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WAR AND THE CITY:

THE EFFECTS OF ARMED CONFLICTS ON URBAN SPACE AND POPULATION

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Volume II

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Bünyamin KOCAOĞLU

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**URBAN FRONTLINES:
THE IMPACT OF AIR OPERATIONS AND CITY
DEFENSE DURING WORLD WAR II**

THE WRATH OF THE ALLIES: THE BOMBING OF DRESDEN

Col. Dr. Atasay ÖZDEMİR (Türkiye)

Introduction

War is the continuation of the diplomacy by other means. It uses a different *lingua franca*, different codes of ethics, and different understandings. It was defined by Clausewitz simply as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will”¹. In order to do so, for centuries armies sought for advances to become the glorious party of the ongoing war. Coupled with the technologic developments, it was beyond imagination where human beings reached within almost two centuries. Especially with the introduction of aircrafts, the war gained an enormous ground and enhanced into three dimensions, the sky and ultimately the space. The invention of the airplanes changed the definition and strategies of war. The first-time airplanes used by Italians in the Turco-Italian War (also known as Tripoli War) mostly for reconnaissance purposes and also for transport, artillery spotting and even bombing roles. During the World War I (WWI) the same tradition continued as the airplanes were not capable of carrying bombs. Nonetheless, Italians together with Germans started utilizing aerial bombings in the Spanish Civil War, which later labeled as the rehearsal of the World War II (WWII). Another impact of this war is that ‘strategic bombing’ arose as a new concept.

Starting with the interwar period, German and Italian air forces initiated the examination of their air force ammunition and capabilities, they continued using these advances in the WWII. Especially German Luftwaffe started strategic bombings at the very first day of the war. Their targets included many cities such as Warsaw, Rotterdam, Belgrade, and London. London attack was the milestone that changed the mind and understanding of the British. British RAF started to bomb the German cities after London bombings. When United States (US) joined the war, US and British Forces established Combined Air Forces and began their targeted attacks on German cities. They conducted several strategic bombings nevertheless; Dresden bombings must be isolated from the others. It was assumed as brutal since it directly targeted the civilian populations, which was accepted as a legal code at the end of 19th century. Hence, among all bombings, Dresden was the one that questioned for many years, even today. For that reason, this study will

¹ Carl Von, Clausewitz, *On War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13.

examine the Dresden bombings particularly with regards to necessity of the bombing, tonnage of bombs, number of casualties, and the impact spread from the day of bombings until today.

In order to reach that end, this study primarily focused on the definitions of strategic bombing, area bombings, and other bombing related concepts used to describe this concept. Afterwards, the perspectives of the either specifically the nations or more general, public opinion was discussed in association with the rules of law defined by these very own nations. Later on, the arguments of both parties namely, the Allied Air Forces members USAAF² and RAF, and German authorities examined and analyzed. The findings of the study support the unnecessary of Dresden bombings.

1. Definitions and Perspectives: Strategic Bombing

1.1. Definitions

It was no later than the end of 19th century that the introduction of new aircrafts. The invention of airplane specifically was a milestone, in many ways though its usage within the war changed the course of war history. To begin with, it introduced the third dimension, in other words the war gained another eye from above. With the advances it provided for the warring party, strategies and tactics changed the courses of accordingly. Either for reconnaissance purposes or later with the proper applications for bombing operations it became a powerful and indispensable tool for those who want to compel their enemies to do their will.

The first ones to use airplanes in war were Italians during the Turco-Italian War against Ottoman Empire (1911-1912). Back then, the airplanes were used to gather reconnaissance and to bomb lands.³ Following that, during WWI, airplanes mostly used for reconnaissance; however, Germany and Italy

² USAAF is the abbreviation of the United States Army Air Force. This unit was the predecessor of the United States Air Force (USAF). Although USAAF was a subordinate functional branch of the United States Army, it did all the same roles of an Air Force could do then. "On September 26, 1947, by order of the Secretary of Defense, personnel of the Army Air Forces (AAF) were transferred from the Department of the Army (formerly the War Department) to the Department of the Air Force and established as the United States Air Force (USAF)." Air Force Historical Support Division, "Evolution of the Department of the Air Force", [accessed 01 September 2023]. [https://www.afhistory.af.mil/FAQs/Fact-Sheets/Article/458985/evolution-of-the-department-of-the-air-force/#:~:text=On%20September%2026%2C%201947%2C%20by,States%20Air%20Force%20\(USAF\).](https://www.afhistory.af.mil/FAQs/Fact-Sheets/Article/458985/evolution-of-the-department-of-the-air-force/#:~:text=On%20September%2026%2C%201947%2C%20by,States%20Air%20Force%20(USAF).)

³ Sıtkı Egeli, "Air Power's Historical Evolution: An Analysis of Properties, Constituent Elements, Mission and Effectiveness", *The Journal of Security Studies* 17, No.39 (2021): 611.

began to use airplanes for offensive attacks.⁴ During the interwar period, Spanish Civil War, which was assumed as a “military laboratory”, was considered a test for new military weaponry and a rehearsal for the WWII. German and Italian aerial bombings particularly in Guernica region on 26 April 1937⁵ was associated with emergence of ‘strategic bombing’ concept.

Strategic bombing has been defined variously by different authorities to serve their objectives. Therefore, there are many diverse definitions though most of them share some common emphasis. Giulio Douhet, an Italian general who was a key proponent of strategic bombing in aerial warfare, identified the five basic target types as; industry, transport infrastructure, communications, government and the will of the people.⁶ The Douhet model rests on the belief that in a conflict the infliction of high costs from aerial bombing can shatter civilian morale. This would unravel the social basis of resistance and pressure citizens into asking their government to surrender. By smothering the enemy’s civilian centers with bombs Douhet argued the war would become so terrible that the common people would rise against their government. As terrible as the bombings as shorter as the wars will.

Strategic bombing is defined in Britannica as “aerial bombardment designed to destroy a country’s ability to wage war by demoralizing civilians and targeting features of an enemy’s infrastructure -such as factories, railways, and refineries- that are essential for the production and supply of war materials”.⁷ Although this definition may seem to be restricted to only functional areas that could serve to the war, demoralizing civilians is not explicitly explained.

It must be kept in mind that another strategy aimed at reducing the morale of civilians is nothing but terrorism. Many strategic bombing campaigns and individual raids of aerial warfare have been described as “terror bombing” by commentators and historians by the end of WWII. At a SHAEF⁸ press conference on 16th February 1945, only two days after the bombing of Dresden, British Air Commodore Colin McKay Grierson replied

⁴ Britannica, “Strategic bombing”, [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/strategic-bombing>.

⁵ Holocaust Encyclopedia, “Spanish Civil War”, [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/spanish-civil-war>.

⁶ Philip S. Meilinger, “Giulio Douhet and the Origins of Airpower Theory”, *The Paths of Heaven: The Evolution of Air Power Theory*, ed. Philip S. Meilinger, (Alabama: Air University Press, 1997), 11.

⁷ Britannica, “Strategic bombing”.

⁸ The Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) was a joint U.S. - British military organization created in England in February 1944 to carry out the invasion of Western Europe. Dwight D. Eisenhower, an officer of the United States Army, was appointed Supreme Allied Commander.

to a question by one of the journalists that the primary target of the bombing had been on communications to prevent Germans from moving military supplies and to stop movement in all directions if possible. He then added in an offhand remark that the raid also helped destroying what is left of German morale.⁹

The issue of morale is given in another definition which also blurred the location: “aerial bombing done well beyond the battlefield for the purpose of destroying or undermining the enemy’s ability to fight, and will to fight”.¹⁰ Beyond the battlefield could be interpreted as both city areas where civilians live and other military installations as well as critical infrastructures. Some other definition emphasized the refrainment from attacking armed forces: “strategic bombing involves employing bombers to strike directly at key industrial, economic or political targets within an enemy’s country which may affect its capacity to wage war, rather than attacking their armed forces”.¹¹ Final definition, taken from the US Department of Defense, puts it very simple: “strategic bombing [is] destroying enemy military and infrastructure targets and lowering their morale”.¹² As it is clear in these definitions that the main purpose to initiate strategic bombing could be assumed as (1) firstly to demolish military, economic, and political targets; (2) then causing demoralization among the population, including civilians and military members; (3) accordingly destroy their capability and will to fight and (4) ultimately compel own will. It was a method used by the Allied Forces to finalize the WWII.

1.2. Perspectives

The definition of the strategic bombing clarified the purposes though, how to engage these attacks remained blurred. During the war, conduct of strategic bombings may require attacking some strategic infrastructures within the cities populated by civilians. Therefore, strategic bombing concept raises the issue of ethics and humanitarian law within the war, *jus in bello*. First discussed by Grotius, the rules of war gained utmost importance with regard to differentiation between the combatant and non-

⁹ Taylor Frederick, *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 413-414.

¹⁰ Tami Davis Biddle, “British and American approaches to strategic bombing: Their origins and implementation in the World War II combined bomber offensive”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 18, no.1 (1995): 91.

¹¹ Australian War Memorial, “Strategic bombing campaign against Germany”, [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/E84668>.

¹² David Vergun, “Strategic Bombing Matured Quickly During WWII”, U.S. Department of Defense, (22 October 2019), [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Feature-Stories/story/Article/1995480/strategic-bombing-matured-quickly-during-wwii/>.

combatants, the treatment of prisoners of war, and so forth. Since the late 19th century, specifically after the Battle of Solferino, with the initiatives of Henry Dunant, Red Cross/Red Crescent was founded to help the sick and wounded in the battle grounds.¹³ Foundation of such a humanitarian aid organization led the way to determination of the humanitarian acts in the course of war. The Hague (1899-1907) and Geneva Conventions (1864) were held to define the law of war. Simultaneously, in the American continent it was a German immigrant, Francis Lieber, who codified the rules with regard to the conduct of war.¹⁴ In his work, Lieber pointed out in Article 21 that the citizen of a hostile country is an enemy, therefore is ‘subjected to the hardships of the war’. However, in the Article 22, he emphasized the distinction between the “private individual” and the “men in arms” and remarked sparing non-combatants in person and their property.¹⁵ These developments occurred many decades before the WWII, hence it was assumed that the Americans had already adopted such legal codes. Nonetheless, the history proved wrong.

Guernica Bombardment in 1937 during Spanish Civil War, changed the direction of modern warfare. Strategic bombings proved to be a powerful instrument used in accordance with the land operations. Starting from Guernica German Luftwaffe continued its aerial bombing assaults on Polish cities during the invasion of Poland, and on British cities especially on London in the Battle of London.¹⁶ As a response, British RAF changed their strategy, firstly bombed Wilhelmshaven on 4 September 1939 and continued to target many German cities starting from 1940. Later on, USA joined the war and adopted strategic bombing concept.

2. The Case of Dresden Bombings

Dresden was a city of splendor, ‘Florence on Elbe’, a historical treasure which attracted tourists all the time. It was a home for the paintings of many renowned artists, its streets were full of Baroque style buildings, opera house, churches, and so forth.¹⁷ Dresden was the seventh largest city in

¹³ Britannica, “Law of War”, [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/law-of-war>.

¹⁴ Francis Lieber, *Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898). [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://tile.loc.gov/storage-services/service/ll/lmlp/Instructions-gov-armies/Instructions-gov-armies.pdf>.

¹⁵ Lieber, *Instructions for the Government of Armies of the United States in the Field*, 9.

¹⁶ Mason B. Webb, “The Bombing of Dresden: Was the Attack Fully Justified?”, *Warfare History Network*, (2019). [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://warfarehistorynetwork.com/article/the-bombing-of-dresden-was-the-attack-fully-justified/>.

¹⁷ Jason Dawsey, “Apocalypse in Dresden, February 1945”, *The National WWII Museum*, (13 February 2020), [accessed 01 September 2023].

Germany with a population of approximately 600.000 citizens. Before the aerial raids, refugees escaping from the battle fronts, mostly women, children, and older people, those who could not fight in the ongoing war (noncombatant civilians) migrated to Dresden. Dresden was serving as a communication juncture, helping the movement of the refugees to safer areas. However, at the night of the Dresden bombings some refugees were still in the city and had nowhere to go or hide.¹⁸

The original attack plan was supposed to begin with the USAAF daylight precision bombings on 13th February yet, due to the inappropriate weather conditions USAAF could not realize the initial plan. Therefore, RAF started bombing the city areas by night on the very same night, 13th February. Taken by surprise in addition to the inappropriate weather conditions, RAF bombings wreaked havoc in Dresden.¹⁹ RAF dropped 1477,7 tons of high explosives and 1181,6 tons of incendiary bombs with a total of 2659,3 tons of bombs²⁰ which caused fires and firestorms that sucked the oxygen and eventually resulted in mass suffocation of the people inside and outside. Although these uncontainable fires were seen in many wars, “firestorms required just the right combination of weather, weight of attack, ordnance mix, timing, and architecture”; and all was present during the attacks on Dresden.²¹ The bombing and the resulting firestorm destroyed more than 1,600 acres (6.5 km²) of the city center.²² Up to 25.000 people were killed.²³

Dresden Bombings raised many questions with special regard to legality, necessity, and morality. Many politicians, academics, military members, and civilians questioned and criticized whether the bombings were

<https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/apocalypse-dresden-february-1945>. and Tami Davis Biddle, “Sifting Dresden's Ashes”, *The Wilson Quarterly* 29, no:2 (2005): 69.

[accessed 01 September 2023].

http://archive.wilsonquarterly.com/sites/default/files/articles/WQ_VOL29_SP_2005_Article_04.pdf.

¹⁸ Biddle, “Sifting Dresden's Ashes”, (2005): 60-62.

¹⁹ Dawsey, “Apocalypse in Dresden, February 1945”, (2020).

²⁰ United States Air Force (USAF), “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 1953. [accessed 01 September 2023].

<https://media.defense.gov/2011/Feb/08/2001329907/-1/1/0/Bombings%20of%20Dresden.pdf>.

²¹ Biddle, “Sifting Dresden's Ashes”, (2005): 61-62.

²² The National Archives, “Extract from the official account of Bomber Command by Arthur Harris, 1945 (Catalogue ref: AIR 16/487)” [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/+https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesevillains/g1/cs3/g1cs3s1.htm>.

²³ Dresden Historical Commission Report, “Abschlussbericht der Historikerkommission zu den Luftangriffen auf Dresden zwischen dem 13 un 15 Februar 1945”. [accessed 01 September 2023].

https://www.dresden.de/media/pdf/infoblaetter/Historikerkommission_Dresden1945_Abschlussbericht_V1_14a.pdf?

legitimate, essential, and/or inevitable. Correspondingly, USAF prepared a report which remained secret for decades. With the recent accessibility to the report, it enlightened the American perspective with specific emphasis on frequently asked questions. The report titled “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden” was issued in 1953 (and again in 1954) with a top-secret clearance. The report includes an introduction, questions, and a conclusion. Introduction part gives information about why USAF needed to issue such a report. In a response to that it was underlined that Dresden bombings were often became a very “subject of official and semi-official inquiries [as well as] rumor and exaggeration”.²⁴ In the report the operation was defended as the justified bombing of a strategic target, which was noted as a major rail transport and communication center, housing 110 factories and 50,000 workers in support of the German war effort.²⁵ However, several researchers put forward that not all of the communications infrastructure, just like the bridges, were targeted, nor were the extensive industrial areas which were located outside the city center.²⁶ Some critics of the bombing have affirmed that Dresden was a cultural landmark with a little strategic significance, and that the attacks were indiscriminate area bombing and were not proportionate to the military gains.²⁷

In order to give detailed information on the reasons for and the consequences of the Dresden bombings, the USAF report provided answers to these specific questions:

a. Was Dresden a legitimate military target?

b. What strategic objectives, of mutual importance to the Allies and to the Russians, underlay the bombings of Dresden?

c. Did the Russians request that Dresden be bombed by Allied air forces?

d. On whose recommendation, whether by an individual or by a committee, and by what authority were Allied air forces ordered to bomb Dresden?

e. Were the Russians officially informed by the Allies concerning the intended date of and the forces to be committed to the bombing of Dresden?

f. With what forces and with what means did the Allied forces bomb Dresden?

²⁴ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, (1953), 1.

²⁵ Joseph P. Tustin, *Why Dresden was bombed - a review of the reasons and reactions*, (Germany: United States Air Force in Europe, 11 December 1954), [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://media.defense.gov/2013/May/23/2001329959/-1/-1/0/Dresden%20again.pdf>.

²⁶ Alexander McKee, *Dresden 1945: The Devil's Tinderbox*, (London: Granada 1983), 62.

²⁷ McKee, *Dresden 1945: The Devil's Tinderbox*, (1983), 61-94.

- g. What were the specific target objectives in the Dresden bombings?*
- h. What were the immediate and actual consequences of the Dresden bombings on the physical structure and the populace of the city?*
- i. Were the Dresden bombings in any way a deviation from established bombing policies set forth in official bombing directives?*
- j. Were the specific forces and means employed in the Dresden bombings similar to or different from the forces and means employed by the Allies in other aerial attacks on comparable targets in Germany?*
- k. In what specific ways and to what degree did the bombings of Dresden achieve or support the strategic objectives that underlay the attack and were of mutual importance to the Allies and the Russians?''²⁸*

a. Was Dresden a legitimate military target?

According to the report, Dresden was assumed as a military target particularly in terms of its strategic and geographical location, and topography. It is also stated as a commercial and transportation center and an industrial base which were assessed contributing to the conditions of a military target.

b. What strategic objectives, of mutual importance to the Allies and to the Russians, underlay the bombings of Dresden?

As it is elaborated in the report, Dresden was among the cities which were determined to be bombed for the sake of German defeat. In the report, with regard to particular reference to Tehran Conference (28 November-11 December 1943), it was decided by three leaders, Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, that Russian ground operations must be supported by the Allied bombardment from the air. Moreover, it was assessed that movement of German forces from west to east would create a threat to the success of the Russian operations. Therefore, as it is reported “attack of Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and associated cities where heavy attack will ... hamper movement of reinforcements from other fronts”.²⁹ Since there is a consensus between American, British and Russian counterparts, “the decision was founded on basic and explicit exchange of information ... and was clearly a strategic decision of mutual importance to the Allies and the Russians”.³⁰

²⁸ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 1-2.

²⁹ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 10.

³⁰ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 11.

c. Did the Russians request that Dresden be bombed by Allied Air Forces?

It is explicitly shown in the Argonaut Conference Minutes that the Russians requested the Allied air forces to bomb the Eastern front (1945).³¹ Considering the shifting of German troops from the Western front, Norway, and Italy, and specifically the Berlin and Leipzig route, the Russians asked for paralyzing the junction points as well as communication lines in the first half of February. Thus, it was reported as a “Russian request for bombing communications, coupled with the emphasis on forcing troops to shift from west to east through communication centers that led to the Allied bombings of Dresden”.³²

Dresden bombings became a necessity in order to:

“(1) implement strategic objectives of mutual importance to the Allies and the Russians, and

(2) respond to the specific Russian request to paralyze the junctions of Berlin and Leipzig.”³³

d. On whose recommendation, whether by an individual or by a committee, and by what authority were Allied air forces ordered to bomb Dresden?

Allied Strategic Air Forces in Europe, which includes The Supreme Allied Commander, Deputy Supreme Commander, and key British and American operational air authorities, issued CCS Directive No. 3. This Directive included the order to initiate the bombing in Dresden.³⁴

e. Were the Russians officially informed by the Allies concerning the intended date of and the forces to be committed to the bombing of Dresden?

Prior to the attacks it was reported that the liaison between the Russian and Allied forces were in effect. On 8th February Russians were informed that Dresden was among the designated targets. They were also notified that USAF 8th Air Force “intended to attack Dresden Marshalling Yards with a force of 1200 to 1400 bomber planes on 13th February”. 24-hour advance notice procedure was pursued, though due to the weather conditions the attack was prolonged.³⁵

³¹ Argonaut Conference, “Papers and Minutes of the Meeting of Argonaut Conference”, (1945). [accessed 1 September 2023].

<https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/History/WWII/Argonaut3.pdf>.

³² USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 11.

³³ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 11.

³⁴ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 13-14, 34.

³⁵ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 14-16.

f. With what forces and with what means did the Allied forces bomb Dresden?

During 14-15 February, the RAF employed 772 heavy bombers, 1477.7 tons of high explosive, 1131.6 tons of incendiary bombs, and USAF employed 527 heavy bombers, 953.3 tons of high explosive and 294.3 tons of incendiary bombs.³⁶

g. What were the specific target objectives in the Dresden bombings?

Specific target objectives regarding Dresden, as a military target, are detailed as:

- “(1) a primary communications center in the Berlin-Leipzig-Dresden railway complex;
- (2) an important industrial and manufacturing center associated with the production of aircraft components and other military items; and
- (3) an area containing specific military installations”.³⁷

In accordance with these objectives, the night raid by the RAF Bomber Command was aimed to devastate the city area, halt communications within the city and disrupt normal civilian life including the larger communications activities and the dependency on the manufacturing enterprises, while the Eighth Force raids, which were by daylight and following the night raid of the British on the 14th and 15th February, were directed against railways in the city.³⁸

h. What were the immediate and actual consequences of the Dresden bombings on the physical structure and the populace of the city?

RAF bombings resulted in fires which damaged the buildings especially the older and densely built-up areas, and approximately 85% of these areas were destroyed:³⁹ Physical structure, major public buildings, public utilities, and facilities (slaughterhouses, warehouses, distribution centers), industrial facilities (23% seriously damaged), dwelling units (78.000 demolished, 27.700 temporarily uninhabitable, 64.500 minor damage).

All in all, 80 % city’s housing units damaged, and 50 % demolished or seriously damaged. As it was planned, the air raid attacks paralyzed the communications. Those include “passenger terminals, major freight stations, warehouses, storage sheds, roundhouses, railway repair and workshops, coal

³⁶ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 17, 35.

³⁷ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 17-18.

³⁸ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 18.

³⁹ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 18.

stations, and other operating facilities”. Especially railway bridges on the Elbe River were severely damaged not be used for many weeks after the raid attacks.⁴⁰

In regard to casualties, it was assumed that numbers are appropriate with regard to other bombings in Germany, though the number of migrants were usually neglected. It is widely accepted that approximately 25.000 were killed and 30.000 were wounded together with fire storm caused by the incendiary bombs.⁴¹

Apart from that, the report emphasized American complaint about the “terroristic aspects of the Dresden Bombing”, by associating these claims with the Communist propaganda against the Allies, particularly the Americans.⁴²

i. Were the Dresden bombings in any way a deviation from established bombing policies set forth in official bombing directives?

According to the report, American and British Strategic Air Forces established the principle that defines the primary efforts as; mass destruction of important German industrial areas and population centers by night area bombing by RAF, daylight precision bombing of key installations within the larger industrial and population centers by the American Eighth Force.⁴³ In accordance with this principle, six points were emphasized by the US Strategic Air Forces in Europe:

- (1) Civilian targets were never not suitable military targets for the American forces,
- (2) There is no change in American policy of precision bombing,
- (3) Attacks against German communications well listed as secondary priority objectives in CCS Directive No. 3,
- (4) Russian advance on the ground constituted the greatest strategic factor employing strategic bombing,
- (5) For the sake of the Eastern Front, it deemed significant to attack the communication centers like Dresden
- (6) The attacks on other communication cities as well as Dresden was appreciated by the Russians.⁴⁴ Owing to these specific points, it was

⁴⁰ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 19-20.

⁴¹ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 20.

⁴² USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 21.

⁴³ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 23.

⁴⁴ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 27.

stated that there was no “deviation from established bombing policies set forth in official bombing directives” in the Dresden Bombings.⁴⁵

j. Were the specific forces and means employed in the Dresden bombings similar to or different from the forces and means employed by the Allies in other aerial attacks on comparable targets in Germany?

In order to explain the forces and the means employed in the Dresden Bombings, firstly the definition of area attacks was stated as “intentionally directed against the city area by more than 100 bombers with a bomb weight in excess of 100 tons, which destroyed more than 2% of the residential buildings in the city attacked”. Later on, the principal characteristics of area attacks were elaborated as; (1) generally made at night, (2) against large cities, (3) designed to spread destruction over a wide area, and (4) intended to destroy morale of the industrial workers specifically.⁴⁶ Besides, it was underlined that Dresden Bombings were relatively smaller when compared to the other attacks against German cities in terms of forces and means used.⁴⁷

Allied Bombings of Dresden⁴⁸

NO	DATE	Actual Target and Aiming Point	Force	Number of Aircraft Attacking	Bomb Tonnage on Target		TOTAL
					High Explosives	Incendiary Bombs	
1	7 Oct 1944	Marshalling Yards	8th AF	30	72,5	-	72,5
2	16 Jan 1945	Marshalling Yards	8th AF	133	279,8	41,6	321,4
3	14 Feb 1945	City Area	RAF BC	772	1477,7	1181,6	2659,3
4	14 Feb 1945	Marshalling Yards	8th AF	316	487,7	294,3	782
5	15 Feb 1945	Marshalling Yards	8th AF	211	465,6	-	465,6
6	2 Mar 1945	Marshalling Yards	8th AF	406	940,3	140,5	1080,8
7	17 Apr 1945	Marshalling Yards	8th AF	572	1526,4	164,5	1690,9
		Industrial Area	8th AF	8	28	-	28
GRAND TOTALS				2448	5278	1822,5	7100,5

⁴⁵ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 35.

⁴⁶ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 29.

⁴⁷ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 31.

⁴⁸ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 3.

k. In what specific ways and to what degree did the bombings of Dresden achieve or support the strategic objectives that underlay the attack and were of mutual importance to the Allies and the Russians?

In the report it was stated that bombings of Dresden achieve or support the strategic objectives that underlay the attack and were of mutual importance to the Allies and the Russians by detailing the objectives as follows:

- (1) Necessity of aerial bombings as a supporting action for Russian operations on the Eastern Germany,
- (2) A specific Russian request,
- (3) Preventing the war to prolong,
- (4) Halting the production of the military goods,
- (5) Weakening of the will of the German people to resist by RAF area raids on the city.

All of these led to the ultimate objective: to bring about the final defeat of Germany.⁴⁹

Another significant work is found in the British archives. This work is nowadays used to educate students and make them decide on some specific historical events. It is “Winston Churchill and the bombing of Dresden”.⁵⁰ This work describes the bombings as a “deliberate bombing of a whole area” and elaborates the incident:

*“eleven square miles of Dresden were consumed by a firestorm. The vacuum caused by the rapid rise of hot air created tornadoes that tossed furniture, trees and debris into the air. People were caught in fires as hot as 1000 °C. The city was devastated. No one knows how many thousands died”*⁵¹

Considering the German armies retreat position, some believed that Dresden bombings was not conducted on the basis of a military decision and eventually caused the slaughter of civilians. This work consists of three parts answering these questions respectively;

⁴⁹ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 31-34.

⁵⁰ The National Archives, “Winston Churchill and the bombing of Dresden”, (3 December 2019). [accessed 01 September 2023].

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/+https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesevillains/g1/>.

⁵¹ The National Archives, “Winston Churchill and the bombing of Dresden”.

1. Why target Dresden?
2. What did the bombing of the Dresden achieve?
3. Was Churchill responsible?”⁵²

The first question focused on the reasons why Dresden was selected as a target. It was emphasized that in a report issued in October 1944, Dresden was designated a possible target, though at the end of the day it was concluded that “compared to other towns of its size, Dresden is therefore an unattractive blitz target”.⁵³ However, in four months, something had changed. It was supported that Dresden was one of the key transport junctions, especially in between Berlin-Leipzig route. It had a capacity of 4000 trucks a day, most of were believed to be transferring military equipment. Particularly as the Russians achieved success in the eastern front, the main concern of the Allies and the Russians was the possibility of the movement of German troops from west to eastern front.⁵⁴

In addition to the domestic railway routes, Dresden was linked with Czechoslovakia region, as well. Besides, some highlighted that with relation to being a transportation center, it was not only the equipment that was transported, but also the refugees were transferred through city to safer places. Hence, attacking a city with additional civilians, refugees, could result in devastating effect. In relation with this, another view supports the idea that Dresden was targeted to affect the morale of the Germans. A cultural center and not touched by the war, Dresden could be the right option to destroy the German belief that they could win the war and therefore, to cease the will of German people to fight.⁵⁵ And last but not the least, German Luftwaffe attacked the English cities like Coventry (1940), London (1940-1941) and it was assumed that it could also contribute to the decision of bombing Dresden.⁵⁶

The question regarding what was achieved at the end of bombings, triggered many concerns and questions especially following the devastating consequences. As it was reported, the weather was clear, there was no resistance including German fighter planes or anti-aircraft guns, Dresden burned for seven days, no exact numbers of dead. It was stated by the British

⁵² The National Archives, “Winston Churchill and the bombing of Dresden”.

⁵³ The National Archives, “Why target Dresden?”, (3 December 2019). [accessed 1 September 2023].

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/+https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesevillains/g1/cs1/>

⁵⁴ The National Archives, “Why target Dresden?”

⁵⁵ The National Archives, “Why target Dresden?”

⁵⁶ The National Archives, “Why target Dresden?”

that Dresden was a city hosting “little industry of importance” and bombings did not result in the surrender of Hitler.

Interestingly, it was also highlighted in the document that RAF questioned the Dresden bombings, yet the bombings were conducted.⁵⁷ In an effort to answering this question, British documents which elaborating the details of the bombings, areas, aircrafts were exploited. Damages to public buildings including “law courts, Carola Ministerien, Rathaus (Neustadt), Central Market Hall, Slaughterhouse, hospitals, Museum of Arts and Crafts, Opera House, Academy of Art” were reported as severely damaged. With regards to services and transportation, those were stated among the damaged facilities; electricity station, Central Police Station, post office, Wettinor Strasse Station, Carola Bridge, Augustus Bridge, Rail Bridge. Military targets, however, included only two facilities; Elbe Barracks and Alto Grenadier-Kaserne.⁵⁸ When it comes to the morale of the Germans, it was emphasized in the documents that breaking the morale of the industrial workers was not achieved, thus production was not completely stopped. In a report dated 22 March 1945, although the %85 of the city was destroyed almost in a month most of the vital infrastructure had been repaired⁵⁹ and the bombings did not have the expected loss of morale.

Final question, whether Winston Churchill was responsible or not was examined. It was clearly stated that it was General Harris, also known as Bomber Harris, as the head of Bomber Command, was responsible for bombing operations.⁶⁰ However, he and his colleagues queried the necessity of Dresden bombings and he expressed in his autobiography that;

*“I know that the destruction of so large and splendid city at this late stage of the war was considered unnecessary even by a good many people who admit that our earlier attacks were as fully justified as any other operation of war. Here I will only say that the attack on Dresden was at the time considered a military necessity by much more important people than myself ...”*⁶¹

⁵⁷ The National Archives, “What did the bombing achieve?”, (3 December 2019). [accessed 01 September 2023].

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/+https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesvillains/g1/cs2/default.htm>

⁵⁸ The National Archives, “What did the bombing achieve?”

⁵⁹ The National Archives, “What did the bombing achieve?”

⁶⁰ The National Archives, “Was Churchill responsible?”, (3 December 2019). [accessed 01 September 2023].

<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/+https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/heroesvillains/g1/cs3/default.htm>

⁶¹ Mason B. Webb, “The Bombing of Dresden: Was the Attack Fully Justified?”

The idea of bombing Dresden was supported in the documents prepared by General Harris, emphasizing that Dresden becoming important as a control point in the German defence. In another document it was highlighted that bombings must be conducted with the intention to attack “on the morale of the enemy civil population, and, in particular, of the industrial workers”.⁶² Churchill’s two letters were also included in the British archives. In these letters, Churchill personally wrote to General Ismay. The first letter dated 28 March 1945, he stated that Dresden bombings was becoming a query against the Allied bombings, therefore he put forward the importance of focusing on their own national interest. Also he emphasized the need for focusing on military objectives like “oil and communications behind the immediate battle-zone, rather than on mere acts of terror and wanton destruction, however impressive”.⁶³ In the second letter dated 1 April 1945 he restated his concerns about Dresden bombings and British interest and added that their “attacks do not do more harm to ourselves in the long run than they do to the enemy’s immediate war effort”.⁶⁴ All in all, the question whether Churchill, as the Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, was responsible, replied as responsible to a degree. Further it was explained that Churchill was not consulted on every single raid and even if he supported the raids, it was to fulfill the Russian request.⁶⁵ Throughout the study American and British perspectives and arguments were discussed. However, it should be kept in mind that German perspective is essential, as well as British and American perspectives and arguments. Among German historians during the first years of the Cold War in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) two arguments were dominant. First one defended that German were misled by the Nazis and Hitler and became the immediate victims of the war. The latter supported the idea that the Germans were collectively accused guilty of the war crimes based on their German identity.⁶⁶ During the later years of the Cold War, in accordance with the division of Germany, two different perspectives emerged on the basis of ideology. Two main issues arose between the East and West, anti-Soviet motives behind the attack and the death toll. In German Democratic Republic (GDR), Third Reich was held responsible for the Second World War. As a result, Allied bombings together with the territorial losses and division of Germany was attributed to Nazi Germany. In addition, war crimes were directed to the Allies and the fascist ideology.⁶⁷

⁶² The National Archives, “Was Churchill responsible?”

⁶³ The National Archives, “Was Churchill responsible?”

⁶⁴ The National Archives, “Was Churchill responsible?”

⁶⁵ The National Archives, “Was Churchill responsible?”

⁶⁶ Bas von Benda-Beckmann, *German Historians and the Bombing of German Cities*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015), 21.

⁶⁷ von Benda-Beckmann, *German Historians and the Bombing of German Cities*, 79-80.

Another argument was related with responsible party of the Dresden bombings. GDR pointed out that since Nazi Germany initiated the WWII, it must be held responsible for the bombings of Dresden. This argument was supported with the fact that fascist leaders of Nazi Germany did not provide protection to the citizens of Dresden. Therefore, Nazis and in a broader sense the Germans were responsible for the concentration camps as well as Dresden bombings.⁶⁸ Nonetheless, this perception changed dramatically at the end of 1940s. With the help of inevitable Soviet effect, the responsible party for the attacks transformed into Western Allies, since it was their ‘Anglo-American’ aircrafts that hit Dresden. It was German people who lost their lives. Then it became “a senseless act of destruction and as a ‘crime against humanity’ committed by the Western Allies against a nation that had already been defeated”.⁶⁹ This interpretation continued to exist in GDR throughout the Cold War. According to Zimmering, it was assumed that the reason behind the Dresden attacks was Allies’ effort to unsettle the Soviet effect in the eastern part of Germany along with their desire to show the destructive power of their aerial attacks. In the end, the first assumption of fascist understanding combined with the Western imperialism specifically by underlying the similarities. Especially the Western efforts of forming a specific alliance, NATO, targeting Soviet Union were raised to support this argument.⁷⁰

Against those views, in FRG, similarly, Soviet regime was combined with Nazi understanding. FRG ascribed responsibility for the destruction of the Soviet Union, particularly Stalin, and emphasized the continuity of the suffering of Dresden under the Soviet occupation. Starting from the 1950s, FRG showed a tendency towards the change of the first interpretations, similar to GDR. Also, FRG accused the Allies for the Dresden bombings and condemned them as mass murderers.⁷¹ Unification of Germany resulted in another change in the German narratives, especially with the acceptance and acknowledge of the German guilt introduced by Groehler. Together with this broad public confrontation with German guilt, and the stability as a result of the unification of Germany brought about a new conscience. This conscience freed the new generation from the chains of past narratives and accusations. They began to discuss their own suffering without accusing any party and acknowledging the responsibility for the Holocaust.⁷²

⁶⁸ von Benda-Beckmann, *German Historians and the Bombing of German Cities*, 80.

⁶⁹ Max Seydewitz, *Die unbesiegbare Stadt. Zerstörung und Wiederaufbau von Dresden*, (Berlin: Kongress, 1956), 181.

⁷⁰ von Benda-Beckmann, *German Historians and the Bombing of German Cities*, 85-87.

⁷¹ von Benda-Beckmann, *German Historians and the Bombing of German Cities*, 123.

⁷² von Benda-Beckmann, *German Historians and the Bombing of German Cities*, 256-257.

3. Analysis

Dresden was the seventh largest city in Germany back in 1945. According to the USAF Report, Dresden ranked the seventh place among the other German cities exposed to the Allied aerial bombardments.

Allied Aerial Bombardments of the Seven Largest German Cities⁷³

Cities	Population	American Tonnage	British Tonnage	Total Tonnage
Berlin	4.339.000	22.090,9	45.517	67.607,3
Hamburg	1.129.000	17.104,6	22.583	39.687,6
Munich	841.000	11.470,4	7.858	27.110,9
Cologne	772.000	10.211,2	34.712	44.923,2
Leipzig	707.000	5.410,4	6.206	11.616,4
Essen	667.000	1.518,0	36.420	37.938,0
Dresden	642.000	4.441,2	2659,3	7.100,5

It would be incorrect to assume that since tonnage of bombs used in Dresden were the least, therefore Dresden Bombings were not significant compared to the other bombings. On the contrary, Dresden Bombings differs from the other in terms of the objectives, timing, city choice, and motives. Other German cities were targeted in the course of ongoing war and in accordance with the military necessities to fulfil military objectives. However, Dresden Bombings were nothing alike. They were totally different, aimed at forcing the Germans to surrender. Janssen expressed the very same idea that Dresden bombings were intended to terrorize the civilian population, and thereby to make Germany surrender.⁷⁴ Since Dresden Bombings were to bring about the closure to the war in Europe, its resemblance with Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings were essential. Even though not any nuclear bomb was dropped on the proper of Germany, these attacks resemble to each other: they were initiated to force a nation by aerial attacks intended to harm and terrorize the civilian population.

Another opinion, supported by Michael Howard, that in the beginning of war air raids actually strengthen the morale of the enemy by raising the hatred and defiance, yet, in the later stages it contributes to the apathy and

⁷³ USAF, “Historical Analysis of the 14-15 February Bombing of Dresden”, 37.

⁷⁴ Volker Janssen, “Why Was Dresden So Heavily Bombed?”, History, (2023). [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://www.history.com/news/dresden-bombing-wwii-allies>.

war-weariness, rarely ultimate destruction of morale.⁷⁵ Considering the refugees present during the bombardments, it could be implied that the city was full of the civilians who were unable to fight. Biddle also reached the same conclusion. He argued that the most important perspective of the Dresden Bombings was not emphasized enough. It was the existence of the high number of refugees consist of mostly women, children, and older people. Keeping in mind that these people have nowhere to go they were the direct victims of the first area raids.⁷⁶ Supporting this idea, Tino Chrupalla, the spokesman of the Alternative for Germany party stated that “The suffering was immeasurable. The Allied attack on a city full of refugees is a war crime”.⁷⁷

On the other hand, in his work Maier supported those two different perspectives occur with regard to aerial bombings. First one suggests that it is like an act of terrorism since it targets civilians, however, it is not as simple as this. Because terrorism intends to kill innocents, not as a cause of some attack. On contrary, second one points out the “evil regime” engaged in this brutal war deemed as responsible for the death of these innocent civilians.⁷⁸ In an effort to comprehend two diverse understandings, one must look through each perspective. Nonetheless, the compass must direct the right path. In other words, since the war made us to compel our will to our enemies, we must do so in accordance with the established rules, legal restrictions, and humanitarian concerns.

Conclusion

Strategic bombing is indeed a cornerstone in the war history, which is still questioned by many. Since it is a concept that is justified with the perspective of one nation, party, or ally; it could be deemed as a contested concept. Throughout the history, strategic bombing became an instrument by German *Luftwaffe* by the application of *Blitzkrieg*. Germany conducted aerial bombings to several European cities before and during the WWII. Nevertheless, Germany was hit by its very own weapon and strategy a couple of times towards the end of WWII. Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Leipzig, Cologne, Essen were all suffered from the strategic bombings and even some

⁷⁵ Mark Clapson, “European Cities Under the Bomb: Nazi and Allied Bombing Campaigns”, 1939-45, *The Blitz Companion*, (London: University of Westminster Press, 2019), 94.

⁷⁶ Biddle, “Sifting Dresden's Ashes”, (2005): 60.

⁷⁷ Melissa Eddy, “How Dresden Looked After a World War II Firestorm 75 Years Ago”, *The New York Times*, (14 February 2020). [accessed 01 September 2023]. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/13/world/europe/dresden-germany-anniversary.html>.

⁷⁸ Charles S. Maier, “Targeting the city: Debates and silences about the aerial bombing of World War II”, *International Review of the Red Cross*, 87, no:859, (2005): 429-444.

of them also suffered from the fire storms caused by the attack, though Dresden Bombings was stand-alone.

Even though Allied Forces has been looking for some arguments or excuses to justify the Dresden Bombings, they were always insufficient to convince the greater international public. Dresden was never a military target, but a commercial one. It was a communications center, on the route of Berlin and Leipzig, but a military center. It was a political target with a commercial and industrial background and hosting the refugees and migrants escaping from the conflict sites. Besides, Dresden was a cultural center, with respect to arts and specific architecture, never touched by the filthy hands of war. The 'Florence on Elbe' was extremely precious yet, forced to pay the debts of the war and the Nazi war crimes associated with the German identity.

Dresden is often commemorated with Hiroshima and Nagasaki, although it cannot be compared with cities hit by a nuclear bomb. However, it is not the reason why their names are spoken together. Dresden was the last resort to make Germany surrender and it was done extremely brutally, and in a terroristic way, to end the war in Europe with an unconditional surrender. In the light of all these findings and assumptions, it could be said that bombing Dresden was nothing related to a necessity, but an atonement for victory holders at the end of WWII.

THE LONG LASTING IMPACT OF THE BOMBING OF DRESDEN IN FEBRUARY 1945

Prof. Dr. Reiner POMMERIN (Germany)

Introduction

“What we used to know as Dresden no longer exists. Walking through it is like a dream walk through Sodom and Gomorrah. There is nothing for any human being in this stony wasteland. Fifteen square kilometres of the town have been mown down and blown away. What would otherwise take entire geological ages to achieve, namely the transformation of rock – has happened here in a single night”.¹ This “single night” was that of 13 February 1945. I was motivated to give this paper by the touching photo which our colleagues of the Turkish Commission for Military History appropriately have chosen for the website of this Congress. Together with the statue of kindness, the only one left of the 16 statues of virtues which had been surrounding the tower of Dresden’s city hall we are looking at a desert which before used to be the centre of the city of Dresden.

In the history of air warfare it was the Italian pilot Lieutenant Giulio Gavotti who first dropped bombs from an airplane. In the course of the Italo – Turkish War he tossed on 1 November 1911 four bombs on the Taguira Oasis south of Tripoli and on a Turkish military camp at Ain Zara. The grenades he threw out of his monoplane Etrich Taube had only the size of a grapefruit weighting about 2 kilograms and they caused no damage.² But the Italians were convinced that these bombs had produced a moral effect.³ Due to the *Gazzetta del Popolo* the bombs had allegedly scattered the “terrorized Turks”. Articles in the *Scientific American* reported 1913 on the Italian bombing arguing: “the importance of the aeroplane bombs lay more in their moral than in their material effect [...] With regard to aerial bombing, the moral effect would soon take on a life of its own”.⁴

¹ Erich Kästner, „Und dann fuhr ich nach Dresden“, in Ingeborg Drewitz, *Städte 1945. Berichte und Bekenntnisse*, Düsseldorf: Diederichs, 1970, 114.

² Thomas Hippler, *Governing from the Skies. A Global History of Aerial Bombing*. (translated by David Fernbach), (London: verso books, 2017), IX-XII.

³ Tami Davis Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality in Air Warfare. The Evolution of British and American Ideas about Strategic Bombing, 1941–1945*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 3.

⁴ Biddle, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 20.

The military always believes that the next war will run a similar course to the previous one and they therefore analyse it in great detail. In the First World War neither the Navy nor the great army offensives had brought the war to an end. All strategic planners of the 1920s and 1930s had come to the conclusion that future wars between great powers would be “total” wars. In other words: all resources of a state would be drawn into the war effort. The logical consequence was that all citizens, not just the armed forces, would be involved in a war. Out of this point of view destroying the economy and moral of an enemy people became perfectly legitimate war aims. In 1921 Italian Army Major General Giulio Douhet published a book with the title: “Il Domino dell’ aria” (The Command of the Air). He believed that terror and annihilation tactics against the civilian population could in a “total war” play a decisive role. The moral of the civilian population would be weakened by the possibility of death from the skies. Sudden attacks from the air could force the enemy to submit to the opponents will.⁵ But in most European countries the army had traditionally been the dominant fighting force. Therefore, the view prevailed that aircraft should only be deployed in an auxiliary role, to provide support for the ground troops, or as part of the interaction of all forces in war operations. Many countries decided to build fighter planes and light bombers which had no strategic function but would play an essentially tactical role in supporting the land and sea forces. Douhet's considerations had great influence on the strategic concepts of developing air forces.

“It is easy to see why air power assumed these dimensions both in strategic theory and in popular conception of warfare, between the World Wars. The threat of destruction from the air had an almost mythical power [...] The feebleness of civilian morale when faced with the stark reality of death from the skies was accepted as common knowledge, though there was little hard evidence to support it. [...] Such view was based on the uncritical assumption that domestic crisis could force military surrender, that in an age of mass politics the people made war and ended it”.⁶

Air War Doctrines

A positive by-product of historians coming to grips with the past is that as a result of their work legends are often destroyed, legends which sometimes seem more firmly established than the actual historical events. In order to understand the decision to bomb Dresden it is essential to grasp the

⁵ Phillip S. Meilinger, “The Historiography of Airpower: Theory and Doctrine,” *The Journal of Military History* (IJMH) 64 no 2 (2000): 467-501.

