“It almost seemed as if the authorities were not prepared to face the fact that Berlin was endangered. Although the Red Army was now barely thirty-two miles away, no alarm had been given and no official announcement had been made. Berliners knew very well that the Russians had attacked. The muffled thunder of artillery had been the first clue; now from refugees, by telephone, by word of mouth, the news had spread. But it was still fragmentary and contradictory, and in the absence of any real information there was wild speculation and rumor. Some people said the Russians were fewer than ten miles away, others heard that they were already in the eastern suburbs. No one knew precisely what the situation was, but most Berliners now believed that the city’s days were numbered, that its death throes had begun.

And yet, astonishingly, people still went about their business. They were nervous, and it was increasingly difficult to preserve the outward appearance of normality, but everyone tried.

At every stop, milkman Richard Poganowka was besieged with questions. His customers seemed to expect him to know more than anyone else. The usually cheerful Poganowska could not provide any answers. He was as fearful as those he served. On the Kreuznacherstrasse the portrait of Adolf Hitler still hung in the living room of the Nazi postal official, but that no longer seemed reassuring to Poganowska.”

Ryan, Cornelius. The Last Battle. 1966. p. 368-9
• Confronting ineffectiveness as an activist

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