

New Year 1943. How our thoughts are with you! May God grant that you are well and remain so in the new year. It is always a comfort to me that Franz is a doctor and can help when it's needed.

God grant, that you are still able to work and make a living, that you are left in peace and that the hour will come when the terrible injustice that has been done and is being done throughout the world will be recognised. I always think the countries who gave these poor people a home will be rewarded by God.¹ Justice and law must return again. There has to be peace again and people will have to stop destroying and exterminating each other. Death and misery must come to an end. One goes so agonisingly, drearily into this new year and one just thinks: put an end, o Lord, put an end to all our suffering -

30 January 1943 – the day of the Takeover² - we've had an early warning alarm since 2 o'clock! Dearest child, what times these are – We went on our errands in the afternoon, we had a bath, ate at 6.30 and are now sitting and waiting, the suitcase packed beside us. How awful it all is. If we lost everything we wouldn't know where to go. Others go to their children. We have no one. You are so far away and we don't believe the Schnabels would offer to put us up. Child, what will the future bring? Stalingrad is as good as lost. Everywhere in Russia they're retreating, in spite of our soldiers fighting like heroes.³ In spite of their superhuman efforts, Libya has been abandoned.⁴ What is to happen? Dorothee is still in Grainau with the children. I can understand that. I couldn't have stood a long, a year-long, separation from you both. Ernst in Paris, working himself to the bone. 2 factories in Berlin, his father sick, the business in Paris. And our father would give anything to have some work. But a lodge-man⁵ is of no use anywhere. Dorothee is not well, a delayed reaction to the radium.⁶ If we only knew what it was and how we could help her! One stands on the sidelines, they need neither love, care nor help. Does life still have any meaning for us? It would if we could just see you again, if we could know that

¹ Presumably this is a careful reference to countries which had provided refuge to the Jews.

² Hitler had been named Chancellor by President Hindenburg on 30 January 1933, an event that led swiftly to one-party rule in Germany.

³ The battle for Stalingrad began in August 1942 and quickly developed into a life and death struggle that would determine the course of the war. In bitter fighting, the Germans managed by November to reach the banks of the Volga River, which divided the city, but Soviet resistance and the approach of winter meant that the attack ground to a halt. Soviet counter-offensives then led to the complete encirclement of German forces which were ordered by Hitler to fight to the last man. On the date of this journal entry, 30 January 1943, Hitler had promoted the commander of German military forces in Stalingrad, Friedrich Paulus, to the rank of Field Marshall in the hope that this would stiffen his resolve. In fact, the German position was already quite hopeless and the next day, 31 January, Paulus was captured by Soviet troops. The battle finally ended on 3 February 1943. Of the 210 000 German soldiers trapped in Stalingrad, some 35 000 were airlifted out, 135 000 were captured, 60 000 were killed, while around 10 000 continued to fight on until the end of February and were subsequently either killed or captured. (See: Beevor, Antony. *Stalingrad*. London: Penguin, 1999) Most of those who entered captivity did not live to return to Germany. One who did was a relative of Marianne's: Burkhardt Angermann (1911 – 1990). (See Charlotte's family tree at the end of this journal.)

⁴ German fortunes in North Africa suffered a serious reverse with the defeat of Rommel's Afrika Korps and their Italian allies at the Battle of El Alamein in Egypt in October-November 1942. Their retreat along the coast to Tunisia finally led to the capitulation of all Axis forces in North Africa in May 1943. Together with Stalingrad, El Alamein is generally regarded as the point at which the war's tide turned in favour of the Allies.

⁵ This is another reference to Konrad's Freemasonry. For a discussion of the social and professional restrictions pertaining to membership of a Masonic lodge, see Charlotte's entry for 30 September 1942.

⁶ Dorothee was clearly undergoing an early form of radiotherapy. In the 1930s and 40s this was usually carried out using radium.

you're alive, well and happy, that you are earning a living, that you have a home life. That's what our thoughts are turning around, over and over. We don't even know if you have children? How I would wish that for you! But what does the future hold? Is it peaceful or do you constantly have air-raids? The poor Rhinelanders! Dear old Langenberg has also suffered badly: Eduard Andreas, Deilbachmühle, Kampmann, Laakerhof, at the Conze-Colsmanns 6 or 8 dead.⁷ They sit in the basements almost every night, even at Christmas and New Year. Dear old Frau Laubmeyer writes so sadly: thousands of houses and villas have been torn down in The Hague, everything fortified. The home in which she lived and felt so comfortable is no longer.⁸ They've been cast to all the winds. Child, my dear, we are always thinking of you –

