



THE BLITZ

What was the Blitz and why did it happen?

Source 1

S E C R E T

From: Headquarters, No. 11 Group.
To: Headquarters, Fighter Command.
Ref: 11G/S.493.
Date: 12th September, 1940.

GERMAN AIR ATTACKS ON ENGLAND - 8TH AUG. - 10TH SEPT.

FIRST PHASE - 8th August to 18th August, 1940:

Enemy Strategy:

3. Bombing attacks were directed against the following objectives:-

- (a) Shipping and ports on the South-East and South coast, between North Foreland and Portland.
- (b) Massed attacks against Portland and Portsmouth.
- (c) Attacks on fighter aerodromes on the coast, followed by Bomber Command and Coastal Command aerodromes on the coast.
- (d) Towards the end of this period, comparatively light attacks were pressed inland by day to various objectives.

German Air Attacks on England 8 August 1940 - 10 September 1940



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Source 1 (pg2)

THIRD PHASE - 6th September, onwards:

Enemy Strategy:

25. On Saturday, September 7th, the enemy first turned to the heavy attack of London by day - perhaps because his timetable called for it, or because his Intelligence staff was persuaded (on the example of Poland) that our fighter defence was sufficiently weakened by the previous month's attacks. This change of bombing plan saved 11 Group Sector Stations from becoming inoperative and enabled them to carry on operations, though at a much lower standard of efficiency.

Enemy Tactics:

26. Dive bombers reappeared in attacks on coastal objectives and shipping off Essex and Kent. These attacks were made under cover of massed attacks by long range bombers against inland objectives. Enemy attacks on inland objectives were made in two or three distinct waves, following one another at about twenty minute intervals, the whole attack lasting up to one hour. Each wave has consisted of a number of raids of from twenty to forty bombers having an equal number of fighters in close escort, and covered at a much higher altitude by

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Method of Attack:

27. The attack of September 7th was pressed home by the weight and numbers of successive waves of bombers at short intervals, mainly with fighter escort, all directed at the London area, and in particular at the Docks.

28. Heavy concentrations of attacks by large numbers of single aircraft, followed the day attacks. These methods of attack have been followed on September 9th and 11th, when the sky was sufficiently clear of clouds. Up to the present, the subsequent attacks have not penetrated so well or done so much damage as on September 7th, and enemy losses have been consistently heavy. On 11th September, the enemy carried out a simultaneous attack on Southampton with fifty or sixty aircraft. The greater damage has probably been done by night raids, in which all pretence of attacking military objectives has been abandoned and consists mainly in "browning" the huge London target.

German Air Attacks on England 8 August 1940 - 10 September 1940



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Source 2

MOST SECRET

Note on German Operation "MOONLIGHT SONATA", and Counter-plan "COLD WATER".

Intelligence.

On the 11th November it was reported that a Prisoner of War, in conversation with a room mate, said that a colossal raid had been planned to take place between the 15th to 20th November, at the full moon, and that Coventry and Birmingham would be the towns attacked. Every bomber in the Luftwaffe would take part, and workmen's dwellings would be methodically attacked in order to undermine the working classes, who were believed to be near revolt. The prisoner thought that every Knicebein route would be used.

2. On the same day information was received from another source that the Germans were planning a gigantic raid under the code name "Moonlight Sonata".

3. On the 12th November Air Intelligence was able to amplify this information sufficiently to confirm that a heavy scale attack was probable at the full moon; that the Knicebein ^{and} V.H.F. beams (River Group) would be employed; that Air Fleets 2 and 3, together with KG-100 (amounting to some 1,800 first line aircraft) would be participating; and that the operation would be undertaken in 3 phases; and that there were 3 target areas which were alternatives. Finally, the Commander-in-Chief of the G.A.F. would be controlling the operation in person.

Air Staff Counter-Plan.

4. On receiving the above information the Air Staff issued a counter-plan (code name "Cold Water"), the principal features of which were:-

- (a) Continuous watch on German radio activity, and maximum radio interference with enemy navigational beams and beacons;
- (b) Security patrols by Bomber aircraft over the German aerodromes occupied by Air Fleets 2 and 3;
- (c) A heavy scale of attack on the aerodromes at Vannes and St. Leger used by the specialist beam flyers of KG-100.
- (d) A special bombing attack on the Knicebein and V.H.F. beam transmitters near Cherbourg by aircraft flying up the beams and dropping sticks of bombs in the silent zone, which has been discovered immediately above the transmitters;
- (e) A heavy bombing attack on a selected city in Germany;
- (f) The maximum scale of night fighter and anti-aircraft artillery to be concentrated against the enemy raiders.

