



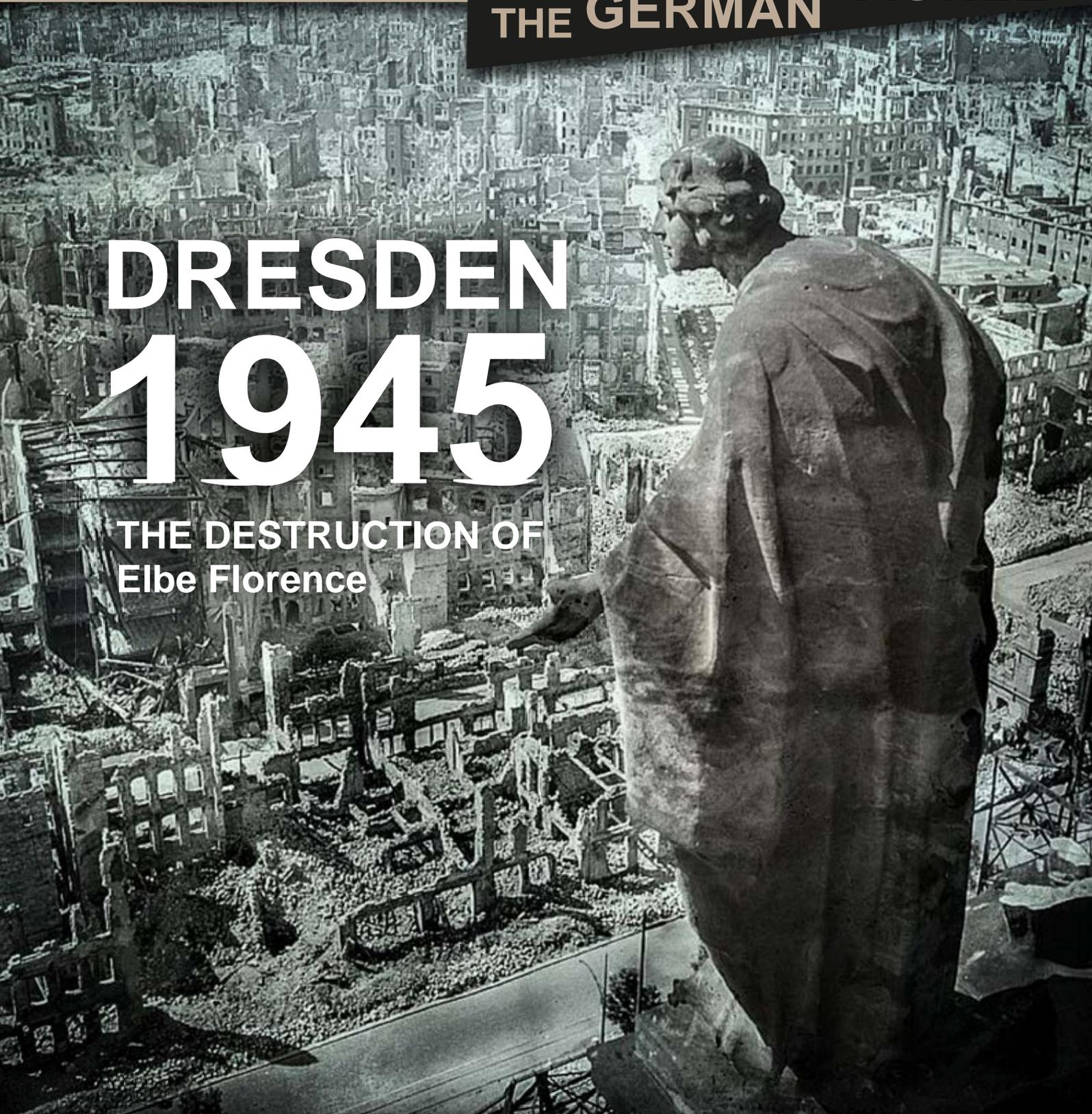
WAKED UP



THE GERMAN AGREE

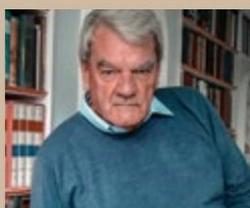
DRESDEN 1945

THE DESTRUCTION OF
Elbe Florence



INTO THE MARKET

BOMBING WAR
AGAINST THE
RICH



INTERVIEW

HISTORIAN
DAVID IRVING
UNCENSORED



INFAMOUS

THE
Smashed
REMEMBRANCE

THE ATTACK



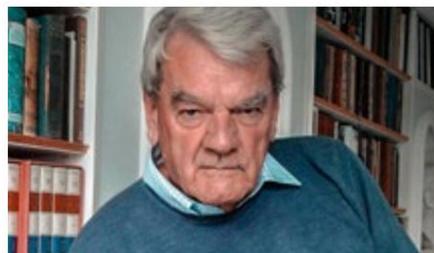
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IMPRINT

Publisher: SVM Sächsische Versand und Medien UG (limited liability),

Frankenberger Straße 227, 09131 Chemnitz

Email: kontakt@aufgewacht-magazin.de

Managing Director: Robert Andres

Printing: Printed in-house

Address of the subscription management:

SVM Sächsische Versand und Medien UG (limited liability),

Frankenberger Straße 227, 09131 Chemnitz

Email: abo@aufgewacht-magazin.de

Editorial team: Jochen Stappenbeck (Editor-in-Chief, responsible under press

law), with the ongoing collaboration of Michael Brück and Arne Schimmer.

Email: redaktion@aufgewacht-magazin.de

For articles marked with a full name, only the authors are responsible. Articles

marked with a name or initials represent the opinion of the authors, but not

necessarily that of the editorial staff.

AUFGEWACHT+ is a special edition and is published three times a year.

Annual subscription prices for AUFGEWACHT+: Print: 20 euros, Digital: 15 euros

Annual subscription prices for AUFGEWACHT (magazine): Germany: 30 euros, other countries: 36 euros. Supporter subscription Germany: 50 euros; supporter subscription-

International subscription: €56. Digital edition: €25. Cancellation period for all annual subscriptions: in writing 6 weeks before the end of the subscription period, otherwise the subscription will be extended for another year (exception: sponsorship or gift subscriptions: these end automatically after [date]).

one year, unless extended earlier).

Advertising: All advertising requests are arranged individually.

Advertising and editorial deadline: The 5th of each month. No compensation will be provided for non-delivery due to force majeure. The place of jurisdiction is Chemnitz.

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THE SONG OF DEAD CITIES

REFLECTING ON THE BOMBING WAR

There is hardly a fate in human existence as terrifying as becoming a victim of aerial warfare. One can be buried under rubble and face days of agonizing death, or be burned alive. In area bombing, entire families can be so completely wiped out that only ashes remain. Hardly any other nation experienced this horror as profoundly as the Germans. Not only were major cities subjected to devastating air raids, but small and medium-sized towns like Nordhausen, Halberstadt, Bad Reichenhall, and Hameln were also virtually flattened by masses of high-explosive and incendiary bombs, often right up until the very end of the war. There was probably nothing comparable in the 20th century, a history certainly not lacking in horrors.



The perpetrators were none other than two nations that considered themselves the guardians of humanity: Great Britain and the USA. How can this be explained? There are few theories. The approach of the air war historian Horst Boog, who died in 2016, is worth considering. He posited that a certain mentality arose from the Royal Air Force's colonial war experience, which may have been transferred to the bombing campaign against Germany. If this were true, then the air war against the Reich would have been understood in London as a kind of punitive expedition to bring the unruly natives to heel and educate them through targeted cruelty. Sometimes, in

The inner circle of the British leadership displayed pure bloodlust. The goal, as Arthur Harris, the head of Bomber Command, put it, was "to bury Boches under the rubble of their homes, to kill Boches and to terrorize Boches."

("Boche" is a French derogatory term for Germans.) Another key question is what the air war did to the attacked, i.e., the Germans.

The German scholar W.G. Sebald pointed out as early as 1997 that the destruction of German cities had left surprisingly few traces in national literature. Was the trauma so great that it was impossible to write about it?

That's one explanation. It's about the mentality of...

The air war has certainly left its mark on the Germans, for it was a profoundly traumatic experience. Germans are, in the truest sense of the word, scarred by war. The singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann once remarked in an interview with the "Süddeutsche Zeitung" that he had remained a child with gray hair, still deeply affected by the images of the bombing of Hamburg, which he survived as a six-year-old. And Jörg Fauser (born in 1944), considered a chronicler of the old Federal Republic before reunification, wrote in his 1979 novella "Everything Will Be Alright": "We are a generation of rubble children; only later were computer silos and sugar-coated facades erected on top of the ruins, but we do not forget them. Our love for this world that was presented to us can never be so great that we do not all yearn for the old ruins."

To this day, the majority of Germans seem to side with those on whom the bombs are dropped. This was the case with the NATO invasion of Yugoslavia in 1999, it was the case with the two Gulf Wars in 1991 and 2003, and it was probably even the case with the Gaza bombings last year.

"Never again bombing raids"—this seems to be a sentiment the Germans have internalized.

While the memory of their own burned cities—Dresden, Hamburg, Pforzheim, Kassel, Darmstadt, Halberstadt, Wesel, Cologne, Königsberg, Düren, Swinemünde—appears to be politically taboo, it continues to work its magic in the collective unconscious of the German people. This issue is dedicated to the memory of the most horrific attack ever carried out on a German city.

Greetings from your

Arne Schimmer

Editor of AUFGEWACHT magazine

GIVING A VOICE TO THE DEAD!

DRESDEN 1945 AND THE ANGLO-AMERICAN BOMB ENTERROR

Every year, German patriots and nationalists commemorate the victims of the bombing of Dresden in February 1945. On February 13, 1945, the bombing of Dresden by British and American bomber squadrons began – an attack that reduced the city to rubble and ashes and claimed countless lives.



"Dresden 1945" stands not only for the destruction of the city, but also for the German victims of the Second World War, who are often ignored or reinterpreted as "perpetrators" in official commemorative culture.

The once-great cultural metropolis was transformed into an inferno within just 37 hours. This crime continues to raise questions about morality, justice, and responsibility, and reminds us to give a voice to the victims.

In February 1945, Dresden was an open city with no military significance. It was not an armaments production center, but rather a refuge for refugees and the wounded. With approximately 630,000 inhabitants and up to 800,000 refugees, the city was overcrowded. Nevertheless, it became the target of a brutal bombing campaign aimed at exterminating civilians and breaking the morale of the German population.

Between February 13th and 15th, 1945, British and American bombers flew

Four massive attacks. Over 3,900 tons of high-explosive and incendiary bombs triggered one of the largest firestorms in history, in which people burned to death in air-raid shelters or were crushed by collapsing buildings.

The exact number of dead is disputed. Contemporary reports spoke of over 200,000 dead, while the International Red Cross estimated up to 275,000 in 1948. Many victims were completely burned by the firestorms, which made counting difficult. But since the 1990s, the number has been systematically reduced. In 2010, a commission of historians cited "only" 25,000 dead. These figures are often uncritically adopted by the media, even though they stand in stark contrast to eyewitness accounts and international sources. Should this be a deliberate minimization of the number of victims, it would not only be a cynical distortion of history, but also a slap in the face to the bereaved. When will research finally take a truly non-ideological view of the history of the Second World War, one committed solely to the truth?

The main person responsible for the attack was Air Marshal Arthur "Bomber" Harris, head of the British Royal Air Force, whom anti-Germans, mostly consumed by national self-hatred, wish every year would repeat his crimes – culminating in the cynical slogan "Bomber Harris – do it again!" Under his leadership, the Allies pursued the strategy of so-called "moral bombing".

The goal was to cover large areas of German cities

to destroy and demoralize the population through terror. Harris, whose name is still associated with the term "area bombing," later spoke of Dresden with appalling indifference: "There is no place like that anymore."

His statue in London remains a symbol of the glorification of the bombing war, while in Dresden the rebuilt Frauenkirche stands as a memorial for peace and reconciliation.

The attack on Dresden also had a political dimension. The Western Allies wanted to show the Red Army that they were equally prepared to destroy cities to achieve their goals. Dresden was thus not only a victim of the Second World War, but also an early symbol of the Cold War.

Today, 80 years after the bombing raids, we must ask ourselves: Have we learned from history? Remembering Dresden must move us to honor the dead, preserve the truth, and create a world in which such crimes can never happen again. Remembering Dresden is not a dusty ritual. It is a memorial against the barbarity of war and the cynical indifference of power politics.

It reminds us that the victims of bomb terror must not be forgotten – no matter what political agenda tries to suppress them.

"Giving the dead a voice" means speaking the truth, even when it is uncomfortable. It means not leaving history to the victors, but confidently standing up for the memory of one's own dead. For only those who understand the past can shape the future.

Peter Schreiber



DRESDEN: THE MYTH OF BEAUTY

THE ORIGINS OF ELBE FLORENCE

In 1747, a young man with shining eyes and a smile on his face strolled through the streets of Dresden. He seemed to have stepped out of time: his long hair fell in silvery-gray curls to his shoulders. He wore a frock coat with lace trim on the sleeves, a colorful waistcoat, and a large white ribbon around his neck. The mysterious stranger repeatedly visited key locations in the city, such as the Brühl Terrace, the Old Market Square, the Augustus Bridge, and the Neustadt side of the Elbe River.

Here, where the best views of the Elbe metropolis unfold, the painter used a camera obscura. With this optical device, he could precisely sketch the proportions and perspectives of his subjects. This enabled Bernardo Bellotto, also known as Canaletto, to depict Dresden's architecture with extraordinary precision. The son of a Venetian family of painters famous and active throughout Europe, he played a crucial role in the creation of the Dresden myth. His photorealistic vedute, or cityscapes, which fetch high prices at auctions today, are a testament to this.

Achieving sums in the tens of millions, it presented the image of a fairytale-like lagoon and palace city, which could be considered unique north of the Alps.

AWAKENED BY THE WETTINERN

The Canaletto view – that is, Dresden as seen from the right bank of the Elbe below the Augustus Bridge – remains a well-established concept to this day. Just 200 years earlier, the city's rise to prominence was far from foreseeable. The Ascanian rulers-

The Dukes of Saxe-Wittenberg were elevated to the rank of Electors by the Golden Bull of 1356 and were thus entitled to participate in the election of the German king. In 1423, their duchy, along with the electoral dignity, fell to the Margraves of Meissen and thus to the House of Wettin, whose territory was then gradually transferred to the name Saxony.

The political center of this region was Meissen, while on an economic level, Freiberg, which had prospered through silver mining in the Ore Mountains, and the trade fair city of Leipzig played the leading roles. Dresden, on the other hand, was not mentioned as a city in documents until 1216 and was therefore a clear latecomer in this respect.

Two events that cannot be rated highly enough for the development of the later state capitals were the Leipzig division of the territory in 1485 and the Wittenberg capitulation of 1547.

The division resulted in the Saxon state territory being divided as a consequence of a fraternal conflict.

Canaletto's famous view of Dresden's Old Town (1748). Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons





The conflict permanently split into an Ernestine and an Albertine part.

The former developed into the nucleus of the later Thuringian small states, the latter was for a long time one of the most powerful territorial lordships in the empire.

Following the victory over the Schmalkaldic League, supported by Protestant princes, in May 1547, the Saxon electoral dignity was transferred to Duke Maurice of the Albertine line, where it remained permanently. Born in Freiberg in 1521, the prince was perhaps the most militarily gifted Wettin. His victory against the rebelling Protestant estates at the Battle of Mühlberg, alongside Emperor Charles V, not only brought him the electoral title but also the immensely important, sole control over the Ore Mountain mints of Annaberg, Freiberg, and Schneeberg. In the same year, Maurice made the momentous decision to move the ducal residence from Meissen to Dresden, which, due to the permanent presence of a court and the emerging central state authorities, experienced rapid growth.

The new Elector immediately began the reconstruction of the Dresden Royal Palace, transforming it into the first large four-winged palace complex in Germany. With the expansion of the fortress ring, the architectural ensemble later known as Brühl's Terrace was created, which for centuries so prominently defined Dresden's Elbe riverfront and was later dubbed the "Balcony of Europe." Johann Walter, editor of the first Protestant hymnal, was appointed court Kapellmeister by Elector Moritz in 1548. This is considered the birth of the Saxon State Orchestra, which today ranks among the world's most prestigious and leading orchestras. In 1621, Heinrich Schütz was appointed court Kapellmeister and held this position until his death in 1672. With "Dafne," the Vogtland native created the first German opera in 1627.