For quite a long time I didn't write anything in your book, my dear! What should I write? One day is like the next one – Everything is so difficult, so cumbersome, so uncertain and dark. Whenever one opens the paper one finds notices of people with names we know, killed in action, just 17, 18 years old. Every week we receive news of a bereavement, now they're also about people killed by air attacks. One grows ever quieter – and never a word from you – child, sometimes this is hardly bearable! In this world is there no way to get to the parents, to the children? This is a quiet, lonely Easter, and the great shock about the Schnabel's house is still affecting us. On the 26 March, during the big air attack on Berlin, the house was hit very hard. The roof has gone, the framework burnt out, doors and windows blown out, the beautiful, large conservatory smashed, curtains torn to shreds. A train with people on leave was parked on the railway embankment. 14 high explosive bombs were dropped on the little Zimmerstraße.⁹ The aircraft came in very low and strafed the train.¹⁰ It must have been horrific. By chance I know this from someone

⁷ The names here must refer to soldiers from Langenberg who had recently been killed. Langenberg, a small town with no obvious war industries, was itself not specifically targeted. On the night of 12 – 13 January 1943, however, there had been an attack by a small group of bombers on the city of Essen. As the targeting radar failed on this occasion, bombs fell in a much wider area and struck Langenberg's sister town of Neviges. It is possible that Langenberg was hit also. In any case, the town was close enough to the Ruhr for its citizens to have been frequently caught up in air-raid alerts. (BCWD, 117)

⁸ The reference here is to the construction of fortifications at The Hague begun in 1942 as part of the Atlantic Wall and designed to defend the city from Allied invasion. The anti-tank ditches, bunkers, concrete walls and other barricades driven through the Dutch city required the demolition of several thousand houses, particularly in the Duinoord and Statenkwartier areas. Around a quarter of the city – some 140 000 people – was forcibly evacuated by the Germans to make way for these fortifications. <https://europere remembers.com/destination/atlantic-wall-the-hague/> (Accessed 16 December 2020)

⁹ Zimmerstraße is a short cul de sac in the suburb of Lichterfelde off the Schwatlostraße. The Schnabel home was at number 4. The Schnabels' home was situated approximately 100 metres from a rail line on an embankment. In 1943 this line was used by two S-Bahn (light rail) services which connected with the main Anhalter Bahnhof terminus in the centre of Berlin. One of these services travelled further out to the Ludwigsfelde mainline station on the southern rim of the city from which trains ran to the city of Halle. The closest station to the Schnabel home would have been Lichterfelde Süd, a 15 minute walk. The line is still part of Berlin's S-Bahn network today and is used by the S25 and S26 services.

¹⁰ The Bomber Command War Diaries describe this raid on the night of 27 – 28 March as "basically a failure." The city was attacked by 396 aircraft but most bombs fell 7 – 17 miles short of the aiming point. Damage in Berlin was therefore spread over a wide area rather than being concentrated as intended. Residential damage was limited with sixteen houses completely destroyed. Compared with similar raids, casualties were relatively low: 102 were killed and 260 injured. According to the *War Diaries*, most deaths occurred when a train bringing soldiers home on leave from the Eastern Front was hit at the Anhalter station by two bombs: 80 soldiers were killed and 63 injured. The damage could have been far worse: around one quarter of the bombs dropped turned out to be duds and did not explode. (BCWD, 371) Charlotte's report here raises the possibility that the *Bomber Command War Diaries* have erred slightly, and that the train was bombed not at the main Anhalter Bahnhof terminus, but on its way to or from that station. This would

who was among the first responders and was in the Schnabels' house, which was declared a provisional hospital and received 50 heavily wounded people. There was no one home. Ernst was in Paris, Dorothee in Grainau with the children. That was good luck! Otherwise, they might have been killed. The house was in a terrible state; puddles of blood on the parquet floor, on the carpets, the furniture bloody. The poor soldiers were difficult to remove from the train, cramped, bleeding bundles of humanity. Inside the house terrifying things occurred. And everyone said: just as well the mistress is not here, because she wouldn't have been able to be happy in this house anymore. From Schnabels, of course, not a word. Father immediately offered Ernst our help, but he didn't even reply! Unfortunately, we have become use to that. In Dorothee's place we would have been gone there immediately. But it seems that a friend like "Dackel" rules that house again and Dorothee seems to be quite dispensable.¹¹ We are very worried about her. She never confides in us and we cannot help. But she seems to be tired, resigned and lives purely for the children. We haven't seen them for a year! We talk about it so often: everyone has grandchildren from the dangerous parts of the country here!¹² It is so quiet and peaceful on the Weißer Hirsch.¹³ We would do everything to replace the parents for the poor children in every respect. As it is they are in the care of the very unreliable nanny who allows Peter to run wild outside and controls Lilli with the cane. Everything around them is lacking love, last year they really enjoyed everything: punctuality, order, flowers on the table. Child, I cannot tell you how sorry we feel for them. Those two narrow uncomfortable rooms, no corner for playing in, no place to put away the toys, they're not allowed to bring other children home – what an upbringing you had in comparison! And we would do everything to provide the same for them. But there's no way through to the Schnabels, and you wouldn't believe how hard this is for us. How old and tired one grows with these things on one's mind. We are always thinking of you, [and wonder] whether you are happy and content, in spite of all the difficulties you have to cope with. And whether it will be possible to be with you once again?!

