

Saw Bodies of Hitler, Braun Burn, Says Guard

By DANIEL DE LUCE

21st Army Group Headquarters, Germany, June 20 (AP). — A guard in the Adolf Hitler's Berlin Reichschancellery claimed today that he saw the bodies of the Fuehrer and his supposed bride, Eva Braun, burning at the exit to Hitler's underground shelter May 1. Four empty gasoline cans were beside the couple, he asserted.

The guard, 32-year-old Hermann Karnau, who surrendered to 1st Canadian Army troops at Wilhelmshaven May 25, said he recognized Hitler by his mustache and Eva Braun by her black suede, cork-soled shoes. He said he believed they had been previously poisoned.

This new account of Hitler's fate was described by Karnau at an Allied press conference. Headquarters did not explain why it was released, since Marshal Zhukov of Russia said in Berlin June 9 that "we have found no corpse that could be Hitler's." Zhukov sug-

gested then that Hitler and Eva Braun had a good opportunity to escape by air.

Karnau asserted that on the last day of Hitler's life—May 1, the day when the Germans claimed Hitler died and 24 hours previous to Berlin's fall—he was mounting guard at the underground shelter.

During the morning, he said, four men arrived carrying gasoline cans "for the air-conditioning system." Karnau said he knew that a Diesel engine was used and consumed oil, and therefore he refused them entrance to the shelter.

"Hitler's valet, Linge, then intervened and said it's all right," Karnau recounted.

Karnau said he saw Hitler alive at about 4 p.m. Afterward he said he and other guards went out into the open air, and then at about 6:30 p.m. he said he saw the burning bodies when he went around past the emergency exit to Hitler's shelter.

"I saw Hitler lying on the ground about two yards from the exit in the open air," he related. "Hitler was on his back with his knees slightly drawn up. Braun was beside him with her face down. Both bodies were on fire and beside them were four empty gasoline cans. There was an incredible odor.

"I turned about and encountered Prof. Stumpfecker, the chief medical officer of the Chancellery at the main entrance to the bunker. I believe that he poisoned the Fuehrer and Fraulein Braun, because four nights earlier he had poisoned Hitler's favorite Alsatian dog."

(Various previous reports of Hitler's death have said that Ahr. Morel, Hitler's personal physician, was believed to have poisoned Hitler or given him a "mercy" needle.)

Karnau said he then entered the bunker, which was about 65 feet

underground, and met the valet Linge.

"We had heard that Linge had orders that the Fuehrer's body should never fall into the hands of the enemy, who was then at the Hollisches Tor and was shelling us heavily," he continued.

"In the bunker I met Sturmabfuhrer Schedule of the Fuehrer's personal staff coming down the emergency exit. He called out, 'The Fuehrer is dead and is burning.'

"With another guard I returned to the spot where the bodies lay. The lower halves of both then were burned away, but I again recognized Braun by her black suede

shoes with high, cork soles which had not yet caught fire."

Karnau said he saw Propaganda Minister Goebbels between 8 p.m. and 9 p.m. "He was standing alone in his bunker room opposite the Fuehrer's, holding his chin thoughtfully in one hand," he said.

(The Russians believed that Goebbels poisoned himself, his wife and five children, but their bodies have not been positively identified.)

Karnau, who did not see the bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun after his second trip to the bunker exit, said he believed there was "only a shoveful left of Hitler's body."

Karnau told Canadian troops at Wilhelmshaven he escaped Berlin May 2 by bluffing his way through Russian lines with the claim that he was a liberated Dutch slave worker. He speaks a dialect akin to Dutch.

He was first questioned by a Canadian Army sergeant, Otto Almsay of Pittsburgh, and later by Capt. K. W. E. Leslie of London.

Capt. Leslie told correspondents that "under ordinary circumstances I would describe Karnau as telling the truth, but it is not my job to prove it's true."

Variations in Story

Capt. Leslie admitted that Karnau's story, which has been held up for three weeks, had varied in some respects as he told and retold it. Capt. Leslie said Karnau once

claimed that Hitler had been poisoned and his body buried. But, after further questioning, Karnau confessed that was hearsay. He also first said Hitler's head showed evidence of a wound. He dropped that part of the story later.

Karnau said Hitler arrived in Berlin at the end of February from Karlshorse near Frankfurt-on-the-Main, and remained to the end. From April 18 on, Hitler remained in his deep underground shelter and never went out.

"On April 13 I met Eva Braun," he said. "She apparently was in great distress. She was crying out: 'I would rather die here—I will not go away.' I tried to calm her, addressing her as Fraulein Braun.

"She replied: 'You may call me Frau Hitler now.'"

The correspondents took a "show-me" attitude after Karnau finished his tale. They asked for more details of Eva Braun. Karnau vaguely described her as having worn a dark blue summer frock of real silk, as being of apparently 28 or 30 years of age, and having blond hair that "looked artificially dyed."

Karnau admitted he was "an applicant for membership" in the Nazi Party since 1937, but asserted it was due to a blanket order by Himmler affecting all German police.

Capt. Leslie said Karnau's statement was not yet transmitted to Russian authorities, but that "all the information will be put at their disposal."

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