⁶ Richard J. Overy, “Air Power in the Second World War. Historical Themes and Theories” In *The Conduct of the Air War in the Second World War. An International Comparison*. (translated by Karl B. Keenan), ed. Horst Boog. (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1992): 23-47.

principles which determined the Anglo-American air war strategy of the Second World War. The United States of America, with no potential enemy in sight and, for a long time to come, protected from air attacks by 2.000 miles of sea around its coasts, had no Air Force as such, only an Army Air Fleet. During the First World War the US Army Air Service had only been used occasionally in Europe to support American ground troops. Colonel William Mitchell was one of the few American Army officers who saw air warfare as an important factor in a future war. That's why he wrote: "The influence of air power on the ability of one nation to impress its will on the other nation in an armed conflict will be decisive".⁷ Mitchell proposed bombing of enemy territory and believed that attacking the enemy's vital centres was the quickest way to break the will to resist. He obviously agreed with the considerations of Douhet. A translation of parts of *Command in the Air* was available at the Air Service Tactical School, Langley Field, Virginia, as early as 1923.⁸ By successfully dropping a bomb in a test on the former German Battleship "Ostfriesland" Mitchell proved that even such a battleship, previously considered to be unsinkable, could be sunk by the bombs of a single plane. But his constant advances for greater investment in air power received neither support nor recognition in the Army and Mitchell was even forced to retire.

However, the operational principles developed by the US Army Air Service Tactical School from 1938 onwards kind of followed Mitchell's reasoning. Precision bombing, which meant dropping bombs on selected and defined economic and industrial targets, should cripple the enemy's war effort. But there was no intention of breaking enemy moral by attacks on the civilian population. The U. S. Army Air Force was formed in June 1941 and General Henry H. Arnold retained command over it until the end of the Second World War. He wrote in 1941 that the most economical way of bringing a big city to its knees was to destroy the power stations supplying electric light, the water supply and the sewerage system. It was recognised, he continued, "that bombing raids on the civilian population are uneconomical and ill-advised".⁹ Fateful for the city of Dresden became the development of air war strategy in Great Britain. During the course of the First World War German Zeppelins and German "Giant Bombers" had dropped bombs on London.¹⁰ The fear of bombardment amongst the population, the so called "air scare" became soon

⁷ William Mitchell, *Winged Defense. The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power – Economic and Military*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's sons, 1925), 214.

⁸ Melvin G. Dealy, *Reprint of The Command of the Air*, (Maxwell: Air University Press, 2019), XI.

⁹ Henry H. Arnold and Ira C. Eaker, *Winged Warfare*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), XIII.

¹⁰ Fredrik C. Gerhardt, *London 1916. Die vergessene Luftschlacht*. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2019), 77.

sort of trauma.¹¹ In July 1917 the War Cabinet therefore appointed a commission, under General Jan Smuts, to view the situation and make recommendations. As a result of Smuts suggestions, the British government established on 1 July 1918 the independent Royal Air Force (RAF).

The RAF developed a specific doctrine for strategic bombing. The idea of bombing German cities had already been mooted in principle in January 1918. A memo from the Empire General Staff recommended “The policy intended to be followed is to attack the important German towns systematically [...] It is intended to concentrate on one town for successive days and then to pass to several other towns returning to the first town until the target is thoroughly destroyed, or at any rate until the moral of workmen is so shaken that output is seriously interfered with”.¹² The so called “police bombing” of the colonial powers in the 1920ties and 1930ties had already tested such ideas. Not only Great Britain but also France had suppressed regional rebellions in their colonies with the help of air raids on villages and towns.¹³ In 1928 RAF Marshal Lord Hugh Trenchard drafted the RAF War Manual. He firmly believed that air raids: “owing to its crushing moral effect on a Nation, may impress the public opinion to a point of disarming the government and thus becoming decisive”¹⁴ According to the War Manual the main aim of air raids was to destroy willpower and national moral.¹⁵ It mentioned, amongst other things: “A nation is defeated once the people or the government no longer have the will to pursue its war aims”.¹⁶ What remained open to question was whether the population of a totalitarian regime like the one in Germany, would be either willing or able to influence their political leaders.¹⁷ Wasn't it actually more likely that a bombing of cities would reinforce German National Socialist die hard slogans and make the population more defiant, along the lines of “now you've really got it coming!” A Joint

¹¹ Raymond H. Fredette, *The First Battle of Britain 1917–1918 and the Birth of the Royal Air Force*, (London: Cassell, 1966) 233. – See also: Thomas Fegan, *The ‘Baby Killers’: German air raids on Britain in the First World War*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2013).

¹² Henry Albert Jones, *The War in the Air. Being the Story of the part played in the Great War by the Royal Air Force*, Vol. 7, Appendices, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), 26.

¹³ James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Air Power in Small Wars. Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists*, (Lawrence: Kansas University Press, 2003). – David Omissi, *Air Power and Colonial Control. The Royal Air Force 1919–1939*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

¹⁴ Jones, *The War in the Air*, Appendices, 33.

¹⁵ Well described by Phillip S. Meilinger, “Trenchard and ‘Morale Bombing’: The Evolution of Royal Air Force Doctrine before World War II,” *IJMH* 60, no 2 (1996): 243-270.

¹⁶ Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany, 1939–1945*, (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1961, Vol. IV), 73.

¹⁷ Henry Austin Probert, “Die Auswirkungen des strategischen Luftkrieges auf die deutsche Moral 1940–1945. Britische Erwartungen und deutsche Reaktionen” ed. Klaus-Jürgen Müller, David Dilks, *Großbritannien und der deutsche Widerstand 1933–1945*, (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1995), 197-216.

Planning Sub-Committee including its member Group Captain Arthur T. Harris wrote in 1936 a paper on “The Appreciation of the Situation in the Event of War against Germany”. Here one could read: “Moreover, a military dictatorship is likely to be less susceptible to popular outcry than a democratic one government”.¹⁸

A fact that needs to be remembered is that as far as international law was concerned, there was at this time no prohibition on air warfare, even though various attempts had been made in this direction. The Hague Convention of 1899 had only outlawed the dropping of bombs from balloons. But at the Hague Conference of 1907 this had already proven to be unsustainable. By then many countries had discovered the aircraft as a potential weapon for war. The Hague Lawyers' Commission of 1932 concluded that bombardment from an aeroplane with the intention of terrorising a civilian population should be banned. But this suggestion was only followed up after the Second World War by the *Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions relating to the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts* of 12 August 1949.¹⁹ When Hitler unleashed the Second World War on 1 September 1939 no internationally recognised settlement existed. This loophole in international law was what President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had in mind when, on the same day, he sent a note to the warring countries. He urged them to make a public declaration that they would not bomb any civilian population or unfortified town from the air. Hitler informed Roosevelt: “For my part I have already made it clear in my speech to the Reichstag today that the German Luftwaffe has been given orders to restrict hostilities to military targets”.²⁰ We now that this was a blatant lie, because the Second World War did not start at Danzig at 5:45. Already at 4:40 a German Stuka Wing had bombed the small Polish town Wielun. This first area bombardment of the Second World War destroyed 70 Percent of the town and killed 1.200 of its inhabitants. Wielun was not at all a tactical or strategic target; the Stuka Wing was just testing its new engines and different new fire bombs.²¹ On the following day both France and Britain complied with Roosevelt's request. This declaration was not unwelcome to the British Bomber Command, which was initially not keen to get involved and in any case had very few bombers and trained crews available.

¹⁸ Webster and Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive*, 89.

¹⁹ Javier Guisández Gómez, The Law of Air Warfare. *International Review of the Red Cross*, no 323, June 1998, 347-362.

²⁰ *Akten zur Deutschen Auswärtigen Politik, Serie D*, ed. Walter Bußmann, Jaques Bariety, Lord Bullock (Baden-Baden: 1956), Vol. VII, 423.

²¹ „Größte Härte...“ *Verbrechen der Wehrmacht in Polen September/Oktober 1939*. Catalogue of an Exhibition, ed. Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. (Osnabrück: Fibre Verlag, 2005), 69-71.

The British and the American concept of air warfare were originally based on the principle that bombers flying high in close formation with defensive weapons on board could not be brought down. But this was soon called into question by the fast fighter planes of the Luftwaffe. The RAF's initial attacks on German ships over the Heligoland Bight in December 1939 incurred therefore heavy British losses and led to a drastic rethinking. In the years that followed British strategic bombing was carried out almost exclusively at night. The original idea of also carrying out precision bombing at night turned out to be impossible, even though the means of identification for target spotting at night continually improved.

The first German air attack on British territory took place on 16 March 1940 and was aimed at the British Fleet at Scapa Flow and RAF airfields. The answer of the RAF was an attack on the German naval air base at Hörnum on the island of Sylt. The reason for reticence about bombing the important industrial cities in the area along the river Ruhr, even though it would have been of great military advantage, was of concern within the British War Cabinet. But still the opinion prevailed: "The possibility that the British could be accused of being the first to begin indiscriminate bombing and that this would probably lead to German retaliatory attacks against England".²²

The files of the War Cabinet clearly show that it was the dramatic deterioration of Britain's and France's position on the ground due to the German occupation of the French Channel coast, and not, as has often mistakenly been assumed, the German bombing of Rotterdam, that ultimately provoked the British decision to start area bombing. The decision was "not a reaction to the way the Germans had been conducting the war, but the realisation of a concept long-since formulated for the event of a war [...] The War Cabinet resolution of 15 May 1940 made Britain the first to embark on air war, which was not directly related to land or sea operations".²³ The attack on the industrial cities along the river Ruhr on 15 May 1940 was not particularly successful and anyhow unable to prevent the military defeat of France. But it was all Hitler needed to give the order "to attack the English homeland in the fullest manner" and to open the air war with an "annihilating reprisal for British attacks on the Ruhr".²⁴

²² Horst Boog, "The Beginning of the Strategic Bombing of the Royal Air Force, the German Air Defence and American Preparations for Air War up to 1941," In *The Global War. Widening of the Conflict into a World War and the Shift of the Initiative 1941–1943*, ed. Horst Boog, Werner Rahn, Reinhard Stumpf, Bernd Wegner, (translated by Derry Cook-Radmore, John Brownjohn, Patricia Crampton, Louis Willmot). (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).496.

²³ Boog, *The Beginning of the Strategic Bombing*, 498.

²⁴ *Hitler's War Directives 1939 –1945*. (translated by Anthony Rhodes), ed. Hugh Trevor-Roper, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1964), 29.

During the First World War Winston Churchill as Munitions Minister had written in October 1917: “It is improbable that any terrorization of the civil population which could be achieved by air attack would compel the government of a great nation to surrender [...] In our own case we have seen the combative spirit of the people roused, and not quelled, by the German air raids. Nothing that we have learned of the capacity of the German population to endure suffering justifies us in assuming that they could be cowed into submission by such methods, or, indeed, that they would not be rendered more desperately resolved by them [...] Any injury which comes to the civil population from this process of attack must be regarded as incidental and inevitable”.²⁵ By July 1940 Churchill as Prime Minister had changed his mind. He now was convinced that: “Nothing will bring the German to his senses or to his knees except an absolutely devastating, exterminating attack by over-heavy bombers from this country against the Nazis' home territory”.²⁶ Two months before the retired Lord Trenchard had already suggested in a “Memorandum on the Present War Situation” to attack the German moral by bombing German civilians: “This, then is their weak point compared with ourselves, and it is at this weak point, that we should strike and strike again”.²⁷

The Fog of War

During the night of August 24th 1940 the Luftwaffe accidentally bombed London. This led to a counterattack on Berlin the next night, soon to be followed by more airstrikes. On 7 September 1940 Hitler ordered targets in London to be attacked. Until then neither the RAF nor the Luftwaffe had indulged in indiscriminate bombing. In fact, where British bombers had been unable to make out their targets they had brought back their bombs, ignoring the risks involved. However, there was no technical means of preventing bombs from dispersing, particularly at night. This meant that henceforth all bombing attacks, in Germany and England, seemed like a sort of act of terror, even before they were actually intended as such. Several bombs had already hit cities in western and northern Germany by the time the War Cabinet approved in December 1940 the first deliberate “area raid” of the war by Bomber Command on the German city Mannheim. This attack took place as part of “Operation Abigail”, justified in British eyes by the German air raid on Coventry a month ago which had destroyed 80 Percent of the city. Action was taken after Bomber Command realized that bombs still tended to disperse. A certain number of planes were now concentrated into a “bomber stream” over the target and target identification improved by marking it in advance

²⁵ Jones, *The War in the Air*, Appendices, 19.

²⁶ John Coleville, *The Fringes of Power. 10 Downing Street Diaries, 1939–1955*, (London: W. W. Norton & Co, 1985), 186.

²⁷ Webster and Frankland, *The Strategic Air Offensive*, 195.

with special luminous colouring. Many more such attacks on German cities followed, for example on Cologne, Essen, Bremen, and Berlin. The British bomber Command realizing that precision bombing at night was not possible concentrated on area bombing instead. It became much more productive to aim at city centres, which tended to be the most developed and the most inhabited areas. These British air raids were answered by the Luftwaffe with the so-called “Baedeker Raids” named after the famous German Baedeker travel guides, on historic cities like Bath, Canterbury and York.

Supporting the Red Army

At the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 Churchill and President Theodore Roosevelt wanted to deflect the complaints from Stalin about the postponement of an invasion across the Channel until 1944. Stalin had shown very little enthusiasm for an invasion of Northwest Africa, even though this offered a good platform for an attack on the German Armed Forces occupying Southwest Europe. At that time there were rumours circulating about the possibility of separate peace negotiations between Germany and the Soviet Union. Churchill and Roosevelt therefore wanted to relieve the Soviet Union in their battle against Germany and make their support more visible. They agreed on a joint Anglo-American bombing offensive of Germany. They let Stalin know that the offensive was supposed to systematically destroy and annihilate Germany's military machinery, industry and economy and demoralise the German people to such a degree that they would lose their will to fight.²⁸ American air raids on Germany should be high altitude precision attacks, made in close formation with fighter escorts. Since effectiveness was an important consideration, the killing of defenceless civilians was rejected by the United States also on moral grounds. While the USAAF could not be persuaded to adopt the RAF tactic of night bombing, the Americans had to live with the fact that even their daytime precision attacks would cause collateral damage and hit German civilian population, particularly when the bombs had due to weather been dropped blind from above the cloud cover.

In London consideration was given to the proposals of the commander in chief of Bomber Command, Air Marshal Harris, who knew about the resolutions of Casablanca to extend the bombing war against Germany now with American support. Harris got the backing he needed from Churchill to pursue Lord Trenchard's principle of air war strategy and to continue area bombing of German cities with renewed zeal. Already in March 1942 had Churchill asked his economic advisor Lord Frederick Cherwell to produce a

²⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, The Conferences at Washington, 1941 – 1942 and Casablanca, 1943*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1968), 669, 746, 781.

report on the effectiveness of such air raids. This was to become the theoretical basis for indiscriminate British bombing. Cherwell had analysed the Luftwaffe's performance over Birmingham and Hull and had calculated that one ton of bombs could destroy 20 to 40 houses and leave 100 to 200 people homeless. He reckoned that by increasing the strength of Bomber Command, 58 German cities could be completely destroyed by mid-1943, and 22 million Germans, one third of the population, made homeless. Churchill and Harris accepted Cherwell's assessment, as did the War Cabinet. According to a resolution of April 1942, the Cabinet now felt it vitally important "to bring home to the majority of German civilians the worst horrors of war".²⁹ On the night of 30 May 1942 as part of the operation "Millennium" the first "thousand bomber raid" of Bomber Command was launched on Cologne. The raid destroyed 13.010 houses completely, and another 6360 severely and killed 469 people. About 150.000 inhabitants had to leave the city, while Bomber Command only lost 43 bombers and their crews of the 1047 aircraft engaged.

Harris believed that with 4.000 heavy bombers Bomber Command could win the war on its own. Air raids on cities like Hamburg causing a death rate of 30.000 civilians, on Leipzig, Braunschweig, Augsburg and Schweinfurt followed. Harris also wanted to destroy the German capital Berlin. But this city was strongly defended and attacks against it caused heavy casualties. In fact, the losses incurred by Bomber Command in the Second World War turned out to be quite high. In total it lost 55,000 men, proportionally greater losses than in any other of the British armed services during the war. In summer of 1944 Germany embarked with the V-1 and the V-2 rockets on a really indiscriminate bombing campaign, designed purely to cause terror. After the landings in Normandy, the British response in summer and autumn of 1944 was the bombing of the cities Stettin, Königsberg, Darmstadt, Saarbrücken, Duisburg, Essen, Bochum, Solingen and Freiburg. On 7 October 1944 the town Emmerich was attacked. 97 Percent of the buildings were razed to the ground so was my parents' house. Also on Bomber Command's list of targets were the cities of Chemnitz, Dresden and Leipzig in Saxony. But the next cities Bomber Command attacked in December were Heilbronn, Karlsruhe, Stuttgart and Ulm. At the beginning of 1945 Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal, and the British representative at the main HQ of the Western Allies, Air Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, wanted the bombardment to be concentrated on refineries and traffic intersections. Harris, still keen to continue bombing cities, therefore offered his resignation but Portal refused to accept it.³⁰ Harris then followed his superior's wishes and ordered the

²⁹ Martin Rüter, *Köln, 31. Mai 1942: Der 1000-Bomber-Angriff*, (Köln: Janus Verlagsgesellschaft, 1992), 25.

³⁰After the war Harris admitted that the demoralization of the Germans had not been reached. See Arthur T. Harris, *Bomber Offensive*, (Barnsley: Frontline Books, 1965), 78.

bombing of the hydro plants at the cities of Leuna, Brüx, Zeitz und Pölitz. But on 16 January a fire storm destroyed again a city, the city of Magdeburg. 5.000 allied Bombers destroyed 68 Percent of the houses and 6.000 inhabitants died. Behind the fuel plants now the cities of Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz moved up to second place on the target list of the RAF. The Soviet attack on the German Reich had successfully started on 12 January 1945. To support their operations on the Eastern front the Soviet Union repeatedly requested the Allies to bomb German traffic intersections in Saxony. On 10 January 1945, Air Marshall Tedder had had talks with Stalin in Moscow about coordinating the activities of the Soviet and the Western armies on German soil. They also discussed strategic bombing targets in Germany, so that Soviet preferences could also be taken into account. The inaccessible files of this meeting may well already contain the name of the city of Dresden.

On 21 January 1945 the Soviet Army had reached the river Oder to the north and south of the Breslau. Before he left for Yalta to meet Roosevelt, Churchill asked Air Minister Archibald Sinclair how he proposed to obstruct the German retreat from the besieged city of Breslau.³¹ Sinclair informed Churchill that the idea was to use the heavy bombers to attack German fuel supplies. But if weather conditions made this impossible Berlin or other German cities like Leipzig, Dresden and Chemnitz could be bombed. These cities, Sinclair said, were administrative centres for military and civilian liaison, through which most of the traffic flowed. But Churchill was not particularly interested in disrupting the German retreat from Breslau. What he really wanted to know was whether Berlin and other cities in the Eastern part of Germany were now being considered as viable targets. On the same day Air Marshal Portal had proposed that, although priority should still be given to destroying fuel supplies, any other available forces should be used for major attacks on Berlin or cities like Dresden, Leipzig and Chemnitz. This would, as he said, prevent a possible transfer of German troops from the West to the East. In this context one should remember that at this time large sections of the Wehrmacht – some 2.5 million battle-hardened troops – were still positioned outside German territory, for example in Norway and Yugoslavia, and could have been deployed to defend Germany. Harris now received the order to carry out the air attacks Air Marshall Portal wanted. But Harris was still hesitant about Dresden since Intelligence had been unable to provide satisfactory information regarding the status of this target. Enquiries at the Air Ministry confirmed that the order included Dresden and that the city should be attacked at the first available opportunity. The USAAF should also take part in these attacks. But its commander General Carl A. Spaatz made it clear

³¹ Dudley Saward, *'Bomber' Harris: The Authorized Biography*, (London: Ashford, Buchan & Enright, 1984), 280.

to the British Air Staff that he would only order his wings to target transport and communication lines. His personal view was that especially shunting yards were the important targets.

At the Conference at Yalta from 4 till 11 February 1945 Soviet General Alexei Antonow expressly demanded Anglo-American air raids on German lines of transportation.³² He feared the Germans could use those lines to transfer troops to the Eastern front from the Western front. Antonow specifically mentioned the traffic intersections at Berlin and Leipzig, his priority being also the shunting yards. As we know now, these targets were already part of the Allied target plans. The Allies agreed to engage in concerted strategic bombing raids against German cities to bring the war machine to a halt and cause confusion behind the German lines. They also agreed to set a boundary line for bombing, to not endanger advancing Soviet ground troops. This boundary ran from Stettin, via Berlin, east of Dresden and the river Elbe to Brünn, Vienna and on to Zagreb. Up as far as this line, American and British air raids were possible without restriction; but to the east of it, closer to the Soviet front, only by arrangement with the Soviet Supreme Command which had to be informed 24 hours in advance.

On 8 February the Soviet Supreme Command received the target list of the Eighth USAAF which consisted of hydrogenation plants, refineries and oil depots. Second priority had traffic intersections in Berlin, Dresden and Chemnitz. Those targets became more feasible due to the air superiority over Germany of the Allies. The Soviet leaders had no objection against these targets. Nor did they express any reservations when they were informed of the plan of the Eighth USAAF to bomb Dresden and the shunting yards on 13 February. The Soviet Supreme Command was also informed in time when the American attack had to be postponed to the following day due to bad weather. Actually, there was no need to inform the Red Army about this attack since it was west of the boundary which had been set for bombardments. Willingness to bomb the shunting yards at Dresden was above all totally in line with the American President's policy, not only to support the advancing Soviet Union's troops, but especially to set up, at least indirectly, a visible sign of support to the eastern partner of the Ant-Hitler Coalition. Roosevelt considered the Soviet Union to be an important great power that would help to decide the future of the world. It should therefore be given every support and he offered anything that would gain its friendship. The British do not appear to have

³² *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945. The Yalta Conference February 4–11, 1945*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), 550-987.

informed the Soviet Supreme Command of their intention to bomb the city of Dresden, although the possibility certainly cannot be ruled out.

On 13 February at 21:45 first “visual marker” aircraft set flares and fire target markers. Over 800 hundred heavy bombers of Bomber Command bombed the city followed next day by the air raid of the wings of the Eighth USAAF, which tried with lots of “collateral damage” to destroy the Dresden shunting yards. In total British and American aircraft, accompanied by fighter planes, dropped nearly 4.000 tons of high explosive bombs and incendiary on Dresden. The bombs and the following firestorms destroyed 6,5 square kilometres of the city centre and killed quite indiscriminately National Socialists, fellow travellers, and innocent citizens. Most of the dead were women, small children and the elderly. The few hospitals still standing could not help the numbers of injured and burned people. Mass burials were therefore necessary. The centre of a cultural and artistic treasure the baroque city of Dresden was completely destroyed.³³

Stuff of Legends

The author Erich Kaestner who had been born at Dresden saw the golden Hercules on the frail structure of Dresden’s town hall cupola as “stuff of legends”.³⁴ And indeed: the propaganda of the National Socialists reacted only two days after the bombardment with statements for the few foreign correspondents which were still remaining at Berlin. The German News Agency sent press releases to the German legations in neutral States and the German long wave broadcast system reported about the bombing in different foreign languages. The main arguments of the propaganda were that the bombing of the city was an Anglo-American militarily useless act of air terror, because at Dresden had been no war industry, which by the way was actually not true. The propaganda underlined further that Dresden, the “Florence on the Elbe”, had only been a unique beautiful city of art and culture with a famous panorama and magnificent buildings. The propaganda underlined that an innocent city had become a victim of a unique and pointless destruction, a premediated war crime and a campaign of annihilation of the Germans. While the local police had reported a number of 25.000 victims the National Socialist propaganda counted 200.000. The aim of the propaganda was to create criticism in the international public against the Allied air war. Newspapers in neutral states like Sweden and Switzerland were fed with apocalyptic numbers

³³ The latest and most serious publication on the bombing of Dresden: Frederick Taylor, *Dresden: Tuesday 13 February 1945*, (London: Bloomsbury Publishers, 2004).

³⁴ Matthias Neutzner, Vom Anklagen zum Erinnern, in *Das rote Leuchten. Dresden und der Bombenkrieg*, ed. Oliver Reinhard, Matthias Neutzner, Wolfgang Hesse, (Dresden: Dresdner Druck- und Verlagshaus, 2005), 128-164,

of dead. The *Svenska Morgonbladet* reported on 17 February that allegedly 2,5 million refugees had been at Dresden and that therefore the number of dead would be way over hundred thousand. The *Svenska Dagbladet* reported on 25 February over 100.000 dead. Obviously, this propaganda was not only successful in neutral states. The questions Richard Stokes, Member of the Labour Party, asked in the House of Commons citing a press release of the German Press Agency signalled the beginning of change of public opinion in Great Britain about area bombing and air raids against cities. Directly after the war the Soviet Military Administration in Germany's Soviet Zone of Occupation had no interest in a day of mourning at Dresden on 13 February 1946. At that time the still working close cooperation with the Western Allies should not be disturbed. Dresden's Mayor Walter Wiedauer quite rightfully labelled the destruction of the city centre truly as a result of a war which had been initiated by the National Socialist Regime. But after the Soviet Union just had left the Allied High Commission, a first demonstration at Dresden on 13 February 1949 aimed against "American warmongers".

In the following time of the Cold War the communist regime of the GDR fell back on the terms of the former regime's propaganda and called the bombing of Dresden again an Anglo-American terror attack and a war crime. The Soviet Union announced that it had never been informed about the bombing of Dresden and would of course not have allowed it. Especially after the Vietnam War had started in 1955 it blamed unrightfully only American bombers for the destruction of the city centre. In the fifties and sixties the Socialist Party organized rallies at Dresden on 13 February. The speeches given at those rallies attacked the "American Warmongers" which together with the West German Imperialists were planning a war against the countries of the Warsaw Pact. After the GDR could join the UN in 1970 the rallies stopped for a decade. The propaganda of the GDR found support from the British author David Irving, a proponent of Holocaust denial, who published in 1963 a book on the bombing of Dresden.³⁵ It contained sentences like "The most devastating air attack in the history of war was not on Hiroshima, nor on Nagasaki." And that the bombing of the city had been "the biggest single Massacre in European History" Irving estimated 150.000 to 200.000 dead, more than in the whole of the war during air raids of the Luftwaffe in Great Britain. In addition, he also in accordance with the National Socialists propaganda reported that fighter planes which had accompanied the bombers had allegedly strafing randomly citizens of the city. These fighter plane attacks soon became part of oral history and propaganda. It should take until 2000 when these propaganda attacks were finally questioned by serious research. It actually would have been impossible due to the lack of time and most of all of

³⁵ David Irving, *The Destruction of Dresden*, (London: William Kimber & Co., Ltd., 1963).

fuel for those fighter planes to leave the bombers they accompanied in a height of 6.000 or 8.000 meters and to go down to four or five hundred meters for strafing and climb up again to reach the previous height. The Allied fighter planes needed their fuel to get back to England and also to survive an eventual dog fight with German fighter planes stationed in France. The local bomb disposal services of Dresden could therefore find no bullets or fragments of strafing.³⁶ But for parts of the population of Dresden, ignoring the truth, the strafing seems to be still a fact. Since the unification of Germany in 1990 the far-right movement tries to threaten the official commemoration and organizes marches through Dresden on 13 February. It tries to capitalize on the tragedy, calling it like the National Socialists a wanton and senseless killing of innocent civilians. While the citizens of Dresden focus on mourning and reconciliation, the far-right movement call the Anglo-American air raid “a bombing Holocaust” and shout their usual xenophobic and revisionist messages.³⁷ The City of Dresden felt obliged to prevent right-wing ideologues from using allegedly high numbers of dead and appointed an independent commission of historians. The commission produced accurate data using historical, military, forensic and archaeological research. The result published in 2010 estimated 22,700 to 25.000 dead.

Conclusion

This year on 13 February only a small group of Germany’s right-wing movement marched through the city still shouting the slogans Dresden is familiar with since the time of the National Socialist regime and GDR period. In the evening thousands of citizens met in silence to form a human chain. This chain surrounded the city centre as a sign against war and destruction. Traditionally at 21:45, at the time when the air raid in 1945 had started, all church bells of Dresden started ringing. I personally agree with the reaction of Thomas Mann after receiving the message that his home town Lübeck with its wonderful old renaissance buildings had been destroyed by an air raid. He said: “But then I think of Coventry – and cannot but accept the lesson that there is a price to pay for everything”.³⁸

³⁶ Helmut Schnatz, *Tiefflieger über Dresden. Legenden und Wirklichkeit*, (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2000).

³⁷ An involuntary support provided the author Jörg Friedrich, *The Fire: The bombing of Germany, 1940–1945*, (translated by Allison Brown), (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2006). The German Original had already been published in Berlin in 2004. – For the opinion of German historians see Bas Benda-Beckmann, *German Historians and the Bombing of German Cities: The Contested Air War*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2015).

³⁸ Thomas Mann, *Zeit und Werk. Tagebücher, Reden und Schriften zum Zeitgeschehen*. (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1956): 655.

WAITING FOR DOUHET

Dr. Paolo FORMICONI (Italy)

In the first part of the twenties years many European authors published their books about the “future war”, and the most part of them appointed their concepts on the *flying danger*, the employ of the airplane in the warfare. This fear were been justified by the recent war, during whom, especially on the central powers side, the air bombing were been employed strongly against Italian, British and French cities. On first Great Britain was knocked by the new weapons, and more of 1.400 Britons died under German bombs during the war. The quick development of the airplane technology transformed until 1914 and 1918 the sky in a new battlefield, and forced military and political leaders to look up when they imagine their next plans, in peace and in war. In Italy, who has the rank of first nation to use the airplane in his colonial war in 1911, the airpower were been studied, after the war, by the colonel Giulio Douhet, a strange sort of major staff officer. Obstinate, visionary, ambitious, *politicienne*, Douhet had were arrested during the war for his unrespected opinions against the general Cadorna, chief of the Italian general staff. Despite that, after the war he became quite famous as expert of strategic questions and military theorist. His major concept, today always studied, was that the complexity of modern society and the enormous importance of the industrial complex are a strength and a weakness at the same time.

The basement of a industrial economy is the city, that also the focal point of the civil, political, cultural and financial life of the nation and all city is very vulnerable to an attack from the sky.¹ If some tens of little German airplanes gave many problems in the previous war to the British cities, what kind of damages would be caused by an offensive by hundreds and hundreds of modern future airplanes, each of whom transporting thousands of overpowered bombs? And what about the possibility that the bombs would be charged with toxic agents?² Italian people has experienced about chemical war during the conflict and, although the real utility of this weapon were been not well, the fear and the anxiety for his a massive use in a future war was really high. And this fear were doubled by the airplanes development.³

¹ Douhet Giulio, *Il dominio dell'aria*, Roma, Ufficio Storico dell'Aeronautica Militare, 2002.

² About this matter: Di Feo Gianluca, *Veleni di Stato*. Milano, BUR, 2009. See also: AUSSME, Fondo L-2, B. 22, fasc. 46-50.

³ Giulio Douhet, *Probabili aspetti della guerra futura*, Sandron, Palermo, 1928, p. 41

In the same era, the British general Hugh Trenchard, the first RAF commander, do a similar theory like in the USA, the general Mitchell, strongly influenced by the Douhet's theories.⁴ When the Fascist party has taken the power in the 1922 more of his decisions in military matter were conditioned by this problems.

The Douhet's theory had many supporters in the new Italian leadership, on first the powerful minister of Air Force Italo Balbo. So, the Italian Air Force would take in his future a great fleet of air bomber. Moreover, the possibility of an enemy attack against the Italian cities, were strongly examined.⁵ On the one side, the Italian government tried to build a strong military instrument, also for the air war, on the other side he accomplished to the international agreement to control the effects of a future indiscriminate war. In the 1923, like in the most part of the Europe, in Italy were created an independent air force, two years later the Italian Kingdom signed the international protocol of Geneva for the ban of chemical weapon, and in the 1926 the national air defence were radically reformed. In the 1929 were also signed the New Geneva convention, with the subsequent prohibition of indiscriminate bombing on the civil targets. Both the rules, it's important to underline, has no included the colonial theatres.

In the subsequent reform of the Italian high commands, the problem of the air defence and protection were examined, especially after the Ethiopian war, a conflict in whom the Italian Air force use many times chemical weapons⁶. A way of war forbidden and, at the same time, feared by many in Europe. Anyway, Douhet was death from the 1930, and he could not to be witness of the real impact of his ideas. During the Spanish civil war a sort of contingency plan were done for the case of a republican attack through the Mediterranean against the Italian coast. At the same time, in the case of a French intervention, were organized a program of instruction for the civil peoples in the case of air bombing, under the responsibility of the UNPA, National Union for the Anti-airplane Protection, a civil agency under the joint control of War and Internal Minister. At the beginning of the WW" the Italian air defence was equipped by an heterogeneous endowment. The aerophones, a sort of gigantic acoustic receivers, at whom were employed many blind, was the most part of the alarm system, joint with simple watchtowers.

At the moment of Italian intervention, the situation wasn't so different. The 78.000 peoples of the counter-airplane militia were 50.000 under the

⁴ Library of Congress, Washington DC, *The William Mitchell papers*, B. 9.

⁵ Ferrari Paolo a cura di, *L'Aeronautica italiana. Una storia del Novecento*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2004.

⁶ About this matter see: Del Boca Angelo, *I gas di Mussolini. Il fascismo e la guerra di Etiopia*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1996.

theoric level of force, and the alarm net was still based on the aerophone.⁷ Only until the 1941 Germany has given a short number of his first radiodector, named “Freya” like the pagan divinity who see in the night. The allarm net were jointed with the airport command, under the Regia Aeronautica control, and with the command of Maca, the counter airplane artillery, under command of militia. At the same time were alerted the organization of civil protection, under the joint control of the War Ministry and the Interne affairs Minister.⁸ Italian artillery had many models of gun, of disegual value. Some of these were from the Great War, many others were roducted in the following years and only a minor quote were modern.⁹ Also in this context, the german contribute was not so bad, with eighteen modern gun of 88 mm. All this complex system were cohordinated by the “Sottocapo di Stato Maggiore per la Difesa Territoriale” or Deputy Chief of Generale Staff for the Territoriale Defence”.¹⁰ The 4th of june 1940 the british premier Churchill authorized the Raf commander Charles Portal to include the cities int he bombing target, short later, after the italian intervention, started the first bombing campaign against the italian territory, with the Torino’s raid on the 11 june.

The first bombing, by french and britain airplanes were not very hard, but underlined the poor efficence of italian air defence.¹¹ We should to consider, joint to the weekness of italian organization and weapons, also some objective factors. For the first, au contraire than Germany, Italy is exposed on the ses for an extra-long coast line, and this reduced the possibility to discover the air menace on time. On second, on the north-side, the presence of the Alpes, overfliable during spring and summer months, didn't consent the complete employ of the radio-detectors. In final, the principal instrument of visualization of airplanes during the night-bombing, the spotlights, was not so effective as in the northern Europe. The italian night, infact, were normally not cloaked like germans one, and so the power of reflection of the light on the night sky was quite insignificant. Although the real damages were not heavy, the impression produced by the impunish enemy offense was strong and, joint with the news about the first defeats on the African, naval and Balkan front, give to Mussolini's power a rough strike. The fact that the

⁷ Nicola Della Volpe, *Difesa del territorio e protezione antiaerea (1915-1943). Storia, documenti e immagini*. Roma USSME, 1986, p. 38.

⁸ Formiconi Paolo, *La protezione e la difesa contraerea del regime fascista: evoluzione istituzionale*, in: *I bombardamenti aerei sull'Italia*, a cura di Nicola Labanca, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012, pp. 117-130.

⁹ Filippo Cappellano, *L'artiglieria contraerei italiana sino al 1943*, Storia Militare Dossier, marzo-aprile 2015, p. 17.

¹⁰ Amedeo Giannini, *Gli ordinamenti della difesa antiarea*. Pubblicazioni dell'Istituto di diritto aeronautico della R. Università di Roma. Milano, Giuffrè, 1941.

¹¹ Gioannini M. , *Bombardare l'Italia. Le strategie alleate e le vittime civili*, cit., p. 79.

Taranto's attack were gained by airplanes completed the impression of a failure by the two fascism military creatures: the fascist militia and the air force. Following the displacement of the first german air, naval and ground forces in Italy, also some counterairplane assets were sent in Italy at the start of 1941.

This modern weapons, significantly, were dislocated along the railway itinerary, from Brennero to Naples, and on the Sicily's airports given to German Luftflote.¹² The confront with the allied's material and praxis, and the massive production of the good Italian counter airplane gun of 90 mm improved the Italian efficiency, and when the most part of German forces went away on the spring, sent to Russian front, the Italian spirit in the cities was a bit better than some months before. The organization also augmented his structure and enlarged his competence during the war. In the following months, enemy activity in the Italian skies was rare. Some isolated British aircraft or squadron carrying out a raid on an airfield or a night attack on a major city, with the sole aim of breaking the prestige of the fascist regime rather than any real military achievement. This aspect, according with the memories of some Italian peoples, is important. In the anglosaxon perspective the liability of Italian people was strictly joint with the fascist consensus, and the consensus was the most important basement of the fascist power. Touching or even just challenging Italian territory was therefore considered, in the absence of other possibilities, an effective system for corroding Italian solidity. However, along the war's course was in Axis favour, the real achieve of this strategy is on doubt. Only the poor cost of the attacks justify his prosecution in a moment of success of italo-german war. Also when the US power start to show himself in the Mediterranean area, and the first heavy daytime bombing began, the Italian moral, according with the fascist information service reports, didn't substantially not falter.

City's defence was in this period improved, as far as possible, following the marks of German system. Another model of German radiodetector, named *Wurzburg*, were sent to Italian forces, and also an Italian prototype came in service, making a first half-efficient network. Also the organization was strongly improved, with the creation of the Center command of air defence, leaded from air force officials. In end, all the system was subjected to the War Ministry.¹³

¹² Marco Gioannini, Giulio Massobrio, *Bombardate l'Italia. Storia della guerra di distruzione aerea 1940-45*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2007, pp. 168-169.

¹³ Ivi, p. 183.

The civilian side, led by the UNPA and the Air Defense Bureau, has not improved to the same degree, mainly due to the rather modest quality of personnel, and the low level of economic resources dedicated.¹⁴ Only with the end of 1942 and especially in the 1943 summer the air offensive, by US air force and British air force, on the Italian territory became destructive and achieved those objectives that theorists of indiscriminate bombing had foreseen some years before.¹⁵ The attacks struck first the great cities of the north of the country, following, with increasing strength and intensity, the cities of the south, on the occasion of the invasion of the Peninsula. Naples and Palermo were almost destroyed, although the opposition of the Italian air defence. In the summer of 1943 the air attacks struck a great number of small cities of all the west-south, especially in Sicily, with the strategic target of destroy the logistic capacity of Italian railways, streets and naval docks. In this period the Italian air defence organization was quite efficient, especially in the proximity defence, thanks to the excellent Breda machine gun of 20 mm, and almost 2/3 of all the casualties of the Allied air force in Italy between June 1940 and September 1943 has been in the months of June and July. The island was put back at the “stone age”, like a fascist leader wrote to Mussolini.

When Sicilian airports fall under Allied control the menace against Italian territory became terrible, and at the same time the power of the Italian air force, burned in the Sicily's battle, went to the lowest level. The bombing campaign of the months of July and, especially, in the second half of August, claimed the highest point of intensity.¹⁶ Now the Anglo-American bomber could knock two times a day the nearest targets, and one a day the farthest ones, the US in the day and the Britons in the night, with the strike-power of 400/500 airplanes. Also, the capital, Rome, were included as target, causing before the fall of the fascist government and, in a second time, the call for armistice of the subsequent Italian government. To understand the real condition by the Italian side, know that all the Lombardy, the Italian most important industrial region, had, in all and for all, nine hunter airplanes, the Tuscany four, Rome and its interlands twentyone and the Campania, the nearest region at the Allied bases, twentyfour. At the same time, when the General Staff decided to reinforce Rome's anti-aircraft defense, the only solution, quickly achievable, was to use the modern 65 mm cannon, which had just been installed on the Aquila aircraft carrier, which was about to be completed.¹⁷

¹⁴ About the history of the UNPA see: Della Volpe Nicola, *Difesa del territorio e protezione antiaerea 1915/1943*, Roma, Ufficio Storico SME, 1986.

¹⁵ Vedi Marco Gioannini, *Bombardare l'Italia. Le strategie alleate e le vittime civili*, in: *I bombardamenti aerei sull'Italia*, a cura di Nicola Labanca, Bologna, Il Mulino, 2012, p. 83.

¹⁶ AUSSME, Fondo L-4, Bollettini delle incursioni.

¹⁷ Fondo L2, Difesa Contraerea e Protezione Antiaerea, busta 88, fasc. 1108: *Potenziamento della Difesa C. A. della capitale (Contributo della R. Marina)*.

All without considering the problems that the fact involved, such as the different pointing and movement system, between sea and land. The impossibility to defend Rome, and all the rest of big Italian cities, had a great importance in the decision to ask an armistice by the Italian government. The own Mussolini probably was thinking something like this, but he but he retained great faith in the assets of the German ally, the secret weapons, but especially the conventional one.

On the 19 of July he tried, and failed, to obtain a consistent of new airplanes, radiodetector an counterairplan gun from Germany, and his not-fact was the primary cause of his fall. In front of the country, the upper class and the monarch he wasn't capable to win the war, to stop the war, to fight the war¹⁸. So, he musted leave. This, it's right to note, was not the result of the bombing campaign against the Italian cities, but the result of the specific offensive against Rome, jointed with the defeated in Egypt, Russia, Tunisia and Sicily, appned subsequently in the previous months. So, far from the hypothetical decisive factor supposed in the twenties, by italian and stranger military theorists, the air bombing weapon was resolute only as adjunctive element at the defeated of the ground forces, and his force of push on the civil moral, has been decisive only after the turning point of the war.¹⁹

¹⁸ De Simone Cesare, *20 angeli sopra Roma. I bombardamenti sulla città eterna, 19 luglio e 13 agosto 1943*, Milano, Mursia, 2007.

¹⁹ Baldoli Claudia, Knapp Andrew, *Forgotten Blitzes: France and Italy under Allied Air Attack, 1940-1945*, London, Continuum, 2012; Gioannini Marco, Massobrio Giulio, *Bombardate l'Italia. Storia della guerra di distruzione aerea 1940-1945*, Milano, Rizzoli, 2007; Overy Richard, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War Over Europe 1940-1945*, New York, Viking Penguin, 2014; Bonacina Giorgio, *Obiettivo: Italia. I bombardamenti aerei delle città italiane dal 1940 al 1945*, Milano, Ugo Mursia Editore, 2005.

HOW TO DEFEND MAJOR CITIES IN WORLD WAR II? THE FLAK-TOWERS IN HAMBURG AND BERLIN

Dr. Philipp FRAUND (USA)

Introduction

Today, the scars of urban warfare are still visible when walking through Berlin or Hamburg. Although entire city districts have been rebuilt after the Second World War, the monstrous flak towers in these two German cities are a constant reminder of the past when cities and the civil population were major targets in wartime. Their original purpose to protect the cities and its civilian population from Allied bombing raids, has long gone, but blowing them up was no option either due to the high risk of pressure waves. As a result, the flak towers are still part of Berlin and Hamburg's (but also of other cities')¹ architecture.

This article examines the role of flak towers for the defence of German cities in the Second World War. First, the article discusses the planning for air defence in the period after the First World War. Second, the examples of Hamburg and Berlin are used to illustrate the building of the flak towers and the challenges this posed. Third, the effectiveness of the flak towers will be discussed for the air defence of these two cities. Finally, the article explores of what happened to the flak towers after the Second World War.

1. Planning for Future Air Warfare

The First World War had illustrated the potential for future air warfare. British and American military experts, such as Billy Mitchell, Sir Basil Liddel-Hart, Sir Hugh Trenchard, and Sir Arthur Harris to name but a few, drew the lesson from that war that trench warfare with its high casualty rates had to be avoided at all cost in a future war.² Air warfare, they imagined,

¹ Vienna was since 1943 another frequent target for allied air raids. Therefore, Hitler also decided to build flak towers there.

² See in detail Craig Morris, *The Origins of American Strategic Bombing Theory* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 2017). Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to be Won: Fighting the Second World War*, 2 ed. (Cambridge; Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 2000), 304-05. Williamson Murray, "Strategic bombing: The British, American, and German experiences," in *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period*, ed. Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr, 1996). Thomas Hippler, *Bombing the*

would drive the frontline back to enemy cities where armament factories and the civil population offered more effective targets in terms of bringing the enemy quickly to his knees. All these concepts shared the idea, that air raids should not only target enemy military installations and their lines of communication, but that they would also aim at soft targets, such as industrial complexes and housing areas.³ In Germany, the Treaty of Versailles limited its military arsenal and they were only allowed to maintain a Reichswehr of 100,000 men, a navy of 15,000 men, but no air force.⁴ Secretly though, the Chief of Staff for the Reichswehr, General Hans von Seeckt, supported the creation of an air force and therefore integrated 180 former air force officers in the ranks of the Reichswehr.⁵ Many of them should become crucial in the formulation of a German air warfare doctrine such as Helmuth Wilberg, Hans Ritter, and Walter Wever.⁶ One of the lessons they drew from the First World War was the importance of civilian air defence.⁷ Similarly to their Allied colleagues, they concluded that future air warfare would shift from the front lines to the home front. Therefore, the construction of private and public air raid shelters had been regarded as the most effective measure to protect the population from potential enemy air raids in a future war. Soon after Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the German government initiated the construction of private and public air raid shelters.⁸

People: Giulio Douhet and the Foundations of Air-Power Strategy, 1884 - 1939 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013).