29 May

Yesterday evening we accompanied dear Frau Laubmeyer to the train. She came on the 25 May. The visit had been planned for years. They had wanted to stay in a guesthouse, the two "Konrads" wanted to go for long walks across the heath, the two of us wanted to

certainly make sense in light of the aiming errors recorded by the *War Diaries* which resulted in bombs falling several miles short of the target. It is likely, however, that Charlotte's reports of the train being machine-gunned were the result of rumour. During a raid such as this bombers invariably tried to reduce their own losses by flying at an altitude that made it more difficult for the flak batteries to reach them. The fighter aircraft capable of strafing targets at street level – as Clara suggests happened here – were not part of the attacking force and would not, in any case, have risked such low level passes at night.

¹¹ Dackel in German usually means a dachshund, but it can also be used as a pejorative term for an inept individual. The implication is that the household has a new maid who appears to have been – from Charlotte's perspective – as impertinent as her predecessor.

¹² That is, grandchildren evacuated from more dangerous regions of Germany. In the course of the war, it became more and more difficult for non-natives to obtain a residence permit to live in Dresden: "Local authorities tried to keep the convoys of refugees out of the city and seldom issued relocation permits due to the lack of measures to protect the city's inhabitants. [...] With evacuations increasing in the winter of 1944-45 pressure grew on the administration as tens of thousands of refugees had to pass through this communications hub. Everyone, even mothers with children, received only short-term residence permits. The limited allocation of ration coupons for food and other benefits compelled them to continue their journey." (Widera, Thomas. "Krieg, Zerstörung und Besetzung von Dresden." *Geschichte der Stadt Dresden*. Ed. Starke, Holger. Vol. 3. Stuttgart: Theiss, 2006. 497 - 528. 502.)

¹³ The Dresden suburb on the right bank of the Elbe where the Angermanns lived.

go shopping in the town!¹⁴ Herr Laubmeyer has been dead now for quite some time. And there is no shopping anymore! She has become quiet and old, very sad and dejected. We had a few nice days together. She is so amiable and modest, a lovely, lovely guest. We talked a lot about the good old times, the dear old house, about your youth. Günther still carries your photo in his wallet – and the sepia-drawing, which you made for him and for us, is hanging over his bedside table.¹⁵ May God grant that you have found complete happiness, my dear. Günther hasn't, and we 3 old folk quite often ask: why did things have to turn out like this?

31 May

Last night there was a terrible attack on Wuppertal.

6 June¹⁶

The letters about Barmen¹⁷ are terrible! 80% of it is said to have been destroyed, 9 thousand dead, 100 thousand homeless. Phosphorus is said to have poured from the sky in bucket loads.¹⁸ They say that people burned to death in their beds and jumped like

¹⁴ Charlotte refers to plans the Laubmeyers and Angermanns must have had before the war for a reunion in Germany.

¹⁵ Günther Walther Clemens Anton Laubmeyer (1903 - ?) was the son of the oft-mentioned Frau Laubmeyer, a friend of the family's. He would appear to have had quite a lot in common with Marianne; he was the same age, he was a native of Langenberg and he also had a doctorate in chemistry. This entry seems to imply that he and Marianne had once been very close. Be that as it may, Günther eventually married Elisabeth Piepmeyer in Kassel on 7 January 1928. (Hessisches Hauptstaatsarchiv; Wiesbaden, Deutschland; Bestand: 910) See also the earlier entry from 22 October 1938 for further information on Günther Laubmeyer.

¹⁶ Described by the Bomber Command War Diaries as "the outstanding success of the Battle of the Ruhr", this raid on the night of 29 – 30 May focused on Wuppertal-Barmen in the west of the city. The narrow streets in the old town became the centre of a firestorm that destroyed 80% of Barmen's built-up area. Industrial and residential sites were equally affected: 4 000 houses were destroyed as were five of the town's six largest factories. The death toll of 3 400 set an egregious record – it was five times higher than the previous worst casualty list. (BCWD, 395) Clara's report of people leaping into the river to save themselves is confirmed by Jörg Friedrich's account of the bombing of Wuppertal-Barmen which opens his book *The Fire. The Bombing of Germany 1940 – 1945* (2006): "Surrounded by fire, many sought protection in the Wupper River. They did not jump in but slid instead down the embankment walls. Elisabeth Stark, a physician on duty in the first-aid centre, was called in by firefighters and let down on rope ladders to help the burn victims out of the water. "Half their bodies were one giant wound, with shreds of clothing sticking to it. Dr. Stark treated the wounds and gave morphine injections to ease the pain." (Friedrich, 5) Friedrich provides a litany of horrors in his description of the attack: people suffocated in their cellars, mothers and their newborns were incinerated in the Fischertal Hospital; people waded through molten asphalt in the streets; and rescue workers relied on alcohol to help them confront the horrors of their work. (ibid, 2 – 8) Three and a half weeks later, on the night of 24 – 25 June, the RAF returned to bomb Elberfeld, the other half of Wuppertal. The tonnage of bombs dropped was even greater than in the raid on Barmen; 94% of the town was destroyed and 1 800 people killed. (BCWD, 401)

¹⁷ An independent town until 1929, Barmen is now a district in the northeast of Wuppertal.

