

DEATH OF A DUTCH TOWN

BY MARTHA GELLHORN

There is a moral to this story. And the picture of a little Dutch girl of four with big, silent eyes will help you to remember it

RADIOED FROM PARIS

THIS is a story about a little Dutch town called Nijmegen and pronounced in any way you choose. The moral of the story is: It would be a fine thing if the Germans did not make war every twenty years or so, and that way there would be no story about little towns called Nijmegen. I have no idea what Nijmegen used to look like; there was probably a sweet old part to the city, judging from the looks of some of the ruins, some remnants of roofs and a carved doorway here and there. Also, I imagine the curve of houses on the bluff by the Waal River were nice houses, but as they are all burned out, it is hard to tell. And through the center of the town where the university stood, it was also very likely pleasant and clean and untroubled, but, due to uninterrupted shelling for a month or more, the place looks now as if it had been abandoned years ago following an earthquake and a flood.

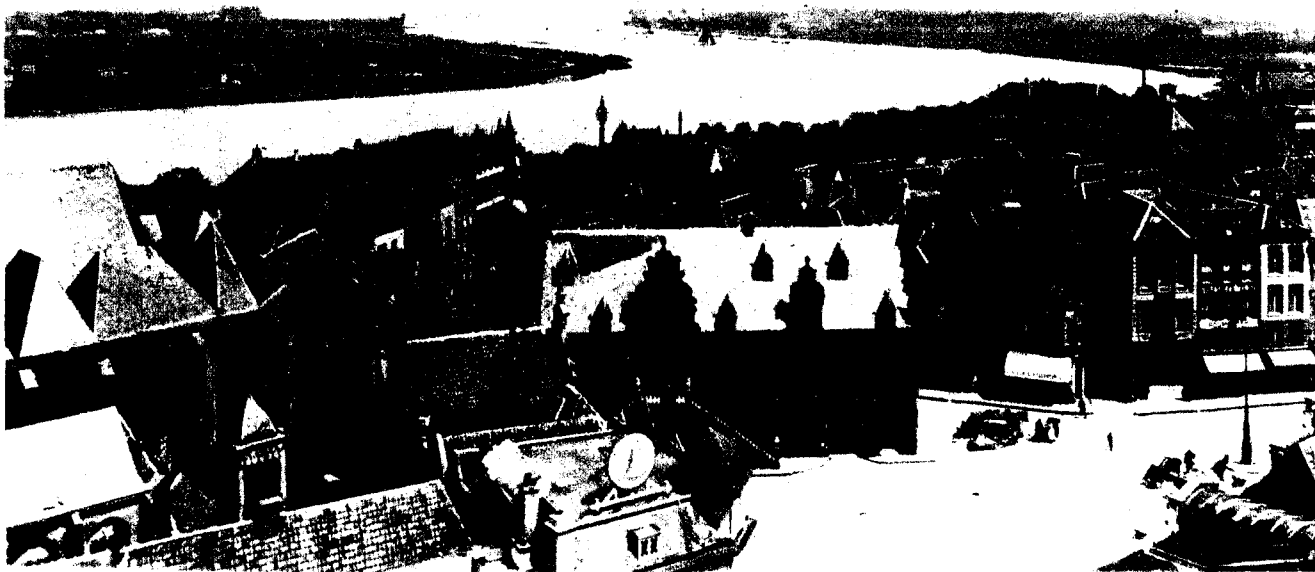
Today Nijmegen is a town where people sleep in cellars and walk with care on the streets, listening hard for incoming shells. The Dutch sweep up broken glass every morning in a despairingly tidy way, but there is no transport to cart glass away, so, under the dripping autumn trees and along the shell-marked street, there are neat mounds of rubble and glass.

The center of the town can be ignored, since it is not livable, having no windows left and too many houses burned hollow, but on the fringes of the town there are ugly unimaginative comfortable red-brick homes which are very modern and cheap to rent or own. There are no signs of great wealth in Nijmegen, and the poorest parts of the city, which are also the oldest and have the most charm, are not so bad as slums in an equivalent-sized English or American town. The people who lived in Nijmegen were obviously people accustomed to safety. They are a God-fearing folk, devoutly Catholic, who led a quiet provincial life and worked hard and neither wasted nor wanted and could count on a measure of security in their old age.

But there is a great road bridge at Nijmegen crossing the Waal River, and this part of Holland bears a strategic relationship to Germany and the construction of the Siegfried Line and the course of the Rhine, and for these reasons—to put it very simply—Nijmegen found itself in the path of the opposing armies. So Nijmegen, in modern times, becomes a besieged citadel, which means that the Germans are a few kilometers away to the east, a few more kilometers away to the west, even more kilometers away to the north, and behind the city the road stretches back to Belgium through a long,

"There is a great bridge crossing the Waal and this part bears a strategic relationship to Germany." A British soldier guards it. The Germans left Hitler's picture

BRITISH OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH



OFFICIAL NETHERLANDS

Here is an idea what Nijmegen used to look like (above); there was a fine solid part to the city; but now (below) "the center part can be ignored, since it is not livable, and has too many houses burned hollow"

ACME



narrow Allied-held corridor. Any town within range of artillery is an unlucky town.