³ Richard J. Overy, *The Bombers and the Bombed: Allied Air War over Europe, 1940-1945* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2013). Christoph Bernhardt, Harald Bodenschatz, and et. al., "Städtebau und Politik: Altstadterneuerung und Bau neuer Städte," in *Planen und Bauen im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Wolfgang Benz et al. (München: Hirmer, 2023). Tami Davis Biddle, "Anglo-American Strategic Bombing, 1940- 1945," in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, ed. John Robert Ferris and Evan Mawdsley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 458-87. See also Martin L. van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War: Combat from the Marne to Iraq* (Novato; Calif; Newbury: Presidio, 2006), 81-184. Horst Boog, "Strategischer Luftkrieg in Europa und Reichsluftverteidigung 1943 - 1944," in *Das deutsche Reich in der Defensive*, ed. Horst Boog, Gerhard Krebs, and Detlef Vogel, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001). Robert A. Pape, *Bombing to Win: Air Power and Coercion in War* (London: Cornell University Press, 1996).

⁴ James S. Corum, *The Luftwaffe: Creating the Operational Air War, 1918 - 1940*, *Modern War Studies*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1997), 49.

⁵ For the impressive career of Hans von Seeckt, see Corum, *Corum: The Luftwaffe*, 49-52.

⁶ See James S. Corum, "Stärken und Schwächen der Luftwaffe: Führungsqualitäten und Führung im Zweiten Weltkrieg," in *Die Wehrmacht*, ed. Rolf-Dieter Müller and Hans Erich Volkmann (München: Oldenbourg, 1999). Corum, *Corum: The Luftwaffe*, 58-84. Murray, "Murray: Strategic bombing," 111-15; 28-35.

⁷ See Corum, "Corum: Stärken und Schwächen der Luftwaffe." Corum, *Corum: The Luftwaffe*.

⁸ See Richard J. Overy, *The Bombing War: Europe 1939 - 1945* (London: Penguin Books, 2014), 411-27. Overy, *Overy: The Bombing War*, 411-27; Corum, "Corum: Stärken und Schwächen der Luftwaffe," 292-93. Bernd Lemke, *Luftschutz in Großbritannien und*

Furthermore, the Wehrmacht heavily relied on flak guns⁹ for the defence of the cities in the Third Reich. There were two reasons for this decision: First, the lessons, which were drawn from the Spanish Civil War, where the flak guns proved to be effective against low-flying aircrafts. Second, Hitler could personally more relate to guns than to aircrafts.¹⁰

Shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the flak guns available proved relatively ineffective against modern aircrafts, especially bombers, which had been developed after the Spanish Civil War and which could fly at a much higher altitude. However, the Wehrmacht and Hitler held on to the technology of the flak.¹¹ When in August 1940, the Allies regularly flew air raids over Germany, the Luftwaffe, which was responsible for air defence, had little to counter these attacks.¹² The American journalist William L. Shirer, who was accredited in Berlin at the time, described the night action in his book *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* as follows:

*“Berlin was well defended by two great rings of anti-aircraft and for three hours while the visiting bombers droned above the clouds, which prevented the hundreds of searchlight batteries from picking them up, the flak fire was the most intense I had ever seen. But not a single plane was brought down.”*¹³

Deutschland 1923 bis 1939: Zivile Kriegsvorbereitungen als Ausdruck der staats- und gesellschaftspolitischen Grundlagen von Demokratie und Diktatur, Militärgeschichtliche Studien, (München: Oldenbourg, 2005); Bernd Stegemann and Klaus A. Maier, "Einsatzvorstellungen und Lagebeurteilungen der Luftwaffe und der Marine bis Kriegsbeginn," in *Die Errichtung der Hegemonie auf dem Europäischen Kontinent*, ed. Klaus A. Maier et al., Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979), 43-76. Klaus A. Maier, "Der operative Luftkrieg bis zur Luftschlacht um England," in *Die Errichtung der Hegemonie auf dem Europäischen Kontinent*, ed. Klaus A. Maier et al., Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1979), 329-41. Horst Boog, "Der Anglo-Amerikanische strategische Luftkrieg über Europa und die deutsche Luftverteidigung," in *Der Globale Krieg*, ed. Horst Boog et al., Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1990), 429-565.

⁹ FLAK (Fluabwehrkanonen) and AAA (Anti-Aircraft Artillery) are used synonymously in this article.

¹⁰ See Murray and Millett, *Murray et al.: A War to be Won*, 314.

¹¹ See Williamson Murray, *Strategy for Defeat: The Luftwaffe 1933-1945* (Maxwell Air Force Base (AL); Washington (DC): Air University Press, 1983), 132.

¹² See Michael Foedrowitz, *Die Flaktürme: Berlin - Hamburg - Wien*, 2., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage ed. (Berlin: Edition Berliner Unterwelten im Ch. Links Verlag, 2017), 9. William Lawrence Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (London: Arrow Books, 1998), 776-80. Lemke, *Lemke: Luftschutz in Großbritannien und Deutschland*.

¹³ Shirer, *Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 778.

The Allied air raids fulfilled the desired aim to cause panic and chaos in the cities they had attacked. In Berlin, the population was in total shock as Shirer wrote:

*“The Berliners are stunned [...] They did not think it could ever happen. When this war began, Goering assured them it couldn't ... They believed him. Their disillusionment today therefore is all the greater. You have to see their faces to measure it”*¹⁴

The Nazi regime had to quickly respond to the air raids in order to avoid a loss of trust in the leadership while also deterring enemy air raids. The former was comparatively easy to achieve by intensifying propaganda. However, the latter posed a far greater challenge. The flak, which should have discouraged air raids over the Reich, was not successful. This was a fact, which could not easily be dismissed in the circles of the Wehrmacht and the Nazi government.¹⁵

For an effective air defence, the Luftwaffe had installed an early warning system, consisting of the radar device “Freya”, which could effectively detect enemy aircrafts soon after they were airborne. Furthermore, the Luftwaffe possessed the Messerschmidt BF 109, which proved to be an excellent fighter plane. Finally, by the end of the German western campaign in June 1940 and the occupation of Western Europe, the Luftwaffe had a geographical advantage: if enemy aircrafts wanted to reach targets in the Reich, they first had to fly long distances over German-occupied areas. So German fighter planes had enough time from alarm until interception of the enemy aircraft.¹⁶ In response to the Allied air raids, Hitler ordered on September 9, 1940, the construction of flak towers in Berlin and accompanied his order with his personal sketches of the design and construction.¹⁷ The idea

¹⁴ Shirer, *Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 778 (Omission in the original).

¹⁵ See Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 10. See also Shirer, *Shirer: The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 709-11. Edward B. Westermann, *Flak: German Anti-Aircraft Defences: 1914-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001), 127-28. On Nazi propaganda see in detail Aristotle A. Kallis, “Der Niedergang der Deutungsmacht: Nationalsozialistische Propaganda im Kriegsverlauf,” in *Die Deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp, Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2005).

¹⁶ For more details on the organization of German air defence, see: Maier, “Einsatzvorstellungen und Lagebeurteilungen der Luftwaffe und der Marine bis Kriegesbeginn.” Boog, “Boog: Der Anglo-Amerikanische strategische Luftkrieg über Europa.” Boog, “Boog: Der Anglo-Amerikanische strategische Luftkrieg über Europa,” 138-298. Valentin E. Wille, *Die Flaktürme in Wien, Berlin und Hamburg: Geschichte, Bedeutung und Neunutzung*, Neue Ausg. ed. (Saarbrücken: AV Akademikerverlag, 2012), 17-19. See also Biddle, “Biddle: Anglo-American Strategic Bombing,” 491-93.

¹⁷ For Hitler's understanding of art and politics / war, see Joachim Fest, *Hitler: Eine Biographie*, 4. Aufl. ed. (Berlin: Propyläen, 2008), 24-29. Hitler's directive can be found in Henning Angerer, *Flakbunker: Betonierte Geschichte* (Hamburg: Ergebnisse-Verl., 2000), 17-18.

of a flak tower was to place anti-aircraft guns on natural or artificially constructed hills to fight the enemy aircrafts from an elevated position. The elevated position of the guns significantly increased their range and, most importantly, avoided damages to the surrounding buildings that could be caused by pressure waves from the guns fired.

According to the notes of the State Secretary of the Reich Aviation Ministry, Erhard Milch, Hitler had already requested the building of flak towers as early as 1934. The primary idea behind those flak towers was not to shoot down enemy aircrafts, but rather to act as deterrence. Should enemy bomber formations still attack urban areas, barrages of flak fire should force them to operate from such a high altitude that it would impair the accuracy of the bombers.¹⁸

Hitler's draft was immediately translated into more detailed plans for the implementation in Berlin, which proved to be more challenging than expected. First, the planners identified buildings in the city that were high enough to mount anti-aircraft guns. For instance, the corner towers of the Reichstag provided an excellent location but the plans were quickly discarded as the statics of the Reichstag did not allow for such a construction. As a result, new plans were drawn by members of the Wehrmacht and representatives of the NS-Construction Organization Todt (OT) together with General Building Inspector for the Reich Capital (GBI), Albert Speer. The specifications for an artificial construction of a flak tower were impressive:

“For this purpose, a 4- or 8-cornered building is to be built, with a heavy artillery piece installed at each corner. A fire control device should be installed in the middle. The dimensions are about 35m from the centre of the fire control unit to the centre of the guns. In addition to these 4 large-calibre cannons, the so-called 'battery tower' is also to be equipped with four 2cm Flak 400 (quadruple) guns to ward off low-level attacks. These quadruplets are to be set up either on one platform each below the gun emplacements (with a 4-sided battery design) or between two heavy guns (octagonal design!).”¹⁹

Soon, the planners realised that the command-and-control devices were too sensitive to be set up in the same tower as the pressure waves and the smoke from the guns could impair the devices. Therefore, the command-and-control devices had to be placed in a smaller, separate, second tower, at a safe

¹⁸ The future Field Marshal of the Luftwaffe, Erhard Milch, recorded Hitler's demand in his diary from 1934, see David Irving, *Die Tragödie der Deutschen Luftwaffe: Aus den Akten und Erinnerungen von Feldmarschall Milch* (Frankfurt a. M.: Ullstein, 1982), 79. See also Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 10-11. Westermann, *Flak*, 62-65.

¹⁹ Quoted after Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 18. English translation by the author

distance from the guns.²⁰ As a result, the flak towers always consisted of two towers as a pair: a control tower, which housed the technology, and a second combat tower, on which the guns were mounted. The two flak towers were connected through a small tunnel, which contained communication cables as well as water and heating pipes, securing safe communication. On the combat tower a super-heavy 12.8 cm Flak-Zwilling twin mount system was placed. In addition, smaller anti-aircraft guns of 2 cm and 3 cm calibre were also installed for the protection of the towers against low-flying aircrafts.²¹ A radar device of the type "FuMG 65 Würzburg Riese" was usually installed in the control tower. It could be elevated and lowered into a concrete shaft to protect it from environmental influences, such as ice. The shaft could also be sealed with a steel plate when Allied bomber fleets flew over it.²²

2. Construction of the Flak Towers

The construction of the first flak towers began in Berlin's Zoo (also known as Tiergarten) in October 1940 – just under a month after Hitler's order. The sheer size of the towers required a large area where the towers could be built. The Zoo fulfilled the criteria of a space in the city centre and offered an ideal location, close to the city centre. The biggest challenge, however, posed the structure itself. The towers were built like bunkers, which required a wall thickness of up to 2 meters and the ceilings needed to be 3.5 meters thick to withstand air raids. A special concrete was used for the construction, which consisted almost entirely out of cement and water but contained no additives. This so-called "blue concrete" had the decisive advantage that it continued to harden over 5 decades, increasing its endurance.²³

Enormous quantities of cement and reinforcing steel were needed. Since both materials were not readily available in the desired quantity, the Nazis prioritized the materials for the building of the flak towers. For example, the flak towers in the Zoo required 120,000 tons of gravel sand, 78,000 tons of chippings, 35,000 tons of cement, 9,200 tons of round iron and 15,000 cubic meters of wood.²⁴ Trucks alone could not transport such vast quantities of materials, so a light railway needed to be built first to secure the logistics of the construction site. In some cases, existing tram lines were used to transport

²⁰ See Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 10. Angerer, *Flakbunker*, p. 50.

²¹ See Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 13.

²² A detailed description of the whole location and tracking technology would go far beyond the scope of this overview article. See in detail Marcello La Speranza, *Flakturm-Archäologie: Ein Fundbuch zu den Wiener Festungsbauwerken*, 3., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage ed. (Berlin: Edition Berliner Unterwelten im Ch. Links Verlag, 2016), 44-45. Wille, *Wille: Flaktürme*, 27. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 88. Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 29-30.

²³ See Wille, *Wille: Flaktürme*, 34-36. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 13. Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 20-23.

²⁴ See Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 13.

the building materials, in other cases, railway tracks were specially laid. To ensure a rapid construction progress, extensive rationalization was also responsible for the rapid construction progress and work had to be carried out day and night. The formwork required for the towers was not erected on site, but was delivered pre-assembled. Most importantly though was manpower. Many prisoners of war, inmates of concentration camps and forced laborers were used for the construction of the flak towers. They had to work day and night, and thus the flak towers in Berlin's Zoo were completed in April 1941 – in a record time of 7 months only.²⁵

Berlin as the capital of the Third Reich was the target of frequent air raids and therefore two more flak towers were constructed shortly after the completion of the flak towers in the Zoo. In October 1941, the flak towers in Friedrichshain were completed and in April 1942 those in Humboldtthain. Hamburg, as the second largest city in Germany and the most important port city of the Third Reich, was another target for Allied air raids. The geographic location of the port facilities between the rivers Alster and Elbe made orientation for the Allied bomber pilots easy. By December 1941, Hamburg had experienced 162 Allied air raids, and thus, the Nazis decided in February 1942 to build flak towers in Hamburg's Heiliggeistfeld, close to the port facilities. Construction for them began in April 1942 and was completed in October 1942. A second flak tower was built in the city district of Wilhelmsburg, again close to the port facilities, and was completed in April 1943. Although rationalization played an important part in speeding up the construction, each of the flak towers erected in Berlin and Hamburg was unique. Every was therefore improved and modified based on the experience gained during the construction of the previous tower.²⁶

However, little consideration was given to the surroundings when the flak towers were erected in Berlin and Hamburg. Tactical considerations of air defence were clearly in the foreground. At a meeting between representatives of the Organization Todt (OT), Albert Speer, the City of Berlin and the Luftwaffe regarding the erection of the flak towers in Humboldtthain, the planners remarked laconically:

“The command tower can be built in the small rose garden [...], creating a good axis relationship with the flak tower. [...] It's not a great pity about the old-fashioned rose garden with a sculpture in the middle.”²⁷

²⁵ See Wille, *Wille: Flaktürme*, 34-36. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 13. Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 20-23.

²⁶ See Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 22-23. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 24-25.

²⁷ Quoted after La Speranza, *Flakturm-Archäologie*, 26. English translation by the author.

There were also other factors, which played a role. For instance, the location and shape of the flak towers played an integral part in the planning for the redesign of Berlin as the “world capital of Germania”.²⁸ Moreover, Albert Speer personally influenced the location and number of flak towers in Berlin. For example, the flak towers in Friedrichshain were to be aligned in such a way that their position later corresponded with the planned monumental east-west axis of Berlin.²⁹ The flak towers not only offered space for the military personnel and military command facilities, but also housed armaments factories, well-equipped hospitals, or art depots. Moreover, the flak towers were used as an air raid shelters for civilians, and, thus, they helped to boost the morale of the civilian population.³⁰

3. Effectiveness

Sir Hugh Trenchard, former Chief of Air Staff wrote in a memorandum, which Churchill circulated in May 1941 amongst his cabinet, about the effectiveness of aerial bombing:

*“This means that if you are bombing a target at sea, then 99 percent of your bombs are wasted, but not only 99 percent of the bombs are wasted but 99 percent, too, of the pilots and of the training which went to produce them. ... If, however, our bombs are dropped in Germany, then 99 percent which miss the military target all help to kill, damage, frighten, or interfere with Germans in Germany, and the whole 100 percent of the bomber organization is doing useful work and not merely 1 percent of it.”*³¹

While the Allies were convinced of the effectiveness of aerial bombing, the Nazis had little to counter. The flak towers in Berlin and Hamburg were primarily intended as a deterrence against air raids with the aim to minimize air attacks on the vital infrastructure and civilians of those cities. Yet, the flak towers were relatively ineffective against allied bombing raids. Despite the massive construction, the improvement of the Allied bombs meant that they could effortlessly penetrate the 5-meter-thick ceilings of the flak towers. Moreover, Allied bombers had also progressed to the extent that they could fly higher and drop their bombs more precisely. This meant that the use of the flak became even more ineffective. Depending on the calibre of

²⁸ See in detail André Deschan, "Die Neugestaltungsstädte als Großprojekte des NS-Regimes," in *Planen und Bauen im Nationalsozialismus*, ed. Wolfgang Benz et al. (München: Hirner, 2023).

²⁹ See Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 56-60.

³⁰ Vgl. Wille, *Wille: Flaktürme*, 49-50. La Speranza, *Flakturm-Archäologie*, 25-27. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 13, 33.

³¹ Quoted after Murray, *Murray: Strategy for Defeat*, 128.

the flak, between 3,000 and 16,000 grenades had to be fired to shoot down one Allied aircraft. It is estimated that all flak towers combined brought down around 100 – 120 enemy aircraft throughout the war.³² To make things worse, the construction costs of a single pair of towers was around 55 million Reichsmark, which corresponds today to around 360 million Euro – not including the costs for guns, command and control equipment, and interior furnishings.³³ Given that the towers required an enormous amount of scarce materials to be built, the project wasted valuable resources.

As the war progressed, the disadvantages of the flak towers became even more apparent. The stationary position of the flak towers limited the range of the flak guns even though the shooting range was continuously improved. Moreover, the Allies knew since the first air raids about the location of the flak towers and could either avoid or attack them. In addition, Allied bombers were improved and could drop their bombs more precisely from higher altitude, while making it difficult for the flak guns to shoot them down. As a result, the flak towers became increasingly ineffective for the air defence of the cities.³⁴ Overall, the flak towers – like the construction of the Atlantic Wall – were an anachronism cast in vast amounts of concrete, which was ultimately of little military value. On the other hand, the flak towers offered shelter to countless civilians, while the guns tried to stop the Allies from advancing towards their cities.³⁵

³² These numbers are approximate values, since many documents had been lost at the end of the war. For details see Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 126-28.

³³ See Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 128.

³⁴ See Rolf-Dieter Müller, "Albert Speer und die Rüstungspolitik im Totalen Krieg," in *Organisation und Mobilisierung des deutschen Machtbereichs*, ed. Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Dieter Müller, and Hans Umbreit, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1999), 585. Horst Boog, "Die strategische Bomberoffensive der Alliierten gegen Deutschland und die Reichsluftverteidigung in der Schlußphase des Krieges," in *Der Zusammenbruch des Deutschen Reiches 1945*, ed. Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2008), 840-47. Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 42.

³⁵ See in detail Margret Boveri, *Tage des Überlebens: Berlin 1945* (München: dtv, 1970). Melvin J. Lasky et al., eds., *Und alles war still: Deutsches Tagebuch 1945*, 2. Aufl. ed. (Berlin: Rowohlt Berlin, 2014). Peter Lieb, *Die Schlacht um Berlin und das Ende des Dritten Reiches 1945*, *Kriege der Moderne*, (Ditzingen: Reclam, Philipp, 2020). Richard Lakowski, "Der Zusammenbruch der deutschen Verteidigung zwischen Ostsee und Karpaten," in *Der Zusammenbruch des Deutschen Reiches 1945*, ed. Rolf-Dieter Müller, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2008), 656-73. Manfred Rauchensteiner, *Der Krieg in Österreich 1945* (Wien: Amalthea, 2015), 153-92. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 100-10.

4. Memory and Flak Towers

The flak towers in Berlin and Hamburg still stood tall when Second World War came to an end. The planners of the flak towers had already developed plans during the war for the use and function of the towers after the war. The towers should then be transformed into medieval strongholds loaded with Nazi symbolism and covered with "raw bricks and French marble".³⁶ As a model served Castel del Monte, in Apulia, Italy, built by the Hohenstaufen Emperor Frederick II.³⁷ The Nazi leadership was fascinated by Frederick II, his power politics, as well as the conflict between empire and the papacy. Ernst Kantorowicz' eloquent biography of the Staufer Emperor, which he published in 1927, was on the bedside table of both Josef Goebbels and Heinrich Himmler, according to several sources.³⁸ Hermann Goering also gave the biography as a birthday present to the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.³⁹

The architectural reference to Castel Del Monte and the other medieval strongholds marked the climax as well as the end point of castle and fortress construction. The Nazi propaganda used medieval terminology to describe the flak towers as "air defence towers" and the civilian air raid shelters as "defence houses". These terms should illustrate continuity and permanence of the National Socialist order and state.⁴⁰ Fritz Todt, Hitler's master builder and namesake of the Todt Organization (which was led after Todt's death by Albert Speer), demanded of his architects "to find an

³⁶ Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 34.

³⁷ See La Speranza, *Flakturm-Archäologie*, 25-31. Wille, *Wille: Flaktürme*, 24-25. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 11, 34. Concerning the building programme see in detail Anton Joachimsthaler, *Die Breitspurbahn: Das Projekt zur Erschließung des groß-europäischen Raumes 1942 - 1945*, 6. überarb. und erw. Neuaufl. ed. (München: Herbig, 1999), 22-43. Ingrid Holzschuh, "Verlorene Stadtgeschichten: Hitlers Blick auf Wien," in *Wien. Die Perle des Reiches*, ed. Ingrid Holzschuh and Monika Platzer (Zürich: Park Books, 2015). Helmut Weihsmann, *Bauen unterm Hakenkreuz: Architektur des Untergangs* (Wien: Promedia, 1998).

³⁸ Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *Kaiser Friedrich der Zweite*, 7 ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994). For the reception history of Frederick II, see in detail Eckhart Grünewald, "'Not Only in Learned Circles': The Reception of Frederick the Second in Germany before the Second World War," in *Ernst Kantorowicz*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Johannes Fried, *Frankfurter historische Abhandlungen* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997). Lucas Burkart, "'... ein vortrefflicher Fischzug" als Beinahe-Geschichte: Ernst Kantorowicz und die deutschsprachige Geschichtswissenschaft in der Zwischen- und Nachkriegszeit," in *Mythen, Körper, Bilder*, ed. Lucas Burkart et al. (Göttingen: Wallstein-Verl., 2015), 169-64.

³⁹ See Ernst Hartwig Kantorowicz, *Frederick the Second: Wonder of the World 1194-1250* (London: Head of Zeus, 2019), vi.

⁴⁰ See Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 9. On the concept of "national community" see in detail Sven Oliver Müller, "Nationalismus in der deutschen Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945," in *Die Deutsche Kriegsgesellschaft 1939 bis 1945*, ed. Jörg Echternkamp, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2005), 29-40.

appropriate form for defensive use, which in many cases would remain a cultural monument of a time far beyond its material purpose"⁴¹

Having in mind the future use of the towers after the war, they should be converted into shrines for the fallen of the war. Moreover, the enormous flak towers in Berlin should be redesigned as part of Berlin's "world capital Germania". The architect Wilhelm Kreis, who was the general advisor for the German war cemeteries, had submitted drafts for such "castles of the dead" (in German: Totenburgen) in 1941. His design strongly resembled the Hohenstaufen architecture of the Castel del Monte as suggested by Hitler. Others proposed to turn the flak towers after the war into museums to celebrate their final victory.⁴²

When the Allies occupied Berlin in 1945, they were confronted with the monstrous constructions. The destruction of the flak towers was seen as a visible sign of the demilitarization and denazification as outlined in the Potsdam Agreement of 1945.⁴³ Since the flak towers were located in different Allied sectors, a race broke out between the occupying powers, which of the forces could most effectively remove the flak towers from their zone of occupation. Within two years after the war, the Soviets blew up the flak towers in Friedrichshain in 1947, leaving a huge mound of rubble, which still exists today.⁴⁴ The French army successfully blew up the control tower of Humboldthain in December 1945 but faced serious issues when they wanted to remove the combat tower. As a result, a part of the combat tower still stands today and was handed over to the Berlin section of the German Alpine Club in 1989 that uses it as a climbing wall ever since.⁴⁵

The flak towers in Berlin Zoo were in the British sector and a British pioneer battalion needed several attempts to blow up the combat tower. A first attempt was made on September 27, 1947, which only weakened its structure. Several months later, the British pioneers made another attempt on July 30, 1948 but unfortunately the blast caused serious damage to the Berlin Zoo, which had just been rebuilt after the war. The remains of the combat tower

⁴¹ Quoted after Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 52.

⁴² See Gunnar Brands, "Bekanntnisse eines Angepassten: Der Architekt Wilhelm Kreis als Generalbaurat für die Gestaltung der Deutschen Kriegerfriedhöfe," in *Architektur und Ingenieurwesen zur Zeit der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft 1933 -1945*, ed. Ulrich Kuder (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verl., 1997), 124-56.

⁴³ See US Department of State, ed., *Germany 1947-1949: The Story in Documents* (Washington; D.C: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 47-57. See also Michael S. Neiberg, *Potsdam: The End of World War II and the Remaking of Europe* (New York: Basic Books, 2015).

⁴⁴ See Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 89. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme.*, 181 – 185.

⁴⁵ See S.n., "Nazi Flak Tower Defies TNT," *The New York Times*, August 31, 1947, 15. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 186-90. Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 90-91.

and the mound of rubble were later integrated into the Berlin Zoo, when it expanded in the 1950s and became part of the monkey enclosure.⁴⁶

After the war, the flak towers in Hamburg initially served as a temporary emergency accommodation for civilians and file storage for the city government in Hamburg. In September 1947, the British military government decided to remove the control tower in Wilhelmsburg. Yet, the tower could not so easily be destroyed, rather it left a huge mound of rubble, still standing as a kind of *damnatio memoriae*, about which a British officer remarked that: “*The bunker has become a pile of rubble, which is causing the clearance office great grief and should have increased the Hamburg mass of rubble considerably.*”⁴⁷ The costs for a complete demolition, however, were so enormous, that the British decided against it.⁴⁸ From 2010 to 2013, the combat tower was stabilized, gutted and converted into an “energy bunker”. The solar panels erected on the tower provide energy for the city district.⁴⁹

In 1946, the control tower in Heiliggeistfeld was used by the "Radio Section" the British military government as well as the Headquarters of the Post Office Hamburg. Various radio stations also used the tower in the post-war period, among them the NWDR (Northwest German Broadcasting, later known as North German Broadcasting Company (NDR)). Later it also housed a television studio of the NDR. In 1973, the control tower was sold to the then German Postal Service, which had it demolished in 1975 and built a high-rise building for the Hamburg telecommunications office in its place.⁵⁰ The combat tower in Heiliggeistfeld was first used as a storage facility and was later converted into temporary living quarters. Since 1956, the tower became a "creative bunker" and "media bunker", where several photo and recording studios have resided.⁵¹ Today, the tower is converted into a hotel.⁵² In all, the destruction of the flak towers in Berlin and Hamburg proved difficult, if not impossible. As a result, the military governments of the Allied forces and later German city planners creatively used the buildings for multiple purposes, serving the cities and its inhabitants and making it part of the cities' infrastructure.

⁴⁶ See Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 86-89. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 173-80.

⁴⁷ Quoted after Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 191.

⁴⁸ See Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 91-100. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 192-98.

⁴⁹ The Wilhelmsburg energy bunker is the former battle tower, with 2000 m² of solar cells and solar thermal modules mounted on its roof and walls. Inside there is a combined heat and power plant and a buffer storage tank with a capacity of 2000m³ of water, which ensures the energy supplies for the district. See <https://www.hamburgenergie.de/ueber-uns/energieerzeugung/energiebunker/> [Last access 15.11.2023].

⁵⁰ See Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 198-201. Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 91-100.

⁵¹ See Angerer, *Flakbunker*, 91-100. Foedrowitz, *Flaktürme*, 201-04.

⁵² See <https://www.bunker-stpauli.de/> [Last access 15.11.2023]

In conclusion, the flak towers in Berlin and Hamburg built by the Nazis during the Second World War never quite fulfilled the expectations of their planners in terms of providing effective air defence for their cities in wartime. Probably its most useful function was that of providing shelter for thousands of civilians during Allied air raids and, thus, saving countless civilian lives. After the war, they provided a difficult legacy. The Nazis had planned to turn the flak towers into war memorials and hence they should have served as part of heroic defence of the cities. For the victorious Allies, however, the flak towers were a remnant of the Nazi architecture, which needed to be erased from the cityscape. Simply blowing the towers up proved unsuccessful in destroying such monstrous structures. As a result, subsequent generations had to think creatively of how to make use of them and integrate them into the urban landscape. While the flak towers became a part of the cities, with some parts more visible than others, they still stand tall as reminders of the past.

JAPAN'S POLICY OF DEALING WITH AIR RAIDS AS A FORM OF NATIONAL PROTECTION DURING WORLD WAR II

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Introduction

In 2003, the Act on Securing the Peace and Independence of Japan and the Safety of the Nation and the People in Armed Attack Situations, etc. (Act No. 79 of June 13, 2003) (hereinafter referred to as the "Situation Management Act").¹ The Act on Measures for Protection of the People in Armed Attack Situations, etc. (Act No. 112 of June 18, 2004) (hereinafter referred to as the "National Protection Act") was enacted in 2004 as a separate situation law to be developed based on the framework provided by Situation Management Act.² Based on this "National Protection Act," each local government has prepared a national protection plan and conducted drills.

One has the impression that measures for civil protection in Japan were first implemented with the passage of the "National Protection Act. However, prior to World War II, Japan had a policy of "civil air defense" in preparation for air raids from enemy aircraft. This policy centered on a law called the "Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO)" (Law No. 47 of April 5, 1937, amended in 1941 and 1943), which was passed in 1937, four years before the start of the Pacific War, in preparation for air raids on the mainland.³ This policy is also said to have been one of the National Mobilization Regime.⁴

The purpose of the Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO) is to "prevent or mitigate the damage that may be caused by aircraft attacks in time of war or incident," and the items to be carried out by "persons other than the Army and Navy in accordance with the defense conducted by the Army and Navy," that is, citizens, are "surveillance, communication, warning, light control,

¹ *Laws and Regulations Complete Book, June 2003* (National Printing Bureau, 2003), 106-109.

² *Laws and Regulations Complete Book, June 2004* (National Printing Bureau, 2004), 524-554.

³ *Showa Nenkan Hourei Zensho Showa 12 Nen Vol. 11-2* (Hara Shobo, 1997), 62-65; *Showa Nenkan Hourei Zensho Showa 16 Nen Vol. 15-1* (Hara Shobo, 2001), 201-207; *Showa Nenkan Hourei Zensho Showa 18 Nen (Vol. 17-2)* (Hara Shobo, 2004), 290-294.

⁴ Tetsuo Furuya, "Shaping and Developing the Popular Mobilization Policy, *Quarterly Journal of Contemporary History*, No. 6 (1975). Eiju Suzuki, "Bōkoku Dōuin to Sengi kokunai Taisei no saihen [Air Defense Mobilization and the Reorganization of the Wartime Domestic System]," *Ritsumeikan University Institute for Research in the Humanities Bulletin*, No. 52 (1991).

dispersion, conversion, camouflage, firefighting, fire prevention, bulletproofing protection, gas proofing, evacuation, first aids, quarantine, distribution of emergency supplies, emergency restoration, and other matters to be specified by royal decree" (Article 1, Air Defense Law(BOKU-HO) , 1943, as amended).⁵ The "Enforcement Ordinance (7 January, 1944) specified "cleanup of damaged sites and other cleanup (cleaning)," "blockage by balloons (blockage)," "supply of drinking water (water supply)," "emergency transportation," and "coordination of emergency labor" as items to be specified by imperial ordinance, making a total of 21 items.⁶ The Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO) is often criticized with regard to "firefighting" and "fire prevention," where it is discussed as a bad law. For example, in the "*Tokyo Great Air Raid and War Damage Report*" criticism of the Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO), which stipulates fire prevention obligations, is described as follows. The people of Tokyo had a legal obligation to prevent fire, from which they could never escape, drilled into their heads. The only means of fire protection was the bucket relay based on neighborhood groups and a fighting spirit...We must point to the unscientific air-raid mentality, air-raid system, and air-raid obligations that held the people of Tokyo in thrall as the cause of the horrific tragedy of 10 March.⁷

Nobuya Saka, who was Superintendent of Tokyo Metropolitan Police at the time of the Tokyo Great Air Raid of March 10, 1945 (over 100,000 people died and about one million were affected), wrote about the Tokyo Great Air Raid in his "*My Resume*" series in the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun* after the war, "If they had abandoned fire prevention, and evacuated, there would not have been so many deaths. The long air-raid drills turned out to be a disaster."⁸ This sentence has been quoted in various documents, and is the reason why the Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO) has the image of a bad law. If one accepts the various criticisms as they are, it seems as if the BOKU-HO was not intended to protect the people but only to impose burdens on them. Some analyzes say, "There was no proper air defense in Japan before the war. To prove its non-existence, it is enough to show its disastrous results. This is one of the reasons why research on 'Civil Defense' has made little progress."⁹ Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO) has been cut off from researchers until now.

⁵ *Showa Nenkan Hourei Zensho Showa 18 Nen* (Vol. 17-2), 290-294.

⁶ *Showa Nenkan Hourei Zensho, Showa 19Nen* (Vol. 18-2) (Hara Shobo, 2005), 14-21.

⁷ Tokyo Dai Kushu Sensai-shi [Tokyo Great Air Raid, War Damage Report] Editorial Committee, *Tokyo Dai Kushu Sensai-shi [Tokyo Great Air Raid, War Damage Report Vol. 1]* (Society to Record Tokyo Great Air Raids, 1973), 22,23.

⁸ Nobuya Saka, *Watashi no Rirekisho [My Resume, Vol. 18]* (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 1963),167,168.

⁹ Hironari Tsuchida, *Kindai Nihon no "Kokumin Hozoku" seido [Modern Japan's "National Air Defense" System]* (Kanda University of Foreign Studies Press, 2010), 18,19.

The Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO) is designed to cover the entire air raid process, from pre-protection to post-air raid measures and even restoration, and it is not appropriate to evaluate only "firefighting" and "fire protection" failures. With this in mind, I have examined the results of all items and comprehensively evaluated them in my book, "Civil Protection in Civil Air Defense Policy."¹⁰ From this, I will draw out the main points, summarize them in a straightforward manner, and add some additional supplements to discuss Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO)'s performance.

History of Civil Defense and Japan's Air Defense Policy

Civil defense is considered a generic term for non-military activities that protect the general population from hostilities and provide the necessary conditions for survival.¹¹

In World War I, there were approximately 10 million military deaths and 500,000 civilian deaths, while in World War II, there were 24 million civilian deaths compared to approximately 26 million military deaths.¹² Under these circumstances, small-scale civilian protective operations in the United Kingdom during World War I are said to have been the beginning of civilian defense. In World War II, which became an all-out war, countermeasures against air raids under state guidance were systematically implemented.¹³ After World War II, it developed as an addition to wartime civil defense against the threat of nuclear weapons, a trend that continues today in the United Kingdom, Germany, and other countries.¹⁴

Also, as a product of reflection on the 24 million civilian deaths during World War II, the Geneva Conventions for the Protection of Civilian Persons in War of August 12, 1949 (hereafter referred to as the "Geneva Conventions") entered into force on October 21, 1950.¹⁵ Furthermore, in order to respond to modern conditions such as the diversification of forms of armed conflict since World War II, including the increase in national liberation wars and guerrilla warfare, and the development of military technology, the Geneva Conventions were supplemented and expanded, and new provisions were added as "Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949,

¹⁰ Yoshiyasu Ohi, *Minbouku-Seisaku ni Okeru Kokuminhogo[National Protection in Civil Air Defense Policy]* (Kinseisha, 2016).

¹¹ Kunio Kawaki, "Minkan Bouei no Shiteki-Hensen ni Tsuite[On the Historical Transition of Civil Defense]" *National Defense Academy of Japan Bulletin, 100th Edition* (March 2010),58.

¹² Yutaka Gouda, *Sekai no Shimin Bouei[Civil Defense in the World]* (Japan Civil Defense Association, 1987),11-16.

¹³ Kawaki, "On the Historical Transition of Civil Defense," 58.

¹⁴ Kawaki, "On the Historical Transition of Civil Defense," 81,82.

¹⁵ Gouda, *Civil Defense in the World*, 19.

concerning the Protection of Victims of International Armed Conflicts".¹⁶ Part IV, Chapter VI, Article 61, "Civil Defense," to protect the civilian population against the dangers, and to help it to recover from the immediate effects, of hostilities or disasters and also to provide the conditions necessary for its survival.¹⁷ On the other hand, Japan has recently enacted its national protection policy, but the origins and reasons for the long process of enactment have rarely been addressed.

World War II ended in August 1945 with Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration. The Imperial Japanese Army and Navy were disbanded, and Japan was occupied by the United States, the United Kingdom, and other Allied nations. Under the occupation policy, all laws related to war, military affairs, civil defense, and national mobilization were abolished. Seven years later, in 1952, with the entry into force of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, Japan became independent and the occupation policy ended, but little research was done on emergency response and contingency legislation, including civil defense, due to the allergy to war and defeat.

It was in this context that the study of contingency legislation began in 1978 with the creation of the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions. However, it was shelved with the end of the Cold War. Then, in August 1998, the launch of a ballistic missile (Taepodong) by North Korea over the Japanese mainland and other security needs arose, and as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, the Contingency Law and the National Protection Law were enacted.¹⁸

Why has the enactment of the national protection law taken so long? Because for nearly 60 years after the war, academia and general public had believed that Japan was helpless in defending its cities, this belief was inculcated in their minds because of the sorrow memory of the allied massive air raids on the Japanese mainland at the end of the second world war. Japanese cities were built mostly of wooden houses, and they suffered heavy damages from incendiary bomb attacks. Ever since, people have thought that the Japanese wartime civil protection policy was ineffective. However, this report argues that there are other reasons for the extensive damages to the Japanese cities, and that the civil protection policy itself was not as inadequate previously thought.

¹⁶ Ministry of Foreign Affairs website. https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/k_jindo/giteisho.html (accessed July 14, 2023).

¹⁷ ICRC, *International Humanitarian Law Databases*, [accessed 8 November 2023], <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977/article-61>.

¹⁸ Kawaki, "On the Historical Transition of Civil Defense," 67-71.

Japan's Air Defense System before World War II

Japan's perception of air raids began when Hironori Mizuno (Commander of the Navy) studied in Europe at his own expense during World War I. After returning to Japan, he wrote a series of articles in the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun about the German air raids on London that he had witnessed there. In the article, he pointed out the need for air defense in view of the future development of aircraft and the vulnerability of Japanese cities to fire.¹⁹ After the Great Kanto Earthquake (1923), the problem of wooden houses' vulnerability to fire was about to be solved by establishing an air defense system, advocating the construction of a noncombustible city. That is, in order to reconstruct Tokyo as a nonflammable city after the earthquake destroyed 300,000 houses, the city was to be rebuilt through fireproof construction by designating fire zones. Fireproof construction was costly, and the construction of modern nonflammable housing was promoted through subsidized programs, but was discontinued due to the Sino-Japanese War that began in 1937.²⁰

According to the judgment of the General Staff, the number of Soviet aircraft in the Far East at the end of 1935 reached 950, including large bombers with a range that could make a round trip to and from the Japanese mainland.²¹ It was predicted that the main targets of air raids on the Japanese mainland would be Tokyo, Kanmon-Kitakyushu, and Keihanshin, in that order, and that 10 to 50 percent of the planes would break through the anti-air defenses and drop incendiary bombs in large numbers and over a wide area, disorient the civilian population with gas bombs, and destroy important facilities with bombs.²² Recognizing and responding to this air raid from the Soviet forces in the Far East, Japan's air defense was structured in three tiers: offensive (attacks on enemy bases), air defense operations with interceptor fighters and anti-aircraft guns, and civil air defense under the Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO).

Air Raids Suffered by Japan

On 16 June 1944, the U.S. military bombing of the Japanese mainland, known as the Matterhorn Plan, was initially intended to devastate Japan with state-of-the-art B-29 strategic bombers from Chengdu, deep in the heart of mainland China. However, it was not effective, and the distance was too great

¹⁹ Tsuchida, *Modern Japan's "National Air Defense" System*, 42.

²⁰ Yasuhiro Kuroda, *Teikoku Nihon no Bouku-Taisaku [Air Defense Measures in Imperial Japan]* (Shinbunsha, 2010), 29-43.

²¹ Tsuchida, *Modern Japan's "National Air Defense" System*, 216.

²² Military History Office, National Institute for Defense Studies, Defense Agency, *Senshi Soshō: Hondo Boei Sakusen [Military History Series: Mainland Air Defense Operations]* (Asagumo Shinbunsha, 1968), 25-27.

to target Tokyo. The U.S. military decided to establish a base for strategic bombing of Japan in the Mariana Islands, and ordered Admiral Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, to secure the Marianas by June 1944. In August 1944, the U.S. forces occupied the Japanese-administered islands of Saipan and Tinian in the Mariana Island, where Runways were constructed and full-scale air raids on the Japanese mainland began in earnest in November.

Air raids on the Japanese mainland by B-29s are generally referred to as high-altitude precision bombing before 10 March 1945 (Great Air Raid on Tokyo), and low-altitude indiscriminate bombing after that. There are several tactical reasons for the use of low-altitude indiscriminate bombing. First, if incendiary bombs are dropped to burn an area, precise targeting is not necessary, and to drop incendiary bombs on unburned areas, it is easier for B-29 bombers to recognize the target (position or area) at night than during the day. At night, the risk of flying at low altitude is reduced because interception on the Japanese side, where searchlights and anti-aircraft guns are not synchronized, is not so severe.²³ And for the B-29, the load to climb to high altitude is reduced, so the bomb load is increased.²⁴ Furthermore, since each aircraft dropped incendiary bombs in separate, unburned areas, the need to form up was eliminated, and speed adjustments to maintain formation were no longer necessary, saving fuel.²⁵

This tactic is referred to as low-altitude incendiary attack, metropolitan incendiary attack, or saturation incendiary attack, because it targeted large cities at low altitude with large numbers of incendiary bombs to saturate firefighting operations. In this paper, this is referred to as "area attack". In addition, B-29s were also flown when they conducted weather reconnaissance. Weather reconnaissance aircraft were sent out day and night, each with a specialist weather observer on board to transmit data to base every 30 minutes. Then they would go with five 500-pound bombs on board. With this, they found a favorable target somewhere in Japan and bombed it.²⁶ The table below summarizes the air raids based on these data. Precision bombings

²³ Yoshishige Okuzumi and Toshio Hikasa, *Rumay no Shouji-Dengekisen [Rumay's Incendiary Blitzkrieg: Analysis Report by the General Staff]*, (Okayama Air Raid Documentation Center, 2005), 28.

²⁴ Office of Air Force History, *The Army Air Forces In World War II Volume 5: The Pacific - Matterhorn To Nagasaki June 1944 To August 1945*, (Washington, D.C. G.P.O 1965), 613, [accessed 8 November 2023], <https://archive.org/details/Vol5ThePacificMatterhornToNagasaki/page/n673/mode/2up>.

²⁵ Yoshishige Okuzumi and Katsumoto Saotome, *Tokyo wo Bakugeki Seyo [Bomb Tokyo]*, (Sanseido, 2007), 60.

²⁶ Chester Marshall (translated by Koji Takagi), *Sky Giants Over Japan-A Diary of a B-29 Combat Crew in WWII*, (Global Press, 1984), *B-29 Nihon-Bakugeki 30Kai no Jitsuroku* (Neko Publishing, 2001), 162.

of military targets were carried out 198 times, of which 169 were during the day (34 in high altitude and 135 in low- medium) and 29 at night (5 in high altitude, 24 in low- medium altitude). Area attacks targeting urban areas were carried out 78 times, 9 during the day (1 high altitude, 8 low-medium altitude) and 69 at night (only low-mid altitude). In addition, weather reconnaissance aircraft dropped bombs 46 times (10 during the day and 36 at night), and attacks by shipboard aircraft were executed 23 times during the day, for an overall total of 345 attacks. In addition, mines were laid 46 times.

Air Raid Aspects²⁷

	Daytime		Nights		Total
	High Altitude	Low-Medium Altitude	High Altitude	Low-Medium Altitude	
Precision Bombing	34	135	5	24	198
Area Attack	1	8	0	69	78
Weather Reconnaissance	10		36		46
Ship-Borne Plane	23		0		23
Total	211		134		345

The most effective of these air raids for the U.S. forces, and the most severe for the Japanese, was the area attack. In addition to the weak air defense system, from around March-April 1945, the Japanese military adopted a policy of preserving military aircraft in preparation against the landing of U.S. forces to Japanese mainland, and abandoned air superiority. This meant that most of the air raids were dealt with by civil air defense based on the Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO).

Air Raid Estimate

An air raid estimate published by the military in 1941, before the outbreak of the war between Japan and the United States, describes the reality of the air raids suffered, anticipating a war against the Soviet Union, the United States, and United Kingdom a few years later. It was estimated that the enemy could hit our country from the eastern coastal regions of the Soviet Union in about two or three hours, and that the interest was Soviet forces.²⁸ In an estimate made on 9 March 1942, at a time when Japan was operating favorably after the outbreak of the war against the United States (8 December 1941), a major enemy counteroffensive was not expected until 1943, "Concentrating our sea and air forces in the Pacific, and using some of them to obstruct our sea traffic routes, surprise attacks on Japanese centers, and

²⁷ Mines Laid in addition: 46 times. We defined high altitude above 20,000 feet and low-medium altitude below that.