5. The operation orders to implement this plan were issued at 0300 hrs. on the 14th November.

"Moonlight Sonata" and Operation "Cold Water" October-November 1940



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Source 3

RAID ON COVENTRY, 14/15th NOVEMBER, 1940.

Fires:

The fire situation was extremely serious owing to damage to water mains, and to the number of hydrants and other essential equipment which were buried under debris. 85 pumps were sent into Coventry on this night from other West Midland areas, and from the Manchester Region. Water shortage was still making fire-fighting difficult next day, and debris blazed up from time to time during the afternoon. Water was relayed from the River Sherborne, and barges with trailer-pumps were in action on the canal. Altogether 180 pumps were sent into Coventry during and after the raid, from other parts of the Region and from four other Regions. Over the week-end (the raid was on a Thursday night), all outside firemen - 50 from Leeds, 48 from London, 52 from Bristol and others from within the Region - were returned to their bases and replaced by 100 men from Manchester and 50 from Leeds. On the night of Monday 18th November firemen were called to seven outbreaks of fire at old incidents, but they were not serious and were soon checked.

Casualties, Homeless, and effect on morale:

506 people were killed and 432 seriously injured in this raid, in which about 3000 homeless were dealt with by the authorities. The attack was inevitably a serious shock to the people, who were seen to be very dejected next day. That afternoon, however, the Home Secretary and Ministry of Aircraft Production paid the town an invigorating visit, and put much new life into those responsible for restoring the town. On the Saturday the King arrived, and his tour had a remarkable effect on the spirit of the people.

Nightly evacuation:

It was to be expected that many people would leave the town after the raid (shaky morale in Coventry had been alleged, and had caused some official concern, after earlier attacks), but it is some indication of the recovery they made on this occasion that when arrangements were made to transport 10,000 people out of the centre of the City on Saturday night, 36 hours after the end of the raid, only 300 people went.

Raid on Coventry 14/15 November 1940



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Source 3 (pg2)

RAID ON COVENTRY, 14/15th NOVEMBER, 1940.

Coventry was first attacked on 26/27th August, 1940. In October there were seven appreciable raids, in which from 12 to 70 people were killed on each occasion. There had been two minor attacks in November before the historic bombardment now to be considered.

Scale and distribution of enemy effort.

It is estimated that 430 enemy long-range bombers were over the country on the night of 14/15th November. In addition to the Coventry raid there was a light scale secondary attack on London, and bombs were also dropped at a number of points in the Midlands and in Kent. All told, there were some 130-140 minor incidents on this night, most of them south of the line Humber-Severn, a few in Yorkshire.

140
185
225
105
430

Coventry. Duration and incidence of raid:

The Coventry attack began at 1920 with the dropping of many incendiary bombs and the raid was not over until 0615 next morning, nearly 11 hours later. Though bombs fell all over Coventry on this night, the main concentration was in an area only about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile by $\frac{1}{2}$ mile in the centre of the City, about a third which was completely devastated, another third requiring subsequent demolition.

Weight of attack:

Altogether 525 incidents were reported, and by 0330 200 fires had been started, many of which were not under control until the following evening. By midday on 16th November only five fires were still burning, and on 17th four were smouldering without glare. Of the many H.E. bombs dropped, a large number failed to explode; of these about 200 still awaited disposal on 16th November. Some 30 parachute mines, together with sixteen more which were unexploded also fell on this night. All mines had been rendered safe by Monday 18th November.

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Source 4

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~~SECRET~~

Summary

The following conclusions are drawn from the evidence :-

- (a) Only 20 - 30% of the aircraft operating usually succeed in bombing the target town. The proportion has once or twice been as high as 40% and as low as 10%.
- (b) The only really effective blitz on this country was on Coventry 14/15 November, 1940, when the activity index of the town fell to 37% of the pre-blitz level, and the police and rescue party organisation had to be reinforced sixfold by outside help, including the military.
- (c) The immediate industrial effect of a blitz is proportional to the weight of H.E. attack per square mile of town area regardless of the size of town. To equal the Coventry blitz requires an attack of 6.0 - 7.0 tons of H.E. per square mile.
- (d) All towns recover from the industrial effect of a blitz at about the same rate of 2 - 3% increase of activity index, per day; Coventry took about 5 - 6 weeks.

