

# Collier's

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## THE DESTRUCTION OF GERMANY

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BY RADIO FROM LONDON



The Reich is being methodically pulverized. The Eighth U. S. Air Force by day and the R.A.F. by night have only begun their deadly round-the-clock team job. The coming months will see them unleash a fury that surpasses all the world's earthquakes

**Y**OU will shudder many times in the days just ahead, though you may be safe at home thousands of miles away. The inability of your eyes to see or your ears to hear across the Atlantic will not exempt your sensibilities from sickening thunders and visions.

You will behold the sad and horrifying but wholly justifiable and inescapable tragedy of a great, modern nation being literally crumbled upon the face of the planet, and the sins of vicious men being scoured from their land by its rubble. Rome will be repeated a hundredfold and London a thousandfold in the cities of the Reich.

Air bombardment will so pulverize Germany in the next six months that a generation of diligent rebuilding will scarcely restore her. The sum total of all the world's earthquakes of recorded times concentrated upon the Fatherland couldn't raze and burn and convulse it more thoroughly.

This is the definite, measurable, terrible promise now given by Allied airpower as it grows swiftly toward full strength. Merely routine work remains to be done in co-operating the bombers of the R.A.F. and the Eighth United States Air Force, aided by their fighter and tactical commands, backed by the workers and the resources of our aviation industry.

Such a triumph has been quickened by a victory within victories—the vindication of daylight precision bombing which is America's greatest single contribution to the application of air force upon our enemies. This victory has been won by the Eighth United States Air Force, not over Germans, Japs or Italians, but against the home-front critics of our equipment, leadership and methods.



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### A Home-Front Victory

Fighting airmen here believe that when the postwar summing up takes place, the winning of American and British faith to our air corps' long-cherished theory of daylight precision bombing will loom as the initial major achievement of Major General Ira C. Eaker and his "combat kids."

Just a year ago, four-engined Yank-built and Yank-operated "heavies" first opened their bomb hatches over the Nazi-infested continent. They were planes of the Eighth Air Force, which is the aviation section of "ETOUSA"—that's European Theater of Operations United States Army." It was a very small air force then. It has grown impressively—from 12-plane jabs to 300-plane haymakers. In its first year the Eighth spewed almost 16,000 tons of explosives upon more than 100 targets, brushed 1,728 enemy fighters from the skies and damaged about 900 more, carried out 82 attacks in the full light of day. But even as you read this, the Eighth will be sluicing as many bombs over Germany in a single month as it did all last year.

At any rate, the Eighth—having won its two-edged victory—now flies and fights as it was designed, trained and meant to fight: independently, precisely and by day.

The story behind this great war drama you are now watching—the biggest air show of all time—goes back to the last war. The astonishing growth of the flight arm within the space of that one conflict, plus the development of aeronautical science in the historic postwar decade, enlivened by Billy Mitchell and climaxed by Lindbergh, made it apparent to all except die-hard land-and-sea-bound militarists that airpower would be decisive next time.

Every great world power always has its particular military needs dictated by politics, wealth, temperament and geography as well as by many imponderables. Hence the British navy, the German and Russian land hordes, the old United States cavalry. Formulating their post-1918 strategies on the wonderful new weapon, each country had to make a choice of the proportion of each major type of war-plane it would have within its air forces.

Hitler's Third Reich, conceived for aggression, put its main faith in the airplane of aggression—and of army co-operation—the dive bomber. Supporting it was the hard-smashing, medium-range general-utility air force of fighters, medium bombers and transports. It is easy now to see with hindsight that the traditional German



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inflexibility was latent in this setup. Once the Luftwaffe departed from co-ordination with the Reichswehr and struck off by itself on the air blitz of England, it didn't have the organizational strength, imagination, versatility or the right airplane to win.

England's consideration was defense. Her peculiar necessities indicated that this should be short-range; she's but a score of miles at one point from the land mass whence enemy planes could swarm. She put her chief reliance in the single-seat fighter, superb all-around high- and low-altitude performance and speed. Her choice was notably justified in the Battle of Britain, in which Spitfires and Hurricanes prevented a world catastrophe. Even today—this is a fact difficult to accept when you remember the magnitude, ferocity, and wide range of her attacks—her bomber command still is only approximately one tenth of her total air strength.

