The destruction of the very old, rich city of Nuremberg will perhaps be known to history as the greatest single property loss Germany suffered in World War II. The modern buildings of Berlin can be replaced. Munich and Frankfurt can rebuild themselves. But the inner walled city of Nuremberg, one of the jewels of man's ancient history, is gone for-ever, irre- placeably lost.

The wall surrounding the old city still stands today, but almost nothing is left within it to give the casual visitor an idea of its former beauty. Streets become lanes and lanes become footpaths that lead up over the brick and rubble of once-famous buildings.

Nuremberg's walls and imperial castles were built in the 11th century. The last enclosure and the last fortification of the city was completed 400 years later; and so Nuremberg stood as one of Europe's largest walled cities, containing no fewer than 30,000 inhabitants. The wall itself was a formidable thing, more than three miles long, three feet thick at its narrowest, 21 feet high at its lowest, a moat 60 feet wide at its base.

Many of the private houses of modern-day Nuremberger dated back to the 16th century. Their style was Gothic for the most part, and presented a rather plain exterior to the street. In the interior courts the lavish and ornate woodcarvings and painted walls were examples of German Renaissance decoration at its best. The Fumbo-Haus in Burgstrasse, only slightly damaged, is one of the few surviving examples of the richly-ornamented Nuremberg residences.
Throughout four centuries, builders of new houses in the inner city employed the same decorations, gables, red tile roofs and general architectural style in an effort to maintain the medieval appearance. Thus Nuremberg continued to surpass any other German town in beauty and elegance. Emperor Charles IV called it "the noblest and bestsituated town" in his empire. Because it was the home of so many rich and incomparable treasures if German art and civilization, it was known as the "Treasury of the Reich". Others called it das Schatzkaštlein, "the little jewel box."

Nuremberg used to attract throngs of as many as 500,000 visitors every summer before the war. Among the city's early admirers were the emperors of Germany, to whom the city owes much of its early wealth and expansion. They conferred on it special favors throughout the Middle Ages. These German monarchs often lived in Nuremberg and held their congresses there.

The most important of these congresses was held in 1356 and gave birth to the famous Golden Bull (proclamation) of that year. This set of laws transformed the empire from a monarchy into an aristocratic federation and gave to seven sovereign electors the right to choose the German emperors under exercise supervision over the empire.

They were the archbishops of Mainz, Trier and Cologne, the Count Palatinate of the Rhine, the Duke of Saxony, the Margrave of Brandenburg and the King of Bohemia. It remained
in effect for 450 years, until 1806.

In 1219 Frederick II had granted Nuremberg the rights of a free city of the nation. In the centuries that followed, the struggles for control of the city between burgesses, who lived in Nuremberg Castle, and the town council, which represented the burghers of the rising city, led to constant, sometimes bloody quarrels. Nuremberg survived them all and by the 16th century had acquired enough territory—about 500 square miles—to make it the largest German city of all time. It was the peak of Nuremberg civilization.

Nuremberg did not rely merely on architectural beauty for her fame. Throughout the Middle Ages the city was a famous trading center for all Europe. Fortunately situated at the crossroads of two important highways of central Europe, Nuremberg served as an intermediary between Italy and the East on the one hand and northern Europe on the other.

There is an old proverb which says "Nuremberg's toys go through every land." Such was the fame of one of the products of Nuremberg in medieval days.

Having no natural resources, or assets on which to depend for trade and prosperity, the people of Nuremberg developed their own arts and crafts. Nuremberg merchants quickly became famous for their rare and fine metal work. Working as armorerers, compass-makers, brass-founders, coppersmiths and goldsmiths, many of these craftsmen developed their talents to the point of fine art.
From the ranks of such men came many inventions of importance. Brass was first made at Nuremberg. In 1510 Peter Henlein invented the pocket watch (it was shaped like an egg). Hans Lobsinger built the first air gun about 50 years later. Other inventions include the clarinet, gun locks and terrestrial globes. The first globe representing the earth was made in 1490 and of course, did not show America.

Nuremberg wares are still known throughout the world. In the manufacture of toys and pencils, prewar Nuremberg dominated the world market.

Nuremberg produced at least two artists of world renown and eternal fame. One was the great painter and copper engraver, Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). The other was the shoemaker-poet, Hans Sachs (1494-1576), one of the master singers who joined with other poets, singers and composers in Nuremberg’s famous singing and song composing concerts. It was about these singers that Richard Wagner wrote his opera The Meistersinger, and it was Hans Sachs he chose as his leading character.

Nuremberg began to slip as a commercial center in the 17th century as a result of the discovery of new trade routes to India and America. The regular trade channels across Europe and through Nuremberg were upset, and many large Nuremberg commercial houses collapsed.

A second blow to the prosperity of the city was the Thirty-Year War. Although Nuremberg was neither captured nor destroyed, and estimated 10,000 of its inhabitants died of disease and want.
The incorporation of the city into the Kingdom of Bavaria at the beginning of the 19th century gave Nuremberg a new lease on life. Its trade and commerce recovered. Industry was developed as a new road to prosperity. Germany's first railroad was laid down to connect Nuremberg with nearby Fuerth, and Nuremberg became one of the leading rail and industrial cities of Germany.

A thriving modern community grew up around the carefully preserved inner city. As a modern industrial city, it had one quality in common with all other German cities: It had no slums.

After 1933 Nuremberg became the focal point for Nazi Party activities. As Munich was the birthplace and headquarters of Nazism, Nuremberg became its unholy shrine. Important party celebrations and congresses were held there, including the weeklong September "Party Day" rally. This yearly meeting was the high point of the drum-beating, orating and mystical hokum-pokus by which Hitler held the German people spellbound. The entire city was decked in garish tributes of flags and bunting; searchlights swept the sky at night; and several hundred thousands from all over Germany crowded into the Party Day Stadium (now the "Victory Stadium") to hear Hitler make inflammatory speeches.

Although the city had never been notably anti-Semitic, Nuremberg was chosen as the name-city for the infamous Nuremberg Laws of 1935, by which German Jews were deprived of the rights of citizenship and human beings.
The city first became an air target in 1943; by January, 1945, it had been reduced to its present state.

By an ironic coincidence, Nuremberg fell to US troops on April 20, 1945. It was Hitler's birthday.

Today this once magnificent city, about which Pope Pius II once said "A simple Nuremberg burgher is better lodged than the King of Scotland," is barely able to offer shelter to the 320,000 persons who live in "91 per cent dead" Nuremberg.