Stars and Stripes - Wednesday May 2, 1945

It was a monumental downfall. Nazi Germany was losing the war and everything else. The country was collapsing. Hitler, its ruthless, criminal ruler, was falling apart too. The last few days of April 1945 saw the unstoppable advance of the Soviet army into Berlin. Hitler, in the then sombre and stuffy atmosphere of the bunker under the German chancellery, could not escape the noise and tremors of the direct hits that the building was suffering. Soviet forces, with their heavy artillery were closing in. Hitler's once mighty army had disintegrated, his most trusted generals and friends were abandoning him, if not directly ignoring his orders. In this atmosphere Hitler designed his last grandiose *coup de teatre*: he married his long-standing girlfriend Eva Braun. They toasted with champagne. It was a mixture of tragedy and perhaps a little happiness. But the impending doom could not be halted. The war was lost.

On April 29, Mussolini was executed, hanged upside down at a petrol station in Milan, then thrown into the gutter, spat on, kicked and abused. The news quickly reached the Berlin bunker.

The following day Hitler was sure that his time had come. He rejected the advice of his aides to flee and save his life. But he knew there was nowhere he could hide. In the early afternoon of April 30, the newly-weds poisoned themselves, and to make sure, Hitler shot himself in the head. As he had asked explicitly in his will, his body was taken outside, doused with gasoline and burnt beyond recognition. He decided to choose death for himself and his wife "in order to escape the disgrace of capitulation".

THE STARS AND STRIPES

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HITLER DEAD

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th Clears Munich

nk Armor
ross Elbe

Reds Gain on Baltic,
Race Into Moravia

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Death Is Not Explained

This is how the newspaper of the United States Army, in its German edition printed in Frankfurt, reported the news: "Adolf Hitler, for 12 years the master of Germany and the man who set out to conquer the world, died yesterday afternoon, the German radio at Hamburg announced last night. Declaring that Grand Admiral Karl Doenitz, commander-in-chief of the German Navy, was Hitler's successor, the radio stated. "It is reported from Der Fuehrer's headquarters that Der Fuehrer, Adolf Hitler, has fallen this afternoon at his command post in the Reich Chancellery, fighting to the last breath against Bolshevism and for Germany".

On the back page there was a picture of Hitler and Mussolini with this sarcastic headline: "Hitler joins his pal".