

NOTE

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Renewal of Enemy Air Activity over Britain.
The Present Phase of the War.

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1. A further report is submitted. This report deals with the recent increase in enemy air activity over London and the United Kingdom generally, and attempts some comment on the state of the war as seen from this country at the beginning of spring, 1941.

INCREASE IN ENEMY AIR ACTIVITY

2. Since the time of my arrival in this country (25 Dec 40) enemy air activity against the United Kingdom has been upon a relatively limited scale. As noted in my Report No. 8, the fierceness of the raids against LONDON declined from November onwards; and through January and February enemy action against the country at large has not been especially large or vigorous. March, however, has witnessed a revival of activity and an extension of it into some new quarters.

3. The comparative slightness of activity during the winter is reflected in the figures of civilian casualties which have been published. As given in the EVENING STANDARD of 8 March, they are as follows:

	KILLED	INJURED
January	1502	2012
February	789	1068

Comparison with earlier figures (Report No. 8 demonstrates the relative insignificance of these totals. The figures for March, however, will almost certainly show a substantial increase.

4. The new phase may be said to have begun with a heavy raid on LONDON on the night of 8-9 March, between about 2000 hrs and midnight. The attack was particularly heavy between about 2030 and 2100 hrs, and the Sun Life Building, where I was working in my office that evening, was shaken by explosions more than once. This was the first time that bombs had fallen close to C.M.H.Q. since my arrival. I found the next morning that one bomb had hit the premises of Humphreys & Crook, the tailors, at the corner of the Haymarket and Suffolk Place, between two and three hundred yards from the Sun Life Building; another had struck Garlands Hotel at the head of Suffolk Street; and a third, probably I think of the same "stick", had caused heavy loss of life at the Cafe de Paris in Coventry Street.

5. The bombing of this restaurant caused eight Canadian military casualties, including the following killed:

Capt. P.F. SEAGRAM (48TH HIGHLANDERS)
 Lieut. J.D. WRIGHT (11th Field Coy. R.C.E.)
 P-27990 Sgt. R.A. BRADSHAW (C.M.H.Q.)
 B-83922 Cpl. G.W. QUINN (C.M.H.Q.)

In addition, two officers, one nursing sister and one other rank were wounded. These details are furnished me by the Casualty Section, Records Office, ACTON, as of 13 Mar 41. The two non-commissioned officers named were the first fatal casualties suffered by C.M.H.Q. (at least among military personnel). Capt. Seagram was formerly A.D.C. to General McNaughton.

6. As I have previously pointed out (Diary for February), the decline in enemy air activity had led to a visible revival in the life of the West End; and this sudden attack launched by the enemy on a Saturday evening was almost certain to cause considerable casualties.

7. A good many incendiary bombs were dropped in Westminster on this occasion, though so far as I am aware no actual fires were started. Walking down Whitehall the next morning, I found several of the patches of sand which tell where incendiaries have been smothered, within a few yards of Westminster Abbey. The road between the Abbey and the Houses of Parliament was closed beyond St. Margaret's on account of unexploded bombs. A policeman told me that two had fallen here, one of which had already been safely removed. Passing the same way a few days later, I found that the other had exploded, causing a large crater in the roadway almost beside the Victoria Tower. A workman told me that the explosion had caused no loss of life; the bomb-disposal squad had (according to his account) been due to return to work a quarter of an hour after it took place.

8. Buckingham Palace was bombed again on this occasion. The Palace proper was not struck, but the "Garden Gate" within a few yards of the north wall was demolished, and other bombs of the stick fell in the forecourt and on either side of Constitution Hill. My impression is that this was a deliberate attempt at destruction of the Palace. There was a brilliant moon that night and some of the enemy bombers (judging by the noise of their engines) were flying quite low.

9. London was again raided the following night, and thereafter there was no night without an alert until that of 17-18 March, although on at least two there was very little visible or audible activity.

ATTACKS ON PORTS AND INDUSTRIAL CENTRES

10. Still heavier raids than that on London on the night of 8-9 March have since been directed against the ports and industrial centres of Western England and Scotland. On the night of 12-13 March, "the moon being full and the weather very clear" (communique in TIMES, 14 March), the raiding (to quote the War Office secret summary - Miltel No. 180, 14/3/41) was "the heaviest (and) most widespread for several months", the main effort being directed against MERSEYSIDE. On the following night CLYDESIDE was heavily attacked (THE TIMES notes this as the area's first big raid). The same region was struck again the next night (14-15), and Miltel No. 182 notes "Heavy incendiary attack Clydebank. Military assistance requested", while also mentioning that two factories were fired at GLASGOW. There was also some damage in the MERSEYSIDE region on this occasion.

11. These developments seem significant, and we can probably expect further attacks on the LIVERPOOL, and GLASGOW areas. As noted in my Report No. 1, it was a matter of astonishment to the troops arriving with T.C. 8 that the enemy had not attempted more seriously to interfere with the tremendous amount of ship-building activity which we saw on the upper reaches of the CLYDE, and the great concentration of shipping afloat on the lower reaches. He is now beginning to strike hard at this most important region.

