

J. M. Spaight

Bombing Vindicated

AAARGH

[Aaargh: this online copy of *Bombing Vindicated* was first displayed on the web at www.jrbooksonline.com]

By the same author

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

BLOCKADE BY AIR

VOLCANO ISLAND

BOMBING VINDICATED

by

J. M. SPAIGHT, C.B., C.B.E.

Late Principal Assistant Secretary, Air Ministry

GEOFFREY BLES
37 ESSEX STREET, STRAND, LONDON

First published 1944

BOOK
PRODUCTION
WAR ECONOMY
STANDARD

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORIZED
ECONOMY STANDARDS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE BOMBER SAVES CIVILISATION	7
II. TACTICS AND STRATEGICS	24
III. OUR GREAT DECISION	52
IV. THE BATTLE-TOWNS	76
V. THE BOMBING OF CIVILIANS	106
VI. THE TOKYO OUTRAGE	123
VII. RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT	141
INDEX	157

CHAPTER I

THE BOMBER SAVES CIVILISATION

The Bomber and Aggression

'The bomber saves civilisation': my first chapter heading may strike some readers as a paradox, possibly as a perversion of the truth, at best as an overstatement made for the purpose of calling attention to what I have to say. It is nothing of the kind. I am not trying to shock or to bamboozle the reader. I am stating the truth as the truth appears to me. The bomber *is* the saver of civilisation. We have not grasped that fact as yet, mainly because we are slaves to pre-conceived conceptions about air warfare. Air warfare is the dog with a bad name. The bad name is, on the whole, a calumny. This book is an attempt to rehabilitate it, not *against* the facts of the case but *because* of the facts of the case. Civilisation, I believe firmly, would have been destroyed if there had been no bombing in this war. It was the bomber aircraft which, more than any other instrument of war, prevented the forces of evil from prevailing. It was supposed to be the chosen instrument of aggression. Actually, it was precisely the opposite. Aggression would have had a clearer run if there had been no bombers—on either side. And the greatest contribution of the bomber both to the winning of the war and the cause of peace is still to come.

This view of mine, I feel entitled to add, is no newly formed one. For twenty years or more I have believed, and written, that air power was very far from being the menace to civilisation which it was commonly supposed to be. I have no need in *this* particular matter to cry *Peccavi*—as I have, alas! in some others. Air power never was and is not now the villain of the piece in war.

[p. 8]

'Air power', some reader may say. 'Yes, in so far as it is represented by the *fighters* it is the defender of civilisation; but how can you pretend that the *bombers* save civilisation?' I agree about the fighters. They saved the cause of freedom in the battle of Britain. What they did then is acknowledged by all. Their fame is immortal. So, too, should be that of the bombers, whose rôle as preservers rather than wreckers is less well understood. It is assuredly in no spirit of disparagement of the magnificent record of the fighters that I emphasise here the no less superb and no less important rôle which the other branch of our Air Force played in the great drama of war which we have been witnessing, and that I insist upon the essentially defensive character of that branch's activities.

The Pre-War View

If there was one subject upon which there was almost universal agreement before the war it was, first, that another war would be the end of civilisation, and, secondly, that aircraft would be the prime agents in the causation of that end. There was hardly a dissentient voice; but one there was, and it is worthy of record. In the House of Commons on 15 March, 1937, Mr. Austin Hopkinson said: 'I say, presupposing that war is to continue, and that is a presumption, I think, upon which it would be safe to base our policy at the present time, the more that war is fought in the air the more likely it is to prove the salvation rather than the destruction of civilisation.' With that prediction it would not be an exaggeration to say that not one person in a thousand would have agreed at that time. The other view, that aircraft would make war more terrible and more homicidal than it had ever been, was the accepted view. It was expressed not only in the popular literature of the day—for example, in such books as Mr. A. A.

[p. 9]

Milne's *Peace with Honour* and Mr. Beverley Nichols's *Cry Havoc*—but also in the solemn warnings of responsible Ministers. One such warning was given a few years earlier and it had an immense influence upon public opinion.

On 10 November, 1932, a famous British statesman made in the House of Commons one of the most eloquent and moving speeches ever heard in that assembly. It was acclaimed by all parties as a noteworthy pronouncement upon the subject which was then being debated in Geneva and in all the capitals of the civilised world: the subject of disarmament, especially in the air. Now, it is the simple truth and no paradox to say that practically every major proposition in that speech could be turned round and made to state the opposite of what was actually said, and the result would then be nearer the truth than in fact it was. It was not only that the speech was wrong in such specific statements as that 'the bomber will always get through': which we now know it will not against powerful defences by day, so that an unqualified statement such as that made in the speech was, in fact, incorrect. [1] It was rather in the general approach to the new situation that the speech went astray. Its main thesis was that the only hope for humanity lay in the agreed abolition of all military aircraft, or, if that could not be effected, at least the prohibition of bombing, together with the institution of such control of civil aviation as would prevent its misuse for warlike purposes. The speaker appealed to the younger men, on whom, he said, a failure to act betimes would re-

1 Professor F. A. Lindemann in a letter to the *Daily Telegraph* of 25 May, 1935, spoke of the 'fatal obsession' which seemed to be 'implanted so firmly in the minds of nearly everyone in authority' that there was no possible defence against the bomber and that all that could be done by the people bombed was to repay the enemy by 'reprisals more ghastly and more bloody than anything they can inflict'. 'In the whole of recorded history,' he said, 'no weapon has ever yet been invented to which a counter has not been found.'

[p. 10]

coil, to decide to take the measures necessary to preserve themselves from the threatened doom.

The Flaw in the Argument

Now, it is a more sustainable proposition that the hope of civilisation lay then and in the years that followed on the *retention* rather than on the abolition of air forces, and, furthermore, that it was on the *older* generation and not on the young that the calamities which a failure to abolish them would entail were likely to fall. It was indeed to sacrifice the young to let the old order of war continue. War had become by 1918 a sheer massacre of boys. War in the air is terrible but it is not that. The most disastrous calamity that can befall any generation of men is that which strikes down the flower of it. *That*, and nothing else, is the destruction of civilisation which all efforts should be bent to preventing. It was, and is, the tragic harvest of the historical husbandry of war. It is a necessary harvest when great land-battles are the only means not only of clinching but of preparing for a decision. The tremendous difference which air warfare makes is that the long process of attrition can be carried on without any comparable waste of human life.

Mr. Churchill and the Somme

Let me illustrate my argument by comparing what happened in five months in 1916 and what happened in nine months in 1940-41. The battle of the Somme began on 1 July, 1916, and went on until the end of November. We and the French lost in killed, wounded, missing and prisoners—the last were not many—about 630,000 officers and men. The German losses were about 680,000 [1] in the

1 Official History, *Military Operations, France and Belgium*, 2 July, 1916, to end of battles of Somme, p. 553; also Preface to same volume, p. xvi. Our losses in the Somme battles were greater than the total losses incurred by

[p. 11]

nine months, September 1940—May 1941, during which the intensive air raids upon this country continued, the losses sustained by us were approximately 90,000 persons killed and seriously injured. That figure is only half as much again as the loss incurred by the British army on one day alone (1 July) in 1916. But, it will be said, the comparison is unfair, for much more important results were obtained on that one day in July (and in the subsequent battles) than air operations could possibly have achieved over many months. Not so: I dispute that conclusion. On the contrary, I suggest that our own raids on Germany have caused more damage to her war-effort and contributed more effectively to her ultimate defeat than did *all* our land battles in the last war before 8 August, 1918. Read what Mr. Churchill has to say about the Somme.

'Night closed [on 1 July] over the whole thundering battlefield. Nearly 60,000 British soldiers had fallen, killed or wounded, or were prisoners in the hands of the enemy. This was the greatest loss and slaughter sustained in a single day in the whole history of the British Army.' [2] 'The extent of the catastrophe was concealed by the censorship.' [3] In the first five days of the battle we lost nearly 100,000 of our best troops, and 'the ground conquered was so limited both in width and depth as to exclude [*sic*] any strategic results.' [4] Summing up the results of all the fighting on the Somme, Mr. Churchill says:

'The campaign of 1916 on the Western Front was from

British Empire forces during the first three years of the present war. The latter were given by Mr. Attlee in the House of Commons on 1 June, 1943, as 92,089 killed, 226,719 missing, 88,294 wounded and 107,891 prisoners: a total of 514,933. The proportion of prisoners (and probably many of the huge total of missing will be found also to be prisoners) was immensely greater in the figures for 1939-42 than in those for the Somme battles.

2 W. S. Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1916-8*, Part I, p. 179.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 180.

4 *Ibid.*., p. 180.

[p. 12]

beginning to end a welter of slaughter, which after the issue was determined left the British and French armies weaker in relation to the German than when it opened, while the actual battle fronts were not appreciably altered. . . . The battlefields of the Somme were the graveyards of Kitchener's Army. The flower of that generous manhood which quitted peaceful civilian life in every kind of workaday occupation, which came at the call of Britain, and, as we may still hope, at the call of humanity, and came from the most remote parts of the Empire, was shorn away for ever in 1916. [1]

Mr. Lloyd George on Passchendaele

The blood-bath of the Somme was succeeded in the following year (1917) by that of Passchendaele, the horror and futility of which another Prime Minister has recorded with still more trenchant pen. Passchendaele, Mr. Lloyd George concludes, was 'a reckless gamble' on the chance of a rainless autumn on the Flemish coast. And the rains, alas! came. 'Artillery became bogged, tanks sank in the mire, unwounded men by the hundreds and wounded men by the thousands sank beyond recovery in the filth. It is a comment upon the intelligence with which the whole plan had been conceived and prepared that after the ridge had been reached it was an essential part of the plan that masses of cavalry were intended to thunder across this impassable bog to complete the rout of a fleeing enemy.' [2] 'While the ghastliness I have inadequately summarised was proceeding, and brave men were being sacrificed to the stubborn infatuation of the High Command, the public at home, official and unofficial, were all being dosed day by day with tendentious statements about vic-

1 W. S. Churchill, *op. cit.* pp. 194, 195.

2 D. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, Vol. IV, p. 2211.

[p. 13]

tories won and progress made towards more assured and even greater triumphs.' [1] It was all, Mr. Lloyd George states, a ghastly exercise of 'the bovine and brutal game of attrition'. [2] 'Passchendaele was indeed one of the greatest disasters of the war.' [3]

A Historian's Verdict

The verdict of a temperate historian does not differ substantially from that of Mr. Lloyd George. 'Strategically,' says Mr. Crutwell, 'nothing whatever had been accomplished [at Passchendaele]. On the contrary, the enlarged salient, with its tip at Passchendaele, where an advance of about five miles had been made, was even more unwieldy than of old. All our gains had to be evacuated at a stroke next April, when the second great German thrust took the enemy forward beyond Bailleul.' [4]

The hecatombs of the Somme and Passchendaele had their rivals in some of the other long-drawn-out battles of that war. At Verdun the French losses were 362,000 and the German 336,000. [5] In the great German offensive of the spring of 1918 we lost nearly 240,000 men and the French 92,000; the German losses were 348,000. [6] During the whole war the *military deaths* amounted to: for the British Empire, over 900,000; for France, 1,300,000; for Germany, 2,300,000; for Austro-Hungary, 1,530,000; for Russia, 1,700,000. [7] The total military losses in 1914-18

1 D. Lloyd George, *op. cit.* p. 2219.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 2234.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 2251.

4 C. R. M. F. Crutwell, *A History of the Great War, 1914-8*, p. 442.

5 Official History, *Military Operations, France and Belgium*, March-April, 1918, p. 490. 6 *Ibid.*

7 S. Dumas and K. O. Vedel-Petersen, *Losses of Life Caused by War*. Copenhagen, English translation, Clarendon Press, 1926, pp. 137-142. The authors state that the Russian losses are unknown; the figure of 1,700,000 is given by Mr. Crutwell, *op. cit.*, p. 631. He gives the total of military deaths for the *British Empire* as 947,023 (p. 630). This is close enough to the figure of 947,364, given by Lord Riddell in his *Diary*, p. 336.

[p. 14]

were about eleven millions, of which the military deaths amounted to eight millions. [1]

Human Losses, 1939-43

Before the present war ends we may have to endure human losses comparable to those of 1914-18. The fighting in Russia has already produced its massive harvest of death. We, too, may have terrible casualty lists to record in the land encounters which have already begun in Europe and in which many tens of thousands of lives will be lost before the end. I may be told: You spoke too soon. Not so: nothing yet to come can alter the fact that in the first four years of war we in Britain have not seen a generation slaughtered and mutilated on the appalling scale to which we became accustomed in 1914-18. There has been in the west, at least, no such shedding of blood as there was then. That which is, alas! to come—it must come if the German armies are to be broken—will have its parallel, one may expect and hope, in the toll of lives which we had to pay in the *final* stages of the war of 1914-18 and which were the price of a victory towards the winning of which our earlier sacrifices contributed but little. [2] We have escaped at least the holocausts of 1915-17. We have come without having to endure them to a stage in the conflict corresponding to that which we reached in the summer of 1918. By our air raids and our blockade we have hurt Germany at least as much as we had then. We have done so at a cost in British lives almost negligible in comparison with that which we had to pay before we entered on the final round in 1918. Nor should we forget how

1 J. Dumas and K. O. Vedeb Petersen, *op. cit.* p. 133.

2 That, it is evident from the extracts quoted from Mr. Churchill's and Mr. Lloyd George's books, is the view which eminent statesmen would endorse. A different view is held by others; see, for instance, the defence of our tactics at Passchendaele in *Sir Douglas Haig's Command*, pp. 20-26, by Mr. G. A. B. Dewar and Lieut. Colonel J. H. Boraston.

[p. 15]

greatly the use of our air arm and that of the United States Army has reduced the volume of the casualties which the conquest of Tunisia would otherwise have entailed upon the ground forces there. Again and again the airmen blasted the way for the advance of their comrades below. There can be no question whatever but that, both strategically and tactically, air action has contributed very materially to keeping the level of the human losses far below that of the last great war.

The Menace of the Air

The prophets of calamity who fixed their thoughts on the menace of the air, almost to the exclusion of everything else, were really the slaves to an *idée fixe*. They could not rid themselves of the idea that air warfare must mean necessarily the end of civilisation if war were allowed to come at all. It was on the menace of the bomber that their thoughts centred. War would apparently not be so bad if that particular instrument were banished. In the famous speech of 10 November, 1932, already quoted, the confident assertion was made that in the next war 'European civilisation will be wiped out . . . and by no force more than by that force'—that is, by the force of the air. It was for that reason that strenuous efforts were made at Geneva in 1932 to abolish air forces altogether. Incidentally, it was apparently forgotten at Geneva that the practical question was not the abolition of all air forces but the implementing of an already decreed abolition of a particular air force. The sole danger of a major European war was known even then to arise from a re-armed Germany; and Germany had been forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles to possess an air force. Civilisation was threatened, in, fact, not because the younger men hesitated to take a new decision but because the older men, the men in power, were afraid to enforce a decision reached in 1919.

[p. 16]

It is amazing in the retrospect to read the forecasts which were made before September, 1939, of the cataclysmic horrors which air warfare was to bring upon the world. There was loss of perspective, of balance in the preview, an almost hysterical self-surrender to the emotion which it evoked, an inverted kind of wishful-thinking in which everything that was most horrible was assumed to be fated. Cities were to be wiped out; there were nice calculations of the precise tonnage of high explosives that would be needed entirely to destroy towns of varying sizes. No doubt a few well-informed people knew, and said, that the popular view was a sensational one, not likely to be confirmed by the sober fact. The vast majority held firmly to the belief that air warfare would mean the pentecost of calamity, that the slaughter and mutilation which it would necessarily involve would surpass anything ever recorded in the sombre annals of war. The truth is that aircraft were credited with a capacity for destruction which they did not possess when the war began. Even after it began one finds the same kind of exaggeration of the results which bombardment from the air could achieve.

Two American Views

On 19 September, 1940, when the attack on London was at its height, Mr. Joseph Kennedy, the American Ambassador in London, told Mr. George Bilainkin that the Germans were 'not using a twentieth or, thirtieth of their bomber strength against Britain. Air war has not really begun.' [1] Twenty to thirty times the number of bombers then being used for raiding this country would amount to some 10,000 to 15,000 aircraft. The possibility of an even greater armada of the air being launched against us was foretold by another well-known American. Major Malcolm Wheeler-Nicholson wrote in 1940: 'A horrified world

1 George Bilainkin, *Diary of a Diplomatic Correspondent*, 1942.

[p. 17]

may well be treated to the spectacle of at least 20,000 'planes, flying in great waves, one after the other, and at different levels, ranging far and wide in strict formation, each with a particular objective, each objective to be reduced by a smashing and overwhelming attack and obliterated into kinship with the dust. It could be such a concentration of air power as the world has never seen. Its unrelenting attack is likely to go on continuously day and night, to be followed by simultaneous invasion of two million men from every bay and inlet on the coast of the North Sea, the Channel and the Atlantic, using every type of ship and barge and motor boat that will carry a handful of men. . . . The British would probably be outnumbered in the air not five to one but fifty to one.' [1]

Now, it is as certain as that these words are being penned that it would have been utterly impossible for Germany to send over Britain more than *one-tenth* of the lowest number of bombers quoted by Mr. Kennedy and Major Nicholson (10,000, 15,000 and 20,000). Anyone who disputes this statement is, I submit, unacquainted with the meaning of first-line or operational air strength. The two eminent Americans were, in fact, talking arrant nonsense; and they were very far indeed from being the only eminent persons, here and in America, to whose utterances a similar criticism would be perfectly appropriate. Wilder statements have probably been made about air warfare than about any other subject under the sun. They were particularly wild when they referred to the disasters which bomber aircraft were likely to cause 'in the next war'.

Air Power as a Bogey

Air power is 'news', 'hot news', only when it is portrayed as a portent of lurid magnitude and of almost limit-

1 M. Wheeler-Nicholson, *America Can Win*, 1941, pp. 139-141.

[p. 18]

less capacity for evil. It is something to write about then, to splash over front pages, to give banner headlines to, to dilate upon with gusto. The air power which can really work wonders is something much less sensational, less arresting, more coldly scientific in a terrible way that is at times not a very interesting way. It is a reality, not a bogey, not the sort of 'monstrous crow as black as a tar-barrel' which 'frightened both the brothers so they quite forgot their quarrel'.

Now, that was precisely what many well-meaning people conceived air power to be before this war began. They *wanted* it as a bogey. They saw in it a power of appalling potentiality as a *deterrent*, a kind of withheld thunderbolt the mere menace of which would make nations hesitate to go to war. That they should hesitate was, of course, an excellent thing and the aim pursued was a laudable one; but it had some unfortunate results. It was one of the reasons why the question of what aircraft might and might not do in war was never definitely settled.)

That is another of the matters which will probably strike the future historian as a not unimportant item in the long list of the failures of statesmanship during the period between the two great wars. Here was a new weapon whose employment required to be regulated at least as much as did that of artillery on land or the guns of warships. It was not regulated. There were rules, internationally agreed, for war on land and sea. There were none for air warfare. An attempt was made, indeed, and rules were drafted by a Commission of Jurists at The Hague in 1922-23, but they were never embodied in a convention. When the war began in 1939, the air arm, alone among the arms of war, went into action without a stitch of regulations to its back. Those who had the duty of directing it were left without guidance to find their way through the tangled thicket formed by the intricate and abstruse body

[p. 19]

of international law which relates to the conduct of war. To suppose that the officers of a fighting Service can easily pick out of the general principles of that law rules to govern their action in any given case is to display a lamentable ignorance of its complexity.

The Lack of Rules

I write with some feeling on this subject. Probably more than anyone else in this country, I advocated in season and out of season the putting of our house in order in this matter of the regulation of air warfare. What I actually proposed did not and does not matter. What was important was that something should be done to clear up the chaotic condition in which the whole law of bombardment was left. [1] Nothing was done, and the omission was, in part at least, the result of a determination that nothing should be done.

Lord Thomson's View

In 1927 the late Lord Thomson, who had already filled the office of Secretary of State for Air and was to do so again in 1929-30, put on record his views on the subject of the regulation of warfare. They were views of general applicability, but actually he was evidently thinking of air warfare, for he was dealing (quite fairly and courteously) with my proposals as outlined in my *Air Power and War Rights*. He spoke of 'the efforts of well-intentioned people who . . . tried to subordinate it [war] to a legal system, to limit its scope, to prevent its worst atrocities, in short, to civilise and bring it up to date.' In so doing, he held, they have 'helped to perpetuate an international crime'.

¹ This was described in my paper on 'The Chaotic State of the International Law Governing Bombardment' in *The Royal Air Force Quarterly* for January, 1938. I had previously dealt with some aspects of the same subject in an article entitled 'The Lawless Arm' in *The Army Quarterly* for October, 1935. My books also contained discussions of the question.

[p. 20]

'Homicide, arson, the destruction of property and trespass are criminal offences, and war is a combination of these illegalities. . . . Instead of trying to control, restrain, mitigate or civilise modern warfare, the more logical course is to outlaw war itself and make aggression illegal. This is admittedly a counsel of perfection, but it does not compromise with evil and offers a real solution towards which humanity can strive.' [1]

Now, that attitude to the regulation of warfare is a perfectly tenable one. The point which I want to emphasise is that it is *not* the attitude which the civilised nations have taken to *war by land and sea*. They have entered into international agreements regulating both these kinds of war. They have not done so in regard to war in the air. The difference of treatment is largely the result, I am convinced, of a (sometimes sub-conscious) feeling that air warfare is not altogether on the same ethical plane as war on land or sea, that it is not quite canonical, not quite respectable, that it is a sort of outlaw warfare, a kind of warfare which, like certain social evils, decent people do well to ignore. That conception of air warfare has been contributed to, perhaps, by the tendency of senior members—a minority only, but an influential one—of the two other Services to talk in rather disparaging terms of the methods by which they believe the air arm seeks to achieve its results—methods which are sometimes stigmatised as amounting to 'frightfulness'. [2] But over and above such petty misrepresentation there is undoubtedly a popular disposition to regard air warfare as the least tolerable of the three categories of warfare. The differentiation against it was natural enough if the initial assumption that it was

1 Lord Thomson, *Air Facts and Problems*, pp. 34-5.

2 'Frightfulness', said Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond in a lecture delivered at the Royal United Service Institution in 1923 and reproduced in his *National Policy and Naval Strength*, p. 187, 'appears to be a fundamental principle in the air.'

[p. 21]

destined to be the destroyer of civilisation in any event was accepted. On that supposition the only course was to abolish it altogether, not to try to 'civilise' it. But the result was not altogether that which was expected.

The Bogey Fails to Frighten

The purpose in view was not achieved in so far as the nations were not in fact scared by the bogey. They did go to war after all. It is true that for many months after the war began the principal belligerents hesitated to use their air arms against one another's metropolitan territories, but the reason for that, as is explained in Chapter III, was not solely that the bogey was operating in (so to speak) second gear. And the failure to define the legitimate scope of air attack had some other unfortunate results. One was, probably, the judicial murder of the American airmen referred to in Chapter VI, hereafter. It might conceivably have had some influence upon the action of the Japanese Government if it had set its hand to a convention which, *inter alia*, defined in clear terms the right to resort to strategic bombing. One cannot speak with any certainty upon such a point, and the fact that the Tokyo Government was a party to the Prisoners of War Convention, 1929, which also should have protected the airmen, cuts the other way. Nevertheless, the double assurance might have had some effect. There would have been such a double assurance if a convention had been in existence containing a provision similar to that in Article 2 of the Convention on Naval Bombardment signed at The Hague in 1907. This Article provides that a naval commander who uses his ships' guns to destroy military objectives in an undefended port or town 'incurs no responsibility for any unavoidable damage which may be caused by a bombardment under such circumstances'. It was not possible, however, for the American airmen to point to any such charter of their rights.

[p. 22]

The Bomber the Saver of Civilisation

The fundamental mistake of those who made air warfare a bogey was that they looked at it always from one side—the potential enemy's side; and for us in Britain that was to look at it from the side of the likely aggressor. It would have been better to have regarded it also from the side of the victim of aggression. So regarded, air power was and is not the destroyer but the saver of civilisation. We are beginning to understand that fact at last. Whether air power, unaided, can bring about a decision in our favour in the present struggle is, for this purpose, an immaterial question. Those who think that it can may be right or they may be wrong. Time will tell.

What can be claimed without fear of contradiction is that air power is an absolutely essential factor in the combination which will give us victory; and at the very heart of air power there stands the strategic offensive. The matter was placed in the proper perspective by Mr. Churchill in his great speech at Ottawa on 30 December, 1941. 'While an ever-increasing bombing offensive against Germany will remain one of the principal methods of ending this war,' he said, 'it is not the only one which growing strength enables us to take into account.'

This view of the position is accepted now, it seems, by all who are not blind to realities. It has been endorsed in quarters which cannot be suspected of undue addiction to extremist or doctrinaire modes of thought. Leading articles in the Press reflect the informed reaction to it. 'We are thoroughly committed to the large-scale bombing of Germany as part of our war-winning strategy,' said the *Daily Mail* on 18 September, 1942, 'and there can be no question that so far the policy is paying good dividends by weakening the enemy's productive power and dislocating his daily life. It is doubtful whether this use of the air

[p. 23]

weapon by itself could win the war, but it is certain that we could not win without it.'

'There are still those who confuse themselves with the parrot question: Can the war be won by bombing Germany?' wrote the *Daily Telegraph* on 19 September, 1942. 'No one of knowledge and judgment ever thought of speculating on such a possibility. The reason why the United Command must bomb Germany with all the power that can be provided is that without such a sustained and cumulative air offensive the war cannot be won at all.' That conclusion will not be disputed by anyone who preserves a sense of proportion. It is a conclusion which even if it stood alone, and it does not stand alone, would suffice to show that the bomber is in fact the saver of civilisation.

[p. 24]

CHAPTER II

TACTICS AND STRATEGICS

The Three Choices

A nation which is proposing to build up its air strength has a choice of three possible lines to follow. It can decide to have an air force of the kind that is best fitted for use in co-operation with the army. (One may leave naval cooperation out of account for the present purpose.) It can choose, instead, to have one intended pre-eminently for independent action, that is, one which is most effectively used outside and beyond the zones of land-encounter. It can also decide to have an air force part of which is to be employed co-operatively and part independently. Different types of aircraft, different organisations of command and different training techniques being needed for these different kinds of employment, the third choice is possible only when the air establishment which it is proposed to bring into being is one of very considerable magnitude and diversity, both in matériel and personnel: It is air strength such as a Great Power would alone be able to develop that is here in question. A minor Power's problem and solution would be different and of less importance.

Adopting the usual nomenclature (though it is not an altogether satisfying one), one may say that the choice lies between having:

- A. An air force that is predominantly tactical, or
- B. One that is predominantly strategical, or
- C. One that has both tactical and strategical components of worth-while dimensions.

To anticipate for the purpose of clarifying my argument, I will begin by dealing with a situation which can be regarded as the result of the choice denoted 'C' above,

[p. 25]

although strictly it is a situation which emerged only at a date much later than those at which the choices at 'A' and 'B' had been made respectively by Germany and by Britain.