The Theater am Taschenberg, built in the Saxon capital between 1664 and 1667, was the second German opera house built entirely of stone, after Vienna.

Since that time, the name of Dresden has been inextricably linked to the idea of great and uplifting music. Here, in 1820, Carl Maria von Weber finalized his opera "Der Freischütz." Richard Wagner, one of his successors as Saxon court conductor, completed his opera "Lohengrin" in Graupa near Dresden in the revolutionary year of 1848. In the last decades of the 17th century, the city's appearance gradually took on its present contours. From 1676 onward, at the behest of Elector Johann Georg III, a unique park, the Great Garden, was laid out in the heart of the city. At its center stands the palace, built from 1679 onward, which is considered the precursor to Dresden Baroque. The adventurer Johann Limberg already noted in his "Memorable Travelogues," published in 1690: "But I say, whoever has not seen Dresden has seen nothing." But then the already turbulent developments escalated once again.

CAPITAL OF AN EMPIRE

During the heyday of the "Augustan Age", the Saxon state capital rose to become the center of a large Central European empire.

Augustus the Strong, who as Elector Fried-

After Augustus I assumed the regency in 1694, he succeeded in having himself crowned King of Poland in Krakow in 1697. He thus established a union between the two states, which would last for 66 years. During this time, Dresden developed into a modern-day Athens and a Baroque architectural jewel. Buildings such as the Zwinger Palace and the Frauenkirche (Church of Our Lady), planned during Augustus the Strong's lifetime, were constructed and are still considered the epitome of Saxon identity.

The monarch's conversion led to the establishment of a Catholic dynasty in an otherwise deeply Protestant country. All of this has left profound traces to this day – and established a specifically Saxon self-confidence, the likes of which are probably only found elsewhere in Germany in Bavaria. In September 1719, the Saxon metropolis hosted what was probably the largest and most magnificent wedding of the entire Baroque era. At that time, Augustus the Strong was pursuing the idea – which seems fantastical from our modern perspective – of winning the imperial crown for the Wettin dynasty. No expense was too great to prove that his son, Frederick Augustus, was a worthy groom for the Habsburg imperial throne.

Altmarkt with Kreuzkirche, around 1900. Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons





Canaletto: The Neumarkt in Dresden from the Jüdenhof (1749). Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons

daughter Maria Josepha. The wedding, which lasted over 26 days and cost six million thalers, was preceded by extensive construction work that significantly altered the face of the Elbe metropolis and continues to shape it to this day.

The Zwinger, as the central courtly festival building, the Taschenberg Palace, and the Japanese Palace, which housed countless pieces of porcelain produced for the first time in Europe and manufactured in the Meissen manufactory since 1710, were built or remodeled. Also in the first half of the 18th century, the city's two towering landmarks, the Protestant Frauenkirche by George Bähr (from 1726) and the Roman Catholic Hofkirche by Chiaveri (from 1738), rose into the sky. In addition, there were the architectural gems that cluster around the Elbe metropolis: Moritzburg Hunting Lodge, built on an artificial island in a lake, which became world-famous at the latest through the filming of the movie "Three Hazelnuts for Cinderella" that took place here in 1972; Pillnitz Pleasure Palace, located upstream on the right bank of the Elbe, with its famous 250-year-old camellia; and Großsedlitz Baroque Garden, located halfway to Pirna in the town of Heidenau, with its magnificent orangery.

As if all that weren't enough, on top of this abundance come the unique collections. To name just a few.

The Green Vault would be the treasure chamber of the Wettin princes, with its splendor of exquisite objects made of ivory, jade, amber or white silver.

The jewel chamber was comparable worldwide only to that in the Tower of London, until the Remmo clan looted some of the most valuable treasures in a robbery in November 2019.

DESTRUCTION AND REPAIR RESURRECTION

King Augustus III, son of Augustus the Strong, then achieved another coup of the century when he purchased one hundred of the most famous works from the Galeria Estense of the Duke of Modena, including paintings by Titian, Rubens, and Tintoretto. The absolute highlight was the acquisition in 1754 of Raphael's Sistine Madonna, alongside Leonardo's Mona Lisa, the most famous painting of the Renaissance. Dresden now also possessed an art gallery of world renown. In 1802, the East Prussian polymath and poet Johann Gottfried Herder coined the term "Florence on the Elbe." In his newspaper "Adrastea," he wrote: "Bloom, German Florence, with your treasures of the art world! / May Dresden be assured of our peace and quiet, Olympia."

In the first half of the 19th century, the great minds and artists were practically queuing up to visit the Saxon capital.

Elbe metropolis was, alongside Jena, the birthplace of Romanticism and thus of perhaps the most German of all intellectual movements. Caspar David Friedrich created all his oil paintings here. Among those who shaped the city's intellectual climate were Robert Schumann, Heinrich von Kleist, Richard Wagner, and E.T.A. Hoffmann. The Semperoper, built in the Neo-Renaissance style and completed in 1878, finally completed the ensemble of central buildings in the city center. Three operas by Richard Wagner ("Rienzi," "The Flying Dutchman," and "Tannhäuser") as well as eight of Richard Strauss's fifteen operas premiered in this building with its ideal acoustics.

The cruel destruction of this city, which had been so lovingly built up over centuries, in the terrible bombing night of February 13th to 14th, 1945, was a deeply traumatic event for the Germans.

The "city entrusted to the imagination," as the author Peter Härtling once wrote, was damaged, desecrated, and burned. Plans to blow up the Elbe metropolis, which now consisted almost entirely of ruins, and rebuild it elsewhere were thankfully abandoned. East German leader Walter Ulbricht wanted to create a new "socialist city" here with a completely new layout, but at the same time, more and more reconstruction projects were undertaken. The reopening of the Semperoper on the 13th...

The performance of Carl Maria von Weber's "Der Freischütz" in February 1985 was a pan-German event of the first order. When Helmut Kohl arrived at Dresden-Klotzsche Airport on December 19, 1989, for a meeting with the then East German head of state, Hans Modrow, he was greeted by tens of thousands of people and a sea of black, red, and gold flags. The native of the Palatinate commented on the scene to his chief of staff, Rudolf Seiters, with the words: "It's all over." Thus, Dresden also became the city where the decision for German reunification was made. Nevertheless, despite all the magnificent achievements of its reconstruction, the Elbe metropolis remains to this day a kind of beauty on crutches, since the cohesiveness of the old cityscape could not, of course, be restored. **Arne Schimmer**

FIRESTORM OVER GERMANY

THE BOMBING WAR 1939 TO 1945



Image from the first night attack of "Operation Gomorrah" on Hamburg on July 24 and 25, 1943. Three days later, the devastating firestorm engulfed the Alster metropolis. Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons

On the night before Palm Sunday in 1942, 234 British bombers were approaching the Hanseatic city of Lübeck. The island in the Trave and Wakenitz rivers, on which the old town was situated, offered a particularly attractive target, easily spotted on this cloudless and frosty night. The attack began at 11:18 p.m. and lasted almost four hours. Four hundred tons of bombs, two-thirds of them incendiary materials, were dropped on the ancient trading metropolis, which was soon engulfed in flames. It wasn't long before a 130-kilometer-long street front was transformed into a sea of fire.

At 10:30 the following morning, Henry the Lion's cathedral collapsed, and 1,500 of the magnificent patrician houses had burned to the ground. Air Chief Marshal Arthur Harris, the infamous "Bomber Harris," was delighted.

To him, the old Hanseatic city with its half-timbered buildings seemed "more like" anyway.

"A fire starter as a human settlement."

Thomas Mann, speaking via radio from California, let it be known, in light of the destruction of his hometown, that he was thinking of Coventry and was a proponent of the doctrine "that everything must be paid for." To this day, the German air raids on the English Midlands are still remembered.

The city of [city name] of November 14, 1940, is often used as an alibi for the British bombing offensive. However, it is regularly overlooked that the German Luftwaffe largely fought according to the principles of classical continental European warfare from 1939 to 1942, and civilians were therefore not the explicit target of the attacks.

THE ROAD TO TOTAL BOMBING WAR

In the German government's peace plan of March 31, 1936, Adolf Hitler proposed convening a conference to bring the air war "into the moral and human atmosphere of the leniency granted at that time by the Geneva Convention to non-combatants or the wounded." Gas, poison, and incendiary bombs were to be outlawed, and the bombing of open villages beyond the range of medium-weight artillery on the front lines was to be prohibited. At a meeting with British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain on September 30, 1938—the Munich Agreement had just been signed—the German dictator reiterated that he found the idea of bombing women and children abhorrent. However, the Western powers were not prepared to respond to such overtures at that time. Within the German military leadership, there was no discussion of a completely unrestrained bombing campaign after the outbreak of the Second World War.

In his standard work "The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945," published in 2013, Richard Overy stated: "German and French military leaders considered bombing raids against distant targets unrelated to ground fighting to be a waste of resources. The German bombing-



The bombings of Warsaw, Belgrade, Rotterdam and numerous Soviet cities correspond to this narrower definition of strategic bombing." The British historian further emphasized: "The German operations against Great Britain were based on a precise list of industrial and military targets, which had been compiled before 1939 with the help of photographic reconnaissance and industrial espionage."

A turning point in the history of the Second World War, as well as the entire 20th century, was the "Area Bombing Directive" issued by the British Air Ministry. It was published on February 14, 1942, almost exactly three years before the devastating terrorist attacks on Dresden.

It ordered area bombing, which was "primarily aimed at the morale of the enemy civilian population." A day later, Charles Portal, Chief of Staff of the Royal Air Force (RAF), was even more explicit and specified: "I assume it is clear that the targets are built-up areas and not, for example,

Shipyards or aircraft factories will be listed in Annex A. This must be made clear to everyone, if it is not already.

"This was how it was understood." Another step in the bestialization of modern warfare had been taken. Its victims were primarily the elderly, women, and children, but also foreign laborers. In Leipzig, a "funeral ceremony for fallen European guest workers" was held in 1944.

The identification of the dead, who were sometimes completely burned to ash, was often only possible through jewelry. To those burned alive were those who suffocated in air-raid shelters. Fire victims threw themselves into rivers and lakes and drowned. Even the masses of water used to extinguish the blazes could become a deadly hazard. The bomber pilots released their deadly cargo kilometers above German cities. Had they been forced to carry out their mission in the face of their victims, who consisted primarily of women and children, it would hardly have been possible for them.

THE FIGHT OF THE GERMANS HUNTER

Like almost all major disasters, this one also had small beginnings. Shortly after the start of the Second World War in September 1939, the Royal Air Force flew only a few limited missions in the North Sea-

The area, including Sylt, Helgoland and Wilhelmshaven, was bombed. The casualty rates for the attacking bomber formations in this air battle over the German Bight were exceptionally high.

Nevertheless, according to the renowned East German air war historian Olaf Groehler, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill was already firmly convinced from mid-1940 onwards that only a massive deployment of his own bomber fleet could decide the war for the United Kingdom. A heavy, nighttime firebombing attack on Mannheim, which took place on the 16th...

The bombing of Lübeck in December 1940, carried out by 134 bombers and resulting in the destruction of the Electoral Palace, already foreshadowed the grim future of the bombing campaign. The air raid on Lübeck in March 1942 then marked the beginning of the systematic area bombing of German cities. From April 23rd to 27th, 1942, the four-day bombing of Rostock followed, demonstrating the RAF's ability to handle increasingly complex operations.

As early as March 4, 1942, the British had launched a massive attack on the Renault factories in Boulogne-Billancourt near Paris with more than 200 aircraft. From then on, almost all countries of continental Europe came under the scrutiny of British bomber squadrons, with astonishingly little regard given to the fact that all these countries were supposed to be liberated from German occupation. In the end, the Allied air war against France and Italy alone claimed 40,000 lives each.

For comparison: German air raids on Great Britain are estimated to have cost 60,000 lives. In the early morning hours of May 31, 1942, as part of "Operation Millennium," the first British thousand-bomber raid on a German city, namely Cologne, was carried out. Apart from a single anti-aircraft battery, only civilian targets were hit.

"Bomber Harris" had now demonstrated that it was possible to direct such a large number of aircraft toward a target without countless collisions. The thousand-bomber fleet remained in operation, carrying out attacks on Essen on June 1st and 2nd, 1942, and on Bremen on June 25th and 26th. A firestorm rolling across the North Sea during the nights was intended, according to Churchill's wishes, to

The development of the jet fighter was among the revolutionary technological advancements achieved by the Germans during World War II. Here is a Messerschmitt Me 262. However, even new types of weapons could not reverse the negative course of the air war for Germany. Image: CC0, goodfon.com



now to gradually crush all German cities.

In 1942 and 1943, however, the German Luftwaffe was still strong enough to mount fierce resistance and inflict heavy losses on the Allied air forces. The proverbial German ingenuity also played a part in preventing the American and British bombers from achieving total air superiority over the German Reich for a considerable time. Colonel Josef Kammhuber, later, from 1957, the first Inspector of the West German Air Force and a close confidant of Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauss, built a 1,000-kilometer-long system of listening posts, searchlight batteries, anti-aircraft and radar units, and ground-based fighter units that struck fear into the hearts of the Allied attackers. The German night fighters, in particular, who fought with utter disregard for their own lives, were quickly revered as heroes by the urban population of Germany. Their kill rates improved steadily as they were granted greater freedom of operation. The British successes after the Thousand Bomber Offensive

The developments that began in early summer 1942 stagnated thereafter.

The German night fighters were equipped with the state-of-the-art "Lichtenstein" air-to-air radar manufactured by Telefunken. With the Messerschmitt Me 262, which made its maiden flight in July 1942, a jet fighter took to the skies for the first time. With its superior flight characteristics, this aircraft could have decided the air war in Germany's favor, had Adolf Hitler not conceived the absurd idea of converting these aircraft, clearly designed as fighters, into heavy offensive bombers. Mass production of the "wonder bird" therefore progressed too late. From March 1945 onward, the German Luftwaffe also deployed the first operational R4M air-to-air missiles. Up until 1943, the war in German airspace was not a one-sided affair. The Anglo-American attackers suffered some heavy losses. During their attacks on Anklam (October 9, 1943) and the Lower Franconian ball bearing town of Schweinfurt (October 14, 1943), 18 and 60 US bombers respectively were shot down.

On July 27th to 28th, 1943, the British Air Force succeeded in disabling all German radar detection during their devastating attack on Hamburg, carried out under the self-righteous codename "Operation Gomorrah," by dropping masses of tinfoil strips.

This, combined with other factors such as the exceptionally hot weather that day, resulted in a terrible firestorm and the deadliest attack on a German city besides that on Dresden on February 13, 1945. With the Allied advance in Italy during 1944, the 15th US Air Force, in addition to the 8th, was increasingly able to join the fighting over the German Reich. The loss of the German radar stations on the English Channel due to the Allied advance in the autumn of 1944 further severely impaired German air defense capabilities.

General Adolf Galland of the Fighter Pilots had already remarked in April 1944: "Daytime fighter operations have lost well over 1,000 pilots in the last four months, including the best squadron captains, commanders and wing commanders."

These gaps cannot be filled." In the last nine months of the Second World War, more than half of Britain's total tonnage of incendiary and high-explosive bombs was dropped on largely undefended German cities. Objectively speaking, one must conclude that this was one of the worst war crimes of the 20th century. In his 2002 book "The Fire," historian Jörg Friedrich stated: "The relentless and unchecked waves of attacks by Lancaster and Boeing 17 bombers were intended to raze cities to the ground until none remained. That is why Freiburg, Heilbronn, Nuremberg, Hildesheim, Würzburg, Mainz, Paderborn, Magdeburg, Halberstadt, Worms, Pforzheim, Trier, Chemnitz, Potsdam, Dresden, Danzig, and others met their end in the final stretch before Germany's surrender." The bombing campaign against Germany claimed the lives of more than 600,000 people, including at least 80,000 children. To this day, the Federal Republic of Germany has not even come close to finding a suitable way to commemorate these dead who died under the most horrific circumstances. **Arne Schimmer**

View of Berlin, completely destroyed by hundreds of air raids after May 8, 1945. However, the Reich capital did not manage to ignite a large firestorm like the one in Hamburg. Image: tormentor4555, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons



To this day, this period is considered the "black week" of the US Air Force. The Royal Air Force, in turn, had to abandon the Battle of Berlin on March 25, 1944, after losing "between 492 and 504 aircraft, depending on the source," in 16 major attacks on the Reich capital, as Maximilian Czesany noted in his 1998 book "Europe in the Bombing War: 1939–1945".

