

Pre-Invasion Bombs



As the Allied air preparation for the invasion of Europe reaches its climax, every hour brings new records for the bombing of German industrial centers and the destruction of German planes.

THE pre-invasion bashing in of Europe is almost complete. Many German factories still smoke, but from ruins, not production. Whole sections of Nazi cities—cities now in name alone—are junk heaps. Germany's civilians trek from shattered homes by the millions, searching for refuge from bombs.

But there is no refuge.

With the arrival of spring, a great Allied army is poised in England to invade the Continent. began, of which 43,000 tons exploded on Berlin alone. That means five pounds of TNT for every person in western Europe and Germany, and one pound is enough to kill several persons. Since last November, for every person living in Berlin some 20 pounds of explosives have screamed earthward. In one recent 120-day period the Allies dropped on Berlin alone almost as much TNT as the Nazis dropped on *all* of Britain during *all* of 1940, the "big" Blitz year.

western Europe, will appreciate hearing then that bombings such as these last year cut German fighter-plane production about 40 percent. This, plus the huge loss of German planes in recent battles, means that the Nazis will be "hard pressed," as one authority puts it, to replace even one plane for every five they lose during the coming invasion battle.

It is estimated that the monthly German production of twin-engine fighters today has dropped from 500 to 100; single-engine fighters from 1,000 to 400; bombers from 400 to 300. All types, from 2,500 to 1,230 a month. The Germans can't afford such staggering losses.

Tanks? It is estimated that of the nine major plants producing Nazi tanks, five have suffered severely from the recent heavy bombings.

Other war materials vital to Hitler's preparations for Allied invasion? Out of 90 industrial cities 20 of the biggest have been crippled and many of the others have been seriously damaged. Over-all production in Germany has probably declined 25 percent, perhaps more. Berlin, economic, political and military center of Hitler's war effort, is at the very least one-third in ruins and may be half destroyed.

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THESE are the apparent effects of Allied bombings in recent months. There are other terrible results that are not so obvious. German prisoners captured in Italy confess they were paralyzed when they were subjected to an 18-hour barrage by 100,000 shells. Yet that's roughly equal to but one bombing of 2,300 tons, which the air forces drop in about 40 minutes' time, or, in other words, about 27 times the concentrated fury of a particularly heavy artillery barrage. Many of the *Wehrmacht* will be dead—or as good as dead—when Allied barges scrape on Europe's shore.

Because of this strategic bombing by the Allies, Hitler's military potential—his ability to replace battle-smashed tanks and guns and planes when invasion starts—is dangerously small. And in these last days just preceding the hour of invasion, Allied bombers are actually intensifying their pulverizing attacks; as the Nazis laboriously reconstruct their battered industrial areas, Liberators and Lancasters and Fortresses return to redestroy in 30 minutes what it took the Germans months to build up.

Invasion, however, will not begin until the Nazis have been virtually knocked out of the sky. The target of the moment, therefore, is the German air force. The job is already well on its way to completion. From 500 airdromes scattered throughout Britain Allied planes fly night and day—frequently every hour out of the 24—some in fleets of a thousand or more to battle the *Luftwaffe*. German operational losses have been astronomical; in January alone 665 Nazi planes were downed; in February more than 900 fighters crashed under Allied fire, a figure considerably larger than the estimated monthly production capacity of Nazi fighter planes.

The Allies are utilizing every trick they know to coax the Nazis into sky battle. But the Nazis are getting wary—and tired. Heavily gunned Fortresses now fly as escorts to Liberators and take high toll of enemy planes; even our fighters can now accompany our bombers straight to Berlin. Results are impressive. Today it is estimated that the Nazis have only 1,200 fighters available for western Europe, out of a total of less than 1,800 fighters in the whole *Luftwaffe*, including 150 rocket-carrier planes. The strength of the Allied air forces may well be four times that of the *Luftwaffe*.

These add up to a lot of facts. In a sense they are only glittering statistics. Yet, while the Germans are tough, while the *Luftwaffe* is determined and skillful, while the German High Command is brilliantly thorough, the destructive prelude by bombs is even now roaring to a climax. True, the Allies are losing considerably more flying crews and planes (in weight) than the Nazis, but it's an exchange the Allies can afford. For example, in the U. S. the flying-crew training program is being seriously curtailed, while American plane production is already greater than that of all the rest of the world put together. In short, whatever statistics there may be against the Allies in the air war, there are 100 times as many against the Nazis.

Air war as such is almost over in Europe; the Allied infantryman is preparing now to march across a continent, battling along a "road" already cut wide and long by bombers and fighters four miles upward.