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The London Blitz II

Lead: In the nine months of the London Blitz, the capital of Great Britain absorbed 20,000 tons of bombs, endured thousands of civilian deaths, and saw one in six Londoners lose their homes. It only made the English tougher.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: Their plan was to destroy the Royal Air Force to prepare for a cross-channel invasion, but Hitler and Goering largely failed and turned to bombing civilian and industrial

targets in central and southern Great Britain. London was the main object of their fury and for nine months, Germany rained death and destruction on the precincts of the City, particularly the impoverished districts of East London where were located the docks and industrial installations of commercial activity. According to author Peter Stansky, “the Blitz marked an introduction of modern terror on a large scale.” There was no such thing as the Home Front anymore. Everyone was at risk. It was a new type of warfare.

During the first six weeks of the Blitz more than 16,000 London houses were destroyed and 300,000 people became homeless. By the

spring, more than 44,000 had been killed and over 52,000 were seriously injured. Complicated by one of the harshest winters in recent years, the Blitz rendered living conditions as miserable. Dwindling coal supplies and blast-shattered windows made life unusually uncomfortable for the sick and elderly and for mothers with young children.

People took shelter in the Tube stations, trenches in the parks, basements of commercial buildings and caves. Despite the fears of the government that if people went underground they would not come out to work, people went anyway and soon the Tube stations and other shelters were filled with humanity

trying to escape the fiery hell being rained down from above.

At first, the Germans tried daylight attacks, but the Brits became very good at picking German bombers out of the sky so Goering went almost exclusively to night raids, which were not very accurate but quite destructive. Britain lacked effective night defenses so the streets of London, Bristol, Plymouth, Coventry and Liverpool and other cities were wide-open to German attacks.

Oddly enough, the Blitz, which was designed as a blow to British morale, had almost the opposite effect as would the failure of Allied raids over

Germany and Japan later in the war. Demonstrating a unity of spirit and courage, the English people rallied to their leaders, repaired their homes, bridges and roads and supported the war effort with grim and growing determination.

By spring 1941, it was clear that the German strategy was a failure and that Britain was more than ever able and willing to repel any threatened invasion. Disappointed, Hitler turned his attention eastward to the invasion of Russia and the skies of Britain soon filled with allied planes headed toward Germany to return the favor born of the London Blitz.

**At the University of Richmond,
this is Dan Roberts.**

Resources

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