Army Co-operation in North Africa

By 1943 we in Britain had built up such a powerful air establishment that we were in a position to use air power both tactically and strategically with an effectiveness and on a scale which it is not national vanity to claim had never been attained before. We were conducting a long-range offensive against the war-industries and communications of Germany and Italy, and the powerful flotillas of heavy bombers which we had created for this purpose were operating from bases both in Britain and in Africa. In addition, we were able to spare bombers for operational duties directly connected with the campaign against the submarines—duties which included attacks on U-boats, the convoying of merchant vessels in the middle reaches of the north Atlantic, and the mining of terminal waters through which the submarines had to pass on their voyages to and from their hunting grounds. At the same time we had gradually built up our other categories of aircraft, trained the necessary pilots and members of air-crews, and so on, to such a peak that we were in the enviable position of being able to provide for our armies an overflowing measure of air support such as probably no armies had ever had before. That achievement was a very remarkable one, for our Air Force was in some degree a newcomer in the field of tactical work. How splendidly it did the work has been freely acknowledged both by the military leaders and by other authorities. The *communiqué* issued at General Eisenhower's headquarters on the evening of 6 May, 1943, referred to the 'magnificent support of our air forces' during the offensive operations which the

[p. 26]

1st Army and the 2nd United States Corps had opened on that morning. They 'blasted a path in advance of the ground forces', it was stated, and had already achieved complete domination of the air. War correspondents were unanimous in declaring that no troops had ever had the advantage of such air cover as the Allied troops had in these operations. 'The mutual understanding between the fighters in the air and on the ground was brought in this campaign to a pitch of 'perfection that we have never hitherto attained,' said Mr. Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, in the House of Commons on 11 May, 1943. The support which the 8th Army had already received from the Desert Air Force in its operations in Cyrenaica and Tripolitania had also been of the highest standard and had been acknowledged in generous terms by General Montgomery. The co-operation between ground and air arms was again extraordinarily effective in the invasions of Sicily on 10 July and of Calabria on 3 September, and in the operations on the island and the mainland.

The North West African Air Forces were organised in the spring of 1943 into Tactical, Strategical and Coastal Air Forces. The principle of the organisation was sound and logical; it carried no implication; however, that the work of each of the three forces would be bulk-headed from that of the other two. In practice their spheres of duty overlapped. That was inevitable in the circumstances. It was admitted, indeed, in the official reports. The North African *communiqué* of 9 May, 1943, for instance, stated that bombers of the Tactical Air Force and fighter-bombers of the Strategical Air Force had carried out a heavy attack upon the airfield on Pantellaria Island. Frequent references appear in the *communiqués* to the operations conducted by *both* forces against shipping in the neighbouring waters and against enemy concentrations and gun positions in the Tunisian theatre. While the raid-

[p. 27]

ing of objectives such as the airfields in Sardinia or the harbours and airfields in Sicily and Italy would have fallen naturally to the Strategic Air Force, there was here also some overlapping, and only in the specialised tactical work of the 'tank-busters' (Hurricane 11D fighters with 40 mm. cannons) were the spheres of the two forces clearly defined. It was less easy to demarcate their domains in many instances, and that was indeed one of the chief merits of the system. It allowed the units of the one force to be switched over as the need arose to duties which were strictly the preserve of the other. The organisation permitted a measure of fluidity or elasticity which would not have been attainable under a more rigid system of the earmarking of air contingents.

Now, the undoubted effectiveness of the co-operation of the Royal Air Force with the ground forces in the campaigns in North Africa is all the more remarkable when one remembers that before the war began the tactical employment of the arm was given in Britain hardly the amount of attention and consideration which it deserved'. Indeed, in our early operations, the ground forces had some reason to complain of the inadequacy of the support which they received in the air. The reason for the comparative failure was largely geographical, but there was some substance in the allegation that we had not envisaged sufficiently clearly the absolutely indispensable factor of air support in all operations in which troops are engaged against an enemy who is strong in the air. It is perhaps noteworthy that our Army Co-operation Command was formed only on 1 December, 1940, that is, fifteen months after the war had begun.

The Tactical Air Force at Home

The success of the experiment in North Africa led to the creation of a Tactical Air Force in Great Britain itself. On

[p. 28]

14 June, 1943, it was announced that certain measures of re-organisation had been made in the metropolitan Air Force and that the Army Co-operation Command had been merged into a Tactical Air Force designed to work with the army in the field. 'The Organisation of this force,' said the announcement, 'conforms closely with that of the Tactical Air Force under Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham in North Africa.' It would be located in Fighter Command in order to ensure close integration of the work of the Tactical reconnaissance aircraft and light bombers with that of the main fighter force. The commander of the new force was Air Vice-Marshal J. H. D'Albiac.

The announcement marked the completion of the measures which Mr. Churchill had foreshadowed some months before when he stated that steps would be taken to prepare the metropolitan Air Force for work with the army in large-scale operations and that the organisation adopted for this purpose would follow closely that which was proving itself in North Africa. There a force comprising all types of squadrons had been found to be most suitable for direct support of armies in the field, together with the necessary headquarters, maintenance units and signals organisation, and a similar force was accordingly built up from Army Co-operation Command as the nucleus. The new system was tried out in the combined exercises held in England in March, 1943, and was found to work satisfactorily. The placing of the new Force in Fighter Command was calculated to permit the greatest possible degree of flexibility in the operational work on the one hand and the training work on the other.

British Air Organisation before 1939

Germany set herself seriously to build up an air force after Hitler became Reichskanzler in January, 1933. We

[p. 29]

took up her challenge a year or so later. We had, of course, an air force already, but it was more or less a 'token' one. It was utterly inadequate for the needs of a major war. We began to expand it in 1934 and followed up our modest initial programme by a more ambitious one in 1935. In 1936 we re-modelled our organisation of air defence in the light of the new menace. Germany's aggressive intentions had become clear by that date and the new model was one which took account of that most disturbing development. In July, 1936, the former 'Air Defence of Great Britain' Command was broken up and in its place three new operational Commands-Bomber, Fighter and Coastal-were formed. A Training Command was also created. The re-organisation was important and significant. In effect, it traced the pattern of the coming war in the air so far as it was to be waged by Great Britain. From it could be discerned by the eye of faith the unrolling panorama of that mighty effort in the air which is overshadowing the forces of aggression today.

In the successive schemes of expansion, gradually growing in magnitude, the emphasis was laid, as it soon became apparent, on the bombing counter-offensive as the principal means of meeting the threatened attack, and the provision made for a powerful bomber force was the most noteworthy feature of each of the successive programmes. The number of bomber squadrons which it was proposed to form was almost double that of the fighter squadrons. It was expected that they would operate, as in 1917-18, from French aerodromes, but the likelihood was also foreseen of their being able, in time, to carry out their raids from bases in Britain. At the close of an address given by Major-General R. J. Collins at the Royal United Service Institution on 23 November, 1938, Marshal of the R.A.F. Sir Edward Ellington said in summing up: 'The counter-attack will be largely launched from the home

[p. 30]

aerodromes of the bombers and in the future may be entirely launched from them.' [1]

Germany's Choice

A very different policy was adopted by the builders of the re-created German air force. Their conception of the rôle of the air arm in a future war was in striking contrast with that which had commended itself to Sir Hugh Trenchard and the air strategists upon whom his mantle had descended. The British idea of an air force as the co-equal of the other Services and the possibly predominant partner in warlike ventures in which they would have minor parts to play would have seemed to the German higher strategists little short of heresy. The philosophy of air warfare which inspired our re-organisation of 1936 was wholly alien to their mode of thought. They formed no such functional Commands as we did. Instead, they created a number of Luftflotten—there are five of these now (1943)—organised on a territorial rather than a functional basis and composite rather than specialised in content. There never has been, and there is not, a Bomber Command in Germany. That fact is of great significance.

It has often been suggested that the fundamental error which the Allies made in 1919 was that, by allowing the nucleus of a military force to be maintained in Germany, they neglected an opportunity to break the military tradition of the German people. The result was that a number of able officers of the old school were able to put together by degrees the framework of an army which could be filled in and enlarged as time went on. Among these officers was General Von Seeckt, to whom, more than to anyone else, there belongs the credit of having salvaged the wreck of Germany's old army and fitted and re-

1 *Journal of the R.U.S.I.*, February, 1939, p. 69.

[p. 31]

fashioned its broken pieces into a new military structure, which, modest at first, would serve at least as the foundation for a tower of armed strength such as the world had never yet seen. 'It is to Von Seeckt that the Germans owe most for having kept alive not only the military machine but the spirit animating it: the spirit of being above the State and of strict cohesion within itself. . . . His *Thoughts of a Soldier* are enlightening. "The Army is above parties," he said; but he did not stop there. "The Army *is* the State," he concludes, and no German knew better than he. It is that conclusion which spells expansionism, for the Army is not a force within the State but the head of a nation in arms in peace time. Conquest by arms is the inevitable goal, for the itch to expand is there.' [1]

That the second world war would not have taken place if the military tradition in Germany had been effectively disrupted after the first is true, no doubt, but that is not the point which I wish to emphasise here. It is rather that the result was to canalise the urge to expansionism in a particular way. The fact that the military caste remained in the saddle had a very important bearing upon the nature of Germany's re-armament in the air. Its effect was that the voice of the General Staff of the army continued to be the dominant note in the counsels of the Reich: 'Colonel Blimp' retained his power, and 'Colonel Blimp' is always and inherently traditionalist and non-responsive to new ideas. For him the German army was the appointed and appropriate instrument, the symbol and manifestation of a German nation in arms. It was by its power that the great Frederick had triumphed. It would be for Frederick's latter-day successors the sharp and trusty blade that would once again carve a path to glory. It would be a new army, modernised and equipped with the latest weapons and devices, but it would still be

1 Ernest Hambloch, *Germany Rampant*, 1938, pp. 48-9.

[p. 32]

at heart the old army whose story was imperishably inscribed in the nation's annals. One of its weapons would be the aircraft, but it would only be a weapon of a Service which was predominantly the embodiment of German land power. The idea of air power as the rival or equal of land power was beyond the comprehension of soldiers steeped in the philosophy of war which commended itself to German mentality.

Hiller on the Army's Shield

Not the air arm but the mighty German army would be the shield of the Reich. To it would fall the task of keeping the foes of the fatherland far outside the borders of the Germanic realm. That, we know from *Mein Kampf*, was an object by which Hitler set great store. He wrote:

'Let us imagine the bloody battles of the world war not as having taken place on the Somme, in Flanders, in Artois, in front of Warsaw, Nishni-Novgorod, Kowno and Riga, but in Germany, in the Ruhr, on the Elbe, in front of Hanover, Leipzig, Nuremberg, etc. If such happened, then we must admit that the destruction of Germany might have been accomplished. . . . If this titanic conflict between the nations developed outside the frontiers of our fatherland not only is all the merit due to the immortal service rendered by our old army but it was also very fortunate for the future of Germany. I am convinced that if things had taken a different course there would no longer be a German Reich today but only German States.' [1]

The second world war has brought to the localities enumerated in this passage misfortunes which the old

1 *Mein Kampf*, Murphy's translation, London, 1939, p. 547. Hitler seems to have attached little importance to the air arm, but he does refer to it in connection with the threat which 'French aeroplanes and long-range batteries' would constitute for Britain's vital centres. It is evident from what he says that in his view the submarine menace was more serious still. (*Ibid.*, p. 503.)

[p. 33]

Germanic shield has been powerless to avert. Death and destruction have been rained upon them from the skies while German armies stood massively on guard far beyond the frontiers of the Reich. Such catastrophies were the price which Germany had to pay for pinning her faith to military doctrines which were already becoming obsolete.

Tedder on Air Power

The fact is that the Germans have never really understood the meaning of air power. 'They did not understand how to use air power as a weapon of war,' Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder stated in a review of the North African campaign on 15 May, 1943. 'They misused it.' They did not know how to use an air force properly. Four months before, on 9 January, Sir Arthur had said at Cairo: 'We have learned this new kind of warfare and the Americans are learning it. The Hun and the Jap have yet to learn it.' 'Today,' he said, 'Britain alone of the embattled nations can look to a striking force in the air unshackled and untrammelled by parochialism and preconceived ideas, free from glib phrases like "air support" and "fighter assistance"—an Air Force which commands the air.'

The Tethered Air Arm

Sir Arthur Tedder's reference to the Americans is interesting in view of the fact that their air organisation is still, broadly, that which we discarded in 1918. Although it is, there is nevertheless no doubt whatever that the American authorities believe firmly in the strategic use of the air arm. It was not always so. That the air arm should be ancillary and operationally subordinate to the army was the view strongly advocated by the representative of the General Staff of the United States Army when he gave

[p. 34]

evidence before the Dwight Morrow Committee in 1925; the question being considered was whether an autonomous air force should be established in the United States. 'There is no separate responsibility, separate mission or separate theatre of action that can be assigned to such a separate force,' this officer stated. Another officer, Major-General C. P. Summerall, commanding the 2nd Corps Area, testified: 'As far as we are concerned, in war the only object is the enemy's army. If that falls, everything falls. . . . A bombing expedition must therefore be made as something connected with the enemy's armed forces.' There was implicit in this statement a disavowal of the conception of air power in the fullest sense and an affirmation of the doctrine of land-air power, which is a different thing. There is room for both air power, proper, and land-air power in a philosophy of war. 'What is of practical importance is the emphasis placed on the one or on the other.

Land-Air Power and Air Power

In Germany the emphasis was placed on land-air power. In Britain it was placed on air power, with sea-air power as runner-up, land-air power being a rather straggling competitor. The difference was reflected in the composition of the respective air forces, in the organisation of the higher commands, and, above all, in the attitude of the Governments to the master-strategies which the scientific study of air warfare presented. The German air force was an instrument admirably fitted for the execution of the air policy which the German military authorities had adopted. It was an almost ideal arm for co-operation with ground forces. It contained a high proportion of dive-bombers (Junkers 87's) and of transport aircraft (Junkers 52's). Our own air force was weak in these two categories but was superior to the German in the quality (though not

[p. 35]

the quantity of its long-range bombers and its single-seat fighters. Our Wellington was a better heavy bomber than anything which Germany had, and we were definitely ahead of her in the fighter class. She had a fairly good interceptor in the Messerschmitt 109, but it was definitely inferior to our Hurricane or Spitfire. In other words, in the two categories which are of prime importance in the waging of air warfare, considered *per se*, we had the advantage, while Germany had it in those categories which are essential in air operations ancillary to those of ground forces.

The Great Divide of 1918

In Germany, as in Britain, the air force is a separate Service, but it has never been able to free itself from the army's influence to the same extent. Our own air force cut adrift from the army more than twenty-one years before the present war began. The date when it came into being, 1 April, 1918, is an epochal one in the calendar which records the conflict between British air power and German militarist ambition. The other red-letter dates in that calendar are 11 May, 1940, when we opened our strategic air offensive against the Reich, and 27 September, 1940, when Fighter Command won the last of its great victories over the *Luftwaffe* in the battle of Britain. Perhaps some other dates should be added to this list, those, for instance, in 1935-36 when we conceived the eight-gun monoplane fighter and the big four-engined bomber. None of them had the same importance, however, as the first of all, the date on which the Air Force was formed.

Its creation was an act of faith. Those who worked for a separate Service—and General Smuts was first and foremost in that prescient band—looked far ahead. They cast their minds forward to a time which seemed distant and to some indeed so visionary and shadowy as to be

[p. 36]

beyond the range of profitable calculation. They were wise in their prevision. They grasped the truth that man's mastery of the air has not only made warfare three-dimensional—that is a truism today—but entitles the arm whose path is the third element to claim the place of a co-equal with the historic arms of war.

To split up into three the two Services that existed in 1917 was a daring experiment. The result might well have been disastrous. Instead, the gamble succeeded beyond all expectation. It approved itself in action. The dream of those who worked for, planned and created the third arm was to become a reality sooner than they knew. Within a generation the testing time arrived. The weapon which they forged was tried by fire. It did not fail.

The Battle of Britain

In the autumn of 1940 there was fought one of the decisive battles of history. It was fought not as the older battles on land or sea but in the air. It was waged above the harvest fields of southern England. In the fierce encounters that flashed and flickered, shifted and swayed in the sunlight high above the quiet countryside the Royal Air Force met and broke the massed onset of the most powerful array ever assembled in the air. They did something more than Drake and his fellow captains had done three centuries and more before. They sent a more ruthless and formidable foe reeling back, his hopes of world domination wrecked for ever.

To have failed in that great conflict would have opened the way to a waiting army of invasion. All the preparations had been made for a swift dash across the English Channel. The ships and barges were ready to sail. They waited for one thing only. If their venture was to succeed it was necessary that the *Luftwaffe* should first have won the temporary command of the air over south-eastern England.

[p. 37]

We all know that it failed in the attempt to win that command. It was Fighter Command of the Royal Air Force which came out of the clash with the right to hoist a whip at the fore.

It is not to strain the probabilities of the case to trace a direct connection between what happened in 1940 and what had happened in 1918. The battle of Britain was won because the Royal Air Force had better pilots and better machines than the *Luftwaffe*. They were better, in all human probability, because there was in existence a system which went as far to ensure as any system could that they were better. They might not have been better if the system had been still that which was in existence in 1917. British equipment was inferior to German during some phases of the first world war; it was so in the early parts of both the years 1916 and 1917. The British air service was not then an autonomous one. It is not fanciful to suggest that it might have been inferior in 1940 if the change of organisation had not taken place in 1918. Those who would challenge such a statement should ponder what Mr. Churchill said in the House of Commons on 10 June, 1941. 'The equipment of our army at the outbreak of war,' he said, 'was of a most meagre and deficient character.' Our anti-aircraft defence on the ground was particularly inadequate. Would the defence in the air have been much better if it too had been the responsibility of a department and a service which had a multitude of competing cares and duties?

The Birth of the Giant Bomber

The result of the re-organisation of 1918 was that the air was assured of its merited place in the scheme of national defence. It became the concern of a department and a Service which could concentrate all thought and energy on this one subject. The change ensured that provision for

[p. 38]

security in this element at least should not be overlooked or allowed to go by default. It enabled 'thinking ahead' to be systematised in the sphere of air defence. That is really why today giant four-engined bombers are tearing the heart out of industrial Germany. Those bombers trace their descent to a brain-wave which came to British experts in 1936, while Germany was thinking only in terms of short-range bombers and particularly of dive-bombers for employment with her powerful mechanised army.

The idea behind 'specification B.12/36' was that when the next war came Britain would need a long-range weight-carrying bomber which could go farther and load a bigger cargo of high explosive in its own bomb-racks than a whole squadron could at that time. This advance was becoming possible as a result of the development of new techniques of construction. Various improvements were being made in the designs and structures of airframes and engines. Much higher wing-loadings were being tried; all-metal stressed skin (or, alternatively, geodetic) construction of fuselages was becoming practicable; more powerful engines, including those of sleeve-valve design, were coming into use. The Stirling, built by Short Brothers to Mr. Arthur Gouge's design, was the answer to the specification; it marked an epoch in the history of heavy bombers. It was followed by the Handley Page Halifax and the Avro Lancaster. The last is the finest heavy bomber in existence, today. But the whole trio is unsurpassed. Germany has nothing approaching them. And they are not the last word in the vocabulary of Britain's effort in the air. Mightier bombers are on the stocks already.

The Germans Become Apprehensive

Perhaps Hitler's famous intuition gave him an inkling of the ultimate significance of what Britain was beginning

[p. 39]

to do in 1935-36. In May of the former year he expressed, his personal apprehension on the subject of long-range bombing to Mr. Edward Price Bell, the well-known press correspondent. 'War has been speeded up too much,' he said, 'and made too overwhelmingly destructive for our geographical limitations. Within an hour—in some instances within forty minutes of the outbreak of hostilities—swift bombing machines would wreak ruin upon European capitals.' [1] There was nothing profound in that remark, but it was significant when made by a man in whose brain there was already being formed a scheme for the domination of Europe. *He was afraid of the air.* He showed that he was, again, when in 1935 and in 1936 he put forward proposals for the prohibition of bombing outside battle-zones. Again, there was nothing new in the idea of such prohibition. It was simply another instance of the survival of the military code of thought. It reflected the view, put forward in Germany in the last war, that the proper rôle of the air arm is that of long-range artillery.

Aircraft as Long-range Artillery

In that war, General von Hoeppner, then the head of the German air service, has put it on record, the view which commended itself to the military hierarchy was that 'the weapons admitted by international law as being in accordance with the usages of land warfare should be employed against fortresses and important military places in the actual theatre of war (*Kriegsschauplatz*), that is, the zone in which the armies were fighting. We limited ourselves accordingly. England went further. In the autumn of 1914, she destroyed the airship Z.11 in the shed at Düsseldorf, attacked Friedrichshafen, and raided military objectives far from the field of operations. But at that time

1 *The Speeches of Adolf Hitler, 1922-39.* Edited by N. H. Baynes, 1942, Vol. II, p. 1215.

[p. 40]

she showed consideration for the peaceful population. France adopted a different line. On 4 December, 1914, she attacked the entirely undefended town of Freiburg-im-Breisgau, eighty kilometres behind the lines, and thus for the first time carried the terrors of air warfare into an entirely peaceful territory.' [1]

The motive behind the recurrent German attempts to have the sphere of action of aircraft confined to the battle-zones is clear enough. The kind of aggressive war which the German General Staff has forever in mind is essentially a war of mass-attack which, to be successful, demands an unceasing flow of armaments to support it. Interrupt or dislocate the supply of munitions, and you go far to bring the great juggernaut of invasion to a halt. The world can be made safe for war-lords, in fact, only if the devil's cauldrons in which they brew their lethal mixtures are safe-guarded from an enemy's attack. That has been why the idea of fighting on foreign, not Germanic, soil has always been a cardinal idea in German strategy. And it was here that the thought of the war in the third dimension came to disturb and alarm the plotters of the new war of aggression.

The German Attempt to Restrict Bombing

The Ruhr and the Rhineland are the homes of Germany's heavy war-industries, and they are both areas which are particularly exposed to attack from the air. The restriction on bombing which the Germans tried to read into international law in 1914-18 (though their practice then hardly conformed to their precept) and which in 1935 and 1936 they proposed, as stated above, should be made the subject of an international agreement, would have suited Germany admirably. It would have protected the Ruhr, the Rhineland and other centres of German

1 Von Hoepfner, *Deutschlands Krieg in der Luft*, 1920, p. 21.

[p. 41]

industries, while it would not have prevented the German air force from bombing objectives in areas in which the German army was operating. It would thus not have saved Warsaw, Rotterdam and Belgrade from the savage attacks which they sustained in 1939-41 and which are by themselves sufficient to show that the motive of humanity had no part in the German proposal. On the other hand, acceptance of that proposal would have safeguarded Essen, Duisburg and scores of other armament centres in Germany. The making of the proposal was; in fact, an exceedingly crafty manoeuvre, undertaken for the purpose of securing a military advantage.

For that and the other reasons, hereafter given, I am personally convinced that the proposal, was seriously meant, that is, that it was intended to be accepted. I can not subscribe to the view that Hitler brought it forward in 1935 and 1936 with his tongue in his cheek; not in the least because he was incapable of doing so, but simply because it was unquestionably in his interest to have such a restriction accepted. He was scared of the possible effect of a bombing offensive upon Germany's war effort and the morale of the German population. He would infinitely have preferred to fight out the war in another way, a way that was not *our* way but was *his* way. He did not want *our* kind of war. That is why it is right and proper that he should get our kind of war from now to the end.

So little did he relish the idea of long-distance raiding that he initiated no attack of this kind in the first ten months or more of the war (see the following chapter for the facts). The German air force was then the most powerful in the world. Its bombers may riot have been, individually, as good as ours, but there were more than twice as many of them; and our anti-aircraft defences were notoriously weak in the early part of the war. Then, if ever, would have been the time to launch massed air attacks on

[p. 42]

Britain. No such attacks came. After Poland had been crushed we fully expected the weight of the German blow in the air to fall on us: It did not fall. Why? The explanation was really simple. (I am not being 'superior'; I was as much at sea as anyone about the reasons for 'the lull in the air'.) It was that to have bombed this country otherwise than in connection with an attempted landing here would have been, in the German view, a misuse of the air arm, a mis-appropriation of it to a purpose which it was not intended to fulfil. It would have been militarily inexpedient; no question of ethical or humanitarian inhibition came into the matter. It was simply that the role of the strategic air offensive would have been out of character in the drama of Germanic air warfare.

Warsaw—Rotterdam—London

One thing is certain, and it is a thing which should be made clear, for it is commonly misunderstood: the bombing of Warsaw or of Rotterdam was not in parallel with the bombing of London. An American journalist and editor has written: 'In the month of September [1940] Hitler failed to follow up his initial advantage and lost his opportunity to win the kind of *Blitzkrieg* that took Poland and Norway and Holland and Belgium for him. . . . From now on he must find some other way to win this infamous war.' [1] This statement betrays a lack of appreciation of the real position. The attack upon London was not *Blitzkrieg*. *Blitzkrieg* is the combination of swift mechanised onslaughts in the air and on the ground. It is a technique of attack which leaves the assailant in possession of the objective. Now, air attack alone could never have left London in the hands of the enemy. If Hitler had gone on bombing London from that time to this he would never have conquered London.

1 Ralph Ingersoll, *Report on England*, 1941, p. 19.

[p. 43]

When Warsaw and Rotterdam were bombed, German armies were at their gates. The air bombardment was an operation of the tactical offensive. It was therefore, for the Germans, 'according to Cocker', 'Cocker' here being a standard of military expediency alone. Purbblind, the Germans thought that they could get away with these very brutal bombardments, just because the bombers were operating with an investing army, and still maintain the *de facto* ban upon the bombing of objectives outside the battle-zone. They were soon undeceived. They are, *au fond*, stupid people on the whole.

They showed their stupidity when they kept on harping, once the raids on London had begun, on the *retaliatory* nature of the attacks on the city. Again and again the German official reports emphasised the reprisal element in the action of the *Luftwaffe*. They kept screaming, in effect: We are hitting you because you hit us first. If you stop bombing us, we'll stop bombing you. That, too, was the recurrent note in Hitler's periodical denunciations of our air offensive. He added to his diatribes a good deal of sob-stuff about war on women and children—as if the German airmen had never machine-gunned the pitiable refugees crowding the roads in France. Here are a number of extracts from Hitler's speeches:

Hitler on the British Air Offensive

In a speech at the opening of the Winter Relief Campaign on 4 September, 1940, he stated that the British could not fly over the Reich by day and therefore came by night, when they dropped their bombs indiscriminately and without plan on civilian residential quarters, farms and buildings. For three months he had not replied to these raids, thinking they would stop, but now the British would know 'we are giving our answer night after night'. 'We will erase their cities—for every thousand pound of

[p. 44]

bombs, 150, 180, yes 200 thousand. . . .' The rest of the sentence was drowned in a storm of applause. [1]

On 9 November, 1940, Hitler stated at Munich that the German air force had made no night raids on Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium or France. 'Then, suddenly, Mr. Churchill had bombs dropped on the German civil population. I waited in patience, thinking "The man is mad; for such action could only lead to Britain's destruction," and I made my plan for peace. Now I am resolved to fight it out to the last.' 'It was the greatest military folly of all time that Mr. Churchill committed in attempting to fight with the weakest of all his weapons.'

On 31 December, 1940, Hitler addressed to the National Socialist Party a New Year Proclamation in which he again stated that the British had bombed German cities for three and a half months before reprisal action was taken. In May England began her attacks on Freiburg. Now, since the middle of September, she must have realised that it was nothing but humane feelings which had prevented an earlier reply to 'the Churchill crimes'. For every bomb ten, or if necessary a hundred, would be dropped by the German air force.

In a speech to the Reichstag in the Kroll Opera House, Berlin, on 4 May, 1941, Hitler said: 'Churchill, this amateur strategist, began his night air war. What did he care whether this war meant the destruction of towns, of monuments of culture, of treasures collected by peoples over centuries? Churchill is determined to continue this kind of warfare. We also are resolved to continue and to retaliate a hundredfold, until Britain has got rid of this criminal and his methods.'