BOMBS ON UNDEFINISHED CITIES

However, this success, along with the downing of 95 British bombers during the attack on Nuremberg on March 31, 1944, were the last major victories of the German air defenses, which were finding themselves in an increasingly hopeless situation. At the conference in Casablanca, Morocco, in January 1943, Churchill and US President Franklin D. Roosevelt had agreed on a joint bomber offensive, in which US bombers would attack targets in the German Reich around the clock during the day and British aircraft around the clock at night. On the night of



Their goal was the most effective possible destruction of German cities and the civilian population: Here, a B-17 "Flying Fortress" bomber of the USAAF is approaching.
Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons

BOMBER OVER DRESDEN

THE NIGHT THE FIRE CAME

When Air Marshal Arthur Harris opened the meeting of Bomber Command's leaders and chiefs at his headquarters, High Wiccombe, on the morning of February 13, 1945, he first received the latest reports from the two chief meteorologists. He read them. Then he hesitated for a few seconds before announcing to his staff: "Gentlemen, tonight we will attack Dresden! I myself know of no particular reason that led to the selection of this city, but the attack has been ordered to me with great urgency by the highest authority."

He passed the weather report to his deputy, Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby, who had only learned of this target a few days earlier and had been asked by Harris to determine why this particular city had suddenly become so important. Saundby had to report that the entire counterintelligence department, which stored all relevant information about the attacking targets, knew nothing about Dresden. He could only report: "The city is not designated as a troop assembly point. All that is known is that it is overrun with hundreds of thousands of refugees from the east." Air Marshal Harris showed the commanders on the large map the route the bomber fleets were to take, and

announced which decoy and relief attacks would be flown. The launch sites would be in southern and southeastern England. The prescribed flight routes, including the ordered evasive maneuvers around the anti-aircraft centers in Germany, would be 1,300 kilometers on the outbound flight and 1,400 kilometers on the return flight.

STREETS OF HELL

This meant that the Lancaster bombers would be in the air for a total of nine to ten hours. The internal instructions for the two master bombers differed from the reports that had been sent to the bomber crews.

were sent on their way. The two lead aircraft – one for each wave – were flown by experienced officers who knew this type of aerial warfare and what was important. The first aircraft, a state-of-the-art Mosquito, was designated for the 5th Bomber Group. It was flown by Wing Commander Maurice Smith. The aircraft designated to guide the second wave was under the command of Squadron Leader Peter de Wesselov. He had flown the 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 8th Bomber Groups.

to bring the Bomber Group to its target. Both had been told beforehand during briefing that they wanted to "demonstrate the striking power of Bomber Command to the Russians." This was reported by Wesselov, while Smith added the following: "This complete destruction of a hitherto intact city of this size and type will have a significant effect on the Russians." (...) Master Bomber Smith had been guided to Dresden by his Loran device. As he entered the correct position for the steep descent towards the target,



After the devastating air raids by the Anglo-American terror bombers in February 1945: View from the tower of the Kreuzkirche towards the destroyed city center of Dresden in the direction of Pirmaischer Platz.

Image: Federal Archives, Image 183-Z0309-310 / G. Beyer / CC-BY-SA 3.0



Statue of Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Harris, nicknamed "Bomber Harris" in London.

Image: Eluveitie, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons

He first broke through the upper cloud cover, which was not very dense, and suddenly saw the city directly below him on the silver ribbon of the Elbe, which from his point of view still flowed beyond the area to be bombed.

A few seconds later, he saw the heart of the old town below him. It was exactly 10:03 PM when suddenly the four green flares, dropped by the markers, glowed brightly and now swung back and forth on their parachutes above the southern part of the Ostragehege.

Finally, four red illuminating bombs had fallen. The master bomber was now tasked with directing the aircraft to create the first major fire, which the entire bomber wave could use as a guide. Beforehand, however, sight checkers reported that all four red-flame bombs were clearly visible, even through the light cloud cover. The first group then dropped their bombs from about 3,500 meters onto this target marker. Among the 500-pounders were also a number of high-explosive incendiary bombs in bundles. Every fourth of these incendiary bombs detonated on the ground after a certain time, scattering phosphorus and explosive fragments and thus preventing the removal of the incendiary bombs, which weighed only four pounds each.

(This was done despite the risk that the bombs picked up would explode in the hands of the helpers, causing them life-threatening injuries). The first fires blazed up at the planned locations and quickly grew larger, so that the main group of attackers could easily identify the target. Everything proceeded according to plan, since all anti-aircraft units had been withdrawn from Dresden battery by battery since the end of October 1944, and nothing and no one could prevent these precisely executed preparations for the bombing.

The main group now descended to 3,000 meters. "No danger," the master bomber had signaled. The bombs fell. They smashed into houses, sheared off trees and streetlights, tore people to shreds as they tried to reach a safe cellar, and laid down roads of inferno through their sector.

The individual groups attacked one after the other. Coming from Riesa, they reached their sectors and dropped their deadly cargo. 270 mine bombs fell, mostly 4,000-pounders, but also one weighing 8,000 pounds. 1,094 high-explosive bombs of 1,000, 500, and 250 pounds tore apart the houses of the old town, crippled water pipes, and silenced the telephones. Moreover, those

140,100 incendiary bombs engulfed the city in flames that set not only the houses but also the asphalt streets ablaze. The first aid workers were on their way when, after 25 minutes of continuous bombardment, the last bomber of this first wave turned away at 11:38 p.m.

THE DEVASTATING SECOND ATTACK

The brief silence proved deceptive: In the following hours, the time-delay bombs detonated, killing many of the rescuers who had ventured into the inferno to try to save lives. At the same time as the sirens in Dresden warned all the city's inhabitants, forcing them to seek shelter in their cellars or—as if from the Sarrasani Circus—to rush home, the second wave began in England. It consisted of 551 Lancaster bombers from the 1st, 3rd, 6th, and 8th Bomber Groups. Once again, a series of diversionary attacks were launched. Even from a distance of a hundred kilometers or more, and despite the cloud cover, the attacking bombers could clearly see Dresden.

The fires blazed brightly. Nevertheless, the same procedure of target markers and illuminators followed before the bombers, also flying from only 3,000 meters, went to work, further intensifying the fires.



and also to expand to the edges. Master Bomber de Wesselow wanted to waste nothing. He spared the bombers from areas already ablaze and ordered them to widen the target area to the left and right. In doing so, he concentrated the bulk of the bombers on the still-unburned parts of the city center, including the Great Garden, where tens of thousands of Dresdeners and refugees had meanwhile sought refuge in a false sense of security. The first bombs of this second wave fell at 1:21 a.m. Within 26 minutes, in a seemingly endless stream, 480 mine bombs, 1,005 high-explosive bombs, and, most importantly, 288,554 incendiary bombs were dropped to incinerate the city. Thus, during both attacks, a total of 964.60 tons of high-explosive bombs and 891.30 tons of incendiary bombs had been dropped.

The firestorms over Dresden, which began about 30 minutes after the first

The attacks had broken out and were rapidly spreading through the densely winding streets of the old town, reducing everything to rubble – including the helpless people trapped in cellars and under debris – and were not prevented from spreading further by any wide streets or even squares.

hindered. Unlike in the Ruhr area or the Rhineland or Wupper region, where every citizen in a severely affected city had learned through years of experience the rules of conduct that alone ensured survival, Dresden's citizens were completely unprepared.

Here is the voice of a British pilot who participated in the second attack and who had a hunch that this couldn't be industrial areas after all – because those were always surrounded by a dense ring of anti-aircraft fire – but simply a city inhabited by a million people or more: "Above the target area, I saw a single, dense, red-hot mass: the flames that consumed everything within the vortex of the inferno. We dropped our bombs into these flames. The flames were already much larger before we dropped them than we had ever seen before, and they grew even larger, spread even further, and seemed to reach up towards us. I was in Hamburg, and that was already hell. But this was hell and purgatory at the same time; it was beyond comparison because there could never have been a city burning like this before. For me, Dresden was just a

Target area of well over thirty others.

But when we learned a few days later what had happened, and then saw the photos of this ruined landscape, over which all hell had broken loose, it was a completely different story. There was simply nothing left. Everything just wiped away. I felt sick." (Report to the author)

THE US AIR FLEET ATTACK

What remained was the awareness that all the victorious powers had carried out the same work of annihilating the vanquished, and that they were earnestly striving to complete the victory as completely as possible. All Dresdeners who had cellars in their homes had fled there when hell fell from the sky. Most of them perished there because the houses collapsed like prefabricated buildings, burying them beneath them. After their houses were engulfed in flames, many tried to escape into the open air because the smoke and heat made survival in the cellars impossible. But when they staggered out into the street, they found themselves confronted there, too, by the inferno of the bombings. They saw the fiery blaze that rolled through the streets, sweeping everything away and capturing all movable objects in its vortex. Thus, these whirlpools snatched a baby from a woman's arms and hurled it into the flames.

The mother rushed after her child, tore it from the blazing flames, and burned both her arms beyond recognition.

Nevertheless, she continued to hold onto her child until compassionate people took it from her. The child was dead. But that was not the end of her perfidy.

On February 14, 1945, the entire 8th US Air Force was scheduled to take off and appear over Dresden around noon. By the time the US bomber formation was south of Jena, it was 11:54 a.m. The first news of another enemy aircraft incursion was relayed down to the city via a still-intact telephone line. The total number of 1,299 aircraft carried a bomb load of 3,906.90 tons. This included a total of 296.30 tons of incendiary bombs and canisters. Among the aircraft were 288 P-51 Mustangs, which had taken on the escort duties.

The completely destroyed Dresden Zwinger after the bombing raids from February 13th to 15th, 1945.
Image: CC0, picryl.com





The order for the bombing forces, which designated Dresden as the target, read: "The aim of the attack is the destruction of the marshalling yard." That even approximately 300 tons of incendiary bombs should be needed for this is inexplicable to experts, because railway tracks and track systems do not burn, nor do the ironwood sleepers. Incendiary bombs were completely unsuitable for this task, but not for further incineration of the parts of the city that had so far been spared. The first bombs fell at 12:19, and until 12:31, bombs and incendiary bombs fell from the sky in rapid succession. The shunting yard, the stated target, was not hit.

The bombs, dropped blindly during radar approach, fell scattered across the entire city. In total, these 311 aircraft dropped 474 tons of high-explosive bombs and 296.30 tons of incendiary bombs. The rest of the city went up in flames. Several large fires, which had already begun to recede, flared up again as sky-high pyres. To add insult to injury, on February 15th, the 8th US Air Force attacked Dresden once more with 210 of the B-17 bombers that had already been launched, dropping another 461 tons of bombs into the ruins, extinguishing the last vestiges of life that still existed, some partially trapped beneath the rubble. But what they ultimately wreaked, when it all seemed over and the survivors, injured and in shock, were trying to reach safety, is described by those eyewitnesses who had to experience this final drama firsthand. The US annals of the air forces involved contain no mention of this, leading some authors to conclude that such a thing could not have happened.

ATTACK OF THE LOW-FLYING PLANES

It was US P-51 Mustang aircraft that, at midday on February 14th, carried out a sweeping attack, flying low over the Elbe meadows. There they shot at the people who, stripped of all their possessions, were trying to save their lives. Not even columns of refugees were spared from the low-level attacks. Even Red-

The Kreuzwagen (a type of railcar) experienced shelling by a victory-drunk group of fighter planes who – fearing no resistance because there was neither anti-aircraft guns nor German fighters in the area – dived down and followed their "hunting instinct". After the war, it turned out that the "attack on the marshalling yard" was just a ruse. The 8th US Air Force's attack targets were twofold: Dresden's Neustadt district and the creation of confusion on the main roads leading out of the city, thereby increasing the chaos within. While the B-17s dropped their bomb loads, P-51 escort fighters attacked other targets, one of which was a transport of wounded soldiers that had just left the city heading west.

As early as February 14, 1945, BBC London reported the following in a brief news bulletin: "British and American bombers carried out one of those heavy strikes against central Germany last night and this morning that the Allied leadership promised the Russians at Yalta. During the night, the Royal Air Force sent 800

Aircraft to Dresden, the capital of Saxony, which lies in front of Marshal Konev's attacking troops. (...) With this message, the British government admitted that it had promised the Soviets the attack on Dresden at Yalta. Nevertheless, Dresden was never mentioned again by name in any of the subsequent reports—not even in passing. It was almost as if the attack on Dresden had never happened. When, very soon after, reports emerged in neutral countries of 100,000 dead in Dresden, predominantly women, children, and the elderly, and when the full horror of this terror attack came to light in England as well, there was shock. The truth could not be suppressed. It was women, children, and the elderly who lost their lives in this act of annihilation. And in the end, there should be that sentence inscribed on the memorial stone in the Waldfriedhof cemetery at the "Wild Man": "How many died? Who knows the number? / In your wounds one sees the agony / Of the nameless who burned here / In the hellfire of human hands." **Franz Kurowski**

The Luther monument in front of the ruins of the Frauenkirche, 1958.
Image: German Federal Archives, Image 183-60015-0002 / Giso Löwe / CC-BY-SA 3.0





"STUN OF DECAY AND "Acrid smoke"

DRESDEN AFTER THE BOMBING ATTACKS IN FEBRUARY 1945



Thousands of corpses were burned in Dresden's Altmarkt (Old Market Square) between the end of February and the beginning of March 1945 to prevent the spread of disease. Image: Drach78, CC0, Wikimedia Commons

In particularly heavily damaged cities where the municipal administrative structure was no longer functional, the Reich authorities initiated external organizational assistance. Theodor Ellgering therefore became the full-fledged mayor of Dresden on February 18, 1945.

In 1955, he wrote a report about his work in Dresden. In it, he speaks of "a catastrophe of unprecedented proportions." To ensure that this difficult period in our city's history is not forgotten, we quote from his report.

Report by Ellgering, Head of the Interministerial Air War Damage Committee (ILA):

"In order to begin this, we first used tanks and clearing equipment to clear a roadway in the rubble-strewn streets, as these were completely impassable for vehicles. (...)

At the same time, we began transporting the bodies away on all available trucks and horse-drawn carts. The bodies were systematically collected from the streets and squares and carried onto the vehicles for loading. Men's, women's, and children's bodies were piled up indiscriminately and then loaded onto the

thrown by constantly moving vehicles:

Burned, charred, dismembered, parts of them as an unrecognizable mass, some seemingly sleeping peacefully, others contorted in pain and spasms, wrapped in rags or with their clothes burned, pitiful piles of ash, among them remnants of bones, and over everything the stench of decay and acrid smoke. (...)

Special work details – mostly Russians and forced laborers from Eastern Europe – were assigned to this gruesome and increasingly horrific task. At first, attempts were made to properly identify the dead. Criminal investigators were involved in this as the process progressed...