¹⁸ According to Frederick Taylor, phosphorus was only used either to mark out the target for the main attacking force or as an initial fire-starter. Such was the terror induced by incendiary attacks, however, that it soon came to be associated with fire-bombing as such: "German civilians tended to refer to all incendiaries as phosphor bombs, although only in a few cases was the terrifying, blister-inducing substance used as any more than an aid to initial ignition." (Taylor, 113) Bombing victims who claimed that their houses were consumed by phosphorus were more likely to have observed the effects of gasoline or oil-based bombs, writes Taylor. (ibid, 329) Over 2.6 million 30 pound bombs containing white phosphorus and benzol gel were dropped in 1943 – 1944, but most incendiaries contained magnesium and explosive thermite pellets - over 44 million 4 pound devices of this type were used in the same period. (Richard Overy, *The Bombing War. Europe 1939 – 1945*. London: Penguin, 2013. 181)

flaming torches into the River Wupper. Gerta Hammel¹⁹ went to Langenberg²⁰ during the night, barefoot, in her nightdress, sweatpants and a light summer coat. She has lost everything. In the town hall in Elberfeld, they laid out babies on tables at certain times in order to establish whose children they were. Phosphorus ran down the houses and into the cellars, where it ignited the coal, the staircases, it was unspeakable. What is going to become of us?

13 June

It was a quiet Pentecost. Child, we were depressed and very anxious about what is going to come. The poor Rhineland! Düsseldorf,²¹ Bochum,²² Essen,²³ Oberhausen,²⁴ Duisburg²⁵ – the people there are said to experience dreadful things. We've got off lightly in comparison, around 30 alarms, but so far no damage. The weather is very bad: bleak and cold. Nothing is growing. We have hardly any vegetables, and queue up in vain for 1½ - 2 hours. Frequently we don't know what to put on the table and have to make do with potatoes throughout the week.

23 June

These have been dreadful days, child! In the loft all the lath partitions had to be removed and what was stored there was supposed to be reduced to the bare minimum.²⁶ From your 6 boxes we packed 2, counted everything and made notes of it. Old-fashioned things and those which would have been just too big and bulky we sold and put the money into your savings account. Should we not survive, Dorothee has been informed! All your books are now in father's bookcase. Your silver is in your corner-cupboard, your Meißner coffee

¹⁹ The daughter of Rudolf (1855 – 1925) and Laura Hammel (1867 – 1940) from Langenberg.

²⁰ A distance on foot of around 15 km.

²¹ A raid on Düsseldorf on the night of 25 – 26 May 1943 by 759 aircraft was considered a failure with bombs scattered over a wide area. "Only" 50 – 100 buildings were destroyed in the city and 30 people killed. (BCWD, 392) On 11 – 12 June 1943 another large raid was staged with 783 aircraft, and this proved to be the most destructive of the war for the city. Some 8 882 separate fires were recorded over an area 8 km by 5 km, 140 000 people were made homeless and 1 292 were killed. (BCWD, 396-7) By 1944 the population of Düsseldorf had been reduced by half, and by the end of the war the city had endured 243 air raids. (Friedrich, 220)

²² On the night of 13 – 14 May 1943 Bochum was attacked by 442 bombers with 394 buildings destroyed and 302 people killed. (BCWD, 385) Similar damage was inflicted on 12 – 13 June in a raid by 503 aircraft: 449 buildings were destroyed and 312 people killed. (BCWD, 397)

²³ Essen had recently been attacked on the night of 27 – 28 May in a raid by 518 aircraft. The British felt that damage was "limited", yet 488 buildings were destroyed and 196 people killed. Bombs also fell in a number of surrounding Ruhr towns. (BCWD, 393)

²⁴ Oberhausen is a town between Duisburg and Essen. It was attacked in a raid by 203 aircraft on the night of 14 – 15 June 1943 i.e. after the date of this journal entry. On that occasion, 267 buildings were destroyed and 85 people killed. (BCWD, 398) It is likely that Oberhausen had already suffered collateral damage from attacks on other Ruhr towns such as Duisburg (see next footnote), and this may be what Charlotte is referring to here.

²⁵ Duisburg was raided for the fourth time in the war on the night of 12 – 13 May by a force of 572 aircraft. 1 596 buildings were destroyed and 273 people killed. (BCWD, 384-5) The city was a crucial site of German industry; it produced one third of the country's iron and steel, had the second largest marshalling yard and the largest inland port, along with a large number of coking plants, mines and shipyards. Duisburg was bombed 299 times during the war – an average, as Jörg Friedrich points out, of one raid per week. In three raids in mid-October 1944, Allied air forces released one and a half times the tonnage of bombs over the city that it had endured up to that point: a total of nine thousand tons in just twenty hours. (Friedrich, 210)

²⁶ These were likely to have been fire prevention measures. Clearing out attics and dismantling partitions would have reduced the materials so easily set alight by incendiary bombs penetrating the roof space.

set is in the big cupboard. Everything which is yours and which is to come to you is marked with your name. May God grant that you enjoy it one day!