1 The text of the passage was published in Germany as follows: Wenn die britische Luftwaffe 2 oder 3 oder 4000 Kilogramm Bomben wirft, dann werfen wir jetzt in einer Nacht 150,000, 180,000, 230,000, 300,000, 400,000 and mehr Kilo! Und wenn sie erklären, sie werden unsere Städte in grossem Masstabe angreifen—wir werden ihre Städte ausradieren!

[p. 45]

There was no specific reference to the air raids in the speech which Hitler made at a meeting of the Nazi Party members and soldiers at Berlin on 30 January, 1942, but the speech was notable for the pitch of vituperation of Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt to which he rose on this occasion. 'This arch-liar,' he said of the former, 'today shows that Britain never was in a position to wage war alone.' 'This gabbler, this drunkard Churchill,' were other polite references to our Prime Minister. 'And then his accomplice in the White House—this mad fool.' Altogether it was a most refreshing performance—no doubt for the speaker and his hearers but certainly for us, because of its implications.

In a speech in the Reichstag on 26 April, 1942, Hitler said: 'Should the idea of bombing civilians increase in Great Britain, I wish to say this before the whole world: "Churchill started the air war in 1940, and then started moaning. From now on I shall return blow for blow, till I have broken this criminal and his works." '

Here I interrupt the Hitlerian flow of words to quote some which Mr. Churchill used in his speech at the County Hall, London, on 14 July, 1941, that is, nine months previously. 'We ask no favour of the enemy. We seek from them no compunction. On the contrary, if tonight the people of London were asked to cast their votes whether a convention should be entered into to stop the bombing of all cities, the overwhelming majority would cry "No, we will mete out to the Germans the measure, and more than the measure, that they have meted out to us".' This statement was greeted with cheers. There is not much moaning about it.

At the opening of the Winter Help Campaign on 30 September, 1942, Hitler said at the Sportpalast, Berlin: 'Apart from the second front, our enemies have another means to carry on the war—bombing of the civilian popu-

[p. 46]

lation. The man who invented the bombing war now declares that the bombing war will increase in violence in the future. In May, 1940, Churchill sent the first bombers against the German civilian population. I warned him then, and I continued to warn him for four months, but in vain. Then we struck hard. When we did so they began weeping and whining. There was talk of barbarity and disgusting inhumanity. A man who, apart from the principal warmonger, Roosevelt, is the main culprit, pretended to be innocent, and today they are again carrying on this bombing war. I should like to say this. This time, too, the time will come when we shall reply.' Very loud cheers acclaimed this threat.

At Munich on a November, 1942, Hitler said: 'Do you think I don't eat my heart out when I think of the British attacks on Germany? We did not drop a single bomb on Paris. [1] Before I attacked Warsaw I five times asked them to capitulate, and only then did I do what is allowed by the rules of war. It is just the same today. I don't forget, I take good note of it all. They will find out in Britain that the German inventive spirit has not been idle, and they will get an answer that will take their breath away.'

Hitler stated in a broadcast from his headquarters on 10 September, 1943: 'Only from the air is the enemy able to terrorise the German homeland. But here, too, technical and organisational conditions are being created which will not only break his terror attacks but which will also enable us to retaliate effectively.'

Hitler's Aim

Various people will draw various conclusions from the selection of utterances given above. Many will say they

¹ They did, however, bomb the Citroen works and other objectives in the suburbs. In the raid of 3 June, 1940, on the Paris area 254 people (including 195 civilians) were killed and 652 (including 545 civilians) injured. (Alexander Werth, *The Last Days of Paris*, 1940, p. 127.)

[p. 47]

were merely the hysterical screams of a neuropath who did not mean what he said. I take leave to disagree. I can read them in one way only, and that is that, whatever Hitler wanted or did not want, he most assuredly did not want the mutual bombing to go on. He had not wanted it ever to begin. He wanted it, having begun, to be called off. That, I am firmly convinced, was the aim behind all his frantic bellowings and all his blather about attacks on the civil population. He knew that, in the end, our air offensive, if it did not win the war for us, would certainly prevent Germany from winning it. That that and nothing else was his motive is shown by other happenings also.

One was the unanimity with which the chorus of Press and radio in Germany plugged the theme-song that long-distance bombing is useless and that the proper place for the air arm is the vicinity of the battle-zone. A pseudo-British station was rigged to swell the chorus. It spoke as if from Britain and debated gravely, and always with adverse verdict, the question whether it was really worth 'our' while to go on with the air offensive. Unfortunately, the German propagandists were able to count upon a certain amount of support in their campaign from within this country of free speech. That it was the support of only a tiny fraction of the population was shown when, on 29 April, 1942, Mr. Rhys Davies, a Pacifist Member of Parliament, questioned the Secretary of State for Air about the recent raid on Lübeck and implied in a supplementary question that the air offensive should be stopped. There was a resounding cheer throughout the House of Commons when Sir Archibald Sinclair replied: 'The best way to prevent this destruction is to win the war as quickly as possible.' A few weeks later, on 16 June, another Socialist Member, Mr. R. R. Stokes, was asking about the recent 'thousand-bomber' raids and their utility. Mr. Attlee, the Deputy Prime Minister, declined to discuss

[p. 48]

the question with him. The following extract from the official report is interesting as showing where the sympathies of the House (and, it may be added, of the country) lay.

'Mr. Ellis Smith: Will my right hon. Friend bear in mind that these well-organised raids have won the admiration of the whole people?

'Mr. Stokes: Is my right hon. Friend aware that there is a substantial minority which considers indiscriminate raiding of this kind highly immoral?

'Mr. Evelyn Walkden: Is my right hon. Friend aware that the rest of the people of the country admire the Royal Air Force?

'Mr. Attlee: My hon. Friend probably more accurately represents the views of these people than the hon. Member for Ipswich (Mr. Stokes).'

Nothing daunted, Mr. Stokes returned to the charge on 27 May, 1943. After the Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Attlee, had informed him in reply to the original question that we were not going to be diverted from our policy of bombing the Axis war potential by neutral or other representations, Mr. Stokes asked whether there was not an ever-growing volume of opinion in this country which considered the 'indiscriminate bombing of civilian centres both morally wrong and strategic lunacy'. Mr. Attlee replied: 'No, there is no indiscriminate bombing. (Cheers.) As has been repeatedly stated in the House, the bombing is of those targets which are most effective from the military point of view.' (Cheers.) Another Member asked if Mr. Attlee realised that his answer would be appreciated by all sensible people in this country.

Dr. C. E. M. Joad's View

Unwittingly, and in all sincerity, writers in the Press were also inclined in a few exceptional instances to play

[p. 49]

Hitler's game for him. A fair example of the kind of arguments relied upon is to be found in an article contributed to a Sunday newspaper by Dr. C. E. M. Joad, well known to thousands of listeners as a member of the B.B.C. Brains Trust. His attack was on night-bombing, but that in the circumstances meant all bombing of objectives in Germany by our Air Force: as, indeed, Dr. Joad implied in what he said. His case was that night bombing was not only inhumane but was not even a war-winning method. Its effect was not to weaken but to strengthen the morale of the people attacked. Moreover, it was bad policy for us. 'The Germans have nearer bases. They still have, we are assured, more planes. They have a smaller area to bomb. Germany is a perimeter of a fan of which we are the handle. Is it quite certain that we can do more damage to their perimeter than they do to the concentrated handle?' The able correspondent of the newspaper which published Dr. Joad's article [1] appended a note to it contesting the statement that the *Luftwaffe* could hurt Britain more than the Royal Air Force could hurt Germany. The effective answer to Dr. Joad is, indeed, that the War Cabinet has evidently arrived at a different conclusion. It has done so in the light of the wealth of information at the call of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, the Joint Intelligence Committee, the Directorate of Intelligence at the Air Ministry, the Ministry of Economic Warfare, and other sources and channels not available to Dr. Joad. A difficult question of operational policy cannot be settled by the light of pure reason.

The Meaning of Air Power

More nonsense has been talked and written about air power than, probably, any other subject connected with warfare. It has been particularly nonsensical when the

1 *Sunday Dispatch*, 9 November, 1941.

[p. 50]

speaker or writer has thought it incumbent upon herself or himself to dilate upon the inhumanity of the air offensive. In Chapter V I deal at some length with the assertion or innuendo that what that offensive really amounts to is the slaughter and mutilation of enemy civilians. The quotations made in the present chapter from Hitler's speeches and from other sources have a bearing on the arguments in Chapter V. The purpose of the present chapter is, however, to show, and illustrate, the nature of the difference between tactical and strategical bombing and the practical results of that difference as they emerged in the present struggle. There was really a clash between conflicting conceptions of air power, the British and the German. We, it is legitimate, and only human, to claim, made the right choice and Germany the wrong. To cover up that mistake the Germans have chosen to misrepresent our use of the air arm as not only a diversion of it from its proper purpose but as a barbarous war against the civil population. Actually, our kind of air warfare was far more logical than the German and at least as justifiable from the ethical angle. From some of the German outbursts one would think that it amounted merely to dumping high explosives and incendiaries from the upper reaches of the air upon sleeping towns. That was a grossly distorted picture of the reality. Lord Trenchard put the position in its true perspective in a speech which he delivered at Winchester on 15 May, 1943. He said:

"The word "raid" is inadequate to describe the attacks by our bombers on Germany. I call them *battles*. They are the Battle of the Ruhr. This great force of night bombers forces its way through terrific anti-aircraft defences and thousands of guns and night fighters: They are causing havoc among the submarine production centres and assembling yards. They are making the Germans realise the horror of war on their own great cities and towns, and

[p. 51]

interrupting and dislocating the whole civil life of their nation. German war production has suffered enormously, and by it untold casualties have been saved for the United Nations' armies and navies.'

There Lord Trenchard puts his finger on the root of the trouble—the trouble from the Germans' point of view. It was just because our air offensive was, and is, smashing their capacity to make war that they have been, and are, screaming raucous denunciations of it, on the ground, forsooth, of its inhumanity.

[p. 52]

CHAPTER III

OUR GREAT DECISION

Complacency in 1939-40

Never since hostilities began have we in Britain been so foolishly complacent as we were during the first winter of the war. We were terribly pleased with ourselves then. Everything was going well. We were having a nice, comfortable war. The change-over from the pace of peace had been a far easier one on the whole than we had feared it would be; the gears had hardly jarred at all. Now we could just jog along—still on first speed, though we did not know it then—and not worry. We had time on our side. All we had to do was to keep on keeping our morale up, and Germany was doomed. She could not hope to stand up indefinitely to our blockade. The economic pressure which we were subjecting her to and remorselessly intensifying was bound to crush her in time, as it did in 1918. It would not necessarily be a short war, but of its outcome there was no doubt whatever. No one then expected the French to crack. They and we would be in the fight up to the end. The Nazis would see before long that it was hopeless to go on, their leaders would scuttle themselves, a satisfactory peace would follow a satisfactory war, and all would be well again with the world.

At the close of 1939 a booklet entitled *Assurance of Victory* was issued under official auspices. It was a heartening publication. It set forth the overwhelming advantages which we possessed in comparison with Germany. The first was man-power. Citizens of the British Empire alone outnumbered the population of enemy territory by more than four to one. We had complete mastery of the sea, and it was being used to the full and from the very start. Our

[p. 53]

blockade was more effective than in the last war. 'This time we have begun where we left off in 1918.' We had the measure of the U-boats. We were sinking between two and four every week. Our shipping losses were less than one per cent of our tonnage afloat. We had greater reserves of labour than Germany. Her railways were strained almost to breaking point. 'We do not need to defeat the Nazis on land, but only to prevent them from defeating us. If we can succeed in doing that, we can rely on our strength in other directions to bring them to their knees.' 'The Nazis cannot hope to win the war on sea or on land.' What of the air? 'More than any other nation they depend on the striking power of their bombers. They may be able to inflict grave losses. For a time the Allied peoples must be ready to endure considerable damage and perhaps many casualties. But—this is the vital question—can the Nazis keep it up?' To that question the official booklet answered No. They could not build aircraft on a scale sufficient to keep a huge air force in the field. They would be short, too, of oil. Two-thirds of Germany's oil had to be imported in peace. She would need more in war, and she could not obtain it. She imported two-thirds, also, of the iron ore which she needed, and here again she would be in difficulties. She would be short of fats also. Her gold reserves were low. The morale of the workers was a doubtful factor. 'This war will expose the fatal weaknesses of the Nazi structure. . . . The immense staying-power of democracy is the final guarantee of Allied triumph.'

A Douche of Cold Water

Like thousands of other people in this country, I read that booklet and it made me feel good. I felt that the war was going well for us. It was the greater shock, therefore, when in the first days of January, 1940, I happened to have a talk with a famous air commander of the last war.

[p. 54]

He was not complacent; very far from it. He did not like the way the war was shaping. We were *not* winning the war by our present methods. On the contrary, we were losing it, losing it hand-over-fist. We were not *hitting* Germany, and war *is* hitting. We were allowing her to mount undisturbed a great battle for the west. By the end of March at the earliest, perhaps a little later, she would be ready. Then the blow would fall. The massed attack would smash its way through the Low Countries and the whole Allied line in the west would be rocked. How often when the storm broke in the following May did I think of those prophetic, unpalatable words to which I had listened, only half believing them, on a cold, foggy afternoon of early January.

London's Vulnerability

Certainly the war had been until then a far less terrible affair than we had expected it to be. We had been convinced that it would begin with a tremendous onslaught from the air upon our ports and cities and, above all, London. London, it had been driven home to us by innumerable warnings, was the most vulnerable capital in the world. Its unfortunate position had been pointed out repeatedly. A distinguished airman, writing in 1938, had compared it to a huge, ungainly 'wen'—Cobbett's word—which almost invited an enemy to hit it. In comparison with Berlin it was extraordinarily ill-sited. 'For every 700 miles there and back which the German bombers would have to fly to reach London our own would have to fly 1000 to reach Berlin, and, in consequence, in rougher computation, they could make ten round trips to our seven, presuming both air forces to be equal, and drop their bombs by tons in a like proportion.' 'The ratios which have been quoted mean, in plainer language, a 30 per cent advantage to our potential enemy, and this not

[p. 55]

in human brawn but in horse-power, in explosive effect, and in scientific calculation.' [1]

The Germans knew these facts as well as we did. 'No land in the world is so vulnerable from the air as the British Isles,' said Goering in a special New Year's article in the *Völkischer Beobachter* of 30 December, 1939. 'Once again, as the German Zeppelins did twenty-five years ago, German squadrons will unleash air-raid alarms over London. . . . All that is needed is the Führer's command for them to carry over their loads of destruction-bearing bombs instead of a load of cameras. . . . The German Air Force will strike at Britain with an onslaught such as has never been known in the history of the world as soon as Hitler orders counter-measures to the British blockade.' Here there was perhaps to be discerned some hint of impatience with the policy which restrained the *Luftwaffe*—Goering's pride and passion—from aiming at London and Britain the blows which we at least had expected would fall the moment hostilities opened.

Fears for Berlin and Paris

Yet Goering had the sense to perceive that the abstention from raiding and counter-raiding was not altogether to Germany's disadvantage. The Germans on their side had expected to be attacked at once. That is clear from what Dr. Goebbels said at Poznan on 19 January, 1940. He was referring to the British Government's declaration of war, and he said: 'One would have expected that, on the afternoon of that day their much-vaunted bombers would have appeared over Berlin.' Our bombers did fly over Germany, but only to drop leaflets. This practice the Germans professed to regard with equanimity. Goering himself said at the Rheinmetal-Borsig armament works on

1 Air Commodore L. E. O. Charlton, *The New Factor in Warfare* in *The Air Defence of Britain*, Penguin Special, 1938, pp. 83-4.

[p. 56]

9 September, 1939: 'If the British aeroplanes fly at tremendous heights at night and drop their ridiculous propaganda in German territory, I have nothing against it. But take care if the leaflets are replaced by one bomb. Then reprisals will follow as in Poland.'

Paris awaited raids on the outbreak of war no less apprehensively than Berlin. There was a mingled feeling of surprise and relief when no raids came. An American correspondent who was in Paris before and during September, 1939, says: 'It was taken for, granted by laymen that a mass bombardment of Paris and London by the German aviation would be the first act of war, if war came.' [1] 'Only two things struck us as slightly unnatural,' he says later. 'There was no bombing from the air, and this war, unlike all wars legitimately born, had not produced a song, no "Madelon", "Tipperary", or "Over There".' [2]

Capital Cities as Hostages to Fortune

It would have been strange if the danger to the capital cities had not been prominently in the minds of all who were responsible for the direction of affairs. Here were these great agglomerations of humanity, sprawling centres of highly organised activities, densely populated areas of pulsating civic life, and all at the mercy, as Mr. Bernard Shaw has said, of a single airman. He speaks of 'cities where millions of inhabitants are depending for light and heat, water and food, on centralised mechanical organs like great steel hearts and arteries that can be smashed in half an hour by a boy in a bomber.' [3] That was, no doubt an overstatement, but the menace was there. It was all the more disturbing because no one knew what a bomber

1 Edmond Taylor, *The Strategy of Terror*, Boston, 1940, p. 20.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

3 *Adventures of the Black Girl in Search of God*, pp. 64-5.

[p. 57]

formation could in fact accomplish. There was a tendency to attribute to air power an almost miraculous capacity for destruction and many of the forecasts made of the wrath to come were rather wild shots in the dark.

There is little doubt now that we in this country took an exaggerated view of the danger that threatened us. Looking back now on what we did—and said—in 1939, one can see that we were in some respects over-apprehensive in regard to the air menace, and, which was hardly surprising at that time, very dubious about the public reaction to it if it should emerge as an actuality. We undoubtedly over-estimated the casualty-roll which bombing would cause. We made an immense provision for hospital beds, for instance—a provision which was found in the event to be happily far in excess of the needs of the victims. There was a general tendency in this country to fear the worst. In June, 1939, the *Air Raid Defence League* issued a pamphlet in which the casualties likely to be caused by a single day's raiding were estimated at 35,000—a figure which would increase, it was stated, to 100,000 in a few days. Fortunately, in four years of war we have hardly reached that total yet. In London alone, Professor J. B. S. Haldane [1] warned us, from his experience in Spain, that a knock-out blow from the air might result in the killing of 50,000 to 100,000 people. It is hardly surprising that the catastrophic losses which were contemplated should have inspired precautions which were in some respects over-elaborate, or perhaps one should say over-solicitous for the safeguarding of life and limb. We were encouraged in the early days to seek shelter at once when the sirens sounded. It was our duty, indeed, not to expose ourselves to the risk of becoming casualties and therefore a burden on the community. Now when the alert is heard we take up our posts nonchalantly as fire-watchers or extra wardens as

1 *A.R.P.*, 1938, p. 63.

[p. 58]

other active-and exposed-participants in the great civilian *levée-en-masse* enrolled behind the organised fire brigades, rescue parties and demolition squads. And most of us have found that the possession of a tin helmet has raised our morale tremendously!

In the early days, however, we thought only of going to ground. So obsessed did we all seem to be with the idea of taking cover that some shrewd observers feared that our morale would be undermined in advance. In the House of Lords on 15 March, 1939, Lord Trenchard warned the country that we were thinking far too much about defence and devoting too much energy, money and material to the provision of dug-outs and shelters. He deprecated the 'continuous clamouring for defence measures'. In a letter to *The Times* of 18 March, 1939, Sir Henry Page-Croft (now Lord Croft) wrote: 'Nothing could more surely play the game of the enemy than to create a panic psychology which encourages flight to shelter.'

The Gas Menace

We were particularly concerned with the danger from gas. We had warnings from many sources that our cities would be flooded with toxic vapours the moment hostilities began. It is evident, in the retrospect, that the Government of the time took this particular menace far more seriously than any other. The precautions taken to meet it were much more thorough and elaborate than those which were considered necessary for active defence. The provision of anti-aircraft guns and searchlights left, in comparison, much to be desired. There was a general obsession with the gas menace in the years 1937-39.

In the House of Lords, for instance, on 13 December, 1937, Lord Swinton, the Secretary of State for Air, in moving the second reading of the Air Raid Precautions Bill, devoted all the earlier part of his speech to the mea-

[p. 59]

asures that were being taken to protect people against gas attack. They were most comprehensive. Already, he stated, some 200,000 volunteers had been trained in anti-gas measures, all the policemen in the country had been given instruction in this subject, about 10,000 doctors and 10,000 nurses had passed through a special course on the treatment of gas cases, and twenty million gas masks had been produced in the Government factory taken over in July, 1936. (The number of gas masks increased to 50,000,000 by March, 1939.) 'I believe,' said Lord Swinton, with evident satisfaction, 'that we are the only country that has devised a system of mass-production of gas masks.'

In the subsequent debate there was one discordant note only in the general acceptance of the necessity for the measures proposed. It was struck by Lord Trenchard. He suggested that rather too much attention was being paid to the gas menace. The greatest danger, in his opinion, came from high explosive and incendiary bombs. Here, as in some other instances, Lord Trenchard showed himself to be a true prophet.

Why Germany did not use Gas

Whether Germany will use gas or not before this war ends can obviously not be known as yet. One thing, however, is certain, the confident expectation that she would begin the war with a series of gas attacks was falsified by the event. Then, if at all, was her opportunity. She was far stronger in the air than were we. Why did she not use gas against London? The probability is that she never had the least intention of using it: which is not to say that she may not eventually use it—but only as a desperate last resort. It is significant, that, as Mr. George Sava has pointed out: 'In the voluminous analyses of military problems published in Nazi Germany there was almost unanimous

[p. 60]

agreement on the uselessness of poison gas.' [1] Indeed, gas does not form a congruous element of the prescription for war which has its application in the *Blitzkrieg*.

Hitler's Psychological Victory

The German abstention both from strategic bombing and from the use of gas should not really have surprised us if we had appreciated truly the pattern of the air warfare which the mere predominance of the military school of thought in Germany had already outlined. It should have been apparent that tactical and not strategic bombing was Hitler's *arcanum vincendi*, or at least one of his *arcana*. There was ample evidence that he did not want the latter kind of bombing to become the practice. He had done his best to have it banned by international agreement. It seemed during the first eight and a half months of the war that the object which he had failed to achieve by way of express agreement he was attaining by a kind of tacit consent. We in Britain had organised a Bomber Command. The whole *raison d'être* of that Command was to bomb Germany if she should be our enemy. We were not bombing her. We were most carefully abstaining from bombing her. What, then, was the use of Bomber Command? Its position was almost a ridiculous one. It seemed to be keeping clear of the war, keeping neutral, acting as if it had made a separate peace. Had it—horrible thought—been bitten by a bug from Eire? What was the explanation? It certainly looked as if the policy of Munich, of appeasement, were still being continued in this particular sphere of warlike activity, or inactivity. Hitler must have been a happy man, happier far than he is now, during that first winter. In effect he had won a great psychological victory, or he seemed to have won it; perhaps here, again, fate smiled on him only to betray. The Lancasters, Stirlings and Halifaxes were

1 G. Sava, *School for War*, 1942, p. 154.

[p. 61]

being built all the time. At least the lull in the air meant that the construction of our big bombers could go on without interruption.

Some Popular Reactions

It is certain at any rate that our failure to carry the war into Germany was the subject of a good deal of criticism in this country. Why were we dropping leaflets and not bombs? it was asked. The Germans would have been more impressed by high explosives than even the best propagandist literature. It was a policy of 'kid gloves and confetti', said an important monthly journal.¹ Sometimes the reaction was bewilderment tinged with sardonic amusement. 'Lord, man, you might have hurt someone!' a squadron leader was supposed to have admonished a flying officer who had not untied the packet of 'nickels' (leaflets) before jettisoning them. Another jest was that the Navy had taken to sending down leaflets instead of depth-charges in its hunt for submarines. *Punch*, as of right, joined in the chorus and printed a Christmas carol on the subject, ending:

'Bombs, my foot!' said good King Wence,
'Them be leaflets, Stephen.'

These comments were the froth on the surface of waters of doubt and perplexity which were deep and wide. There was serious criticism of our inaction. The Air Force, it was complained, was not being used for the purpose for which, so far as it was an offensive force, it had been created. Only when the German advance into the Low Countries and France began in May, 1940, was our striking force of the air allowed to fulfil its function; and then, in the opinion of some authorities, an opportunity had already been missed of the kind that does not recur—the opportunity to

¹ *National Review*, January, 1940.

[p. 62]

strike at the German concentration which preceded the great attack in the west.

Two Notable Editorials

These missed opportunities were referred to in a notable editorial article in *The Aeroplane* of 29 March, 1940. It referred to 'the unwritten law' which forbade the bombing of civilians and thus, it was assumed, stood in the way of our opening an air offensive against Germany. 'Some amazing stories of the opportunities foregone by Great Britain in observance of this law will be told some day', it stated. 'Pilots, confronted with perfect targets, have had to keep the law, grind their teeth in chagrin, and hope for a change in the temper of the war. The breach of the law by the Nazis in the dusk at Scapa Flow seemed for the moment to mark the end of the period of humane restraints. The reprisal by the Royal Air Force at Sylt looked like acceptance of the challenge by the Allies. More mature reflections show that the exploit of the Royal Air Force was still part of the scoring game—a heartening and splendid piece of scoring, but still just an incident in the match which was to be continued according to the unwritten law. It was rather an insistence on the laws than a punishment for the breach of them. It was certainly not a declaration that, since the enemy had broken the laws, the fight was now free to all.' Public opinion both in Britain and France, Mr. Shepherd went on, was in favour of a more vigorous policy but had been restrained by the need to build up our reserves. That reason for caution would soon lose its force, and then 'in the final encounters we must assuredly take the initiative'.

We had not yet done so when Mr. Shepherd returned to the subject in his issue of 3 May, 1940. 'More than ever,' he wrote, 'is there need to carry the war to Germany, to strangle the offensive at the root. . . . If we are sincere in

[p. 63]

the desire to win this war quickly and effectively we must carry the war to Germany. The Germans have never felt the evils of such wars as they impose on others. . . . The solution must lie in a bold decision to deal with the menace at its source.' It needed some courage at that time to challenge our official policy. Fortunately, there were in this country a number of independent-minded people who were prepared to question the wisdom of letting Bomber Command rust in action.

A Pro and a Con

One of them was an anonymous correspondent who wrote to the *Sunday Times* of 14 January, 1940, to ask why we were not using air power to increase the effect of the blockade. Attack on military objectives in the interior of Germany, the writer pointed out, would open up an earlier prospect of an end to the war than the slow operation of sea power promised. We could not strike at the enemy by land but we could in the air. Why did we not strike in the air? It could only be because we could not sustain such attack, or feared that the enemy would attack more strongly, or believed that our moral position would be jeopardised if we attacked military objectives and injured—as we must—some civilians in the process. The writer examined each of these reasons in turn and came to the conclusion that they were not really strong arguments against the starting of an air offensive. His letter was the subject of some comment by 'Scrutator' [1] in the same issue of the newspaper. 'Scrutator' said: 'Such an extension of the offensive, whoever began it, would inevitably develop into competitive frightfulness. It might be forced on us in reprisal for the enemy's action, and we must be in a position to make reprisals if necessary. But the bombing of industrial towns with its unavoidable loss of life among the civil

1 Not the present (1943) 'Scrutator' but the late Mr. Herbert Sidebotham.

[p. 64]

population—that is what it would come to—would be inconsistent with the spirit, if not with the actual words, of the pledges given from both sides at the beginning of the war. [1] It is not only to neutrals that we should have to justify our being the first to break an undertaking which, so far as England and France are concerned, had been observed by the enemy, but to our own people, whose war risks we would be increasing, while at the same time we are determined to save the Army from the risks of unwise offensives.'