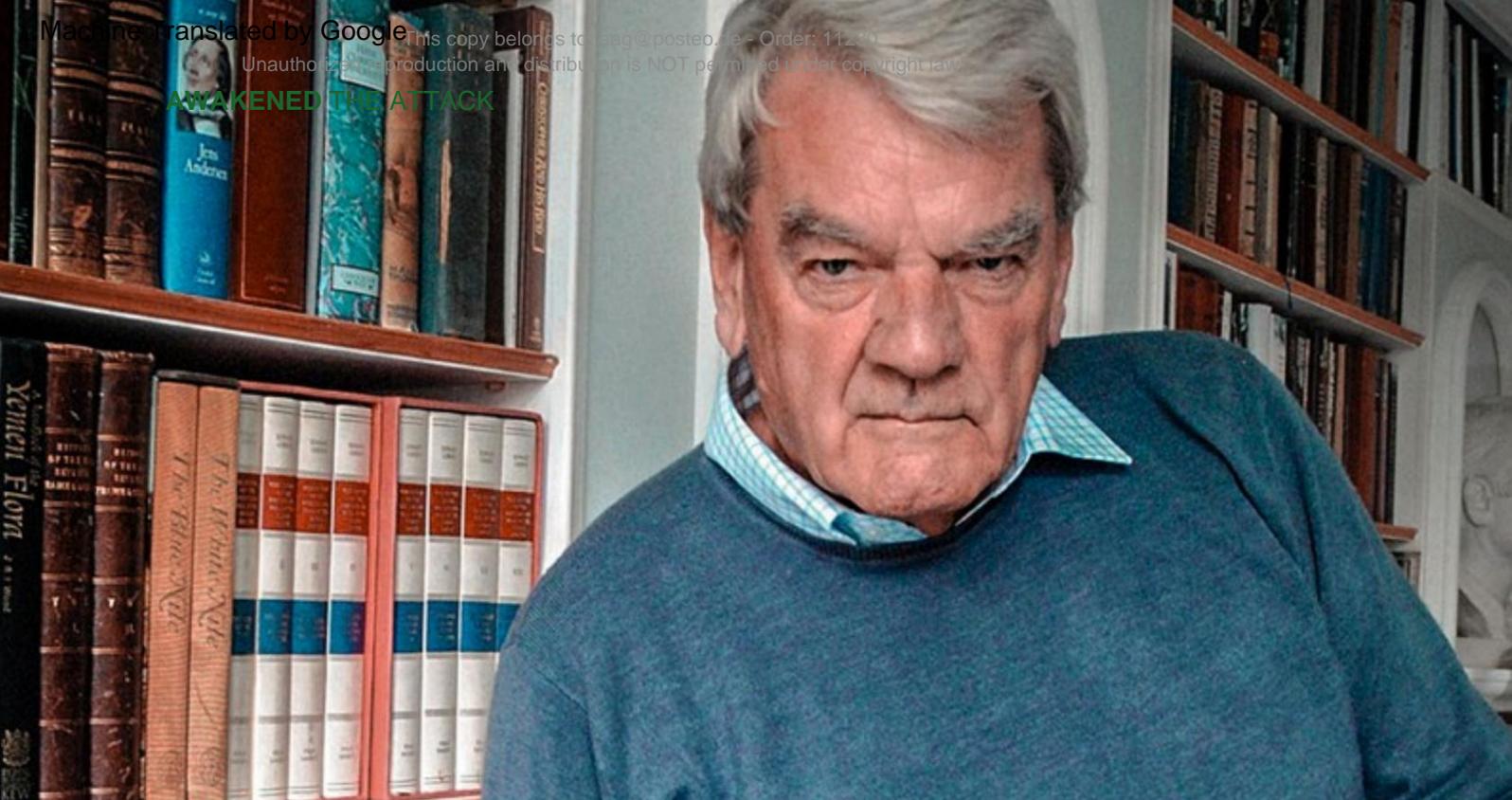
occupied with the increasingly difficult and agonizing task of dealing with decomposition. (...) A proper burial of the dead was completely impossible, so it was necessary to dig wide trenches in the cemetery with excavators."

"IN ALL STAGES OF RESOLUTION"

In his book "Dresden 1945: Data, Facts, Victims," Wolfgang Schaarschmidt supplements Ellgering's account: Numbing their disgust and fear of poisoning with alcohol, they crawled down into the cellars over rubble. A horrific stench assaulted them from the corpses, which lay jumbled together in all stages of decomposition. The bodies, which had begun to decompose in the warm cellars, were "leaking." The foul-smelling liquid rendered the rescuers' clothing unusable. Who was counting the dead here—precisely? In the initial phase of the recovery operation, when the main thoroughfares and squares had to be cleared of corpses, reliable registration was impossible.

Max Seydewitz, Saxony's Minister-President from 1947 to 1952, expressed a similar view in his 1955 book "Destruction and Reconstruction of Dresden": "The Nazi authorities were unable – even if they had wanted to – to give a reasonably accurate number of the dead," and: "no one was able to conscientiously count the many dead."

AUFGEWACHT thanks Gert Bürgel, www.dresden-dossier1945.de, for his contributions. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the destruction of Dresden in February 2020, Gert Bürgel presented, after several years of work, the more than 1,000-page "Memorial Book of Names," which was primarily based on documents freely accessible in Saxon archives that list the names of the victims.



British historian David Irving in 2012. Image: Allan Warren, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons

"ONE WANT THE NUMBERS "DO NOT NAME THE VICTIM"

BRITISH HISTORIAN DAVID IRVING IN CONVERSATION ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF DRESDEN

• **Mr. Irving, you are considered not only one of the most profound experts on German contemporary history in general, but also, and especially, on the events surrounding the Allied bombing raids on Dresden. How did this attack come about? Who bore the responsibility for it?**

Well, that was, so to speak, a gap on the list. Air Marshal Harris told me a list had been drawn up, and at some point, Dresden's turn would have to come. But that couldn't happen any sooner because, until then, Dresden was beyond the range of our British radio guidance systems. A new guidance system, called LORAN, had to be introduced first. And as soon as this LORAN system was successfully established in France, the attack against Dresden could be launched. Then they would have that range. In fact, Dresden had no such range at all.

It had no military significance, but it had to be done. The bomber crews were told during flight briefings the evening before that Dresden would be attacked to teach the Russians a lesson. The Russians were to realize how strong our air force was. That was the main reason. The Russians were to be taught a lesson.

• **What did the British know about German defenses and especially about the German air force at the time of the attack in February 1945?**

A great deal was known about the Luftwaffe, for various reasons: Since 1940, most of its operational capabilities had been known. Deciphering Luftwaffe radio messages resulted, for example, in the discovery that Winston Churchill was in the second half of the In approximately 80 percent of cases in 1940.

They knew exactly which part of Great Britain would be attacked by the Germans. This was known from radio transmissions, and also from the various radio guidance systems – one was called Knickebein, others were the X and Y devices – and on the British side, they could trace the radio guidance lines and see which cities they intersected over. But we also learned the attack targets in advance from deciphering the German radio transmissions.

• **A frequently heard objection is that the Germans themselves brought about the annihilation attacks on German cities by unleashing the Second World War. Is this view tenable? Can the attack on Dresden really be compared to the German attacks on Warsaw, Rotterdam, or, for example, Coventry?**



The air raid on Rotterdam was a tactical air raid targeting the artillery positions. On May 14, 1940, a margarine warehouse and an oil depot caught fire, which then set a significant portion of the city ablaze. Approximately 900 people lost their lives, as confirmed to me by the city itself, which did not prevent Churchill from writing in his memoirs of 30,000 deaths in the air raid.

Incidentally, in the following years, the British killed far more people in Rotterdam through air raids than the Germans. The air raid on Warsaw in September 1939 was something entirely different. The Germans had called on Warsaw to surrender and given the population the opportunity to take refuge in the previously designated streets. However, the Polish commander of Warsaw urged the population to remain in the city. An artillery barrage and an air bombardment then ensued, resulting in considerable property damage. I don't know how many people were killed. In my opinion, the German air raid on Belgrade in April 1941 was far more significant. It is said that around 17,000 people died. This is stated in a contemporary document. However, I don't know how authentic this account is. Allegedly, the air war against the capital cities began in the summer of 1940. For an entire year, not a single bomb fell on London. Hitler had issued a ban on bombing London.

He had authorized the bombing of English air bases and port facilities. But no bombs were allowed to be dropped on London.

Around August 24, 1940, a year after the start of the war, a single German bomb fell on a street at the eastern edge of London. An aircraft had gone astray. It had been ordered to attack an oil storage facility. No one was killed. No one was injured. But when Churchill learned of it the next morning at 9 a.m., he personally called Bomber Command at its headquarters in High Wycombe, west of London, and ordered an immediate attack on Berlin with 100 aircraft. He saw that this was the only

This would be a way to prolong the war in his favor. A peace movement had broken out in England that summer, even within his own cabinet. Churchill saw this as an opportunity to silence the peace movement by launching an air war. Furthermore, it would allow him to demonstrate the horrors of the Germans to the Americans.

And it was possible to deflect the pressure of the German air raids from the English airfields and radar installations in southern England and redirect it towards the capital. That was his intention. We attacked Berlin four times between August 25 and September 4, 1940. Four times Hitler refused to respond to these attacks. When Churchill then ordered the fourth attack on Berlin, Hitler...

In September 1940, he delivered his famous speech at the Sportpalast, in which he said: "We will wipe out their cities!" And so on. Churchill immediately gave the order to attack the center of Berlin again that same evening. On September 6, the German Luftwaffe appeared over London on a Saturday afternoon, not a night attack, but a daylight raid. With that, the air war had begun. It was clearly Churchill's wish that it happen this way.

The burned-out Coventry Cathedral after the German air raid of November 1940. It claimed only a fraction of the victims of the bombing of Dresden.
Image: GoShow, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons



David Irving, born in 1938, is one of the most renowned historians of the 20th century. He achieved international acclaim with his 1963 book "The Fall of Dresden," which immediately garnered worldwide media attention. "British book renews controversy over Allied attack on Dresden," headlined the "New York Times," and in London's "New Statesman," Richard H.S. Crossman succinctly summarized the book's message: "War crime." The West German playwright Rolf Hochhuth also referenced Irving's book on Dresden in his 1967 play "Soldiers." Subsequently, nearly all of Irving's books have been reprinted multiple times and translated into several languages, including his biographies of Erwin Rommel, Hermann Göring, and Winston Churchill, all of which were published in Germany by major and prestigious publishing houses. From the 1990s onwards, Irving was considered "controversial" and faced increasing legal persecution because of his work as a historian. He described this in his book "My Prisons: Experiences and Thoughts in Austrian Prisons," published in 2007 by FZ-Verlag.

What role did Bomber Command play in British air warfare? Was Churchill's course of warfare controversial within the Luftwaffe leadership? Was there any military resistance in Great Britain comparable to the German resistance that ultimately culminated in the July 20th plot?

There was resistance against Churchill in the summer of 1940. It only gradually became clear that the Queen Mother, then Queen Elizabeth, was behind it. She hated Churchill. She conspired with various admirals. This was also one of the reasons why Churchill provoked the air war. This sentiment was prevalent at the time.

Returning to the attack on Dresden: Is it correct that two hours were deliberately left between the two attacks so that the firefighting and medical units could also be hit in the second attack?

That's absolutely correct. Bomber Harris confirmed this to me personally when I visited him on March 23, 1962. He confirmed to me that it was pure tactics, just like the Irish terrorists did in England, who always used two bombs.



They laid a bomb. First a small one, then firefighters and rescue workers arrived, and then the big bomb went off.

Mr. Irving, you also wrote a well-researched biography of the British wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill. With your current knowledge, would you describe Churchill as a war criminal?

By today's standards, Churchill is undoubtedly a war criminal. It is now clearly established that air raids like those carried out against Dresden in 1945 are unequivocally a war crime. If only for reasons of proportionality. You can't simply wipe out a city of 100,000 people to destroy a cigarette factory or a glassworks. You can't.

Based on all the documents you have been able to evaluate over the decades and that you are familiar with: How high do you estimate the number of victims from February 13, 1945, especially considering that many refugees from the east were in the city at that time?

While I was writing the book, a senior teacher from Hanover named Hanns Voigt, who was the head of the "Missing Persons Registration Office," specifically the "Dead" department, contacted me. He described to me in detail how this terrible task was carried out. He said, "In the end, we had several buckets full of wedding rings, all of which we handed over to the Reichsbank in Frankfurt." He told me his estimate was 135,000. I also mentioned this figure in my book at the time.

There were corpses, there were cellars where there was only mush or layers of ash.

How could anyone have determined how many people burned to death there? Besides, there were countless refugees in the city, half a million refugees. Entire families perished, families who had no home, no air-raid shelter. When an entire family dies, there's no one to report them missing.

Or you can approach the whole thing like in Hamburg, where you know how many apartments there were and how many people lived in each apartment.

Calculations can also be made in this way. A very good work has now been published by the city of Dresden. It discusses incidental findings that can be used to make calculations. For example, a salvage team was present at the Heidefriedhof cemetery, and their reports mentioned, for example, in mid-April 1945: "We have approximately 300 hundredweight of clothing here. The clothing was removed from the corpses, and they had five tons of footwear there."

Mountains of shoes. What does that remind you of? Mountains of glasses.

The old clothes were taken from the corpses, sorted and cleaned, and then passed on to the prisoner camps.

But these 15,000 kilos of clothing are obviously not from all the corpses. You can see the photos from the Old Market Square.

The bodies piled up there by the 500 on the pyres were not undressed. The clothing of those who were dismembered or burned in the streets was also not removed. Clothing could only be taken from the "clean" bodies.

That's another calculation that leads to a different figure altogether.

The attack on Dresden is now also a chapter in West German "historical politics." While, on the one hand, German atrocities are portrayed in an increasingly larger light as the events recede into the distance, German casualties are minimized wherever possible. From an international perspective, do you see any change in this national masochism of West German historical politics in the years since reunification?

No, things are still going in the wrong direction. When I was last in Dresden in February 1990, Dresden wasn't politically correct yet. Reunification was underway; it was still the GDR, but suddenly you were allowed to speak freely. On February 13th, the evening of the air raid, I was in Dresden. It was a very solemn occasion. People came with candles.

This was never done in West Germany on the anniversaries of the major air raids. West Germans found it unsettling. In the following years, efforts intensified to discontinue this form of commemoration.

All this splitting hairs over numbers points in the same direction. They don't want to give the correct figures. They don't want to give a final total. The number of air war dead in Germany is always given as "approximately half a million." It's unclear whether this refers only to Germany as a whole or to Germany including the occupied territories. But it always remains at approximately half a million. However, if you break that down—Dresden around 100,000, Hamburg around 40,000, Pforzheim 27,000, Darmstadt 15,000—then you see: This half a million cannot possibly be the correct figure. But that's politics; it's a political tool.

Mr. Irving, thank you for the interview.

The interview was conducted by Henrik Ostendorf and Karl Richter in 2005. AUFGEWACHT thanks Deutsche Stimme Verlags GmbH for permission to reprint.



WAKED UP
MAGAZINE OF RESISTANCE ON THE NET

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THE MAIN TRAIN STATION: PLACE OF HORROR

AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT FROM THE DRESDEN INFERNO

When the alarm sirens wailed, Dresden's main train station was packed with people. Both levels – the upper level for long-distance trains and the lower level for local trains – were completely jammed with refugees and returning soldiers. It was nearly impossible for staff to get through. On the lower level alone, four refugee trains were waiting to continue their journeys. But since this substation was a terminal station, all the trains would have had to depart in the same direction and be guided through the maze of signal boxes and tracks to their respective destinations.

Since it was uncertain whether some signal boxes had been damaged by the initial bombing raids, all trains had to remain in the station. Chaos reigned in the cellars and passageways.

Thousands of people, mostly refugees, were crammed together in this confined space. They all heard the piercing screech of the bombs hurtling down and the hard impacts that seemed to set the entire station vibrating violently. The main station's basement had no ventilation system whatsoever. This proved fatal for many hundreds in the completely overcrowded cellar.

Children gasped for air, crying, their cries drowned out by rattling sounds as they gasped for breath. The agonizing gasps echoed through the air-raid shelter like death cries. The same fate befell those who had sought refuge in the makeshift air-raid shelter on Bismarckplatz. Here at the main train station, too, no ventilation system had been installed. Here, too, people fought in terror for every breath; here, too, hundreds suffocated. Because there was no emergency exit on Bismarckstrasse, it was initially impossible for the rescuers, who began their work immediately after the bombing, to reach the people, as the main exit had been blocked.

Courageous men, including a pioneer group led by Major Hugo Eichhorn, Commander-

The commander of the replacement detachment of a pioneer regiment, who had been ordered there immediately after the end of the first attack, was finally able to clear the entrance and bring out the surviving people. Major Eichhorn, however, had set off with the bulk of his men immediately after he had witnessed the bombers take off. With his adjutant, he assembled the individual rescue teams and sent them into the city. A D-train carriage stood in front of the station, ready to be coupled to one of the westbound trains and depart.

The shunting locomotive stopped at the start of the attack. So did this wagon, which contained about 60 children from the nearby children's evacuation home, who were waiting with their teacher for onward transport westward.

When the first bombs fell, the whole carriage rocked like a boat on the high seas, when the first windows shattered and the blinding light of the flickering fires pierced the night, the children began to cry. Their teacher tried to calm them. The bombardment intensified from one minute to the next into a wild crescendo of destruction. Then incendiary bombs rained down from the sky, and phosphorus canisters were also dropped. One of them hit the carriage roof, and seconds later a greenish, iridescent mass flowed through one of the windows into the carriage interior. An air force officer, inspecting the station and the surrounding area, flung open the first compartment door and shouted: "The carriage is already on fire. Everyone out of here!" The children

They left the compartments and stumbled over to the railway embankment. When they arrived there and tried to enter the bunker, they were turned away. "Not a single space left." "Continue west."

They managed to reach the next air-raid shelter further west. Here they were safe.

Major Eichhorn and the main squad worked their way into the heart of the destruction. They fought their way through the burning streets to one of the few air-raid shelters and freed the people trapped inside. Advancing further, they witnessed horrific scenes. People clinging to the iron railings to avoid being swept away by the flames burned their hands and arms.