²⁸ 防衛省防衛研究所, 陸軍省・参謀本部, 国民防空指導に関する指針1940年5月.

guerrilla warfare".²⁹ About a month later, on 18 April the first U.S. bombing raid on the Japanese mainland, by the Doolittle Bomber Command, was carried out. The raid used the tactic of launching B-25s from the Navy aircraft carrier USS Hornet. B-25 is a land-based bomber that was particularly superior in terms of cruising capability. 16 B-25s were launched, and 13 bombed the Keihin area.³⁰ Estimates on 7 November 1942,³¹ indicated that major air raids would not occur until after 1943, and air raids from the Aleutians and Midway were expected. As it was, after the Doolittle Air Raid, there were no air raids on the mainland in 1942 or 1943.

In an estimate on 15 January 1944, Japan predicted that "from mid-1944 onward, we will be subjected to intense air raids by formations of dozens or more aircraft due to the new large aircraft".³² As predicted, B-29s first appeared on the Japanese mainland (Kitakyushu) on 15 June of the same year. At that time, B-29s were launched from Chengdu, China, and in response, a landing operation was launched on the island of Saipan.³³ In August of the same year, after the fall of Saipan, estimates stated, "Generally speaking, air raids were carried out continuously and on a large scale from August onward, and the impact of the damage on Japan's ability to conduct the war cannot be underestimated."³⁴ Air raids on the mainland by B-29s launched from Saipan began in earnest, as generally expected, with the bombing of the Musashino Works of the Nakajima Aircraft Company on 24 November.³⁵ The "World Situation Assessment" of February 22, 1945, predicted intensified air raids on the Japanese mainland and air raids by the ships of the task force.³⁶ And the air raids by the ship-borne aircraft of the task force started around February.³⁷ After the Tokyo air raid on March 10 of the same year, air raids on the Japanese mainland intensified, with Nagoya and Osaka becoming targets, and then expanding to other regional cities. If the period of the Pacific War is

²⁹ 防衛省防衛研究所, 世界情勢判断, 重要国策決定綴り 巻二.

³⁰ Takashi Shimamura, *Hondo Kushu* [Mainland Air Raids] (Book Publishers, 1971), 45.

³¹ National Institute for Defense Studies, *Daitoua Senso ni Okeru Minbouku-Seisaku* [Civil Air Defense Policy in the Greater East Asia War], (National Institute for Defense, 1987), 240.

³² 国立公文書館, 陸軍省・海軍省「緊急防空計画設定上の基準」, 防空二関スル件(六).

³³ E. Barlett Karr (translated by Isao Otani), *Flames Over Tokyo*, (Harold Ober Associates Incorporated, 1991), *Tokyo Daikushu* [The Great Tokyo Air Bombing] (Kojinsha, 2001), 66, 67.

³⁴ 防衛省防衛研究所, 世界情勢判断 昭和19年8月19日, 参謀総長保管書類 最高戦争指導会議二関スル綴 其の一.

³⁵ Hiratsuka Masao, *Beigun ga Kirokusha Nihon-Kushu* [The U.S. Military Recorded the Air Raids on Japan] (Soshisha, 1995), 35.

³⁶ 防衛省防衛研究所, 世界情勢判断 昭和19年8月19日, 参謀総長保管書類 最高戦争指導会議二関スル綴 其の一.

³⁷ Yozo Kudo and Yoshishige Okuzumi, *Shasin ga Kataru Nihon-Kushu* [Photographs Tell the Story of Japan's Air Raids] (Gendai Shiryo Shuppan, 2008), 113.

viewed broadly in this way, it can be said that the air raids were conducted in the manner in which the Japanese side estimated them to be.

Scatter Density

In preparing for the air raid, the Japanese had estimated the density of incendiary bombs to be dropped. It was one incendiary bomb per Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group).³⁸ Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group) was organized as a voluntary self-defense organization for air defense and supported civil air defense, and consisted of 10-15 houses.³⁹ Meanwhile, the U.S. military conducted a demonstration test to investigate the appropriate density of incendiary bombs to burn down Japanese houses built of wood. Twelve two-story row houses were constructed in a test area spread out 112 km southwest of Salt Lake City, Utah. It was constructed and furnished the same as in Japan, using the same lumber, dimensions, thickness, angles, and paint.⁴⁰ The results of demonstration tests conducted over a four-month period beginning in May 1943 showed that the M69 incendiary bomb was the most suitable to burn down a house, even if the fire was extinguished for six minutes. The M69 was designed to drop 38 relatively small bombs weighing 6 pounds (2.7 kg) together and scatter as the convergence zone was dislodged in the air.⁴¹ The fuses were then triggered after landing, scattering the fiery napalm. And a scatter density of 10 tons per square mile was derived.⁴²

The aforementioned Japanese estimate of one incendiary device per (Tonari Gumi) neighborhood translates to 25 tons per square mile, so the Japanese estimate at the beginning of the war was appropriate. However, when the actual incendiary bombing began, the 20th Bomber Command dropped 250 tons per square mile, or 25 times more than in the demonstration tests, according to field assessments. That is 10 times the Japanese estimate.⁴³ The Japanese civil air defence was overwhelmed by the incendiary bombs, which far exceeded the initial estimate of the density of bombs dropped, and many casualties were inflicted. However, there were cases where the spread of fire was prevented in areas where the density of bombs dropped was low.

³⁸ Namba Satoshi, *Gen-jikyoku-ka no Bouku* [Air Defense under the Current Situation] (Kodansha, 1941), 48.

³⁹ 国立国会図書館電子資料室, 内務省計画局長・警保局長「家庭防空隣保組織要綱」(1939年8月内務省発第108号), *防空関係法令及例規*.

⁴⁰ E. Barlett Carr (translated by Isao Otani), *The Great Tokyo Air Bombing*, 21-23.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 23-25.

⁴³ Effects of the Incendiary Bomb Attacks on Japan- A Report on Eight Cities (final report and original draft): Tokyo, *Records of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey ; Entry 41, Pacific Survey Reports and Supporting Records 1928-1947*, 3 [accessed 8 November 2023], <https://dl.ndl.go.jp/pid/8821933/1/5>.

Actual Situation of Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO)

As mentioned at the beginning, the Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO) has 21 items, which can be divided into three phases: "Pre-protection measures", "air raid response" and "post-air raid measures". This paper describes "dispersal evacuation" and "evacuation" as pre-protection measures, "surveillance, communication, and warning", "camouflage", and "firefighting and fire prevention" as air raid response, and "emergency restoration" as post-air raid measures. In investigating the actual state of BOKU-HO, I referred not only to Japanese records of the time, but also to the final report by the USSBS (THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY) after war. This survey mission, a joint US Army-Navy agency set up under the orders of President Roosevelt, conducted surveys in various parts of Japan to investigate the effects and impact of the strategic bombing carried out by US forces and to analyze the potential for air power, and issued its final report in July 1946.⁴⁴ The report is of high value as a historical document.

Dispersal Evacuation and Evacuation

The subject of "decentralized evacuation" were; facilities or businesses related to the production, processing, repair, storage, or distribution of important mobilized materials, facilities or businesses related to electricity, gas, or water supply, facilities or businesses related to transportation and communications or traffic, and the competent minister could order "dispersal evacuation".⁴⁵ The USSBS report states the following in the section entitled Evacuation and Voluntary precautionary evacuation, began early in 1944 and continued on the same voluntary basis even after the saturation raids. evacuation of primary school children was well conceived, integrated, and executed.⁴⁶ The Tokyo Metropolitan Government evacuated 140,000 schoolchildren (3rd-6th grade), and 410,000 nationwide to the countryside. Despite some shortcomings, the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of schoolchildren to the countryside without the fear of air raids has been described as more effective and successful than expected.⁴⁷ The evacuation of school children was carried out in accordance with the "Guidelines for Facilitating the Evacuation of School Children" in view of air defense needs.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey of Japan, *White Paper on the Pacific War, Volume 1: Headquarters Report* (Japan Book Center, 1992), commentary.

⁴⁵ *Showa Nenkan Hourei Zensho, Showa 19 Nen (Vol. 18-2)* (Hara Shobo, 2005),14-21.

⁴⁶ THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY, *FINAL REPORT Covering Air-Raid Protection and Allied Subject in JAPAN* (Civilian Defense Division,1947),5-6.

⁴⁷ Asami Joboji, *Nihon Bōkū-ishi [History of Air Defense in Japan]* (Hara Shobo, 1981),273.

⁴⁸ The Cabinet decision on June 30, 1944, "Outline for the Promotion of Evacuation of School Children" (Digital Archive, National Archives of Japan).

Surveillance, Communication and Warning

Surveillance, communication, and warning can be considered as an integral part. The USSBS report states the following in the section "Air-Raid Warning. "The air-raid-warning system of detection was effective; planes were spotted in time and warning centers were notified."⁴⁹ Furthermore, according to previous studies, from November 1944, when full-scale air raids on the Kanto region began, to the end of the war, air-raid warnings were issued 427 times in the Eastern Military District of Japan, 88 of which were accompanied by bombings, and according to analysis, 83% of these 88 times, either an air raid warning was issued before the bombing began or an alert was issued 30 minutes before the bombing.⁵⁰

Camouflage

Camouflage is a measure to make it difficult for enemy aircraft to detect and impossible to precisely bomb properties that are likely to become targets of air raids, and is classified as camouflage (painting, tree planting) and shielding.⁵¹ With the cooperation and guidance of the Ministry of the Interior, the Metropolitan Police Department, the Headquarters of the Army Construction Department, and the Army Aviation Research Institute, the Architectural Institute of Japan compiled the "Guidelines for Building Camouflage" in February 1941.⁵² In the Guidelines, detailed guidelines were provided for each building in the hope of making it difficult to detect visually from a viewing distance of 10km(5.5nm) or more, or to create the illusion that it was a fake, even though it was not effective against photographic reconnaissance.⁵³

The USSBS report states. "Some techniques of camouflage, concealment, and deception which did not greatly confuse the analyst may have been effective in confusing an attacking pilot or bombardiers."⁵⁴

⁴⁹ THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY, *FINAL REPORT Covering Air-Raid Protection and Allied Subject in JAPAN* (Civilian Defense Division, 1947), 6.

⁵⁰ Masanori Hattori, "Air Defense Warning System and Activities during the Greater East Asia War," *shin bouei ronshyu Vol.12, No.2*(October 1984), 85, 86.

⁵¹ 国立公文書館デジタルアーカイブ, 学童疎開促進要綱1944年6月30日閣議決定, [accessed 8 November 2023], <https://rnavi.ndl.go.jp/cabinet/bib00563.html>

⁵² Shoichi Hoshino, "Kentiku-gisou-shishin ni Tsuite[On the Guideline for Building Falsification]" *Kentiku-Zasshi[Architectural Magazine]*, Vol. 55, No. 671 (1941), 24.

⁵³ Committee for the Study of Urban Air Defense, *Pamphlet on Urban Air Defense* (Architectural Institute of Japan, 1940-16).

⁵⁴ THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY, *Evaluation of Photographic Intelligence in the Japanese Homeland PART FIVE CAMOUFLAGE, CONCEALMENT, AND DECEPTION* (Photographic Intelligence Section, 1947), 5-01.

For example, the shape of the gas tank is unique, so special consideration was required,⁵⁵ and Tokyo Gas dispersed its plants and placed the gas tank in nine different locations to disguise them.⁵⁶ It is recorded that the supply capacity of gas was reduced by half due to the air raid.⁵⁷ and if we simply assume that half of the gas tanks, or about four, remained, we can assume that the camouflage was effective there.

Firefighting and Fire Prevention

The aforementioned Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group) was heavily involved in firefighting and fire prevention. The general public organizing that Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group) was obligated to respond to incendiary attacks in the following sequence.

When an air raid is being carried out and incendiary bombs are being dropped, the civilians wait at a shelter to avoid being directly hit by the bombs. When the incendiary bombs have been dropped and enemy aircraft have passed directly overhead, they will jump out of the shelters to prevent the incendiary bombs from igniting buildings and other structures and starting a fire. If this does not work and the fire spreads to buildings and other structures, then the initial firefighting measures should be taken. If the fire cannot be extinguished, then the assistance of a permanent firefighting organization (fire brigade or government fire brigade) should be requested. Once the fire brigade arrives, follow their instructions to prevent the fire from spreading and assist them. If the fire is so strong that it is impossible to extinguish and becomes dangerous, evacuate the area (under the direction of the fire brigade).⁵⁸ The actual situation was overwhelming, as the incendiary attack was ten times denser than expected. In the midst of this situation, I calculated numerically how well they were able to cope with the situation.

The record of preventing the spread of fire is also the record of preventing many houses from burning down. There is no data on the number of houses prevented from burning down, but there is data on the number of half-burned houses. If the fire had not been prevented from spreading, the fire would have been totally destroyed. Since the U.S. military selected the targets of incendiary attacks after conducting weather reconnaissance, the possibility

⁵⁵ Committee for the Study of Urban Air Defense, "General Guidelines for Building Camouflage" *Kentiku-Zasshi [Architectural Magazine]*, Vol. 55, No. 671, (February 1941), 113.

⁵⁶ Yutaka Iwamura, "Gase-Gigyou ni Okeru Koujou-boukuu-Taisaku[Air Defense Measures for Factories in the Gas Business]" *Teikoku-Gas-Kyokai Zasshi [Imperial Gas Association Magazine]*, Vol. 31, No. 2] (March 1942), 97, 98.

⁵⁷ THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY, *Effects of air attack on urban complex Tokyo-Kawasaki-Yokohama* (Urban Areas Division 1947), 15.

⁵⁸ Yoshiyasu Ohi, *Min-Bouku-Seisaku ni Okeru Kokumin-hogo[Civil Protection in Civil Air Defense Policy]* (Kinseisha, 2016), 186.

that the fire was extinguished by rainfall and the fire was only half extinguished is not worth considering. The number of half-burned houses was considered as the performance of Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group), and to analyze this, an index called "fire extinguishing rate" was defined.

Table 1: Mixing of Bombs and Incendiaries
(Extinguishing Rate)⁵⁹

Date	Target	Houses Burned Down	Half-Burnt House	Fire Extinguishing Rate %.	Type of Bombing
24 Nov 1944.	Nakajima Aircraft	29	9	23.68	precision bombing
27 Nov 1944	Nakajima Aircraft	20	7	25.93	precision bombing
3 Dec 1944	Nakajima Aircraft	20	10	33.33	precision bombing
27 Dec 1944.	Nakajima Aircraft	12	7	36.84	precision bombing
27 Jan 1945	Urban Industrial Jetty	508	95	15.75	precision bombing
19 Feb 1945	Pier District	570	41	6.71	precision bombing
4 Mar 1945	Nakajima Aircraft	2,365	810	25.51	precision bombing

This is analyzed for air raids against the city of Tokyo. Table 1 shows the case of precision bombing, with seven cases falling under this category and a higher percentage of bombs than incendiaries. The extinguishing rate in such cases ranges from 6 to 60%, and in many cases the figure exceeds 20%. In other words, it can be assumed that Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group) would have been able to fight the fires if the raids had not been primarily incendiary.

Table 2: Incendiary Only or Primarily Incendiary (Extinguishing Rate)

Date	Target	Houses Burned Down	Half-Burnt House	Fire Extinguishing Rate %.	Type of Bombing
29 Nov 1944	Light industrial district	2,773	141	4.84	area attack
25 Feb 1945	urban area	19,927	368	1.81	area attack
10 Mar 1945	Urban area (Tokyo Great Air Raid)	267,171	971	0.36	area attack

⁵⁹ Fire extinguishing rate = half burned houses/(totally burned houses + half burned houses) x 100 (%).

13 Apr 1945	Arsenal District (Akabane)	168,350	138	0.08	area attack
15 Apr 1945	Southern Cities	61,847	563	0.90	area attack
24 May 1945	urban area	60,381	141	0.23	area attack
25 May 1945	urban area	165,103	339	0.20	area attack
29 May 1945	urban area	1,377	6	0.43	area attack

Totally burned houses total 746,929 Half burned houses total 2,667 Extinguishing rate of total 0.36%

Table-2 shows nine cases of area bombing, and since incendiary bombs were used mainly, the fire extinguishing rate was very poor, less than 1% in seven cases. All seven cases were after the Tokyo Great Air Raid (10 March 1945). After this Raid, the fire extinguishing rate rapidly worsened, and the calculated fire extinguishing rate was only 0.08-1.84% (0.36% in total). This is the performance of Tonari Gumi's (Neighborhood Group) activities mainly against area attacks, and by extension, the performance of "emergency fire prevention" and "firefighting," including government fire departments. In other words, the fire was beyond the capability of Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group), also permanent fire services.

The situation is believed to be similar in local cities, and records regarding area attacks were examined.⁶⁰ The number of area attacks believed to have targeted local cities was 81. Table 3 lists some of them for reference.

Table 3: Fire Extinguishing Rates for Area Attacks on Rural Cities (Selected)⁶¹

City Name	Date 1945	Entirely Destroyed	Partial Destruction by Fire	Fire Extinguishing Ratio
Gifu City	9 Jul	20,303	29	0.14
Nishinomiya City	5 Jun	1,207	28	2.26
Nishinomiya City	15 Jul	308	32	9.41
Uwajima City	12 Jul	2,100	62	2.86
Uwajima City	28 Jul	3,900	40	1.01
Sendai City	10 Jul	11,645	293	2.45
Sakai City	13 March	158	38	19.38
Kochi City	4 Jul	12,031	169	1.38

⁶⁰ Ministry of Construction (ed.), *Journal of War Disaster Reconstruction, Volumes 4-9* (Urban Planning Association, 1957-1960).

⁶¹ Fire extinguishing rate $320,411 \div 13,574 \times 100 = 4.06$.

Hamamatsu City	18 Jun	16,011	193	1.19
Sasebo City	28 Jul	12,037	69	0.56
Kofu City	6 Jul	17,864	230	1.27
Yokkaichi City	18 Jun	8,410	130	0.37
Okayama City	29 Jul	24,232	800	3.19
City of Yokohama	29 May	79,437	133	0.16

From these, we were able to extract war-damaged cities where half-burned houses were mentioned, and we were able to survey 32 times. The average fire extinguishing rate for these 32 raids was 4.06%, a higher rate than the 0.08-1.84% in Tokyo (0.36% in total). The reason for this may be that the density of houses is looser in rural areas. In addition, in most rural areas, there was only one large-scale incendiary attack, and it can be assumed that the firefighting preparedness Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group), etc., for that one attack, while overwhelmed, functioned in some areas.

Many researchers agree that Japan's air defense system was ineffective in the face of overwhelming air-raids by U.S forces. air strikes, as evidenced by the devastation of Tokyo and other cities. However, in the USSBS report under the heading of SPECIAL CIVILIAN DEFENSE AGENCIES, there is the following description of the "Neighborhood Group".

Here was the Japanese expression of "self-protection"-a group fighting for the protection of its homes before the arrival of larger and better-equipped forces. It offered the great advantage of having a working organization with a responsible leader on the scene of a bombing incident a few minutes after its inception, the time when prompt action was most valuable.

The number of simultaneous incidents, together with the casualties and confusion which were the natural results of the raids from March 1945 to the end of the war, overtaxed the capabilities of these services, but it is logical to assume that, without this group, loss of life and property would have been far greater.⁶² Clearly, the United States has recognized the effectiveness of Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group)'s fire prevention efforts. Tonari Gumi (Neighborhood Group) dealt with many situations prior to March 1945, when bombing was not the primary means of burning down urban homes. Of the 345 bombings covered, it can be said to have responded to a total of 267 bombings, including 198 precision bombings (169 during the day and 29 at night), 46 bombs thrown by weather reconnaissance aircraft, and 23 attacks by shipboard aircraft.

⁶² THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY, *FINAL REPORT Covering Air-Raid Protection and Allied Subject in JAPAN* (Civilian Defense Division, 1947), 32.

In an air raid that primarily used incendiary bombs, the density of incendiary bombs dropped, which was more than 10 times greater than expected, was far beyond our ability to cope. As a result, there were many casualties and great confusion. The bombings covered by this evaluation were 78 area attacks.

However, "fire prevention" and "firefighting" activities were not entirely absent. In response to the incendiary fires, several hundred half-burned houses were the result in Tokyo. The fire extinguishing rate of 0.082 to 1.84% (0.36% in total) of the total number of damaged houses, and 4.06% in regional cities, is the result of fire prevention, firefighting. This is a quantitative figure and is the result of fire prevention activities that were overwhelmed by incendiary bombs 10 times greater than expected. If this number is considered zero, Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO) is totally negated. However, if 4% is not zero, we can consider measures to improve this figure. Japanese civilian air defense research has stalled here because of the strong tendency to regard this figure as zero.

Post-air Raid Measures

"Post-air raid measures" has not been the subject of much research until now, and for this reason there is no critical literature on post-air raid measures. According to the Air Defense Law (BOKU-HO), post-air raid measures include "emergency restoration," "quarantine," "poison control," "water supply," "cleaning," "relief work," and "distribution of emergency supplies. There are records in local government histories that these items were carried out after the air raids. The following is a summary from the "Clearance and Repair" section of the USSBS report.⁶³

Water supply: During the early stages of the air raids on the Japanese mainland, interruptions in the water supply mains due to precision bombing were repaired in a matter of hours. However, as the severity of the raids increased, water supply personnel were killed, wounded, and dispersed, and their efficiency was severely reduced by the lack of transportation. Auxiliary organizations, such as the police brigade and the fire brigade, attempted to make temporary repairs to the sometimes-damaged water mains, although they were not trained to do so. However, they were inefficient due to lack of technical training.

Electricity and Gas: Whether privately or publicly owned, utilities established wartime maintenance units, but they simply gave the original maintenance units the name "emergency". During wartime, private companies

⁶³ THE UNITED STATES STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY, *FINAL REPORT Covering Air-Raid Protection and Allied Subject in JAPAN* (Civilian Defense Division, 1947), 95-99.

responded by calling on workers employed by the company or trained personnel from nearby cooperative groups.

Tram: Trams were organized most effectively for restoration in both public and private public institutions. The organization of the streetcar system was restored without requesting assistance from auxiliary organizations in case of emergency. Furthermore, they did not rely on the help of engineers from other nearby companies. Emergency repair teams were stationed at various locations, equipped with the necessary equipment, and specially trained to simulate bomb damage.

Thus, the USSBS report acknowledges that there were "emergency restoration" efforts for water, electricity, gas, and streetcars. However, since there are no specific items in the report, Following is introduced some of them from the descriptions in the municipal history.

Water supply:

About 20 days later, emergency restoration work was completed and temporary water taps were installed at key locations to start emergency water supply. (Honjo Village)

The water source was spared from the war damage, and water supply was started as early as the next morning. (Gifu City)

Emergency repairs at the water source were completed at 4:00 p.m. on the same day, and the water supply was restored. (Ichinomiya City)

It took nearly nine months to restore the water supply to the end of the city. (Hiroshima City)

Electricity:

On 6 August, the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima City. On the following day, 7 August, power was transmitted to a part of the city, and on 11 August, the line to the broadcasting station was restored, and by evening, temporary power was transmitted throughout the city. (Chugoku Electric Power Distribution Co.)

Tram:

After the air raid on 29 May, 1945, 35.6 km, or 73% of the entire line, was restored on July 1. (Yokohama City)

All lines were opened to traffic on 20 August 1945, 40 days after the air raid. (Sendai City)

The company was bombed on 20 June 1945, and on 8 July, the Higashida - Maehata line was restored, and work began on restoring the Maehata - Asabashi line; in the same month, that work was completed and the line began operation. (Toyohashi Railway)

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF BULGARIAN AIR DEFENSE AND CIVIL MOBILIZATION DURING THE ALLIED BOMBARDMENTS ON SOFIA (NOVEMBER 1943 – MAY 1944)

Prof. Dr. Jordan BAEV (Bulgaria)

Introduction

The intensive bombardments over Sofia started on 14 November 1943 and continued until 17 April 1944. The primary aim of the Allied operation was to detach Bulgaria from the Tripartite pact. The US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) organized at the same time a covert action for secret negotiations with the Bulgarian government, while the British Special Operations Executive (SOE) started in March 1944 limited arms delivery by air to the Bulgarian leftist guerilla detachments.

The paper will not discuss the details of the air bombardments, neither the air defense counterattacks by the Bulgarian Air Forces because these issues have been well described in many previous publications of Bulgarian historians.¹ The Western military historiography, indeed, paid no specific attention on the issue; however, a few authors discussed the effects of the Allied air bombardment over Bulgaria.² The fate of the British and U.S. pilots shot down over the Bulgarian territory and detained in a prisoners' camp near Shumen is also well known.³

Among the specific issues was the significant move from the principle of refraining from airstrikes on civilian population toward total war and the disappearance of the characteristic distinction between front and rear. The controversial decision of bombing the civilian targets (as drastic violation of the rules described at the fourth Hague convention of October 1907⁴)

¹ Kotev, Nikolay (1989, 1991), Rumenin, Rumen (1990), Milanov, Yordan (1999), Nedyalkov, Dimitar (2004), Yanev, Kiril (2010).

² Miller, Marshall. *Bulgaria during the Second World War*, (Stanford University Press, 1975); Davis, Richard. *Bombing the European Axis Powers. A Historical Digest of the Combined Bombing Offensive 1939-1945*, (Maxuel, AL: Air University Press, 2006).

³ See: Dimitrov, Ivan (1996), Stanev, Stanimir and Mark La Scotte (2012).

⁴ Several authors claimed that the two Hague conventions of 1899 and 1907 related to the "land warfare" and did not include "war in the air". However, the Hague conventions determined the laws and customs of war in general, as cited by the Nüremberg International Military Tribunal in 1946.

continues to be a topic of historical debate nowadays, but it was focused almost entirely on the bombardments against Germany (with a principal Case Study the destruction of Dresden in February 1945) and Japan, and partly in Italy.⁵ The proposed paper will be focused mainly on the analysis and assessments on the effectiveness of the special measures undertaken for protection of the civilian population in Sofia.

Our research is based on various documents from the Bulgarian state, military, and regional archival records.⁶ We have revealed several collections of the Sofia City and District Archives, the Central State Archives in Sofia, and the State Military History Archives in Veliko Tarnovo. These collections include the protocol books of the Sofia Greater Municipality and the meetings of the mayor's administration, minutes of the meetings of the municipal council, documents, instructions, orders, reports and circulars of various offices at the municipality (including the fire department), protocols for assessing destruction and the impact of bombing on the urban environment, materials on evacuation, the organization and work of individual commissariats on evacuation, assistance and recovery, etc. In the records of the Ministry of the Interior and Public Health there are stored also materials on the bombings, instructions, regulations on the number of benefits (especially of the Department of Public Welfare), etc. Interesting materials on the evacuation and supply of the population were found in the records of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Labor, as well as in the later Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, where the materials of the Commissariat for Assistance are stored. Very difficult was to locate the materials of the Commissariat for Evacuation, which were scattered in different records, but the most important part of them can be found in the Civil Mobilization Directorate.⁷ Some

⁵ For instance: Grayling, Anthony. *Among the Dead Cities. The History and Moral Legacy of the WW II Bombing of Civilians in Germany and Japan* (New York: Walker and Co, 2006); *Terror in the Sky: The bombing of German Cities in World War II* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010); Arnold, Jörg. *The Allied Air War and Urban Memory. The Legacy of Strategic Bombing in Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2011); *Death From the Skies: How the British and Germans Survived Bombing in World War II* (Oxford University Press, 2014); Crane, Conrad. *American Airpower Strategy in World War II: Bombs, Cities, Civilians, and Oil* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2016); Maynard, Jonathan. "Allied Area Bombing in World War II" In: *Ideology and Mass Killing: The Radicalized Security Politics of Genocides and Deadly Atrocities* (Oxford University Press, 2022), 179-220. In his book's introduction Conrad Crane cited a leading British military historian Basil Liddel Hart that the intensive Allied bombardment on civilian targets was "the most uncivilized method of warfare the world has known since the Mongol devastations".

⁶ Several selected documents could be viewed online in a special digital collection about Bulgaria in the World War II, published at the official website of the State Agency "Archives" in Sofia - <https://wars.archives.bg>.

⁷ Some of these archival collections have been discussed for the first time in a PhD dissertation at the Faculty of History of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski" – Maslarska, Radoslava.

documents were also found in the records of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. What is still unclear, was the amount and essence of the important government records taken by the Soviet troops in September-October 1944. They are stored as “war trophies” at the Russian State Military Archive (RGVA) in Podolsk near Moscow, but we have no access to these files so far. The decisions and goals of the Allied bombardments over Sofia and their immediate results could be seen as well by comparison with some important reports, stored at the British National Archives (TNA) at Kew, and US National Archives (NARA) at College Park, MD.

Operation Point Blank and Bulgaria

The new Allied strategy of intensive UK-US bomber offensive for 1943-1944 was discussed at the Casablanca conference (SYMBOL) in January 1943. The “Casablanca Directive” (C.C.S. 166/1/D), approved by the Combined Chiefs of Staff on 21 January 1943), determined five priority objects with primary goal “the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people”. The Directive gave start further to Operation “Point Blank”⁸, discussed again at the next UK-US conference in Quebec (QUADRANT). Meanwhile, the strategic Allied bombardment in Europe was extended to Italy and, as a specific target, the oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania. On 18 May 1943 the Combined Chiefs of Staff approved “Tidal Wave” operation for massive bombardment of the oil fields near Ploesti, which was carried out on 1 August 1943. During the next Allied conferences in Cairo (SECTANT) and Tehran (EURECA) the further intensive bombardment against the European satellites of Nazi Germany (Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary) was discussed in a more detailed mode. A month before these high-level meetings, at the time of opening of the Moscow conference of the foreign ministers during a discussion of the Royal Defense Committee on 18 October 1943 the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill underlined: “We cannot tolerate any longer these activities of the Bulgarian jackals however much they may be under the heels of the Germans. We consider that a sharp lesson should be administered to Bulgaria with the primary object of forcing them to withdraw their divisions from Yugoslavia and Greece, thereby adding to Germany’s difficulties and helping our campaign in Italy.

British-American Bombardments over Sofia during the Second World War – military, diplomatic, and human aspects (2018) A PhD Dissertation [in Bulgarian].

⁸ The decision to start Combined Bomber offensive with code name “Point Blank” was agreed during the US-UK conference in Washington DC (TRIDENT) in mid-May 1943. The Point Blank Directive was issued on 14 June 1943.

We have carefully considered the best method of bringing Bulgaria to heel. All agree that surprise air attack on Sofia, accompanied by leaflets citing fate of Hamburg and Hannover, would have best and most immediate effects warning in advance of bombing not favored because it will risk increased losses. Better to do it well first and then threaten repetition on a larger scale.⁹

The Combined bomber offensive in Europe in 1943-1944 was seen as a prerequisite for preparation of the main Allied operation OVERLORD, scheduled for May-June 1944. The bombardments over the Axis powers in the Balkans and Central Europe had both military and political purposes. Though the fact that Bulgaria did not participate in active military actions against the Allied troops since the declaration of “symbolic war” against Great Britain and the USA on 13 December 1941 (but not entering in the war against the Soviet Union), its government was accused for sending occupation troops to Greek and Yugoslav territories and thus supporting the withdrawal of some German troops from the Balkans. The political crisis in Bulgaria after the surprising death of Tsar Boris III at the end of August 1943 opened the discussion of eventual withdrawal of the country from its alliance with the Third Reich as result of the Allied military pressure. Exactly at the end of 1943 the US intelligence service OSS started a secret mission in Istanbul (Mission Jadwin) for confidential negotiations with Bulgarian officials over the terms of possible armistice. The British SOE intelligence Force 133 units (Mulligatawny and Clarridges missions) were sent illegally to Bulgaria and soon it was agreed that RAF planes will supply weapons and equipment for the Bulgarian leftist anti-Nazi guerrillas in the mountains.

According to an agreement of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, the bombardments on Bulgaria should begin with American daylight air raids followed by British night raids. Since the beginning of Operation Point Blank, the American air campaign in the Balkans had shown a contradictory approach. On the one hand, “the architect of US strategic bombing” gen. Ira Eaker ordered his commanders “to be especially careful so that it is a matter of first concern that non-military objects suffer as little as possible”. On the other hand, however, his priorities in defining the goals in 1944 were in the following ranking: No. 1 – cities in Bulgaria; No. 2 – Budapest; No. 3 Bucharest, the targets of the airstrikes being both military and political. US and UK airmen were expected to terrorize the local population without ostensibly using terrorist tactics.

During the Communist rule in Bulgaria a false hypothesis was propagated officially – that Stalin has opposed to the Allied bombardments of Bulgaria. In fact, during the Moscow and Tehran conferences in October-

⁹ Davis, Richard, *Bombing the European Axis Powers*, 313.

November 1943 the Soviet political and military leaders agreed with the plans of extension of the Point Blank operation toward the Balkans. A specific diplomatic move was used, however, immediately after the first massive bombardments over Sofia on 10 January 1944. The Bulgarian Regent and former Prime Minister Bogdan Filov noted in his personal Diary on 30 January 1944 that the Soviet diplomatic representative in Bulgaria Alexander Lavrishchev mentioned in a confidential talk with the Bulgarian Prime Minister Dobri Bozhilov that Moscow “was ready to plead with England and America to stop the bombing if we withdrew the occupation corps” [in Yugoslavia].¹⁰

Bulgarian Air Defense and Civil Mobilization Normative Base and Organization

The initial normative base in Bulgaria for the organization of civil protection during the war times were the Law on the air and chemical defense (ZVHZ) of 1936 and the Law for civil mobilization of April 1940. On 6 July 1940 the Commandant of Sofia Garrison issued an Order for “protection of the civil population from air attacks”. The document specified different alarms, blackouts, ambushes (dugs), and evacuation procedures. The first urgent measures in the wartime period were undertaken during the confidential German-Bulgarian contacts at the end of 1940 before the formal joining of Bulgaria to the Tripartite pact. On 25 December 1940 Bulgarian government accepted new Regulations for civil mobilization, approved with a Decree by Tsar Boris III on 16 January 1941.¹¹ The document defined the structure of state and local departments which would be responsible for the immediate measures in case of war threats. Following the Regulations, several local and district authorities (in Yambol, Pernik, Montana and other cities) issued their own orders for air defense exercises and additional training, including measures for blackout of homes and public buildings. Exactly in those days Bulgarian General staff signed a secret agreement with the Wehrmacht Command for the crossing of German troops through the Bulgarian territory. New practical measures for anti-aircraft defense and protection of the population from bombings and chemical attacks were adopted soon after Bulgaria joined the Tripartite pact on 1 March 1941, especially after the first bombings on Bulgarian territory in April 1941 during the Nazi invasion in Yugoslavia and Greece.¹² The announcement of the so

¹⁰ Филов, Богдан, *Дневник*, 659.

¹¹ DVIA, Veliko Tarnovo, Fond 1, Opis 5, A.E. 590, sheets 12-13, 17-44.

¹² Some British planes bombed Southern Bulgaria between 6 – 18 April 1941, while a few Yugoslav planes crossed the Western part of the country near Kyustendil. For the first time RAF planes made on 14 April a night air raid against Sofia despite of the fact that in those

called “symbolic war” against Great Britain and the USA on 13 December 1941 did not cause any urgent security measures with the illusion of the ruling elite that the “real war battles” between the leading war adversaries was far away from the Bulgarian territory. However, the eleven bombing attacks over the capital in the period 14 November 1943 - 17 April 1944 were not a total surprise for the government since there were clear indications for such a threat in the mid-1943 when the Allied war operations came closer to the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean.

With an Order No. 46 on 12 March 1942 of the Bulgarian Air Force Commander Gen. Ayrarov, Bulgaria was divided in three Air Defense regions (extended in 1943 to four zones). The defense of Sofia was assigned to an air squadron with three wings, located at the airfields near Sofia (Bozhurishte and Vrazhdebna) and Karlovo. However, until mid-1943 Bulgarian Air Force had in their disposal mainly obsolete Czech Avia B-534 fighters. Bulgarian AF had also a few new ME-109 fighters and in late 1943 received from Luftwaffe 89 old French fighters Dewoitine D.520. However, all these fighters were not prepared to act in darkness and the AF pilots were not trained to fight during the night enemy raids. The air defense of Sofia against the RAF night attacks was assigned only to several anti-aircraft batteries.

After instructions from the War Ministry, the Commandant of Sofia Garrison issued an Order No. 29 on 24 March 1943 for training the Air and Chemical Defense units, Protective groups, and Fire commands in the capital.¹³ According to a special regulation for coordinating the activities of the wartime economy, approved by the Council of Ministers with a decree No. 28 of 14 May 1943, a new state institution was established. It was called the High Commissariat of the Wartime Economy, headed by a High Commissioner and determined to be directly subordinate to the Council of Ministers. The main task of the High Commissariat was to coordinate and manage all activities through which the wartime economy was built.¹⁴

On 12 July 1943 the capital's mayor, Eng. Ivan Ivanov, issued a special order No. 394-VII on the necessary urgent measures for anti-aircraft and chemical defense. It was the result of a confidential letter of the Ministry of Public Health dated 8 of July, which warned that the danger of air attacks on Sofia has “increased extremely and can be considered imminent” The order recommended the creation of special anti-aircraft and chemical defense units

months Bulgaria and Great Britain were not in a state of war. Bulgarian air defense was totally unprepared and failed to protect the capital of the country.

¹³ DA-Sofia, Fond 1K, Opis 4, A.E. 1284, sheets 1-3.

¹⁴ On 27 October 1943 the National Assembly (Bulgarian Parliament) approved a proposal by the Prime Minister Dobri Bozhilov for amendments to the Law in order to extend the responsibilities of the High Commissioner on Wartime Economy.

at each municipal office, as well as undertaking of special measures with regard to blackout, the provision of materials and tools for protection, as well as the training of municipal officials. The responsible deputy mayor and the head of the Defense Department at the Greater Municipality were responsible for implementation of the order. The activities were carried out in coordination with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Health. The Minister of the Interior assigned this task to the head of the Central Department at the Ministry. Naturally, the fire prevention measures were also coordinated with the Chief of the Metropolitan Fire Command Yuriy Zakharchuk.

The main provisions of the order concerned the distribution of responsibility for the preparation and effective organization of the defense. The Directorate of Trams and Lighting was obliged to take all necessary measures for the complete street blackout in the area of the Greater Metropolitan Municipality. It should make the mandatory blackout devices for all municipal vehicles – trams, cars, trucks, omnibuses, etc. In each office of the Municipality, a person in a position of authority was appointed (deputy chief, head of service, head of bureau, etc.) and, if possible, a reserve officer or non-commissioned officer as head of Anti-Air Defense of the office, to be responsible for the decisions and actions taken by the office. A defense group composed of trained officials was formed for each office - the names of the leaders and members of these groups should be prepared within 3-4 days. General supervision was in the hands of Deputy Mayor Ivan Lekarski and the head of the Civil Department. In all public buildings, the measures required by the citizens were taken with specific tasks - protection and storage of warehouse property and archives (for which chests were provided by special order), and also for superiors to instill calmness and obedience in employees. Municipal officials and employees were required to take similar protective measures in their homes in order to become role models for other citizens.

The service for “passive” anti-aircraft and chemical defense at the Greater Municipality was built in cooperation with the military leadership of Sofia garrison. The head of the department was Capt. Kosta Stanev and he was assisted in the command by two sections - surveillance and warning (two officers) and civil Anti Air Defense supply and disposal service (five officers) or a command of eight officers in total. Attached to this command were five scribe defenders, five liaison defenders and eleven defenders on three telephone operator shifts in the department. In event of an “alarm”, the heads of the relevant municipal services with responsibilities in the area of air defense (Sanitary Department, Technical Workshop and Cleanliness Department, Water Supply and Sewerage Department, Social Care Department and Architecture and Urban Planning Directorate, as well as some other departments) joined the emergency teams.

The territory of Sofia Greater Municipality was divided into twenty protective groups, of which fourteen were within the boundaries of the city and six were in the attached rural municipalities (Slatina, Nadezhda, Boyana, Dragalevtsi, Gorna Banya and Knyazhevo). It was the defense group that served the respective area and was obliged to put out the created fires and assist the injured population during an air raid. Each defense group had three cores – police-surveillance, sanitary-chemical and fire-technical-parachute. The police-surveillance core watched and protected the discipline of the citizenry when an “alarm” was filed, observed and investigated the defeats, immediately bringing to the head of the group to give immediate rescue and other assistance, protected the damaged property of citizens from looting, performed police service regarding the movement of citizens, the removal and escorting of troublemakers. The sanitary-chemical nuclei were obliged to give first medical aid to the victims, took severely injured citizens to the dressing points of the groups, collected the killed citizens and moved them to the designated places, acted as a chemical nucleus for decontamination of the gassed places and provided assistance to people injured by chemicals. The fire-technical-anti-parachute core fought fires, found and extracted citizens buried under collapsed buildings, and fought against eventual paratroopers. Until the start of the first intensive bombardments over Sofia in November 1943 the whole number of the members of all twenty protective groups was almost 1500 personnel.

Air Defense and Civil Protection against the Strategic Allied Bombardments over Sofia

The first ever air battle between Bulgarian and US aviation happened on 1 August 1943, when two groups of US bombers crossed Bulgarian territory after bombing the oil refineries in Ploesti as part of “Tidal Wave” operation.¹⁵ However, the first US air raid with direct target Sofia was carried out on 14 November, with three more bombardments at the end of November and on 10 and 20 December 1943. According to the official assessments, during the first attack on 14 November the civilian population did not react immediately to the Air Defense alarms due to underestimation of the threat. The anti-aircraft batteries were not effective in this first raid, while the number of Bulgarian fighters was five-six time less than the US planes. For the first time in the history of Bulgarian aviation in a direct encounter on 20 December 1943 Lt. Spisarevski carried out a ram attack against an enemy aircraft.

¹⁵ Actually, for the first time US bombers crossed the Bulgarian borders after bombing Ploesti on 12 June 1942, but Bulgarian Air Defense was not prepared and did not react – Руменин, Румен, *Летящи крепости над България*, 63.

In his diary the Regent (of the young Tsar Simeon II) and former Prime Minister Bogdan Filov underlined the lack of coordination between the military and civilian authorities and wrong and weak reaction of the units for first medical support. He noted as well that his first action after the bombardment was to request the Prime Minister and the government to undertake immediate measures for better organization of the state and local administration.¹⁶ Following the instructions, on 22 December 1943 the Council of Ministers issued an Order for some changes in the coordination of the three High Commissariats and establishment of a new High Commissariat for organization of the evacuation of the civilian population.¹⁷

Due to unfavorable weather conditions and thick fog the new air raids on 4 and 24 January 1944 missed Sofia and the bombers attacked entirely peaceful cities without any military or political importance like Dupnitsa and Vratsa. The most destructive attack was on 10 January with a daytime raid of more than 300 US bombers followed by night raid of British bombers. The proportion between the Allied and Bulgarian aircraft in that battle was ten to one. For the first and last time during the war a German air wing participated in defense of Sofia on 10 January with death of its commander Capt. Gerhard Wenger.

The heavy bombardments on 10 January led to total panic among the civilian population and almost entire paralyze of the administrative activity and public life in the capital. According to official estimates, the preparatory plans and measures were totally abandoned when many of the municipality officials and members of the protective groups ignored their duties and ran to save their own families.¹⁸ According to the state statistics, in the beginning of January 1944 the number of Sofia population was 372 416 citizens in the city and 55 512 more in the suburbs. As result of the spontaneous stampede in the first days after the bombardment about 300 000 citizens leaved the capital creating jamming and disorder on the roads and railway stations and further housing and supply crisis in the neighboring small cities and villages. Historical evidences show that in just a few days Sofia turned into a “ghost city”.

Only on 14 January Ministry of the Interior issued an urgent Order for compulsory evacuation of the civilian population.¹⁹ The water supply and electricity were restored three weeks after the bombardment, while the public transport was restored up to 70 per cent. With new Order No. 19 on 20 January

¹⁶ Филов, Богдан, *Дневник*, 648-649; Стоянов, Стоян. *Ние бранехме тебе, София*, 51.

¹⁷ TsDA, f. 49, op. 1, A.E. 4739.

¹⁸ TsDA, f. 1K, op. 2, a.e. 1034, sheets 1-13.

¹⁹ TsDA, f. 49, op. 1, A.E. 4739, sheets 23-24.

1944 of the Minister of the Interior the responsibilities of the Commissioner for assistance to victims of air raids were specified with request for better coordination with the Commissioner for evacuation, the Commissioner for reconstruction of Urban Planning, the Chief of Department of Air and Chemical Defense, and the head of the Directorate of Public Assistance at the Metropolitan Municipality.²⁰

The Political Warfare Executive (PWE) at the British Secret Intelligence Service and the head of the SOE mission in Bulgaria Maj. Mostyn Davies informed in several messages from January-February 1944 about the mass panic, complete disorganization and administrative paralyze after the day-and-night bombardment on 10 January. According to these reports, the psychological results of the bombing were “extremely effective”. The recommendations of the British Intelligence services were to continue the intensive bombing not only of Sofia but also of all main provincial centers in Bulgaria.²¹ In this spirit was the confidential message of Winston Churchill to President Franklin Roosevelt at the end of February – after the “medicine” has worked, we must continue with it...