A little later, on 27 January, 1940, another newspaper, the *Daily Mail*, endorsed editorially the view put forward by its contemporary. It devoted a leading article to combating the suggestion of Mr. Amery and others that we should start the bombing of Germany. We were fighting, the article said, for a moral issue and we should do nothing unworthy of our cause. It confused the issue by speaking of a choice between the deliberate bombing of women and children and not bombing at all. Actually, the choice was between bombing military objectives in Germany and not bombing them: a totally different matter.

The Supposed 'Gentlemen's Agreement'

There was a suggestion in some of the statements made at the time that we had a sort of 'gentlemen's agreement' with Germany to refrain from bombing one another's territory. In the *Daily Mail* of 26 April, 1940, Mr. Duff Cooper wrote: 'There would appear to exist a kind of unwritten truce between the great belligerents according to the tacit terms of which they do not bomb one another but are all agreed upon the bombing of smaller countries.' He

1 The reference is to the declaration made by the British and French Governments on 2 September, 1939, that only 'strictly military objectives in the narrowest sense of the word' would be bombarded. The German Government also stated that only military objectives would be attacked.

[p. 65]

pointed out that the Germans had made merciless attacks in Poland and Norway, and stated that in his recent lecturing tour in America he had frequently been asked why we had not helped Poland by bombing the bases of the German army and its lines of communications, instead of confining ourselves to distributing pamphlets. 'There exists at the present time,' he stated naturally enough, 'some bewilderment in the public mind with regard to the subject of air warfare.'

A suggestion that we had an understanding with Germany in this matter was made in a question which Colonel Josiah Wedgwood addressed to the Secretary of State for Air in the House of Commons on 5 June, 1940. He asked 'whether the understanding that we should not bomb military objectives in Germany until they bomb us still holds, in spite of the bombing of Allied civilians in Poland, Norway, Holland and Belgium, and how much longer this is to continue without retaliation in kind?' Sir Archibald Sinclair replied: 'I know of no understanding of the character referred to. Indeed, the right honourable and gallant gentleman will be aware that the Royal Air Force has carried out a number of successful attacks against military objectives in Germany.'

Lord Trenchard's Views

The advantages which Germany derived from our abstention (before 11 May, 1940) from the raiding of the Reich were emphasised by Lord Trenchard in two speeches in the House of Lords. On 19 March, 1940, he said, referring to the Germans: 'They have our ships to aim at, and all the neutrals and non-combatants at sea, and we have nothing at which we can hit back. . . . I have no wish to say anything that would be of use to the enemy, but I do beg of your Lordships to remember that the Air Force is an offensive and not a defensive weapon.' A little

[p. 66]

later, on 8 May, he said: 'We practically proclaim that Germany need not keep in her homeland home defences, guns, fighters, searchlights, civil guards, or take air raid precautions. Those forces are immense, and she is now free to move them to overpower her weaker neighbours and to expel us when we rush—if "rush" is the right word—to their assistance. If it is wrong for me to say that I should like to see military objectives in Germany hit by air, it is a thousand times more wrong for the Government to help the Germans by saying that we shall never do it. . . . No Englishman wants to kill civilians, but the Government are deluding themselves if they think that the civilian population of this country are going to shrink from facing, as their relations and comrades in the field have to face, whatever risk may be necessary to bring this war to a successful conclusion. . . . Make no mistake about it: when the time comes, Germany will hit us by air, open towns and military objectives alike, mercilessly and thoroughly. Why should we await her convenience before striking at military targets in Germany?'

Mr. Churchill's Explanation

The reason why we waited was explained by Mr. Churchill in a speech at Manchester on 27 January, 1940. He referred to the unexpected absence of German air raiders, an absence which he declared himself unable to ascribe to any definite cause. It might be due, he said, to their 'saving up for some orgy of frightfulness which will soon come upon us', or to fear of our fighting aircraft or of our powerful bombing force's reply. 'No one can say for certain. But one thing is sure, it is not from any false sense of delicacy that they have so far refrained from subjecting us to this new and odious form of attack. Nor is it out of love and kindliness. But for the present, here is a chapter of war which they have not chosen to open upon us be-

[p. 67]

cause they cannot tell what may be written in its final pages. The question then arises ought we instead of demonstrating the power of our Air Force by dropping leaflets all over Germany to have dropped bombs? There I am quite clear that our policy has been right. In this peaceful country, governed by public opinion, democracy and Parliament, we were not as thoroughly prepared at the outbreak of war as was a dictator State whose whole thought was bent on the preparation for war. We know from what they did in Poland that there is no brutality or bestial massacre of civilians by air bombing which they would not readily commit if they thought it was for their advantage. We have striven hard to make the most of the time of preparation that has been gained, and there is no doubt that an enormous advance has been made both in the protection of the civil population and in the punishment which would be inflicted upon the raiders. Not only have our air defences and shelters been markedly improved, but our armies at home and abroad, which are now very large, are steadily maturing in training and in quality, and the whole preparation of our munition industries under the spur of war has rolled forward with gathering momentum.'

The Passing of the Lull in the Air

Three and a half months passed from the time when Mr. Churchill spoke until he and his colleagues in the War Cabinet thought it wise to vary the policy of waiting as explained by him. The change made in May was heralded by a statement issued by the Foreign Office on the 10th of that month. It began by referring to the assurance given to the President of the United States that the Air Force had received orders limiting bombing to strictly military objectives and went on to state that His Majesty's Government 'now publicly proclaim that they reserve to them-

[p. 68]

selves the right to take any action which they consider appropriate in the event of bombing by the enemy of civil populations, whether in the United Kingdom, France or in countries assisted by the United Kingdom.' As the Germans had in fact already attacked 'civil populations . . . in countries assisted by the United Kingdom', the statement of the Foreign Office was equivalent to an announcement that our Government regarded itself as freed from the restriction which it had imposed on itself when the war began. That restriction really amounted in practice to a ban upon the bombing of military objectives in Germany. Thus came to an end the period of the 'phoney war' in the air.

Some Official Pronouncements

Action followed swiftly on the warning, and it was action *from our side*. We began to bomb objectives on the German mainland before the Germans began to bomb objectives on the British mainland. That is a historical fact which has been publicly admitted. The way in which the bombing began was explained by Captain Harold Balfour, the Under-Secretary of State for Air, in reply to a question in the House of Commons on 28 January, 1942. He said:

'The first British raid on German territory was the attack on the seaplane base on the island of Sylt on the night of 18-19 March, 1940. The first German attack on British soil was carried out on the night of 16 March, 1940, when bombs were dropped on the Orkneys, causing civilian casualties. One of the first acts of the German offensive in the west was an attack on the town and harbour of Calais in the early morning of 10 May, causing numerous civilian casualties. This was followed by German attacks on aerodromes and communications in France on succeeding nights. The Royal Air Force began attacks on

[p. 69]

military lines of communication in western Germany on 11 May, 1940, and on the following nights and days.'

It is fairly certain that the bombs which fell on the Orkneys, near Bridge of Waith, on 16 March were not dropped there deliberately; they were intended for the warships at Scapa Flow. Lord Halifax referred to this incident in the House of Lords on 19 March, 1940. It was, he said, the first occasion on which a civilian on land had been killed. 'Was that deliberate?' asked Lord Strabolgi. 'No,' replied Lord Halifax, 'I should think not.' When further questioned, he added that while the killing and wounding of civilians at Bridge of Waith was not, on the information available, deliberate, the responsibility for the consequences did rest on the authors of that raid on Scapa Flow. Our own attack on Sylt two nights later was admittedly a reprisal for the raid on the Orkneys.

The Air War Carried into Germany

In an article contributed by Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief Bomber Command, to the American periodical *Flying* ('Special Royal Air Force Issue') for September, 1942, he wrote: 'The first British bombs fell on the soil of the German mainland on the night of 11 May 1940, when a force of 18 Whitley bombers attacked railway communications behind the lines of the German advance across Flanders and the Low Countries. Light bombers of the Command, at that time Blenheims, also endeavoured to stem the onrush of the attack by desperate and costly sorties against immediately threatening enemy concentrations.' That even then our action was taken in the teeth of strong French objection is evident from what is stated in the official booklet, *Bomber Command*. The following extract from it is illuminating as indicating the defeatist spirit which even at that date was wrecking France's war-effort.

[p. 70]

'Matters continued thus [*i.e.* only reconnaissance flights into Germany were undertaken] until the German offensive against France began. In the meantime, however, the attack on Norway had caused the French High Command to raise once again the question of the use to be made of our bombing force. On 14 April that Command was informed that, subject to a minimum diversion to Norway, Denmark and *Northern Germany*, it was intended, should the Germans attack, to use our full offensive strength in the area of the enemy's advance and *in the districts east of the Rhine* through which his lines of communication and supply would have to run. On the next day the *Comité de Guerre* ruled that, *because casualties might be caused to the civilian population, bombing attacks on enemy concentrations in Germany were not to be made unless the Germans launched them upon the Allies*. This decision at once limited the possible objectives to enemy columns on the march. It was pointed out to General Gamelin that such targets were quite unsuitable for our heavy bombers, since they had been designed for an entirely different purpose. General Gamelin remained unconvinced. The German attack opened in force on 10 May, 1940. *The Allied Commander-in-Chief still refused to allow objectives in Germany or German troops on the move in their own country to be bombed*. It was not until the afternoon of the 10th that the Advanced Air Striking Force bombed German columns advancing through Luxembourg and not until the *next day* that attacks were made on enemy troops and lines of communication by our medium and heavy bombing forces.' [1]

The Maginot Air-Mind

It was unfortunate that, as is made clear in the same booklet, the French General Staff had all along a concep-

1 *Bomber Command*, 1941, p. 45. The italics are not in the original.

[p. 71]

tion of air warfare broadly similar to that of the German General Staff and divergent from that of the British Air Staff. 'They viewed with the greatest misgiving any plan by which bombers were to be used for attacks on German industry and they did not hesitate to say so. In their considered opinion the main, indeed the only, use to which a bombing force should be put was to extend the range of artillery supporting armies in the field.' [1] Such a doctrine of air power, or rather of land-air power, was bound to have consequences as calamitous as those which followed from the acceptance of the doctrine of defence exemplified in the French Staff's reliance upon the Maginot Line. In the air as on land France was strategically decadent, at least in her high counsels. We did not know that before June, 1940. We learned it then, to our dismay and almost to our undoing.

Still, Gamelin notwithstanding, Bomber Command went to war on 11 May, 1940. It had only been fooling with war until then. That is the great date in its war diary: not because of anything spectacular achieved immediately, but because of what was to follow in the fullness of time. In that decision of May, 1940, there was implicit the doom of Germany, though we little guessed it then. For a time, however, our offensive, it must be acknowledged, was a rather small affair.

The Raid on Hanover

Our attacks in May July, 1940, do not seem to have disturbed the Germans very seriously; their radio and press were eloquent about the futility of such methods of warfare and the sufferings inflicted upon the civil population, but in general there was no very violent reaction to those earlier raids. On the night of 1 August, 1940, some-

1 *Bomber Command*, 1941, p. 44.

[p. 72]

thing happened which did really alarm the authorities. Our bombers visited a number of towns, including Hanover, on that night. They must have achieved some really important results. Next day, 2 August, the German newspapers found front-page space for air raid news for the first time since the British offensive began. They denounced the attack on Hanover as an outrage against humanity. 'Britain loses her honour,' the *Bremen Zeitung* proclaimed to the world. The raid was 'an appalling crime', according to the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. The other papers echoed the chorus of dispraise. Goebbels had evidently waved his baton for it.

That was the first of a lengthening series of hysterical protests against our raids. W. L. Shirer in his *Berlin Diary* (1941) quotes a number of extracts from the German press on the theme of our disregard for the honourable laws of war. Only an unsoldierly nation like the British could expect lasting advantages from attacks on the civil population, said the *Völkischer Beobachter* on 12 May, 1941. Our methods were contrasted unfavourably with those of the German airmen, who invariably confined their attacks to military objectives. We were pursuing terroristic tactics, while they were striking solely at our war factories, etc. Self-complacency and very real apprehension mark the outbursts of the German press and radio.

A Might-Have-Been

In Chapter II I have given my reasons for thinking that the Germans did not want to start strategic bombing and that they would gladly have called it off when it did start; and what I have recorded in the present chapter is further evidence to support my argument. Suppose that it had not been started; suppose that the view of the French General Staff had prevailed in the counsels of the Anglo-French alliance, which, let us again suppose, had continued to

[p. 73]

exist until now; and suppose that, in consequence, the air arms of all the main belligerents had been reserved for tactical employment: what would have been our position now in that event? Certainly our cities would have escaped the grievous scars which they now bear, honourably and proudly. Thousands of innocent persons who are dead or maimed would be alive and vigorous today. We should have been saved much suffering and loss; but should we not have lost something, too?

I am not thinking here of loss of military advantage, of the difference it would have made to our and our Allies' prospects of victory if we had not weakened Germany by our hammer-blows in the air, of the worsening of our outlook if we had still held our bombers on the leash. I am thinking of something more intangible and imponderable but not less real and important: our national honour. Today we can hold our heads high. Could we have done so if we had continued the policy which we adopted in September, 1939, and maintained until May, 1940? It was a selfish policy after all, an ungenerous one, an unworthy one. We were prepared to see our weaker neighbours' cities devastated by air attack—of the tactical order—to bear their misfortunes with equanimity, to do nothing to help them in the only way in which we could help at all. (We had no great army then to oppose to the German hosts, and the mills of sea power grind very slowly.) We were prepared, in fact, to leave them to their fate provided we could save our own skin.

Our Great Decision

As it was, we chose the better, because the harder, way. We refused to purchase immunity—immunity for a time at least—for our cities while those of our friends went up in flames. We offered London as a sacrifice in the cause of freedom and civilisation. Retaliation was *certain* if we car-

[p. 74]

ried the war into Germany. There was no certainty, but there was a reasonable probability, that our capital and our industrial centres would not have been attacked if we had continued to refrain from attacking those of Germany. No doubt some readers will say that I am making too big an assumption here and that Germany would have raided London and our provincial towns in any event. Perhaps so; I can only put on record my own belief that she probably would not have done so, partly because it would not have suited her military book, partly because she was afraid of the long-term consequences. She would have called a truce if she could from the cross-raiding by British and German bombers when it did begin; she did call one, in effect, whenever she saw a ghost of a chance. It simply did not pay her, this kind of air warfare. Humanitarian considerations had nothing whatever to do with the matter.

Yet, because we were doubtful about the psychological effect of propagandist distortion of the truth that it was we who started the strategic offensive, we have shrunk from giving our great decision of May, 1940, the publicity which it deserved. That, surely, was a mistake. It was a splendid decision. It was as heroic, as self-sacrificing, as Russia's decision, to adopt her policy of 'scorched earth'. It gave Coventry and Birmingham, Sheffield and Southampton, the right to look Kief and Kharkov, Stalingrad and Sebastopol, in the face. Our Soviet allies would have been less critical of our inactivity in 1942 if they had understood what we had done. We should have shouted it from the house-tops instead of keeping silence about it.

It could have harmed us morally only if it were equivalent to an admission that we were the first to bomb towns. It was nothing of the sort. The German airmen were the first to do that in the present war. (They had done it long before, too—at Durango and Guernica in 1937, nay, at

[p. 75]

London in 1915-18.) It was they, not the British airmen, who created a precedent for 'war against the civilian population'. How little substance there is in the charge made on this head against our Air Force by the German propaganda I try to show in the chapters which follow.

[p. 76]

CHAPTER IV

THE BATTLE-TOWNS

The Battle-towns

Battle-towns, or battle-making towns—either term would be appropriate; they are also for the most part the metal-working towns. War has become more and more metallic. Steel is more precious in war than gold. Gold, we are told, no longer matters very much, though some economists hold that without the yellow metal dug from the bowels of the earth modern civilisation would have been impossible. However that may be, it is certain that without the minerals extracted from the same source modern war would be impossible. (Even if an age of plastics succeeds that of steel the ultimate origin will still be the same.) It was inevitable, therefore, that when the air was mastered, the centres where the metals are fashioned into weapons of war should tend to become the theatre of conflict. Even in the stone age an enemy would have seen the advantage of preventing flints from being knapped or made into battle-axes for his undoing.

The instrument that has made assault upon the sources of an enemy's armament possible is itself metallic. There is steel in it, but still more is there the light metallic alloy whose use enables it to overcome those natural forces which limit man's ability to utilise the pathways of the air for the purpose of offence. That alloy, too, is transformed and made lethal in the centres of armament. To those centres the venue of battle has tended inevitably to shift with the coming of the era of human flight. Battles by land and sea there still are and still will be. The clash of encounter must always take place in part in the setting which our forefathers knew. But over and above these contacts of

[p. 77]

armies and fleets there are others which man's new power to use the air for his warlike ventures has made inevitable. It has been a consequence—the logical consequence—of that new power that areas which had hitherto been immune from the ravages of war should no longer be left in the enjoyment of their ancient peace.

The tide of war has begun to lap round the bounds of all the places where are made the arms to be used in the encounters on sea or land or in the air. Indeed, it began to flow in the last war. The battle-towns had their origin then. What has happened is only that the problem, which that war first posed for statesmen and strategists and which was then a minor one, has become a major and far more complicated problem today.

The Power of the Machine

Today machinery dominates war. Man is a pigmy beside the robots of scientific destruction which he has created; or, did he really create them? Is man in truth the maker of the machine or only the machine's way of making a new machine, its instrument for propagating its kind? One would think when one looks on the baleful, malign, ingeniously destructive machines which are used in war today that there is a soul, a very evil soul, lurking somewhere in them. And it is these monstrosities, these half human half-devilish monstrosities, which get themselves born, somehow, in the battle-towns. That is the grim fact which makes those towns fit brand for the burning.

The killer-machines are made necessarily in crowded centres. They could not otherwise be made in the quantities which modern warfare demands. The Moloch consumes armaments with an appetite which only mass-production can satisfy. An enormous and sustained output of munitions is needed if the armed forces, of sizes un-

[p. 78]

known in the past, are to be kept supplied with the *matériel* which they use. Mass-production implies, in turn, the presence of great numbers of workers, male and female, in the neighbourhood of the plants. Naturally, especially in a prolonged war, the workers' families tend to congregate in the same areas. The great urban agglomerations are in fact the areas in which the armament factories that really matter are located.

Pre-fabricated Battle

Now, those areas have become in the march of events battle-areas. It is idle to pretend that they are still the quiet, innocuous towns which they were once. They are not. They are dangerous, lethal, menacing towns—to an enemy. Terrible things—in his eyes—are done in them. *Battle begins in them.* One must think today of battle as being *pre-fabricated*. Most of the work of making it has been done before the encounter takes place. The clash of arms is only the final stage, of a process which has had its beginning elsewhere and long before. It could not reach that stage if the arms to be used in it had not been made in the earlier stage whose setting is a battle-town. The tentacles of the battle-monster spread out from the factories to all the theatres of war. To smash or cut them at the centre is to destroy at the same time the power of the extremity. There is as logical a case for a blow at the heart as at the limb, and it may be by far the more damaging blow. Stop the preparing of battle and you stop the making of battle too.

The making of arms is war-making. It cannot be called anything else. It is not non-combatant work. It is a definitely warlike activity which an enemy is entitled by all the means in his power to prevent. He would be failing in his duty to his own country if he did not try to interrupt it. He is entitled to do so by striking at the battle-towns.

[p. 79]

That right, never clearly recognised in the discussions about strategic bombing, cannot be denied to him. That it was foreseen long before the present war began that the right would be exercised is evident from the precautions which all the belligerent nations had already taken to protect their armament centres from air attack. Many of these centres have now more guns in their perimeters than whole armies used to have in their campaigns a few years ago. The defences of the larger towns in which armaments are made are more powerful than those of many purely military or naval stations. The centres in question have become in a double sense *places d'armes*.

The Fortress of the Ruhr

Speaking on the Berlin radio on 2 April, 1943, General Quade, the spokesman of the German air force, claimed that the attacks which that air force made on Warsaw and Rotterdam were lawful operations, while the British raids on German towns were not. Warsaw, he stated, was 'a fortress' and Rotterdam 'a pillar of Holland's defence'. What else is Essen—or, indeed, the whole Ruhr, but a fortress? Even before the war began the Ruhr was strongly defended. Goering boasted in August, 1939, that no enemy airman could drop a bomb on it. [1] Since then its defences have been enormously increased. There are about 3,000 guns of all calibres within its bounds; thousands of searchlights, great numbers of observation and radiolocation stations, and a huge host of passive defence *personnel*. The defences of Berlin and of the north-western ports—Bremen, Emden, Hamburg, Wilhelmshaven and Kiel—are organised on an equally lavish scale. Mr. Elmer Davis, Director of the Office of War Information in the United States, stated on 26 June, 1943, that 30,000 anti-aircraft

1 He said at Essen on 10 August, 1939: Das Ruhrgebiet werden wir auch nicht einer einzigen Bombe feindlicher Flieger ausliefern.

[p. 80]

guns and more than 1,000 fighter planes had been concentrated to protect the cities of north-western Germany. (Presumably what we call western Germany, the Ruhr and the Rhineland, was intended to be included.) Germany was stripped for the battle of the air from the first. She has discarded some more of her fighting kit in the stress of combat as it progressed; but she had her important towns in battle-dress from the first.

And what a fight they put up, the battle-towns! 'Open towns', forsooth!—our airmen who have been over them would have a swift answer to make to anyone who called them so. They are literally fortresses. Of that there is no shadow of doubt. To attack them is to engage in battle. The bomber crews who venture near them go into the jaws of death. Many come back with their wings and fuselages torn to shreds. Many never come back at all. Our airman's name for the Ruhr—'Happy Valley'—is a grim euphemism for a section of the sky which is about as nearly a mundane reproduction of Dante's *Inferno* as anything on or above this globe can be. If these towns are not fortresses, if what happens in the air above them is not battle, what on earth are they?

That there was indeed a 'Battle of the Ruhr' was admitted a little belatedly in Germany in the summer of 1943. On 22 June, 1943, for instance, the German radio in an impassioned denunciation of the 'terror raid' of the previous night on Krefeld, ended thus: 'That is the Battle of the Ruhr—moral strength against bombs, and the German people will win this battle too. Germany is on the defensive at present in the Battle of the Ruhr. But it is clear to everybody that there will be a retaliation, and that battle will be remembered one day under the name of one or several British counties.' From such a statement one would infer that the battle was a one-sided affair, with bombs on our side and only moral resolution on the Ger-

[p. 81]

man. The fact that there was a very powerful defence and that 44 of our bombers were missing after that raid was completely ignored.

The Duel of Air and Ground

The attack on such a centre is a colossal battering match between air and ground. The ground tries to blast the air-invaders out of the sky. The air tries to smother the defence under the weight of its attack. Sometimes it succeeds. It did so on the night of 31 July, 1942, when Düsseldorf was visited by a great force of bombers and more than 150 two-ton bombs, as well as a huge weight of other high explosive and incendiary bombs, were dropped in the space of fifty minutes. The effect of the concentrated, massive attack was the 'saturation' of the defences. 'Though Düsseldorf is an arsenal of great importance to the enemy's armed forces,' said an Air Ministry Bulletin on 1 August, 1942, 'and therefore has all the defences that one would expect, the guns and searchlights were confused by the momentum of the bombing. . . . Hundreds of searchlights came on at once and the sky was filled with bursting shells. To overcome such opposition it was necessary that the bombs should fall in a ceaseless rain. They did.'

That was only one of many occasions on which the fury of the onslaught overwhelmed the defence. Another was the attack on Duisburg on the night of 26 April, 1943. The Germans, said the Air Ministry Bulletin of 27 April, 'had packed the Duisburg area with heavy anti-aircraft guns, and searchlights. Outside the town there was a searchlight belt with others inside it, while hundreds of guns put up one of the heaviest barrages which our bombers have encountered, but the defences in spite of their great strength were unable to cope with the attack. Pilots who went in towards the end of the raid reported that the bar-

[p. 82]

rage had fallen off considerably. . . . Towards the end of the raid the port [Duisburg is the largest *inland* port in Germany] was ablaze with large red fires. One pilot described it as 'a cauldron bubbling with angry molten metal which spurted up every now and then as more and more bombs exploded.' It was then that the defences began to slacken, so much so that one pilot said his chief difficulty was not the anti-aircraft fire but the high winds through which they had to fly to the target.

At Dortmund on the night of 23 May, 1943, the battle again ended in favour of the airmen. This was the first raid in which more than 2,000 tons of high explosive and incendiary bombs were dropped, and the effect of the terrific onslaught was to crush the life out of the defence. 'Flak was fairly intense at the beginning of the raid,' said the Air Ministry Bulletin of 24 May, 'but as the attack developed the flak died down considerably and cones of searchlights split up into twos and threes. "Single searchlights were aimlessly waving about in the sky," said a pilot, "as if the defences couldn't stand up to the weight of bombs. I was one of the last to bomb and the flak had become so moderate that it didn't worry us." '

'At Wuppertal itself the defences gave out,' said the Air Ministry Bulletin describing the raid of the night of 29 May, 1943. 'One pilot said there were only about a dozen heavy guns and one or two searchlights, and later arrivals said there was no opposition at all.' At the beginning of the raid on Düsseldorf on the night of 11 June, 'the barrage was fairly intense but it was soon overwhelmed by the weight of the attack, very few guns firing at the end.' At Krefeld on the night of 21 June the defence was overborne again. 'The defences there were slow to open up,' said the Bulletin of 22 June, 'and when they did so they were soon overwhelmed by the weight of the attack. The cones of searchlights wavered and broke up.'

[p. 83]

In the attack on the Kalk and Deutz districts of Cologne on the night of 3 July the defences were very strong at first; the searchlights were massed into three big cones and a curtain of flak was poured into the spaces between. 'Later arrivals found that the defences had slackened off considerably and by the end of the attack were comparatively ineffective,' said the Bulletin of 4 July, which quoted a pilot's remark: 'We simply pounded them and flattened them out.'

The Battle of Essen

Nowhere has the battle been fiercer than at Essen. There the Krupps armament works, covering 800 acres and employing 75,000 workers, became naturally a magnet to draw our bombers to the city. It has been raided again and again. The greatest attack up to that time took place on the night of 5 March, 1943, when nearly a thousand tons of bombs were dropped on it. Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Secretary of State for Air, described it as the heaviest blow of the war (to date) at the German war industry. The devastation, which covered one area of 160 acres, another of 32 acres, and other smaller areas, was comparable to that caused at Cologne by the 'thousand-bomber-raid' of 30 May, 1942. Vehicle-assembly shops, furnace and tempering shops, foundries, billet-rolling mills, sheet-metal shops, machine shops and many other buildings were destroyed or damaged in the raid.

A week passed and the night of 12 March, 1943, saw the battle of Essen flare up again. It was a battle indeed. 'The searchlights, in several huge cones; made a wall of light through the north of Essen,' said the Air Ministry Bulletin of 13 March. 'Intense flak was being fired up into the centre of the cone. "We got the impression that the defences were being very intelligently directed," said a Lancaster captain. "They were certainly ready for us, and

[p. 84]

wherever I looked I could see other bombers lit up by the searchlights." Almost every crew described how they saw other bombers twisting and turning in the searchlight cone, and how they were themselves caught by the beam. But the bombing was so rapid and heavy that as the attack progressed the flak began to die away and the searchlights nearest to the target were gradually doused.' Our attack had overborne Essen's defence.