If they let go, they would be torn away like leaves by the wind.

One of the smaller rescue teams, called to a flooded basement, had to pull the drowned from the scorching water. It was a horrific sight to recover people who had perished in this way amidst the inferno. Other groups, seemingly unharmed by nearby mine-bombs, had suffered only ruptured lungs from the blast. When the rescue teams finally fought their way to the main train station, they found nothing but dead bodies, mutilated and torn apart. Little did they know that this was not yet the full horror of the night.

This eyewitness account can be found in the documentary appendix of Franz Kurowski's book "The Dresden Massacre and the Anglo-American Bombing Terror 1944/1945" (Druffel-Verlag, Berg am Starnberger See, 1995). AUFGEWACHT thanks the publisher, Dr. Gert Sudholt, for kindly granting permission to reprint it.

AWAKENED THE ATTACK

"THE TERROR POWERS THE BRITAIN

IN CONVERSATION WITH THE AVIATOR-
LEGEND "HAJO" HERRMANN

© 2007

Mr. Herrmann, it is often claimed that Germany brought about the destruction of its cities itself. Warsaw and Rotterdam come to mind.

The claim that Germany launched an air war against the civilian population with these two operations is a propaganda lie. We did not bomb the cities, but rather the enemy troops who were entrenched on the outskirts of Warsaw and Rotterdam and were shelling the German troops.

The enemy commanders were asked to surrender, which they refused or did reluctantly.

But residential buildings were destroyed. However, the property and lives of private individuals must be protected, as commanded by the Hague Convention on Land Warfare.

But not if the enemy turns the city into a fortress. In the case of Warsaw, the propagandists were clearly refuted by the French military attaché, General Armengaud, who was in Warsaw.

I witnessed the German attack. According to him, the Germans acted in accordance with the laws of war after repeated demands for surrender. In the case of Rotterdam, the Dutch were given deadlines for surrender, which they met at the last second after threats of bombing raids and a lengthy decision-making process – a pure delaying tactic. A group from my squadron, KG 4 "General Wever," was able to be recalled by radio – landing with bombs – while the radio message unfortunately reached the second group a few seconds too late. Only high-explosive bombs were dropped, no incendiary bombs.

An additional misfortune was that the explosions ignited the old buildings and the wind spread the fire.

As a former pilot of Fighter Wing 4, what are your thoughts on being blamed for the bombing terror?

The British perpetrated the terror by seeking thorough, scientific Attempts to disable the bomb cargo of apartment blockbusters, other explosive and to mix incendiary bombs so perfectly

Hans-Joachim "Hajo" Herrmann (born August 1, 1913, in Kiel; died November 5, 2010, in Düsseldorf) was a German fighter pilot during World War II, ultimately reaching the rank of colonel. After the war, he spent more than ten years in Soviet captivity. Herrmann developed the "Wild Boar" night fighter maneuver, with which German pilots inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. This maneuver involved day fighters operating directly over the night attack areas using a specially developed technique. Later, he worked as a lawyer.

discovered that all hell broke loose in German cities.

If the English version simply asserted, out of the blue, that the Germans had acted unlawfully in Warsaw and Rotterdam, what was the point of that?

To deceive the British and the world public, including the Germans, into believing that it was now justified to bomb open German cities, thus ostensibly to exact revenge. Distraction and a lack of justification. They began immediately in May 1940 under Churchill. Bombers flying in at night bombed German cities, deliberately avoiding identifying specific militarily significant targets, if indeed such targeting was even intended.

The number of civilians killed was constantly announced on the radio.

If the British nevertheless invoked retaliation, did the German leadership then immediately invoke retaliation with a better right by ordering the bombing of cities in England?

Not at all! Until mid-June, I only attacked targets between Dunkirk and Brest, deliberately diving on cargoes in the ports. It wasn't until June 18, 1940, that I flew over the English coast. This wasn't a reaction to the bombing of German cities, but rather strategic planning, as England was determined to continue the war. (...)

The interview documented here in excerpts was conducted by Ralph Tegethoff in 2004. AUF-GEWACHT thanks Deutsche Stimme Verlags GmbH for permission to reprint it.



DRESDEN COMMEMORATION – COMMAND OF CONSCIENCE!

GREETINGS FROM LUTZ GIESEN

For three decades now, a memorial march honoring those killed in the air war has taken place in Dresden. There has always been a need in Dresden for a dignified and honorable commemoration. Therefore, dedicated supporters have always come forward to ensure that the memorial march can be carried out.

During the 2019 Dresden commemoration, the names of 250 cities were read aloud, all of which shared Dresden's fate, having also been targeted by Anglo-American bombers. This ceremony has been further developed in subsequent years and has become an integral part of the event. Since then, it has formed the dignified conclusion of the Dresden commemoration, culminating in the traditional funeral march.

In the perception of many participants in the memorial march, as well as many Dresden residents, the commemoration is largely concentrated in the old town and city center. These areas were particularly hard hit during the bombing raids from February 13th to 15th, 1945. However, there are also many districts outside the city center that suffered extensive destruction. To ensure these events are not forgotten, memorial marches have repeatedly led to these areas. For no victim should be forgotten, no fate should disappear into oblivion. We want to keep the memory alive.

The 2016 Dresden Commemoration led through a large residential area to a memorial in Dresden-Nickern. The sandstone obelisk, with its clear, GDR-era inscription commemorating the "victims of Anglo-American bombing terror," was to be more prominently integrated into the commemoration than before. Demands from Dresden's self-righteous do-gooders for a redesign of the memorial followed promptly. From the outset, our events were linked to two central demands: to make February 13th the official day of remembrance.

and finally to erect a dignified memorial in the center of Dresden for all those who died as a result of the Allied bombing campaign. For many contemporary witnesses, it was particularly important to express the lack of a dignified memorial. Other bombed cities, both nationally and internationally, had set an example. The memorial sites in Hiroshima and Nagasaki are particularly moving.

In Dresden, however, monuments are even being removed. This happened in January 2024 in the Altmarkt (Old Market Square).

The inscription on the sandstone bench was quietly removed. Until then, it read: "This is a place of warning, remembrance, and commemoration. Here, the bodies of thousands of victims of the air raids of February 13 and 14, 1945, were cremated." At that time, the horror of war, carried from Germany to the whole world, also returned to our city."

The old inscription on the bench backrest was criticized not only because of its location. The final sentence has also been repeatedly attacked. It gave the impression that the city was justifying the Anglo-American bombing campaign against the civilian population. Many historians agree that no justification can be derived from the reference to Coventry or from any other arguments. This "rewriting" marks another low point in the culture of remembrance, which the city has been sabotaging and obstructing for decades. This is precisely why so many people from all over Germany and Europe participate in the traditional memorial march every year. The falsification of our history and the mockery of our dead must not go unchallenged.

An exhibition is planned as part of the commemoration in 2025. It is intended not only to remember the dead. The 21,700 known deceased should also be named and thus rescued from oblivion. This list is thanks to the meticulous research of the city historian Gert Bürgel.

He dedicated a book of over a thousand pages to the dead. Furthermore, he proved that the eyewitnesses who reported low-level attacks were not mistaken. Various events are being prepared for the week of action.

In addition to distributing leaflets, several street actions are planned. The commemorative march on February 15, 2025, will provide a fitting conclusion.

It traditionally ends with the ceremony, the minute of silence and the singing of the German national anthem.

Everyone is called upon to participate in the Dresden commemoration, to join the memorial march and thus contribute to ensuring that our dead are not forgotten! See you in Dresden!



Lutz Giesen has been the head of the ceremony of the "Dresden Remembrance" initiative since 2019 and the organizer of the traditional memorial march since 2022. Information about the initiative will be announced via the Telegram channel t.me/dresden_gedenken and the website www.dresden-gedenken.de.

THE BREATH OF STONES

You hear the stones speak
Tell about the country
The enemies wanted to break them.
With the hand of evil powers

They testify to the creation
Fueled by that power
Those stronger than weapons
Called German Spirit

They bear witness to the construction.
At a proud house

From which the times look
They went in and out

They remind us of the dead
They brought out the seeds
Messengers of distant times
They praise her deed

The stones should fall
To erase from the mind
Will the halls also burn down?
And which points towards height

But some stayed.
Despite the enemy power
What withstood all the blows

As a young seed awakens

From it, the green shoots stir,
tender and small, growing
tirelessly into a new existence.

Björn Clemens



THE BOMB ENTERROR AS GERMAN TRAUMA

FROM ULRIKE MEINHOF TO THE YOUNG LANDSMANSHIP EAST PRUSSIA

Yes, that did happen once! In a distant and now almost legendary prehistory, there were also leftists in our country who mourned German victims.

While this political spectrum is now largely staunchly anti-German, labels any remembrance of the bombing of Dresden as a "victim cult", suppresses the death toll as much as possible and does not shy away from taking to the streets with cynical slogans such as "Bomber Harris, do it again!", "No Tears for Krauts" or "All good things come from above", things looked very different a few decades ago – in both East and West.



Commemorative event on Dresden's Altstadt in February 2024. Previously, the city had removed an inscription there that commemorated the victims of the bombing. Photo: Arne Schimmer

A radical leftist like Ulrike Meinhof, later a member of the RAF, wrote a moving article for the magazine "Konkret" in 1965 about the destruction of the Elbe metropolis. Meinhof begins her text, titled "Dresden," in a completely matter-of-fact way: "Twenty years ago, on February 13 and 14, 1945, on the night of Shrove Tuesday to Ash Wednesday, the largest air raid by the Allied bomber commands on a German city in the Second World War was carried out: the attack on Dresden."

AS LEFTISTS STILL ABOUT GERMANS MOURNED

Furthermore, the then "Konkret" wrote Editor: "Over 200,000 people

"perished in the flames of Dresden." Such a statement would be enough today to be classified by the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution as "confirmed right-wing extremist." A national-revolutionary undertone also characterized the pronouncements of the early RAF. For example, in their statement on the devastating Heidelberg RAF attack of May 24, 1972, on the headquarters of the US Army in Europe, which claimed three lives, they stated: "The people in the Federal Republic are not supporting the security forces in the search for the bombers [...] because they have not forgotten Auschwitz, Dresden, and Hamburg." The RAF, then, as the declared avengers of the German bombing victims of the Second World War? There is no other way to interpret it.

I can hardly understand this passage. Today, any terrorists who adopted such a tone would immediately and without hesitation be categorized as "right-wing terrorists." In the 1950s, Ulrike Meinhof belonged to the minority who protested against the course of Western integration pursued by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, a course that nevertheless found growing support among large segments of the West German population. A majority was apparently also prepared to sacrifice the goal of German reunification for this. Memories of the Anglo-American bombing campaign against German cities were perceived as rather disturbing, since the perpetrators of the past had become new allies. Even in the otherwise quite diverse literature of the 1950s, only a few outsiders addressed the topic of the air war. Among those who could be mentioned are Gerd Gaiser, a former member of the German Air Force, with his expressionist masterpiece "The Dying Hunt," and the more communist-leaning Gert Ledig with his story "Retribution." This blank spot in the collective memory remains characteristic of western Germany to this day. In an essay published in the "taz" newspaper on November 29, 2023, entitled "Whoever says Gaza must also say Dresden," Steffen Greiner observed: "Behind the innocuous term 'post-war architecture' lie pedestrian zones that bear witness to an estimated 500,000 dead and ten million homeless. An enormous act of repression and only traces of remembrance."

"POWERFUL DEMONSTRATION" OF THE PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE

The situation in East Germany was quite different. Dresden, in particular, developed into the center of a state-run...



official commemoration of the air war. On the evening of the first anniversary of Dresden's destruction, at 9:45 p.m. – roughly coinciding with the start of the first wave of attacks – the bells of all the city's churches rang. This beautiful form of remembrance has been preserved to this day. On the third anniversary of the air raids, on the 13th... In February 1948, commemorative events were organized for the first time in the Dresden city districts. From the fifth anniversary of the destruction of Dresden onward, commemorative events were held throughout East Germany. On the tenth anniversary in 1955, the East German leadership issued a call for a "powerful demonstration of the people's struggle" against the "ratification of the Paris Agreements and the remilitarization of West Germany." Until 1956, the main mass rally took place in front of the Japanese Palace in the Neustadt district; from 1957 onward, it was held in the Altmarkt square of the Elbe metropolis. Up to 200,000 citizens regularly participated in these large-scale events. The main speakers included East German head of state Walter Ulbricht (1952) and Minister-President Otto Grotewohl (1951 and 1955). These large East German rallies, which continued until 1970, certainly had a political bias. This manifested itself, for example, in the overemphasis on the American contribution to the destruction of the city, while the devastation caused by British bombers was sometimes barely mentioned. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the GDR succeeded—unlike the Federal Republic, where this was never even planned—in organizing a dignified and appropriately scaled state commemoration of the bombing victims. From 1983 onward, state memorial events were once again held in front of the ruins of the Frauenkirche.

The year 1985 deserves special mention, as the reopening of the Semperoper opera house sparked another mass rally with 200,000 participants and East German leader Erich Honecker as the keynote speaker. Internationally, two spectacular book publications in the 1960s brought the bombing of Dresden into sharp focus. David Irving's "The Fall of Dresden" was published in 1963, providing the first comprehensive and well-researched work on the subject. In 1969...



Banner of the Young East Prussian Association (JLO) at the 2012 memorial march.
Image: Archive WAKED UP

Kurt Vonnegut then published his novel "Slaughterhouse-Five," a work that oscillates between collage, grotesque, and tragedy and is now considered a classic of modern literature. Vonnegut had experienced the devastating air raid as a US prisoner of war in the catacombs of the city slaughterhouse and henceforth viewed his survival amidst total destruction as a flaw in the fabric of fate.

JÖRG FRIEDRICHS MILESTONE

A pivotal turning point in German collective memory was the publication of "The Fire" in 2002 by the independent scholar Jörg Friedrich. The historian presented the bombing campaign against German cities as a vast and empathetically narrated panorama, attracting considerable attention both nationally and internationally. For several years, the taboo surrounding the incineration of German cities was broken, allowing for a more open discussion.

In 1990, the year of German reunification, the "Call from Dresden," initiated by trumpeter Ludwig Güttler, called for the reconstruction of the destroyed Frauenkirche. Its reopening in 2005 was certainly a joyous event for the entire nation. However, the Elbe metropolis now lacked a prominent memorial for the victims of the bombing. Even during the 1990s, it had become apparent that such a project would meet with the disinterest of a state increasingly acting in an anti-nationalist manner.

On February 13, 1994, the first commemoration organized by the Young East Prussian Association (JLO) took place in Dresden. A group of JLO members carried a cardboard coffin through the city center at a measured pace, bearing the motto: "1,000 steps for Dresden – how many dead with each step?" From 1998 onward, the number of participants doubled every year. By 1999, there were 200, and by 2000, over 500. Well-known right-wing politicians like Franz Schönhuber took part in the memorial march. On the 60th anniversary of the bombing of Dresden, more than 8,000 people marched in a kilometer-long memorial march through Dresden's city center under the auspices of the NPD parliamentary group in the Saxon State Parliament.

In the following years, increasing left-wing terrorism overshadowed the Dresden commemoration, yet the number of participants reached five figures in 2010. From then on, the police increasingly targeted not left-wing extremists, but the properly registered and approved memorial march. This was the sad culmination of a history of systematic repression that had escalated year after year. However, the Dresden commemoration has seen renewed interest in recent years. In 2024, the Free Saxons and the patriotic citizens' network were even able to temporarily erect a three-meter-high bomb memorial, the "Flame of Remembrance," on the Neumarkt square in front of the Frauenkirche, thus demonstrating that the victims of the area bombing are not forgotten.

Arne Schimmer



POINTS OF CONTROL: VICTIM- NUMBERS AND LOW-FLYING PLANES

MINIMIZED WAR CRIME

Shortly after the bombing raids on Dresden from February 13th to 15th, 1945, rumors spread that something monstrous and unprecedented had occurred in the Elbe metropolis. The Berlin correspondent of the "Svenska Dagbladet" reported in the February 26th edition that there had been 250,000 victims.

In March 1945, the "Tagesanzeiger von Stadt und Kanton Zürich" published three installments of a harrowing eyewitness account entitled "Escape from Hell", in which the author, after consulting with soldiers, spoke of 200,000 dead.

The Romance scholar Viktor Klemperer, at that time a resident of various "Jewish houses", complained in a diary entry dated February 22nd about the "brief notes about Dresden" in the press, which contained "not a word about the 200,000 dead".

