said, "I promised to chauffeur the priest of our parish around on some calls this afternoon."

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