What of the battlefield after it? There the scene was almost incredible. So tremendous was the damage that it could not be concealed in Germany. Five or six days after the raid of 12 March an Essen newspaper wrote: 'The extent of the damage caused by the raid—the heaviest yet suffered by a German town—cannot yet be ascertained. Across the ruins and the débris one has a wide view of the space formerly occupied by buildings, and the streets and squares present an amazing sight. They are changed to such an extent that one has to rely on memory to recall what they used to look like.' This, in view of the German policy of minimising the amount of the damage caused by our bombers, was a most significant admission. It showed unmistakably how that particular battle had ended.

Essen, however, is a vast fortress, and the assault on it had to be renewed. On the night of 3 April it was attacked again. The aerial photographs taken after the heavy attack of that night were particularly clear. Usually the thick industrial haze over the works obscures the details, but on this occasion there was no haze when the reconnaissance aircraft flew over the town two days after the raid. There was no haze because most of the factories were out of action and no smoke was belching from their chimneys. Krupps had practically been brought to a standstill. The photographs showed that machine-shops, steel works, billet-rolling mills, forges, stores and sheds had been destroyed or damaged over tens of thousands of square

[p. 85]

yards. The railways had also suffered severely, and a colliery was badly damaged. The bombing had been highly concentrated and most of the damage inflicted was to be seen within the Krupps works, though districts to the south and south-west of the factory had also suffered severely.

Never was the pattern of battle more clearly traced than in the great attack of the night of 27 May, 1943. Ten waves of our bombers swept in succession over the town and for fifty minutes showered upon it their loads of 4,000 lb. and 8,000 lb. bombs as well as a huge weight of other high-explosive and incendiary bombs. It was the old cavalry charge revived in a new and more terrible form in which artillery of the air seemed also to have a place. The defence was powerful but could not stand up to such an onslaught. All over the Ruhr, which had been subjected to six devastating raids in May, the defences had been strengthened. Some commentators stated that the *personnel* and *matériel* assembled in the region were the equivalent of fifty divisions of troops. That was the order, of the defensive array which our bomber crews had to face when they 'went over the top'. The anti-aircraft fire was particularly violent on that night, our crews reported. The bombers had to drive forward through a barrage of fire and steel; the whole sky seemed to be full of bursting shells and many machines had their fuselages and wings riddled and tattered, but only a tiny minority failed to penetrate the curtain of fire. Nearly all put, down their loads just where they intended. The result was impressive. 'The fires appeared to weld themselves into a solid mass over a large area,' said one pilot. We lost twenty-three bombers in that battle, but that was a small price to pay for the military damage caused to Germany.

The moral of it all was drawn in a broadcast on the Algiers radio, in French, on 28 May. 'But for the mighty

[p. 86]

British air raids on the town of Essen, with its vast Krupps armament works, Hitler would have been able to equip fully many additional German army corps. That is the meaning of the British air blows on the Ruhr.'

A Fierce Engagement

One of the fiercest engagements in the battle of the Ruhr was fought on the night of 24 June, 1943, when a strong force of our bombers attacked the industrial town of Elberfeld. This town and Barmen form together the city of Wuppertal, one of the most important of Germany's armament centres. Barmen had been heavily raided on the night of 29 May, when more than a thousand acres were devastated and the town was, indeed, almost wiped off the map. The Germans were evidently determined that the twin town of Elberfeld should not suffer a like fate. They massed defences around it and strengthened also those which shielded the Ruhr to the north. Our bombers had to face scores of searchlights and a very heavy barrage immediately they crossed the Belgian coast on the night of 24 June. The crews reported that there had been a great increase in the defences on the coast, to which the outer ring of protection had been pushed out. They ran into worse trouble still when they reached the Ruhr. Great belts of searchlights, twenty or thirty in each cone, tried to pick them up and anti-aircraft guns of various calibres fired at them up the beams. One pilot was held for twenty minutes by the searchlights and was hit several times before he reached the target area. The defences of Düsseldorf and Cologne co-operated with those of Elberfeld in a desperate attempt to beat off the raiders.

There were scores of night-fighters in action, too. Some crews saw four or five on their way to the objective. Many duels were fought by bombers and fighters. Still, through

[p. 87]

searchlights, flak and opposition in the air the bombers won through and put down their loads where they intended. 'Great damage appears to have been done,' said the Air Ministry *communiqué* on the following day. How great it was could be judged from an admission by Dr. Karl Holzhammer, the German radio commentator, on 25 June. 'The town,' he said, 'is still hidden under clouds of flames and smoke. The desolation and devastation are a sight so terrific, so infernal, that no human imagination can visualise it.'

There were hosts of night-fighters in the air again four nights later, when a very heavy attack was made upon Cologne. Indeed, that battle was mainly fought many thousands of feet up in the sky and the bombers and the fighters were the contestants. There was much cloud over the Rhineland and the searchlights were therefore at a disadvantage; the guns maintained a powerful barrage, however, and heavy flak came up through the clouds. It was above the cloud-bank that the most bitter fighting occurred. The Northern Lights lit up the sky and the bombers were silhouetted against the cloud surface below. For the fighters the conditions were ideal. They attacked in swarms. 'A Polish pilot said that at one moment he saw nine combats going on simultaneously,' an Air Ministry Bulletin stated on 29 June. 'Stirling crews alone reported fourteen engagements.' We lost twenty-five bombers on that night, but, despite the adverse conditions, the attack was well concentrated and immense damage was caused in the industrial parts of Cologne.

The battle of the night of 9 August, 1943, when the twin towns of Mannheim and Ludwigshafen were raided, was again fought above the clouds. The Germans had to rely mainly on their night-fighters, which accosted our bombers as soon as they crossed the coast and followed them all the way to the target. 'Despite the fighters,' said the

[p. 88]

Air Ministry Bulletin of 10 August, 'our aircraft arrived promptly over the target. While the ground gunners put up a blind barrage, the searchlight crews concentrated on lighting up the base of the clouds so that the bombers would be silhouetted for the fighters. Combats took place over the target, both, bombers and fighters firing at one another while the flak was bursting round them.' Our crews bombed through gaps in the clouds and did so with such effect that very soon there sprang up great fires the glow of which was visible nearly a hundred miles away.

The fierce air combats which were waged above Munich on the night of 6 September, 1943, were fought in conditions resembling those of day. The Germans made frantic efforts to protect Hitler's precious city. They used hundreds of searchlights and light and heavy guns; to help their night-fighters they laid an aerial flare path for the purpose of illuminating the raiders. The flares, dropped from great heights, took as much as twenty minutes to fall to the ground. One pilot saw forty of them falling at one time. The device cut-both ways. If it helped the fighters to find the bombers, it helped the latter to see and shoot down the fighters. There were scores of air combats. One pilot saw three fighters being shot down over the town—one hitting the ground and two falling in flames—at the same time. Every kind of fighter was put up that night—Me 109, Me 110, Me 210, Ju 88, Fw 190, Do 217—but Munich was battered and burnt for all that they could do. Our bomber crews saw the fires there burning when they were 150 miles away on their homeward flight.

The Battle of Hamburg

Not even Essen itself experienced so terrible a period of tribulation as that through which Hamburg passed in the last week of July, 1943. The great port had been bombed repeatedly during the three years that were gone, but the

[p. 89]

storms and trials which it had had to endure were all surpassed by its sufferings in the cyclone which swept it in those seven days and nights of fire and flame. It was raided six times by night and twice by daylight in that week, and of the raids by night three were mammoth affairs in each of which 2,300 tons of bombs were dropped. The total weight dropped on the city in the seven days was 7,500 tons—a weight as great as that dropped on London during the whole period of the German air offensive in 1940-41. The maximum tonnage ever deposited on London in a night was 450. No city in the world has ever endured such a colossal, concentrated battering as did Hamburg in that week. What the effect was may be inferred from the ejaculations of one German radio commentator (Dr. Carl Hofman): 'Terror . . . terror . . . terror . . . pure, naked, bloody terror.'

That was an admission that the attack had overborne the defence. As in the Ruhr, so at Hamburg the Germans had left nothing undone to convert the whole area into a *place d'armes*. The defences were very considerably strengthened as raid succeeded raid. New guns and more searchlights were brought into use and the number of night fighters was increased. But nothing could stand up to the fire and fury of the onslaught. The bombers went through and the high explosive and incendiaries went down. Huge conflagrations sprang up everywhere. To help to overcome them the fire brigades from Bremen and Hanover were called in aid, but the fires were never entirely quenched during all the week. Our bomber crews arriving for the later attacks found the fires started in earlier raids still burning.

The Incidental Damage to Property

The centres of war-production, it has already been stated, are large towns. They are sometimes, too, old

[p. 90]

towns in which there are buildings of historic association and cultural interest. Inevitably damage is sustained by such buildings in the course of attacks which are directed against military objectives and which, in view of the powerful nature of the defence, can be delivered only in conditions which make absolute precision of aim impracticable. Naturally it is upon the damage to the non-military property that the German official reports have most to say. They were eloquent about the burning of St. Hedwigs church in Berlin in the raid of the night of 1 March, 1943, when considerable damage was caused to buildings which our airmen most certainly would have spared if they could. They said nothing about the incidents which really made that raid important. One would never have guessed from the enemy's account of it that it was one of the most damaging blows ever struck at his war potential. The factories destroyed or severely damaged included the Telefunken and the Blaupunkt wireless works, the Askania instrument works, the motor repair works of the Auto-Union A.G. and of the Klocken-Humboldt-Deutz A.G., the roller-bearings factory of Deutsche-Timken, the works of the Reichs Telegrafien Zeugamt, the lorry repair factory of G. Lindner A.G., the chemical works of H. Schwartzkopf, and many other plants. The most serious damage of all was probably that caused to the Templehof railway yards, where workshops covering twenty acres were destroyed. The destruction of churches and historic buildings, lamentable though it was, was relatively insignificant when set against the enormously important military results achieved by the raid.

Nuremberg and Munich

It is stupid and unprofitable to wreck an enemy's beautiful buildings. It only harms the destroyer. It makes the people whose treasures are lost see red, makes them more

[p. 91]

determined to go on. We know that as well as any people. We have seen our beautiful Wren churches and many an other historic building destroyed, and it has only made us angry. We may assume that the re-action in Germany is the same. To say 'Oh, these Huns began the war and they have to be taught a lesson' is merely to be childish. Yes, teach them that war does not pay, but do not descend to vandalism. It is to shame the cause for which we are in arms to wreck the common heritage of humanity. Nevertheless, war cannot be waged without risk of the destruction of many things which all would desire to preserve. The destruction of them is the incidental and unavoidable consequence of a lawful operation of war—the attacking of the sources of an enemy's munitionment. Whatever the Germans may have felt about their raids on Canterbury or Bath, it was certainly no satisfaction to the Royal Air Force, or the British people as a whole, that the cathedrals at Lizbeck or Mainz should be wrecked. So, too, nothing but regret would be felt in this country for such damage to historic buildings as occurred in the raid of 8 March, 1943, upon Nuremberg. The famous 15th century Mauthalle was destroyed on that occasion, as well as the museum and other old buildings. 'Little does our enemy think of the cruelty and sorrow he inflicts on our women and children,' said a German paper after this raid. 'He has no pity. . . . We hate this kind of warfare.' Yes, no doubt; but they hated it most of all for other than aesthetic or humanitarian reasons. They hated it because it caused irreparable damage to Germany's war-industries. In that raid on Nuremberg the M.A.N. factory, which makes Diesel engines, was wrecked; in the Siemens electrical works two thirds of one workshop covering five acres was destroyed; and a number of other buildings in the factory were gutted. The fires were still smouldering there when the town was photographed from the air two days after the

[p. 92]

raid. At the railway workshops one large repair shop covering nearly five acres was gutted, and another area of devastation of sixteen acres was to be seen in the neighbouring railway sidings and goods yards, which were swept by fire. The plants of a number of establishments manufacturing or processing tools and engineering supplies, selenium discs for wireless rectifiers, electrical equipment, etc., were severely damaged. Many of the buildings were completely burnt out. It was all this devastation which gave the battle of Nuremberg its importance. The incidental damage to the historic or cultural buildings was deeply to be regretted, both for the intrinsic loss and because it gave the German propagandists a good talking point, but militarily it was of very small importance.

On the next night (9 March, 1943) Munich was raided. Here again a number of fine old buildings sustained damage. Three of the world-famous picture galleries of the city—the Pinakothek, the Shack and the Glyptothek—were stated to have been destroyed. Again there were denunciations of our airmen in the German Press and on the radio, denunciations which, one may surmise, were inspired as much by Nazi rage at the damaging of the Brown House as by regret for the art galleries. Not a word was said about the industrial targets which were hit, or about the fact that the galleries were fairly close to the railway terminus which, in view of Munich's importance as a centre of transportation, was a legitimate objective. Munich is also an armament centre; there are in it plants which construct submarine engines, aero-engines, tanks, armoured cars, hand grenades and motor tyres. It is, in fact, one of the Jekyll and Hyde cities of Germany. It has a dual personality and it was the bad and dangerous Munich that had to be put out of action, which could not be done without danger to the Munich which all civilised peoples would wish to be spared.

[p. 93]

Cologne is another town of dual character, and it is one in which the good and evil elements (in the opposing belligerent's eyes) are very closely intermingled. The Cathedral is near the main railway station, and the latter is, in view of the city's importance as a centre of transportation, a legitimate objective. In the heavy raid of the night of 28 June, 1943, both the station and the Cathedral were damaged; the German *communiqué* was very explicit about the latter damage but silent about the former. There are, of course, a great number of other military targets also in Cologne.

The Destruction of Dwellings

Towns in which armaments are produced on a large scale are necessarily large towns. A town without a considerable supply of labour could not undertake mass-production, and in any case, such a town would not really be worth an enemy's powder and shot. It is on the centres of population that the blows struck in the strategic air offensive are therefore likely to fall. Inevitably those blows must fall often on private dwellings. Apart from the houses of the workers in the vicinity of the war-factories, the residential districts as a whole may suffer when the attack on the military objectives in or around the town is delivered at night and aim is made more difficult by blinding searchlights and a fierce artillery barrage. Here again, we in Britain know only too well how private property can suffer under air attack. In the raids upon this country in 1940-42 some 2,750,000 houses in England and Wales were damaged, [1] and it is a safe assumption that the great majority were private dwellings. In Germany the number may be greater still, but no figures have been disclosed in that country. Some 3,000 houses were entirely destroyed when Lübeck was raided on the night of 28 Marches 1942.

1 Statement by Mr. Ernest Brown on 13 November, 1942.

[p. 94]

The damage done at Rostock in the four nights, 23 to 26 April, 1942, was greater still; between 80,000 and 100,000 were evacuated after these raids as compared with 30,000 people from Lubeck. A year later, on the night of 20 April, 1943, Stettin, Rostock's neighbour, had its time of tribulation. An area of a hundred acres was devastated and many factories and depots were wrecked; the Neptune ship-building yard was particularly hard hit. 40,000 people were reported to have been made homeless by the raid, which dislocated the life of the town for a week, no water, gas or electricity being available. In the Pommerensdorf area alone 1,400 houses were destroyed. The number displaced from Cologne after the 'thousand-bomber-raid' of 30 May, 1942, was far greater still; according to a Vichy report of 14 June, 1942, some 250,000 people were removed. The destruction of dwellings at Düsseldorf on the night of 10 September, 1942, when 380 acres were devastated, was on a comparable scale. Nearly 200,000 people were made homeless, mainly as a result of the conflagrations caused by the 100,000 incendiaries dropped on that night. The fires took such a 'hold upon the town that the fire-brigades had to fight them for two days. 'Düsseldorf has become a regular city of ruins,' said a letter from a German in Düsseldorf to another in Berlin. The evacuations from other raided towns in the Ruhr and the Rhineland have reached a total which must run into many hundreds of thousands. Certainly Bomber Command, if it has done nothing else, has proved itself an efficient organiser of mass-migrations. The cities of northern Italy know that as well as those of Germany. There were large evacuations from Milan, Turin and Genoa after the raids of November-December, 1942. It was mainly as a result of them that the population of Rome rose from 1,115,000 in 1940 to nearly 2,000,000 in January, 1943. Later Rome itself had begun to send its dwellers forth into the great

[p. 95]

open spaces before Italy dropped out of the war on 8 September.

Mr. Churchill's Advice

Mr. Churchill, in his broadcast speech of 10 May, 1942, gave the German population some good advice. He reaffirmed our intention to bomb all the cities 'in which the vital industries of the German war machine are established.' 'The civil population of Germany,' he went on, 'have an easy way to escape from these severities. All they have to do is to leave the cities where munition work is being carried on, abandon this work and go out into the fields and watch the home fires burning from a distance. In this way they may find time for meditation and repentance. There they may remember the millions of Russian women and children they have driven out to perish in the snows, and the mass executions of peasants and prisoners of war which in varying scales they are inflicting upon so many of the ancient and famous peoples of Europe. There they may remember that it is the villainous Hitlerite régime which is responsible for dragging Germany through misery and slaughter to ultimate ruin, and that the tyrant's overthrow is the first step to world liberation.'

Over a year later, on 19 May, 1943, Mr. Churchill, in his speech before the United States Congress, underlined the warning which he had then addressed to the German people. 'It is the settled policy of our two staffs and war-making authorities,' he said, 'to make it impossible for Germany to carry on any form of war industry on a large or concentrated scale, either in Germany, Italy or in the enemy-occupied countries. Wherever these centres exist or are developed they will be destroyed, and the munitions population will be dispersed.' The message conveyed to the German munition workers in the two speeches, read together and colloquially paraphrased, amounted to this:

[p. 96]

'Get out while the going is good. If you don't, we'll bomb you out.'

It was also the message addressed to the Italians in a broadcast from Allied Headquarters at Algiers on 18 June, 1943. The Allied Air Forces, it stated, had been ordered to bomb Italian war industries and lines of communications working for the Axis, but had no wish to annihilate the innocent civilian population. 'Therefore the Allied High Command advises you to leave the neighbourhood of these objectives and to take your families to safe places.'

Suburban and Residential Districts

Much is heard in the German official reports of the damage caused in suburban and other residential districts by our raids. Nothing is ever said about the fact that the war-factories are often in the same districts. In Berlin the industrial belt is largely in the suburbs. That was why in the raid of the night of 1 March, 1943, there was considerable destruction of property in the western and southwestern parts of the city, and as a result a number of residential districts had to be evacuated. The heavy casualties and widespread destruction of dwelling houses in Cologne on the night of 30 May, 1942, was due in some measure to the fact that the town's industries are largely located in the suburbs of Koln Mulheim and Koln Kalk, though there are also in the city itself important plants producing machinery, chemicals, rubber and small arms. 'Things are worst in the old town and the business quarters, but the suburbs have also suffered severely,' wrote a correspondent who had visited Cologne some months after the raid. 'Everywhere there are burnt-out ruins; whole streets are devastated.' Areas covering 5,000 acres in all were devastated in that great raid. Naturally they included a large number of private houses—but they also included very many factories, and it was the destruction

[p. 97]

or damaging of 250 of these which justified the attack and made it worth while as an operation of war.

The Bomb Splash

It would be idle to deny that the use of 4,000 lb. and 8,000 lb. bombs has enlarged enormously the radius within which private property is likely to be destroyed or damaged when a military target is aimed at in a built-up area. The bomb-splash is a mighty one when bombs of that size are dropped, and inevitably its effect is felt over an area far exceeding that in which it was expected before this war that incidental damage would be caused. It was foreseen that very large bombs might be used in a future war and that the destruction which they would spread would embrace a circle several times larger than that within which houses were damaged when a 1000 kilogram bomb was dropped in Warrington Crescent, Paddington, on 7 March, 1918. One writer drew from that incident the lesson that the effect of the dropping of one 5,000 lb. bomb in Parliament Square and another on Horse Guards Parade would be to leave little of administrative London standing. [1] Fortunately, Whitehall, though it has suffered, has not had the unpleasant experience of meeting the impact of a bomb even nearly so large as that, still less one of the colossal size which our airmen have frequently dropped on German towns. How terrible the effect of such monster projectiles can be we shall not know for certain until the Germans see fit to disclose exactly what happened to Dortmund on the night of 23 May, 1943, when an exceptionally large number of them was dropped. There is reason to believe that the effect was appalling. The photograph published in *The Times* and other papers on 3 June gives some idea of the devastation.

The big bombs are the answer of the attack to the in-

1 Frank Morrison, *War on Great Cities*, 1937, pp. 191-4.

[p. 98]

tensification of the defence. The anti-aircraft barrage had been made so powerful that bombing was becoming ineffective and indeed almost a waste of effort. The military results of the so-called high-level, precision bombing were not commensurate with the wastage of *personnel* and *matériel* involved for the attacking formations. To redress the balance it, was necessary to bring into use projectiles of such destructive capacity that when launched from great heights on the estimated target area they could be counted upon to wreck the target as well as (unfortunately) much else besides. The justification of the method must rest on military necessity. If in no other way can a belligerent destroy his enemy's armament centres or interrupt his enemy's process of munitionment, then this way can be defended. So justified, it is not inconsistent with accepted principles of the laws of war.

The Weather Factor

Our methods have been criticised on the ground that they amount in effect to indiscriminate bombing when the target cannot be identified because of the darkness or cloud. Weather, often the bombing airman's enemy, is sometimes his friend. Cloud, especially if it is accompanied by icing, hampers him, but it protects him, too. It makes the task not only of the searchlight crews and the ground gunners but also that of the night-fighter pilots more difficult. Clear, moonlight conditions help the defence. Nor does thick weather preclude effective bombing. That was demonstrated by the results of the raid of the night of 30 April, 1943, on Essen. It is apparent from the report that our bomber crews could not see what the results of the attack were, but subsequent reconnaissance showed that they were highly successful, sixty acres in the Krupps works being devastated. A still more notable instance was the raid of the night of 11 February, 1943, on

[p. 99]

Wilhelmshaven. The weather was very bad and the bombing was necessarily more or less 'blind'. The crews could see little of what was happening below but they did agree in reporting one huge explosion which could not be attributed even to the bursting of an 8,000 lb. bomb. The explanation of it came later. It was the result of a direct hit on the Mariensiel ammunition depot, in which torpedoes, mining materials, depth charges and other explosives were stored. The explosive material was stored in fifty long sheds and forty of these were destroyed, the devastation covering an area of 150 acres. Here was a case in which a military result of the first importance was achieved in conditions in which precise aiming at a defined target was entirely out of the question.

Daylight Bombing

It has been suggested that the incidental destruction of non-military property could be avoided if bombing were carried out by daylight only. Actual experience does not support this contention. In the daylight raid on Milan on 24 October, 1942, our bombers, according to the Italian report, damaged churches, schools and hospitals as well as many residential buildings (nothing was said, of course, about the military damage). Quite possibly they did, but it was assuredly not intentional. The daylight raids conducted by the United States 8th Air Force and the American heavy bombers serving in General Doolittle's Strategic Air Force appear also to have caused damage to nonmilitary objectives—and again we may be sure that the result was an undesired one. The sights used by the American bomber crews are remarkably efficient and the bombing is careful and accurate, but it is evident that it does not preclude the damaging of innocuous buildings in the vicinity of the target. At any rate, civilian life and property appear to have suffered in the daylight raids of 5

[p. 100]

September, 1942, on Rouen, of 4 December, 1942, on Naples, of 1 March, 1943, on Palermo, of 8 March, 1943, on Rouen and Rennes, and of 26 April, 1943, on the airfield at Grosseto. The destruction of churches in Palermo was particularly publicised in Italy. Cardinal Lavitrano, the Archbishop of Palermo, stated that 'innumerable beautiful churches' were damaged, including the 12th century Basilica San Francesco, and he spoke of 'indescribable' destruction in the town.

When the Flying Fortresses of the United States 8th Air Force attacked the Renault works at Billancourt on 4 April, 1943, 300 people were killed and 1,000 wounded, accorded to the radio announcement at Paris on 5 April, in this 'American raid on a Paris suburb'. The Berlin radio stated that a station on the Paris underground railway received a direct hit and that many people sheltering in it were killed. Neither Paris nor Berlin alluded to the not irrelevant detail that hardly a single important building in the Renault works escaped damage in this highly successful raid. The Italian *communiqué* was equally reticent about the military results of the raid by American Flying Fortresses on the naval base at Leghorn on 28 May, 1943. It said that 'very considerable damage was caused to public and private buildings' but forebore to add that railways, shipyards, and an oil refinery were wrecked as well.

The Double Dividend in Daylight Raids

Daylight raiding has one advantage over night attack in that it yields a double dividend, as it were, as compared with the single return accruing from the other kind of bombing. Not only does it destroy the enemy's armaments on the ground, or hinder the manufacture of them, but, very frequently, it puts out of action in air combat a number of his fighter aircraft. Bombers sometimes shoot down enemy fighters at night, but the numbers so de-

[p. 101]

stroyed are insignificant in comparison with those accounted for not infrequently in the daylight raids. The twofold character of the return seemed almost to be underlined in the daylight raid of 17 April, 1943, on Bremen. The Flying Fortresses put more than half the Focke-Wulf factory out of commission and shot down 63 German fighters (including, it may be assumed, Focke-Wulf as well as Messerschmitt machines) into the bargain. The raid was thus a double blow at Germany's establishment of fighter aircraft. A still larger number was destroyed in the raids on Kiel, Antwerp and Courtrai on 14 May, when the American bombers shot down 67 enemy fighters. They improved on that figure on 21 May, when they destroyed 74 German fighters in the course of the attacks on Wilhelmshaven and Emden. A still finer dividend was returned in the raid on Wilhelmshaven and Cuxhaven on 11 June; 85 and possibly 105 German fighters were claimed by the Flying Fortress crews. In the raid on Kiel and Bremen two days later 65 were shot down, and a total of nearly 100 was accounted for in the American daylight raids on the Ruhr and Antwerp on 22 June, and on northwest Germany on 25 June. (The Germans claimed that their fighters prevented the bombers from reaching their objectives in the last raid.) The return given by the attacks of 17 August, 1943, on factories in Schweinfurt and Regensburg was the highest. No less than 307 enemy fighters were shot down in these two great raids, 287 by the bombers and 20 by supporting Thunderbolts. It must be particularly galling to the German production-executives to find their *matériel* thus subjected to a double wastage.

It should be added that, quite apart from the destruction of enemy fighters in combat, the American heavy bombers have been and are performing work of the very highest importance by their daylight raiding of individual targets in Germany. Their deeply penetrating incursions

[p. 102]

are an essential part of the Anglo-American strategic bombing programme. They supplement by precision-bombing the offensive conducted at night by our Bomber Command against target areas. Perhaps the most notable instances of the successful work which they have accomplished are the wrecking of the synthetic rubber factory at Huls, near Recklinghausen, on 22 June, 1943, and the attacks on the ball and roller bearing works at Schweinfurt and the Messerschmitt factory at Regensburg in the raids of 17 August referred to in the preceding paragraph.

The losses suffered by the defending fighters are augmented in the supporting and diversionary sweeps which usually take place at the same time as the daylight bombing raids. The battle of the towns then ranges far afield. It may be fought out a hundred miles or more from the industrial centre which the bombers are attacking. It is the raid on the town which is its centre-piece, however, and the duels in the air, though fought far distant from the bombers' objective, are actions related and subsidiary to that main operation.