The records of the literary scholar, who later became world-famous, thus stand in diametrical contrast to the now widespread theory that Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels used the destruction of Dresden as a pretext for a major campaign and

This supposedly secured the "final victory" of an agitation campaign that continues to have an impact on neo-Nazis and right-wing extremists to this day. It is striking that in all three statements from completely different observers, a death toll in the high six figures is considered entirely plausible.

TRAVERY CONFESSIONS

The bombing of Dresden was, in any case, a coldly calculated mass murder.

and a terrible war crime.

However, those circles currently in power cannot accept this well-founded finding, as the ruling class's historical policy is based on minimizing the memory of German victims.

Therefore, in 2004, the city of Dresden appointed a commission of historians tasked with "scientifically" reducing the circulating figures for the number of victims. Even the precise figure of "at most 25,000 dead," announced a few years later by Dresden's state historians, is revealing.

For in no other German city bombed during the war is the determination of precise figures likely to be as difficult – not to say impossible – as in Dresden. This is due, firstly, to the sheer scale of the casualty figures that had to be dealt with here. "For the first time in the history of the war, an air raid had so devastatingly destroyed a target that there were not enough unharmed survivors to bury the dead," he emphasized.

Memorial to the dead of the air raids on Dresden in February 1945 at the Dresden Heath Cemetery.

More than 11,500 victims lie in mass graves along this path. An ash grave contains the remains of another 6,865 people who, due to the risk of disease, were cremated on makeshift grates (some made from railway tracks) in the Old Market Square using flamethrowers.

Image: Wikswat, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons





David Irving in his 1963 book "The Fall of Dresden".

The major problem in counting the victims also lies in the fact that the officially ordered recovery and documentation measures were interrupted by the Red Army's entry into the city on May 7/8, 1945, and could never be resumed seamlessly afterward, as large parts of the previously compiled files had either been destroyed or taken abroad. Perhaps no light at all would ever have been shed on the matter if the excellent researcher Irving had not been able to obtain testimonies from key eyewitnesses in the early 1960s. Today, the British historian is shamelessly vilified as an alleged falsifier of history at every opportunity. In reality, however, "The Fall of Dresden" was the first truly scholarly work on this subject and set standards in the field of aerial warfare history.

To be fair, historian and aviation expert Matthias Neutzner, in the 2005 anthology "The Red Glow: Dresden and the Bombing War," published by the politically unobjectionable "Edition Sächsische Zeitung," highlighted Irving's outstanding pioneering role in the field. Neutzner noted that Irving had "for several years diligently collected Allied and German documents, the majority of which had never been published before, and painstakingly located eyewitnesses – including in Dresden." Neutzner described the accounts gathered in the book as "gripping, full of shocking details, and illustrated with previously unseen photographs." Irving also succeeded in identifying the key witness for determining a reasonably accurate number of victims. This was Hanns Voigt, who on March 6, 1945, had been appointed head of the "Dead Persons Department" of the "Missing Persons Registration Center" (VNZ), which had been hastily established in Dresden.

Although Voigt had to work in an environment that would have made even Dante's Hell seem like a charming Garden of Eden in comparison, he and his 90 employees proceeded in an extremely methodical and deliberate manner.

to separate missing person reports from death reports.

Four separate files were created. The first contained clothing cards, each with a sample from an unidentified body; the second contained personal valuables; the third consisted of a register of identified bombing victims; and the fourth was a list of recovered wedding rings. Precise details of the location and date of discovery were always recorded. Given the prevailing circumstances, this was an achievement that can hardly be overstated.

The rescue teams worked in cellars at risk of collapse, constantly putting their lives at risk and performing a psychologically demanding task, which many could only manage with considerable alcohol consumption. Cellars where coal had been stored remained insane furnaces for weeks. Added to this was the growing nervousness as the Red Army drew closer week by week. It is understandable that some members of the rescue teams felt overwhelmed by the documentation requirements and were solely focused on the often completely mutilated, mummified, and...

to bury charred, wedged-together, or burned-in-small piles of ash bodies as quickly as possible.

"ESTIMATES OF UP TO 150,000 DEAD ARE JUSTIFIED"

This likely led to a considerable underestimation of the number of victims. In a letter to David Irving dated April 30, 1961, the former head of the "Dead Men Department" summarizes the situation as follows: "The number of dead registered as 'known' or 'unknown' – as long as I worked there – is, as I recall, around 80,000 to 90,000. I believe that approximately 135,000 dead from the attacks would be a more accurate figure.

There are so-called documentary reports that speak of 50,000 to 500,000, some even cite 220,000, but in my opinion, none of them are accurate." This quote from the letter to Irving can be found in the book "Dresden 1945: Data – Facts – Victims" by the physician and contemporary historian Wolfgang Schaarschmidt, who died in 2022 and, in retirement, conducted extensive research on the bombing raids on Dresden. He presented the results in two clearly structured publications in 2010 and 2018.

A pile of corpses on the old market square in Dresden, stacked on railway tracks, February 1945.

Image: German Federal Archives, Image 183-08778-0001 / Hahn / CC-BY-SA 3.0





Expanded and updated new editions of his book, first published in 2004. Probably no other author has devoted so much time and effort over decades to estimating the number of victims of the bombing raids on Dresden. Schaarschmidt ultimately concluded: "Estimates of 100,000 to 150,000 dead are justified."

But why, then, was the significantly lower figure of 35,000 dead declared binding in the GDR, at the latest with the 1965 publication of the book "Inferno Dresden – On Lies and Legends Surrounding Operation Thunderclap" by the post-war mayor of Dresden, Walter Weidauer? Schaarschmidt also investigated this question. First of all, the "Department of the Dead" was drastically reduced by the new rulers to just six employees. Hanns Voigt moved to West Germany after being denounced as a former member of the Nazi Party and dismissed from the civil service. However, the extensive confiscation by the Soviet occupying forces of the card index compiled by Voigt and his staff had far more serious consequences for the now severely restricted research on the Dresden bombing victims; only a few remnants of this index remain.

the Elbe metropolis remained. The originals are now probably either in Russia or Great Britain.

In his book, Schaarschmidt writes: "An intermediary provided the author with a significant communication from the former Soviet ambassador to Bonn, Valentin Falin. According to this communication, on Churchill's orders, the British approached the Soviet side with the request that they hand over all original documents concerning the Dresden bombing victims that fell into their hands. In return, the Russians would receive compensation from the captured stockpile of German modern weapons development." Churchill justifiably feared being accused of war crimes and took appropriate precautions. This incident demonstrates that the question of the number of Dresden bombing victims has always been considered a highly politically relevant matter, even at the highest international levels. The figure of 35,000 bombing deaths, declared canonical in the GDR, was thus determined based on an already significantly depleted body of records.

ROSSBEG COMMISSION: QUESTION-WORTHY TRIMMINGS

Furthermore, only those deceased who were buried in Dresden cemeteries were included. Precise information on determining the number of victims in the GDR can be found in the booklet "Attack on Dresden's Dead" by Dieter Lämpe, published in 2010 by the publishing house "Das Neue Berlin". The author was a member of a commission appointed by the communist post-war mayor Walter Weidauer to determine the number of dead, which worked in the years 1945/46. Lämpe's primary concern, however, is sharp criticism of the work of the commission of historians appointed in 2004 by the then FDP mayor Ingolf Roßberg, which subsequently determined a victim count of only 25,000. Lämpe calls this unequivocally a "lie".

The Rossberg Commission, for example, simply excluded those bombing victims from the Balance sheet removed, which was on the 1945 They were buried in the Dresden Heath Cemetery, but their names can no longer be determined.

They could. This group of victims undoubtedly existed. The relevant documents and statements by the then head gardener, Wilhelm Zeppenfeld, left no room for doubt. Lämpe describes the Roßberg Commission's, in his view, clearly untrue downplaying of the number of victims as "an undignified and unnecessary process."

However, the Rossberg Commission's categorical assertion that there were supposedly no low-level air attacks on defenseless survivors in Dresden in February 1945 is also being questioned. The Dresden-based contemporary historian Gert Bürgel has documented no fewer than 78 eyewitness accounts "who clearly identify the morning of February 14, 1945, in their reports of low-level air attacks." (Gert Bürgel: "Low-Level Air Attacks Dresden 1945" in: Wolfgang Schaarschmidt: "Dresden 1945: Data – Facts – Victims") In his 1982 book "Dresden 1945: The German Hiroshima," the renowned British historian Alexander McKee documents a detailed account by Otto Sailer-Jackson, head of the predator house at the Dresden Zoo in 1945, of a low-level air attack. Established historians like Helmut Schnatz simply dismiss such accounts as "fabrications" and "persistent legends."

One can't help but wonder whether academic historians will even refer to Dresden as a bombing raid in 50 years if this tendency to downplay and trivialize the event continues unabated. Indeed, the bombing of Dresden in February 1945 (there were further attacks in late summer and autumn of 1944, as well as in January, March, and April 1945) ranks among the worst and deadliest attacks ever carried out on a city. The research of David Irving and Wolfgang Schaarschmidt suggests that the city, overflowing with refugees from Silesia, may have suffered a low six-figure death toll. This represents a scale that defies all human comprehension. Dresden, like Hiroshima and Nagasaki, must live on in humanity's memory as a memorial against the unspeakable horrors of aerial warfare!

Arne Schimmer



“LEARNING TO CRY”

QUOTES ABOUT THE DESTROYED DRESDEN

"Those who have forgotten how to weep will learn it again at the fall of Dresden. This cheerful morning star of youth has shone brightly upon the world until now. I know that in England and America there are enough good minds to whom the divine light of the Sistine Madonna was not unfamiliar, and who weep with the deepest sorrow at the extinguishing of this star."

And I personally witnessed the destruction of Dresden under the Sodom and Gomorrah hells of the English and American aircraft. (...)

I stand at the starting point of life and envy all my deceased intellectual companions who were spared this experience. I weep. Don't take offense at the word "weeping": the greatest heroes of antiquity, including Pericles and others, were not ashamed of it. From Dresden, from its exquisitely balanced cultivation of art in music and literature, magnificent currents flowed throughout the world, and England and America, too, drank thirstily from them. Have you forgotten that? I am nearly eighty-three years old and stand before God with a legacy that is, unfortunately, powerless and comes only from the heart: it is the plea that God may grant humanity more

"Love, purify, and clarify for their salvation as before."

Nobel laureate in Literature Gerhart Hauptmann on March 29, 1945 in Agnetendorf, Silesia

"A guard repeatedly went up the stone steps to check on the outside, then came down and whispered to other guards. Outside, a conflagration raged. Dresden was one vast flame. A flame that consumed everything organic, everything flammable."

It was not safe to leave the shelter until noon the following day. When the Americans and their guards finally went out, the sky was black with smoke. The sun was like an angry pinhead. Dresden was now like the moon, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everyone else in the surrounding area was dead.

Kurt Vonnegut, "Slaughterhouse Five"

"The horrific destruction continued; besides Dresden, Vienna was also heavily bombed. One has the feeling of..."

Blows aimed at a carcass. The measure of pain doesn't seem to be full yet. Onward in the garden and at the desk. Thought: Isn't this activity similar to that of those insects one sometimes encounters on the path – one can still see the head feeding and the antennae moving, while the body has already died?

That, however, is only one side of the process; the other is metaphorical, sacramental. One sows without expecting to reap. Such activity is either completely meaningless or transcendental.

Which of the two—that is, to determine—lies in our hands.

Ernst Jünger in his war diary "Radiations", entry of February 16, 1945

"This afternoon, the fourth attack on central Saxony, especially on Dresden. (...) The thought that the two old people, possibly homeless since the night before last, are huddled somewhere among the rubble, and that my mother is clutching my two manuscript folders tightly despite fear, death, and devils, makes me sick. (...)



The thought that ten to fifteen thousand planes drop bombs on Germany every day, and that we, long since without any resistance, have to remain silent and, like cattle in the slaughterhouse, actually remain silent, makes one's mind stop. When will I hear anything?

Erich Kästner on February 15, 1945 in his diary "Notabene 45"

"The British government under its Prime Minister Sir Winston Churchill succeeded until the end of the war, until March 1945, in concealing the true, deliberate, and systematic nature of the British bombing raids on German cities. (...) If proof were needed that there is no such thing as a just war – Dresden would be the proof. If proof were needed that a state of defense inevitably degenerates into aggression – Dresden would be the proof. If proof were needed that nations are exploited by the belligerent governments themselves – Dresden would be the proof."

Ulrike Meinhof in "konkret" 3/1965

*"Since I received no message from my husband, I was so desperate that I dared to visit Dresden again."
Because I didn't have a single diaper, bag, etc. for my baby.*

I knew that the station cellar, which resembled a labyrinth, was still intact; the people down there had simply suffocated. However, the SS had sealed everything off because there was a typhus outbreak.

I did eventually manage to get into the cellar, accompanied by a railway official with one arm who warned me, saying: 'You won't be able to bear it; there are thousands of dead bodies down there, and I can't help you!' What I saw down there is truly a horror story, dimly illuminated by the railwayman's lantern.

The people down there resembled leathery figures."

From the diary of a young female refugee, entry dated February 15, 1945, quoted from: "The Red Rooster: Dresden in February 1945" by Walter Kempowski

"The eerie aspect was that a war crimes tribunal was convened here by victors who, according to the standards of the later Nuremberg trials, should all have been hanged. Stalin at least for Katyn, if not for everything. Truman at least for the completely unnecessary bombing of Nagasaki, and Churchill at least as chief bomber of Dresden. All three had decided on 'population resettlements' of insane proportions; all knew how criminal these were being carried out."

Rudolf Augstein, founder of the magazine "Der Spiegel", in 1985 about the Potsdam Conference

"The sight was so harrowing that I immediately decided not to continue my walk through these corpses. For this reason, I turned back and continued towards the Great Garden. But it was even worse there: as I walked through the grounds, I saw severed arms and legs, mutilated bodies, and heads that had been torn from their torsos and rolled away. Sometimes the corpses lay so close together that I had to push my way through to avoid stepping on arms and legs."

Report by a Swiss eyewitness, published as a three-part series under the title "Escape from Hell" in March 1945 in the "Tagesanzeiger von Stadt und Canton of Zurich"

"Incidentally, I was bombed by almost all air forces except the German ones – first by British and American aircraft, then after liberation Soviet planes hunted us down as we wandered along the German country roads."

The author and former US prisoner of war Kurt Vonnegut in an interview with "Der Spiegel" in Year 1998 ■

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Loar Frie

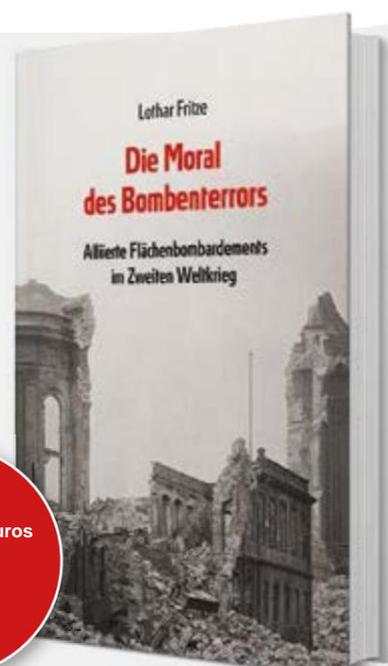
The morality of bomb terror

Allied area bombing in World

War II

Loar Frie was a research associate at the Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies in Dresden for more than 20 years and also an adjunct professor at the Chemnitz University of Technology. Political correctness in academia could not prevent him from publishing this explosive book: "The Morality of Bombing Terror" is a meticulously researched fundamental study of the merciless destruction of German cities by the so-called liberators – and above all, a documentation of the true war aims of the Allies.

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REMEMBRANCE AND LEFT-WING HATE

ANTIFA VIOLENCE AND BLOCKADES: 2010 AS A TURNING POINT OF DRESDEN MOURNING MARCH

Since the mid-1990s, the annual commemoration of the Dresden bombing victims had been a fixture on the calendar of patriotic and conservative circles. The "Young East German Association (JLO)," formerly known as the "Young East Prussian Association" until its forced name change in 2000, played a significant role in this success. The JLO organized the central memorial march, which always took place on the Saturday following February 13th. Participants ranged from conservative circles and student fraternities to supporters of the then-leading right-wing parties (Republicans, DVU, NPD), to non-partisan comradeships, and even ordinary Dresden citizens with no political affiliation whatsoever.

