

GIs Think Germans Are Stupid

A Correspondent

Reports on a Bull Session

At the Front

By JOHN R. WILHELM



WITH U. S. 3D ARMY, GERMANY, Apr. 21.—A group of American doughboys and tankmen were lying in the sun under white-blossomed apple trees. Chewing blades of grass during a brief pause, they discussed among themselves tangled world affairs.

They decided that Czechoslovakia wouldn't be so bad, that the German people were the most stupid they had ever met, that it was too bad Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Ernie Pyle were dead but that "after all, they're just a couple more guys as far as we're concerned."

Before any eyebrow-lifting can be expressed over the latter, in fairness to the GIs it may be said they feel deeply over the death of any "couple of guys." But there comes a time when emotion drains dry.

"What about these Russians?" said one tall tanker, idly tossing his leather combat helmet about.

They're A-Coming

"Don't worry about the Russians. If we just sit here they'll just be a-coming," replied a turret gunner, a red-haired boy from Pennsylvania.

"Hell. We wait anywhere?" an armored infantryman broke in scoffingly. "We are going on, maybe through Czechoslovakia.

"I can hardly wait," he went on. "All those dames with petticoats and lace, bring us out beer. I'll just lay out on the grass like here and let them petticoat babes pour it down my poor old throat."

He signed in anticipation of that great day in Czechoslovakia when U. S. beer manufacturers' advertising would come to life.

"Czechoslovakia?" interrupted a Kentucky boy. "Do you like the idea of messing up all the towns in Czechoslovakia like we done in Germany?" He demanded indignantly. "They ain't Germans. They're Allies in case you don't read the papers, stupid."

The GI group was silent a minute and then a boy sitting on the edge of a tank brought up an often-discussed topic—the German people.

Bull Session

Some Good Ones?

"Aren't these Heinies the stupidest people you ever saw?" he asked, reflectively. "This woman whose house we lived at washed all the guys' clothes and put sheets on the beds—after we come to town and kick them all out of their own homes.

"Now what the hell do you make of that?" he finished triumphantly.

"So what's wrong with that. Maybe they ain't mad at you," answered the Kentuckian. "Maybe there are some good people here."

Over at the side a bespectacled Jewish tanker suddenly got serious about this new subject.

"They are good people now," he said. But were these good people when they knew there was a concentration camp like Ohdruf and Buchenwald and everywhere else and they just went on living like they didn't mind?

"Were they good people when they all waved flags and hollered for Hitler? There are still pictures around if you forget that," He finished.

"Well, what would you've done if you were them," the Kentuckian asked.

"I might have sat around at first," the tanker said, "but if I were a German and saw one of my neighbors getting arrested for reading the wrong kind of books or listening to the BBC (British Broadcasting Corp.), then everybody in the block should have been mad as hell and stomped down to get them out.

"And if they did anything to the neighbors from our block, then the whole town should have been aroused to overthrow the camp and then if they did anything to the town, the whole country should have come to the rescue of the town—even the Nazis couldn't have stopped that."

The group was silent. Then the boy from Kentucky issued the afternoon's verdict.

"Yeah," he drawled, "I guess they were stupid, all right."