United States leaders had quite different problems. "Hemisphere defense," becoming our national military-policy catchword, framed a practical job for our Air Corps strategists. First they had to reason how potential enemy forces might come to North or South America. Then they had to decide what types of planes were best to halt them.

### Geographic Defense Strategy

It was logical for us to exploit the advantages offered by the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, our natural barriers. Our shores were beyond the reach of foreign bombers of known or expected ranges. Some day, perhaps before this war is over, there will be warplanes capable of nonstop round-trip flight from Europe and Asia to the United States on an important scale with useful bomb loads. But after four years of war, no power yet has such planes in service. Moreover, even if airborne foes seized land bases within our hemisphere—South America, say, and it was part of our air force design to prevent just that—they would still be, in effective military sense, as far or farther away from us than if at home in Europe. Carrier-based bombers did not have much performance. Therefore, it was reasonably expected that we, unlike England, would not be bombed from high altitudes, and we haven't been.

The calculated work of our warplanes loomed clearly. Our fighters would have to intercept, strafe and knock out enemy task forces that might have broken through our outer defenses and be trying to land on our territory. This required fast low- and medium-altitude fighters. These we developed better than any others



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in the world. The Airacobra at low altitudes can fly the ailerons off the Zeros and the Messerschmitts. Criticism of our fighters came only when they were taken to England, France and Holland, and applied to special needs and problems for which they were not intended.

Pearl Harbor was not a failure of this fighter policy but a failure of vigilance. A couple of alerted fighter squadrons might have matched the R.A.F.'s feats of September, 1940, and knocked the carrier-based Japs smoking into the pineapple fields of Oahu. Used within their intention, our prewar-designed fighters have been eminently successful. With various Curtiss Hawks, General Chennault's fliers dammed the Jap flow toward India and hold a score of twenty to one or better over the Zeros. The troop and tank-strafting Bell Airacobras with their 20- or 37-millimeter cannons have been the backbone of Russian mastery over Germany's attempted eastward blitzes.

Our bombers, on the other hand, under hemisphere defense, had to constitute our outer air bulwark. Certain features were therefore essential. Great range was necessary to fly to any point within the hemisphere or to roam halfway across the Atlantic to forestall enemy sea approaches. And because they must customarily operate beyond the possibility of help from our fighters, they had to have great speed and altitude and defensive powers—they had to be able, in short, to get through, bomb, and then fight off interceptors.

Finally, and most characteristic, they must sally by daylight because darkened ships could not be found at night, and they must be able to bomb with bull's-eye accuracy the very small targets presented by shipping, the only feasible method then or now available to our enemies for attacking our hemisphere.

In terms of hemisphere defense it was more important for our bombers to lay a single heavy bomb precisely upon a hostile ship than to sow ten bombs over a city.

### Two Methods of Bombing

Modern heavy bombardment aviation recognizes two chief methods: "spot" or pin-point, and "area" or saturation bombing. Each necessitates the cutting down of certain plane attributes in order that others may be enhanced. Circumstances dictated that we must select the spot method, which requires particularized equipment, methods and training, and, as of now, daylight. England, with the continent's industrial and military localities under its nose, chose the saturation process—lug 'em over and let 'em go, using darkness rather than inbuilt defensive power for major protection. Ger-



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many's dive bombing of "set" targets as differentiated from mobile ones—set targets are cities and factories rather than troops—was a compromise between the two methods which England's balloon, flak and fighter defenses quickly emasculated by driving it too high for accuracy.

Our fundamental bombing problem resulted eventually in the Flying Fortress, later joined by the Liberator. But spot bombing required at least two corollary developments: an extraordinary bomb sight (hence the much-publicized "secret" United States bomb sights) plus long, tedious, teamlike drilling of bomber crews (hence the notable "hitting a fish in a barrel from 36,000 feet" demonstrations of our peacetime Air Corps).

There, in fighters and bombers, is the basic pattern of our hemisphere defense air force as of 1940. Then in 1941 our Air Corps was suddenly called to war far outside our hemisphere, to fight offensively rather than defensively, a task completely contrary to the one it had been prepared for.