Until the end of the 2000s, the number of participants steadily increased, soon reaching the 10,000 mark. With hundreds of black flags waving, the annual event in Dresden was also a visual expression of a dignified culture of remembrance, carrying on the flame of memory.

While the commemoration in the first years after the fall of the Berlin Wall was comparatively media-

Although it initially received little attention, the focus increased significantly, particularly after the NPD's entry into the state parliament in 2004 (as did the number of participants in the event). Counter-protests also grew year by year; from 2005 onwards, there were initial attempts at blockades and minor disruptions, initially organized by regional left-wing extremists. However, in 2009, nationwide Antifa alliances mobilized for the first time in Dresden. Although-

Initially, blocking the memorial march wasn't enough, but the first Antifa clashes occurred, though exclusively against the police tasked with managing the far-left demonstration. The patriotic commemoration proceeded without incident. However, as the following year would reveal, this was the last time.

BIG APPEARANCE BY "DRESDEN NAZ-FREE"

As early as the end of 2009, left-wing groups across Germany mobilized to prevent the "Nazi march" in Dresden. In Antifa strongholds such as Berlin, Hamburg, and Jena, "blockade conferences" were held to coordinate actions. A coordinated bus trip for Antifa supporters took place nationwide, with the organizers, united in the "Dresden Nazifrei" (Dresden Nazi-Free) alliance, orchestrating the journeys to potential blockade sites. The security authorities also took notice of the massive counter-mobilization. However, instead of taking action, given the numerous concrete calls for violence, the city of Dresden, as the assembly authority, issued a ban on the JLO's memorial march. Although this ban was not legally tenable (which is why it has already been overturned by the Dresden Administrative Court), it was a first indication that in the future one could no longer rely on the neutrality of the authorities, who in previous years had accompanied the funeral march in a comparatively professional manner.

An Antifa blockade during the memorial march in 2010.
Image: dielinke_sachsen, CC BY 2.0 Wikimedia Commons



And it happened as it had to: Over 10,000 left-wing extremists from all over Germany traveled there on February 13, 2010; the central funeral march even attracted attention.



On the day of the bombing itself, they traveled to Dresden. In a coordinated manner, they began occupying key locations in the old town and city center. Groups of patriotic demonstrators arriving in Dresden were specifically targeted, the windows of tour buses were smashed, and some passersby who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time were brutally attacked. This situation was new for the organizers of the JLO (Young Local Organization). The designated assembly point in front of the Neustadt train station, from which the memorial march was to begin, proved to be extremely unfavorable; all entrances and exits were blocked by counter-protesters within a very short time. Nevertheless, by the afternoon, around 7,000 patriots had managed to reach the assembly area; countless others were either prevented from entering or abandoned their journey in despair. I myself was part of a larger tour group from Dortmund; we, along with several other tour bus crews from the Dresden area, had initially travelled by train to Dresden-den-Mitte station, before we were informed there that train service to Neustadt station would be discontinued.

We took matters into our own hands and marched across the railway tracks towards Neustadt, but the same police who had allowed the far-left mob to run rampant were suddenly very quick to push several hundred patriots back to the central station, using persuasive tactics like pepper spray. At least after several hours, a train finally arrived, allowing us to reach the rally site. Hundreds of other activists, including many tour bus crews who had traveled to Dresden from the north, had even fought their way several kilometers through Dresden from the "Wilder Mann" exit (literally, as there were direct clashes with Antifa) before reaching the Neustadt station.

"SHAME, SHAME"

Theoretically, the funeral march could have begun with thousands of participants, but the police leadership decided to block the event. The state authorities announced via loudspeaker that the march would not take place without result.

It was announced that the event would be reduced to a stationary rally, as the safety of the participants could not be guaranteed. Thousands of shouts of "Shame, shame!" echoed back at the police, led by Frank Rennie, who was at the microphone at the time, but the far-left counter-mobilization was successful. For the first time in 2010, the central memorial march was prevented by mass blockades. The participants, who had traveled from afar, were left with only a disappointed journey home.

While most of the participants dispersed, the bus crews of the West German tour buses traveled together by train to Pirna, where the buses were waiting for their return journey. Frustrated by the undignified way in which the commemoration had been disrupted, most of the returning travelers did not board the buses but instead staged a spontaneous demonstration in Pirna with approximately 500 participants. The small police presence accompanying the train proved overwhelmed and had to limit themselves to directing traffic. The local SPD (Social Democratic Party) experienced firsthand just how angry the demonstrators were: their constituency office on Lange Straße had fallen victim to the general frustration during the demonstration and lost all its windows. Not exactly pleasant, but compared to the numerous acts of violence perpetrated by left-wing extremists that same day, a minor incident.

Here, too, it became clear once again how zealously the state can act when it so chooses: Following the spontaneous demonstration, the police blocked the A17 on-ramp towards Dresden with a patrol car and forced all tour buses to take the motorway towards the Czech Republic. Apparently, this was to prevent any escape onto the A4, because the A17 was subsequently completely closed, and several hundred patriots were held at a rest area just before the Czech border until late into the night by a (by then arrived)

Large police presence detained. Under the accusation of breach of the peace, hours of checks and criminal charges followed, which, as far as is known, were discontinued

"Bomber Harris do it again!"
Nackt-Studentin provoziert Pegida mit Weltkriegsvergleich



When hatred for one's own country and political-ideological opposition outweigh any decent human feeling, then this is what it looks like – not only revealing but also damning, as this 2015 FOCUS report shows. Image: Screenshot focus.de

The blockade of the memorial march in 2010 changed the nature of the Dresden commemoration: The left-wing scene gained even more momentum and continued its blockade policy the following year, 2011, when massive street battles erupted across the city. At the same time, the number of participants on the patriotic side dropped significantly after the chaotic events of the previous year. An attempt to counter the left-wing blockade tactic with a star march, in which demonstrators converged from multiple starting points to a common destination, failed due to the mass militancy of the far left: Instead of blocking individual squares, barricades burned across large parts of Dresden that day, and clashes broke out throughout the city between left-wing extremists and patriots, as well as between the police and both sides. The JLO subsequently decided to abandon the central memorial march – a painful defeat for the German right, across all political spectrums. It was only almost a decade later that the tradition of the central commemoration was revived by the "Dresden Remembrance" alliance, but the number of participants from the late 2000s has not been reached since.

Michael Brück





COLOGNE: A THOUSAND BOMBERS ON APPROACH

“OPERATION MILLENNIUM”: BLUEPRINT FOR A WAR CRIMES

The spring of 1942 was marked by serious conflicts within the British military leadership. Both the Admiralty and some army commanders demanded that the Royal Air Force allocate more aircraft to secure sea lanes and to support British war operations in the Middle East and Africa.



Cologne's Old Town was 95 percent destroyed in March 1945. Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons

Many commanders resented the fact that, in their view, too many resources were being allocated to Arthur Harris's Bomber Command. Prime Minister Winston Churchill, however, was a fanatical advocate of area bombing of major German cities; otherwise, there might have been a reallocation of resources. By May 1942, the pressure had become so great that Harris planned a decisive move. This was to consist of a spectacular operation: the first thousand-bomber raid in military history.

For this purpose, all reserves of the British Air Force were mobilized, including naval aircraft and already decommissioned planes. The project was named "Operation Millennium." From an aviation perspective

Unfavorable weather conditions over northern Germany prompted Harris to change the bombing target from Hamburg, originally planned for May 30, 1942, and instead head for Cologne. On Sunday, May 31, 1942, at 12:17 a.m., air raid sirens sounded for the Rhine metropolis. The first bombs fell at 12:47 a.m., the last around 2:25 a.m. A bomber appeared over the city every five seconds, and 12,000 individual fires merged into 1,700 major blazes.

From the bomber crews' perspective, the entire city melted into a gigantic sea of flames. In reality, however, unlike two months earlier in Lübeck, a firestorm did not develop. 150 fire brigades from across the Rhineland and the Ruhr region raced to the scene and were able to extinguish numerous fires. There were 480 dead and 5,000 injured; later attacks would have far worse consequences. In London, they were satisfied. The mass pile-up of bombers predicted by many experts had not occurred. The anti-aircraft batteries with their searchlights had indeed inflicted a new record loss of 3.9 percent on the attackers, but Churchill and his associates considered this acceptable. Bomber Command had demonstrated its capabilities, and Harris received numerous congratulations. The debacle expected by some experts had failed to materialize.

On June 15, Churchill wrote cheerfully to Air Force Chief of Staff Charles Portal that he had been pleased to learn of Bomber Command's intention to

June was to be used "for another iteration of 'Arabian Nights,'" and there were no longer any serious objections from the Luftwaffe and Navy leadership. The die was cast, the fate of the German cities sealed. The heaviest attack on Cologne then followed with the Peter and Paul Raid on the night of June 28-29, 1943. It was part of the RAF's "Battle of the Ruhr," in which one city after another in the Rhineland and Ruhr region was massively attacked from the air. The Peter and Paul Raid claimed 4,500 lives, almost ten times more victims than "Operation Millennium."

In a 2013 article published in the "Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger," eyewitness Heinz Pettenberg recalled the day after the devastating attack, writing: "The heat is unbearable, St. George's Church is in ruins at Waidmarkt, the smoke drifts through the streets a toxic blue-black, people occasionally emerge from the fumes: emergency response teams with puffy eyes, panting refugees with bags on their shoulders. A dead horse, misshapen and bloated, lies in the street, and—a scene of horror—corpses, barely concealed." An unbelievable 262 times Cologne was bombed during the Second World War, making it the most frequently attacked city in Germany during the war. The cathedral, however, did not collapse, which many Rhinelanders considered a miracle. Although the cathedral was severely damaged, its Gothic architecture allowed the pressure waves from the bombs to be dissipated through the windows and open buttresses. By the end of World War II, however, Cologne had almost ceased to exist; the old town was 95 percent destroyed.

Arne Schimmer



OPERATION GOMORRHA: DEATH OVER HAMBURG

IGNITION OF A GIGANTIC FIRESTORM

From March to July 1943, the British Air Force continuously bombed the Ruhr region and the Rhineland. This air battle, known as the "Battle of the Ruhr," also resulted in heavy losses for the attackers, who lost 872 aircraft and 6,000 aircrew members. The air war might soon have ended for the United Kingdom had the lost pilots and radio operators not been replaced by personnel from Commonwealth countries, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and India.

The losses during the Battle of the Ruhr were so painful for Bomber Command that Commander-in-Chief Arthur Harris decided to deploy a supposed wonder weapon in the planned bombing offensive against Hamburg. The mass dropping of reflective strips of tinfoil was intended to render the German radar and detection system inoperable. In London, this technical deception, known as "Windows," was considered potentially decisive for the war effort. It had been withheld until then because it was deemed too dangerous for the enemy.

Eilbeker Weg in Hamburg after the bombing attacks of Operation Gomorrah. Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons



he didn't want to reveal it. However, the method was already well-known in the German Reich, where the metal strips were called "Düffel" (chaff). Luftwaffe chief Hermann Göring had also refrained from using this technology for reasons of secrecy. Then, on July 24, 1943, during the opening attack of the air battle around Hamburg, known as "Operation Gomorrah," British bombers dropped tons of the reflective metal strips.

In fact, this largely disabled German radar detection.

The astute German engineers did find countermeasures to "Windows" relatively quickly. However, in July 1943, the kill rates of German night fighters and anti-aircraft batteries remained significantly below average, which contributed to "Operation Gomorrah" developing into a truly devastating attack.

Furthermore, this marked the first time the British and American bomber fleets engaged in a combined operation. The division of labor involved the British conducting night raids, while the American bombers attacked during the day. The second major attack by the Royal Air Force, which took place on the night of July 27th/28th, then unleashed a firestorm of unprecedented scale.

The laws of physics no longer seemed to apply. Jörg Friedrich wrote about this in his book "The Fire": "The narrow backyards become glowing dungeons; those imprisoned there can find no way out."

and await death. At the zenith of the firestorm, the sheer heat radiation causes houses to ignite instantly from the roof to the ground floor like a flash of flame.

(...) Trees rooted meters deep in the ground snapped and their crowns twisted.

Poplar trees were seen bent horizontally. Both Hamburg-Mitte and the districts of Rothenburgsort, Hammerbrook, Borgfelde, Hohenfelde, and Hamm were completely destroyed. Euphoria broke out in London over the results achieved. Now, the prevailing opinion was that Berlin only needed to be incinerated in the same way, and then the war would be as good as won. However, Churchill and Harris failed to understand that the firestorm, unleashed in this extreme form, was due to an exceptional climatic situation.

At the end of July 1943, exceptional drought prevailed, with humidity at only 30 percent, which facilitated the spread of the fires. Furthermore, the massive fires triggered by the first wave of attacks on July 24th and 25th, 1943, combined with a specific weather pattern—a high-pressure area in the lower elevations and a low-pressure trough with cold air masses aloft—created a so-called "air chimney" over the Elbe metropolis. The resulting suction effect gave the firestorm hurricane-force intensity.

In his 2016 autobiography, "Don't Wait for Better Times," Wolf Biermann described the firestorm as follows: "Thousands of people burned to death in the nights illuminated by bomb fire. Not a face, not a color, not a smell, not a sound has ever left my memory. The memory of this inferno is seared into my mind like nothing else." According to investigations by the Hamburg police, "Operation Gomorrah" claimed 41,450 lives. **Arne Schimmer**

BRAUNSCHWEIG AND DARM- CITY: FANS OF DEATH

"WATER GATES" SAVE MANY RESIDENTS OF THE CITY OF WELFEN

During the air raid on Darmstadt by RAF Bomber Command units in September 1944, the aircraft formed a fan-shaped formation for the first time. A special marking technique and the staggered timing of the high-explosive and incendiary bombs perfected the new attack tactic. The "night of fire" claimed the lives of 11,500 of Darmstadt's approximately 110,000 inhabitants. The destruction of Braunschweig was planned according to the same scheme. Several air raids in the previous year had already created gaps in the medieval half-timbered buildings. However, most of the city of Braunschweig still stood – until October 15, 1944. At 1:45 a.m. that day, the following report was issued: "The lead of the reported enemy bomber formation has overflown the city of Hanover and is now approaching Braunschweig!"

Just seven minutes later, the first bombs fell on Braunschweig. The destructive attack lasted 40 minutes. In total, approximately 847 tons of bombs were dropped on the city, initially 12,000 high-explosive bombs ("blockbusters") to provide the intended firestorm with flammable material. These were followed by 200,000 phosphorus and incendiary bombs to deliberately ignite a firestorm.

From their bunkers, the firefighters could see that fires were raging everywhere. The faint roar of the few remaining anti-aircraft guns could only be heard. As the first waves of bombs dropped, Lieutenant Rudolf Prescher of the fire protection police left the bunker on Münzstraße. Years later, he would record these events for posterity in his book, "The Red Rooster over Braunschweig: Air Raid Protection Measures and Air War Events in the City of Braunschweig, 1927–1945."

Prescher notes that thousands of people have fled through the burning streets to the outskirts. Tens of thousands, however, remain trapped in the firestorm of the city center, venturing out from the deceptive safety of their cellars into the ever-intensifying blaze. 23,000 people are – for now – safe in the six bunkers and two public air-raid shelters within the fire zone. Lieutenant Prescher and his comrades recognize the danger. If the fires in the immediate vicinity

If the area around the bunkers were to consume all the oxygen, thousands would lose their lives. Since the 400 men of the Braunschweig fire department are already deployed throughout the city, the rescue operation for the bunker occupants can only be carried out by emergency services from outside the city.

Prescher therefore rides his motorcycle to the command post on Celler Straße to meet the four fire brigades from Hanover. They arrive around 5 a.m. The lieutenant leads them from the northwest to the edge of the city center. From here, a "water corridor" must be driven towards the bunkers. The water corridor is one of the regularly practiced exercises of every fire department. It consists of a system of hoses that protects itself and the immediate surroundings from the embers with a sprayed curtain of water. However, it can only function if there is enough water available. And that has been ensured in Braunschweig.

Although the city's water supply network is severed in numerous places, the air raid protection authorities had established sufficient underground cisterns and fire ponds. Water can also be drawn from the Oker River, which flows around the city center.

The six bunkers and the two public air-raid shelters in the wildfire area are built so securely that the flames alone cannot harm them.

They could. But if the large air intake pumps were only forcing carbon oxides into the rooms, then the flames would indirectly claim their victims after all. By 7 a.m., the water tunnel had been driven to the first bunker. Everyone had survived and was now being led through the inferno of the firestorm, protected by the water curtains, out into the outer districts. Another 4,000 helpers from the surrounding villages gradually arrived in Braunschweig. They drove further water tunnels to the remaining bunkers. Only in the afternoon of October 15th was the fury of the fires broken. But for another four days, a thick layer of haze lay over the city, through which the light of the autumn sun could barely penetrate.