The Changed German Tune

The Germans gloried in the battles of the towns when the battles were one-sided and the towns were the enemy's. It is a very different matter today, when the towns are German. The change which has taken place in German feeling about the matter was referred to by Mr. Churchill in his broadcast of 10 May, 1942, already quoted in this chapter. Hitler's conversion to humanitarian sentiment had come too late, he said. It should have taken place 'before he bombed Warsaw or massacred 20,000 Dutch folk in defenceless Rotterdam or wreaked his cruel vengeance upon the open city of Belgrade.' In those early days 'the German propaganda films, thinking to terrorise neutral countries and glorying in devastating violence,

[p. 103]

were wont to show rows of great German bombers being loaded up with bombs, then flying in the air in battle array, then casting down showers of bombs upon the defenceless towns and villages, choking them in smoke and flame. All this was intended to make the world believe that resistance to the German will was impossible and that subjugation and slavery was the safest and easiest road.'

'Those days are gone,' said Mr. Churchill. With their passing there has come to the Germans a great light. They are beginning to realise for the first time that war is not the great and glorious adventure which they have always thought it was. If Bomber Command had done nothing else it would have performed an inestimable service for civilisation by driving that lesson home. It has taught a race of itching warriors that there is something after all in the old and still valid Golden Rule.

German Propaganda

Meanwhile, all the arts of German propaganda are employed to misrepresent what is really happening in the battles of the towns. The British raids are described as random attacks on the civilian population, as 'terror raids', as having no other object than the slaughter of women, children and other non-combatants. In Italy, too, the game of misrepresentation and vilification was played with gusto before that country surrendered. Mario Apellius, the radio commentator of Rome, for instance, denounced on 30 November, 1942, the '100 per cent barbarity of British bombers'. 'They drop their bombs at random on the centres of towns,' he said. 'Not the war factories but the heart of Italy is the target.' The aid of the Spanish Press has been enlisted in the campaign. There, too, the cruelty and uselessness of the bombing of towns have been the subject of much eloquent comment. Mr.

[p. 104]

Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, referred to it in a speech of 28 May, 1943, when he pointed out that not a voice had been raised in Spain when Germany was bombing towns 'in Poland, Holland and Britain, and that protests had begun to be made only when Germany and Italy were the sufferers. He declared unequivocally that we would not be deterred by intervention from any quarter from continuing to conduct our strategic offensive.

Not all neutral countries re-acted to the German and Italian propaganda in the same way as Spain. In Turkey there was little disposition to take Dr. Goebbels' and his friends' efforts very seriously. At the beginning of June, 1943, M. Ahmed Shukri Esmer, a member of the Turkish Grand National Assembly, contributed to the official periodical *Ullus* of Ankara an article from which some extracts were quoted in *The Times* of 4 June, 1943. He stated that the question who dropped the first bomb on enemy territory, difficult to determine in itself, was immaterial and irrelevant. 'What matters,' he said, 'is to ascertain which side began massive and indiscriminate air raids on undefended cities, thereby causing heavy casualties among the civilian populations. Warsaw, Rotterdam and Belgrade answer that question. But even assuming that the attacks on those cities, by stretching the argument, could be explained up to a certain point by the fact that they were carried out in conjunction with land operations, the "blitzing" of London, Coventry and other British cities is indefensible.'

'Had the Nazis won the war,' M. Esmer said later in his article, 'they would have glorified their cleverness in catching their enemy unawares and unprepared, and in having achieved an easy victory by "blitz" tactics of their own invention with little loss to the German people. Now that the tide of war has turned against them they have suddenly become very sensitive about the question of who is

[p. 105]

responsible for having started the bombing of open cities. Evidently the Nazis are beginning to be conscious of the terrible responsibility they have incurred not only towards world opinion but towards their own people.'

If Hitler had been a man of far-ranging vision—if, in fact, his 'intuition' had been worth its salt—he would never have sent the *Luftwaffe* to batter Warsaw in September, 1939. He would have used the artillery of the German army to reduce the city and kept the bombers away from it. Then he might have come into the controversy about the bombing of towns with clean hands. As it was he chose to set a precedent for the bombing of centres of population in this war at its very outset and thereby prejudiced his position as the advocate of the mutual abandonment by the belligerents of the practice of strategic bombing. In short, it was he who really began the battles of the towns. He is probably very sorry now that he ever did so.

[p. 106]

CHAPTER V

THE BOMBING OF CIVILIANS

The German Campaign of Misrepresentation

'Whatever is bombed in another war,' said Lord Trenchard in the House of Lords on 15 March, 1939, 'nothing we can say or do will prevent enemy propaganda from asserting that women and children are bombed intentionally, because, of course, a large number of women and children will undoubtedly be hit.' The truth of his prediction was most abundantly proved in the course of the war which began less than six months later. From the first the German re-action to our air offensive took the form of representing it as an intentional attack on women and children. The chorus of denunciation of it on this score has gone on increasing in volume to the present day.

The extracts from Hitler's speeches quoted in Chapter II included a number of references to the ruthlessness of our raids as the Germans saw them. With our methods of brutality the German propagandists contrasted the burning German desire to save non-combatants from the rigours of war. One of them, speaking on the Berlin radio on 8 August, 1941, stated that the Führer had always been in favour of a convention to prevent the bombing of civilians in the interests of humanity. He was nothing of the sort. He was in favour of it in the military interests of Germany. He wanted a particular kind of convention which would have banned the type of bombing which did not suit his book but would have left the type which did perfectly uncontrolled. His proposals of 1935 and 1936 would not have prevented the bombing of Warsaw, Rotterdam or Belgrade. They would have prevented our raids on the Ruhr. It was to rise, indeed, to the height of impudence to

[p. 107]

mention the Führer and regard for the interests of humanity in the same breath. What Hitler really thought upon this subject has been disclosed by one who was formerly intimate with him.

Hitler and Humanitarianism

Herr Hermann Rauschning has put it on record that shortly after the Reichstag fire (27 February, 1933) Hitler summoned him, with Gauleiter Forster, to the Reich Chancellery to discuss a report on the Danzig situation. The discussion veered round to the subject of the place of brute force in government. 'I have no choice,' said Hitler, 'I must do things that cannot be measured by the yardstick of bourgeois squeamishness. . . . The world can only be ruled by fear.' The same subject came under discussion when Rauschning saw Hitler again, in the autumn of 1933, at Danzig. 'Brutality is respected,' Hitler said. 'Brutality and physical strength. . . . The people need wholesome fear. They *want* to fear something. They want someone to frighten them and make them shudderingly submissive. . . . Terror is the most effective political instrument. I shall not permit myself to be robbed of it because a lot of stupid bourgeois mollicoddles choose to be offended by it. It is my duty to make use of *every* means of training the German people to severity and to prepare them for war. . . . My behaviour in war-time will be no different. The most horrible warfare is the kindest. I shall spread terror by the surprise employment of all my measures. The important thing is the sudden shock of an overwhelming fear of death.' [1]

The German Army's Ethics

Hitler's sudden conversion to humanitarianism under the stress of circumstance was accompanied, it seems, by a similar change of heart in the German military hier-

1 H. Rauschning, *Hitler Speaks*, 1939, pp. 87, 89, 90.

[p. 108]

archy. The German army, the world was solemnly assured by a quisling radio commentator, has always had a code of ethics which makes it unthinkable that war should be waged unchivalrously. Here is what Max Blockzijl said from the German-controlled station at Hilversum in the autumn of 1942:

'The German people have a great military tradition which the British have not; certainly not so far as the army is concerned. The German professional officers, who were always very numerous in Germany, stick particularly to their code of honour and chivalry. The English commanders are mostly dilettantes and are hastily recruited, under the pressure of emergency, from the most varied group of the population. They don't know the moral scruples which a German commander possesses as an inborn gift.' Hence, said Blockzijl, the Royal Air Force's attacks on women and children, hospitals, churches, historical buildings and monuments, whereas the Germans attacked only military objectives. If the *Luftwaffe* did bomb even industrial objectives, which he doubted, 'it was exclusively a retaliation measure, reprisals after endless warnings.' [1]

It is true that the German people have 'a great military tradition' and a numerous class of professional officers. How far have these assets served to assure humane treatment of enemy civilians? The answer will be apparent to anyone who has studied military history. In 1870 the German commander refused a request that the bombardment of Paris should be restricted to the *Festungswerke*. A similar practice was adopted at Péronne, and the result of a *general* bombardment of that town was that it was speedily captured. A regular investment (*Belagerung*), says a German professor, [2] a who approves the ruthless procedure

1 Quoted in *Aeronautics*, November, 1942, p. 63.

2 Dr. Heilbron of Breslau, article on *Deutsch-Französischer Krieg* in Strupp, *Wörterbuch des Völkerrechts*, 1924, pp. 232-3.

[p. 109]

adopted, would have cost 1,000 to 1,500 casualties to the besieged and 3,000 to 4,000 to the besiegers. These were reduced to a few hundred men, he states; he does not mention the fact that this saving of life was really effected by the expedient of intimidating the civilian population.

Psychological Bombardment

It was an example, in fact, of 'psychological bombardment', or, as the French jurists term it, *pression psychologique*, that is, bombardment of an invested town *as a whole* for the purpose of inducing the inhabitants to put pressure on the defending commander to surrender. Such a practice, say MM. Bonfils and Fauchille in their standard treatise, was first adopted by the Germans in the war of 1870-71. It subsequently became an accepted but regretted usage of war, as both Oppenheim and W. E. Hall admit in the works on International Law. It was roundly condemned from the first by the great German jurist, Bluntschli, who described it as 'entirely immoral'. 'It provokes hatred and vengeance,' he said, 'but has no decisive result.' [1] It is a strange turn of fate that Bluntschli's objection to the practice,—and it is still the practice of the German army and air force, as Warsaw and Rotterdam prove—should have been resurrected by the present generation of Germans and twisted to apply to the much less questionable operation represented by the strategic bombing raid.

It was the argument used, for instance, by Suendermann, the deputy press chief in Berlin, in a talk with neutral journalists on 4 March, 1943. The 'terror raids' which, he said, the British had begun and to which Hitler had made no reply for six months, would never break the morale of the German civil population. He calmly ignored

1 Bonfils-Fauchille, *Traité de Droit International*, 8th Edition, Tome II, § 1197.

[p. 110]

the fact that the main purpose of our air offensive is to interfere with German war-production. In assuming that it was aimed only at morale-breaking he elevated a quite subsidiary and incidental result—it is not really a purpose—into the highest place and made use of an argument which was a valid objection to the German practice of psychological bombardment but not—except in a negligible degree—to our raiding of German armament centres.

The Bolshevising of War

Rather belatedly, German propaganda made the great discovery that the strategic air offensive was really the result of the Bolshevisation of war. The *National Zeitung* of Essen (Goering's paper) declared at the end of April, 1943:

'This war has taken on a new aspect which is represented above all by Bolshevism. The Bolshevisation of the war proves that the principle of terror, by which Bolshevism directs its internal policy, has become a method of warfare too. The manner in which the British and Americans plan and carry out their terror raids on German towns shows that these countries are under the influence of Bolshevism in many spheres. Today they are already Bolshevised, above all in one sphere, that of fighting ethics.' [1]

Only Teutonic incapacity to see any other view than the Teutonic could have been blind to the truth that Nazi domination is founded on terror, too, and that Germany has never scrupled to resort to frightfulness when it was necessary for a military end.

'Stop Bombing Civilians'

It is not to be supposed that all those whose consciences are troubled by the 'bombing of civilians' are either pro-Nazis or insincere and unpatriotic people. They are, most of them, people of high character, and they have the cour-

1 *The Times*, 30 April, 1943.

[p. 111]

age of their convictions. It is necessary to add, however, that they are misinformed people. They have not studied all the facts. They have formed their conclusions on *ex pane* evidence. A good example of the arguments which they rely upon is to be found in the pamphlet *Stop Bombing Civilians!* published by the 'Bombing Restriction Committee' whose address is 49 Parliament Hill, London, N.W.3, and whose purpose is thus set forth at the beginning of the pamphlet:

'To urge the Government to stop violating their declared policy of bombing only military objectives and particularly to cease causing the death of many thousands of civilians in their homes.'

The indictment is incorrectly drawn. The Government are not violating their declared policy. It was definitely stated by Captain Harold Balfour, the Under-Secretary of State for Air, in the House of Commons on 11 March, 1943, that we were still bombing only military objectives. 'I can give the assurance,' he told the House, 'that we are not bombing the women and children of Germany wantonly. If in the pursuit of our objective the German civilian population have to suffer, it is not our fault.' This, it will be seen, was a specific denial of the assertion that we were no longer aiming at military objectives and that we were attacking towns indiscriminately. I believe that denial to be correct, and I have at my disposal information which could not be available to the Bombing Restriction Committee.

The Committee weaken their case, first and in general, by overstating it, secondly, and in particular, by failing to distinguish between the two classes of 'civilians' whose positions must be differentiated if a discussion of the problem is to lead anywhere. They do admit that the civilians working in munition factories which are attacked are bound inevitably to suffer. They do not appear, however,

[p. 112]

to appreciate the necessary implications of that admission, and in any event they do not see, apparently, that transport workers are also in a special position.

To speak of the 'bombing of civilians' without qualification is really to confuse the issue. One must define one's terms. The old clear distinction between soldiers and civilians has been obscured. That is not to say that the whole population of an enemy country is subject to attack. Indiscriminate bombing is certainly not justifiable. The point to be remembered is that there is a difference between the civilians who are engaged in definitely warlike activities and those who are not. It is the latter who have a claim to immunity, not the former. The people who make and transport war material are, to the opposing belligerent, active, dangerous enemies. He is as fully entitled to try to put them out of action as if they were commissioned or enlisted soldiers. They are in fact *warriors*. The fact that they wear no uniform is immaterial. They are in no proper sense of the word non-combatants.

The change which the coming of flight has brought about is that these people, these warriors, can now be attacked even though an army stands between them and the invader. Another change has come to pass also. Today the weapons of war are made by millions of workers, men and women, in thousands of factories. Total war cannot be waged unless there are huge agglomerations of warriors on the home front. All these persons must be considered to be engaged in the preliminary process of the *pre-fabricated battle* to which reference has been made in Chapter IV.

Professor Rolland on Munition Workers

The view that such persons cannot be regarded as non-combatants is not a new one invented specially by Great Britain for the purpose of justifying the strategic air offensive against Germany. It was formulated nearly thirty

[p. 113]

years ago by a very eminent authority on International Law, a French professor. Professor Rolland of Nancy pointed out in 1916 that armament workers 'occupy a position intermediate between the combatants proper and the non-combatants who are still employed on their peacetime trades and professions. The reasons for sparing them are losing force. Fundamentally they are almost in exactly the same position as the men of the auxiliary services of the armies, and the latter are certainly legitimate objects of attack.' [1]

Professor Rolland made no mention of transport workers, but there is little doubt that he would have included them, at least so far as they were engaged in the conveying of armaments, in the category of workers who cannot be regarded as true non-combatants. Every argument which supports the inclusion of the makers of armaments in that category applies with no less force to the inclusion of those who convey to the armies or other forces the products of the factories. By no logical process of reasoning can the drivers, firemen, shunters, pointsmen and others who handle the rail traffic within the Krupps works at Essen and who, while doing so, are clearly not distinguishable from the men who make the armaments there, be considered to acquire a new and different status as soon as they have worked the trains out of the factory yards. It is a question, indeed, whether transportation is not more important than manufacture of armaments in modern war.

Transport Workers

Dr. Goebbels wrote in *Das Reich* in May, 1943: 'The outstanding problem of the war is mobility. The side which is able to send its troops and material to the battlefield of the moment in the most favourable circumstances

¹ L. Rolland, *Les Pratiques de la Guerre Aérienne dans le Conflit de 1914, et le Droit des Gens*, in *Revue de Droit International*, Paris, 1916, p. 554.

[p. 114]

will win.' [1] That statement was, in effect, an admission of the necessity for and legitimacy of the Anglo-American raids on railway targets in Germany and German-occupied territories. How sustained and effective those raids have become was explained in an Air Ministry Bulletin dated 7 June, 1943.

It detailed the railway centres attacked during the month of May in France and Belgium as well as the results of the intruder operations against trains in the Low Countries, France and Germany. It showed how traffic had been dislocated by such attacks as those of the American bombers on the locomotive repair shops of Lille-Hellemmes on 13 January, 1943, and of our Lancasters on the Le Creusot works on 7 October, 1942. The result was that no repair work had been done in the two works since these raids up to the end of May. The final section of the Bulletin was as follows:

'Although little specific information is available about the German locomotive position, it seems clear that the improvement anticipated by the Germans this summer has not so far materialised. The principal reason for this is that the great building programme has fallen behind schedule. Part of the delay in fulfilling the programme may be ascribed to air raids on Henschels at Kassel, Krupps at Essen, Schneiders at Le Creusot, Fives-Lille, Batignolles at Nantes, Cockerill at Liège, the Lingen, Paderborn and Julich repair shops; and damage to the Duisburg and Düsseldorf sheds. In addition to the number of engines that have been destroyed by Fighter and Army Co-operation Commands, the damage to railway repair shops or locomotive depots in raids on Berlin, Essen, Munich, Nuremberg, Trier and Thionville, besides destroying engines, has been sufficiently heavy to reduce repair capacity at the shops for some time; the congestion at shops

1 Quoted in *The Times*, 22 May, 1943.

[p. 115]

which have not been attacked is such as to make impossible the complete transfer of work normally carried out in the damaged shops. It can be stated that the German locomotive position has clearly deteriorated and must be one of acute anxiety.'

The Real Non-Combatants

Armament and transport workers, as well as all the civilians enrolled in the service of passive defence—the fire-fighters, the fire-watchers, the rescue parties, the demolition squads—cannot be classed otherwise than as warriors in the new kind of war in which their work is as essential and, in principle, as warlike as that of the soldiers, sailors and airmen. No one would waste tears on them if they alone were the sufferers in the air attacks. Unfortunately, there are other victims whose connection with hostilities is too remote to justify their being brought into the same category and whom in any event it is neither the desire nor the interest of an enemy to kill or mutilate. No chivalrous airman wants to slaughter grandmothers or babies. The tragedy is that he may do so in trying to put the others out of action. It is an unintended, horrible, pitiable incident of war, but to say that is not to condemn air bombardment.

The justification of air bombardment is that it is essentially *defensive* in purpose. You kill and destroy to save yourself from being killed or destroyed. You can do so not merely on the field of battle, as in the older war, but wherever the arms which would have been used in the field are being made or conveyed. That is the case for the bombing of centres of war-production and transportation. Is it not possible that the secret of flight was given to man so that the weapons of war should perish?

There would in fact be no case against bombing if as great a degree of precision were possible as was thought

[p. 116]

at one time to be practicable. Conditions have changed even since Mr. Chamberlain explained in the House of Commons on 21 June, 1938, the view of the Government of the permissible limits of air attack. Deliberate attack on the civilian population was unlawful, but military targets might be bombed if they could be identified and if reasonable care were taken not to bomb civilians in their neighbourhood. It has become impossible to comply with these conditions to the full. Targets are no longer identifiable because belligerents have taken good care that they should not be identifiable. They have not only adopted the most elaborate schemes of camouflage but, as I have shown in Chapter IV, have protected all centres of war-production with very powerful defences. It would be suicide, normally, for a bomber formation to approach its target at a height at which precision of aim would be certain. The swift darting raids of such machines as the Mosquitoes or the fighter-bombers can be made at low heights, but they are not the raids which cause the heavy losses.

Air Attack and Submarine Attack

Should not bombing of populated centres then be abandoned? To do so would certainly save the lives of many whom it is no advantage to a belligerent to kill; on the contrary, it is better that, being 'useless mouths' in a blockaded country, they should live. To spare them might mean, however, that the lives of one's own fighting men were sacrificed. It is to save these men's lives to put a war-plant out of operation or to stop a trainload of munitions from reaching the front. And why should the enemy civilians have priority of consideration over our own civilians on the sea? The latter are killed in their hundreds by the U-boats which it is one of the objects of the air offensive to prevent from being built. It is a question of setting one tragedy against another.

[p. 117]

A liner with many passengers on board is torpedoed in the North Atlantic. Those who are not killed or drowned when she is hit or sinks take to the boats and drift perhaps for days in the Arctic cold, to perish after indescribable sufferings. They may include women and children. That tragedy would have been prevented if the particular U-boat which caused it had been smashed by our bombers while it was being built or after its completion. To have smashed it would have endangered the lives of the wives and children of the shipyard workers at the place of construction in Germany. A tragedy there might have averted the later tragedy of the sea. The lives of the German noncombatants who perish in an air attack are not more precious than those of our own non-combatants who would have had to pay the price of any forbearance shown by our airmen. It must not be forgotten, moreover, that the bombing of an urban factory engaged in war-production is not unlawful, [1] which the German technique of submarine warfare definitely is. [2]

1 The late Lord Birkenhead in his *International Law*, 6th Edition, edited by R. Moelwyn-Hughes, 1927, p. 205, referring to the evidence afforded by the events of the last war that 'the progressive doctrine of the distinction between armed forces and the civilian population is in danger of disappearing', quotes without expressing dissent Oppenheim's attribution of this to four causes, one of which Lord Birkenhead states thus:

'The employment of airships and aeroplanes for bombing not only troops and military fortifications but also lines of communications, factories and bridges outside the theatre of war—a mode of violence which it would be vain to consider illegal, and which cannot but result, especially when conducted at night, in injury to the civil population.'

2 Part IV of the London Naval Treaty of 1930 prohibited the sinking, or the rendering incapable of navigation, of a merchant vessel unless the passengers, crew and ship's papers were first placed in safety. When the Treaty was otherwise due to expire in 1936, the United States, Great Britain (for herself and the Dominions and India), France, Italy and Japan signed in London on 6 November, 1936, a Protocol incorporating Part IV of the Treaty, which Part thus remained in force. Germany acceded to this Protocol in 1936. (Oppenheim, *International Law*, 6th Edition, edited by H. Lauterpacht, 1940, § 194A).

[p. 118]

The Archbishop of York on Bombing

Dr. Garbett, the Archbishop of York, had some wise things to say on this subject in the *York Diocesan Leaflet* in June, 1943. He had been asked, he said, to join in protests against the bombing of German and Italian towns. He gave some reasons for his not being able to consent. 'The real justification for continuing this bombing is that it will shorten the war and may save thousands of lives. Those who demand the suspension of all bombing are advocating a policy which would condemn many more of our soldiers to death, and would postpone the hour of liberation which will alone save from massacre and torture those who are now in the power of the Nazis.'

'Often in life,' the Archbishop went on, 'there is no clear choice between absolute right and wrong; frequently the choice has to be made, of the lesser of two evils, and it is a lesser evil to bomb a war-loving Germany than to sacrifice the lives of thousands of our own fellow-countrymen who long for peace and to delay delivering millions now held in slavery. . . . However much we may deplore the sufferings of the civilian population and the destruction of their homes, and of beautiful buildings, we must continue to use our superiority in the air as a means of ending the war as speedily as we can, and then build up some strong central international order which will by force maintain peace until it is willingly accepted by all the nations.' [1]

A German Admission

There was in Germany, when it suited Germany's purpose, no hesitation to admit that the bombing of military objectives might have as an incidental consequence the injuring of civilian life and property, but that it was not the less lawful on that account. A German professor who

1 *The Times*, 25 June, 1943.

[p. 119]

wrote an apologia for the German air force in the last war emphasised the impracticability of ensuring complete immunity for women and children in air warfare. 'Germany cannot be reproached for killing women and children,' he said, 'because an airman cannot compute the exact spot on which he intends his missiles to strike. It is in accord with the tragic consequences of war that here, too, the innocent must suffer with the guilty.' [1]

The Toll of Blockade

Lamentable as is the killing of non-combatants proper when an industrial centre is bombed, the tragedy must be viewed not in isolation but against the sombre background of war. Some critics of bombing policy appear to lose perspective in this matter. They discuss the question without regard to certain other incidents of war and almost as if it were one which could be decided according to the standards applicable to preventable disasters in peace. That is to misconceive the whole situation. War is war, and it is horrible. The loss of civilian life which bombing causes is almost trivial in comparison with that due to blockade. In the war of 1914-18 the excess civilian mortality, as compared with the normal, amounted in Germany to about 700,000, while the deficit in the birth-rate in the four years was about 2,900,000. These figures compared with an excess mortality of 250,000 and a decrease in births of 600,000 in Britain during the four years. The difference between the German and the British figures must be attributed in large part to the action of the blockade. [2] History seems to be repeating itself in the present war. Some very significant statistics were published in Germany and summarised in *The Times* of 24 May, 1943.

1 Muller-Meiningen, *Zusammenbruch des Völkerrechts*, quoted by J. W. Garner, *International Law in the World War*, 1920, Vol. I, p. 488, note.

2 S. Dumas and K. O. Vedel-Peterson, *Loss of Life Caused by War*, Copenhagen, English translation, 1923, pp. 133-4.

[p. 120]

They showed that in the large towns of Germany, containing a population of 24,500,000, infant mortality per 1000 live births was 59 in 1941 and 69 in 1942; the rate for England and Wales in 1942 was 49. That difference of 20 per 1,000 births between the two countries must be attributed mainly to the strangle-hold of our blockade. The mortality for the whole population of Germany was 24 per cent higher in 1942 than in 1939. Deaths from tuberculosis and some other diseases rose substantially. The birthrate showed a dramatic fall; there were 80,000 fewer births in the large towns of Germany in 1942 than in 1940. For the whole of Germany the drop in the birth-rate indicated a loss of approximately 550,000 live births in 1942 as compared with 1939-40. It is hardly too much to say that these dry statistics are the tragic sign of a nation dying in the grip of sea power. Air power could never reap such a terrible harvest. Do those critics who devote so much attention to our bombing policy ever think of this other accompaniment or consequence of war?

The Military Balance Sheet

It is not uncommon for the critics, when baffled in their attempt to arraign strategic bombing on the humanitarian or ethical plane, to fall back on the argument of military expediency. Bombing, they sometimes assert, is not a profitable undertaking, in view of the heavy losses suffered by the raiders and the comparatively small extent of the damage which they can inflict upon a country geared for total war. Civilians are killed and mutilated but the enemy's war-potential is not seriously affected. That is a completely mistaken view. There is not a shadow of doubt that the strategic offensive conducted by Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force and the Bomber Command of the United States 8th Army Air Force is a *militarily profitable undertaking*. That being so, it is hardly reason-

[p. 121]

able to ask them as belligerents to forego the use of a mode of warfare against which the only remaining argument that can be urged is the humanitarian or ethical one. Such an argument has never been held to prevail against military interest. If the results of the employment of a weapon or a method of warfare are worth-while, belligerents will not be prepared to discard them. Only where they are *not* worth-while, that is, where giving up the use of them does not matter very much, has the humanitarian objection won the day. That was why explosive bullets were banned in the Declaration of St. Petersburg, whereas the larger projectiles remain lawful. To expect States as powerful in the air as we and the United States now are to abandon bombing, at all events during the current war, is to expect a miracle. It simply will not happen.

A Disclaimer

Let me end this chapter with a disclaimer, to prevent any possibility of misunderstanding. I seem in it to have been exalting military expediency and discounting the humane motive. I should like to make it clear that I am very far indeed from advocating anything in the nature of frightfulness in air warfare. 'War is cruelty,' Sherman—a humane man—told the citizens of Atlanta, 'and you cannot refine it.' To suppose that it can be anything else than cruelty is to dwell in cloud-cuckoo-land. But it, need not be wanton, brutal cruelty. There is a tendency in some quarters to regard as an unpractical idealist anyone who urges moderation in war. Well, great captains of the past have not been afraid to urge moderation.