On the professional military side, pressure to absorb its forces seems to be something the United States must always expect in one form or another from international allies. You will recall Pershing's fight to preserve the integrity of the A.E.F. as a strictly American undertaking. The Eighth Air Force had a comparable fight against a few British and Americans who thought it should abandon its independent daylight existence and join its personnel, equipment and production to the R.A.F.'s.

### Luftwaffe Failure by Day

On the lay side, the English public had good reason for lacking faith in the daylight technique of their new allies. Just three years ago the English people watched the daylight bombers of the Luftwaffe hosed from the skies over Kent and Surrey by English fighters until the survivors were glad to scurry back to the continent with their rudders between their wheels.

However, such authoritative English leaders as Air Chief Marshals Portal and Harris saw the different values of the American theory of daylight precision bombing and perceived at once a "war chance" that's little short of providential. That is the manner in which daylight precision or spot bombing and night area or saturation bombing complement, fill out and complete each other.

That both types of bombing should be available to our side, making possible a round-the-clock 24-hour-a-day thrashing of our common enemies, is the most felicitous discovery within Allied power in this war. It is literally a miraculous gift of heaven that guarantees victory.

But even so happy a union could not be profited by at once. The Eighth had to walk before it ran. That's one reason our first raids were on Nazi targets in France, requiring only shallow penetration of enemy defenses. Another simple fact is that until now we did not have enough planes for a big showing.

Remember that R.A.F. heavy bomber



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production is largely for this European front alone, while our heavy bombers have to be allotted to a dozen fronts. Eaker was unshakable in his refusal to disregard arithmetic. He insisted upon maintaining strength at a rate, however slight, of increase. He wouldn't push his operations into the law of diminishing returns. That is, raid faster than he could make up his losses.

The third cause of delay was that the Eighth, after slowly gathering its strength over half a year, was robbed for North Africa. Thenceforth, the Eighth was really acting in support of the North African expedition, a matter hitherto unrevealed. In bombing Brest Peninsula, Saint-Nazaire, La Pallice and other U-boat nests, it was protecting the flank of great convoys to Africa. That those convoys had no losses from U-Boat action was due in large measure to the shellacking of the submarine pens by the Eighth.

Loss statistics don't show that night raiding is safer than day raiding. Actually, at this writing, the percentages show a shade more havoc for the latter, but this has no useful relation to the job of winning the war. There's no such thing as "safe" or "safer" warfare. Inherently it is a business of death and wastage. What democratic war leaders can and do seek, however, is economy of life: that economy ("safety," if you will) is often best served by quick prodigality with equipment, material and human lives. Night and day bombings are safer than either method alone.

Many of the trappings of Fortresses and Liberators, needful in daytime, are useless at night. Yet scrapping them wouldn't make room for all their equivalent weight in bombs. Any keenly useful, high-performance airplane is too acutely designed for such versatility. Consider just three examples in the American heavies: armament, bomb sights and exhausts

Each of our four-engine bombers carries nearly 2,000 pounds of ammunition for its guns, and the latter weigh more than 3,500 pounds, a total weight of active defensive equipment (not including armor) of nearly 3 tons. Left out, that could not be replaced by 3 additional tons of bombs without redesigning throughout the ship.

The insignificant weight saved by removing the bomb sight would be more than offset by the large weight of flares essential in area bombing. Night raids are commonly preceded by planes that drop target-marker flares. As much as a fifth of the total load of an R.A.F. night formation might be taken up by incendiaries and flares. Compared practically, the 8-ton possible load capacity of the Lancaster and the three tons of Fort isn't really a five-ton difference. The heavy-explosives-per-plane loading of a British raid is probably closer to 3 tons, the rest being taken up by flares and incendiaries. The load of each Yank plane is all heavy explosive bombs—the most useful on small, concentrated targets.

To maintain flight efficiency at the high altitudes from which they bomb, our heavies are equipped with turbosuperchargers. These are not customarily flame-dampened, and the exhausts make a



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spectacular glow in the dark—flaming torches for the benefit of flak gunners and night fighters. Corrective gear is heavy, takes hours to install, and affects performance. Nevertheless, it will be installed on some, so that approaches can be made by night for dawn bombing, or return trips homeward can be made in darkness after dusk assaults.