Thanks to the selfless and sacrificial work of the firefighters, no more than 561 fatalities were recorded. But 80,000 people lost everything they owned in that single night. The RAF drew its conclusions from this. The 5th

The bomber group that had already destroyed Darmstadt and Braunschweig is also carrying out air raids on Dresden. **Stefan Paasche**

B-17 "Flying Fortress" in a fan-like attack formation. Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons





PFORZHEIM: CREATURE A JEWELRY CITY

“CODE YELLOWFIN”: APOCALYPSE ON THE NAGOLD

In 1945, the destruction of German cities by the British Bomber Command and the US Air Force finally took on the form of an apocalyptic Armageddon. As early as 1954, the British aviation historian George Saunders remarked in the third volume of his history of the Royal Air Force between 1939 and 1945: "The destruction of Germany had by this time reached a scale that would have frightened even an Attila or Genghis Khan."

A horrific climax of this orgy of destruction was the bombing of Pforzheim, codenamed "Code Yellowfin," which took place on the night of February 23, 1945. 368 Royal Air Force aircraft dropped 1,575 tons of bombs, including high-explosive and incendiary bombs, as well as aerial mines. The densely built city on the Enz, Nagold, and Würm rivers was reduced to ash within just 20 minutes, covering an area of two by one and a half kilometers. At least 22,000 Pforzheim residents, one in three inhabitants of the watchmaking and jewelry city, perished in the firestorm. Eyewitnesses recall that even in Tübingen, 60 kilometers away, the fiery red sky was visible. The sheer force of the firestorm is further underscored by the fact that later, stationery belonging to a Pforzheim doctor was found in Stuttgart, and charred business mail from a local bank was even discovered on Lake Constance. The city, where Baden's Margrave Karl Friedrich had begun manufacturing watches and jewelry in 1767, burned for nine days.

The production of detonators had been outsourced from Pforzheim by the time of the attack, therefore there was not the slightest military necessity for the destruction of the previously picturesque and charming half-timbered town. Many people tried to save themselves by jumping into the Nagold and Enz rivers and drowned. Nevertheless, some survived thanks to the protection of the water. "Der Spiegel" documented this in its article published on the 21st. The article "You can write off the whole city" published in February 2020

Eyewitness accounts, including this one: "From a cellar window on the banks of the Enz River, a mother desperately tried to save herself and her two children by jumping into the water. Later, she recalled that she had been the first to jump in, to test whether she could stand. In the water, she felt the bottom beneath her feet. Her daughter screamed from above, saying she couldn't stand the heat any longer. She jumped into her mother's arms, who immediately asked in despair, 'Where is Karl-Heinz?' The little boy died in the flames."

The inferno reached indescribable proportions. Jörg Friedrich, in his book "The Fire," remarked on the attack on the city situated on the edge of the northern Black Forest: "Metals with a melting point of 1,700 degrees Celsius melted." Pforzheim "boiled into lava, as if the Cyclopean fists of another geological era had struck." During the British bomber fleet's return flight, one of the last remaining German night fighters, a Messerschmitt Bf 110, suddenly took to the sky and shot down the commander of the attacking formation, Master Bomber Edwin Swales. After the war, Pforzheim was rebuilt in the style of the 1950s; virtually nothing of the city's former medieval architectural identity has survived. Authors such as Wolfgang Schaarschmidt ("Dresden 1945: Data, Facts, Victims") and Björn Schumacher ("The Destruction of German Cities in the Air War") have also pointed out that the total area of damage from the Pforzheim firestorm amounted to 2.5 square kilometers.



Memorial to the victims of the Pforzheim bombing on the Wallberg hill, built from rubble. Image: Thomas, CC BY 2.0, Wikimedia Commons

Since the incinerated area in Dresden covered 15 square kilometers, it is plausible to assume a six-figure death toll. For 30 years, the "Friends of a Heart for Germany" (FHD) association, founded in 1989, has regularly held memorial services on February 23rd for the Pforzheim bombing victims on the Wartberg hill overlooking the city. These services have sometimes been subjected to massive attacks by violent left-wing extremists, regularly requiring the "largest police operation of the year" (Anton Maegerle) in the jewelry city. Thus, even in West Germany, there are still citizens who want to commemorate the victims of the destruction of German cities by the Allied bombing squads in public spaces. **Arne Schimmer**





"DORTMUND WAS ONCE UPON A TIME"

THE AIR ATTACK OF MARCH 12, 1945

As an industrial city, Dortmund was not spared from Allied air raids. As early as May 1943, the Royal Air Force launched two heavy attacks, deploying 596 and 826 bombers respectively, resulting in the deaths of hundreds. Reich Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels noted in his diary: "The reports coming out of Dortmund are quite horrifying"—but these were only a foretaste of what was to follow almost two years later. That was the attack of March 12, 1945, in which over 90 percent of Dortmund's city center was razed to the ground and tens of thousands of people—the exact numbers remain unknown to this day—lost their lives. It was the heaviest air raid of the entire Second World War, measured by the sheer number of bombs carried. A survivor described the destruction shortly afterward in three words: "Dortmund is gone."

At a time when the war was long since decided and the Allies were advancing ever further into the Ruhr region (Dortmund was occupied by American troops on April 13, 1945), the Royal Air Force Bomber Command, intoxicated by the terror attack on the city of Dresden just a few weeks earlier, decided to collectively punish the population of the Ruhr region as well. As early as March 11, 1945, British aircraft bombed nearby Essen. A day later, 1,108 British aircraft took off from eastern England towards Dortmund. Their deadly cargo: 5,000 tons of mines and high-explosive bombs. Their target: the city center.

A CITY LOSES ITS FACE

At 4:30 pm the first wave of attacks began with 921 bombers involved, affecting the entire historic city center, in which, incidentally, no war-related industry was located (insofar as that still played a role at this late stage of the war).

A second wave of attacks, carried out by the remaining bombers about half an hour later, then targeted the districts north of the city center, causing severe destruction there as well. After these attacks, the cityscape resembled a landscape of rubble; hardly a stone remained standing, and Dortmund's urban character was completely destroyed.

Lost. Only the extensive bunker system, especially the bunker network around the main train station, which was still under construction and intended to protect up to 120,000 people upon completion, prevented even higher death tolls. According to official figures, around 6,000 people died on March 12, 1945 alone, almost exclusively civilians. However, it can be assumed that the number was significantly higher, as many victims simply could not be identified or remained lost under the rubble.

The extent of Dortmund's destruction is also evident in the thoughts of the Allied occupying forces, who briefly considered abandoning the city's reconstruction altogether – it seemed inconceivable that a functioning city could ever be built from the rubble. It is only thanks to the unimaginable efforts of Dortmund's population, especially the women who cleared the rubble and their children who helped out, that the Westphalian metropolis could be rebuilt within just a few years.

The high demand for coal and steel led to an unprecedented economic boom in the first decades of the Bonn Republic.

Today, March 12, 1945, has almost completely disappeared from the memory of Dortmund's population. There are no official city-sponsored commemorative events and no culture of remembrance, only in...



Dortmund experienced the heaviest air raid, in terms of bomb load, on a European city during World War II on March 12, 1945. Image: CC0, Wikimedia Commons

The local press mentions – mostly round anniversaries. Only right-wing organizations attempt to commemorate the horrific events anew each year. The party DIE RECHTE (The Right), which has since effectively ceased to exist and was represented on the Dortmund city council since 2014, demanded in its local election platform that March 12, 1945, be made a city-wide day of remembrance. The Dortmund AfD (Alternative for Germany) also regularly lays wreaths to commemorate the darkest day in Dortmund's history. Otherwise, the memory fades further with each passing year, and the last eyewitnesses die – like Anna-Luise Wegstrotz, who experienced the bombing of the northern part of the city as a child and later recounted this horror to subsequent generations in numerous lectures. She passed away at the age of 90 on December 22, 2024. **Michael Brück**



PLAUEN: EXTINCTION

Shortly before the end of the war

“CHRISTMAS TREES” OVER THE VOGTLAND

"A night operation against Plauen with the intention of wiping the city off the map." This is how the 156th Squadron FAF LOG, which participated in the air raid on the evening of April 10, 1945, described it. It represented the culmination of a total of fourteen attacks against the city of the Vogtland region, carried out by British and American air forces since September 1944.

A total of 4,925 tons of bombs were dropped on the city. More than 75 percent of the buildings were destroyed, and over 2,358 deaths, 54 percent of them female, were officially recorded. With 159 tons per square kilometer, Plauen suffered the highest bomb load of any major Saxon city. Although the Vomag tank factory, a strategically important target, had been completely destroyed in a daylight raid on March 26, 1945, the bombing campaign continued unabated, culminating in the horrific night raid of April 10/11, 1945: In the evening, 304 heavy long-range bombers and six Mosquitos of the RAF took off from southeast England, assisted by eight radar-equipped bombers. Under a clear, starry night sky, they could see their target area of Plauen, including the White Elster River and the built-up city area, below them. The OBOE guidance system safely led the scouts and the master bomber to the target area.

Numerous illumination sets on parachutes and 756 green illuminated "Christmas trees" had precisely marked out the target area beforehand. From 11:02 PM to 11:24 PM, the bombers dropped 1,167.7 tons of blockbuster ("blockbuster"), high-explosive, and incendiary bombs into the target area. The entire available arsenal of bomb types was used, including fragmentation, mine, and phosphorus incendiary bombs, as well as containers with various incendiary agents and differentiated bomb cocktails.

The massive explosions were followed by enormous wildfires, and the smoke reached up to four kilometers in altitude. The bombs could still be seen from 100 miles away.

Aircrews on their return flight could see the red glow of the fires. The smoke had still not completely cleared when American troops marched in on April 16. Almost all city districts were affected by the widespread devastation and large fires; the area around the Upper Station was completely destroyed.

The RAF's attack claimed the lives of over 890 registered residents of Plauen. Since refugees and other individuals were also affected, the actual number of victims is likely significantly higher. A scholarly investigation into the matter is still pending. In addition to 6,500 residential buildings that were destroyed or damaged, numerous churches, public buildings, and cultural sites were reduced to rubble. To name just a few:

The destroyed Peace Bridge in Plauen in 1945.
Image: Wikswat, CC BY 3.0, Wikimedia Commons



Until then, the castle of the Vogt family and the convent building of the Teutonic Order had dominated the city. Plauen's population plummeted from 111,000 in 1942 to 77,700 in July 1945. The population lived crammed together, some in roofless houses, damp cellars, and barns. Reconstruction dragged on for decades.

In his 1990 book "Bombing War Against Germany," Olaf Groehler observed: "While some restrictions on air warfare came into effect in the future western occupation zones after April 1945, the focus of the air war shifted increasingly to the provinces of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia, and Mecklenburg in April 1945. This was reflected in both the target assignments and the practice of air warfare." Central Germany was now considered the industrial heart of Germany. East German historians later theorized that the British and Americans had deliberately devastated the Soviet occupation zone in order to hinder the subsequent development of a socialist society.

Considering the destruction previously wrought in West German cities, this is probably more likely a communist conspiracy theory.

When, in April 2010, the city of Plauen organized a three-day "Liberty Convoy" to mark the 65th anniversary of the US Army's entry into the Vogtland region, reenacting the occupation of the area in the original historical uniforms and vehicles of the Western Allies, the NPD launched a highly publicized counter-campaign, declaring that "mass murder, expulsion and air warfare are not a party spectacle".

■ Stefan Paasche



BLACK RAIN OVER JAPAN

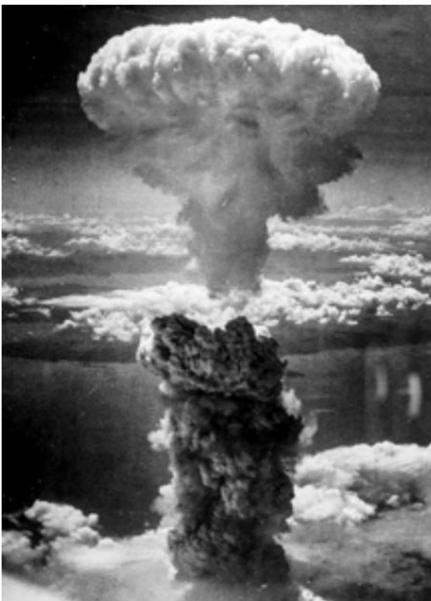
HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI FUME

In Kirchorst, Lower Saxony, where Ernst Jünger experienced the immediate postwar period, he wrote in his diary on August 10, 1945: "A destruction of a scale that previously seemed possible only through cosmic catastrophes." In the first days after the first use of nuclear weapons in human history, there was widespread speculation about what had actually happened in Japan. Many simply refused to believe that the deadly cargo of just one aircraft could have been enough to destroy 90 percent of the major Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

But that's how it had been. On August 6, 1945, shortly after 8 a.m. local time, the B-29 bomber "Enola Gay" released an atomic bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy," over Hiroshima. By comparison, on Ash Wednesday of that same horrific year, just six months earlier, 311 B-17 "Flying Fortresses" had been deployed over Dresden to carry out their destructive work.

When "Little Boy" exploded at 8:16 a.m. local time at an altitude of around 600 meters above Hiroshima, an indescribable inferno broke out.

The mushroom cloud from the Nagasaki bomb.
Image: CC0, pxhere.com



In less than half a second, heat rays exceeding 3,000 degrees Celsius caused third-degree burns in victims within a radius of 3.2 kilometers. Between 80,000 and 140,000 of the city's inhabitants were killed instantly. The survivors often fared worse. Some had their faces almost completely burned away, and only 28 of the city's 290 doctors were still able to work.

Physicist Robert Oppenheimer, who as scientific director had led the atomic weapons program dubbed the "Manhattan Project," was in excellent spirits on the evening of August 6th and exclaimed to cheering scientists: "It's just a shame the bomb wasn't ready in time for Germany." US President Harry S. Truman, in turn, mocked critics of the atomic bombings. Historians have since demonstrated in various studies that the man in the White House was not concerned with preventing the deaths of 500,000 US soldiers in the event of an invasion of the Japanese mainland, but rather solely with impressing his adversary Stalin in the emerging Cold War.

Tokyo had already extended peace feelers in the summer of 1945, stipulating only that the imperial family must remain untouched in the event of an armistice. Completely incomprehensible to anyone, even remotely...

As justification, the US Air Force then dropped a second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945, which killed up to 75,000 more people.

After the atomic explosion, black, greasy, oily rain fell on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It formed as the fireball cooled, when water condensed around the radioactive particles. The radioactive water clung to the skin and clothing of the victims.

While in Germany the number of bombing victims is constantly downplayed and remembering the destroyed cities is criminalized, such a shameful treatment of the victims is simply unthinkable in Japan. Whenever possible, the Japanese Prime Minister attends the memorial events in both cities, which regularly attract worldwide attention. To this day, the "Hibakusha," the survivors of the atomic bombings, receive free medical care and a victim's pension in the Land of the Rising Sun.

On each anniversary, the names of the "Hibakusha" who died in the previous year are recorded in a book in both cities, listing all the victims. According to a 2015 report in the newspaper "Die Welt," the names of the victims were recorded at the atomic bomb shrines in Hiroshima on June 6th. In August 2014, 292,325 names were recorded; in Nagasaki on August 9, 165,405. A Japanese politician who would denigrate the commemoration of the victims could immediately end their career. The peace mission that the Japanese consider to have been imposed upon them by the atomic bombings is also taken very seriously: Last year, the Israeli ambassador was explicitly not invited to the memorial service in Nagasaki because of his country's bombing of Gaza.

Arne Schimmer





SAXONY TALLER DRESDEN 1945

28mm, fine silver, hand-stamped, 60 euros



The incineration of Dresden is the culmination of the crime against humanity that was the area bombing of German cities, ordered by Churchill, Roosevelt, and their henchmen and inflicted upon the German people between 1942 and 1945. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from Silesia were in the Saxon capital when, on the night of February 13-14, 1945, bombs and phosphorus rained down from the sky, igniting a devastating firestorm.

With our silver coin, we commemorate the dead – especially women, children, and the elderly – who were murdered in the most gruesome way on that horrific night. We also take a stand against historians who, in line with current trends, have for many years tried to downplay the number of German victims.

These and other declarations of love for our beautiful Saxony can be found at:

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