10. In general it seems that the blitzes on this country have been very inefficient in reducing industrial activity. Roughly speaking, the Ministry of Supply's War Material Production Index seems to have been affected in April as much by the Easter Holidays as by air raids.

The Blitz - a summary 1941



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Source 4 (pg2)

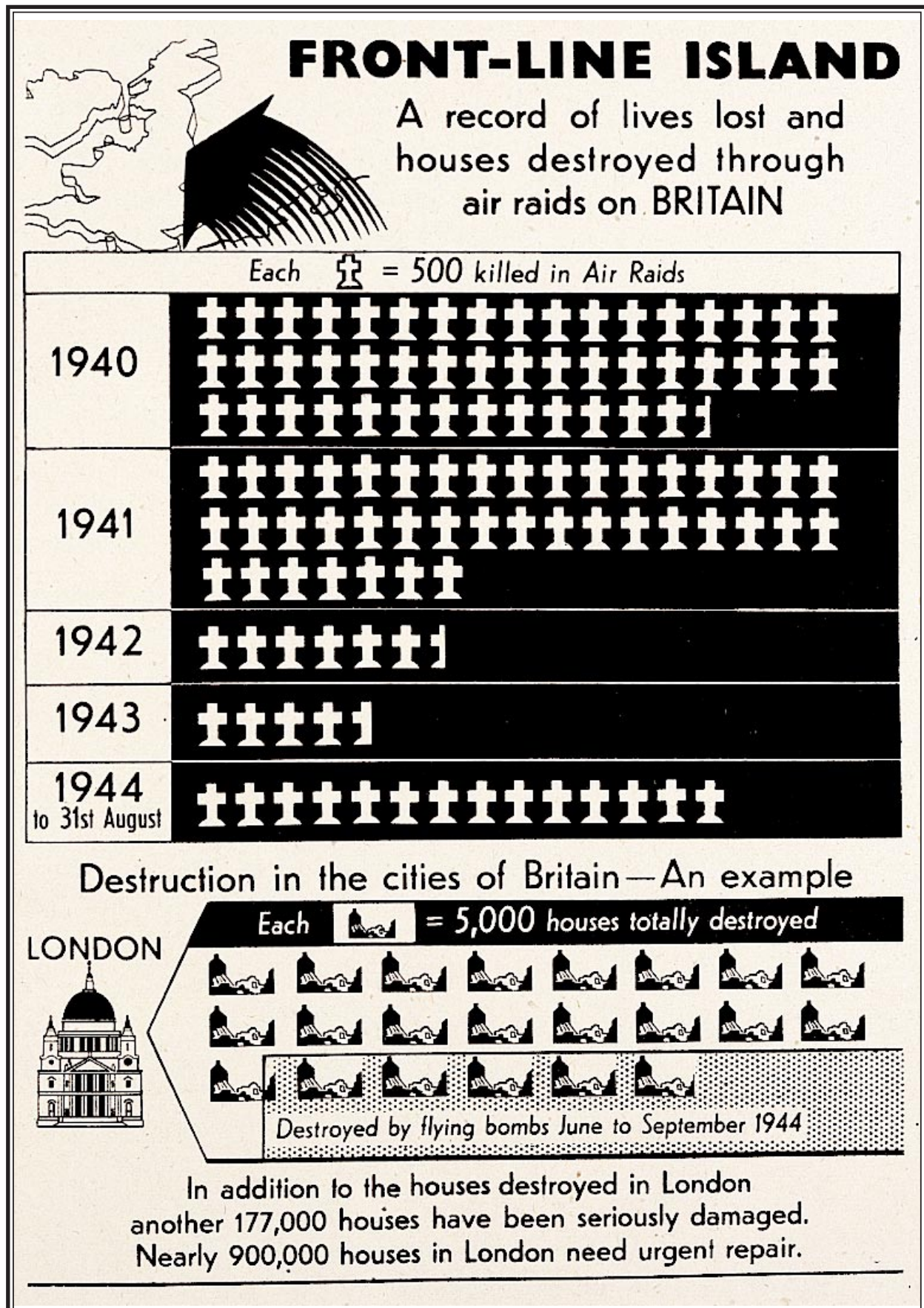


Illustration showing lives lost and houses destroyed



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Source 5



Photograph showing Bomb damage



THE BLITZ

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Source 5a



Photographs showing Bomb damage