### **Retraining for Night Flying**

As with the ships themselves, so with their crews. Ours are trained for day operations. They would have to be re-educated for night operations—not alone in bombing but in flying also. Frankly, English and North European night weather with its mists and clouds and vagaries is beyond the capabilities—without much additional training—of our young fliers schooled under the less tricky climate of the United States. Besides, there is a definite limit to the expansion of night operations. England is only so big. It takes nearly a minute to get off one bomber or land it. Nights have definite lengths and time must be consumed for rendezvous and flights to and from targets. Obviously the notch for night flying will come in R.A.F.-Eighth joint strength when for both to operate at night would choke England's air lanes and communications beyond safety, bring collisions and other operational losses.

Each member of a bomber crew is a specialist. To retrain ours to R.A.F. methods would take several months for each man. The upset would extend to home, compel a virtual revamping of our whole bomber training system.

Manifestly, to withdraw our Fortresses and Liberators from day operations and refit them for night sorties, and to remove Yank crews from combat and return them to training schools would constitute a disastrous hiatus in the total Anglo-American war effort. It would be a gift on a plate to the Luftwaffe. But, most serious, joined-forces bombing would insanely surrender the golden advantages of eruptions around the clock—the cold-blooded, ferocious, relentless mangling of the enemy in any one or more of each 24 hours. It would commit the unpardonable military error of failure to exploit a heaven-endowed superiority.

The Eighth Air Force, of itself alone in daylight bombing, has made three immensely useful contributions toward the final discomfiture of the Nazi machine:

First, it is the only United States fighting unit that has reached the body proper of Germany at all.

### **Yanks Over Germany**

Second, early in this war I reported to you from Germany that Hans Schmitt's loyalty as war progressed would be endangered by only two things: heavy casualty lists and United States entry into the war. The Russians and the R.A.F. have notably arranged the former. The latter, Goebbels subverted for a long time with a fictional picture of American impotence. Military commentators assured the public that the United States, harassed by politics, isola-



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tionism and strikes, might give a little material and financial help to England but that Germans would never see Americans actually fighting.

All last year during the Eighth's battering of submarine pens Goebbels told Germans there were no Yank-manned American planes in Europe. Now the Fortresses and Liberators by the hundreds are swarming into German skies in broad daylight for German eyes to see. And to oppress German hearts.

Third, attrition of the Luftwaffe's fighters. This goes back to the hemisphere-defense plan of Yank heavies. Designed to protect themselves without fighter cover if necessary, they have tremendous firepower. A flight of 100 Fortresses of the latest type has 1,300 machine guns capable of firing 100,000 pounds of bullets—50 tons—per minute in its own defense. They fly in very tight, almost wing-kissing formation, literally a single maneuverable fort.

Latest figures show about 6 German fighters destroyed for every four-engined Yank. Merely as figures, these are not in our favor. In crews they mean 9 or 10 American specialists downed for every 6 German pilots. In money, the Germans can probably build 20 of their fighters for the price of one Fortress.

However, the overwhelming strength of American production redresses the balance in our favor. American industry works without fear of bombs. German industry struggles under the handicaps of a disorganized nation, constant raid interruptions, the killing of workmen. It is likely that for every German pilot dead in combat, scores of skilled aviation workers are killed in raids. So Germany cannot afford her losses, whereas we could afford ten times as many as we have. The Luftwaffe is compelled to come up and meet the American heavies, for home morale if for nothing else. Our crews say they do so with courage and resolution.

The Luftwaffe is trapped by the law of diminishing returns, with a battered home front that cannot keep up with its losses. This is the reason Allied casualties have been diminishing. So pressed is the Luftwaffe that its black-painted and thinly armored night fighters now go up with the sturdier day fighters against the Eighth.

Yet it is not the virtues of American heavies fighting alone, but the co-operation with the night-flying R.A.F. that counts most. In a sense they are like two knight-doctors working on Hitler's fetid dragon. The R.A.F., the anesthetic, that slugs the body into unconsciousness and paralyzes it. Then the Eighth comes along and with surgical precision cuts off the limbs and extracts the poison fangs.

The R.A.F. does not bomb in formation. Every plane shifts for itself over the target. In their hundreds they confuse and spread the defenses, burn and crush and devastate the whole military or industrial area in hour-long earthquakes.

