

World War II: The Murderous Allied Firestorms against German Civilians

British and American air assaults forced a furious Hitler to reply in kind.

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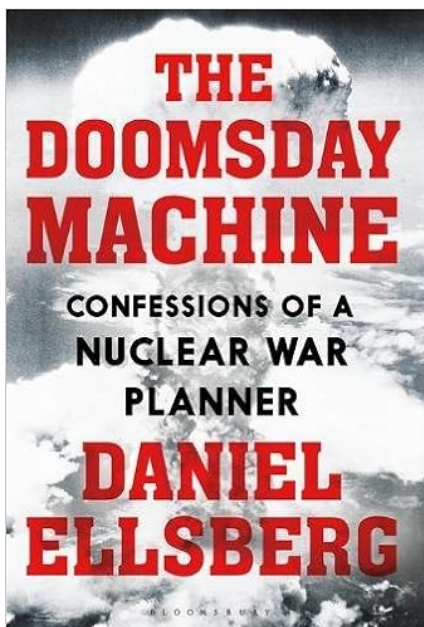
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*Shortly after becoming Britain's prime minister in May 1940, **Winston Churchill** said the war will be directed "against the strength of the German people, which is to be smashed once and for all, regardless of whether it's in the hands of Hitler or a Jesuit priest". Such statements were a warning of what was to come. With the Nazis then rampaging across Europe, it would take time before Britain's firestorms could be unleashed on the German people.*

On 30 June 1940, Hitler's Luftwaffe chief **Hermann Goering**, then at the height of his popularity, declared just days after the fall of France,

"The war against England is to be restricted to destructive attacks against industry and air force targets... It is also stressed that every effort should be made to avoid unnecessary loss of life amongst the civilian population".



By contrast, on 14 February 1942, a British Air Staff directive outlined their bombing campaigns should "be focused on the morale of the enemy's civilian population". As **Daniel Ellsberg**, the veteran former US military analyst, [confirms](#) in his recent book *The Doomsday Machine*, Britain was the first to begin "deliberate bombing of urban populations as the principal way of fighting a war", starting in early 1942.

The murderous assaults on German civilians, often with incendiary bombs, were specifically to the liking of not just Churchill. Also a vociferous supporter of these methods was England's Air Marshal, **Arthur "Bomber" Harris** - or "Butcher" Harris as he was known in the Royal Air Force. Among his first public broadcasts in the beginning of 1942, Harris said the Nazis had "sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind".

Britain's unscrupulous intentions were being signaled in even earlier military pronouncements. On 23 September 1941, a British Air Staff paper [outlined that](#):

"The ultimate aim of an attack on a [German] town area is to break the morale of the population which occupies it... first, we must make the town physically uninhabitable and, secondly, we must make the people conscious of constant personal danger. The immediate aim is therefore twofold, namely, to produce (i) destruction and (ii) fear of death".

It was only after Britain began their mass targeting of residential areas that the Nazis responded in kind. On 28 March 1942, the RAF firestormed the medieval city of Lubeck, northern Germany, which persuaded Hitler to alter his tactics. During the British night raid on Lubeck, over 60% of all buildings there suffered damage, severe or light. The attacks lasted less than four hours, in which hundreds of Lubeck's civilians were killed in the lightly-defended city.

"Bomber" Harris was satisfied with the destruction, saying Lubeck "was built more like a fire-lighter than a human habitation... it seemed to me better to destroy an industrial town of moderate importance [Lubeck] than to fail to destroy a large industrial city".



[Lübeck Cathedral](#) burning following the raids (Source: CC-BY-SA 3.0)

Britain's outright targeting of German cities enraged Hitler. Just over two weeks after the Lubeck bombing, on 14 April 1942, a command was forwarded at his behest:

“The Fuhrer has ordered that the air war against England be given a more aggressive stamp... preference is to be given to those where attacks are likely to have the greatest possible effect on civilian life”.

It would be unwise to suggest, however, that until April 1942 Hitler was a soft touch in relation to bombardment. For example, in September 1941, as his forces surrounded the Russian city of Leningrad (Petersburg), Hitler relayed the following order:

“The Fuhrer has decided to raze the city of Petersburg from the face of the earth. There is no reason for the future existence of this large city”.

Along with the people in it.

Soon, America willingly joined their British ally in the annihilation of German cities. In July 1943, US and British bombers killed over 40,000 civilians in Hamburg in a 10 day campaign – even more than was killed during the Luftwaffe’s eight month blitz of Britain. An eyewitness account of the Hamburg firestorms noted that

“Some people who tried to walk along, they were pulled in by the fire, they all of a sudden disappeared right in front of you”, while afterwards “Rats and flies ruled the city”.