Total war is not total destruction. Apparently some people in this country think it is, or that it should be. I have mentioned the 'Stop Bombing Civilians' cry. It is right and proper to mention also the 'Don't Stop Bombing Civilians' cry. It was uttered raucously by a Sunday jour-

[p. 122]

nal [1] a few days after Captain Harold Balfour had assured the House of Commons that we were not bombing the women and children of Germany wantonly. The paper had no patience with that sort of namby-pamby attitude to the question. In a leading article headed 'Apologies with our Bombs' it wanted to know why we were so solicitous for the civil population in the Reich. It was right that the German civilians should 'smell death at close quarters.' 'Now they are getting the stench of it.' That was excellent—if only our Government were not too much inclined to be merciful. By implication, if not in so many words, the paper called for the indiscriminate bombing of towns in Germany.

Most earnestly do I deprecate that sort of approach to this terribly grave and difficult problem. It is unworthy of the cause for which we and the other United Nations are in arms. That cause is, after all, the cause of humanity and of the individual's rights. It would not be consistent with our high purpose to hold that even in total war the individual life matters nothing, so long as an ulterior end can be attained. To slaughter and mutilate simply to impress upon the civil population the inadvisability of countenancing aggressive war would be, I suggest, to stain the sword of democracy.

The paper from which I have quoted above stated that the view which it propounded was that of the British public. I do not believe it is. I am certain it is not the view of the Royal Air Force. The officers and men of that great Service are realists. They know that war cannot be waged with kid gloves, that terrible things must happen in it, that the killing and wounding of innocent people cannot always be avoided. But they take no pleasure in the deliberate slaying or mutilating of the helpless, and most certainly they do not gloat over the sufferings of their victims. They are in fact far less bloodthirsty than some whose activities are less intimately connected with the tragic realities of modern war.

1 *Sunday Dispatch*, 14 March, 1943.

[p. 123]

CHAPTER VI

THE TOKYO OUTRAGE

Brigadier General Doolittle's Foray

On 18 April, 1942, a force of medium bombers of the B-25 type, North American Mitchells, under the command of Brigadier General James Doolittle, took off from the United States aircraft carrier 'Hornet' in the north Pacific and flew to Japan. It was the first occasion on which aircraft of such a size had ever operated from a carrier. They dropped their bombs on Tokyo, Yokohama, Kobe and Nagoya, and (with two exceptions) then flew on to the mainland. One landed in Russia, the rest in China. The latter had to come down in Japanese-occupied territory, where the crews abandoned their machines and made their way with difficulty to the west. Any disclosure of their presence in eastern China might have prejudiced their safe arrival in the Chinese lines, and no particulars were published, therefore, by the United States authorities at the time of the raid.

The Japanese radio stated on 18 April, that sixty aircraft took part in the raid and that nine were shot down. Both figures were characteristic exaggerations. Only sixteen bombers were engaged and only two were brought down. The Japanese official account stated that schools and hospitals were seriously damaged in Tokyo, that fires were started in Kobe and Nagoya, and that no military installations were hit. A broadcast from Tokyo in the early hours of 19 April implied, however, that some damage had been caused to railways; it stated that communication facilities were functioning 'without any important alterations'. Other Japanese reports quoted by the German wireless on 19 April also pointed to the occurrence of industrial

[p. 124]

damage in the capital. It was stated that the Japanese Government had provided funds for rebuilding 'factories and dwelling houses which, with a cinema, were burnt down in the Tokyo area'. Earlier broadcasts had asserted that the aircraft had failed to reach the centre of Tokyo and had dropped their bombs blindly on residential and suburban districts. What precise damage was caused by the raid has never been clearly established. That the moral effect of it was considerable is undoubted.

'Enough evidence has come from Japanese spokesmen, affirming, denying, and exhorting,' said *The Times* in a leading article on 20 April, 1942, 'to justify the inference that their people have at least been badly startled at the rude breach of their hitherto unbroken immunity from the kind of destruction that their war-lords have wantonly inflicted on other nations. When the full story is told it may be found that heavy damage has been done to the military objectives of the raids.' The fact that Tokyo had two air-raid alarms on 19 April, when no Allied aircraft was anywhere near Japan, was evidence of the jitters which the attack of 18 April had induced.

The White House Announcement

How savagely the consternation translated itself into action was not known until more than a year had elapsed. On 21 April, 1943, it was revealed in a statement issued from the White House at Washington that some of the American airmen who had been captured had been executed by the Japanese. The statement said:

'The crews of two American bombers have been captured by the Japanese. On 19 October the Government learned from Japanese broadcasts of the capture, trial and severe punishment of these Americans. Not until 12 March was it that the American Government received the communication given by the Japanese Government that the

[p. 125]

Americans had, in fact, been tried, and that the death penalty had been pronounced. It was further stated that the death penalty was commuted for some, but that sentence of death had been applied to others.

'The Government has vigorously condemned this act of barbarity in a formal communication sent to the Japanese Government. It has informed the Japanese Government that the American Government will hold personally responsible for these diabolical crimes all those officers of the Japanese Government who participated therein, and will in due course bring those officers to justice. This recourse to frightfulness is barbarous. The effort by the Japanese war lords to intimidate us will utterly fail. It will make Americans more determined than ever to blot out the shameless militarism of Japan.'

The American Note to Japan

The Note to Japan said:

'The Japanese Government alleges that it has subjected the American aviators to this treatment because they intentionally bombed non-military installations and deliberately fired on civilians, and that the aviators admitted these acts. The United States informs Japan that instructions to the American forces always ordered these forces to direct attacks upon military objectives. The American forces participating in the attack upon Japan had such instructions, and it is known that they did not deviate from them. The United States brands as false the charges that the aviators intentionally attacked non-combatants anywhere. With regard to the allegation that the aviators admitted the acts of which the Japanese Government accuses them, there are numerous known instances in which Japanese official agencies employed brutal and bestial methods of extorting alleged confessions from persons in their power.

It is customary for these agencies to use statements ob-

[p. 126]

tained by torture, or alleged statements, in proceedings against the victims. If the admissions alleged to have been made by the American aviators have in fact been made, then they could only have been extorted fabrications.'

The Note went on to remind Japan that she had agreed to abide by the Geneva Convention regarding the treatment of prisoners of war and that she had violated that Convention. It also called on the Japanese Government to inform the Swiss Minister of the charges and sentences, as required by the Convention, and to permit him to visit the surviving aviators and to restore them their full rights under the Convention. The Note proceeded:

'If, as it appears, the Japanese Government has descended to acts of barbarity and manifestations of depravity such as the murder in cold blood of uniformed members of the United States armed forces, the American Government will hold personally and officially responsible for those deliberate crimes officers of the Japanese Government who participated in their commitment and will in due course bring those officers to judgment.'

American and British Reactions to the Outrage

The immediate effect of the disclosure of the murder of the United States airmen was that thousands of pilots volunteered to man aircraft for further raids on Tokyo. A wave of anger swept the United States and there was an insistent demand throughout America for further attacks on Japan. In these, Mr. Churchill stated, the British airmen hoped to share. In a message sent to General Arnold, Chief of the United States Army Air Force, he said: 'I have read with indignation of the cold-blooded execution of your airmen by the Japanese. This barbarous and unusual action reveals in a particularly significant manner the fear the Japanese have of having the munition factories and other military objectives in their homeland

[p. 127]

bombed. I cannot resist sending you this message to assure you that the Royal Air Force earnestly look forward to the day when they will be able to fly side by side with their American comrades to attack Tokyo and other cities of Japan and strip this cruel and greedy nation of their power to molest the civilised world.'

Mr. Churchill reiterated in his address to Congress on 19 May, 1943, his desire that the Royal Air Force should be associated with the American air forces in the punishing of Japan. 'It is all agreed between us,' he said, 'that we should at the earliest possible moment similarly bring our joint air power to bear upon the military targets in the home lands of Japan. The cold-blooded execution of the United States airmen by the Japanese Government is a proof not only of their barbarism but of the dread with which they regard this possibility.' [1]

The significance of the murder of the airmen as evidence of Japan's fear of the Allied bombing offensive was also emphasised in a leading article in *The Times* of 24 April, 1943, which also pointed out that there was still another reason for the outrage. 'In adding this latest act of cruel and cold-blooded murder to their long list of war-crimes, the enemy may have been actuated by two motives. The bombing of military targets in their chief cities was a surprise which must have sorely wounded the prestige and pride of the authorities responsible for home defence; and in the Far East damaged "face" is less easily forgiven than other injuries. No doubt they also hoped to deter the Americans and their allies from further attacks, although

1 It is significant that Japanese propagandists are insistent upon the absence of any such dread. One of them has declared that only 20 of 100 United States aircraft which set out to attack Tokyo would ever reach the city, and that 'in view of the number of aeroplanes in possession of the two countries and their performances, a United States air raid upon Tokyo is nothing to be feared.' (Kinoaki Matsuo, *How Japan Plans to Win*, English translation, 1942, p. 205.)

[p. 128]

the slightest knowledge of American psychology might have saved them from this monstrous and criminal error.' The leading article went on to refer to the intense anger aroused in the United States by the act, to the universal approval expressed in the British Commonwealth and in China of the President's denunciation of it, and to the proof which the act had finally afforded that the 'thin and brittle lacquer of civilisation has long been stripped from these barbarians and fanatics of the East'.

Enemy and Neutral Reactions

The German reaction to the Japanese atrocity was such as was to be expected. The Berlin radio, after referring to President Roosevelt's scathing denunciation of the crime, said blandly: 'The German people will approve the precedent established by the Japanese in executing some American airmen who deliberately bombed non-military objectives in Tokyo, as the proper answer to a form of aerial warfare which the Anglo-Americans have made their standard pattern.' There was no declaration that Germany would adopt a similar attitude towards captured airmen, and, in fact, Allied airmen who are shot down or, make forced landings in Germany are not specially maltreated. There was, however, a very characteristic implication in the broadcast, a kind of gloating, sadistic satisfaction with the display of cruelty against helpless captives. There was also an unintended admission that the Anglo-American air offensives were equally unpopular—and with good reason—in Tokyo and in Berlin.

Neutral opinion reacted in a very different way. 'The Japanese executions of prisoners,' said the Swedish paper *Allehanda* on 26 April, 'are the most brutal and premeditated breach of international law yet committed. The hypocritical German and Italian approval leaves a ghastly impression.' 'When the Germans bombed England,' the paper went on,

[p. 129]

'no German voice mentioning international law was ever heard. Now, when the same fate has befallen Germany, international law has become the favourite reading at the Wilhelmstrasse. Apparently English churches and English hospitals are in German opinion legitimate targets, but German ones are not. German fliers, for their attacks on buildings which were against international law—though surely not premeditated—received the Iron Cross or Sword. When an Allied flyer is guilty of a similar mistake he should, according to the German conception, be executed like a criminal.'

Japan's Record in the Air

It might conceivably have been possible to find some shadow of excuse for Japan's act if she had adopted from the first a firm and consistent attitude of opposition to the bombing of towns from the air. If she had refused to let her own air force drop bombs on urban objectives and had made clear by her action her determination never to resort to this mode of warfare, she would have had some sort of case for doing what she did, though even then it would not have been a really defensible case. Her own record, however, denies her the right to plead such a justification. It is a black record. The facts are grim and they are beyond dispute. It is no waste of time or paper to set them down here. The whole story could not and need not be told. What the Japanese air force did at two Chinese cities—Canton and Chungking—is sufficient to condemn that air force to extinction; and extinguished it will be. There will be no more Japanese air force after this war ends.

The Air Raids on Canton

Canton's worst ordeal came in the end of May and the beginning of June, 1938. There were heavy raids on the

[p. 130]

crowded city on 28, 29 and 30 May. On the last of these three days a special correspondent in Canton reported to his paper as follows:

'First-hand investigation of the areas bombed in the last three tragic days leaves no doubt whatever that the Japanese have changed their raiding tactics, which during the last two months have been relatively humane, if the epithet is permissible. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, perhaps 70 per cent of their bombing has had some conceivable relevance to military, administrative or industrial objectives; the rest has been either completely malignant or wildly maladroit. Even if not altogether indiscriminate in intention, the raids have been indiscriminate in effect.' [1]

The attacks were resumed on 31 May and again there was a heavy toll of life. The same correspondent reporter on that day:

'In the majority of cases the Japanese appear to have interpreted the term "military objective" as including all buildings housing departments of the civil administration, the private residences of officials wherever situated, and non-military factories and public works. If they were better shots, they might have cleaner hands; as it is, for every hit on something which could possibly be called a legitimate target at least 10 bombs have fallen far wide and accomplished nothing but butchery. There have, in addition, been many areas—about one-fifth of the total areas bombed—where there was no discoverable objective of any kind. This, and the fact that there has been a certain amount of obviously indiscriminate machine-gunning from a fair height, makes it seem that a certain percentage of the bombs dropped had no mission to fulfil save terrorism through slaughter. This analysis puts the most liberal interpretation possible upon the raiders' intentions. What the Japanese have done, as opposed to what they

1 *The Times*, 31 May, 1938.

[p. 131]

may have meant to do, can hardly be analysed dispassionately.' [1]

Protests Against the Raids

On 1 June the Chinese Ambassador in London delivered to Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary, a Note addressed to neutral Powers, appealing to them to 'take such urgent and effective measures as would restrain Japan from continuing the wholesale slaughter of innocent non-combatants, largely women and children.' The Note said: 'The present bombing of Canton has proved even more barbarous and disastrous than any of the previous visitations by Japanese aircraft.' Our Government did what was possible in the circumstances. 'Instructions have been sent to His Majesty's Ambassador at Tokyo,' said Mr. Chamberlain in the House of Commons on 3 June, 'to protest urgently against this indiscriminate bombing of civilian areas and thickly populated centres.' [2]

The Raids of June and July, 1938, on Canton

The protest had little effect. Canton was again raided heavily on 4 and 5 June. The Sun-Yat-sen University was damaged and many private houses and other buildings were wrecked. The hospitals were filled to overflowing. Worse still was to come on 6 June, when the city had its most destructive raid up to that time. The main street, Winghon Road, became a shambles. Next day, 7 June, there were three raids, and two more on 8 June. By the latter date it was estimated that one-third of all the houses in the city were empty and that half a million people had been evacuated. [3] After that there was a short respite but

1 *The Times*, 1 June, 1938.

2 Mr. Chamberlain stated in the same reply: 'The reports indicate that, whatever may have been the objects aimed at, most of the bombs fell on places which cannot be considered as of military importance.'

3 *The Times*, 9 June, 1938.

[p. 132]

the raiding was not over. During July there were repeated attacks.

An English lady who visited Canton in July, 1938, and witnessed three air raids in one day, thus described what she saw:

'We walked on to another bombed area, and then another. Here had been a school where seventy-five children had perished; here sixty people had been blown to pieces or buried beneath the fall of masonry; here ten houses had been demolished, there twenty. In the area a mile away from the station, which was completely deserted and nothing but a mass of rubble and stone, five hundred houses had been demolished. And so on from place to place. A map with red points marking where bombs had fallen showed hardly a single area, except the British concession, untouched. Occasionally one saw a poor family still living in a room with three, or even only two, walls left. One place was as safe as another.' [1]

(The same writer also describes pitiable scenes at Hankow and Hangyang; children searching for their mothers buried under fallen walls, horribly mutilated bodies, dead babies, mangled messes of human limbs and sand, screams of agony from the wounded, ruins everywhere. [2])

A Japanese official spokesman attempted to explain away the losses suffered by the inhabitants by attributing them to the Chinese anti-aircraft fire. A counterblast was issued by eight foreign doctors in Canton, who stated that only a very few casualties had been caused by shrapnel, and affirmed their belief that it was the settled intention of the Japanese to destroy Canton. [3]

1 Freda Uteley, *China at War*, 1939, p. 27.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 195.

3 *The Times*, 9 June, 1938.

[p. 133]

The Raids on Chungking

Chungking, the new capital of China, had its first raid on 15 January, 1939, when Japanese bombers attacked the Government offices, the arsenal and the wharves; and also dropped bombs in the poorest quarter of the city, near the East Gate. A good deal of damage was done, but it was insignificant in comparison with that inflicted by the raids of 3, 4 and 5 May, 1939. That of 4 May was the heaviest of all. The Japanese aircraft dropped two lines of bombs across the heart of the city, including the district in which the British, French and German Consulates were situated. Madame Chiang Kai-Shek was in Chungking, and she described in a letter of 19 May, published in *The Times* of 14 June, 1939, how the city suffered on that occasion. She wrote:

'The bombing was the worst exhibition of cold-blooded mass murder that the Japanese have so far been able to perpetrate. . . . The areas affected were raging infernos. I never saw anything like it. Most of the houses which climb the hillsides are made of timber, perched on long piles. They burned like tinder. The phosphorus kept the fires raging and a breeze extended them. Chungking is a city of houses packed tightly together on a long, high tongue of land, girt with cliffs. . . . Three-quarters of a square mile of houses were in flames. Wall after wall tumbled down. Tongues of fire on every side leaped and crackled and devoured furniture, woodwork, everything. . . . From where I stood I could see the whole west side of the city burning. The flames raged for hours. At dawn the sky was still angry with crimson light-crimson with fire and, indeed, with the blood of thousands of victims who perished. Fathers, mothers watched their children burn alive. . . . The cries and shrieks of the dying and the wounded resounded in the night, muffled only by the incessant roar of the ever-

[p. 134]

hungry fire. Hundreds tried to escape by climbing the old city wall but were caught by the pursuing flames, and, as if by magic, were shrivelled into cinders. . . . Everyone was helpless, even the fire-fighters. They used up all the water out of reservoirs and had to depend upon wells. A bomb broke a main, and the reservoirs could not be re-filled. . . . It was a terrible holocaust, and perhaps quite satisfactory to the Japanese, whose lust to kill is not yet satisfied.'

The Casualty Lists

In the raid of 5 May, the casualty list was still further increased. About a hundred women and children were trapped against the city wall and burned to death. Official figures estimated the casualties caused by the three days' raiding at more than fifteen hundred killed and a similar number wounded. General Chiang Kai-shek ordered the evacuation of all civilians, including foreigners, whose presence was not strictly required in Chungking. Many of the displaced people went to Chengtu, which had its own disastrous experience a month or so later, on 12 June. The losses there were severe, mainly because dug-outs could not be constructed as a result of the presence of surface-water within a few feet of the ground-level.

A rather higher estimate of the casualties than that quoted above was given by Mr. R. A. Butler, the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, in reply to a question in the House of Commons on 15 May, 1939. The raids of 3 and 4 May had caused the death of 1,600 non-combatants, he stated, and approximately the same number of wounded: 'It is feared, however,' he added, 'that the full casualty list will be found to be even higher when excavations are completed.' Mr. Butler also stated that His Majesty's Ambassador at Tokyo had made 'strong representations to the Japanese Government, urging that, from a humanitarian point of view, as well as in Japan's best interests, stringent

[p. 135]

instructions should be sent to restrict attacks to recognised military objectives. Sir Robert Craigie observed that in the case of the Chungking air raid, casualties appeared to have been suffered almost exclusively by the civilian element of the population.' Mr. Butler added that representations on very similar lines had been made to the Japanese by the Ambassadors of other countries.

The Raids of August, 1940

The representations had little effect. Chungking had another severe battering on 12 June; and still worse experiences on later occasions. It had to stand up to two heavy raids on 20 and 21 August, 1940. That of the 20 August was the most destructive attack since the terrible raid of 4 May, 1939. High explosive and incendiary bombs caused widespread damage; an area nearly a mile long and three blocks wide within the walled city was swept by fire; which a high wind helped to spread, and about 20,000 people were made homeless. In the crowded business centre of the city a further area covering half a square mile, was devastated on 21 August by conflagrations started by incendiary bombs. 'The fire was the largest and most destructive in the history of the raids on Chungking,' said the local correspondent of *The Times*. 'Many more tens of thousands have now been made homeless and hundreds of buildings have been destroyed, though the casualties are not numerous. Yesterday's fire had not been put out when today's attack set the adjoining part of the city alight.' [1]

The raids of August, 1940, Mr. O. M. Green has pointed out, could by no pretence be represented as having been directed against military objectives. They were aimed at the suburbs which spread along the level ground below the steep promontory which runs between the Yangtze and a tributary stream. 'These,' he says; 'con-

1 *The Times*, 22 August, 1940.

[p. 136]

tained nothing but business and residential houses, some hospitals, and the headquarters of foreign Embassies. All Government offices, as the Japanese knew very well, for everyone else did, were well underground in the rocky sides of the old town, which has also been honeycombed with refuges for the public. Yet it was against this purely non-official, non-military part of Chungking that they directed their bombs, reducing almost the whole quarter, including the American hospital, to ruins. Even after three years of war the Japanese had not realized that such barbarism has no effect but to lower them still further in the world's black books and to score up another mark against themselves in China's memory.' [1]

A Chinese Indictment

The story of Chungking's sufferings under the bludgeon-strokes of the Japanese air force was summarised in a Chinese official publication issued in 1943. Here is an extract:

'In this compact city [Chungking], the nerve centre of China, the Japanese have dumped thousands of tons of incendiary and high explosive bombs. Block after block of houses have been wiped out, not once, but twice or even three times in the past three years, but the indomitable spirit of the Chinese people, which the Japanese have been seeking vainly to destroy in their numerous merciless raids, remains constant.

'The first severe raid on Chungking took place on 3 and 4 May, 1939, when the Japanese air force transformed the mid-town section of the inner city of Chungking into a mad inferno of flames. Seven huge conflagrations were counted at night-fall, roaring through the heart of the city in a swath a mile and a half long and a half mile wide. By the time night fell the red glow of the flames illuminated

1 O. M. Green, *China's Struggle with the Dictators*, p. 179.

[p. 137]

the countryside for miles around. Yet more disastrous bombings battered the city on 19 and 20 August, 1940, when 250 Japanese planes showered missiles on the closely built-in quarters on two successive days. More than 30 fires broke out on the first day. The few blocks left intact were finished on the following day, when some 20 blazes raged simultaneously in the business section.

'On both occasions the fires burnt from afternoon to late night. Billowed by a brisk north-easterly wind, the rolling flames eventually merged into a huge mass puffing skyward to darken the eastern horizon. When night fell, the entire down-town area was engulfed in flames. The full moon rising over the Yangtze was blood-red in the fire-lit sky. The conflagrations razed four-fifths of Chungking's once busy down-town district. Streets, lanes and shops and civilian quarters were turned into heaps of charred ruins, and in between them stood a forest of gaunt walls bearing testimony to the wanton raids.' [1]

The Caves that Saved

There is not a shadow of doubt that the Japanese airmen set themselves deliberately to destroy Chungking, to blast and burn it to the ground, to wipe it out utterly. What saved its inhabitants from the full measure of death and mutilation which would otherwise have been their fate was the wonderful system of cave-shelters with which the city was fortunate enough to be provided. 'The answer to the intense and destructive bombings of the first days of May,' 1939—more than five thousand persons were killed in three days' raids and a huge section of the city was burned flat—was not panic, but the construction in record time of the safest dug-outs in the world,' says Mr. Herry-

1 *China After Five Years of War*. Prepared under the auspices of the Ministry of Information of the Republic of China. Preface by Dr. V. K. Wellington Koo. London, 1943, pp. 158-9.

[p. 138]

mon Maurer. It was the dug-outs which, he states, gave Chungking its amazing imperturbability. The Japanese aircraft would come over in formations of fifty machines and drop their bombs at a signal from the leader. Streets were demolished, houses hurled in the air, whole areas of the city were devastated, but still business went on. The inhabitants sought shelter in their wonderful caves while the fury lasted and then emerged to resume their interrupted activities. The casualties were practically confined to the soldiers, policemen and firemen whose duties necessitated their remaining on the surface. [1]

Japanese Raids in Burma

The raids in Chungking did not cease in August, 1940, but enough has been told above to illustrate Japan's conception of air warfare; and it is not necessary to add to what has been written the no less tragic story of many another Chinese town. Nor were the barbarities of the Japanese air force reserved for employment against China. Burma, too, had bitter experience of them. Reuter's correspondent at Maymyo reported on 22 April, 1942, that the Japanese had then bombed almost every major town in the country. Bombing, he stated, was deliberately aimed at civilians and seemed to be intended to spread panic and alarm. 'By this ruthless bombing of civilians throughout Burma the Japanese are laying up for themselves a terrible reckoning when the tide turns.' [2] A few days later the special correspondent of *The Times* at Mandalay reported: 'Today many of the cities, towns and villages of Burma are blasted by Japanese bombs. Misery and devastation have spread through lower and central Burma.' [3] It must in fairness be added that in Malaya the Japanese appear to have been more considerate. 'Broadly

1 Herrymon Maurer, *The End is Not Yet*, 1942, pp. 71-3.

2 *The Times*, 25 April, 1942.

3 *Ibid.*, 27 April, 1942.

[p. 139]

speaking,' says an eye-witness, 'the Japanese confined their bombing to legitimate military objectives, and the number of civilian casualties was comparatively small when one considers the constant aerial activity.' Airfields and docks were the chief targets. [1]

Retribution for Japan

The terrible record of the Japanese air force in China, briefly summarised above, must form part of the indictment which will eventually be framed when Japan's military power has been crushed. It establishes beyond all possibility of questioning the responsibility of Japan for inaugurating the practice of bombing cities indiscriminately and mercilessly. Her airmen set in China a precedent to which there is no parallel in anything that happened in 1914-18. The raids carried out in that war were petty affairs and the destruction which they caused was almost trivial in comparison with that which can be accomplished by modern heavy bomber formations. Nor were the attacks on Durango (31 March, 1937) and Guernica (26 April, 1937) [2] really comparable to the Japanese raids in China. They were disastrous, of course, for the unfortunate people who were their victims, but they were, after all, only attacks on villages. It was the scale of the bombing and the importance of the cities attacked which made the Japanese air offensive on China a landmark in the history of war.

Japan will have to pay the price for her misdeeds. Her own towns must be made to taste the bitter medicine which she forced the Chinese towns to swallow. The vast flotillas of the American and British air forces will have spoons sufficiently long to administer it. Japan will have

1 Ian Morrison, *Malayan Postscript*, 1942, p. 93.

2 See G. L. Steer, *The Tree of Gernika*, 1938, pp. 161-7 and 236-41 for these raids.

[p. 140]

to learn in fire and flame a lesson more sharp and salutary than that which Admiral De Kuyper's fleet taught her at Kagosima in 1863. But that will not be enough. Two other things will remain to be done. They are both things for which there is already a warrant signed and sealed. One is the complete disarming of her in the air, as well as on land and sea. That has been foreshadowed in the Atlantic Charter. The other is the bringing to justice of all the officers of the Japanese Government who had any part in the judicial murder of General Doolittle's airmen. That was foreshadowed in the American Government's note of April, 1943. If those who were responsible for the Tokyo outrage are not war criminals, deserving punishment, who are?

[p. 141]

CHAPTER VII

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

An Idea is Born

It is a maintainable proposition that it was Mrs. Carrie Nation who sowed the seed which flowered abundantly in the Anglo-American bombing offensive in the present war. She, good lady, had no notion of it, of course, and we certainly gave her never a thought when we sent our bombers over Germany, nor, when they followed, did the Americans. Still, in the latter's expressive phrase, she unquestionably started something. She had the right idea of how to get things done. She went and did them herself. She set out to stop the liquor traffic in Kansas, forty odd years ago. What did she do? She heaved bricks at it, literally. She climbed into her buggy, took with her a good supply of bricks (all carefully wrapped in newspapers), drove round all the saloons, and smashed their contents, glasses, bottles, mirrors, everything, to smithereens. She was very aggressive and totalitarian in her methods but she was soundly democratic at heart. She was thinking of the greatest good of the greater number all the time.