12. In conjunction with these attacks on port cities, we must note also the increased violence of the campaign against our shipping at sea. The announcement (TIMES, 12 Mar 41) that losses to British, Allied and Neutral shipping during the week ending 2 Mar amounted to 148,038 tons, marks the beginning of this intensification (which the enemy had promised). It seems apparent that during the phase of the war now beginning a supreme effort is to be made to break this country by the weapon of blockade, which so nearly won the war for the Germans in the spring of 1917.

13. This means that the garrison of this country must be prepared to tighten its belt. Already the Canadian troops have been complaining of inadequate rations, and they are quite likely to have more grounds for the complaint from now on. We are now beginning to see increasing signs of stringency. Two little indications of the situation presented themselves to me simultaneously at breakfast time this morning: for the first time, my landlord had been unable to supply either marmalade or jam; and for the first time I received a Daily Mail instead of a Times, the latter being unobtainable "owing to the rationing of supplies". The Mail itself explained to its readers that they must expect a smaller paper from now on - only four pages several days a week - as a result of the shortage of newsprint. The papers have already been thin, but will now be thinner. (17 March).

14. The public has derived great satisfaction from the recent heavy losses sustained by the German night-bombers, and particularly from the fact that 13 were destroyed on the night of 13-14 March, this constituting a new record. (G.H.Q. Home Forces Intelligence Summary No. 228 estimates the German effort on this occasion at 265 long-range bombers, 20 fighters and 50 minelayers; while Mittel No. 181 speaks of "400 enemy aircraft".) "New devices" may have played a part in this success - the Air Ministry states that 11 Germans were destroyed by night-fighters, one by anti-aircraft fire, and one by "other means", and our fighters presumably have special equipment - but it seems likely that the main element in it was the unusually bright moonlight.

15. In connection with the submarine campaign, it is of interest to note the report (G.H.Q. Home Forces Intelligence Summary No. 230) that at least 39 submarines have been laid down at HAMBURG, while six are mentioned as fitting out there; and that probably 10 are under construction at BREMEN. Considerable naval forces of other sorts are now available in German ports; and the two heavy battleships Bismarck and Tirpitz have evidently been completed.

PRESENT GERMAN STRATEGY

16. The War Office Weekly Intelligence Summary No. 82 (for the week 5-12 Mar) notes in connection with the recent German occupation of Bulgaria, "There is no doubt that Germany intends to clear up the Greek affair either by negotiation or military action, probably before the end of March." The Balkans, in other words, appear to be the most probable immediate field of action for the German army, especially as it is further noted that, while preparations for the invasion of Britain con-

tinue, "there is no evidence that a large-scale attack is imminent." The attack upon Britain will presumably, for the present, take the form of a violent onslaught by submarines and aircraft against our sea-communications, including the western ports. Later in the season, an actual attempt at invasion is perhaps conceivable; and failing other developments which cannot at the moment be foreseen, such an attempt would appear to offer the only likelihood of important action this season for the large and increasing force of Canadian troops in the United Kingdom.

17. A field where fundamental developments are always possible is the Iberian Peninsula. The political intelligence which we receive is to the effect that Senor Sener, the Spanish Foreign Minister, is strongly pro-German, though we are also told that his own position is not secure. The Intelligence Summary just quoted comments that Germany is still "preparing the ground" in Spain against a possible entry. Recently it was reported from German sources that Britain was planning to occupy the Azores and land troops in Portugal. The Diplomatic Correspondent of THE TIMES (15 March) says, perhaps a trifle complacently, "These inventions are disregarded in London. All they mean is that the Germans want the world to think that they themselves are about to enter Portugal." This recalled to me that Lt.-Col. G.G. SIMONDS, the Commandant of the Canadian War Staff Course, had said to me on the occasion of my visit to Ford Manor that he would like to "see us cash in on our ancient and honourable alliance with Portugal" before the Germans got there first.

18. Any developments in the direction of GIBRALTER in the near future will have a special interest for Canada, thanks to the presence at that fortress of Canadian engineer units working on the defences. A large "special detachment" of No. 1 Tunnelling Company, R.C.E., has been there for some time past; and more recently No. 2 Tunnelling Company has proceeded thither and absorbed a large proportion (though not the whole) of this detachment's personnel. The force from Canada now at that station is equivalent to one-and-a-half companies. Special instructions covering the preparation of war diaries by these units have been issued by the Officer i/c Records, ACTON, and the work done by them should constitute an interesting episode in the history of Canada's part in this war.

19. The foregoing somewhat random comments are made subject to the obvious proviso that it would be foolish to attempt any confident assessment of the future beyond the next few weeks. It is worth while, however, to set down at this moment the shape of things as it appears on the basis of the information available at Canadian Military Headquarters, London. One thing, it would seem, can be stated with considerable confidence. It is now clearly necessary for Hitler to win the war soon if he is to win it at all. The growing extent of United States commitment to the British cause, and especially the recent passage of the "Lend and Lease" Bill (signed by President ROOSEVELT on 11 March), suggest that from this time British strength will increase steadily and fairly rapidly. The logic of the situation appears to indicate the probability of tremendous efforts by Hitler before next autumn.

20. No apology seems necessary for dealing at some length with the general situation in the United Kingdom. This country is the key to the present crisis. More than this, the fortunes of this country and those of the bulk of the Canadian Army Overseas are now identified with each other; and the historian who writes the story of this phase of Canada's share in the war will necessarily find himself obliged to tell a great part of the story of the Battle of Britain.

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