30 August

Again, we have gone through difficult days. On 23 – 24 August there was a heavy attack on Berlin²⁷ again, and Dorothee and Ernst only just managed to save their lives. From their slit trench in their garden they could see their house burning for the second time. This time the roof and the upper storey burned out completely, the doors and windows were blown out. Ernst has burns to his face and on his hands. Dorothee is a wreck. She has no rest in her life! We only heard from them 5 days after the event, there was no communication with Berlin whatsoever. Now she is in Grainau again with the children. When will they be all together again? Child, are you still alive? The year has passed its peak and there is still no word from you. It is so unspeakably lonely for us. You are so out of reach. Dorothee doesn't bother with us. She hasn't been here for almost 3 years. How happy we were with you and now we are totally alone -

26 September

Dear child, it feels like winter is about to arrive! It's only 8 degrees, it has been pouring down all day, and we thank God that at least some of our coal is in the cellar and we can get a fire going quickly. One freezes all the more because our bodies have lost all their fat. And Father is so skinny it's heart-breaking. We await the winter with great anxiety! We couldn't get any peas or beans, or cucumbers. The potato harvest is bad, the cabbage harvest too. Our soldiers have been in the field now for 5 years. And there is no end in sight. They are performing superhuman deeds, as are the poor people living in the areas of the terror attacks. Leni ten Eicken²⁸ has lost everything, everything. I'll keep her letter for you. Are you still alive? Why is there no back and forth between us? Why are all natural bonds being broken?

21 / 11 / 43

Sunday of the Dead – dear child, how many people do we have to remember today who are no longer with us. Maybe they have been spared the lot that we might have to face? What am I to write? Time goes too quickly for our little portion of life, and too slowly for everything we have to throw into the pot. What will the winter have in store, both here and abroad? All those poor people who don't have a homeland anymore. Dreadful

²⁷ This raid on Berlin by 727 aircraft was considered only “partially successful” by Bomber Command. The target markers were incorrectly laid and German defences were particularly fierce. Most bombs landed in the southern approaches to the city centre, including on surrounding villages. Nevertheless, this was the worst raid suffered by Berlin thus far. The most severely affected residential areas were the southern suburbs of Lankwitz and Lichterfelde – where the Schnabel family had their home. Despite the erratic bombing, the casualty lists were long: 854 were killed with many deaths caused by people not taking cover in their allocated shelters. (BCWD, 425)

²⁸ Leni ten Eicken (Langenberg 1903 – Wuppertal 1994)

concerns about the Russian front²⁹ – What is going to happen in Italy?³⁰ Our soldiers are performing superhuman deeds. The homeland is sacrificing and suffering. It is the Fatherland that is at stake, the future of children and grandchildren. Do you think of us as much as we do of you?

26 / 11 / 43.³¹

Dear child, now Ernst Schnabel's factory in Berlin has been bombed in the terror attack on Berlin on 22 / 11.³² High explosives on both sides. The roof has gone, doors, windows, walls demolished. The workers are said to have been heroes. From rubble metres high they recovered machines, cleaned them, repaired them and got going whatever they could save, and after 3 days they were already able to start some work again.³³ Dorothee

²⁹ In their Summer-Autumn campaign of 1943, the Red Army had driven the Germans back across a broad front. The Wehrmacht was forced to abandon all its positions on the eastern bank of the Dnieper River while Soviet forces were able to establish bridgeheads on the western side from which they advanced to capture Kiev, the largest city in Ukraine, by December. Though still capable of mounting serious counterattacks, from 1943 onwards the Germans were relentlessly forced out of all the occupied territories in the East. (See: Hill, Alexander, *The Red Army and the Second World War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016. 456 ff)

³⁰ In July 1943 Sicily had been invaded by the Allies who then went on to land on the Italian peninsula itself in September. By the time Charlotte wrote this entry in November, Naples had been taken but the Allied advance quickly became bogged down by a dogged German defence conducted in inhospitable terrain. Fighting in Italy would not come to an end until the German capitulation of May 1945. (See: Morgan, Philip. *The Fall of Mussolini: Italy, the Italians, and the Second World War*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 127 ff)

³¹ Although Charlotte here refers to the raid of 22 – 23 November, the city was also hit again on the date of this entry (26 November). Even Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels was affected by the havoc wrought on the city by these raids. In a diary entry for 27 November, he noted his reactions to a tour he made of the city: "In the morning I undertook an extended trip through the damaged areas of Berlin. Sometimes I'd like to close my eyes so as not to see all this horror. The diplomatic quarter along the Tiergarten looks like one gigantic heap of rubble. One can hardly pass through the streets, so deeply are they covered with debris." Nevertheless, in the same diary entry, Goebbels insisted on interpreting these horrors as a sign of his – and the Nazi Party's – historic mission: "What a life we are leading! Who could have prophesied that when I was born! I don't believe anyone could be leading a more dramatic and nerve-wracking life. Nevertheless, it has great and impelling impulses. One must throw oneself into this life with abandon both to taste it to the full and to help to shape it. Later generations will not only admire us but be jealous that life entrusted us with such tremendous tasks." (Goebbels, Joseph. *The Goebbels Diaries*. Trans. Lochner, Louis F. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1948. 435 – 436)