She really did a very remarkable thing, this lone, obstreperous female. The great god Bung laid her by the heels in the end, but for a time she made a huge success of her job. She practically put the saloon-keeping business of Kansas out of action, made it shut up shop, made it look ridiculous. And that, more or less, is what the great democracies' air power has done to the aggressors' brand of war. As she pelted the liquor industry with bricks, so their air power has pelted the war industry with bombs. The effect was to make each industry look silly. Certainly the fine old business of war-making can never be the same again.

[p. 142]

The Spoiling of War

Bombing is a serious affair, a grim affair, and yet because it has had the effect referred to above, it is not without a touch of comedy. In a broadcast of 6 February, 1934, Mr. Bernard Shaw startled and amused his hearers by referring to bombing aircraft as 'angels of peace'. The employment of them, he prophesied, would lead to the mutual surrender of the capitals of the belligerent Powers and a war would peter out in general ridicule. That has hardly happened as yet, though this war has seen capital and other cities scuttling to cover by declaring themselves 'open cities' in order to avoid an enemy's attack. But other cities have disdained such a way of escape. They have stood up to the enemy's onslaught and taken the worst which he could give. In another way, however, Mr. Shaw's forecast is in a fair way to become true. War seems to be likely to peter out in general derision simply because air power has discovered that the best way to deal with it is to heave bricks or spanners or bombs or what-not into its works. Now, war simply cannot go on once that sort of thing has been begun.

War was all right when it was waged well away from the war-maker's homeland. It was a fine adventure then, and often a profitable one. It is such no longer. It is a bad business, a losing game. It used to be a way by which the dispossessed could help themselves to the possessions of the more fortunate nations. Now, because the latter have greater resources at their call they must prevail in the end in a war of mass-produced armaments. The dispossessed remain the dispossessed when the final account is taken. There is no future, in fact, for aggressive war. Only if the possessing nations, the contented nations, are criminally careless, or so stupid as to let domestic party strife blind

[p. 143]

them to the needs of national defence, can the dice cease to be loaded against the dispossessed.

As the religious and dynastic wars passed away, so it seems that the wars waged for political or economic ends must pass. away also. They will do so because what the plain man in every country wants today is social security, and war means social *insecurity*. It has become a universal nuisance. It will not be tolerated by a Beveridged world.

Conceptions of Air Power

It is to Britain that the main credit is due for the bringing about of the change to which I refer. It has been the British way of using air power which has revolutionised war. In a book which I had not the advantage of reading until I had completed the first five chapters of my own, the anonymous, obviously well-informed author summarised in a most interesting passage the differences between the British, French and German conceptions of air power. 'While the British thought of the bomber as an offensive weapon, designed to attack the economic resources of the enemy deep within his country,' he says, 'and the Germans thought of the bomber as an offensive weapon designed to blast a path for an advancing army, the French wanted the bomber to serve as a defensive weapon, a support or adjunct to the fixed guns of the Maginot Line. . . . For Germany, the bomber was artillery for fast-moving troops; for France, the bomber was artillery for stationary troops dug fast into their fortress. . . . But Britain is a naval Power and an Empire; our bombers were therefore intended to work as a navy works, carrying power into remote parts of the world or, against a Continental nation, slowly draining the enemy's wealth from him.' [1]

For the final six words I would substitute 'destroying

1 *Bombers Battle*, by 'A Wing Commander', 1943, pp. 47-8.

[p. 144]

the enemy's capacity to make war'; but I agree wholeheartedly with the comparison of the British, German and French attitudes to the bombing arm. In Germany and France the air arm never cut adrift from the land arm; it was tethered to the army in these countries. In Britain it was free to roam. It made the fullest use of its freedom. Germany and France used the new weapon unimaginatively. We saw its possibilities. They were fast-bound and enslaved by the thongs and gyves of military tradition. We were not. We had the sea in our blood, and that was perhaps why we were able, somehow, to free ourselves from the inhibitions which handicapped them. Nearly a century and a half ago we beat Napoleon by using the sea against him. We beat Hitler by using the sea and the air against him. The combination was irresistible. Hitler never even began to understand the air. His Stukas and Junkers 52's, even his Junkers 88's and Dornier 217's, were the weapons of an *ersatz* air power. We had the true armoury.

The Germans and the Air

There would probably have been no strategic bombing in this war if it had been 'run' by the General Staffs. It was an innovation of the new-comers, the amateurs (from the professional soldiers' point of view), the air staffs—and above all of the most brilliant and efficient of them all, the air staff which Trenchard created and inspired. It was they who messed up what used to be a nice tidy affair. They spoiled war, the good old war. Nowhere was that feeling more prevalent than in Germany.

To that country, indeed, the new kind of war has always seemed to be not war at all but a perversion of it, an innovation devilishly conceived by people who do not understand what war is. In an article by the German official news agency published towards the end of June, 1943, one

[p. 145]

finds this statement: 'On the European air front the conflict has assumed forms which no longer have anything in common with war.' Here, said the diplomatic correspondent of *The Times*, who quoted the statement, the agency develops the theme which draws a distinction between 'war' and 'bombing'. 'Many newspapers; anxious to preserve the German military tradition, try to show that allied bombing is not the consequence of German aggression, but something unfair and even extraneous.' [1]

The Germans could not see, they could not be expected to see, being a nation of goose-stepping Blimps, that the bomber has really killed the old kind of war. It has applied a sort of chemotherapy to the malady of international conflicts of the type of which the war of 1914-18 was the most conspicuous example. What it has achieved might be compared without an undue straining of analogy to what the sulphonamides have accomplished in the realm of bacterial infection. They, too, are a modern discovery, a later discovery, indeed, than human flight. They have routed some diseases already. They have done so simply by interfering with the processes by which infectious germs obtain and extend their hold upon the human organism. So, too, the bomber interferes with the processes by which war is able to invade the international organism and the interruption of which makes the waging of it impossible. It, too, may rout the acute political fever which is called war.

The Revolution

We have been living through a revolution, and we have been too close to it to see it. The segregated battlefield is no more. It has gone the way of the jousting enclosures, of Camelot and Carcassonne. Armies used to fix the venue. Air flotillas do it now. They carry their battlefields with

1 *The Times*, 28 June, 1943.

[p. 146]

them. Where should they go but to the nerve-centre, the heart of mechanised war? We find it hard to realise that this amazing change has come to pass. We refuse resolutely to realise it. We talk in terms of an era that is going. We talk of the Kilkenny-cattery of the mutual bombing of cities, of the stupidity and waste of it all. Think for a moment; is it so stupid and so wasteful after all? Is it not rather the only logical kind of war? What has really happened is that air power has killed absenteeism in war. That is a staggering fact for those of us who used to be the absentees. We are all in the thick of the trouble now.

Naturally, to those who have not grown accustomed to being no longer absentees it is nothing but an intrusion, a trespass, a violation, an outrage, when war thus invades their hearths and homes. It is more than that—it is an abomination, a needless cruelty, a grim and mocking travesty of war, when bombs come crashing down on their houses, when people are killed in their sleep, when death and ruin overwhelm their world. This, they cry, is not war—it is murder. But it *is* war—the new kind of war. It is wrong, horrible, unendurable, but it was inevitable. It was inevitable that the air offensive against an enemy's sources of armed strength should come and with it the incidental killing of non-combatants. It was hardly less inevitable that an enemy to whom such an offensive was anathema should reply by indiscriminate attack on his opponent's towns. It is an evil thing that has grown out of another evil thing. The initial evil was the intermingling of two incompatibles. The intrusion began when the ways of war were superimposed upon the ways of peace. The bomber crews only followed where the armament producers had led the way.

Calamities unspeakable have befallen the cities and towns because ambitious and unscrupulous men rediscovered the old moss-trooper's rule in an age of mecha-

[p. 147]

nised warfare and saw that only in the centres of population could they find the labour-force needed to produce the massive armaments essential if their ends were to be accomplished. They were evil men and crafty men: evil, because they must have known that what they were doing would bring the horrors of war upon those cities and towns; crafty, because they were planning already to capitalise the sufferings of the citizens and townsfolk in pseudo-humanitarian appeals against perfectly lawful operations of war. It was certain, once the air had been mastered, that the blow would fall where it has fallen. Everyone knew it, everyone who was not blind. To suppose that the 'sweet security of streets' could survive in any town in which lethal instruments are made or stored or conveyed was and is to nurse an illusion. And that baseless illusion, that wholly unwarranted illusion is a presupposition of the German propagandist case against our attacks on the Ruhr. Are we really expected to take it seriously?

War Against Hinterlands

It was perfectly well known in Germany before this war that the risk to towns and to civilian populations existed. A German diplomat wrote in 1938:

'There can be no doubt whatever about the fact that aerial warfare makes the whole of a country into a theatre of war and that the complete immunity hitherto enjoyed by the civil population in the hinterland is a thing of the past.' [1]

There was no suggestion here, it will be observed, that the extension of war to the hinterland was unlawful. It was treated, in fact, as a natural development of an existing tendency. It was fairly certain that any town in which armaments were manufactured would be attacked. The

1 R. von Kühlmann, *Heritage of Yesterday*, 1938, p. 55.

[p. 148]

attack might and probably would result in the killing and wounding of persons whom the attackers would gladly have spared. It was not and is not on that account an unlawful operation. To dispute that conclusion is to apply to air warfare a standard of belligerent conduct which, as numerous bombardments prove, has never been applied to warfare by land or sea. Goering, at least, knew that innocent lives must be lost in such circumstances. He joked about it with Sir Nevile Henderson in August, 1939. The latter had suggested that a German bomb intended for a military objective in Britain might kill him and was at once assured that Goering 'would certainly send a special aeroplane to drop a wreath at my funeral.' [1]

The killing or maiming of non-combatants in such circumstances is a lamentable incident of war. So is the destruction caused in the purely terroristic raids—including 'Baedeker' raids—to which the enemy may resort in retaliation. The loss of precious lives in such raids is to be regarded, as is the loss of the no less precious lives of our airmen over Germany, as the human price that has to be paid for the winning of a military advantage of the first order. The advantage is the weakening of the enemy's war potential and the ultimate saving of thousands of lives in our own and our Allies' forces.

The War of Areas

The truth is that we cannot free ourselves of the habit of thinking in terms of the war of entrenched lines, of fixed fronts; and that kind of war, though not entirely superseded, is no longer the sole kind of war that has to be envisaged. There is the war of areas, too. The new-comer's existence was recognised already before the present conflict began, but there was a tendency to represent it as a war directed solely against an enemy population's morale.

1 Sir Nevile Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, 1940, p. 88.

[p. 149]

Brigadier-General P. R. C. Groves, for instance, writing nearly ten years ago, seems to have shared this tendency, though otherwise he appraised correctly the changed situation brought about by the use of the air arm in war. 'In Europe,' he wrote, 'warfare hitherto primarily an affair of fronts will be henceforth primarily an affair of areas. . . . In this "War of Areas" the aim of each belligerent will be to bring such pressure to bear upon the enemy people as to force them to oblige their government to sue for peace. The method of applying this pressure will be by aerial bombardment of national nerve-centres, chief among which are the great cities.' [1]

The moral or psychological effect is, however, only a by-product of an attack whose purpose is definitely strategical, that is, the crippling of the enemy's war machinery. It is because the new mode of warfare is directed against the sources of the enemy's armed strength that it is ethically justified and, provided that it is directed in overwhelming force, ultimately deadly in its effect.

Norway and the Ruhr

Such an attack, massive, sustained, compelling, is-now being made by the British and American Air Forces upon all the accessible centres of production in Germany. To Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force it has fallen to be the pathfinder in this great adventure of war. It led the way and blazed the trail. The road which it opened is a busy road now. Along it we are advancing irresistibly to the goal of victory. To ask us to believe that the whole majestic process would never have been set in train if a few German bombs had not been dropped in the Orkneys or on a Kentish wood is to make an undue demand upon our credulity. To hesitate to subscribe to such a belief is not to admit for one moment that we were the first to

1 P. R. C. Groves, *Behind the Smoke Screen*, 1934, p. 32.

[p. 150]

bomb towns in this war. Even if Warsaw is left out of account on the ground—*vide* German propaganda—that the city was invested and had refused to surrender, it is still undeniable that the Germans bombed undefended towns in Norway before we ever dropped a bomb in Germany.

'Kristiansund, an open and absolutely defenceless town where there have never been any military establishments whatever, was bombed for three days; only one house remained. . . . 15,000 inhabitants were left without shelter. In the same way Molde was bombed, and Reknes, the great sanatorium for tuberculosis, was bombed and set on fire.' [1] 'Where Elverum had been but a few hours before, only the church and the Red Cross hospital were left standing. . . . Hardly a house but had been razed to within four feet of the ground.' [2]

That the Germans, having so set the pace in Norway, should protest in the name of humanity when we, having caught them up, stiffened the going for them in the Ruhr, is an indication of the amazing obtuseness of the Teutonic mentality. Have they then forgotten what happened in April, 1940? Those raids in Norway could not be explained away as reprisals. And why, given those raids, was it such a shock to the righteous Germans when we bombed the Ruhr? Why was it a 'Churchill crime'? Why should Essen or Duisburg or Dortmund be inviolate when Elverum and Kristiansund and Reknes were not? It is cheap and easy to ask rhetorical questions in a book published here about the enemy's apparently inconsequent process of thought, but this really is a puzzle.

1 Carl J. Hambro, *I Saw it Happen in Norway*, 1940, p. 96. Halvden Koht, *Norway Neutral and Invaded*, 1941, p. 111, says that not a single house was left in Kristiansund.

2 Mrs. Florence Harriman, *Mission to the North*, 1941, pp. 190-1.

[p. 151]

Mystery and Propaganda

The mystery cannot be disposed of by saying airily that it is an instance of the biter being bit, the tables being turned, the schoolboy bully whining when the methods which he had employed against the small boy are used more violently by a bigger boy still against himself. The problem goes deeper than that. Nor can it all be explained away as mere propaganda. There is, of course, a great deal of propaganda, and very unscrupulous propaganda, in the German presentation-of the case. That was never more apparent than in the oration which Dr. Goebbels delivered at Wuppertal on 18 June, 1943. He accused the Anglo-American plutocracies of the murder of the women, old men and children who fell victims to 'the Wuppertal terror raid', and denounced 'the cold, calculating cynicism of the enemy'. They had adopted methods of war opposed to humanity, he stated, methods which involved the destruction of innumerable schools, hospitals, churches and cultural objects, the object being 'to clean up the German civilian population' and 'to break their morale'. Hitler, he asserted (quite untruthfully), 'had left nothing undone to avoid the war and when it was imposed on us, to give it at least a humane turn.' Goebbels ended: 'One day the hour will come when we shall break terror by counter-terror. The enemy is piling one violent deed on another, opening a bloody account which must be settled eventually. I know that the German people await it with burning impatience.'

It would be unwise to dismiss this tirade as nothing but froth and fury: We should take seriously both the threat of retaliation with which it ends and the implication of the earlier denunciation of the Anglo-American plutocracies. We have heard a similar threat many times before, of course. We have no right to assume that an attempt will

[p. 152]

never be made to execute it. We should be prepared for a very violent *riposte* to our devastating attacks on the Reich. There is no reason to suppose that it will be more effective than the attack which we withstood in 1940-41.

What I am here concerned to establish, however, is the fact that Goebbels' lament at Wuppertal and the similar utterances so frequently heard on the German radio and in the German Press are indicative of a rude awakening in Germany to the tremendous possibilities of the strategic air offensive. Those possibilities had been discounted and belittled before 1943. A very different note is to be heard in Germany today. It is a note of lamentation, and lamentation, above all, for a grievous mistake made and a wonderful opportunity missed. Germany misconceived the whole meaning of air power. She regarded it as a secondary instrument of aggression. In truth, it was a primary instrument for the repression of aggression. The shock of that discovery has knocked the propaganda machine of the Reich off its balance.

The Rehabilitation of the Bomber

The bomber has rehabilitated itself. It was to have been the destroyer of civilisation. Actually, it has been the saver of civilisation. But for it we in Britain would hardly have survived in this war, and most certainly our and America's task in defeating Germany and Japan would have been immensely more difficult. Bombing has served us well. To say that is not to make a fetish of it. Bombing is a horrible thing, at best. The bomb is much more the *diabolus* than the *deus ex machinâ*. It is a murderous weapon. Its only merit is that it can murder war. The bomber is the only weapon that can do that efficiently. Massed artillery could do it but only in great and bloody battles—which are the war we want to prevent. War cannot live with the bomber. It can smother and stifle war at source.

[p. 153]

What an extraordinary turn there has been of the wheel of destiny! A much-debated question of the years 1933-39 was whether it was or was not our reservation about 'police bombing' which blocked the abolition of the bomber at Geneva in 1932-33. 'This entirely insignificant little reservation,' was Mr. Eden's description of it in the House of Commons on 11 July, 1935. 'It never had the smallest international significance,' he said. 'The only significance it has ever had has been for the purpose of party politics at home.' It certainly had its run for the latter purpose. Witness the following passage from the debates in Parliament on 18 February, 1937: Mr. A. V. Alexander: 'But for the folly of representatives of the party opposite at the Disarmament Conference, we could have abolished the use of the bombing plane.'

Hon. Members: 'No.'

Mr. Churchill: 'There is not a word of truth in that statement.'

Perhaps—I do not know—Mr. Churchill would now be prepared to go further and even to assert that to have given up the bomber then would have been as unfortunate a move for us as was the giving up the Irish ports five or six years later. Perhaps our action in 1932-33 will be defended on bolder lines in future and be modelled on the famous Ciceronian argument in the *Pro Milone*. That argument has been summarised thus: 'Milo hath not slain Clodius. Had he slain Clodius, he had done well.' So the champions of Mr. Eden and Lord Londonderry may say in future: 'They did not kill the proposal to abolish bombing. If they had done so, they would have done something of inestimable value to our national interests and the cause of civilisation.' Such a line of defence would not be a departure from the truth.

[p. 154]

A Senile Retrospect

What of the future? First let me dip for a moment into the past.

A small boy in his home in the heart of Co. Clare is listening to a distant rumble.

'Is that thunder?' he asks his father. He is afraid of thunder—lightning is all right.

'No, gunfire,' his father answers.

'Is it the enemy, father?' (Actually, there was no enemy just then).

'No, our own guns at Tarbert—they're practising.'

The forts on the Shannon, thirty miles away to the south-west, are having one of their periodical shoots.

* * * * *

An old man in his home in the Surrey hills, is listening to a distant rumble.

'Is that thunder?' he asks his wife, whose hearing is better than his. He is not so much afraid of thunder, now—it is better than—well, other things.

'No, gunfire,' she answers.

'Practising?'

'No, I think it's the barrage opening away there to the east. There seems to be a raid on.'

Then our own sirens sound in confirmation of her words. There are E. A. over the Greater London area.

* * * * *

Myself when young; myself when old: at both ends of my life I have had the sounds of guns in my ears. Will the small boys who now hear the anti-aircraft barrage be listening fifty years hence to the sounds of war again? I doubt it—if one condition is fulfilled. If it is fulfilled, I do not see why there should ever be another war like this one again.

The condition is that we and the United States—

[p. 155]

Russia, too, by all means, if she is willing—should decide that there shall *not* be another war and do the one thing needful to save that decision from being a futility: We must not make the disastrous mistake which we made after the last great war. 'In the interval between the two great wars the United States sought to promote peace by denouncing war, even by "outlawing" it, and by disarming itself, Great Britain and France. . . . The disarmament movement was, as the event has shown, tragically successful in disarming the nations that believed in disarmament. The net effect was to dissolve the alliance among the victors of the first World War, and to reduce them to almost disastrous impotence on the eve of the second World War.' [1]

The Banning of War

'There shall be no more war.' The victors in the present war can send that command crashing round the globe, if they so decide. Will they have the will to do so? Will they rise to the height of the great occasion? It will be one of the grand climacterics of history. Not another shot need be fired again in a major war, if two or three States decide that it shall not be fired. It is for them to choose. They need not keep in being, to enforce that decision, the huge establishments of all arms which they will have created by the time the war ends: the most stupendous array of armed might the world has ever seen. But to suppose that no armaments need be retained once the present aggressors have been disarmed would be again to gamble with fate.

The problem of the prevention of war seems at last to be soluble, and at the heart of the solution, in all probability, there will be found the bomber aircraft. The stone which the builders of peace at Geneva wished to reject

1 Walter Lippmann, *U.S. Foreign Policy*, New York, 1943, pp. 54-5.

[p. 156]

may be the corner-stone of the new structure of world-peace. No such proved instrument was ready to the hands of the Statesmen who attempted to organise world-peace in 1919. The bomber had not justified itself then. It will have done so abundantly by the end of 1944. Even now, in 1943, we do not know its full possibilities. The world will have been given convincing proof of its almost limitless capacity as a war-breaker before this war ends. It is the ideal weapon for smothering aggression.

How, precisely, the system for safeguarding peace should be organised is a question which it would be unwise to try to answer dogmatically at present. The mistake made in 1919 was that the framers of the new international order were in too great a hurry. They would have been wiser if they had avoided trying to make too complete and tidy a job of their work at the first attempt. They were determined to leave no loose ends hanging about. Now, loose ends can be extraordinarily useful things at times.

The future is broad and long. Let us leave something for those who come after us to do. Our task should be to bridge the gap between the old international order and the new by ensuring that the grand alliance which saved freedom in this war is maintained until its place can be taken by some permanent organisation for the preservation of peace. On that alliance there can be built in time and by degrees the foundations of a new international society. It may be years before the structure can be completed. That need not matter. To attempt to erect it in haste might be to build it of materials which the passing years will show to have been unsound. Passions must have cooled and there must have been leisure to reflect upon the lessons of these last few hectic years before we are ready to approach our great task with the requisite balance and understanding.

[p. 157]

INDEX

Alexander, Rt. Hon. A. V.,
153
Amery, Rt. Hon. L. S., 64
Appelius, M., 103
44,
Armament workers not non-
combatants, 112-3
Arnold, Gen. H. H., 126
22
Attlee, Rt. Hon. C., 11, 26,
47, 48

Balfour, Rt. Hon. H. H., 68,
111, 122

Bell, E. P., 39
Bilainkin, G., 16
Birkenhead, Lord, 117
Blockade, loss of life due to,
119-20
Blockzijl, Max, 108
Bluntschli, J. G., 109
Bombs, two and four ton,

"Bombing Restriction Com-
mittee", 111
Bonfils-Fauchille, MM., 109
Boraston, J. H., 14
Brown, Rt. Hon. E., 93
Butler, Rt. Hon. R. A., 134

Canton, bombing of, 129-32
Casualties in the old and new
kinds of war, 10-4, 57
Chamberlain, Rt. Hon. N.,
116, 131
Charlton, L. E. O., 54
Chiang Kai-shek, Madame,
133

Chungking, bombing of, 133-
8
Churchill, Rt. Hon. W. S.,
10-11, 14, 22, 28, 37,

45, 66, 67, 95, 102, 103,
126, 127, 153
Civilians, bombing of, 106-

Collins, Gen. R. J., 29
Craigie, Sir R., 135
Croft, Lord, 58
Crutwell, C. R. A. F., 13

D'Albiae, Air Vice-Marshal
J. H., 28
Davies, R., 47
Davis, Elmer, 79
Daylight and night bomb-
ing 99-101

Dewar, G. A. B., 14
Doolittle, Gen. J., 99, 123,
140
Duff Cooper, Rt. Hon. A.,
64
Dumas, S., 13, 119
Dwellings, wrecking of, 93-
4, 96

Eden, Rt. Hon. A., 104, 153
Eisenhower, Gen., 25
Ellington, Sir E. L., 29
Esmer, M. Shukri, 104
Essen, battle of, 83-6

Fortress area, the Ruhr as,
79-80
French doctrine of air power,
70-1, 143

[p. 158]

Gamelin, Gen., 70-1
Garbett, Dr., Archbishop of
York, 118
Garner, J. W., 119
Gas, use of, 58-9
German doctrine of air
power, 30-3, 34, 143-4
Goebbels, Dr., 55, 113, 143,
151, 152
Goering, Field-Marshal, 55,
79, 148
Gouge, A., 38
Green, O. M., 135
Groves, P. R. C., 149

Haldane, J. B. S., 57
Halifax, Lord, 69, 131
Hambloch, E., 31
Hambro, C. J., 150
Harriman, Mrs. F., 150
Harris, Sir A. T., 69
Heilbron, Dr., 108
Henderson, Sir N., 148
Historic buildings wrecked,
89-92
Hitler, A., 32, 39, 40, 41, 42,
43, 44, 45, 46, 60, 102, 105,
106-7, 109, 144, 151
Hopkinson, A., 8
Holzhammer, K., 87

Ingersoll, R., 42

Japan, judicial murder of
American airmen, 21, 123-
9; bombing of Canton,
129-32; of Chungking,
133-8; of Burmese towns,
138
Joad, C. E. M., 49

Kennedy, Hon. Joseph, 16,
17
Koht, H., 150

Lauterpacht, H., 117
Lavitrano, Cardinal, 100
Leaflets, dropping of, 55, 61
Lindemann, F. A., 9
Lippman, W., 155
Lloyd George, Rt. Hon. D.,
12-3, 14
Londonderry, Lord, 153
Loss of life due to blockade,
119-20
Luftflotten, 30

Malaya, Japanese bombing
in, 138
Matsuo, K., 127
Maurer, H., 137-8
Morrison, T., 97
Morrison, I., 139
Morrow Committee's re-
port, 34
Müller-Meiningen, Prof.,
119

Non-combatants and bomb
ing, 78, 110-7, 148, 151
Norway, German bombing
in, 150

Oppenheim, L., 117

Passchendaele; losses at, 12-
3
"Police bombing", 153
Pre-fabricated battle, 78, 112
Psychological bombardment,
109

Quade, Gen., 79

Railway targets, 113-4
Rauschning, H., 107
Richmond, Admiral Sir H.,
20
Rolland, L., 113
Roosevelt, President F. D.,
45, 46, 128
Rotterdam, bombing of, 41,
42, 102, 104, 105-6
Ruhr as a fortress area, 79-
80, 83-7

Sava, G., 59
"Scrutator" in *Sunday Times*,
63
Shaw, G. B., 56, 142
Shepherd, E. Colston, 62
Shirer, W. L., 72
Sinclair, Rt. Hon. Sir A.,
47, 65, 83
Smuts, Gen. J., 35
Somme, losses in battle of,
10-2
Steer, G. L., 139
Stokes, R. R., 47, 48
Strabolgi, Lord, 69
Strategical air power, 24, 26,
29, 30, 144
Submarines, German use of,
117

Suendermann, H., 109
Summerall, Gen. C. P., 34
Swinton, Lord, 58-9

Tactical air power, 24-8, 143
Taylor, E., 56
Tedder, Sir A., 33
Thomson, Lord, 19
Transport workers and air
attack, 113-4
Trenchard, Lord, 30, 50, 51,
58, 59, 65, 106, 144

Utley, Freda, 132

Vedel-Petersen, K. O., 13,
119
Von Hoepfner, Gen., 39
Von Kuhlmann, R., 147
Von Seeckt, Gen., 30-1

"Warriors", civilians as,
112
Warsaw, bombardment of,
41, 42, 46, 79, 102, 105-6,
150
Wedgwood, Lord, 65
Werth, A., 46
Wheeler-Nicholson, M., 16,
17