Royal Air Force Bomber Command, 1942-1945. Oblique aerial view of ruined residential and commercial buildings south of the Eilbektal Park (seen at upper right) in the Eilbek district of Hamburg, Germany. These were among the 16,000 multi-storeyed apartment buildings destroyed by the firestorm which developed during the raid by Bomber Command on the night of 27/28 July 1943 (Operation GOMORRAH). The road running diagonally from upper left to lower right is Eilbeker Weg, crossed by Rückertstraße.

The German historian and author, **Jorg Friedrich**, outlines that in **total** About 600,000 German civilians were killed, including 76,000 children. It led Friedrich to describe Churchill as “the greatest child-slaughterer of all time”, with ample assistance provided by “Butcher” Harris, living up to his other nickname.

Little of these unwanted realities are outlined in Western mainstream records, historical accounts or school books. It seems not to fit with Western leaders’ saintly notion of the war being fought between “good” and “evil”. While Hitler’s Reich was one of the most murderous regimes in world history, Britain and America had hardly been angels of virtue until that point.

During Britain’s long subjugation and plundering of India, beginning in the mid-18th century – the imperial power’s policies were responsible for killing tens of millions of Indian people, mainly due to starvation caused from unnecessary droughts. In the year 1700, India had been one of the world’s richest countries, boasting 27% of global gross domestic product. By the time India finally gained independence from Britain in 1947, it was one of the earth’s poorest nations, while further plagued by widespread illiteracy and disease.

The United States’ foundation was built on settler-colonialism. Its basis was laid after **Christopher Columbus**, a mass murderer himself, “discovered” the continent in the late 15th century – often overlooked is that the indigenous population of 80 million or more had already long resided there. What followed was the Native Americans being “exterminated” in the words of America’s founding fathers, as the “superior” Anglo-Saxon race moved in and took their lands.

Meanwhile, as the Second World War advanced, one German city after another was incinerated by firestorms. Even small towns like Pforzheim, in southwest Germany, were obliterated by the RAF, killing a third of its 63,000 inhabitants in February 1945. Such atrocities came long after victory in the war was assured, mainly due to the Red Army’s exploits in the east.

It was previously hoped the Allies’ policies would turn Germany’s population against Hitler. It never happened. Not envisaged was that, from the mid-1930s until war’s end, millions of Germans were exposed to **Joseph Goebbels’** daily propaganda methods. Goebbels had, through devious marketing campaigns, ensured increasing numbers had access to radio sets. Through this medium, the virulently anti-Semitic propaganda minister had monopoly over the German mind. Come 1942 sixteen million households, about 70% of the German population, had confirmed radio reception. It should also be noted the dangers in rebelling against a dictatorship protected by Hitler’s personal bodyguard, the genocidal SS.

As the destruction mounted, by 20 April 1944 – Hitler’s 55th birthday – adorning Berlin’s wrecked buildings were hundreds of miniature swastikas and banners, addressed personally to Hitler. Some messages read, “Our walls have broken, but not our hearts”. To avoid seeing the ruins, Hitler’s rare visits to Berlin were made by night. And yet, contrary to popular

perception, **Albert Speer** observed that Hitler did not react to news of the Reich's bombardment with apoplectic outbursts – rather, he responded to bombing reports with austere, reserved expressions.

The dictator only betrayed pained feelings when he learnt a particular theater or museum was damaged, such buildings being among his most prized possessions before the war. Residential areas were always of secondary importance. As a result, Hitler was oblivious to much of the German people's suffering.

Indeed, from 23 June 1941, the Nazi leader spent over 800 days at the heavily wooded Wolf's Lair headquarters, in East Prussia – 700 kilometers east of Berlin. The enormous military compound was built specifically for Hitler's overseeing of Operation Barbarossa, on the Eastern Front. Remarkably, the heavily guarded headquarters escaped the attention of both Allied and Soviet intelligence. Hitler's private secretary **Traudl Junge** said "there was never more than a single aircraft circling over the forest, and no bombs were dropped".

At the Wolf's Lair, secured from the realities of war, and surrounded by obsequious followers, Hitler eventually entered into a type of fantasy realm, as – despite a string of initial successes – the war slowly closed in around him. On 20 November 1944, Hitler departed the Wolf's Lair for the final time, with the Soviet Army just 15 kilometers away having reached the small town of Angerburg.

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