³² In the original manuscript the date of the air-raid is given as 22 / 12. It is corrected here to 22 / 11. A massive series of aerial assaults had been launched on Berlin by Bomber Command on 18 – 19 November and the prosecution of this campaign would see sixteen separate raids on the German capital before it finally ceased at the end of March 1944. On the night of 22 – 23 November Berlin was attacked by 764 aircraft. Poor weather forced the grounding of most German night-fighters and the bombers were able to take a relatively direct route into and away from their targets without fear of attack. Despite cloud cover, marking and bombing were accurate and immense damage was caused in an area stretching from the centre of the city and across to the western district of Spandau. Firestorms raged and the next day the smoke cloud was measured at 6 000 metres above the city. Some 3 000 homes were destroyed, 175 000 people rendered homeless and around 2 000 killed. Industrial damage was also severe: 23 premises were completely destroyed and thousands of others damaged. It was in this raid that the Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche (Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church) on the Kurfürstendamm suffered serious damage. Its ruins have been retained and now serve as a reminder of the horrors of war. (BCWD, 453) Friedrich provides a slightly lower figure of 753 aircraft for this raid and writes that the bombing run was timed with ruthless industrial efficiency: 34 planes were to pass over the target per minute – a rate of one every 1.76 seconds. (Friedrich, 76)

³³ Allied bombing had had a relatively modest effect on German war production up until the summer of 1943. From this point onwards, however, bombing raids became more intense and frequent: the total tonnage of bombs dropped on Germany in 1943 was 176 263 compared with 45 100 for the previous year.

is with the children in Grainau – she is very nervous and worried about Ernst. He lives in a damaged house without any comforts or anyone to look after him. How dreadfully

From mid 1943 priority was given to targets involved in the manufacture of aircraft – the business in which Ernst Schnabel clearly specialised – and this focus quickly began to pay off for the Allies: “The bombing of aircraft production began in July, with primary emphasis given to airframes. Attacks were heavy and resulted in a loss of 13 percent in total aircraft production during the second half of the year.” (Stanford Research Institute. *Impact of Air Attack in World War II: Selected Data for Civil Defense Planning. Division II: Effects on the General Economy. Volume I: Economic Effects – Germany. Part One.* Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1953. 16)

difficult everything is – Berlin has been suffering heavily. And so have Bremen,³⁴ Hamburg,³⁵ Kiel,³⁶ Kassel,³⁷ the poor Rhineland – what is going to happen?

³⁴ Bremen suffered its heaviest raids in the period June – September of the previous year. On the night of 25 – 26 June 1942 Bremen was targeted in one of the Royal Air Force's first 1000 bomber raids. The raid claimed 85 victims and 2 378 lost their homes. (BCWD, 280) Closer to the time of Charlotte's diary entry, there was another attack on 26 November 1943 which damaged the Diakonie-Krankenhaus (a hospital run by the church), along with eleven schools and the psychiatric hospital. Friedrich notes that Bremen – a relatively small city, one quarter the size of Hamburg – suffered 163 raids during the war. (Friedrich, 168-169)

³⁵ Listing Hamburg alongside other cities downplays the truly apocalyptic nature of what that city endured during the Battle of Hamburg in July-August 1943. Indeed, the devastation and loss of life meted out to Hamburg surpasses anything experienced by any other German city during the war, including Dresden. The worst came during the raid of 27 – 28 July – codenamed "Operation Gomorrah" – when summer air temperatures were high (30 degrees), humidity very low (30%) and there had been a long period without rain. The densely populated working-class suburbs of Hammerbrook, Hamm and Borgfeld were pounded. Firefighters engaged in damping down fires in the west of the city from a raid three nights earlier were unable to attend to the new conflagration because the streets were blocked by rubble. The consequences are recorded by the *War Diaries* in matter-of-fact language:

About half-way through the raid, the fires in Hammerbrook started joining together and competing with each other for the oxygen in the surrounding air. Suddenly, the whole area became one big fire with air being drawn into it with the force of a storm. The bombing continued for another half hour, spreading the firestorm area gradually eastwards. [...] The firestorm raged for about 3 hours and only subsided when all burnable material was consumed. The burnt-out area was almost entirely residential. Approximately 16 000 multi-storeyed apartment buildings were destroyed. There were few survivors from the firestorm area and approximately 40 000 people died, most of them by carbon monoxide poisoning when all the air was drawn out of their basement shelters. In the period immediately following this raid, approximately 1 200 000 people – two thirds of Hamburg's population – fled the city in fear of further raids. (BCWD, 413-14)

