

---

## *The Proof of Strategic Bombing*

In past wars it has always been necessary to dispose of an enemy army before being able to destroy, occupy or dictate terms to the enemy nation, which, in the last analysis, is the real foe. The European war was unlike all others in that this time the enemy nation was destroyed almost ahead of the army which was supposed to defend it.

For the second time in a generation Germany has been defeated by a coalition of Allied powers. For the second time her armies have met their opponents in a series of huge and bloody engagements on two fronts, have won notable victories, but in the end have been vanquished. In these respects the two wars were similar. Fundamentally, however, they were utterly different. In the first none of the fighting was done on German soil. German civilians, except for suffering hunger and deprivation as the result of blockade, were untouched by war. Their cities and factories emerged unscathed. Their armies marched home with bands playing and flags flying, and were able to launch the illusion that they had not been really defeated, an illusion which was to be of inestimable value in preparing the people for the next adventure. But this time they had no such luck. They were faced with a weapon which could leap over battle lines and frontiers and smash at the ultimate enemy (the German workman who fed and equipped the German soldier) in his own home. The home front felt the shock of bombs soon after Britain entered the war. These shocks multiplied in intensity thereafter, continuing almost daily for five and a half years, at the end of which time Germany had literally ceased to exist as an organized industrial community.

**A Small Slow Start** The concept behind this campaign of destruction was born a long time ago. It existed in very crude form in the last war. In fact, so crude was bombing then that the idea of developing it to play a leading part in the military planning of nations was largely discarded in the nineteen twenties. This does not mean that nations were not airminded. Far from it. The major powers, Britain, Russia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United States, all had air forces. As technical advances were made these air forces became larger and more versatile. Generally speaking, however, they continued to remain mere adjuncts to the ground and naval forces, and the design and employment of aircraft were such that those air forces could only supplement ground and naval operations. In other words, they were primarily tactical, not strategic, weapons.

There were two notable exceptions to this. The British, sensing

the potentialities of air, created an independent air force. But being more concerned with defensive than with offensive plans, they concentrated mainly on fighters. It was only in the United States that the germ of strategic bombing was kept alive. It is hard to realize today how feebly the flame of life flickered in that germ. The American Army was small and lacking in influence, considering the size and importance of its mother country. Within that tiny army was an even tinier Air Corps to which nobody paid much attention. Finally, within the Air Corps itself was a handful of "fanatics" who were not as interested in being hot pilots (in those days you were a hot pilot or nothing) as they were in the problems of constructing aerial freight cars which would carry a load of bombs to a target and drop them on that target. Even less attention was paid to them.

But they stuck to their knitting. They procured a bomb sight which satisfied their requirements for accuracy. They wangled an appropriation for a four-engined bomber, the B-17. When it was built they went on good will flights to see how it stood up on long missions under trying conditions. And all the time they applied their growing experience to the evolution of a wild and woolly theory which, if it proved valid, would revolutionize warfare. That theory bluntly stated that sooner or later it would be possible to build a fleet of bombers which by themselves could reduce the vital industries of an enemy country to ashes.

And that is just what they did, launching their attacks from England in the north and Italy in the south. The Germany of 1945 presents a spectacle which defies description. Her bridges are down, her canals ruptured, her harbors clogged her rail yards pitted, many of her factories blasted and silent, her cities gutted. Wherever Germans gathered to build things or even to live together in large numbers may now be found scenes of desolation like those on the face of the moon. It is safe to say that at no time since the locust like days of the Tartars has the physical property of a nation been ground into such small and useless fragments.

Germany declared war on us on 11 December 1941. At that time the whole of Europe had either been conquered by her or was dependent on her economically. An efficient but savage program of exploiting the manpower and resources of this vast area was strengthening her daily, and it was clear that she could beat off conventional ground attacks indefinitely from the west, even assuming that it were possible to launch such attacks. It was in this difficult and unpromising atmosphere that American and British leaders met to formulate a