There is no heat in Nijmegen, and the small and dwindling supply of coal is used for electricity. So at night behind all the blackout curtains, people can at least look at one another while they listen for the shells. The food-ration tickets are the same as those issued by the Germans, only now the tickets are honored and the people can actually buy the basic foodstuffs allowed them.

This is not to say that the stores are open; it is impossible to have a neat system of shops working on fixed hours when half the shops are blown apart by artillery and, at given times, quite unpredictably, not even a cat would want to slink through the shopping district. But some stores are open, and the housewives tell one another of these, and here one can buy a very little food. What the careful Dutch are really living on is the reserves each woman somehow managed to get together during those years.

Instead of a dowry, families gave preserved vegetables and fruits or great stone crocks of eggs or butter to the marrying daughter. The communal kitchens which feed the great bulk of people who have no homes left and, therefore, no reserves are not spoiling or fattening anyone. A regulation day's diet is ersatz coffee or pallid tea and two black-bread sandwiches in the morning, a plate of potatoes at lunch and the same tea or coffee and sandwiches at night.

Life is not exactly dull in Nijmegen, though I do not imagine life was ever really gay there. It is not a town that has a café or a bar or a dance hall, and I never saw a sign of a movie house. But needless to say, none of these pleasure spots would function now anyhow. However, while riding one's bicycle, one can watch a dogfight over the city, between one Messerschmitt and three Spitfires, in case one is the hardy type and is not looking for a likely doorway for shelter.

One can also watch with interest the tanks and the guns rumbling through the town, and the children adore this. It is also easy enough to see gun batteries and machine-gun emplacements and foxholes. And at night there are always the fires—huge roaring fires that eat out the center of a house. At night the streets are very empty and there is no sound except the artillery—our artillery and the German artillery. On one street there will easily be three sets of double houses burning wildly and the small, dark figures of the firemen spraying a weak stream of water onto a blaze that obviously will go on.

As most of the buildings have been opened by high explosives, there are great signs all over Nijmegen saying: "Do Not Loot: Penalty Death." But I do not feel that these signs are necessary. The British and American soldiers like the Dutch and respect them, and because Nijmegen is what it is—a small, not very rich town—the soldiers recognize it and find it understandable and like home, and they know what (Continued on page 58)

G-Eye View OF THE PACIFIC

BY INNES MAC CAMMOND

UP UNTIL December 7, 1941, most young Americans had some quaint illusions—but illusions nevertheless—about the romance-studded islands of the Pacific Ocean. Movies and travel-agency advertising had seen to that. As a result, many a Pacific-bound G.I. expected to find enchanting lagoons, silken-soft beaches, the soft twanging of native guitars, palm trees, a full moon and exquisite, honey-colored maidens who liked to play games like underwater tag as a come-on.

What he actually found was a delicate coral reef that sliced his hands and legs to shreds, or a stinking, steaming malaria-infested jungle full of loathsome insects and impassable, slimy undergrowth, and overrun with murderous Japs. And as for the honey-colored maiden: She was usually patent-leather black, frizzle-haired, bedaubed and scarred, sag-breasted, pomaded with rancid oil—and, to be quite frank, she stank.

Outraged letters cascaded back from the boys in the Solomons, in New Guinea, in New Caledonia and elsewhere, who felt they had been cruelly misled. Even so, there was still much that was weird and wonderful. A great slice of American youth, whose horizons had been bounded heretofore by Kansas City and Saturday-night dates, suddenly had its eyes opened to a new world—a world of strange animals and birds, dazzling flowers, and luxuriant foliage that up until then had been only pictures in back numbers of the National Geographic at the dentist's office. The accompanying map depicts some of the incredible sights that popped the G.I.'s eyes. For convenience in description, the millions of square miles of Pacific are divided into the three main ethnological areas.

MELANESIA. On an ordinary map, the area known as Melanesia looks like about three inches of colored blobs in a bright blue sea. Actually it's a chain of volcanic islands, coral reefs and mountainous archipelagoes more than 3,000 miles long and 700 miles wide. It stretches below the equator from New Guinea, the world's second largest island, to the Fiji Islands, and includes New Britain, New Ireland, New Caledonia, the Solomons and the Admiralty Islands, among others.

In this area of dense tropical forest, swamps and mountain chains and heavy rain-fall, your G.I. found that his clothes, tents and equipment mildewed and rotted away practically overnight. Here he found black-or brown-skinned natives, frizzy-haired and squat-nosed, who went in for tattooing, scanty clothing, nose pins, chewing betel nut, piercing and distending their ear lobes and scarring their bodies—frequently by burning. As if this weren't enough, some bleached their hair with lime for a more elegant effect, and almost all were loaded down with necklaces and pendants of shells, bones and teeth. On the whole, though, he got on pretty well with the natives through the medium of pidgin English. Here, too, the G.I. made his first contact with malaria and dengue fever and amoebic dysentery—all experiences that will not unnaturally prejudice him against the place.

MICRONESIA. On a map, Micronesia is
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Reprints of the map G-EYE VIEW OF THE PACIFIC may be had by sending ten cents in stamps or coin to the Reprint Dept., Crowell-Collier Publishing Company, 250 Park Avenue, New York 17, New York

MAP BY ANTONIO PETRUCCELLI