The Allied bombardments over Sofia started again with new intensity in March 1944. The most devastating bombing was on 29-30 March with repeated day-and-night air raids. A confidential report to German Foreign Ministry in Berlin of 5 April 1944 dispassionately reported: “There is no normal life ever in Sofia. Except for a few suburbs, the city must be considered devastated.”²² The last Allied bombardment over Sofia was on 17 April 1944 at the eve of the operation OVERLORD; however, single air raids on other Bulgarian cities continued until the end of August 1944.

A comparison of the bombing coverage from November 1943 to May 1944²³ shows significant differences in approach and propaganda implications of the Bulgarian authorities. The watershed, as in other elements of the social reaction to what was happening, was the two-serial bombing (day and night) of 10 January 1944. After 10 of January 1944, the propaganda line changed. Certainly, after the double bombing, the government lost control over events, panic set in in the capital, the propaganda machine was also upset, and emergency measures were introduced. Unable to really influence the situation to the end, the government prohibited travel to the capital, introduced a curfew and closed schools indefinitely. Strict prohibitions were imposed on the publication of any information about the bombing of Bulgarian cities.

²⁰ TsDA, f. 49, op. 1, A.E. 4566, sheet 5.

²¹ TNA, FO 371/43 535, 71-75; 43 579, 30-31, 38, 50-51; 43 587, 131-132.

²² България – своенравният съюзник на Третия Райх, 242.

²³ The chronology of the Allied air raids over Bulgaria in 1943-1944 see in: Руменин, Румен. *Летящи крепости над България*, 203-207.

Despite serious efforts to prepare the capital for air defense, the city and its people were ultimately ill-prepared for such an ordeal. A lot had been done - both in terms of measures to ensure protection, and in terms of training the population and relevant services. Yet when the air war started, this would prove insufficient. Heavy casualties on the civilian population, destruction, evacuation and all the other accompanying tragic consequences of this total war would follow.

In those days (January-March 1944), a number of institutions were helping people to survive - and this was especially true for the protection groups, the fire and sanitation services, the police and the military, involved in the rescue and recovery work. Probably the most effective were the services of the Greater Sofia Municipality, despite the chaos created and those specific municipal government bodies - the commissariats that channel the efforts to deal with the crisis - both in clearing the destruction, and in the evacuation, and in helping the victims and providing water, food, heat, light and clothing for the inhabitants of the capital.

For the entire air offensive, more than 12 600 buildings in the capital were hit, 80% of the usable buildings had broken windows and roof tiles. Economic, cultural and government facilities were destroyed. Streets and sidewalks have been broken up (including total destruction of the main commercial street “Targovska” with many banks and shops); tram lines have been taken out. The water supply, electricity supply, sewerage and telephone system were seriously damaged. Among the fully or partly destroyed buildings were the Royal Palace (and another Royal residence “Vrana” outside Sofia), the National Assembly (Bulgarian Parliament), Sofia Municipality, National Theater “Ivan Vazov”, eleven churches (including Orthodox, Catholic, Evangelist, and the Great Synagogue – the third such synagogue in Europe), Sofia University and fourteen schools, Bulgarian Academy of sciences and five museums, the main academic hospital “Alexandrovska”. The aggregated data on the approximately 50,000 aerial bombs of various calibers dropped on civilian and military objects can be regarded as relatively reliable, with Sofia alone reporting over 2 200 killed citizens. The material damage was estimated at the astronomical sum of BGN 2.8 billion.

Conclusion

The main psychological effect and results from the Allied air raids and the Bulgarian Air Defense and protective measures were obviously opposite to the primary goals. The Bulgarian government did not take any serious step to leave the Tripartite Pact since it feared much more from the Nazi punitive strikes, as it happened in Northern Italy and Hungary. The civilian population distrusted the policy of the government and the alliance with the Third Reich; however, the anti-British and anti-American feelings and sentiments increased drastically. Exactly in these months, as many intelligence reports confirmed, visible hopes appeared (even within the legal liberal pro-Western opposition circles) that Bulgaria could go out of the war with the support of the USSR as a “mediator”. Perhaps these feelings were in favor of the “peaceful offensive” of the Soviet troops on Bulgarian territory in September 1944. Meanwhile, the memories for many civilian victims and the sinister traces of the air bombardments still existed in the next postwar years, which was used by the Communist propaganda during the Cold War era.

Illustrations²⁴

Illustration 1: National Assembly (Bulgarian Parliament) Official Building



Illustration 2: National Theater “Ivan Vazov”



²⁴ The archival photos are stored at the collections of State Agency “Archives” and reflect the effect of Allied day-and-night air raids on 10 January and 29-30 March 1944.

Illustration 3: Bulgarian Orthodox Bishops' Residence



Illustration 4: Armenian Evangelist Church in Sofia



Illustration 5: 7th Secondary School “St. Sedmochislenici”



Illustration 6: Houses at “Ferdinand I” Blvd



Illustration 7: Houses at “Graf Ignatiev” Str.



WAR OVER ROMANIA: AERIAL BOMBARDMENTS OF BUCHAREST, 1941-1944

Dr. Manuel STANESCU (Romania)

During World War II, Bucharest was the only European capital to be bombed by Soviet, American, British and German aviation. Due to the loss of human lives, most of them civilians, and the material destruction caused, the aerial bombardments of 1941-1944 represent the greatest tragedy in the history of the city in the twentieth century. They are closely followed by the aftermath of the devastating earthquake which hit the Romanian capital on March 4, 1977.

On June 24, 1941, on the third day of the war, the first attempt by Soviet aviation to bomb Bucharest was recorded. Three Soviet planes approached the capital, but withdrew at the appearance of Romanian-German fighter aviation. The first bombing of the city took place two days later, on June 26, when Soviet aviation attacked in two successive waves. Authorities confirmed four dead, 12 injured, 6 buildings destroyed and three damaged. Also, the Soviet aviation lost two planes, shot down by fighter aviation.¹ After several more unsuccessful attempts, the second Soviet air attack on Bucharest took place on the night of 14–15 July. Firebombs were dropped that caused several fires in the central area. There was only one loss among the population, a citizen who "preferred to watch the spectacle of our artillery instead of taking shelter". Authorities also reported that an enemy plane had crashed and the crew had been taken prisoner.² With the advance of German and Romanian troops on the Eastern Front, Soviet aviation no longer posed a danger to Romania. In the capital, life went on normally, and until 1943, although in the middle of the war, the city retained the charm and relaxation of a large metropolis. A memoirist of the time noted: "Even in the early years of the war, 1941-1943, the Capital followed its bohemian rhythm, naturally integrating the German military presence that was part of the daily life. Cultural and artistic life followed your rhythm, ignoring the war that was still going on far away from us."³

¹ Valeriu Avram, Viorel Gheorghe, Soviet aerial bombardments over Romania (June-July 1941), in "Document. Bulletin of the Romanian Military Archives", nr. 2(60)/2013, p. 46.

² "Time", no. 1504/17 July 1941.

³ Radu Mihai Dimăncescu, *My memories between Bonaparte and Domains followed by Aleea Călăreșilor*, Vremea Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, p. 55.

Romania entered completely into the gears of the global conflict after Great Britain declared war on December 6, 1941. This was followed by declarations of war by Canada and New Zealand (8 December), Australia (10 December) and the South African Union (11 December). Also on December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. The next day, the plenipotentiary ministers of Germany and Italy requested an audience with Mihai Antonescu, the Romanian Foreign Minister and recommended that, based on the provisions of the Tripartite Pact (to which Romania had joined in November 1940), our country consider itself in a state of war with the US. The request was immediately put into practice, and the declaration of war was handed over to the Chargé d'Affaires of the United States in Bucharest.⁴

The United States government officially notified its response nearly half a year later, declaring a state of war with Romania on June 6, 1942. A week later, on June 12, 1942, 13 bombers taken off from Egypt bombed for the first time the territory of Romania, targeting the oil region. The next raid took place more than a year later, on August 1, 1943, when 178 B-24 bombers took off from northern Libya, targeting the entire oil area. Operation Tidal Wave proved extremely expensive: only 162 bombers reached the Romanian border, 35 being shot down over national territory, others severely damaged, falling on the way back. Only 88 bombers returned to bases in Africa. Exceptionally, the United States Congress awarded five Medals of Honor to five American pilots, three of whom he received posthumously.⁵

As part of the Axis system, Romania and its oil resources, but also the communication routes and industry in our country were to be particularly important objectives in the Allied bombing strategy. As the war approached Romania's borders, the targets were not limited to oil, but to a wide range of objectives, such as transport and communications, war industry, aeronautical industry, but also urban centers where specific production activities were carried out to support the war. In fact, it was the British point of view that insisted on "bombing [Germany's] satellites in order to get them out of the war or at least force the Germans to occupy them."⁶ In terms of anti-aircraft protection, at the beginning of 1944 the capital was the best defended city in Romania after Ploiesti. However, authorities were aware of the shortage of AA batteries. In Bucharest there were 124 medium-caliber pieces (88 mm, 76.2 mm and 75 mm), but the need was double. At the level of small caliber pieces (40 mm, 37 mm and 20 mm) there were 216 guns, but another half of

⁴ Radu Oltean, *Bucharest in data and happenings*, Paideia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, p. 467.

⁵ Extensively in Valeriu Avram, Alexandru Armă, *Inferno over Ploiesti. The bombing of August 1, 1943*, Editura Militară, Bucharest, 2012.

⁶ Eugen Preda, *The Oil Stake in the Whirlwind of War*, Bucharest, 1983, p. 170.

this figure was needed. Worse still, there were no large caliber pieces and, although 36 105mm guns had been deployed, they never arrived from Germany.⁷ The anti-aircraft batteries in Bucharest's defense device were organized on several alignments: the medium caliber batteries were placed outside the protected objectives, and the very small caliber ones, at a short distance from the protected objectives. A command post for night firing was also organized.⁸ As far as fighter aviation is concerned, from October 1943 the capital's defense device was divided into three sectors of action, for the best cooperation in case of air attack. At the beginning of 1944, the aviation groups around Bucharest had 112 aircraft, of which only 56 could be alarmed, so the proportion of fighter planes was very small. Most of the aircraft were IAR-81 C, of domestic production and the much more powerful Me-109G.⁹

On March 19, 1944, the Red Army reached Romania's 1939 border. The London radio station warned the Romanian authorities about the approach of the front to the country's borders: "This means that for Romania the hour of defeat has arrived. The myth of German protection was destroyed, as was the myth of German invincibility. If it does not break relations immediately, Romania will lose the power to act as an independent nation. The Romanian people, without wasting a moment, must face the reality of the situation they are in."¹⁰ An overseas post this time, "The Voice of America, reminded Romanians of the words of the great politician Take Ionescu, the artisan of the Little Entente in the interwar period, spoken in 1917, when the German armies occupied most of Romania: "I believe in the victory of the Allies as I believe in the light of day".¹¹

On March 22, 1944, British General Maitland Wilson, commander of the allied forces in the Eastern Mediterranean, sent to Bucharest an ultimative letter, intended to determine Romania's exit from the alliance with Germany. Since until March 28, 1944, the date of the last radiogram, the Romanian authorities had not provided any answer, the green light was given to start massive aerial bombardments over Romanian territory, in order to support the expected Soviet offensive that had proposed partial or total occupation of Romania.¹²

⁷ Sorin Turturică, *The American bombing of Romania (1942-1944)*, in "Tactics and Strategy" no. 3/April 2013; Cf. and *Romanian National Military Archives*, fund 5476, file. 1029

⁸ *History of Romanian Artillery and Anti-aircraft Missiles*, vol I, Modelism Publishing House, 1996, pp. 340-341.

⁹ Alexandru Armă, *Bucharest under bombings 1941-1944*, Editura Militară, Bucharest, 2015, pp. 44-45.

¹⁰ Mihai Pelin, *The Raid of the Betrayed Squadron*, Elion Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, pp. 127-128.

¹¹ A.M.N.R., fond 5471, dosar 1239, f. 45.

¹² Mihai Pelin, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128; for Soviet plans cf. David Glantz....

The first bombing proved to be the most devastating. Tuesday, April 4, 1944, was a beautiful spring day. At 10:30 a.m., the air attack alarm sounded. The capital's residents, who were walking on the streets taking advantage of the beautiful weather, were not alarmed, because the press had announced an exercise that day, specifying that the activity would continue normally.¹³ In reality, at exactly that time, a formation of 350 B-24 Liberator and B-17 Flying Fortress aircraft, belonging to the 15th Air Force of the United States, had taken off from northern Italy targeting the capital of Romania, especially the largest railway station, the North.¹⁴

Finally, due to atmospheric conditions over the Balkans, about 170 B-24 bombers reached Romanian territory around 1 p.m. To intercept them, Romanian aviation operated with 81 aircraft, to which were added 91 German aircraft. But the brunt of the battles was borne by the Romanian pilots, the German fighter aviation being initially directed into the oil area, entering the battle only on the way back of the bombers. Only 10 bombers were lost, 8 falling on Romanian territory.¹⁵

The anti-aircraft defense was ineffective because of the high height at which the bombers flew (6500-7000 meters), the projectiles exploding far below them. Romanian military documents show that the bombing was carried out "in the carpet", the North Station area being extremely affected, hundreds of buildings and about 1,000 train cars being destroyed and/or set on fire. The official casualty figure was 2942 killed and 2,416 wounded.¹⁶

The next day, April 15 (Easter Saturday) Bucharest was bombed again. This time, about 400 B-24 Liberator bombers arrived over the capital. The bombing took place around noon and heavily affected the downtown area. The bombing left 236 dead and 159 wounded.¹⁷

On 21 April the 15th Air Force bombed the capital again, with the aim of completely decommissioning the facilities of the North Railway Station. The bad weather, with poor visibility, led to a double miss of the objective: some of the planes completely missed the target, and those reaching the city missed the intended objectives. The destruction was massive in residential areas, 125 houses were destroyed, 111 damaged, and 87 people lost their lives (of which 51 women and children) and 129 were injured. Of the 258 planes

¹³ Dinu C. Giurescu, *Romania in the Second World War (1939-1945)*, All Publishing House, 1999, p. 110.

¹⁴ Alexandru Armă, *The Wounds of a City. Bucharest bombed April 4 – August 26, 1944*, Vremea Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ Alexandru Armă, *Bucharest under...*, p. 64.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁷ Gheorghe Florea Creangă-Stoilești, *History of Civil Defence, vol. I*, Porto-Franco Publishing House, Galați, 1993, pp. 492-493.

that arrived over the objectives, 10 were lost (60 aviators, of which 27 remained in Romania, prisoners of war). As a percentage, U.S. forces lost 3.9% of the bombers and 5.3% (5 aircraft) of the fighters used in this mission.

Three days later, on April 24, the American aviation returned over Romania with over 500 planes, accompanied by numerous fighter planes. Half were destined for Bucharest, and half were aimed at the oil area. The bombing took place, as usual, around noon and lasted about 40 minutes, again targeting the North Station area. Beyond buildings and transport facilities, power stations, the high-voltage network, several water pipes and the sewerage network were hit. The housing district for CFR employees was damaged. In total, 609 buildings were hit by bombs (405 destroyed and 204 damaged), with 292 dead, 368 wounded and 483 flood victims.¹⁸

On the night of 3–4 May 1944, the capital was attacked for the first time by British aviation, the attack being carried out by about 60 Wellington, Liberator and Halifax bombers from the 205th Bombardment Group.¹⁹ Unlike the American aviation, the British preferred the night attack, the air alarm being given shortly after midnight. In addition to bombs, many incendiary, numerous leaflets were also launched. By the next morning, the fires had been extinguished, with 18 houses destroyed, three damaged, 24 dead and 17 injured.²⁰

The next attack was also carried out by British aviation, on the night of 6 to 7 May, with 57 bombers, resulting in 64 buildings, 100 dead and 88 wounded. Less than 10 hours after the British night attack, the US 15th Air Force launched another raid with about 500 bombers taking off from southern Italy, this time the destruction being massive. It caused the most casualties since April 4: 411 killed, 920 wounded, but also the highest number of victims so far: 32,162.²¹

In the spring and 1944, Allied bombing followed each other at the same pace: British aviation on the night of 7 to 8 May, American aviation on 28 June, again the British on the night of 2 to 3 July, followed in just a few hours by the Americans on 3 July. The British followed again on the night of 23–24 July and the Americans on 31 July, and then the British on the night of 9–10 August 1944.²² It was the last bombing of the Allies before August 23, 1944, when Romania unilaterally decided to leave the alliance with Germany and join the United Nations.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 494.

¹⁹ Patrick Macdonald, *Thought Darkness to Light*, Images Publishing (Malvern) Ltd., Worcestershire, 1994, p. 90.

²⁰ ANIC fund PCM – Military Cabinet, file 89/1944, f. 38-39.

²¹ Gheorghe Florea Creangă-Stoilești, *op. cit.*, p. 495.

²² ANIC fund PCM – Military Cabinet, file 92/1944, f. 271-272.

On the afternoon of August 23, 1944, Marshal Ion Antonescu was arrested at the Royal Palace, and Romania left the alliance with Germany, switching sides with the Allies. On the same evening, King Michael's proclamation to the country was broadcast on the radio, informing the population of the new political situation created. A few hours later, the King left the capital, fearing German reprisals that were not long in coming.

On the morning of August 24, the Germans took action, with Stuka bombers attacking the city center, targeting the Royal Palace and hitting numerous buildings. During the night of 24 to 25 August, the German aviation continued its attacks, using isolated groups of planes that bombed at intervals of 30-40 minutes targets in the center of Bucharest, leaving behind dozens of dead and wounded.²³

During August 25, the German aviation bombed the capital again, in several halves, also in the city center. An emergency hospital was also hit, despite the specific signs on the roof, many doctors, nurses and patients losing their lives. The shelling continued throughout the night and throughout the next day, the most affected being the main central artery, called Calea Victoriei.

During the three days of bombing, the German aviation dropped over 800 bombs over the capital, which hit 514 buildings and homes, causing 383 deaths (272 civilians and 111 military) and 478 wounded, most of them military. 43 state institutions and 21 businesses were hit, and the city center, already affected by allied attacks, was severely damaged.²⁴

New geopolitical arrangements at the end of World War II brought Romania, a defeated country, into the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. The Soviet regime installed in the country, as well as the Ceausescu regime, which tried to provide a national image of the "construction of socialism", waged a real war with the past. The complicated and tragic history of Romania's participation in the war until August 23 remained, for almost half a century, unknown. The traumas experienced then began to be known only after the 1989 revolution, and Bucharest's inhabitants and buildings still bear the scars of the tragedy of the war years.

²³ Gheorghe Florea Creangă-Stoilești, *op. cit.*, p. 528.

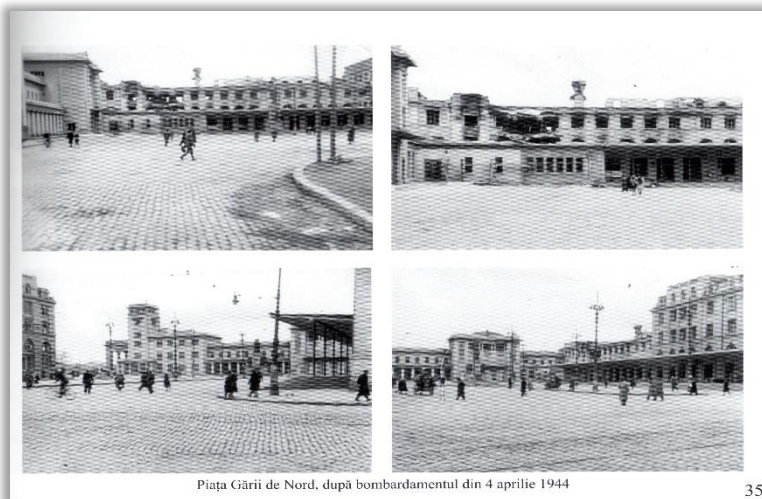
²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 508.

APPENDICES²⁵

Appendix 1: Bucharest, photographed from an American bomber on April 4, 1944.



Appendix 2: North Railway Station Square, after the April 4, 1944, aerial bombardment.

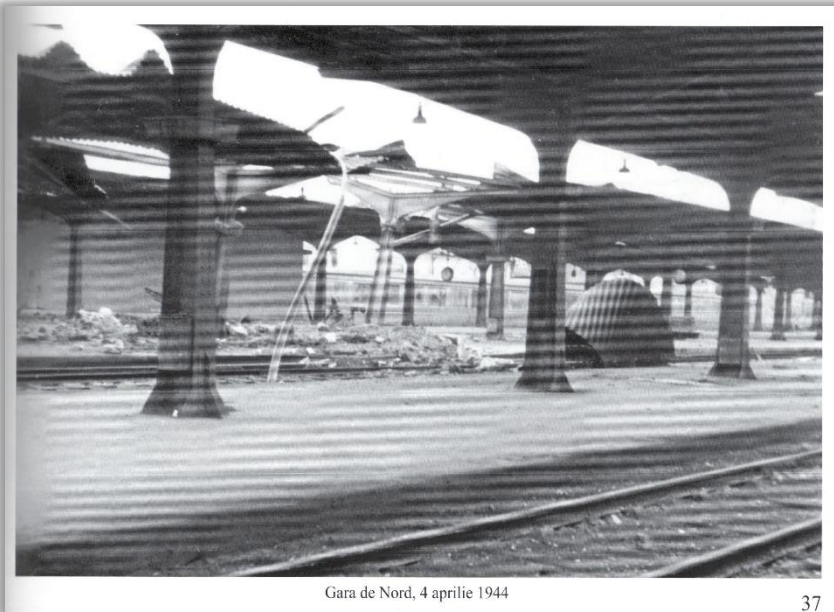


²⁵ Pictures from: Alexandru Armă, *The Wounds of a City. Bucharest bombed April 4 – August 26, 1944*, Vremea Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016 (with author approval).

Appendix 3: Destruction at the North Railway Station, April 4, 1944.



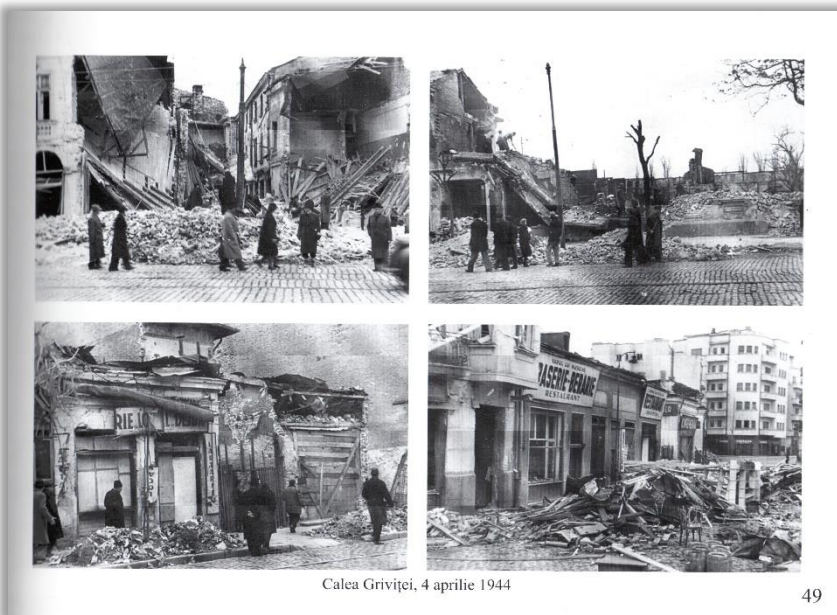
Appendix 4: North Railway Station, April 4, 1944.



Appendix 5: Calea Griviței (Griviței Road), April 4, 1944.



Appendix 6: Calea Griviței (Griviței Road), April 4, 1944.



Appendix 7: The Royal Palace, after the April 4, 1944, aerial bombardment.



Palatul Regal, după bombardamentul din 4 aprilie 1944

Appendix 8: The Athénée Palace and Splendid Hotels, April 4, 1944.



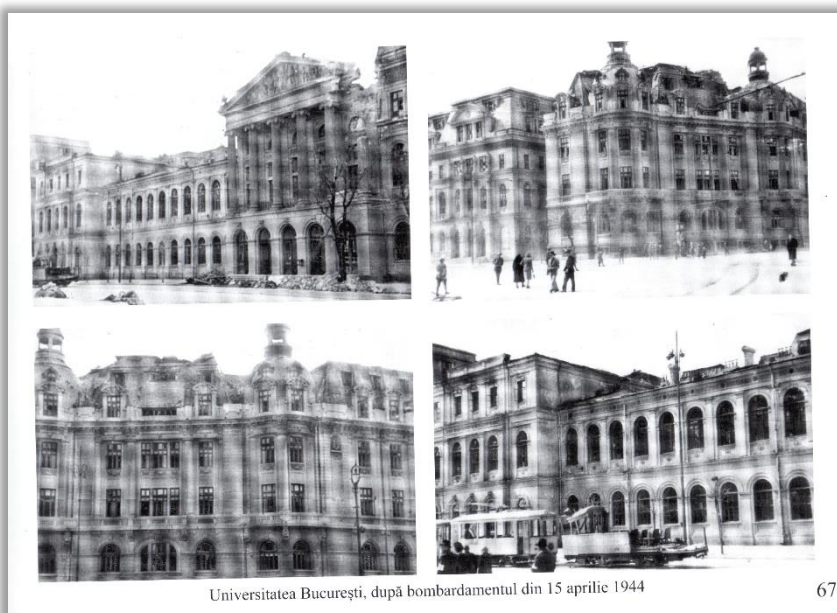
Hotelurile Athenée Palace și Splendid, 4 aprilie 1944

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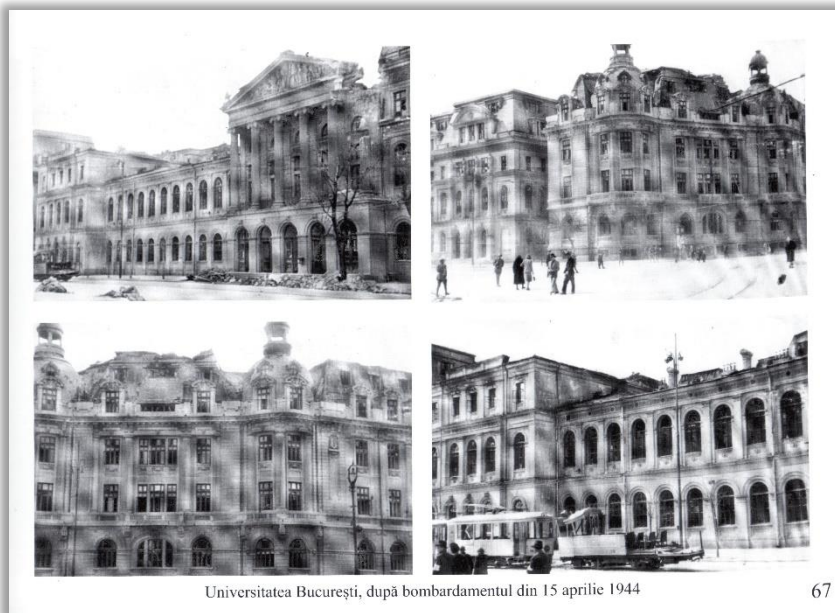
Appendix 9: Bucharest, seen from an American bomber, April 15, 1944.



Appendix 10: University of Bucharest, after the April 15, 1944, aerial bombardment.



Appendix 11: Maria Antonescu, wife of Marshall Ion Antonescu, visiting the Tei district after the April 21, 1944, aerial bombardment.



Appendix 14: Clearing debris in the Tei district, April 21, 1944.

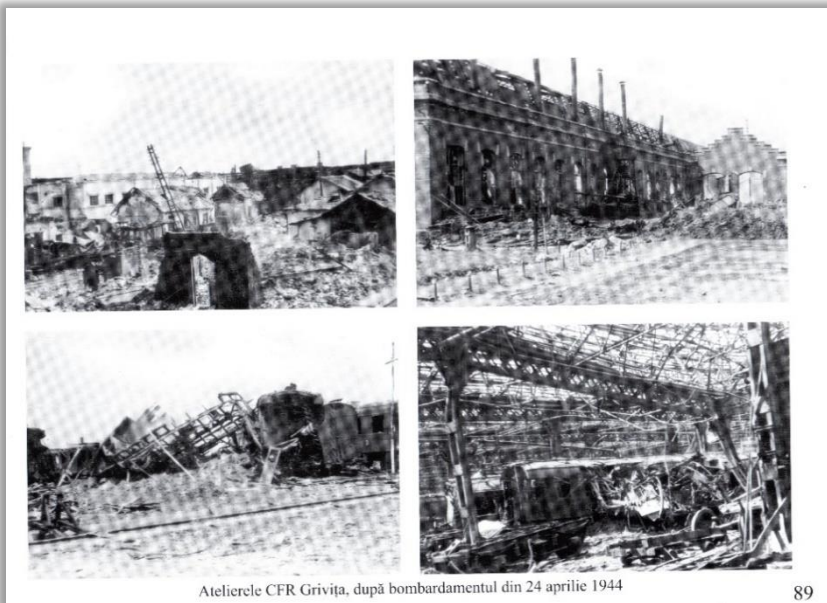


Appendix 15: Photo taken by the American Aviation over Bucharest during the April 24, 1944, aerial bombardment.



Fotografie executată de aviația americană deasupra Bucureștiului în timpul bombardamentului din 24 aprilie 1944

Appendix 16: “Atelierele CFR Grivița”, after the April 24, 1944, aerial bombardment.



Atelierele CFR Grivița, după bombardamentul din 24 aprilie 1944

Appendix 17: American B-24 Liberator bombers flying over Romania after the attack on Bucharest, May 7, 1944.



Bombardiere americane B-24 Liberator surprinse în zbor deasupra României după atacul asupra Bucureștiului din 7 mai 1944

8923

Appendix 18: North Railway Station Square, after the May 7, 1944, aerial bombardment.



Piața Gării de Nord, după bombardamentul din 7 mai 1944

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Appendix 19: “Imprimeriile Românești” building on Ion Brezoianu Street, after the May 7, 1944, aerial bombardment.



Appendix 20: Central Bucharest, after the bombardments of May 1944: Calea Victoriei (up left), Ion Câmpineanu (up right), Sărindar (down left) and Lipsani (down right).



OPERATIONS OF THE WESTERN ALLIED AIR FORCES OVER SLOVAKIA (1944-1945)

Dr. Peter CHORVÁT (Slovakia)

Introduction

Even though the history of military air force operations over Slovakia in 1939-1945 is a topic relatively well processed in Slovak historiography, it continues to attract the attention of historians, archaeologists and amateur researchers. Nowadays, they are mainly interested in the questions related to the organisational development of the Slovak military aviation (Slovak Air Force) in 1939-1944, the personal data of its individual members (especially fighters), operational deployment on the Eastern Front or in the defence of the Slovak airspace. However, the same unrelenting attention is also paid to the air battles in the Slovak National Uprising (1944), the operations of the Soviet Air Force over the Slovak territory in the last two war years (1944-1945) or the combat participation of Czechs and Slovaks in the British Air Force units (RAF). Thus, the topic of the Western allies' air force operations over Slovakia in 1944-1945 basically fits into this spectrum.

This paper is aimed at analysing the latter phenomenon in more detail. In its presentation, we focused mainly on four sub-issues: the operations of the United States Army 15th Air Force, the operations of air units under the British Bomber Command, the air defence of Slovakia until the end of August 1944, and finally, briefly, the capabilities of the Axis Air Forces in the defence of the area under surveillance.

Ad hoc, we focused on the territory of Slovakia within its 1938 borders, i.e. the subject of our interest also included air operations over the areas occupied by Hungary. Until 1944, the Slovak Republic, which was a satellite of Nazi Germany from 1939 to 1945, did not experience the negative aspects of the air war, including bombing. In that last war year, the illusion of a secure zone of interior, which included the perception of the air war only second-hand through radio or newspapers, was severely shattered.

It should be stressed in this context that a year earlier - at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943 - the leaders of the Western Powers had already agreed on a combined air offensive against Germany with the aim of "destroying and disorganizing German military industry, production and research, and further breaking the morale of the German population by day

and night bombing of important targets.” The air attack was also a preparation for the planned Allied landing in Normandy - Operation Overlord. The British Bomber Command and the American 8th Air Force were active in these intentions.

These objectives were gradually fulfilled during 1943. The successful landing of Allied troops on Italian territory in the summer of 1943 enabled the building of an extensive network of Allied air bases in its southern and south-eastern parts. Subsequently, powerful bomber formations could operate from these airfields. At the same time, in this strategically new situation, the 15th United States Army Air Force (USAAF) was established on 1 November 1943. This army air force was established as an element of the U.S. Strategic and Tactical Air Forces in Europe. The very next day (2 November 1943) the air factory in Wiener Neustadt was bombed by its troops. The operations in which the staff of the 15th Air Force took part in the following months were aimed not only at bombing strategic targets in the so-called Third Reich, but also in Hungary, Romania, the Balkans and Slovakia. In particular, operations were directed against the petroleum processing industry, enemy air force, communications, and ground troops. In addition, on 10 December 1943, the Mediterranean Allied Air Force Command was established to coordinate Allied air activity in the area.

The aforementioned Allied air units (i.e., both American and British) were armed with modern strategic bombers with long range, high bomb load capacity, and effective airborne weapons. Their protection was provided by equally modern fighter machines. For example, the 15th Air Force specifically had B-17, B-24, and temporarily also B-25 and B-26 bombers, which were protected by P-38, P-47 or P-51 fighters.

In the second half of 1943, the potential danger of an air attack began to affect the Slovak Republic as well, as its main political and military leaders were convinced by the air raids in the so-called Eastern March, i.e. on the territory of Austria occupied by Nazi Germany. Slovakia's own means to repel such an attack, carried out by massive American bombing raids, were basically inadequate. As far as the active defence is concerned, i.e. fighters in particular, the so-called scramble flight was established on 20 August 1943 to ensure the defence of the capital of the Slovak Republic. It was made up of four Messerschmidt Bf 109 fighter aircraft only. The first alert launch against the American bombers approaching Bratislava from Hainburg, took place only a few months later - 1 October 1943. There was no combat contact. Since the Americans did not attack Slovak targets, the fighters did not interfere in the battles. After the experience of the bombing of Wiener Neustadt on 2 November 1943, which was only 100 kilometres from Bratislava, the question of the defence of Slovak airspace became more urgent. Basically, it was only

a matter of time before an American attack on strategic targets in Slovakia would take place. Not only the industrial agglomeration of the Slovak capital, but also the large armaments factories in the region of Považie, built in the Czechoslovak Republic, as well as other targets were in danger.

In Slovakia, the procedure for air attacks was as follows. If enemy activity was detected within 250 kilometres of Bratislava (in any direction), the radio interrupted broadcasting, the 200-kilometre limit meant airborne danger, and at 150 kilometres the means of ground anti-aircraft defence were activated. The latter was controlled by the headquarters of the artillery anti-aircraft regiment. Its units protected primarily the capital of Slovakia, refineries, armament factories as well as important military airfields in Slovakia.

The aforementioned critical situation had an impact on the strengthening of the fighter defence of the Slovak capital. The so-called scramble flight was replaced by Fighter Squadron 13. This unit was operationally deployed on the Eastern Front between 1941 and 1943, where it achieved more than 200 victories in aerial combat. After returning to Slovakia, it began fulfilling its new assignment on 31 January 1944. At the same time, the Slovak government decided to purchase 15 modern Messerschmidt Bf 109 G fighters. These were delivered to Slovakia during February 1944 as part of the “Eiche” programme. The new equipment delivery has subsequently enabled to intensify the practice alarm launches. Squadron 13 was also included in the “Reich Air Defence” (Reichsluftverteidigung) system, its unofficial name being the Emergency Action Squadron. In particular, it was subordinated to the commander of the fighter units stationed in the so-called Eastern March (JaFü Ostmark). This commander was responsible not only for his own - German - but also for Slovak and Hungarian fighter units.

In the period under review since the beginning of 1944, allied strategic bombing intensified. At the same time, the activities of the 8th and 15th USAAF also began to be coordinated by the US Strategic Air Command Staff in Europe. This Staff was established on 6 January 1944 and commanded by General Carl Spaatz.

On 17 February 1944, the “Combined Air Assault” directive was renegotiated and amended. This directive was originally valid from 10 June 1943 and envisaged “the achievement of total victory using air force”. According to a modified version of this document, the aim of the bombing strikes was to weaken the German air force overall, in the factories, on the ground and in the air. For example, the “Big Week” (20-25 February 1944) took place within the intentions of this modified directive, during which the planes of the 15th and 8th USAAF and British Bomber Command carried out

26 major air attacks on German aircraft industry plants. These were mainly factories producing aircraft and rolling bearings. For the duration of this operation, it became clear that the Luftwaffe was no longer capable of fighting against the powerful American bomber force.

The first tangible contact with the approaching air war was experienced by the inhabitants of Slovakia on 17 March 1944, when a group of 150 bombers of the 15th Air Force took part in the attack on Vienna. Around 1:20 PM, American bombers were flying over the area of Bratislava. Several dozen bombs landed in the vicinity of the Slovak capital. Even though these were not targeted attacks (the crews were only disposing of a certain number of bombs), the event caused unrest among the civilian population and was a prelude to more.

Starting on the following month, a massive Allied air attack was launched against 80 selected factories located on the territory of the “Third Reich” and its allies. In this offensive, the aforementioned 15th and 8th USAAF air units participated as well as the British Bomber Command. The aim of the operation was to paralyse the production of petroleum products.

The flight routes of the 15th USAAF, which were directed mainly against selected targets in Upper Silesia, were increasingly crossing the Slovak airspace. They started to become a real threat to all military, administrative and economic objects on the territory of the Slovak Republic.

These operations had the effect of intensifying alarm launches by Slovak fighters. For example, on 29 May 1944, six of them took off from the Piešťany airfield against the announced American bombing alliance. Again, there was no combat contact.

It was June 1944 that was decisive for the Slovak involvement in the air battles. In addition to the regular alarm launches, there were also casualties of Slovak fighter pilots. These events took place against the background of the reorganisation of German air defence in the Austrian area (JaFü Ostmark). On 15 June, the 8th Fighter Air Division (8th Jagddivision) was established. Colonel Gotthard Handrick, whose staff resided in Vienna, was appointed its commander.

On 16 June 1944, the first bombing of Bratislava took place after all. Sirens announcing the air raid alert were heard in the Slovak capital at 10:05 AM. A few minutes later, the port of Bratislava was hit. At about 10:30 AM, bombs also landed on the main target of the attack - the Apollo mineral oil refinery. This company was one of the ten largest Central European refineries under the management of the so-called Third Reich. The US attack put the factory out of operation for several months. In total, more than 1,500 bombs

were dropped on Bratislava, killing 4 soldiers and 118 civilians - mostly employees of the Apollo company. On the American part, the results of the raid were viewed positively. Slovak anti-aircraft artillery only shot down 2 American bomber planes.

Along with this bombing, an air battle between the 15th USAAF and German, Slovak and Hungarian fighters took place in the area between the Hungarian Lake Balaton and Bratislava. At that time, the commander of the 8th Fighter Air Division (8. Jagddivision) sent all available fighters against the American bombers and fighters.

Six Slovak fighters were also in the air at the time, tracking a group of American bombers east of Bratislava. They learned about the bombing of the city during the flight. In spite of moving immediately into the bombing area, they did not encounter the American machines again. The events connected with the bombing of Bratislava had their consequences. Shortly after the raid, the Minister of National Defence, General Ferdinand Čatloš, reproached the representative of Squadron 13, asking: "What is the point of Slovakia having a fighter air force if it can't even defend Bratislava?!". The members of the German Air Mission in Slovakia went even further and qualified the non-participation of Slovak fighters in the battle for Bratislava even as cowardice.

Ten days later - on 26 June 1944 - shortly after 8:00 AM, a strong American bomber force approached Bratislava from the south again. A total of 677 B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers, protected by some 260 fighters, had the objects around Vienna as their intended targets.

After assessing the situation, eight Slovak fighters were ordered to take off from the Piešťany airfield at 8:40 AM. The air combat taking place with American P-51 fighters ended in Slovak defeat. This was in spite of the fact that one American bomber was shot down, three fighters lost their lives in combat, and one was seriously wounded. After the battle, Squadron 13 - the Emergency Action Squadron - practically ceased to exist, three aircraft were irretrievably lost, another four seriously damaged. Further air battles over Slovakia took place without the participation of the Slovak fighter air force.

On Friday, 7 July 1944, the 15th Air Force made another concentrated attack on the refineries in Silesia. One of the secondary targets that was hit during this day was the arms factory in Dubnica nad Váhom. The factory was only partially damaged by the bombing because part of the production area was located underground. Again, there were casualties reported among civilians.

In connection with this attack, fierce air battles were also fought over Slovakia, with several American bombers landing on Slovak territory after being shot down. This was the time when the air war over Slovakia was reaching its climax.

On 20 August 1944, a group of 76 B-24 bombers attacked the mineral oil refinery in Dubová, built in 1938. The bombing took place visually from an altitude of approximately 6,000 metres, with 50-70 per cent damage to the refinery. There are still disputes ongoing about the necessity of the raid on Dubová. The Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London asked the American part not to include this enterprise in the list of targets of the air offensive. The request was not granted. The fuel destroyed in Dubová was subsequently missing in the Slovak National Uprising, which broke out against the Germans and the domestic collaborator government just a few days later - on 29 August 1944.

American airmen captured in Slovakia by the Slovak security authorities were concentrated in the Grinava camp near Bratislava. There were 31 of them at the end of August 1944. After the outbreak of the Slovak National Uprising, they were transported in groups to Banská Bystrica, later to be evacuated to Italy.

During the summer of 1944, the Luftwaffe had major material and personnel problems. Its units reported daily losses in battles with the 15th and 8th Air Forces. Several German fighters had as many as 5 parachute jumps after being shot down. The lifespan of the young airmen who joined the troops, averaged three to four take-offs against the enemy. Despite this critical situation, 77 fighters were sent into the air on 29 August 1944 to defend the Ostrava refinery complex and the industrial enterprises in its vicinity. During the battles over the White Carpathian Mountains on the Slovak-Czech border, several bombers were again shot down.

In spite of the military-political changes in Slovakia, the air war in its airspace continued. The shot-down American airmen, who were concentrated in the Grinava camp, but also those who were in the mountains with the Slovak partisan units, were taken to the Sliach (Tri Duby) airfield near Banská Bystrica on 17 September and 7 October, and from there flown to the Bari base. During the first landing of American airmen at Tri Duby, 12 airmen were evacuated. On 7 October 1944, a second group of 29 pilots was taken to Bari.

At the same time, an American OSS intelligence group, commanded by Navy Lieutenant James Holt Green, was moved to the insurgent airfield at Tri Duby. In addition to U.S. intelligence officers, a British SOE intelligence mission, dropped by parachute, started operating in the insurgent territory. In principle, the fate of both these missions was tragic. After the suppression of

the Slovak National Uprising, most of their members were captured in the Slovak mountains and executed in Nazi concentration camps.

Whereas the attacks of the American air force were conducted on the territory of Slovakia as a German satellite until the end of August 1944, a qualitatively new situation arose in the course of September 1944. Two bombing actions were carried out for the benefit of the insurgent forces. The first operation was the bombing of the Vrútky railway junction on 13 September 1944, which slowed down the movements of the German Army deployed against the insurgents in this area. A week later - on 20 September 1944 - it was the bombing of the Malacky military airfield located in the so-called German Protection Zone. About 20 German aircraft were destroyed on the ground and the airfield area was unusable by the end of World War II. At the same time, Bratislava was bombed again on this day (20 September 1944). The Apollo refinery, the operation of which was partially restored after the first bombing in June, was destroyed for good. During 1944-1945, the city was eventually bombed six times by American aircraft.

Important railway junctions in southern Slovakia, occupied by Hungary back then, also became targets of American bombing in 1944-1945. Nové Zámky and Komárno were targeted repeatedly. These attacks took place specifically on 7 and 14 October 1944. The 205th Group of the British Royal Air Force, which was temporarily subordinated to the 15th US Army Air Force, also operated in the Danube area. Its subordinate bomber crews specialized in night bombing and dropping river mines in the Danube. The actual dropping of bombs on the Slovak section of the Danube river took place on 4 October 1944. On 8 March and 14 March 1945, Nové Zámky and Komárno were bombed repeatedly.

In Slovakia, 45 bombers and 8 fighters of the 15th US Army Air Force crashed during ten months of operational activity. Four aircraft were lost by the British RAF. 106 American airmen died, 370 were captured in Slovakia. Most of them ended up in the German prisoner-of-war camps. Only a minor part of them managed to be evacuated during rescue missions from the Tri Duby airport.

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THE BOMBING OF PODGORICA IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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During World War II, Podgorica was bombed 82 times. In just one day, 18 kilograms of bombs were dropped per inhabitant. It was established that every eighth resident of this city was killed in the bombing, and that 80% of the buildings were demolished. Podgorica is considered to be the city that had the most severe consequences of bombing in this war

During the First World War 1914-1918. since the beginning of the war, Montenegro was on the side of the Entente powers. In the fight against Montenegro, Austria-Hungary used its aviation that had just been trained for combat operations. The first bombing of Montenegro began on August 17, 1914 on the Lovcen front. After that, Austrian planes regularly fly over Montenegro and drop bombs. In addition to the positions of the Montenegrin army, Austrian aircraft also bombed the settlements of Sutomore, Bar, Cetinje, Podgorica, Nikišić, Pljevlja, Njeguši and other places, which led to civilian casualties. During the bombing, the building of the Red Cross in Cetinje (on Christmas Day 1915), parks, private buildings, churches, the hospital in Cetinje, the castle of King Nikola in Cetinje and Bar, the castle of Crown Prince Danilo, etc. were hit.¹ Among the victims were women and children. In the period from August 1914 to January 1916, the territory of Montenegro was subjected to intensive bombing. In this period, the Montenegrin army did not possess anti-aircraft weapons, and could not defend itself against attacks from the sky in any way. Although this was the beginning of the use of airplanes for bombing, one part of the dropped bombs did not explode, but according to the available data, around 200 Montenegrin citizens were killed or wounded in it.