The Eighth Air Force bombs in formation, all letting go at the same instant at specific things like docks, small fac-



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tories, airplane plants, hangars, utilities—targets too circumscribed to be found at night. A formation of say 100 Yank heavies will lay all its bombs from thirty thousand feet by this method within a circle the diameter of which is about the length of three football fields. The roar, the jar, the terror of hundreds of tons of heavy explosives going off in a single cataclysm in a space not much larger than the Yankee Stadium is for you to imagine.

The R.A.F. is still dropping three or four times as many bomb-tons as the Eighth. The Eighth will catch up. But the present difference in tonnage is evened by the exactness, the intense focusing of the Americans' smaller deliveries. The R.A.F., for instance, could not have done the Rome job nor the Eighth that at Remscheid. For the first time in the history of airpower, complementary bombing was done on a mature scale upon the late city of Hamburg. That erstwhile greatest seaport of the Reich was the sixteenth largest city in the world, exceeded in size by only three American cities and second to Berlin in population. The late Essen was in the first 75 of the earth's great cities.

The ordeals of Hamburg and Essen are over for this war. Their lines in the atlas are blank. Soon, I think we can refer to the late Berlin—or Hanover or Bremen or Frankfort or Leipzig. Today there's surplus evidence—from aerial reconnaissance photos, from intelligence sources and from the "Rhine whine" seeping to neutrals—that human existence as we've known it is now utterly impossible when air force in great proportions is applied round the clock. If men continue to live in German cities listed on the Allied master plan for destruction they will have to crowd out the deepest-burrowing moles and worms.

Day-and-night bombing has many advantages, but the greatest of all is its theft of all ease and order and familiarity of daily life. Londoners knew that, although their nights would be tough, day would bring respite when the R.A.F. fighters cleaned the skies. Germans have no such assurance. They have neither day nor night—only the bleakness of unmeasurable time. Never to leave home and family in the morning knowing they'll be there that night. Never to know, when they start the day's work, if they'll be alive to finish it. Never to have complete rest. Never to be without fear. Never to be clean. Never to have normal, decent social contacts or comforts or recreations. Civilians never with time to rebuild what's knocked down, to put together what's been torn apart, to heal bodies that have been hurt. Soldiers and airmen



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alerted 24 hours every day, all victims of desperate weariness and the neurosis recognized by doctors of Europe as worse than the shell shock of the last war—they are “siren happy.”

Our Air Corps now has left hemisphere defense far behind. We've high-altitude fighters. Soon we'll have heavy bombers capable of ranges and loads double, perhaps triple, those of the Fortresses and Liberators. Even the present heavies can be fixed with wing racks to carry three times as many bombs for special jobs. And our tactical commands are shoving the enemy's favorite weapon, the dive bomber, down his throat with a vengeance.

But war is the least predictable of the arts. There's never been an unanswerable weapon. Our airmen know the Germans may turn up a counter to day-and-night complementary bombing or to daylight precision bombing. They'll have to hurry.

Berlin's numbered days as a real place upon the map promise something beyond an ultimate demonstration of the power of round-the-clock bombing. Berlin in modern times came to be more than the capital of Germany, more than the heart, brains and nerve center of the monster. It was the false-front showcase that Hitler erected upon rotten national morale left by the defeat and revolution of the last war and the inflationary years of aftermath. In it he displayed his successes and sold the Germans his bill of goods. The decayed foundations are still there and will be revealed when Berlin passes from reality into dust. Not only German courage but that most important thing, German hope, will then collapse.

### **Berlin Will Mark the End**

Based on what I know from years of work as a correspondent in Germany, from sitting in air-raid shelters with German people and being in the field with German soldiers, I am taking bets without qualifications, without “on the other hands” and “we shall see,” that with the end of Berlin will come the end of the Nazis. Whether it will also mean the end of the European war depends on diplomatic and political fronts as much as military.

And this bombing you are now seeing holds an even further promise. Killing of men has not stopped wars. The spectacle of utter devastation of a homeland might. That's the wish, at any rate, of your flying young men who are now visiting history's greatest reign of terror on Germany—where live the only people who'd really like to see the Eighth United States Air Force abandon daylight bombing.

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