In the working-class district of Hammerbrook, Jörg Friedrich writes, some 36 percent of residents lost their lives – amongst them, 7 000 children and adolescents – while 10 000 children were made orphans. The heat from the firestorm was so intense that buildings seem to spontaneously combust:

At the zenith of the firestorm, the pure heat radiation caused buildings to ignite all at once, from the roof to the ground, like a darting flame. The gale force winds drew the oxygen out of the cellars like a gigantic pump. Six hours of firestorm supposedly forced two billion tons of fresh air up more than four miles through the air chimney. This created horizontal wind velocities into the storm of up to 170 miles per hour, causing people to lose their footing. Trees with roots extending yards into the ground broke in half, and their crowns were twisted. Poplars were bent completely horizontally. The rescue crews that later gathered the remains of those who had suffocated from lack of oxygen or had been incinerated by the radiant heat had to let the masses of rubble cool down for ten days. (Friedrich, 96).

The huge numbers of refugees who fled this death zone in the wake of the attack, had a sobering effect on the morale of those who encountered them. Fritz Reck in his *Tagebuch eines Verzweifelten (Diary of a Man in Despair)* describes the scene that unfolded on the platform of a Bavarian train station when some forty to fifty survivors from Hamburg tried desperately to board a train:

What happened then was inevitable. A suitcase, a miserable lump of cardboard with edges broken off, missed the target, fell back to the platform and broke open, revealing its contents. There was a pile of clothes, a manicure kit, a toy. And there was the baked corpse of a child, shrunk to the proportions of a mummy, which the half-crazed woman had dragged along with her, the macabre remains of what only a few days before had been a family. (Friedrich Reck-Maleczewen, quoted in W.G. Sebald. *Luftkrieg und Literatur* Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1999)

In *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, W.G. Sebald recounts an interview he conducted with an elderly German woman in Sheffield (a "resolute lady [...] not given to flights of fancy") that seemed to confirm the veracity of Reck's description. This woman had, at the age of sixteen, been a volunteer at the railway station at Stralsund, on the Baltic coast, where she assisted refugees who had arrived on a special train:

[...] most of them [were] still utterly beside themselves, unable to speak of what had happened, struck dumb or sobbing and weeping with despair. And several of the women on this train from Hamburg, I heard quite recently on my visit to Sheffield, actually did have dead children in their luggage, children who had suffocated in the smoke or died in some other way during the air raid. We do not know what

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23 / 7 / 43³⁸ Rheinische Meditationen /Heinz Steguweit/ Friends from Langenberg have sent us this article from the Cologne newspaper. I'll keep it here in the book for you. I know how much you loved Cologne. You will be deeply moved when you read it. All the beautiful things from sacred Cologne will appear again before your eyes. If we could only save your 'Blue Books'.³⁹ Your old Fatherland doesn't exist anymore. And in the 'Blue Books' there so many beautiful things that are no longer there: the Cologne cathedral,⁴⁰ the Emperor's Hall in Aachen,⁴¹ the Hanse House in Hamburg ...

Christmas Eve 1943

We are totally alone, washed-out and exhausted. At 3.30 in the morning we had an alarm for 1½ hours. Another terror attack on Berlin.⁴² Thank God Dorothee and the children are in Grainau and Ernst is with them during the festive season. On 29th November Prof. Mangold⁴³ and his family in Berlin-Halensee lost everything - Child, how our thoughts are with you! If we just had one sign of life from you – soon we won't be able go on any longer. It feels as if life were no longer worth living. And then – if we could see you just once! 8 years ago you left – 8 x 365 days and we only saw you on 3 of them. People can endure a lot – but one becomes quiet and lonely. – This was a strange Christmas, without church, without light – the churches are not heated and are truly freezing. I can't have that with my rheumatism. One doesn't dare go to the wonderful Frauenkirche, where the

became of the mothers who fled carrying such burdens, whether and how they managed to readjust to normal life. Yet perhaps such fragmentary memories show that it is impossible to gauge the depths of trauma suffered by those who came away from the epicentres of the catastrophe. (Sebald, 89)

³⁶ The most serious raid on Kiel in 1943 occurred on the night of 4 – 5 April when the town was attacked by 577 aircraft. It appears that thick cloud and strong winds limited the potential for damage: 11 buildings were destroyed and 26 people killed. (BCWD ,374)

³⁷ Kassel was attacked twice in October 1943, on the nights of 4 – 5 and 22 – 23. In the first raid a force of 547 aircraft managed to hit aircraft factories but also the city's main hospital. There were 118 dead and 304 injured. (BCWD, 436) The second raid by 569 bombers effectively put an end to the city. High explosives and the firestorm created by incendiary bombs destroyed 63% of Kassel's housing and rendered 100 000 – 120 000 people homeless. The recovery of corpses went on for months. By the end of November, 5 599 had been recovered (1 817 were unidentifiable) while 3 300 were still considered missing. (BCWD, 440)

³⁸ The date refers to the publication date of the newspaper in which the article appeared.