After the end of the First World War, although it fought on the side of the Entente powers, Montenegro was forcibly annexed by Serbia in November 1918 and as such became part of the newly formed Kingdom of SHS. In a centrally organized state with an emphasized police apparatus, the Montenegrin people failed to satisfy even their basic needs. Podgorica was the largest city in Montenegro in terms of population. In such unequal conditions, the beginning of the German army's attack on Yugoslavia took place on April 6, 1941. The war lasted until April 17, 1941. The largest part of the territory

¹ Tepacevic, Ivan, *Matica*, (winter 2023) p. 183-195.

of Montenegro was under the Italian occupation zone. Rebellious in their warrior tradition and character, Montenegrins were the first in enslaved Europe to organize a mass armed uprising on July 13, 1941, in which the entire territory of Montenegro was liberated except for four cities. In order to suppress the uprising, the Italian occupier withdrew his forces from Albania and Greece, which were intended to fight on the eastern front, and brought them to Montenegro. Since then, the largest part of the Montenegrin people belonged to the National Liberation Movement, which fought against fascism, and was part of the great Anti-Fascist coalition.

In the period from April 6, 1941, when the war officially began on the territory of Yugoslavia, until May 1945, Podgorica was bombed as many as 82 times. It was bombed for the first time on April 6, 1941. From April 1941 to September 1943, Italian and German aviation bombed this city several times. However, after the capitulation of Italy, allied planes (American and British) began to fly over Montenegro from the direction of the south of Italy towards Romania, where the bombing of oil sources was carried out. On September 23, 1943, the Allied bombing of Podgorica began. Initially, it was about the bombing of the airport in Podgorica in a sweeping flight, and from October 1943, the first bombing of the city began, on a smaller scale. On October 25 1943 Podgorica was bombed by P-39 bombers.²

German forces as well as collaborationist Chetnik forces were concentrated in the vicinity of Podgorica in those days. Therefore, the Anglo-Saxon High Command for the Middle East coordinated its air operations with the actions of the forces of the People's Liberation Movement in order to defeat these forces that were preparing to withdraw. In addition to them, there was also a significant number of members of Chetnik families in the city, as well as refugees from Kosovo who found refuge there.

The biggest bombing of Podgorica happened on May 5, 1944.³ The bombing started around 12:45 p.m. 116 B-24 bombers from the 15th US Air Force took part in it. In the period from 12:45 to 13:30, Podgorica was bombed three times in bursts, and 270 tons of bombs were dropped on the city.⁴ If we take into account that there were at most 15,000 people in the city that day, it can be concluded that 18 kilograms of Allied bombs were delivered per capita. During this bombing, 60% of the buildings were destroyed. The bombers left behind craters that were 10 meters in diameter and 2-3 meters deep. All the craters that day were the same size. According to German reports, there were eight dead and 25 wounded German soldiers, and the commander and about a

² WWII Combat Chronology: October 1943, December 12th 2023.

³ Davis, Richard, *Bombing the European Axis Powers* (april 2006), p. 345.

⁴ Kovacevic, Branislav, *Alied bombing of Montenegro 1943-1943*, (2003).

hundred officers and soldiers of colaborant Chetnik forces were killed. Although according to incomplete data, around 400 civilians were killed in this bombing.⁵

After the bombing, a terrible commotion followed, infectious diseases appeared, while the dead were under the rubble for days. According to witnesses, Podgorica was a city without houses in those days. The survivors tried to leave the city as soon as possible, moans could be heard under the ruins, while parts of human bodies were hanging on telegraph wires. The dead were buried in two deep craters opened by bombs near St. George's Church.

Four English and two Italian pilots, who jumped out with a parachute (without shooting down the plane), were captured.

Until the next heavy bombing that happened in November 1944. Podgorica was bombed 68 times. Another fierce bombing of Podgorica took place on November 19, 1944. It was particularly difficult because the planes over Podgorica arrived around 8 pm when they were not expected. First, light flares were thrown from the plane using parachutes for the purpose of lighting, which was followed by burst bombing. On this occasion, the city was bombarded with different types of bombs. Time bombs weighing 200-250 kilograms with a clock mechanism set to explode at a certain moment were also used. Bombs like this especially spread fear among the residents of Podgorica. Certain types of bombs weighed 2 tons, their length was 2.5 meters, the size of two and a half barrels. On these bombs of great destructive power there were three capsules in a triangle.

According to available data, Podgorica was bombed on May 5, 1944 on the following dates:

May 5, 7, 14 (machine gunnery), 18 and 21 (machine gunnery); June 23; July 21, 22, 23 and 25; August 5, 6, 7, 8, 14 and 21; from August 21 to September 9 four more times; October 16, 30 and 31; November 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29 and 30.⁶

During December, Allied planes bombed and machine-gunned the detachment of German and Chetnik units with numerous escapees, namely: December 2, 3, 4, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21 and 27, 1944. causing them losses in manpower, equipment, chamber, means of transport, on the route: Podgorica - Bioče (several times) - Klopot, Boljesestra - Vjeternik - Lijevo Rijeka - Jabuka - Mateševo - Kolašin - Mojkovac - BijeloPolje - Brodarevo - Prijepolje.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Kovacevic, Branislav, *Allied bombing of Montenegro 1943-1943*, (2003).

Podgorica represented the largest Montenegrin city. It was located at the communication hub of roads from Shkodër, cities on the coast as well as Nikšić and Kolašin. There was an airfield in Podgorica that was used by German forces. Occupying forces were concentrated in it for the purpose of withdrawal. There were hidden occupying forces in the vicinity of Podgorica, but there were no significant German forces in the center of the city, nor did they resist the Allied bombers. During the bombing, the number of civilians and innocent victims was disproportionately higher than the number of enemy soldiers. According to available data, the number of German soldiers killed is about 100, while no more than 200 Chetniks died. More than 1,800 civilians died in this bombing. Material damage was estimated at 9,939,983,900 dinars at 1938 prices.

According to an Italian study, published by the Air Force Headquarters from Foggia, the most aerial bombs in the Balkans, first Italian-German and later allied, were dropped on Podgorica.

In the middle of 1944, Allied aviation achieved supremacy in the air over the Balkans, reduced the number of German planes and ended the initiative of German planes. It significantly hindered the mobility and withdrawal of German forces. It also had a psychological effect on the Chetnik units. Allied aviation facilitated the mobility of the People's Liberation Army, reduced the number of casualties compared to when enemy planes controlled the sky. However, the Allied bombing also caused large civilian casualties, as well as the destruction of cities, infrastructure and buildings.

Podgorica is the city that suffered the highest percentage of casualties in the Second World War, more than the famous British city of Coventry (about 60,000 inhabitants), in which 554 people died on November 14, 1940, or Dresden. In Podgorica, in just one day (May 5, 1944), around 60% of homes and five hundred human lives were wiped out in three raids.⁷

What kind of impression the appearance of Podgorica had after the bombing is perhaps best illustrated by the comment of the assistant to the president of UNRRA (United nations relief and rehabilitation administration) Henderson in a conversation with a high-ranking Montenegrin official, Božo Ljumović, right after the war. After touring the city, which was in ruins, Henderson asked the interpreter: "Have you been to Podgorica before?" The translator replied that it was not. To that, Henderson added: "Now if someone asks you if you've been to Podgorica, you can freely tell them that you haven't, because it doesn't exist."

⁷ Ibid.

The bombing of Podgorica in the second half of 1944 followed with the cooperation of the military command of the People's Liberation Army,⁸ but its execution had and should have been planned and implemented in such a way that the number of civilian victims was less or at least the same as the number of dead enemy soldiers.

Even after the Second World War, the issue of bombs in Podgorica was not over. Namely, from 1945 to the present day, during the digging of foundations for residential and other buildings in the very center of the city, hundreds of aerial bombs were found, most of which had working fuses. They are still occasionally found. These are mostly the largest bombs weighing 1,000 to 2,000 kilograms. It is estimated that 578 people died from residual war material.

⁸ Davis, Richard, *Bombing the European Axis Powers* (april 2006), p. 345.

FOREST FIGHTERS IN URBAN TERRAIN – THE FINNISH ARMY RECAPTURING SORTAVALA AND VYBORG IN 1941

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Introduction

Throughout history Finns have primarily been forest fighters. It is the most typical operational environment for them since over 70% of their country was – and still is – covered by forests. In World War II battles against the Soviet Red Army Finns tried to avoid fighting in urban terrain. It was not difficult because the battlefields along the Russo-Finnish border areas were sparsely populated and there were just a few small urban centers.¹

Finland remained an independent nation, but it lost about 10% of its territory to the Soviet Union as a result of the Winter War (1939–1940). The ceded area included the provincial town of Sortavala and the city of Vyborg, then the second largest city of the country. In the summer of 1941, the Finnish Army joined the German invasion of the Soviet Union in order to recover the land area that they had lost the previous year. In these offensive operations the Finnish forces recaptured both Sortavala and Vyborg. In doing so, they attacked over a large area to isolate both population centers. The operations also included water crossings. Even though they mainly employed outflanking maneuvers through the adjacent forests to cut off the defending Soviet troops, Finns were at times tangled up in small-scale street fighting of which they had very little experience.²

In this paper I analyze the planning and conduct of the above mentioned two urban warfare operations in the early stages of the so-called Finno-Soviet Continuation War (1941–1944). I use existing military historical research literature to draw conclusions about Finnish Army practices and fighting performance in urban terrain at the tactical and, to some extent, operational level of war.

¹ Pasi Tuunainen, *Sodan maantiede: Maaston ja olosuhteiden vaikutus sodankäyntiin 1850-luvulta nykypäivään*, (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2023), 117–135.

² Pasi Tuunainen, *Finnish Military Effectiveness in the Winter War 1939–1940*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 1–6.

Locations

Sortavala was a small provincial town of some 10,000 people. It was founded in 1632 when the Swedish realm was at its largest. Sortavala is located on the north-eastern shore of Lake Ladoga, the largest inland lake in Europe. There was a small air force base there in the 1930s. Sortavala was basically an educational and commercial town and in no way any key terrain.³

In contrast, Vyborg (Viipuri in Finnish) was a fortified medieval city founded in 1293. With a population of almost 100,000 inhabitants, it was big in a predominantly agrarian country. It was a major harbor and the largest garrison in the country. It had a great strategic importance as all the roads and railroads of the Karelian Isthmus between the Baltic Sea and Lake Ladoga, the main area of operation, converged there. As a result of the lost war both cities were annexed by the Soviet Union and today they are part of the Russian Federation.⁴

Based on the peace agreement ending the Winter War in March 1940, Finland had handed over Sortavala to the Soviet authorities despite there not having been any fighting for its ownership. However, there had been fighting in Vyborg in the Finnish civil war of 1918 and again in March 1940, during the final days of the Winter War, Finns managed to stop the Red Army on the hilly terrain just south-east of the town. Yet according to Soviet/Russian historiography, Soviet troops took the city by storm. In June of 1944, the city fell very quickly. Lasse Laaksonen speaks about that disaster in his presentation.⁵

Urban Warfare as a Marginal Matter

The Finnish military had studied urban warfare already in the early 1920s but it was considered as a special environment and also a marginal matter for them until the late 1940s. For example, writings on the topic in

³ Hannu Itkonen, Tapio Hämynen, Arto Nevala, “Sortavala – kesken jääneiden projektien kaupunki,” in *Sortavala: Muutosten ja muistojen kaupunki*, ed. Tapio Hämynen, Hannu Itkonen, (Helsinki: SKS, 2020), 9–22; Tapio Hämynen, Hannu Itkonen, “Sotilaita ja maanpuolustusta,” in Tapio Hämynen, Arto Nevala, “Sortavala – kesken jääneiden projektien kaupunki,” in *Sortavala: Muutosten ja muistojen kaupunki*, ed. Tapio Hämynen, Hannu Itkonen, (Helsinki: SKS, 2020), 120–135.

⁴ Viljo Nissilä, “Viipuri kautta aikojen,” in *Viipurin kirja: Muistojulkaisu*, (Pieksämäki: Torkkelin Säätiö, 1958), 9–52; Harald Öhquist, “Viipuri sotilaallisena keskuksena ja varuskuntakaupunkina,” in *Viipurin kirja: Muistojulkaisu*, (Pieksämäki: Torkkelin Säätiö, 1958), 278–298.

⁵ Teemu Keskisarja, *Viipuri 1918*, (Helsinki: Siltala), 232–309; Lasse Laaksonen, *Todellisuus ja harhat: Kannaksen taistelut ja suomalaisten joukkojen tila talvisodan lopussa 1940*, (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1999), 344–367; *Viipuri 1944: Miksi Viipuri menetettiin?*, ed. Eero Elfvingren, Eeva Tammi, (Helsinki: WSOY, 2007), 9–368.

Finnish military professional magazines are hard to find from the interwar period. Instead, the Finnish officer trainers emphasized the differences in Finnish conditions as compared to those in other parts of Europe. The Finnish forests and harsh weather conditions called for special kind of materiel and tactics. Finns understood at the time that the main value of an urban area was that troops can find shelter and that they can be billeted in buildings. Moreover, they knew the three-dimensional nature of built areas, and that buildings offered good cover and concealment from enemy fire and observation. The Finns had learned from others' experiences that fighting in urban areas was demanding and that it turned out to be a kind of attritional warfare. There was a need for proper planning, artillery preparation and the use of storm troop detachments.⁶

Yet mentions of urban combat were few or they were left out from the Finnish interwar and wartime manuals. If there were sections on urban warfare in manual literature, they were translated and copied from foreign manuals, normally from German (or even Soviet) manuals. Those rare sections instructed that when protecting an urban environment, they were to organize defenses in consecutive lines, preferably in front of the built-up area. In offense, by-pass movements were to be conducted. Penetrations into the built-up areas were to be started from the flanks and from the rear. Follow-up troops were to be tasked with destroying the enemy staying behind. Frontal assaults were to be used only as a last resort. In such cases the troops were to advance in the midst of buildings in a straight-forward manner. Still there was no urban combat training in the Finnish defense forces before the war. Actually, before World War II, some of the Finnish military authors argued that similar tactical principles and fighting methods could be applied to both forest and urban environments.⁷

Planning and Execution of the Operations to Recapture Sortavala and Vyborg

On August 8, 1941, three Finnish divisions were transferred to the newly established I Army Corps. Army Corps received orders to conduct a double-envelopment movement and push the Soviet forces against the shore of Lake Ladoga. The 7th Division was assigned the mission to keep Sortavala isolated, destroy or defeat the enemy north of the town and continue to advance towards the direction of the south-west. The Division commander, Colonel Antero Svensson, gave special instructions as to how the town was to

⁶ Juha Hollanti, *Alivoimaisen taktiikka: Suomalaisen taktisen ajattelun tarkastelu*, (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2019), 91–92, 193–194; Tuunainen, *Sodan maantiede*, 295–321.

⁷ Hollanti, *Alivoimaisen taktiikka*, 92, 194; Martti Frick, Taistelu asutuskeskuksesta. *Sotilasajakauslehti* no. 6 (1947), 5–8.

be taken. According to him, it should be recovered with minimal casualties. In addition, the town, mainly consisting of low wooden buildings, was to be saved from destruction. For these reasons artillery fire was to be kept at a minimum. Curiously, the 168th Red Army Division commanded by Colonel A. Bondarev, a survivor of the Stalinist system, already had been encircled by Finns in the Winter War in the same approximate area.⁸

In the case of Vyborg, on 23 August the Finnish High Command gave an order to IV Army Corps to cut all the roads that led to the south and south-east from Vyborg and then continue to advance towards the latter direction (Uusikirkko). Three Finnish divisions were to close in on the city from various sides. A special feature of the plan was that the 8th Division was to cross the Bay of Vyborg in order to form the right pincer arm and cut the Soviet lines of communication and supply south of the city. The fast-moving 12th division on the left flank was to squeeze the large ring around the city and get ready to prevent the encircled troops from escaping and destroy them. Most of the fighting was to take place in the vicinity of the city. Troops were to secure their flanks and prevent any reinforcements from coming to the rescue. Both captures were to be followed by pursuits.⁹

The Finnish attackers could see their objectives from afar. They knew the terrain very well and Finnish intelligence had acquired information about the Soviet defense positions. As mentioned before, both Sortavala and Vyborg had been home to garrisons. Thus, the Finnish military had very good maps and local knowledge of these areas. In fact, most of the army officers had served in or near Vyborg and therefore they were able to lead operations in the area even without maps.¹⁰

In both cases Finns took risks as they decided to cross water obstacles. In the case of Sortavala the crossing of the Karmalansalmi strait west of the city on 10 August was important. The Soviet engineers had blown up the bridge but they had not done a proper job as the vanguard of the Finns could use the ruins in their crossing that was supported by an artillery barrage and a

⁸ Y. A. Järvinen, *Jatkosodan taistelut*, (Helsinki: WSOY, 1950), 75; Maunu Kuosa, *Tässä Savon joukko tappeli: Jalkaväkirykmentti 30 1941–1944*, (Kuopio: Savo, 1968), 89–106; Heikki Nurmio, Antti Juutilainen, Timo Kallioniemi, “VII ja I Armeijakunta valtaavat Laatokan luoteisrannikon,” in *Jatkosodan historia 2: Hyökkäys Itä-Karjalaan ja Karjalan kannakselle*, 2nd ed., (Sotatieteen Laitoksen sotahistorian toimisto: WSOY, 1992), 23–24, 27–29.

⁹ Eero Kuussaari, Antti Juutilainen, “Länsi-Kannaksen valtaus,” in *Jatkosodan historia 2: Hyökkäys Itä-Karjalaan ja Karjalan kannakselle*, 2nd ed., (Sotatieteen Laitoksen sotahistorian toimisto: WSOY, 1992), 195–196, 205–210, 215–229; Matti Koskimaa, *Suomen kohtalon ratkaisut. Talvisota ja jatkosota 1939–1944*, (Jyväskylä: Docendo, 2016), 102–104.

¹⁰ Tuunainen, *Sodan maantiede*, 32.

smoke screen. The crossing of the strait was a prerequisite for successful encirclement and it also provided them with the element of surprise.¹¹

Later in town the Soviets had tried to blow up the major bridge but the Finnish engineers swam there during one night to cut cables and disarm explosives. The bridge was only partially destroyed. In Vyborg the advancing Finns encountered demolished bridges and strange explosions. They realized that the Soviets detonated the bridges and other targets within the city by using radio-controlled mines and so brought in a vehicle from the Finnish Broadcasting Company to transmit a program on the same frequency that was used for detonations. They played a favorite polka tune that had no pauses, thus giving them an opportunity to locate and disarm the mines and preventing further demolitions.¹²

Water crossings also took place over larger bodies of water. South of Vyborg a full Finnish division (8th) secretly crossed the Bay of Vyborg. It happened at the right moment as most of the Soviet troops had been committed to counter-attacks. The Finnish command also decided not to use artillery, thus maintaining the element of surprise and accomplish a bridgehead on the eastern shore of the bay.¹³ In both cases, the adjacent areas to Sortavala and Vyborg were forested. The Finnish light infantry was trained and equipped to move and fight in afforested terrain. Furthermore, their art of war emphasized the use of cover and concealment offered by the trees and other vegetation. As a matter of fact, the whole army had been trained in an offensive spirit and favored outflanking movements. On the other hand, Finnish troops had very little experience in fighting in built-up areas. Instead, they closed in on Sortavala and Vyborg by advancing through forested terrain simultaneously from various directions.¹⁴

¹¹ Kuosa, *Täss' Savon joukko tappeli*, 78–80; Nurmio, Juutilainen, Kallioniemi, “VII ja I Armeijakunta valtaavat Laatokan luoteisrannikon,” 27; Martti Hahtela, et al. *Taisteleva JR 9: Jalkaväkirykmentti 9 1941–1944*, 2nd edition, (Joensuu: Karjalaisen Kulttuurin Edistämissäätiö, 1992), 95–97; Aarno Söder, *Pioneeripataljoona 35 jatkosodassa 1941–1944*, (Joensuu: Pohjois-Karjalan Pioneerikilta, 2007), 58–66; Janne Mäkitalo, *Räjähävää voimaa I: Suomalaisen pioneeritaktiikan kehittyminen itsenäisyyden aikana*, (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu/Edita, 2019), 541–544; Koskimaa, *Suomen kohtalon ratkaisut*, 104–106.

¹² Eero-Eetu Saarinen, *Pioneeriaselajin historia 1918–1968*, (Jyväskylä: Pioneeripuuseeriyhdistys, 1975), 300–304; K. J. Mikola, *Viestitoiminta Suomessa*, (Helsinki: Viestisäätiö, 1980), 238–239.

¹³ Kuussaari, Juutilainen, “Länsi-Kannaksen valtaus,” 210–215; Antti Juutilainen, “Suomalainen hyökkäystaktiikka jatkosodassa,” in *Jatkosodan taistelut*, ed. Mikko Karjalainen, (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2002), 29–30; Mäkitalo, *Räjähävää voimaa I*, 517, 525.

¹⁴ Nurmio, Juutilainen, Kallioniemi, “VII ja I Armeijakunta valtaavat Laatokan luoteisrannikon,” 30–31; Pasi Tuunainen, “The Finnish Army at War: Operations and Soldiers,

In neither case did much action take place in the streets or centers. Finns occupied railway stations, road junctions and high ground, as well as areas on the outskirts of populated centers. Around Sortavala there were many hills that offered good observations and fields of fire for heavy weapons. There were also many man-made features, such as railroads and fences, that provided them with cover against fire coming from the basements. However, in both cases the action on the outskirts was skirmishing.¹⁵

The Outcomes

The resistance of the Soviet troops ended soon in both cases. The Finnish 7th Division occupied Sortavala after a 6-day series of battles. It fell on 15 August. One factor behind the recapture was loudspeaker propaganda. Two weeks later Vyborg was taken after 7 days, but there the Soviet defenders left the actual city limits without putting up proper resistance. Sortavala was recaptured almost intact whereas Vyborg had been partly destroyed by the Soviet soldiers. On 31 August Finns organized a victory parade in Vyborg, while the recapture was mentioned in dispatches and the participants were decorated.¹⁶

After losing Sortavala the Soviet troops commenced a counter-attack and conducted a fighting retreat. Thus, they managed to hold off Finnish troops and the bulk of their forces made it to a shallow bay of Lake Ladoga. From there they were evacuated by boats to a Soviet-held island. They had to abandon hundreds of their vehicles and other equipment on the shore.¹⁷

Similar events followed the fall of Vyborg. The Soviet forces were encircled in the Ylä-Somme–Porlammi area south of the city. The Finnish artillery inflicted heavy casualties on the disorganized masses of the Red Army. Remnants broke through but left their heavy equipment behind. The war booty was significant: the spoils of war was abundant as Finns captured over 306 field guns, 246 mortars, 272 heavy machine guns, 55 tanks, 670 motor vehicles, etc.¹⁸

1939–45,” in *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations*, ed. Tiina Kinnunen, Ville Kivimäki, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 154–156.

¹⁵ Kuosa, *Täss’ Savon joukko tappeli*, 78–85, 90; Koskimaa, *Suomen kohtalon ratkaisut*, 87–89; Mikola, *Viestitoiminta Suomessa*, 226–227.

¹⁶ Kuosa, *Täss’ Savon joukko tappeli*, 85; Niilo Lappalainen, *Sotiemme suurmotit*, (Porvoo-Helsinki-Juva: WSOY, 1990), 166; Kuussaari, Juutilainen, “Länsi-Kannaksen valtaus,” 227–229; Pasi Tuunainen, “Viipuri sotavuosina 1939–1944,” in *Viipuri: Historiallinen kaupunkikartasto*, ed. Kimmo Katajala et al., (Helsinki: AtlasArt, 2020), 229–230.

¹⁷ Kuosa, *Täss’ Savon joukko tappeli*, 100–105.

¹⁸ Kuussaari, Juutilainen, “Länsi-Kannaksen valtaus,” 229–234; Koskimaa, *Suomen kohtalon ratkaisut*, 107–108.

In terms of casualties, the losses were relatively minor in Sortavala on both sides but 540 Soviet soldiers surrendered there. In Vyborg the situation was much grimmer: the Red Army suffered 7000 killed, 15,000 wounded and 9000 prisoners. A total of 12,000 Soviet troops were eventually able to break out. Even though the Finns were the attackers, their total casualties during the Vyborg operation were just one tenth of those of their enemy, some 3000 men.¹⁹

Conclusion

To conclude, one can say that the two cases discussed above were extraordinary urban operations in which the Finnish commanders avoided fighting in the built-up areas. This was necessitated by the fact that the troops had not been trained for urban combat and that they did not have the needed resources. However, by advancing through the forested areas, which were the most familiar environments for them, and encircling their enemies Finns were able to effectively draw upon their own strengths. They scored successes by taking the two places. However, in these instances the retreating Red Army was able to save two of their divisions.

Both recaptures had a positive impact on the morale of the belligerent Finns. Sortavala was the first town to be recaptured during the offensive phase of the Continuation War. Vyborg had already had a huge symbolic importance to both sides in the Winter War. Later during late 1941 the Finnish Army advanced further east towards the Soviet north-west of the country occupying many population centers, including the major city of Petrozavodsk. Very little street fighting occurred elsewhere,²⁰

Forest warfare was heavily stressed by the Finnish military before and during the second world war. The interest in urban terrain combat among the Finnish military remained at a low level from the early 1920s until the late 1940s. Although Finns had almost no experience of urban warfare, their first guidebook on fighting in built areas was published in 1951.²¹

¹⁹ Hahtela et al. *Taisteleva JR* 9, 97, 101; Kuussaari, Juutilainen, "Länsi-Kannaksen valtaus," 233; Koskimaa, *Suomen kohtalon ratkaisut*, 90.

²⁰ Tuunainen, *Sodan maantiede*, 316.

²¹ Vesa Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen: Taktiikan kehittymisen ensimmäiset vuosikymmenet*, (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 1996), 308, 326–327; Hollanti, *Alivoimaisen taktiikka*, 175, 193; *Asutuskeskustaisteluoja*, (Helsinki: Puolustusvoimat, 1951).

THE DRAMA OF VYBORG 1944

Adj. Prof. Dr. Lasse LAAKSONEN (Finland)

A well-known Finnish military historian, Lieutenant Colonel Wolf Halsti, described afterword the problems of defenders in Vyborg, on June 1944:

On paper and on the map, everything may look great – a new troop, a praised commander, positions drawn in red lines – although in the battle – it is the details that make the difference. You should see them with your own eyes.¹

Vyborg had a significant role in the Finnish history. For centuries it had been a strong hold against the East. Soon after Finland gained independence in 1917, Vyborg, the second largest city of Finland, played a particularly significant role in an urban warfare and in the military history of independent Finland. Its supremacy was fought first in the Civil War in spring 1918 and later in the Winter War 1939-1940 and the Continuation War 1941-1944.

The Finns lost the Karelian Isthmus in the Moscow Peace Treaty of 1940. The Treaty ended the Winter War and meant also losing of Vyborg. The city had to be surrendered, even though the Red Army had not been able to capture the city in battle.² When the Continuation War began, the Finns quickly captured Vyborg and the Karelian Isthmus. However, the offensive was ceased near the old border. Mannerheim, Commander-in-Chief, no longer wanted to attack Leningrad.

The Karelian Isthmus has been described as the Gate of Finland. At front of that gate began the large-scale Soviet offensive on 9 June 1944. Massive artillery fire and aerial bombardment broke the first lines of the Finnish defense. The Russians also used their armored troops in their offensive. On the first day of the main offensive the Soviet troops were able

¹ W. H. Halsti, *Ratkaisu 1944, Suomen sota III*, Kenruu 1957, p. 313.

² L. Laaksonen, *Todellisuus ja Harhat - Kannaksen taistelut ja suomalaisten joukkojen tila talvisodan lopussa 1940* (Reality and Illusions: The Battles in the Karelian Isthmus and the Condition of the Finnish Troops at the End of the Winter War in 1940, See also English summary, Helsinki 1999, passim; L. Laaksonen, *Karjalan kannaksen taistelut*, in *Talvisodan pikkujättiläinen*, Ed. Ed. J. Leskinen ja A. Juutilainen, Helsinki-Porvoo-Juva 1999, pp. 428-448, 453-468.

to advance more than ten kilometers on their main attack direction. Russians had also planned the massive bombing of Vyborg. Luckily, at the last minute, for the Finns, the weather prevented the massive bombing of Vyborg on the first day of the offensive.³

The Russian offensive towards Vyborg was unexpectedly rapid. The Finns had not, at that point, time to strengthen the defense of the city. Although the arrangements had not been completed, the absolute order was to keep the city. The Finnish high command had to keep their appearance; they had not afforded to compromise its credibility. The psychological significance of Vyborg was unlimited for Finns. The loss had been a nationwide shock.

For Finns, the value of keeping the city in mind has been great, especially mentally. On the other hand, the military significance of Vyborg was fewer. The city was located in a planned defensive position, within the Vyborg–Kuparsaari–Taipale line. Keeping the line of defense would have required a strong military force.⁴ The operational advantage of Vyborg was not absolute. Strategic battles took place behind the city on the Tienhaara peninsula. If the Russians would reach from Tienhaara to the mainland, they, in the worst case, could turn their attack directly towards Helsinki via the main roads.

When the Russians launched their main offensive on the Karelian Isthmus in June 1944, the front retreated to near Vyborg in just ten days. The Finnish battle positions in front of the city were still underwork. There were no unified trenches dug and barbed wire barriers were missing. As the main line of defense ran in the suburbs, as previously in the Winter War. The defense line was stiff and it based on masses of soldiers. But there were no extra forces or reserves which could be used. Example the IV Corps under command of Lieutenant General Taavetti Laatikainen were tight to the fighting and did not have reserves for the defense of Vyborg.⁵

The biggest problems in the defense of Vyborg were caused by last-minute improvisations. The High Command finally ordered troops to defend the city, but transportation took time. The 20th Brigade, commanded by Colonel Armas Kempfi, was transferred from the East Karelia to the Karelian

³ *Jatkosodan historia 4, Vetäytyminen Karjalan kannakselta*. Sotatieteen Laitoksen Sotahistorian toimisto, Porvoo 1993, passim; A. Juutiainen, *Taistellen torjuntavoittoon*, in *Jatkosodan pikkujättiläinen*, eds. J. Leskinen ja A. Juutilainen, Porvoo 2005, pp. 793-802; G. Mannerheim, *Muistelmat II* osa (Memories Part II), Helsinki 1952, pp. 446-447.

⁴ L. Laaksonen Lasse, *Viina, hermot ja rangaistukset – sotilasylijohdon henkilökohtaiset ongelmat 1918–1945*. Bookwell Digital 2017, p. 503; W. E. Tuompo, *Päiväkirjani päämajasta 1941-1944*, Saarijärvi 2014, pp. 284-288.

⁵ *Jatkosodan historia 4, Vetäytyminen Karjalan kannakselta* Toim. Sotatieteen Laitoksen Sotahistorian toimisto, Porvoo 1993, passim.

Isthmus. Heist and limited transport capacity meant that maintenance was left behind. Last but not least the destination was changed on the way. The troops under Kemppi were concentrated in a hurry directly in the city. It was believed that when he arrived, he would have time to prepare his troops for urban warfare by building stronger defense positions.

The troops concentrated in Vyborg had to go directly to combat and unfinished positions. The men were completely unaccustomed to defending the city – they had been on different terrain in the Eastern Karelia. Some of them had only been engaged in fortification work behind the frontline in forested terrain. Before the Soviet attack, men from other units still flowed into Vyborg. They were from broken units and they decrease morale by spreading fear with their stories to the fresh troops of the 20th Brigade. Disobedient soldiers plundered buildings which had been evacuated. Either were soldiers of Colonel Kemppi not immune for robbing.

From the beginning troops of Colonel Kemppi had suffered from shortage of ammunition. There were no relief for the shortage of ammunition. One reason for shortage was bureaucratic system. North of Vyborg was the Rautakorpi ammunition depot, but without a written order ammunition were not handed over from there. The brigade got their grenades only after the headquarters had intervened. There were short of time, when ammunition depot handed over grenades, it was far too late.⁶

The Russians attack reached to Vyborg around noon on June 20, 1944. It is not known for certain what kind of the artillery preparations were, but the Soviet troops were apparently able to storm the city quit easily with support of tanks. When the Finnish assault guns in the Centre of the defenders were damaged and the close-range anti-tank weapons and heavy artillery could not be used properly, the morale of the troops was eroded. Troops unaccustomed to urban battles were nervous, even though there was still a long way to go before the house-to-house combat took place.

The incorrect situational awareness picture significantly hampered command. Colonel Kemppi had no telephone connection with the commander of the Army Corps, Lieutenant General Taavetti Laatikainen. Lieutenant General had only little knowledge of the events in Vyborg. The messages were delivered via couriers or even via Mikkeli, where the headquarters was located. Delay of messages was inevitable. Even the battalion commanders of the 20th Brigade did not have direct contacts with each other. When one

⁶ For example, National Archives, IV AKE, Op.os. sotapäiväkirja 20.6.1944, Spk 4380; National Archives, 20.Pr:n sotapäiväkirja 20.6.1944, Spk 20668; U. Tarkki, *Taistelu Viipurista 20.6.1944 – Viipurin menetyt ja oikeudenkäynti!* Jyväskylä 1996, passim.

company in the center of the defenders misinterpreted order and retreated, others followed.⁷

The troops of the scattered brigade quickly sought to leave Vyborg. First, the men packed into the bottleneck of the Linnansilta bridge, after which they retreated to the inland via bridges and straits. This happened although the Russians had not even had time to properly harass the fleeing troops. The Finnish officers no longer managed to organize the defense of the city. Already in the afternoon, only two or three hours after the beginning of the offensive, more than two thousand men left the city. Colonel Kemppe was so shocked by the collapse of his brigade that he first wanted to be left alone at his command post on the city.

The news of the loss of Vyborg was transmitted via complicated communication lines to the upper military command. After five o'clock Kemppe was in a car heading to the headquarters of the IV Army Corps. Kemppe had to explain the situation to Lieutenant General Laatikainen personally. Bad news and Kemppe arrived about same time to the knowledge of Laatikainen. When the news of the catastrophe reached headquarters in Mikkeli, a short time later, Commander-in-Chief Marshal Mannerheim did not even believe it to be true!

Only a couple of minutes later, Commander of the Army Corps Laatikainen gave Kemppe an order on behalf of the commander-in-chief not to give up the main line of defense, even though the troops were in fact already on the mainland. The remaining bridges in the city had been blown up. When the headquarters tried to contact the brigade, it was reported that lines of connection had been cut off. There were many different rumors about the fate of the city. One rumor was that the Russians had gained control of Vyborg.

The commander-in-chief of the Finnish army, Marshal Mannerheim, considered the leaving of Vyborg a “scandal”. He had given an absolute order to hold the city. The credibility of the military high command suffered a blow and was strongly reflected in the mood on the home front. The commander-in-chief demanded a thorough investigation and punishment of the guilty.⁸ Mannerheim directed the initial pace of the process himself and appointed his own general, Major General Väinö Palojarvi, from headquarters to find the felons for the collapse of the defense and the shameful flight from the city. In

⁷ For example, National Archives, II/20, prikaatin sotapäiväkirja 1.1-22.8.1944, Spk 20703; National Archives, 20.Pr:n sotapäiväkirja 20.6.1944, Spk 20668; National Archives, 20. prikaatin sotapäiväkirjan liitteet 31.12.1943-24.10.1944, Spk 20670; National Archives, Päämajan sotapäiväkirja 1.1.44-28.4.45, Spk 20812; U. Tarkki, 1996, passim.

⁸ L. Laaksonen 2017, pp. 508-517.

order to preserve the credibility of the military command, it was necessary, if nothing else, to appoint scapegoats for the rapid loss of Vyborg.

As usual, Marshal Mannerheim was extremely impatient. He saw any reason not to charge. At the same time Mannerheim completely forgot to investigate the leadership activities of the IV Army Corps. Lieutenant General Laatikainen was his personal favorite. From a legal point of view, Mannerheim's dogmatic view was inverted. Undoubtedly, the investigation team had a strong tendency to quickly find the culprits. The most favorable target and scapegoat was undoubtedly, the leadership of the 20th Brigade and its commander Kemppi. Its responsibility had been the defense of Vyborg.⁹

Later, only Brigade Commander Colonel Armas Kemppi and Lieutenant Colonel Kurt Bäckman, commander of the first battalion to leave his position, were brought to court. The former eventually received a mild sentence, the latter committed suicide in the middle of the legal process. Although more detailed information about the battles in Vyborg and the command of the army corps was later obtained, the case was not reopened.¹⁰ From the point of view of the military high command, the matter was embarrassing. It was easier that the scandal of Vyborg was quickly buried in the twilight of history.

⁹ L. Laaksonen 2017, pp. 518-532; L. Laaksonen, *Eripuraa ja arvovaltaa – Mannerheimin ja kenraalien henkilösuhteet ja johtaminen* (Discord and Authority – The Personal Relationships of Mannerheim and his Generals and their Effect on Leadership), Jyväskylä 2004, passim.

¹⁰ National Archives, "Korkeimmalle Oikeudelle", N:o 143/78 V.D. 1944, KKO VD143/78 1944 Eb178; National Archives, "Valtioneuvoston oikeuskanslerille", Sotaylioikeuden v.t. sotaviskaali N:o 337. V. 15.11.1944, KKO VD143/78 1944 Eb178; L. Laaksonen 2017, pp. 532-535, 607-610.

FROM STALINGRAD TO VULHEDAR: THE HISTORY OF RUSSIAN STORM DETACHMENTS IN URBAN WARFARE

Capt. Randy NOORMAN (Netherlands)

Introduction

Over the course of January 2023, Russian Armed Forces (AF), belonging to the 72nd Motorized Rifle Brigade, began stepping up their attacks against the Ukrainian town of Vulhedar.¹ Without many gains to show for initially, they tried again in the beginning of February, with several other Russian formations, notably the 155th Naval Infantry Brigade, suffering heavy losses in a number of failed assaults against the entrenched Ukrainian troops defending the town. Leaving the battlefield scattered with dozens of blackened and burning wreckages and supposedly hundreds of Russian soldiers ending up getting killed.² Besides being an indication of newly mobilized Russian military personnel's poor level of training, these costly assaults also demonstrated faulty Russian tactics and led to severe criticism against a number of Russian commanders for repeatedly making the same mistakes.³

Just a few weeks later, on February 26, a Ukrainian reserve officer serving at the front near Vuhledar reported the capture of a Russian military manual on Twitter, describing the organization and tactics of a new kind of Russian formation called "assault detachments".⁴ Indicating that the unsuccessful attack against Vulhedar and other failures have probably led the Russians to revise their assault tactics and accompanying organizational structures. Also called "storm" units, these are dedicated assault formations, organized, trained and equipped specifically in order to carry out assault

¹ Mike Eckel, "Russia's New Offensive Grinds Into Action As Ukraine Punches Back Hard," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, February 11, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-new-offensive-winter-war-bakhmut-vuhledar/32266536.html>

² Mike Eckel, "What Happened In Vuhledar? A Battle Points To Major Russian Military Problems," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-russia-battle-vuhledar/32276547.html>

³ Institute for the Study of War, *Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, February 10, 2023*, <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-february-10-2023>

⁴ Tatarigami_UA (@Tatarigami_UA) "Russian forces are revamping their assault tactics after experiencing failures with their current structure. The Battalion Tactical Groups (BTGs) are getting replaced with a new unit called the "Assault Unit" or "Assault Detachment," Twitter, February 26, 2023, 06:56 a.m., https://twitter.com/Tatarigami_UA/status/1629722073487613953

operations in urban terrain and heavily fortified wooded areas. Although not all have proven equally competent and quality differs from one unit to another, in general, they have shown to be a major improvement.⁵

During urban warfare and fighting in entrenched positions, limited situational awareness often leads to dispersed small-scale fighting, resulting in isolated battles at the lower tactical levels. Reducing the higher commander's ability to command and control the overall battle and as a consequence, making it necessary for smaller formations and their commanders to be able to operate independently. It also leads to a fragmentation of combat power, changing the combat power ratios already favoring the defender even further. Meaning that a limited number of defenders can tie up a much stronger opponent. Limited situational awareness also increases the risk of fratricide between friendly units. Additionally, the ability to turn buildings into fortifications, often combined with the absence of large open spaces, lacking clear observation and fields of fire, necessitates the ability to generate firepower at much shorter distances.

Assault detachments are basically designed to be more flexible and self-supporting in their role as breakthrough formations and to operate within this complex environment. The current transition towards specialized assault units, however, is actually a revival of a much older concept. As they were initially developed and employed in the Battle of Stalingrad, as well as during a number of other World War II battles, including Berlin. Many decades later, fighting in the Chechen capital of Grozny during the First and Second Chechen Wars, the concept was again revived by necessity. And now, in Ukraine, it again reappears, although in slightly different form. This article therefore aims to trace the historical lineage of Russian Storm Detachments, from their initial development during the Battles of Stalingrad and Berlin, through both Battles of Grozny and onto the current fighting in Donbas. The objective is to answer what circumstances and limitations gave rise to the establishment of these specialized assault formations and how their organization, equipment and tactics have developed over time.

World War II

Before the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, the Red Army had paid little to no attention to the specific characteristics and requirements of urban warfare. With the exception of a short entry describing the employment of storm groups, its 1929 field manual and 1936 provisional field manual offered little guidance to Soviet commanders. Although the Red

⁵ Tanmay Kadam, "Russia's STORM Assault Unit, Armed With "Alpine Quest" Tech, Launch Deadly Attacks To Recapture Lost Positions," *The Eurasian Times*, April 29, 2023, <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/russian-storm-assault-unit-armed-with-alpine-quest-tech/>

Army defended several cities over the course of 1941-42, most fighting on these occasions occurred outside the built-up areas. Stalingrad, on the other hand, would be the first time that large-scale fighting would be conducted inside the city proper.⁶ Between September 10 and November 17, 1942, the German 6th Army under General von Paulus conducted four consecutive attacks in Stalingrad. While German troops initially progressed rapidly, their advance slowed down considerably once they entered the inner city. Becoming entangled in costly house-to-house fighting, resulting in massive casualties.⁷

On the Soviet side, General Vasili Chuikov took command of the Red Army's 62nd Army, defending the city center, on September 12, 1942. He would be the chief responsible for the defense of the city, publishing a first-hand account of the battle after the war, while being the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Ground Forces in 1959. He was also responsible for reinvigorating the use of storm groups, as their use had already been described in the Red Army's 1929 field manual.⁸ According to Chuikov, the use of storm groups and buildings turned into defensive strongpoints were the primary elements in his army's ultimate successful defense of the city. Where fighting usually took place inside buildings, rather than on the streets. Together, they formed the elements necessary to conduct what the Soviets referred to as an active defense, in which fixed and fortified strongholds were used to break up German attacks, while the Germans themselves were kept under continuous pressure by constantly counterattacking, often forcing them to give up positions taken shortly before.⁹

A strongpoint usually consisted of one or a number of buildings which were reinforced and set up for an all-round defense. Depending on its size, these were defended by anything ranging from a section to an entire battalion. More importantly, these strongpoints were expected to fight independently for multiple days, operating as part of a unified defensive network of multiple strongpoints with interlocking fields of fire.¹⁰ As such, their garrisons usually had their own heavy support weapons and specialists, like heavy

⁶ David R. Stone, "Stalingrad and the Evolution of Soviet Urban Warfare," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* vol. 22, no. 2 (June 11, 2009): 196-197 and 204, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13518040902918089>

⁷ S. J. Lewis, "The Battle of Stalingrad," in *Block by Block: The Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003), 37, https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/Primer-on-Urban-Operation/Documents/BlockByBlock_TheChallengesOfUrbanOperations.pdf

⁸ Stone, "Stalingrad and the Evolution of Soviet Urban Warfare," 204.

⁹ Vasili Ivanovich Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad: The Story of World War II's Greatest Battle as Told by the Russian Commander at Stalingrad*, trans. Harold Silver (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), 314-315.

¹⁰ Stone, "Stalingrad and the Evolution of Soviet Urban Warfare," 202.

machineguns, anti-tank weapons, light or medium artillery pieces and even tanks or self-propelled guns. But also, snipers, engineers and medical personnel for the treatment of wounded soldiers, along with the necessary supplies.¹¹ In turn, the men of the 62nd Army were also faced with the German use of strongpoints, which eventually gave rise to the development of storm groups.

Chuikov cites two reasons for the need that arose for developing storm groups. First, infantry by itself was not strong enough to overcome enemy obstacles and capture strongpoints, lacking the necessary firepower to achieve this. Indirect fire through artillery and mortars had little or no effect on well-prepared enemy strongpoints. Second, large infantry formations proved to be too cumbersome to be able to operate effectively in such a complex environment. Storm groups were therefore usually built around existing infantry platoons. Although sizes could vary significantly, based on the nature of the assignment and strength of the objective. In order to overcome the lack of firepower, a number of artillery pieces or even tanks were added in support, using their firepower to destroy enemy fire positions at point blank range. Specialists, like engineers and chemical troops, the latter in Russian often indicating flamethrowers, were used to breach walls and clear strongpoints of enemy soldiers.¹²

Storm groups were divided into three different sub-groups; assault groups, reinforcement groups and reserve groups. The assault groups, eight to ten men strong each and operating under a single commander, were tasked with breaking into the enemy strongpoint and independently engage the enemy troops inside. For this purpose, they were primarily armed with submachine guns and hand grenades. Immediately after the initial assault groups had entered the strongpoint, the reinforcement groups would follow and take up firing positions and set up defenses, in order to prevent enemy reinforcements to come to the aid of their beleaguered comrades. For that reason, they were armed with heavier weapons, such as machine guns, and were led by the storm group commander. Lastly, reserve groups had the task of replenishing initial losses and, if necessary, forming additional assault groups.¹³

The size and composition of the storm group was determined by the object of the assault and the particular resources available. Assaults against enemy strongpoints were always thoroughly planned, prepared and extensively reconnoitered in advance.¹⁴ The assault itself was carried out with

¹¹ Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 306-307.

