

NAME:

BLOCK:

- CENTRAL HISTORICAL QUESTION -

WORLD WAR II & CIVILIANS:

TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE BRITISH ROYAL AIR FORCE TARGETING OF GERMAN CIVILIANS EFFECTIVE & JUSTIFIABLE?

Pictured Polish boy in the ruins of Warsaw September 1939



SOURCE: Julien Bryan (1959) *Warsaw: 1939 Siege; 1959 Warsaw Revisited.*, Warsaw: Polonia Publishing House, p. 126

LESSON OBJECTIVE

1.) **ANALYZE** the effectiveness & morality of the British Royal Air Force bombing of German civilians

PART I: DO NOW & DEBRIEF

DIRECTIONS: Respond to the prompt on the screen. As the mini-discussion continues, mark down any notes that may add to your growing understanding

PART II: BOMBING STRATEGIES OF WWII

**TWO TYPES OF BOMBING IN WORLD WAR II:
AREA & PRECISION BOMBING**

<u>AREA BOMBING</u>	<u>PRECISION BOMBING</u>
<p>The concept of "area bombing" was loosely based on the original theories of Giulio Douhet. According to Douhet, target cities would be subjected to successive waves of bombers carrying different kinds of bombs. The first wave was to carry high explosives for destroying structures, infrastructure, roads and rail lines.</p> <p>This would be followed by a wave of bombs intended to burn out remaining usable structures and to destroy any semblance of shelter for the civilian population.</p> <p>Finally, Douhet called for a third wave of bombers to drop gas on cities in order to kill as many people as possible. The combined effect of such bombing, would so terrorize the enemy that either:</p> <p>a) their morale would be broken and they would surrender OR b) the civilian population would rise up and demand their government cease hostilities.</p> <p>Douhet never denied that his bombing doctrine would result in a tremendous loss of life. War meant killing, after all.</p>	<p>Never as precise as claimed, the primary objective was to destroy a specific military or industrial target using aerial bombardment. Civilians were often killed in these kinds of operations.</p> <p>However, their deaths were considered an unfortunate result of the inaccuracy of precision bombing, the intent was not to target and kill civilians wholesale. By and large, the British pursued this kind of bombing in 1940 and 1941. The RAF abandoned precision bombing in 1942 in favor of area bombing.</p> <p>The US followed suit in December 1943, after the disastrous second Schweinfurt raid, but continued to pursue both area and precision bombing until the end of the war in Europe. In operations over Japan, the USAAF overwhelmingly conducted area bombing.</p>

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Do you think area bombing would break the morale of a country any more than precision bombing would?

Brief Timeline of the Air War, 1939-1945

September 1, 1939: Germany invades Poland, leading Great Britain and France to declare war against Germany.

May 15, 1940: In the first large scale “bombing war,” Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF) bombs the Ruhr area of Germany, specifically civilian industrial targets that are known to aid the German war effort.

September 7, 1940: Beginning of the Nazi bombing campaign against Great Britain. It lasted until May 1941, by which time roughly 40,000 English civilians had been killed.

Summer 1941: A British study shows that RAF bombing is typically inaccurate, with fewer than 20% of bombs landing within five miles of their assigned targets. This report leads to a major shift in Britain’s bombing strategy, shifting away from military targets and towards the main residential and industrial centers in Germany.

December 7, 1941: In a surprise early morning attack, Japan bombs Pearl Harbor and declares war on the U.S. and the U.K. Four days later, Germany and Italy will declare war on the U.S. as well.

April 8, 1942: 272 British bombers of the RAF attack Hamburg at night, signifying the largest raid yet on a single target.

April 24, 1942: In response to Allied bombing that the Nazi’s call “terror raids,” the German air force – the Luftwaffe – bombs Exeter, England, in part of its “Baedeker Blitz.”

May 30, 1942: 898 RAF bombers attack the German city of Cologne in Operation Millennium.

January 14, 1943: At the Casablanca Conference, Roosevelt and Churchill confirm their goal of securing the Axis nations’ surrender. To achieve this, they agree upon a combined bomber offensive: the British will strike at night, while the Americans will bomb by daylight.

Late July 1943: Over the course of ten days, the RAF and the 8th Air Force devastate Hamburg with heavy bombing. The attack, named “Operation Gomorrah,” leaves more than 13 square miles destroyed and kills 45,000 civilians—more than the Germans’ entire Blitz over Britain in April 1942.

September 11, 1944: As part of a strategy to discourage Nazi morale, the RAF bombs Darmstadt, Germany and the resulting firestorm kills more than 10,000 people. The Nazis condemn this raid as an example of Allied “terror bombing.”

February 3, 1945: More than 900 bombers and over 550 fighter escorts – the largest force ever sent against a single city to date – begin the bombing of Berlin. Roughly 25,000 civilians die.

February 13, 1945: 800 bombers drop 4,000 tons of explosives and incendiaries on Dresden, Germany targeting the train yard and passenger station. The combination sets off a firestorm that kills more than 35,000 people.

March through June, 1945: American air-bombing campaign against Japan results in death of 125,000 people, destruction of 1.5 million homes, and devastation of 105 square miles of cityscape.

PART III: HOMEWORK - GRADED DISCUSSION PREPARATION

DIRECTIONS: Using the provided sourcebook, complete the graphic organizer below. Use this graphic organizer to support your contributions to the graded whole class discussion in the following class.

<u>VIEWPOINT</u>	<u>RATIONALE FOR VIEWPOINT</u>	<u>WHAT DOCUMENTS WOULD SUPPORT THIS VIEWPOINT & HOW?</u>
The bombing of German civilian cities was effective.		
The bombing of German civilian cities was ineffective.		
The bombing of German civilian cities was justified.		
The bombing of German civilian cities should be considered a war crime.		

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