³⁹ The "Blue Books" were a series of large format, illustrated guides to art and culture produced by the Langewiesche Verlag. They enjoyed great popularity in the period from 1910 to 1960. See: <http://www.langewiesche-verlag.de/de/reihen/> [Accessed 14 June 2021]

⁴⁰ In fact, the cathedral at Cologne remained standing despite sustaining numerous hits.

⁴¹ Aachen had been attacked by 374 aircraft on the night of 13 – 14 July 1943. As visibility was unusually good, the damage suffered by the city was exceptionally severe. Almost 3 000 buildings were destroyed containing 16 828 apartments. 294 people were killed and 28 500 people fled the city. (BCWD, 407) The Krönungssaal (Coronation Hall), called the "Kaisersaal" here by Charlotte, dates from the mid fourteenth century when it was the largest non-sacral space in the Holy Roman Empire. Despite extensive bomb damage, the Hall has since been carefully restored.

⁴² As part of the RAF's ongoing Battle of Berlin, the capital was attacked by 379 aircraft on the night of 23 – 24 December. This raid was considered something of a failure by the RAF as "only the south-eastern suburbs of Köpenick and Treptow received any serious number of bombs." 287 houses were destroyed and 178 people killed. (BCWD, 461)

⁴³ Prof. Dr. Ernst Mangold (1879 – 1961). Physician, physiologist and nutritionist. Professor Mangold taught at the University of Freiburg at the time Marianne was completing her doctorate there. He resided at Halberstädter Straße 3 in Berlin-Halensee, not far from Berlin's most famous shopping street, the Kurfürstendamm. (Deutsche Nationalbibliothek/Frankfurt am Main. *Amtliches Fernsprechbuch für den Bezirk der Reichspostdirektion Berlin 1941; Berlin ZC 3344.*)

Kreuzschüler choir is singing during midnight mass.⁴⁴ The trains are overflowing. And late in the evening on the way back home – the real horror – an air raid alarm. On 22 / 11 father was caught up in one on his way to the Meißner Ecce⁴⁵ in the Gewerbehaus.⁴⁶ The old Weißeritz millrace⁴⁷ is now an air raid shelter underneath the city from the Schauspielhaus⁴⁸ to the Kaufmannschaft.⁴⁹ He said it was not very comfortable. I have sent my last 4 candles to Dorothee, who did not have a single one left for the children. We will go to bed soon and read: a good book is really one's best friend. One thinks and ponders: Are you alive? Are you, as far as is possible in these times, happy and content? Do you have a warm room, warm clothes, good shoes? Do you actually have a roof over your heads? Are you able to work – and work profitably? We don't know anything, neither what you are doing, nor what you are thinking. Nothing. If only you were to walk through this apartment, sit at this table with us and touch something you loved just once – it would be much easier for us – Do you feel how intensely we are thinking of you? God grant that your Christmas Eve be quiet and peaceful. We bought a beautiful solid silver candle stick with a red candle for you – at Schnauffer's.⁵⁰ Will it ever grace your desk - and where?

⁴⁴ For a description of the Frauenkirche and Kreuzkirche, see the entry for 15 February 1945.

⁴⁵ Possibly a café. "Ecce" may be a variation on "Ecke" i.e corner or meeting place.

⁴⁶ This was probably a false alarm since Dresden was not targeted by Allied bombers until October 1944. (See entry for 12 October 1944). The Gewerbehaus (House of Commerce) was situated in the Ostra-Allee. Opened in 1870, its auditorium seated 2000 and was the main venue for performances by the Dresden Philharmonic which, at that time, was known as the Gewerbehauskapelle.

⁴⁷ The millrace was important in the early industrial development of Dresden. Constructed in the fifteenth century, it diverted water from the Weißeritz River at Dresden-Löbtau in order to drive water wheels in the city. The diversion was blocked in 1937 and the race was either filled in or converted to air-raid shelters (as Charlotte indicates here). (<https://www.stadtwikidd.de/wiki/Wei%C3%9Feritzm%C3%BChlgraben> Accessed: 8 December 2021)

⁴⁸ This was the Königliches Schauspielhaus designed by the architects William Lossow and Max Hans Kühne and built between 1911 and 1913 on the Postplatz, at the southern end of the Ostra-Allee. Partially financed by public subscription, It boasted some of the most advanced stage technology of its day. The building was almost completely destroyed in the February 1945 air raids but has since been rebuilt. (<https://www.stadtwikidd.de/wiki/Schauspielhaus> Accessed: 8 December 2021)

⁴⁹ Haus der Dresdner Kaufmannschaft (Dresden Merchants' House). A business school, built in 1871 and located at Ostra-Allee, 9. Partly destroyed in 1945 it was rebuilt and today houses offices.

⁵⁰ Georg Schnauffer was a court appointed jeweller and purveyor of gold and silverware. The shop was located at Prager Straße, 5. (*Adreßbuch der Stadt Dresden*. Deutsche Nationalbibliothek; Leipzig, Deutschland; Publisher: Güntzsche Stiftung; Bestand: 1936; Signatur: ZC 2382)