¹² Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 314, 316 and 318.

¹³ Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 314 and 317.

¹⁴ Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 317 and 319.

or without artillery preparation, depending on the locations of the enemy's firing positions. However, in most cases individual artillery pieces would be used in a direct fire role in support of the assault.¹⁵ The assault groups dash towards the breaching locations or entry points would take place immediately after the preliminary artillery shelling ended. Otherwise, the approach would be conducted as stealthy as possible. The aim of both approaches was to achieve a maximum amount of surprise, which was considered as being one of the principal requirements for success.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, this demanded a significant amount of boldness and individual initiative at every level, the latter of which, according to Chuikov, was no easy job to teach Red Army soldiers.¹⁷

Seeking to avoid costly and time-consuming urban warfare during their westward advance later in the war, the Soviets basically distinguished between two different ways of taking cities. One option was for a forward detachment to try and capture an enemy city from the march, before it could be properly organized for defense and quickly capture its city center and key infrastructure.¹⁸ If this was not possible, cities would be encircled and attacked across multiple axes using storm groups and storm detachments. These would then disrupt the enemy's defense by isolating and destroying enemy strongpoints.

By that time, storm detachments consisted of three to six storm groups, ranging in size from a platoon to company, with tanks, engineers and (self-propelled) artillery grouped together into a fire support group and a reserve and were usually tasked with capturing multiple strongpoints.¹⁹ Chuikov, in command of 62nd Army now redesignated as 8th Guards Army, was regarded as somewhat as an authority on urban warfare following the victory at Stalingrad. So, in the run-up towards the Battle of Berlin he produced a pamphlet that was distributed throughout the 1st Belorussian Front regarding the use of storm groups and storm detachments, which were again used to great effect.²⁰

¹⁵ Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 321-322.

¹⁶ Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 318.

¹⁷ Chuikov, *The Battle for Stalingrad*, 322-323

¹⁸ Lester Grau, "Changing Russian Urban Tactics: The Aftermath of the Battle for Grozny," *Foreign Militaries Studies Office Fort Leavenworth*, 1 July, 1995, <https://community.apan.org/wg/tradoc-g2/fmso/m/fmso-monographs/244590>

¹⁹ Charles Knight, "Analyzing the Urban Attack: Insights from Soviet doctrine as a 'model checklist'," Australian Army Research Centre, March 4, 2020, <https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/library/land-power-forum/analysing-urban-attack-insights-soviet-doctrine-model-checklist>

²⁰ David M. Glantz and Jonathan M. House, *When Titans Clashed: How the Red Army Stopped Hitler* (Kansas: University Press, 2015), 329 and 338.

Chechen Wars

During the Cold War the Soviets initially continued to study and refine their urban warfare concepts and acknowledged that in the European theater, as part of a large-scale conflict against NATO, fighting in cities would be unavoidable. As part of a deep operation, their approach remained centered around the two options of capturing a city from the march by a forwardly deployed detachment, or, if this was not possible, to bypass the city and let follow-on echelons conduct a more deliberate approach through encirclement and systematic destruction and capture of enemy defensive positions.

During the latter option, they would employ task organized combined arms battalion sized “assault detachments” and company sized “assault groups” retaining the same three-tiered layout as described above. They also recognized that due to the limited scope of command and control of the assault detachment’s commander in an urban environment, company assault groups had to operate more or less independently. Artillery was therefore employed in a decentralized manner, with up to half of an assault detachments artillery, including tanks and anti-tank guns, supplemented by combat engineers and flamethrowers, being attached to assault groups in a direct fire role. At the level of assault detachment, the remaining artillery was employed in an indirect fire role, in order to support the assault group’s advance or thwart enemy counterattacks.²¹

Between the fall of Berlin and the First Battle of Grozny, fifty years later, the Red Army was militarily engaged in a number of major cities, such as Budapest (1956), Prague (1968), Kabul (1979) and Baku (1990). However, on all occasions, with varying degrees of success, these were conducted as a *coup de main*. Meaning that in all cases, before the arrival of the main Soviet ground forces, certain military elements had already been present beforehand, and an extensive reconnaissance had been conducted. Identifying important locations that needed to be captured quickly by using Spetsnaz, paratroopers or forward detachments in order to quickly gain control over the city’s communications and key infrastructure. Especially in Afghanistan this method turned out to be very successful, enabling the Soviets to rapidly install a new government.²² However, when these requirements are not met and the enemy has had time to properly set up defenses, taking a city from the march is not the best option. As the Russians learned on December 31st, 1994.

²¹ Headquarters Department of the Army, *Specialized Warfare and Rear Area Support* (Washington D.C: Headquarters Department of the Army, 1984), 10-1-10-5, <https://irp.fas.org/doddir/army/fm100-2-2.pdf>

²² Lester Grau, “The Takedown of Kabul: An Effective Coup de Main,” in *Block by Block: The Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003), 320.

Inspired by the successful *coup de main* against Kabul, Russian planners decided to opt for a similar approach against Grozny.²³ Time constraints as a result of political pressure prevented an extensive reconnaissance, so a well-prepared deliberate attack on the city was ruled out as a viable option.²⁴ The operations plan which was finally decided upon resulted in three Russian columns converging on the capital. However, numerous delays meant that the element of surprise was lost, and Grozny was not adequately surrounded and sealed off once Russian troops entered the city. Due to a lack of intelligence, the Russians were thus unaware of the extent of Chechen defensive preparations.²⁵ To make matters worse, urban warfare had all but disappeared from Soviet Russian textbooks and training manuals during the Cold War. As a result, most Russian troops assembled for the assault had had little to no training in urban warfare.²⁶

Nevertheless, on 31st December 1994, expecting to face little Chechen opposition, four Russian columns entered the city with the aim of rapidly seizing the city's key infrastructure and capture the seat of government. Trusting that a show of force would be sufficient to withhold the Chechens from entering the fray.²⁷ However, after some initial progress, they ran into well-prepared Chechen ambushes and the whole operation turned into a disaster. Unable to support each other, while lacking sufficient infantry, Russian armored vehicles were knocked out one after another by mobile and lightly armed Chechen fighters, using machine guns and Rocket Propelled Grenades (RPG). At least one of the columns was totally destroyed, while the others ended up taking massive casualties, forcing the Russians to seriously reconsider their plan of assault.²⁸

Following the debacle on New Year's Eve, a quick change of leadership occurred, replacing some of the top generals involved. Those who took over were more mindful of the lessons of the past. In particular general Lev Rokhlin, who acknowledged that he adapted his tactics based on lessons from WWII, in particular the Battle of Berlin. Better trained reinforcements

²³ Richard D. Wallwork, "Artillery in Urban Operations: Reflections on Experiences in Chechnya" (Master Thesis of Military Art and Science, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, 2004), 35, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/citations/ADA429031>

²⁴ Timothy L. Thomas, "The Battle for Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat," *The U.S. Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* vol. 29, no. 2 (May 1999), <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol29/iss2/10/>

²⁵ Wallwork, "Artillery in Urban Operations," 35-40.

²⁶ Olga Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat* (RAND, 2001), 8, https://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/MR1289.html

²⁷ Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*, 5.

²⁸ Timothy L. Thomas, "The 31 December 1994 – 8 February 1995 Battle for Grozny," in *Block by Block: The Challenges of Urban Operations* (Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 2003), 169-170.

helped the Russians to come closer towards the numerical and qualitative superiority that was deemed necessary during an offensive in an urban environment.²⁹ They began employing a more deliberate approach, beginning at the outskirts of the city and then working their way inwards using multiple axes of advance.³⁰ They also quickly relearned that after capture, a building had to be prepared for defense in order to prevent the Chechens from recapturing it.

Mechanized anti-aircraft artillery was brought in, which, due to the elevation of their guns, were exceptionally well-suited to support assaults and combat Chechen positioned in the upper floors of buildings.³¹ They also resorted back to creating task organized storm groups and storm detachments, which they assembled by scrambling together personnel from other formations. However, many of these units were necessarily already composed out of several other units prior to the invasion, and by doing so, they destroyed what little cohesion these units had left.³² Besides this, company and battalion commanders were not sufficiently trained in order to command and control the large number of support assets that were assigned to them.³³ Effective command was further complicated by the fact that, like their predecessors in World War II, as Chuikov already emphasized, the necessary level of initiative and independent action by lower-level commanders and soldiers was not commonplace within Russian military culture.³⁴

Nonetheless, these changes meant a significant improvement, resulting in Russian troops advancing much more methodically.³⁵ Resorting to tanks and artillery clustered into a fire support group to provide direct cover fire during the initial assault. Using smoke to cover the approach, combat engineers to create breaches in order to enter enemy strongpoints and employing smaller tactical formations to clear buildings of enemy troops, largely relying on hand grenades. Once a building was captured by a so-called seizure group, it was immediately prepared for defense by the consolidation group, employing all sorts of grenade launchers as well as mines and boobytraps.³⁶ And a dedicated reserve standing by to support or supplement either one. Of particular interest was the extensive use of RPO-A *Shmel* flamethrowers by Russian troops, which differed from the traditional flamethrowers of World War II in that this was a single-shot shoulder

²⁹ Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*, 23.

³⁰ Grau, "Changing Russian Urban Tactics".

³¹ Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*, 24.

³² Thomas, "The Battle for Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat."

³³ Grau, "Changing Russian Urban Tactics".

³⁴ Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*, 26-27.

³⁵ Thomas, "The Battle for Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat."

³⁶ Wallwork, "Artillery in Urban Operations," 42. Grau, "Changing Russian Urban Tactics".

launched projectile carrying a thermobaric warhead. Creating a fuel air explosion with a blast comparable to that of an 152mm artillery grenade.³⁷

Surprisingly enough, although the Russian were able to draw on a number of lessons from the fighting in Grozny, this did not result in additional training in urban warfare during exercises. What did increase was training in the use of artillery for company and battalion commanders. It appears that in urban combat, the extensive use of artillery for destroying enemy held positions was seen as a workable alternative for costly infantry assaults, despite leading to massive collateral damage and loss of civilian life.³⁸ So when Russian troops returned to Grozny in 1999, they took a much more deliberate approach. Unlike in 1994, this time they first encircled the city, trapping the Chechen forces inside. Important buildings and infrastructure on the outskirts of the city were captured and used to cover the approaches, sealing off the city. This was then followed by a period of sustained artillery bombardments and airstrikes against Chechen positions. Meanwhile, intelligence and reconnaissance preparation for the upcoming assault was much more thorough, as had been the practice during World War II.³⁹

When main assault finally began in late January, the city was divided into several sectors and sub-sectors and assigned to various units. Company sized assault groups now received artillery- or mortar batteries as a whole in direct support. Artillery fire therefore became much more decentralized, with battalion and company commanders each in charge of fires within their own established zones of operations. Shortening the time between reconnaissance and destruction of targets, making Russian fires much more responsive and effective. Another difference, compared to 1994-1995, was that storm groups were now assembled on the basis of existing units, rather than from multiple units scraped together and that more responsibility was allocated towards junior officers.⁴⁰

Much more use was made of trained snipers, who were now capable of serving as artillery spotters. Instead of tanks leading the charge, like they did in 1994, these were now deployed behind the advancing infantry and used to provide direct fire support. Within the storm groups themselves, fire support was organized into so-called “troikas,” consisting of a sniper, grenade launcher (RPG) and a machine gunner. Last and not least, Russian troops were given proper time for rest and recuperation in between assignments.⁴¹ As a

³⁷ Thomas, “The Battle for Grozny: Deadly Classroom for Urban Combat.”

³⁸ Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*, 38 and 46.

³⁹ Timothy L. Thomas, “Grozny 2000: Urban Combat Lessons Learned,” *Military Review* vol. 80, no. 4 (July-August 2000), 50-51 and 54, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA512069.pdf>

⁴⁰ Oliker, *Russia's Chechen Wars 1994-2000: Lessons from Urban Combat*, 60.

⁴¹ Thomas, *Grozny 2000: Urban Combat Lessons Learned*, 51-54.

result of these improvements, although not perfect, the 1999-2000 attack proved much more successful than that of 1994-1995. Meanwhile, however, the city had been reduced to ashes.

Strangely enough, these experiences again did not result in significant adaptations in urban warfare doctrine and training schedules after the war. With the exception of some of the more elite formations, like Spetsnaz and airborne (VDV), or specialized anti-terror components, Russian soldiers continued to receive little to no urban warfare training.⁴² As a consequence, Russian troops would go into the next war just as unprepared as they had done during the last.

Russo-Ukrainian War

The war in Ukraine has shown numerous parallels thus far, from the stretched-out columns of burned-out Russian armored vehicles littering the roads leading towards the capital of Kiev, to cities like Bakhmut and Mariupol being leveled to the ground by massive employment of artillery. As these urban battles have also demonstrated, capturing enemy strongpoints or seizing important urban infrastructure remains a key element of fighting in major cities and necessitate the employment of combined arms warfare. It also means that formations must be capable of defending strongpoints once they have been captured, quickly switching between offense and defense.⁴³ As the manual captured in Vuhledar shows, following numerous failures, the Russians have again resorted to their proven recipe of creating specialized assault detachments, who, by their organization, training and equipment are optimized to fight in this type of environment.

Its current basic features remain the same as they have been in Stalingrad initially and Grozny later on, with higher-echelon support assets and more freedom of action being delegated down to lower tactical levels. However, compared to regular companies and battalions, assault groups and detachments now have a somewhat simplified structure and smaller subunits, making them more manageable during the complex and often fragmented urban fighting. Possibly to compensate for handling the ever-growing number of support assets at the same time. Assault Detachments are now made up of two or three assault companies, a fire support group, including an artillery- and a mortar battery, a reconnaissance group, a reserve group, a separate tank

⁴² John Spencer and Michael Kofman, "Russia, Ukraine, And Urban Warfare," Urban Warfare Project, August 19, 2022, accessed, August 9, 2023, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/russia-ukraine-and-urban-warfare/>

⁴³ John Spencer and Liam Collins, "Twelve Months of War in Ukraine have Revealed Four Fundamental lessons on Urban Warfare," *Modern War Institute at West Point*, 2 February, 2023, <https://mwi.westpoint.edu/twelve-months-of-war-in-ukraine-have-revealed-four-fundamental-lessons-on-urban-warfare/>

group, dedicated air defense, recovery equipment, mobile electronic warfare (EW) systems, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), medevac and of course flamethrowers and combat engineers.⁴⁴

The assault companies themselves are made up of only two platoons instead of the usual three, each numbering just 12-15 in personnel. They also have their own fire support platoon, armored fighting vehicles (AFV), artillery support platoon, reserve section, medevac section and UAV team. These include anything from mortars and individual artillery pieces, anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM), automatic grenade launchers, heavy machine guns and sniper teams. Even at the lowest level, each platoon has its own machine gunner, grenade launcher, combat engineers, combat medic and UAV- and radio operators. Although the exact composition can vary according to mission requirements.⁴⁵

Although the Twitter thread mainly discusses attacking fortified positions in wooded areas, it is possible to derive from this certain general characteristics of how they are intended to operate in urban environments. With regard to the tactics employed, UAVs are used primarily for reconnaissance prior to the assault. Although some Ukrainian sources report that they are also used by Russian commanders to adjust artillery fire and command and control.⁴⁶ The pause between the preliminary artillery bombardment and the actual assault is kept as short as possible. As soon as the artillery stops firing, lighter fire support assets, like automatic grenade launchers, take over in order to suppress the enemy and enable the assault teams to advance unopposed. In terms of decision-making authority for the deployment of fire support, the platoon commander controls automatic grenade launchers and mortar fire, employment of artillery usually remains at the level of company commander and air support is provided at battalion level. During an assault, commanders should avoid moving through open spaces and instead make use of the available cover.⁴⁷ Tanks and other AFVs operate typically operate as mobile fire platforms, individually or grouped together in so-called “*bronegruppas*.”

In another thread posted on March 12, the Ukrainian officer describes the difference between temporary and permanent Russian assault formations.

⁴⁴ Tatarigami_UA(@Tatarigami_UA) “Russian forces are revamping their assault tactics after experiencing failures with their current structure.

⁴⁵ Tatarigami_UA(@Tatarigami_UA) “Russian forces are revamping their assault tactics after experiencing failures with their current structure.

⁴⁶ Kadam, Russia’s STORM Assault Unit, Armed With “Alpine Quest” Tech, Launch Deadly Attacks To Recapture Lost Positions.

⁴⁷ Tatarigami_UA(@Tatarigami_UA) “Russian forces are revamping their assault tactics after experiencing failures with their current structure.

The former are assembled for a specific mission without receiving additional training and are dispensed once the mission has been accomplished. The latter, in this particular thread referred to as “storm” units, are incorporated into the regular military structure, ranging in size from reinforced companies to battalions and receive additional training and equipment, as described above. Although the quality between these formations varies greatly, particularly some of the permanent assault formations have proven themselves to be highly adaptable and formidable in carrying out breakthrough missions.⁴⁸ Even colonel general Oleksandr Syrskyi, commander of Ukraine’s Eastern Group of Forces, recently acknowledged that by forming specialized assault formations, the Russians have significantly improved their offensive capabilities.⁴⁹

Conclusion

Combined arms warfare necessitates the employment of combined arms formations, but the level at which this occurs depends on the particular circumstances. Because battles in urban surroundings and heavily fortified wooded areas tend to result in fragmented fighting conducted by smaller tactical units, distributing the necessary heavy support weapons down to lower tactical formations, as well as delegating the decision-making authority for their deployment down to lower tactical commanders, is a logical consequence. Chuikov understood this when he first decided to organize his men into specialized storm groups, intended to overcome German defenses. Composing units that were small enough to remain manageable, while carrying enough firepower to offset the limited effectiveness of indirect fire against fortified strongpoints.

Prior to World War II, except for a reference to the employment of storm groups, tactical directions on how to fight in urban areas were all but absent in the Soviet’s 1929- and 1936 provisional field manuals. Following the successful employment of storm groups and storm detachments in particularly Stalingrad and Berlin, it again, due to various reasons, disappeared into the background. Only to be revived during the Chechen Wars, with varying degrees of success. This situation did not improve thereafter, which in time would cause Russian forces to enter the current war equally unprepared. Consequently, the Russians have developed an over reliance on artillery in order to compensate for a lack of well-trained infantry,

⁴⁸ Tatarigami_UA(@Tatarigami_UA) “In my previous analysis, I explored the armament and role of assault units. However, their actual effectiveness and structure often differs from what is written in manuals,” Twitter, March 12, 2023, 07:13 a.m., https://twitter.com/Tatarigami_UA/status/1634799680126058502

⁴⁹ Kadam, Russia’s STORM Assault Unit, Armed With “Alpine Quest” Tech, Launch Deadly Attacks To Recapture Lost Positions.

with all its visible consequences and resort to forming specialized assault troops, every time basic training proves insufficient.

Except for some minor modifications, mainly due to the developments in weapons technology, the organization of storm detachments has remained relatively unchanged over the years. Assault detachments and groups are ideally built around existing infantry battalions and companies, supplemented by a number of (fire) support assets. Although infantry formations have become somewhat smaller using a simplified structure, making them more manageable, this is partly negated by the increase in support elements at the lower levels. For that reason, as the Russians have learned the hard way, (sub-)units must have a habitual training relationship and commanders need additional training to be able to manage all the different assets to their disposal. The sub-division of storm groups into dedicated assault- or seizure groups, fire support groups, consolidation groups and reserve groups, has also remained unchanged over the years. The same can be said of most of the tactics employed. One of the first lessons Chuikov identified, was that independent thinking and initiative at lower tactical levels, as well as boldness in action, are necessary characteristics for troops making up assault formations. Although little can be said about the latter, the former has never been a core component of Russian military culture. Artillery is primarily used in a direct fire role, because this is much more effective against fortified positions, especially in an environment lacking large fields of fire. The deployment of which, over the years, has therefore become much more decentralized. Finally, elements such as and extensive reconnaissance and intelligence preparation and achieving surprise, continue to be viewed as crucial prerequisites for a successful assault.

THE DEFENSE OF LAS PALMAS, GRAN CANARIA, THE CAPITAL AND THE PORT, IN WORLD WAR II

Col. Jose ROMERO (Spain)

The Rock of Gibraltar was capable of withstanding a prolonged siege, but it would have had no value other than that of a rock. Faced with the danger of Spain closing that door, we had for nearly two years prepared an expedition of over 5,000 men and the necessary warships to occupy in a few days the Canary Islands, from which we could have fought the enemy submarines by air and sea and secured the route to Australia via the Cape, if the Spaniards had prevented us from using Gibraltar.

Introduction: The Defense of the Canary Islands Since the Castilian Conquest (15th Century)

The city of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, (*el Real*) the Real de Las Palmas, was founded on 24 June 1478 by Captain Juan Rejón, who had disembarked in what would be the port of refuge of La Luz. He advanced approximately 3 kms along the sandy beaches until he reached a ravine with fresh water, the Guinguada river, where he built a palisade in view of three palms and gave the city its name. This description informs us that the city, at that time, extended along the seaside from the isthmus to the interior, leaving the mass of the *Isleta* (small island) as a guardian of the North (See Map 1 Appendix 1). The city would be seriously assaulted in 1595 by the Englishmen Drake and Hawkings, and in 1599 by the formidable squadron of Dutch Admiral Van der Does, with 72 ships and 8000 men of battle. On both occasions, with great hardships, the island protected its independence for the Hispanic Monarchy, but it was evident that future danger, as well as its wealth, would always come from the sea.

At that time, for its defence, King Philip II created the *Tercio de Milicias de Canarias* (1573) with companies in Telde, Gáldar (or Guía, as they are close) and Las Palmas (a deliberate decision as these locations represent the defensive triangle of the island), including a detachment of Cavalry and a small unit of Artillery on the royal payroll in the Castillo de la Luz, to defend the port. The total number of men at that time was limited to 1,500.

Throughout the centuries, the island of Gran Canaria based its military strength in the form of a *militia* and it was not until the end of the 18th century that, in addition to the militia, His Majesty Charles III constituted the Fixed Battalion of the Canary Islands, with three infantry companies in Tenerife and

a fourth one in Las Palmas, to give greater strength to the Island's defence. These companies made up of Regular Forces not only defended the island, as on the occasion of the heroic deeds of 25 July 1797 in Tenerife (General Gutiérrez) against Nelson's squadron, but they had already been hardened in peninsular campaigns such as that of Roussillon (1795).

During the 19th century, the militia transformed into Reserve battalions and the Fixed Battalion into those called *Cazadores* (hunters), two in number, one per main island. Towards the end of the century, due to the danger of the war with the United States (1898), some Island defence regiments of Regular infantry were formed. During the 1930s, a formula of defence in the archipelago had already been established, with a very similar distribution of the Force between the two provinces (Las Palmas and Tenerife) based on one Infantry Regiment per island, with forces deployed on each and every one of the islands (seven) of the archipelago as a permanent military presence.

Along with the Garrison, the island of Gran Canaria developed its fortification plans, collected by Alvarez¹ (2022) whose research details nine plans between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, some which did not come to fruition. According to plans, the defence of the Island is centred in its capital, with the basic plan, extending to Gando (Riviere, 1740), or in the more elaborated ones to Agaete in the North and Melenara-Maspalomas-Arguineguín in the South (Hermosilla, 1780).

The Second World War and the Defence of the Canary Islands

The Spanish Civil War (1936-39) found the archipelago in the rear-guard zone of the military uprising and the so-called National Army, of General Franco's forces. The Garrison at that time numbered around 5,000 men in total. When the Civil War ended in April 1939, the winds of war immediately arose in Europe. The Spain of Franco's regime, which had received the support of Italy and Germany during the Civil War, did not hide its sympathies towards Mussolini and Hitler but with reservations. Spain declared its neutrality in the conflict from the start but, by July 1940, due to the defeat of France and Italy's entry into war on the side of Germany, the Spanish government adopted a non-belligerence status. The same language used by Mussolini at the beginning of the war, which was understood in real terms as pre-belligerence. The Spanish Government's conditions for entering the war were to receive economic and military support from Germany, to get

¹ See bibliography.

Gibraltar back and the possibility of extending its zone of influence in the Oran (Northwest Algeria) and French Morocco.

With regards to the Canaries, both Germany and the United Kingdom had shown their interest for this strategic archipelago located one hundred kilometres off the African coast, on the South Atlantic routes around the Cape to the Middle East, India and Australia. Germany identified its appetite for an island to manoeuvre in the desired Atlantic zone (Morocco, Cameroon, Namibia) and the UK coveted it as a stopover in the South Atlantic as an alternative harbour in the case of losing Gibraltar.

Of course, the Canaries were not alone as key assets in this great maritime space that needed protection. Other interests were related and linked to the rest of Macaronesia: Portuguese Azores, Madeira, and Cape Verde, also considered as Atlantic anchorages. The Azores, in fact, would be used by the Americans under Portuguese authorization. In addition, the situation of *non-occupied France* or the collaborationist France ruled by Vichy (Marshal Petain's Regime), was a complete unknown for the Allies. The British and Free French (De Gaulle) forces raid on Dakar in 1940 had been resoundingly repulsed and was a failure. Consequently, the UK had sunk part of the French fleet at Mazalquivir, near Oran. The Gibraltar Strait has been heavily militarized by Spain which had fortified a defensive line (Javenois) around Gibraltar as a potential assault position where it had placed two reinforced Army Corp (100,000 men) in the Spanish Moroccan Protectorate. The Balearic Islands, like the Straits, was also fortified (Tamarit Line) and both areas were equipped with powerful coastal artillery (Artillery Plan 1926).

This summary shows a geographical strip: Baleares-Gibraltar Strait-Canary Islands, which traditionally had a strategic interest for Spain, an interest that still exists today. In addition to current maritime interests, a new Army Canary Islands Command partly comprises those territories.

The Military Defense of Gran Canaria

In 1943, the Canary Islands, commanded by Captain General Ricardo Serrador, received precise instructions to organize a military defence of the archipelago in case of a potential (without specifications) enemy landing. He was also provided with the economic command of the Isles due to the autocratic system imposed by the isolation of the Franco Regime and for the goal of unifying the economic and military defensive elements within the same command, particularly given the distance to the Iberian Peninsula. General Serrador has already issued a first directive (1940) that left no doubt as to his intention: "to defend all the Islands at all costs".

The defence of the archipelago up to that point then had been very precarious. It was based, as has been described, on two infantry regiments, some artillery groups, with no Navy units (the maritime zone depended on Cadiz) and without assigned military aviation. With only 10,000 men, little could be done against the potential threat of a British landing on the islands. Franco, who was aware of the situation and the risk of losing the Isles, ordered the Captain General to provide the archipelago with a real defensive system.

Each Island was, and still is different, and so were its defence requirements. Nevertheless, and although the Spanish command never had precise knowledge of possible British amphibious operation details, it did correctly identify the main objective as that of Puerto de la Luz, which could have served as an alternative port to Gibraltar. Even so, the port alone would not be enough, and the entire archipelago would have to be dominated otherwise it would allow the Germans or the Spaniards to use one or any part of the Isles as military bases against the UK.

The Island of Gran Canaria, round-shaped, mountainous, and with a 60 km diameter, had its coasts arranged in such a way that, due to the difficulty for landing, its defence was oriented in three zones: passive zones of resistance, those dedicated merely for surveillance, and those areas that needed to be defended (See MAP 2 Appendix 2).

The city of Las Palmas is open to the North, with a beach to the East (Alcaravenaras) located in the port area, and another beach to the West (Las Canteras). It is protected by a reef that makes access from the sea very difficult, except at a far-right location, called El Confital. The isthmus is topped by its imposing *Isleta* that was dedicated as a military zone. The population of the island was 320,500 inhabitants², while the capital itself was inhabited by 119,500 people.

There is debate whether the capital and the port of La Luz were the objective, but the conclusion we can draw is that both, capital and port, needed be defended, and as well by extension the entire Island. This hypothesis can be seen in the plans of attack: what at first had been planned to be a direct amphibious assault by commando type units at Puerto de la Luz, was dismissed by the British joint planning committee and shifted to a series of landings in the Eastern part of the Isle, with a plan to take the city of Las Palmas by indirect approach. Therefore, not only the Island of Gran Canaria, but the entire archipelago had to be defended, and an overall defence plan had to be implemented by all available means incorporating new measures to improve it. In addition, the system had to be symmetrical between the two provinces, for which both capitals (Santa Cruz de Tenerife and Las Palmas de

² Instituto Nacional de Estadística, INE, 1940.

Gran Canaria) had to deploy a Jefatura or Regional Headquarters to carry out the plan and instructions issued by the Capitania (Supreme Regional Command).

The most urgent requirements were to provide Air and Naval power, given the remoteness of the archipelago from the Peninsula and the requirement for mutual support among the islands (if possible) and from the islands of the nearby African coast where Spain held the Sahara, Villa Bens (Cape Yubi), Ifni and Guinea. These were garrisoned by minimal forces, basically the *Tiradores de Ifni* (Ifni Group of Marksmen) with six *tabores* (battalions), four nomadic groups (since 1939) and the territorial police to control the entire territory. The choice for the permanent operational airfield in Gran Canaria was Gando, where a detachment was deployed in February 1939. In August 1940, the so-called 22nd Expeditionary Fighter Group arrived with 24 Fiat-CR32, known as *Chirris* in the Civil War, from Getafe and the 22nd Mixed Air Regiment from Tablada, Seville. Subsequently, the Canary Islands and Spanish West Africa Air Zone was established with Colonel Alejandro Mas de Gaminde as its first commander and all the forces below were grouped into the Air Mixed Regiment No 4³ with:

The aforementioned fighter group (n°22) and the 112th Group,

The 11th Transport Squadron of 5 Junkers JU52 (Cape Juby),

The 54th Reconnaissance Squadron with two Dornier Wal seaplanes for Puerto de la Luz (March 1941), thereafter the Canary Islands Naval Base (Arsenal),

The 49th Aviation Troop Battalion (Lazareto de Gando) and various support units.

The Arsenal also was established in 1940, as the Naval Command of the Canary Islands. The units assigned were the gunboat *Marte*, the patrol boat, *Xauen*, and the old gunboat *Lauria*, prior to its scrapping, that was used as a pontoon. In addition, A-2 and A-4 cisterns, essential for the assistance to the smaller islands were added. The Arsenal was also equipped with torpedoes and underwater weapons.⁴ The Tercio de la Armada, the Marine Infantry, was reorganized in 1940 and in 1942 (October), into five Tercios: three departmental and two for Naval bases (Balearic and Canary Islands). In the Canary Islands, only one company was deployed in Las Palmas (September 1941) as the garrison of the naval base at that time was under construction.

³ Manuel RAMOS, *Alas Portectoras* (Las Palmas de G.C., RSEAP, 2010), 124-126.

⁴ Mari Carmen Castillo and V. Broz, *Arsenal de las Palmas (1940-2011)*, (Madrid, Publicaciones de Defensa, 2016), 25.

This was a modest contribution, since the main surface ships were in Ferrol, under repair after the Civil War; including the three Republican cruisers recovered in Bizerta (Tunicia), and the two National ones (Canarias and Cervera). Additionally, the Aviation Forces did not have access to the latest technological improvements developed during WWII and they only received the acquisition of German armament through the Bär Program, including 15 ME BF 109 F4 fighters and 10 JU 88 A4 bombers. Insufficient resources for the mission, nevertheless, the qualitative leap in capability had been important. Regarding the Army, the Captain General requested a surge for the Garrison, which increased from 5,000 men in 1936 to almost 40,000 in 1943, thanks to partial mobilizations (17,000 additional men were authorized in the Islands in 1940) and due to peninsular reinforcements, both in individual replacements and in complete units deploying to overseas. This sustained rhythm of increase in personnel indicates that the defence for the entire archipelago reached its zenith, as it will be explained, in 1943.

Summer 1939	July 1940	February 1941	1942	1943
12,000	23,500	26,800	34,000	40,000

Table 1: Canary Islands Garrison Through WWII

The increase in sheer numbers was important; however, interestingly the UK identified even higher potential defenders. According to Díaz Benítez (see bibliography), British intelligence reports from 1943 indicated 45,000 defenders, 19,000 of them in Gran Canaria. It is noted that by 1943, two thirds of the defence was provided by non-local born personnel. Regarding the infantry reinforcement units, we note that the Infantry Regiment (R.I.) No. 73 (later renamed R.I. España 18th), with its HQ and three battalions, deployed entirely in Fuerteventura, the R.I. N°18 (later renamed Mallorca 13th), with two battalions to Lanzarote, and two Ifni Tabors (Battalion size) were provided, one for each capital island.

That said, the greatest defensive effort was made on the island of Gran Canaria, with the garrisoned R.I. 39th, which, following the lessons learned in the Spanish Civil War, was split into a twin, 139th, with a corresponding increase in the number of battalions. The third battalion had already been added to the 39th at the beginning of the campaign. Consequently, the defence of Gran Canaria was provided by the R.I. 39th and its five battalions, and the new 139th with 3 battalions, plus a mobilization plan to creating the 200th and 300th series to constitute twelve battalions in all. In addition, as we know, the *IV Tabor de Tiradores de Ifni* (battalion size) was added to the Garrison, as a reserve unit.

Isla de Gran Canaria.

1944
Novbr 1944
3º de Enero 1943.

Estado de Fuerza.

Arma	Unidad	Plantilla				Revista				Presentes.				Situación	
		Jefes	Ofic.	Clase	Trope	Jefes	Ofic.	Clase	Trope	Jefes	Ofic.	Clase	Trope		
Infantería	PM. 1º Bat. Rgt. 39	3	3	5	83	3	3	5	83					Isleta	
	1º Bn. Rgt. 39	1	38	45	406	1	32	32	1308					Isleta	
	2º Bn. Rgt. 39	1	38	45	406	1	32	32	1308					Maspalomas	
	3º Bn. Rgt. 39	1	38	45	406	1	32	32	1308					Gua	
	4º Bn. Rgt. 39	1	31	28	661	1	26	33	750	79	169	259	4631	Guaymora	
	5º Bn. Rgt. 39	1	31	28	661	1	29	44	1895					Las Palmas	
	1º Bn. Rgt. 19	1	38	45	406	1	31	33	663					Llanos de Betula	
	2º Bn. Rgt. 19	1	38	45	406	1	38	41	708					Colabo	
	3º Bn. Rgt. 19	1	38	45	406	1	38	40	707					Gorrión-Arguina	
	Talpa Tiradores	1	26	31	787	1	20	26	929	1	12	41	815	BOJINES	
Artillería	PM. 1º Agr. Campaña	INCLUIDOS EN LOS GRUPOS.													
	PM. 2º Agr. Campaña	INCLUIDOS EN LOS GRUPOS.													
	PM. 3º Agr. Campaña	INCLUIDOS EN LOS GRUPOS.													
		P.M. Mando	2	16	35	319	6	15	26	395	2	14	18	254	Las Palmas.
	(1) Grupos	Agr. Costa Norte	1	17	45	434					2	12	18	317	Las Palmas.
	Grupos	" Centro	2	21	53	473	3	44	60	1194	2	18	16	370	Las Palmas.
	" Sur	1	11	28	271					3	12	212	Distacado.		
	1º Grupo Campaña	1	15	25	248	1	12	15	177	1	6	11	155	Las Palmas (a Bate)	
	2º Grupo Campaña						13	19	420	1	6	17	324	Carrizosa (a Bate)	
(OpD)	3º Grupo Campaña	1	14	17	268	7	11	243		7	5	208	Taormina (No hay)		
	Parque	1	10	34	130	1	6	8	220		6	26	162	Las Palmas.	
Infantería	Sec. Del. 1º Sub. Mitr.		1	1	41		1	1	40		1	1	40	Las Palmas.	
Ingenieros	Grupo Ingen. 4	2	13	22	511	4	9	16	407	2	10	15	575	Las Palmas.	
	Del. Automóviles	1	3	9	116	2	7	132		2	9	177	Las Palmas.		
Intendencia	Compañía	3	3	91		3	6	280		3	1	88	Las Palmas.		
Sanidad	Compañía	1	19	5	262	3	7	319		2	15	8	159	Las Palmas.	
Del. Química	Sección					1	-	56			1	1	48	Las Palmas.	
Veterinaria	Sección.		1		17			91			1	1	15	Isleta.	
Artillería	Grupo A.A.	2	14	24	309	2	16	21	433	2	15	24	269	Las Palmas.	

(1) Bata. Batall. en: 1 Molana, 1 Gando, 1 Arinaga y otra en Puerto Caucilla.

Table 2: Roster of Military Units in Gran Canaria as 1 January 1943

In the province of Las Palmas (Gran Canaria, Fuerteventura, and Lanzarote), Fuerteventura had a new Independent Battalion No. 32, and Lanzarote the No. 33, from which they would also organize their 100 series and plan for the 200 and 300 (furthermore, according to documentation, the 400). The first aim, achieved in 1943, was to have 5 battalions in arms and 4 for mobilization shared between the two islands, through an organization of a “grouping of battalions”, very much to the liking of General Serrador (who died in January 1943, being replaced by García Escámez). This grouping would come out as a new regiment (1 January 1944), the R.I. Ceriñola 51st.

We can surmise that the number, and the decision to have twelve battalions was not accidental. The Spanish divisions of the 1930s (organic divisions) and those that fought in the Civil War, normally had twelve Infantry battalions, grouped into two brigades, and these in turn in half brigades or groupings of three or four battalions. Thus, the Island of Gran Canaria was actually provided with a complete reinforced division with powerful combat support and services. The battalions, elementary tactical units, were of two types, mobile or defensive (fixed), the latter being more powerful in fire support, designed for coastal defence, while the former were designed to provide local counterattacks.

In fact, the traditional administrative division (territorial split) of the two provinces of the Canary Islands had been made on a divisional basis, with Las Palmas constituting Division No. 1 and Tenerife Division No. 2. The current arrangement, practically symmetrical between the provinces, provided the whole archipelago with an Army Corps level of resources with the aspiration of having 40 battalions in arms. In addition to the detailed Infantry units and the support elements that can be seen in the attached table, the fact is that the artillery of the islands was vital to repel a hypothetical landing. Each province had a mixed artillery regiment, No. 7 for Tenerife, and No. 8 for Las Palmas. Each regiment formed a coastal grouping, a field grouping, and several batteries of Anti-Aircraft Artillery (AAA), with its own integral means and those received in support (four German Krupp batteries and the peninsular ones). In addition, there were the expeditionary units of the peninsular Artillery (See MAP 3 Appendix 3).

Most of the elements were concentrated on the Island of Gran Canaria. In brief, Gran Canaria deployed 15 coastal batteries (50 pieces), and almost as many field batteries, with 62 pieces. The graphic shows the deployment, type and range of the pieces. The coastal artillery was mostly obsolete with many first 20th century Ordóñez of various calibres, while the Krupp 15 and 17, the Vickers 15.24, and the Munáiz-Argüelles 15 cms, were the only ones that could be relied on for defence. The field guns were believed to be positioned for either littoral support or for local counterattacks.

A fifth element, in addition to the deployment of infantry units, artillery, air and naval power, was the fortification and destruction plan. As Castro (2014) reports in his book⁵, a defensive *castramental* (castle/fortress) system was devised based on the defence of the coastline, with many single and double machine gun nests and artillery settlements. Of the former, almost 400 elements were built on the islands, 100 of them in Gran Canaria, following the defensive line of the East Coast, from La Isleta to Arguineguín. All this work was mainly carried out in 1943, under the direction of the Mixed Engineer Group No. 4, with its companies of Sappers, along with Infantry units, workers units (disciplinary battalion of penalized working soldiers No. 91) and contracted personnel. A communication company provided services to the whole island (an appropriate entity for a division level).

The plan also included the distribution of some 20,000 mines and a destruction section, with 51 targets (1943), mainly docks, roads, and (surprisingly) the vital inland dams. To launch a powerful counterattack, the deployment of a tank battalion (the Ciudad Universitaria No. 28), with almost 60 tanks, was planned, but it was never carried out. Finally, the whole defence system, prioritizing Gran Canaria and Tenerife, and then Fuerteventura, was designed to make each island an *alcazar* (*a fortress*), as Minister Serrano Suñer said, and the use of the civilian population, Civil Guard and the Falange cadres would be called upon for the defence at all costs, if necessary.

The Threat Assessment

Now that we have a sense of the plans for a defence of Gran Canaria, we must ask what the actual scope of the threat and its possibility for success was. The subject has been well researched by recent studies by Canarian professors such as Morales Lezcano and Diaz Benítez, using British and Canadian sources added to our understanding. Everything indicates that the initial plan, called *Chutney* and *Puma*, was formulated in 1940, when Spain changed its position to non-belligerence. The plan consisted, basically, in taking the Port of La Luz by surprise and direct assault, using commandos (Marines). After the British intelligence estimated that the defence was significant enough to spoil a direct attack (with the experience of Dieppe, 1942), these plans were adapted to the situation and renamed *Pilgrim* and *Tonic*, extending both the front of the landing and the number of participant units. It went from a contingent of approximately 5,000 men to that above 25,000, including Canadian participation, and extended from the beaches of the bay of Gando and Arinaga, 25 and 35 kms from the city, allowing for diversionary actions.

⁵ See bibliography.

This planning extended beyond 1943 and forced the UK to reserve a division level contingent, prepared, trained, and with its own means of transport, at the north of the UK, in the Bay of Clyde, for an operation that was believed to be imminent for months.

The British contingent estimated that a reinforced division was necessary for this operation, a division comprising three brigades with six commando units, the support of at least one battleship, an aircraft carrier (if possible), three cruisers and seven destroyers, and about 150 aircraft.⁶

A turning of the tide in the conflict took place in November 1942 when the USA entered the war in North Africa, precisely in front of the Canary Islands, with the landings of the operation codenamed *Torch*. Landings were set in Casablanca, Oran and Algiers. Although the Vichy put up little resistance, its effects were still worrying for the Allied command, particularly along the Moroccan coast. The UK had to employ its elements, even those earmarked for *Pilgrim*, and used them in Algiers. Canada then took the lead of the force that would have landed on the Island of Gran Canaria, should the operation take place. For this purpose, Canada constituted the land component: two divisions, the 1st and 3rd, and the 1st Canadian Corp HQ, commanded by General Crerar, with the UK providing the air and naval components.⁷

The USA was very worried about Spanish resistance, being so powerful in the Strait of Gibraltar area and with significant forces in the Protectorate and the Canary Islands. Accordingly, President Roosevelt offered guarantees to Franco that the operation would not be intended against the Spanish territories or the Spanish protectorate. Another fear came from the German reaction to *Torch*, leading to the occupation of metropolitan France and the forcing of the French to sink their own fleet in Toulon. It was feared that this pattern could be replicated in the Spanish mainland and Gibraltar by the Germans. After all the planning and preparation from many of the actors, the operation on Gran Canaria did not happen, nor did Spain enter the war, which was a key priority for Franco's Regime.

⁶ Juan José DÍAZ, *Canary Islands defenseless: the allied projects of occupation of the Islands during World War II*. (Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Idea, 2008), 159-161.

⁷ Stacey, C.P. (1955): *Official history of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, (Ottawa, E. Cloutier, CA, 1955, 410-411.

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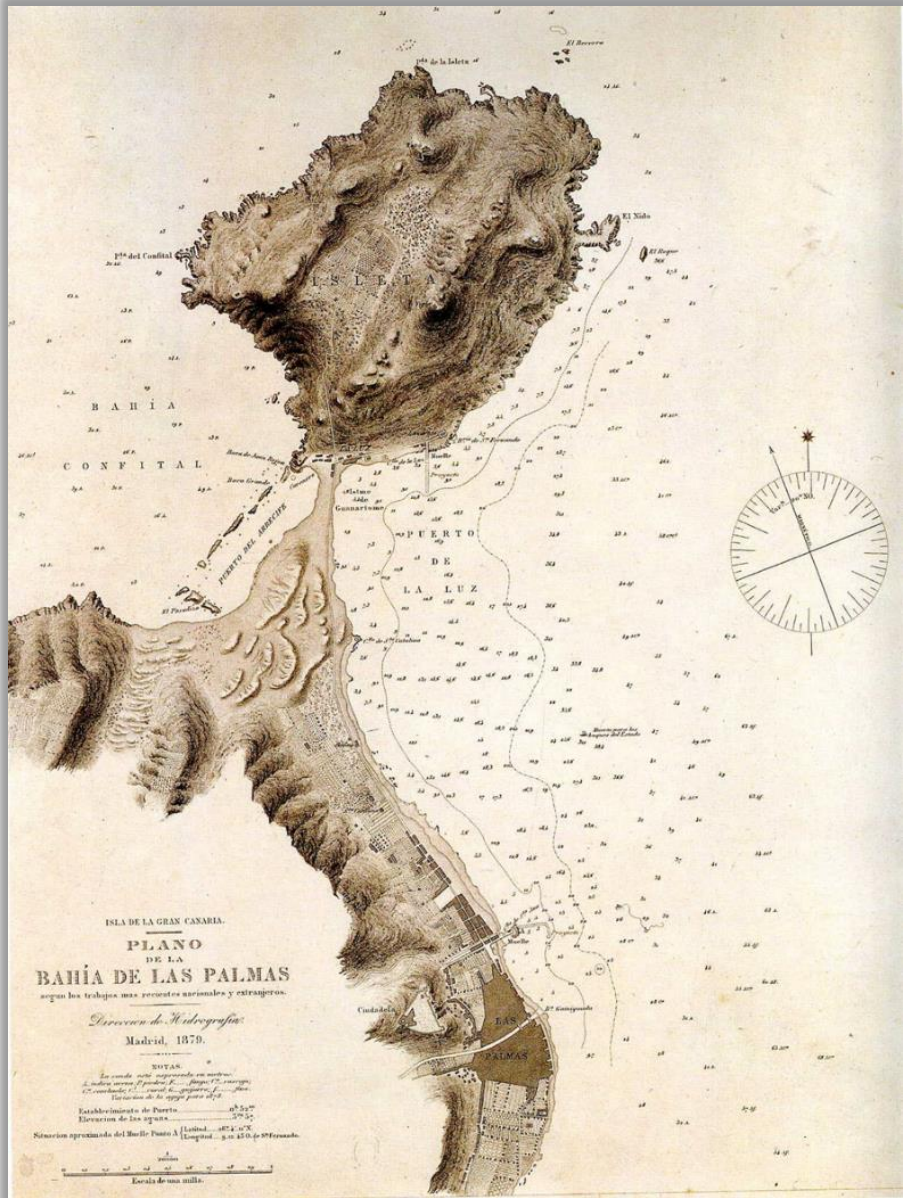
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 19th Century, Isleta on the Top of the City.



