

# United States Strategic Bombing Survey A Summary

**Editor's Note:** After the surrender of Germany in May 1945, the United States wanted to know the effects of the aerial bombing campaign carried out by the European based Army Air Forces. The United States instituted the United States Strategic Bombing Survey. J Kenneth Galbraith was named director, assisted by Burton H Klein. A large team was gathered to interview heads of the industrial complex, plant managers and the workers. Production records and books were examined. The actual work sites were visited by the team members, who prepared reports and took photographic records. The work was very detailed and lengthy.

It was known before the survey was started that bombing accuracy during World War II left a lot to be desired. Bomb plots made from the strike photos were all too revealing of inaccuracies. This was the starting point of the survey.

This report was printed out from micro films in the possession of the Association. This brief chapter outlines summaries and conclusions of the survey team.

### Acknowledgment

*The following report has been prepared not as a series of separate studies but rather as a single over-all account of the effects of strategic bombing on the German economy. It is the result of the interchange of materials and ideas among all those who participated in planning and carrying out the project.*

### A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE AIR OFFENSIVE

In reviewing the history and changing scope of the Allied air offensive against Germany, three main considerations must be kept in mind.

The first is the phenomenal increase in the weight of attack that could be brought against the enemy. In 1940 the RAF started out with an average monthly delivery of 1,128 tons, which increased to almost 6,000 tons in 1942 when the USAAF joined the offensive. In 1943 the monthly tonnage was 26,000 tons, in 1944 it was 131,000 tons, and in 1945 170,000 tons. By far the greatest increase occurred during the pre-invasion months.

The second consideration is the equally impressive improvements in operational technique. The most important among these were the development of the P-51 long-range fighter early in 1944 and the introduction during the same year of radio direction devices like OBOE and H2X. The first provided continuous fighter escort for attacks deep in the heart of Germany; the second rendered possible precision bombing through clouds and at night. Other important developments were the improvement of bomb-aiming techniques and the improved quality and increased weight of bombs. The heaviest bombs dropped by the RAF weighed one ton in 1940 and ten tons in 1945.

The third consideration to bear in mind is that throughout most of the period of the air war the choice of targets was greatly influenced by the requirements of the immediate military situation. First the submarine threat to Allied supply lines in 1942-43, later the danger from Germany's growing fighter force to Allied air supremacy made it advisable to concentrate on the submarine and aircraft industries even though other targets may have promised far better results. In the spring of 1944, at the very time when the greatly increased capabilities of the strategic air forces first made possible a large scale strategic offensive, this had to be postponed in favor of lending full tactical support to the coming invasion. After D-day the tactical requirements of the ground forces continued to divert the strategic air forces until the very end of the war; and paradoxically enough it was in the course of such diversion that some of the greatest strategic successes were achieved.

The air war against Germany can be conveniently divided into the following four phases: (1) the early period (until the end of 1942); (2) the period of limited capabilities (January 1943-February 1944); (3) the aircraft period (February 1944-June 1944); and (4) the period of full scale offensive (July 1944-April 1945). The salient characteristics of the history of each period are given below.

### 1940 TO DECEMBER 1942

The period from 1940 to 1942 is marked by the development of the great area