Appendix 2: Defence of Gran Canaria, 1943: blue arrows as potential landings; red lines as fortifications and artillery sites; green area as passive zone; yellow area as surveillance zone; blue area as zone to defend.



Appendix 2: Artillery Regiment n°8, Gran Canaria, deployment and range.



**CITY BATTLEFIELDS:
COLD WAR URBAN CONFLICTS
AND STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENTS**

IN THE FOREST OR TOWNS? AN APPRECIATION OF FINNISH MILITARY THINKING AND URBAN WARFARE DURING THE EARLY COLD WAR

Col. (Ret.) Prof. Dr. Petteri JOUKO (Finland)

Urban Warfare – Lessons of the Second World War

The climax of the Second World War took place in the cities. The final defense of the Third Reich was broken by the massive Soviet attack in Berlin in early May 1945. Only three months later, the USA forced Japan to make peace by destroying the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with atomic bombs. These events were not detached but part of a more significant phenomenon, as many engagements had taken place in urban environments earlier in the war, unlike during the Great War 20 years earlier. Kharkiv, for example, was captured and recaptured by Germans and the Soviets several times. The desperate Polish uprising in Warsaw in 1944 caused the virtual destruction of an entire city, and the town of Arnhem in Holland saw a fierce battle between the British airborne forces and the German II SS Panzer Corps.

Due to the rapid evolution of military technology, a novel form of warfare, large-scale aerial attacks, extended to densely populated areas. Ruthless bombings of Britain, Germany, and Japan were sinister, yet realistic, examples of the new character of warfare. The extension of almost indiscriminate violence against the civilian population was without exaggeration one of the features of the Second World War. The rationality and morality of annihilating civilian targets are questionable, but bombings indicated a new rationale. Cities and populations were a part of the enemy's society and economic base, a piece of the holistic war machinery that enabled large-scale war. As a result, they were generally accepted as a legitimate target category. The war had become a total war, an incarnation of Clausewitzian ultimate violence.¹

Finnish Experience of War

In the context of urban warfare, the Finnish experience differed radically from the mainstream of events taking place in central Europe. Between 1939 and 1945, the Finnish forces took part in countless battles,

¹ Pekka Visuri, Carl Von Clausewitz ja modernin sodankäynnin teoria *Tiede ja Ase* N:o 25 (Mikkeli: Länsi-Savon Kirjapaino, 1968, 72-74.

minor engagements, and skirmishes, but fighting in urban areas remained relatively low. Before the Second World War, the military manuals had rarely mentioned fighting in built-up areas or urban warfare. Battle instructions produced in 1940 made only a passing note of the built-up regions being challenging environments for a battle. Although they provided cover against enemy surveillance and possibilities for bivouacking, the command and control of units and the employment of direct fires were complicated.²

During the Winter War of 1939–1940, only limited fighting occurred in urban-like environments. In the famous double battle of Suomussalmi-Raate, the Finnish forces encircled the main elements of the Soviet 163rd Division at the village center of Suomussalmi. In the main battle area – the Karelian Isthmus – the fighting stretched to the outskirts of Viipuri, the second-largest city in Finland. However, the peace was signed before any serious street-fighting took place. Instead of taking advantage of villages in their defensive operations during the withdrawal phase, the Finnish units avoided battle even in the smaller hamlets. In contrast, withdrawing Finns carried out scorched earth tactics with variable success to deny the advancing Soviets protection against harsh winter.³

The period between the Winter War and the onslaught on the Soviet Union in June 1941 saw several improvements within the Finnish Field Army. A large pool of untrained auxiliary forces was called to military service, and firepower within wartime formations was enhanced. A large pool of manpower was also trained but with very little if any training for the urban environment. The GHQ's training guidelines of 1940 or 1941 even mentioned fighting in the urban environment.⁴

The first phase of the Continuation War⁵, the Finnish onslaught aimed to recapture lost territory, involved some battles in the urban or semi-urban areas in eastern Karelia, such as the towns of Petroskoi or Karhumäki. But the Soviets evacuated the main prize, the city of Viipuri, before any serious street fighting took place, only to be partially encircled and losing all of its heavy equipment on the eastern side of the town.⁶

² *Jalkaväen ohjesääntö II* (Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Otavan Kirjapaino, 1940), 21.

³ Niilo Lappalainen, *Viipuri toisessa maailmansodassa*, (Helsinki: WSOY, 1991), pp. 74–78; Ari Raunio and Juri Kilin, *Talvisodan taisteluita*, (Helsinki: Karttakeskus, 2007), 126–134; Jarkko Koukkunen, *Hävitysten talvi* (diss.), (Joensuu: Itä-Suomen yliopisto, 2020), 284–291.

⁴ *Koulutuksen suuntaviivat maavoimissa vuonna 1940*, (Helsinki, 1940), passim, Library of the National Defense University, Finland; *Koulutuksen suuntaviivat vuodeksi 1941*, (Helsinki, 1941), passim., The Library of the National Defense University, Finland.

⁵ In the Finnish history writing, the national experience of the Second World War has been divided into three separate events: The Winter War (1939–1940), the Continuation War (1941–1944), and the War of Lapland (1944–1945).

⁶ Niilo Lappalainen, *Sotiemme suurmotit*, (Helsinki: WSOY, 1990), 230–232.

The war against the Soviet Union ended in 1944 after a large-scale Soviet offensive. The initial phases of the Soviet attack in the summer of 1944 penetrated the Finnish defenses. Intensive fire preparations and the massing of superior combined assault forces collapsed the first two Finnish defense lines within a week. The Finnish troops stabilized the front only after the GHQ transferred the main body of the Field Army to the last defense line of the Karelian Isthmus, which had become the Soviet operational *schwerpunkt* once more. The Finnish forces repulsed the Soviets on this line after fierce battles and heavy fighting apart from the city of Viipuri, which was quickly lost. The 20th Brigade, reinforced by totally obsolete armor, withdrew in panic with hardly any action, leaving the city to the Soviets. One could expect that the reasons and consequences for the quick collapse of the defenses were thoroughly analyzed after the war. They were not.⁷

The final phase of Finnish WWII took place in the northern part of Finland against the Germans after Finland had made an interim peace with the Soviet Union in early September 1944. Finnish forces fought in challenging circumstances against a well-prepared enemy. Formations of the *Wehrmacht* were able to carry out a systematic and disciplined withdrawal. Apart from the town of Tornio, where the Finns carried out an ad hoc unopposed amphibious landing (atypical for Finnish operations), no actual urban fighting took place. During the later stages of operations, Germans burned any larger villages or boroughs before the Finns even entered them.⁸

Several warfighting nations suffered from heavy aerial operations against urban areas. Although the Finnish cities were not subjected to bombing like in Germany, the Soviets bombed Finnish cities several hundred times but with a desultory effect. The Soviet air offensive culminated in February 1944 when Stalin concentrated the main body of the ADD, the Long-Range Aviation, against Helsinki to pace unofficial peace negotiations. Due to the efficient air defense and the limited capabilities of the Soviet bomber force, which was by no means comparable to the British Bomber Command, damage to the city and its inhabitants was negligible by any contemporary standards.⁹

⁷ For a description of the battle of Viipuri, see Niilo Lappalainen, *Viipuri toisessa maailmansodassa* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1991), 167–273. For an analysis of the role of the Finnish-converted BT-42 assault guns, see Petteri Jouko and Aku Kangas, *BT-42 – maineensa ansainnut?* in *Sotahistoriallinen aikakauskirja* 42 eds. Riitta Blomberg et al. (Helsinki: Suomen Sotahistoriallinen Seura, 2022), 110–111.

⁸ Sampo Ahto, “Lapin hävitys” in *Suomi sodassa: Talvi- ja jatkosodan tärkeät taistelut*. (Helsinki: Valitut Palat – Readers Digest, 1983, 458–459; Pasi Tuunainen, *Sodan maantiede: maaston ja olosuhteiden vaikutus sodankäyntiin 1850-luvulta nykypäivään* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2023), 318–320.

⁹ Ohto Manninen, “Helsingin suurpommitukset” in *Jatkosodan taistelut*, ed. Mikko Karjalainen, (Helsinki: Gummeruksen Kirjapaino Oy, 2002), 111–117; on effects of the

Collection of Tactical Lessons after the War Proved to be Difficult

Five years of warfighting produced a large amount of information on warfare. The General Headquarters (GHQ) initiated a collection of tactical lessons in early 1945 while elements of the defense forces were still operating against the last elements of the German 20. Mountain Army (*20. Gebirgs-Armee*) at the upper parts of Lapland. The task proved to be complicated. The peacetime formations and units produced a substantial amount of written evidence. Still, comparison of the testimony was problematic mainly because tactical lessons varied greatly, depending on the time and the place the battle had taken place. The environment, terrain, tactical situation, and enemy in the northern parts of Finland were different from the Karelian Isthmus. As one could expect, formulating universal conclusions that could be incorporated into a new set of military manuals was complicated.¹⁰ Tactical assessments or lessons learned from urban fighting were limited since there was very little to collect and assess. The operations division of the GHQ hosted a two-day conference on tactical lessons of the war in the spring of 1945. Presentations and the following discussions concentrated mainly on defensive operations. Still, debate on the defense of populated areas was simply neglected, although the infamous battle of Viipuri, referred to earlier in this paper, was well-known by participants, and many were to become prominent characters in the Finnish post-war officer corps.¹¹ The absence of lessons on urban warfare is evident in the post-war papers documenting the experience of the Finnish Field Army on a larger scale. In addition to written evidence, the peacetime formations were encouraged to host small-scale seminars on the war experience. A typical seminar included one or two brief presentations followed by a discussion. Tables of the content preserved in the GHQ Training Divisions' files reveal that urban warfare was hardly discussed in the seminars. For example, meetings arranged during the spring of 1945 focused on different aspects of defense against a large-scale offensive – the trauma deeply experienced by the Finns in June 1944. The topics varied from the employment of anti-tank weapons to the control of panic within infantry units. Any discussion of urban warfare, however, was conspicuous by its absence.¹²

Bomber Command, see *The Strategic Air Offensive against Germany 1939–1945*, reprinted edition of 1961 (Uckfield: The Naval & Military Press Ltd, 2006), Appendix 49.

¹⁰ Vesa Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen. Taktiikan kehittymisen ensimmäiset vuosikymmenet Suomessa* (diss.) (Joutsa: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 1996), 284–285.

¹¹ National Archives of Finland (NAF), T 24098/F 2, PvPE:n numeroimaton muistio, 24.5.1945.

¹² NAF, T 18002/6, PvPE:n numeroimaton ja päiväämätön sisällysluettelo upseerien keskustelutilaisuuksien alustuksista ja monisteista.

Documents collected from the formations only strengthen the viewpoint of overlooked urban warfare. For example, the influence of the terrain (especially the forest) and weather conditions were analyzed repeatedly in several papers of the 1st Division. Numerous papers discussed different tactical procedures for advancing and attacking in the roadless forest. Still, an assault against the built-up area was discussed only in a single paper. Kevyt Prikaati – the only Finnish armored formation – is a tangible example of ignoring street fighting lessons, even though its wartime predecessor had participated in small-scale battles in urban environments in 1941. The tankmen did not consider the tactical lessons of urban fighting at all.¹³

Discussion of urban fighting also remained virtually nonexistent in contemporary military journals. The volumes of *Tiede ja Ase*, perhaps the most valued contemporary platform for publishing military thought, did not contain a single article about fighting in the built-up areas between 1945 and 1960.¹⁴ A two-part article, published by Captain Martti Frick in 1947–1948 in *Sotilasaikakauslehti* – a journal of the Finnish Officers Association – represents a rare insight into Finnish thinking on operations in the built-up areas. Arguing merely by the German experiences during the war, Frick noted that linear defenses were outdated. Instead, robust, all-around defense perimeters had been effective in wearing down the enemy attack in Central Europe. Since road networks – essential for the logistic tail of any armored or mobile forces – often crossed in the populated areas, the concept of organizing defenses in the cities was militarily a reasonable option. Frick also concluded that it was easier to establish an improvised defense in the built-up area than in the forests because buildings offered ready protection against weather and fires. Moreover, Frick suggested that the Finnish defense should also give further consideration and thought to actively using built-up areas for battle. Although the assessment of Frick is based on relevant reasoning, it is worth noting that the personal views of a junior officer probably did not have a significant impact on higher echelons of command.¹⁵

If the experience of urban fighting was ignored in the official post-war documents, it is also apparent that the subject was not crucial within the training of higher echelons of officers corps. The curriculum of 1949 in the War College, responsible for the training of general staff officers, affirms that

¹³ NAF, T 18002/Kansio 8, 1. Divisioonan sotakokemuksia (luettelo hyökkäystaistelua käsittelevistä sotakokemuksista); NAF, T 18002/Kansio 10, Kevyen Prikaatin sotakokemuksia (sisällysluektelo); Pekka Kantakoski, *Suomalaiset panssarivaunujoukot 1919–1969*, (Hämeenlinna: Karisto Oy:n kirjapaino, 1969), 141–146.

¹⁴ Index to *Tiede ja Ase* N:o 1–N:o 25, *Tiede ja Ase* N:o 25 (Mikkeli: Länsi-Savon Kirjapaino, 1968, 367–377).

¹⁵ Martti Frick, Taistelu asustuskeskuksessa *Sotilasaikakauslehti*, VI/1947, 5–7; Martti Frick, Taistelu asustuskeskuksessa *Sotilasaikakauslehti*, I/1948, 14–15.

urban fighting was a minor part of tactical instruction. In the one-year course, the first term contained one brief map exercise devoted to urban warfare. Instruction in tactics during the second term concentrated on the operations at the army corps level, but not a single exercise was dedicated to urban warfare. However, it is worth noting that the corps' relatively large area of responsibility usually contained smaller populated areas, if not towns.¹⁶

In the syllabus of 1953, the single map exercise of urban warfare was excluded. Topics on urban operations were annexed to a larger scenario involving coastal defense. The adjustment, however, is not as unreasonable as one might expect because the most important cities, including Helsinki, the capital, are located by the sea. Moreover, by the early 1950s, amphibious operations were essential to contemporary threat perceptions, as described later in this paper. Although many theses produced by the student officers during the 1950s studied either the Finnish war experience or the character of war in the future, not a single analysis was made of urban warfare.¹⁷

Fighting in the Built-Up Area Was an Exception in Finnish Tactical Guidance

Collecting and appreciating relevant war experience was a trying ordeal, but refining the lessons into training instructions and tactical manuals was even more difficult. It took some ten years to re-write the most important tactical manuals. The main reason for the delay was not only the compilation of relevant tactical lessons. The problem was more holistic. Finland could not restart military preparations until it had signed a peace treaty with the allies. The Paris Peace Treaty, signed in 1947, had a significant and long-lasting effect on the Finnish defense. Not only did it disallow various weapons systems, but it also limited the size of the Defense Forces to about 41,900 men. Following the treaty, the Finnish Defense Forces profoundly transitioned at the turn of the 1940s and 50s. Both the peacetime and wartime establishments, including the mobilization system, were reorganized during the early 1950s. Only after these cornerstones of the defense system were consolidated was the time ripe for developing tactical doctrine.¹⁸

¹⁶ NAF, T 21369/Db 5, Sotakorkeakoulun maasotalinjan (YO 18) opetussuunnitelman 1949 liite 5 (yleinen taktiikka); NAF, T 21369/Db 5, Sotakorkeakoulun maasotalinjan (YO 18) opetussuunnitelman 1950 liite 5 (yleinen taktiikka)

¹⁷ NAF, T 21369/Db 5, Sotakorkeakoulun maasotalinjan (MSL 20) opetussuunnitelman 1953 Liite 5 (yleinen taktiikka). A list of theses produced at the Finnish War College between 1946 and 1997. Possessed by the author.

¹⁸ Vesa Tynkkynen, *Hyökkäyksestä puolustukseen. Taktiikan kehittymisen ensimmäiset vuosikymmenet Suomessa* (diss.), (Joutsa: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 1996), 306–315; Vesa Tynkkynen and Petteri Jouko, *Towards East or West? Defense Planning in Finland 1944–1966*. Finnish Defense Studies 17. (Helsinki: National Defense University, 2007), 10–19; 40–42.

Oddly enough, one of the first tactical instructions to be published after the war was a handbook for urban warfare in 1951. The guide was written by Lieutenant Colonel K.S. Laakso, the office director for military manuals (*ohjesääntötoimisto*). The handbook was produced relatively quickly because, according to the list of manuals and guides under preparation in 1948, the handbook on urban warfare was not even planned. It is quite possible that the handbook was at least a partial translation from Soviet or Swedish manuals. In addition to the hectic timetable in production, the illustrations and generic style reflect a strong foreign influence.¹⁹ There is, however, a good reason for the generic tone. By the time the handbook was published, the wartime establishments had just been confirmed, but tactical manuals for the infantry remained unconfirmed. As a result, the guide describes urban fighting on a practical level, emphasizing minor tactics and battlecraft.²⁰

To fill the gap between obsolete pre-war manuals, a group of instructors belonging to the War College produced a set of handbooks for officers (*Upseerin käsikirja*). The authors consisted of a pool of officers who were later to climb to the upper ranks of the Finnish officer corps, and although providing general information on defense – such as principles of territorial defense – the handbooks were, in reality, provisional semi-military manuals. Many of the guidelines were almost literally copied to the formations-level Field Manual published in 1954 and other manuals published during the later 1950s.²¹ The last of the officers' handbooks published in 1953 introduced new organizations – an infantry brigade replacing division as the basic formation and subunits – and the principles of their tactical employment. The handbook reviewed fighting in the built-up areas, only superficially presenting broad guidelines on a few pages. The defense in built-up areas was defined as taking advantage of permanent infrastructure within a city or borough. Battles in built-up areas require a large amount of manpower. The defensive position of an infantry battalion consisted of company-sized defense perimeters subdivided into platoon-sized strongholds. A single stronghold would consist of a block of houses or a single large building. In practice, it meant that a company would man between 4 and 6 blocks of houses, depending on their size. One of the features in the built-up areas was limited visibility. As a result,

¹⁹ NAF, T 24167/F 21, PvPE:n kirjelmä nro 987/Koul.2/25, 1.3.1948; *Asutuskeskustaistelun opas (Asut tst opas)*, (Helsinki: Kauppalehti Oy:n Kirjapaino, 1951), passim; Tynkkynen (1996), 327.

²⁰ *Asutuskeskustaistelun opas (Asut tst opas)*, (Helsinki: Kauppalehti Oy:n Kirjapaino, 1951), passim; Liimatta, Hannu, *Ulkomaisista esikuvista kohti omaperäisempiä ratkaisuja. Itsenäisen Suomen jalkaväkitaiteen kehittämisen neljä ensimmäistä vuosikymmentä* (diss.), (Helsinki: Edita 2018), 410-413.

²¹ *Upseerin käsikirja, III osa* (Joukkoja varten). (Helsinki: Topografikunnan rotaatiopaino, 1953), 3–9.

the defending force could not be deployed evenly, but some areas would be controlled only by observation, which, in turn, required relatively large local mobile reserves: 1/4–1/3 of the defending force should be reserved for counterattacks.²² Another peculiarity of fighting in the built-up areas was that engagements took place in short ranges. In that sense, they did not differ from the dense forests. Special attention and effort should be made to create a network of fires for small-caliber weapons, preferably automatic weapons with a high rate of fire. Mortars were effective in providing fire support due to their ability to shoot at high angles, and their projectiles featured a favorable angle of impact.²³

Supporting artillery units could usually not deploy in densely built-up areas because of their ballistic characteristics. Artillery battalions – the basic firing unit in the Finnish Defense Forces – should be deployed on the city's outskirts. Because the buildings restricted surveillance and observation of fires, the appropriate positioning of fire observers was essential. Concentrated fire within built-up areas was not considered reasonable since most of the projectiles would hit the roofs or walls of the buildings. Instead, concentrated defensive fire against the enemy marshaling for the attack would have better results. On rare occasions, single guns – preferably heavier than 122 millimeters – would be allocated for direct firing support.²⁴ Defending the city would require special logistic arrangements. Because transportation of supplies would be hazardous during the action, if tunnels were not available, strongholds should be stocked with ammunition and other equipment before the battle because, according to estimates, the consumption of ammunition would rise steeply during the dense firefights taking place at close range. Any transportation during the action should be allocated to the evacuation of the wounded.²⁵

The battle itself should be conducted actively from the forward area of the battle zone by artillery fire. The marshaling areas and positions of the fire support weapons, such as anti-tank guns or assault guns, should be brought under concentrated fire. The basic idea was to break up the enemy assault even before it had started – as had taken place during the battles of 1944 – and to prevent it from entering the city center and dense population.²⁶

²² *Upseerin käsikirja, III osa* (Joukkoja varten). (Helsinki: Topografikunnan rotaatiopaino, 1953), 192–194.

²³ *Kenttäohjesääntö II osa (KO II)*. (Helsinki, 1954), 142–143.

²⁴ *Upseerin käsikirja, III osa* (Joukkoja varten). (Helsinki: Topografikunnan rotaatiopaino, 1953), 195; *Kenttätykistön taisteluohjesääntö, I osa* (Tykistön käyttö ja johtaminen) (Tykistön kuvalaboratorio, 1949), 100.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 195.

²⁶ On tactical employment and tactical evolution of concentrated fire during the summer of 1944, see Pasi Kesseli, *Tykistö taistelee tulellaan: tykistötaktiikan kehitys Suomessa*

If the enemy assault force could enter the main defensive positions, it was vital to start counterattacks at the earliest possible stage to prevent it from taking the initiative and start a systematic mopping-up of the buildings. Since maintaining tactical communications was difficult and hampered more by smoke, extreme noise, and lack of visual contact, leaders and commanders at every level were expected to be active and take the initiative.²⁷ If defensive operations in populated areas were a special occasion, an attack in the built-up area was an even more remote option. It was considered time-consuming and causing heavy casualties – one of the reasons the wartime supreme commander, Field Marshall Mannerheim, had declined to use Finnish forces to assault Leningrad to assist the German effort during the Second World War.²⁸

Assault in a built-up area requires profound preparations and should be planned in depth. Frontal attacks from one direction were usually unsuccessful. Instead, the target area should be attacked from several directions to tie down mobile reserves. Due to the fighting conditions, the standard order of battle was unsuitable. The infantry units should be divided into smaller task units reinforced by other arms, especially by engineers trained to use explosives. Because the break-in phase would be made against strongly fortified positions in buildings, task units should be equipped with extra equipment and hardware, especially explosives or flame throwers. As in defense, sectors allocated for the units should be very limited. The maximum width of attack for a reinforced infantry company would be only a few hundred meters.²⁹ Arrangements for fire support were complex because indirect artillery fire had only a limited effect. In addition to standard fire preparation, artillery fire should be used for interdiction on the flanks and rear to prevent the enemy from deploying its reserves. Furthermore, because the heaviest direct-firing weapons, such as heavy machine guns, could not be deployed in fighting inside the buildings, they should be used for concentrated fire support.³⁰ The tactical manual for the infantry battalion, introduced in 1955, did not introduce anything new. Fighting in the built-up area was still considered secondary to fighting in forests. The principles presented in earlier manuals and handbooks were confirmed in short chapters describing the

itsenäisyytemme aikana, (Helsinki: Edita Oy, 2017), 148-149. 165–171; *Upseerin käsikirja, III osa* (Joukkoja varten). (Helsinki: Topografikunnan rotaatiopaino, 1953), 196.

²⁷ *Upseerin käsikirja, III osa* (Joukkoja varten). (Helsinki: Topografikunnan rotaatiopaino, 1953), 197.

²⁸ Mikko Karjalainen and Toni Mononen, *Mannerheimin sotataito*, (Helsinki: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Otava, 2022), 208.

²⁹ *Kenttäohjesääntö II osa (KO II)*. (Helsinki, 1954), 69–71.

³⁰ *Upseerin käsikirja, III osa* (Joukkoja varten). (Helsinki: Topografikunnan rotaatiopaino, 1953), 140–141.

conduct of defense and attack. Guidelines for the tactical employment of land forces produced in 1957 did not change aspects of urban warfare. Instead of urban warfare, the guidelines promoted guerrilla warfare, deep defense, and exploitation of darkness, heavy terrain, and weather as balancing factors against the mechanized enemy. Urban fighting was not even mentioned in this secret document, which laid the foundations for the tactical doctrine of the 1960s.³¹

A Medicine for Total War? Introduction of Territorial Defense and Urban Warfare

The operations against the Germans were still raging when the government nominated a special Parliamentary Defense Revision Committee to review the foundations of the national defense. The committee worked for four tedious years before publishing its memorandum and recommendations. In hindsight, it was fortunate that the seemingly endless committee work lasted this long because the committee could then incorporate the effects of the Paris Peace Treaty and the Soviet-Finnish Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance into its three-volume review.³²

Finland between East and West

The Defense Revision Committee allocated a substantial number of pages to assess the Finnish military-political situation and the nature of total war and the battlefield. The review promoted the Finnish will to maintain neutrality during any crisis. However, due to the evolution of atomic weapons and their carriers and the political division between the East and the West, the territory of Finland would interest both power blocks. Although Finland and the Arctic region remained secondary during any conflict, the Finnish territory – especially the airspace – would offer operational opportunities for the West, especially if it remained undefended.³³ The review also addressed lessons from the Second World War. The war had become total as entire societies and resources were mobilized for the struggle on an industrial scale. Even remote areas could be affected by the air power and rockets enabled by rapid technological evolution, which had only accelerated after the war. The battlefield had become more mobile. The Allies had opened new fronts through vast amphibious operations. Motorization of the land forces and the introduction of airborne operations had created a new pace and dimension for land operations.³⁴

³¹ *Jalkaväen taisteluohjesääntö II osa* (JvO II. Pataljoonan taistelu), Mikkeli, 1955), 228–233 and 158–164; NAF, T 21442/7B sal, PE:n ohje nro 136/Ohjetsto/8 b sal, 16.5.1957.

³² Pekka Visuri, *Puolustusvoimat kylmässä sodassa: Suomen puolustuspolitiikka 1945–1961*, (Helsinki: WSOY, 1994), 56–62.

³³ *Puolustusrevision mietintö, I Osa* (Helsinki 1949), 13–17.

³⁴ *Puolustusrevision mietintö, I Osa* (Helsinki 1949), 45–50.

What did this all mean to the defense? Because Finland was a large country with a small population, conscription producing large reserves was the only feasible basis for the defense system. According to the experience of the Second World War, there was no division between the battlefield and the home front. The defense system had to be designed to meet deep attacks by organizing it on a territorial basis. Instead of organizing the defense on the battlefield and home front, as during the Second World War, there should be unified commands integrating all defense measures.³⁵

Fight on the Outskirts – Defense of Helsinki in the Early 1950s

The defense review did not name the aggressor but noted that Finland could be dragged into the conflict between the West and East. Finland per se was not interesting, but its territory offered opportunities for operations against the Soviet Union during the Second World War. Hostilities against the Soviet Union were not likely due to the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance. A conflict between the Soviet Union and Finland was a political absurdity that could not be publicly discussed. Subsequently, the Soviet military base in Porkkala, capable of not only controlling the narrowest part of the Gulf of Finland but also the capital, was not considered a threat. However, the Finnish defense was aware of the Soviet capabilities in the base since central Helsinki was literally within gun range of the base. The Soviet garrison consisted of an infantry division supported by armor. Even worse, the Finnish could not control sea traffic to the base. The Soviets could secretly reinforce their forces at the base and launch a surprise attack with very short forewarning. How did the Finnish defense forces prepare to defend the capital with minimal experience in urban warfare?³⁶

The Finnish threat perception in the early fifties consisted of three scenarios designed to meet the political demands of the FCMA treaty. Scenario B's basic assumption was that the large-scale war had extended to the Baltic. Due to their ability to create new fronts during the Second World War, the Western powers would make amphibious landing at the southwestern part of Finland to create a solid base for further operations against Leningrad. The concept of a Western invasion had been established as early as 1945 when the future of Finland was anything but straightforward. A threat from the West

³⁵ *Puolustusrevision mietintö, I Osa* (Helsinki 1949), 26–27, 76. Before the war, the field manual addressing the principals of war divided the territory of Finland into theaters of war and home front, *Kenttäohjesääntö, yleinen osa* (Helsinki, 1931), 19–20.

³⁶ Jari Leskinen, “Porkkalan tukikohta 1944–1956” in *Porkkala – Tapahtumien keskellä* eds. Jyrki Iivonen et al., (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2007), 49–53; Tapio Koskimies, *Puolustuskyykyinen valtio vai Ruotsin hälytyskello: Suomen sotilasstrateginen asema kylmän sodan asiantuntija-arvioissa* (diss.), (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu 2010), 126–126.

was not, however, realistic. Rapidly developing operations extending to the Baltic was not probable, as noted in contemporary documents, due to NATO's limited capabilities. On the other hand, if the war turned out to be a long and exhaustive repetition of the Second World War with fully mobilized nations, almost anything was within possibility.³⁷

The Finnish Defense Forces conducted the first round of operational planning between 1950 and 1953. They were – as the threat perception – designed to meet the eventualities of carrying out the FCMA treaty. The first of the plans involved only forces within the limitations of the Paris Peace Treaty. The second plan was more comprehensive since it integrated plans for various stages of mobilization and readiness. In this context, it is impossible to analyze these plans comprehensively. However, it is essential to note that the capital, Helsinki, played an important role in both plans.³⁸ If the operations took place before the mobilization, the defenses of Helsinki relied on the units of the Helsinki garrison. The coastal artillery regiment was tasked to guard and cover islands in the vicinity of Helsinki. Of the two available mobile units, one protected military and administrative infrastructure within central Helsinki. The other one was deployed outside central Helsinki and reserved for counterattacks to potential airborne landing zones to assist local police forces against any uprisings and to support, if necessary, the frontier guard responsible for guarding the Soviet base.³⁹

According to OpPlan-52, large-scale Western operations against Helsinki were very unlikely because of the Soviet base on the western side of the capital. Nonetheless, Helsingin linnoitusalue (a unique fortified region of Helsinki), the wartime establishment responsible for the defense of the capital, based its planning on three different threat scenarios.⁴⁰ The enemy would make amphibious landings either on the eastern or western side of central Helsinki or, in an optimal situation, directly into the principal harbors within central Helsinki. The east side was considered the most optimal for landings due to the channels leading to the mainland. The main elements of a divisional assault force could be transported to the area, which nowadays contains the main harbor for commercial vessels. The western side of the city offered opportunities only for a regimental assault.⁴¹

³⁷ Vesa Tynkkynen and Petteri Jouko, "Uhkalähtöinen puolustus suunnittelu" in Suomen puolustusvoimat 100 vuotta, ed. Mikko Karjalainen (Helsinki: Edita 2018), 140–142; Mika Jääskeläinen, *Suunnitelmat pääkaupunkiseudun puolustamiseksi jatkosodan lopulta 1960-luvun alkuun* (diss.), (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu 2021), 48–49.

³⁸ Jääskeläinen (2021), 89–91.

³⁹ NAF, T 20184/ F 5 OT-sal, HelSpE:n käsky nro 133/Järjsto/OT/11 a sal, 25.7.1953.

⁴⁰ NAF, T 26862/F 3 OT-sal, PvPE:n käsky nro 80/Op. 1/11 b /OT/sal, 13.6.1952.

⁴¹ Petteri Jouko, "Porkkalan sotilasstrateginen asema" in *Porkkala – Tapahtumien keskellä* eds. Jyrki Iivonen et al., (Helsinki: Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulu, 2007), 67–69.

In the light of threat perception, it is interesting to note that although the defense perimeter was prepared to meet an attack from all directions, the majority of the forces were deployed on the western side of the city facing the Soviet base. Apart from one battalion – the reserve preparing to counter airborne landings – the units of the infantry brigade allocated to the defense were deployed to cover western approaches to the city. According to the plan, the main battle would take place on the outskirts of the town after the nimble units of the Frontier Guard responsible for guarding the base had taken delaying action. The forces would take advantage of the WW1-era fortifications, which were part of more extensive defenses of Helsinki built to protect not only Helsinki itself but the contemporary capital of imperial Russia, Saint Petersburg. Inside the city, civilian and military installations would be covered by the Guards Battalion and Anti-Aircraft units.⁴²

The larger operational framework also supports the idea of fighting the main battle on the outer perimeter of the city. The GHQ planned to deploy the general reserves consisting of several brigades in the vicinity of Helsinki to reinforce the defenses or conduct counterattacks. In addition, the GHQ planned to direct both of the wartime armored brigades to Helsinki after they had been brought to the wartime establishment during the mobilization.⁴³

Conclusions

The concept of conducting military operations in built-up areas remained vague, almost nonexistent in the Finnish post-war military thinking and planning. The success of the Finnish arms during the Second World War relied heavily on victories that had taken place in dense forests. Rugged terrain had been the balancing factor against superior Soviet forces in various areas of operations. Also, the Soviet offensive operations in 1944 received substantial attention as the Finnish reasoned that a deep attack could be countered only by a deep defense.

As a result, the tactical lessons addressed after the war concentrated on fighting outside cities – urban warfare received hardly any attention at any level. The military manuals written in the early 1950s introduced only some very general principles of urban warfare despite the cities in Southern Finland being in the danger zone of any future military operations. Forests had provided cover and opportunities for the Finnish forces during the war, and they were expected to do so in the future. It would take decades before tactics in urban warfare took significant steps forward.

⁴² NAF, T 20184/F 4 OT-sal, HelSpE:n käsky nro 244/Järjtsto/OT 11 a sal, 2.9.1953; NAF T 20184/F 4 OT-sal, UudSIE:n käsky nro 373/OT/11 a sal, 30.9.1953, Liite 5.

⁴³ NAF, T 26862/F 3 OT-sal, PvPE:n käsky nro 80/Op. 1/11 b/OT/sal, 13.6.1952.

THE FIGHT OVER THE ‘KEY AREAS’: URBAN WARFARE IN THE INDONESIAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, 1945-1949

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Introduction

This paper will deal with several key episodes of urban fighting in the Indonesian war of independence. It starts with analyzing the early struggles that arose around the transfer of Japanese arms to the newly established Indonesian army in September, 1945, in the north Javanese port city of Semarang. In November of that same year, the largest battle of the entire war was fought between British and Indonesian forces in another port city, Surabaya. This event formed a turning point in the war, shaping both strategic planning and tactical conduct on all sides. In the year that followed, Indonesian troops fought another urban battle in Semarang, this time against the Dutch, who had by then taken over positions in several so-called ‘key areas’. The fighting here was characterized by large-scale and indiscriminate naval gunfire support by Dutch destroyers, that compensated for a lack of air support in this phase of the war. The paper ends where the war ended: in the last urban battle of the war in the royal city of Surakarta (Solo), where a massive attack by thousands of guerrillas formed the final chord of more than four years of fighting over control in the Indonesian archipelago.

Five-day Struggle in Semarang

On August 17, 1945, only two days after imperial Japan surrendered, Indonesian nationalist leader Sukarno read the following text to a crowd gathered in Jakarta: ‘We the people of Indonesia hereby declare the independence of Indonesia. Matters which concern the transfer of power and other things will be executed by careful means and in the shortest possible time.’¹ Some of the more pressing ‘other things’ Sukarno referred to were the establishment of an army and the subsequent acquisition of arms to defend the newly proclaimed independence against foreign intervention. In many places in the archipelago the nationalists managed to obtain large stocks of weapons from the Japanese military without much bloodshed, but in several instances it came to violent clashes on a considerable scale.

¹ Translation by George McT. Kahin in idem, ‘Sukarno’s proclamation of Indonesian independence’, *Indonesia* 69 (2000) 1-3, there 2.

Typical of the fighting between Japanese and Indonesian troops in the early days of the independence struggle (between August and October, 1945) were urban battles between relatively lightly armed Japanese units and hastily organized Indonesian troops. The Japanese did have artillery and other support weapons at their disposal, but were generally hesitant to use these as they were not at war with the Indonesian people.² Instead, they were tasked with maintaining order until allied troops would take over control over the main cities of the Indonesian archipelago to organize evacuation of prisoners of war and internees. Another reason may have been the limited tactical value of heavy, indirect fire in the close-quarter urban combat environment of many cities on the two main islands of Java and Sumatra. Nonetheless, casualties on the Indonesian side were often high, being mainly caused by machine gun fire against inexperienced Indonesian *pemuda* (litt: youth, youngster) fighters, who exposed themselves too often to deadly enemy fire. Reports of summary executions with handguns, bamboo spears and even bayonets, by both sides, are also numerous.³

The fighting that took place over arms acquisition in the north Javanese port city of Semarang between October 14 and 19, known in Indonesia as *pertempuran lima hari*, ('the struggle of five days'), occupies an important place in Indonesian collective memory of the revolutionary years.⁴ In much of the literature, the actions of the Japanese troops during the battle is portrayed as an act of revenge for the execution of 100-150 Japanese civil and army workers that were held captive in a prison. But as one author has pointed out, Japanese operations had already begun before the massacre. It is likely, however, that the ferocity of Japanese operations increased after the discovery of the bodies on October 16, as many accounts report mass executions of captured *pemuda* fighters by Japanese forces after that date. In part, these harsh methods can also be explained by the Japanese code of war, which stipulated that a soldier fights to his death and never surrenders, leading to contempt for prisoners of war.⁵

² Sadao Oba, 'Recollections of Indonesia, 1944-1947', in Ian Nish (ed.), *Indonesian experience: the role of Japan and Britain, 1943-1948* (Londen, 1979), 1-34, there 27.

³ Rémy Limpach, *De brandende kampongs van generaal Spoor* (Amsterdam: Boom, 2016), 244-45.

⁴ See, among others, Panitia Penyusunan Sejarah Pertempuran Lima Hari di Semarang, *Sejarah pertempuran lima hari di Semarang* (Semarang 1977); Syamsur Said, *Pertempuran lima hari di Semarang* (Jakarta, 1984); Moerwanto, *Jiwa Patriot. Pertempuran lima hari di Semarang* (Jakarta 1992); Moehkardi, *Revolusi nasional 1945 di Semarang* (Jakarta 2012); Amrin Imran and Ariwadi (eds.), *Peranan Pelajar dalam perang kemerdekaan* (Jakarta, 1985).

⁵ Han Bing Siong, 'The secret of Major Kido: the battle of Semarang, 15-19 October 1945', *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde / Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia* 152:3 (1996) 382-428, there 391.

Indonesian troops that took part in the battle overall had little firepower, although there were major differences between units. An Indonesian special police unit was relatively well armed, as the Japanese police had transferred some of their weapons to it. Most *pemuda* fighters, however, hardly possessed any guns, a situation that also applied to many units of the recently established *Tentara Keamanan Rakyat* (TKR or People's Security Army, the predecessor of the later national army, the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* or TNI). After reports of the Japanese violence spread, groups of freedom fighters from all over Central Java moved to Semarang to contribute to the struggle. According to Indonesian historian Moehkardi, who experienced the battle as a child, many of these *pemuda* fought without command, without coordination and without organization, but with high morale. During the fighting, TKR units managed to get hold of some Japanese machine guns and equipped snipers with them. In reaction, Japanese soldiers perched on the roofs of tall buildings shot anyone who dared to move on the thoroughfares.⁶

Casualties were high on both sides, ranging from more than four hundred Japanese to several thousand Indonesians. Although much lower than the Indonesian death toll, Japanese losses amounted to almost half of all casualties suffered during their invasion of Java in 1942.⁷ According to Han Bing Siong, who bore witness to the events, this too could be attributed to the *bushidō*, the Japanese code of honor. He quotes military historian Alvin Coox, who stated that 'risk, as a correlation of strategic objectives, interests and consequences, is not a word that can be found in the general vocabulary of the Japanese army.'⁸ T.S. Tull, a British wing commander who arrived at the scene on September 18, writes with some pathos that the Japanese 'swept through the town, regardless of dangers or their own losses like one of the Mongolian hordes of Genghiz Khan or Tamerlane'.⁹ From their part, Indonesian fighters also proved themselves time and again ready to accept extremely high losses in battles with superiorly armed and well-trained opponents. In light of subsequent events, this is a relevant observation, as the British and Dutch forces adopted a fundamentally different attitude to risk. To a lesser extent, the Indonesian forces would eventually do the same, but not everywhere, and not consistently.

⁶ Moehkardi, *Revolusi nasional 1945 di Semarang*, 208-216.

⁷ Ken'ichi Goto, 'Caught in the middle: Japanese attitude toward Indonesian independence in 1945', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27:1 (1996) 37-48.

⁸ Han Bing Siong, 'The secret of Major Kido', 421-422. According to Japanese reports their losses amounted to 42 killed, 43 wounded and 213 missing.

⁹ Petra Groen, "'Patience and bluff": de bevrijding van de Nederlandse burgergeïnterneerden op Midden-Java (augustus-december 1945)", *Mededelingen van de Sectie Militaire Geschiedenis van de Landmachtstaf* 8 (1985) 91-154, there 117.

The Battle of Surabaya, 10 November 1945

While the fighting in the early months was characterized by fanatical battles fought by lightly armed opponents, in Surabaya a different type of urban battle took place, one that would have a lasting impact on all warring parties and the way the war was fought. On October 1st, *pemuda* fighters stormed the headquarters of the *kempetai*, the dreaded Japanese police and intelligence unit. Japanese security forces on the spot fired their machine guns at the attacking crowd until they ran out of ammunition, then evacuated the building and retreated. According to an official Indonesian army publication, the captured arsenal in this and other raids in Surabaya together made up half of the armament of the later TNI. The author lists 700 light and heavy machine guns, 148 grenade launchers, 17 infantry guns, 20 field and mountain guns from the prewar Dutch colonial army, 63 heavy mortars, 20 pieces of anti-tank guns, 140 anti-aircraft guns, 4 howitzers, 16 tanks and many hundreds of vehicles and firearms.¹⁰ Although other authors mention different numbers, they are all in the same order of magnitude, and it was this weaponry that made the difference in the urban battle that later unfolded.¹¹ Indonesian army historian Nugroho Notosusanto even claimed that, should the Indonesian armed forces (numbering more than 100,000 at that point) have been able to make optimal use of this equipment, the British would not have been able to drive them out of Surabaya with only one division. The fact that none of the *pemuda* had ever sat in a tank, let alone driven one, as an Indonesian participant in the fighting observed, illustrates that the reality was far from that optimal situation.¹²

The already tense atmosphere in Surabaya heated up further in the following weeks when British forces landed in the harbor. Indonesians suspected them of helping the Dutch colonizers return to Java, and on October 28 'all hell broke loose' when thousands of Indonesian fighters stormed British positions in the city, which at that time had a strength of only one brigade in total. Several posts were completely overwhelmed when they ran out of ammunition, and losses were high on both sides. Sukarno was flown in to broker a cease-fire on the 29th. One day later, British Brigadier A.W.S.

¹⁰ Cited in H. Th. Bussemaker, *Bersiap! Opstand in het paradijs: de bersiap-periode op Java en Sumatra 1945-1946* (Zutphen 2005), 208.

¹¹ Miyamoto Shizuo, *Jawa shusen shoriki* (Tokyo, 1973), 347, cited in W.G.J. Rummelink, 'The emergence of the new situation: the Japanese army on Java after the surrender', *Militaire Spectator* 147 (1978) 49-66, there 60; Nugroho Notosusanto, *The Battle of Surabaya* (Jakarta, 1970), 14; Anthony Reid, *The Indonesian National Revolution, 1945-1950* (Hawthorn, Vic., 1974), 51; H. Wagner, 'Hoe kwamen de Indonesische strijdkrachten in de jaren '40 aan wapens?', *Militaire Spectator* 156:11 (1987), 488-495, there 489.

¹² Notosusanto, *The Battle of Surabaya*, 14; Suhario Padmodiwiryo, *Revolution in the city of heroes: a memoir of the battle that sparked Indonesia's National Revolution*, translated by Frank Palmos (Singapore, 2016), 52.

Mallaby, commander of the 49th Indian Brigade, was killed in a chaotic skirmish. His death shocked British ranks. British historian Richard McMillan writes that while in the short run it ignited a resolute fighting spirit among British troops, in the long run it strengthened their resolve to leave Indonesia and get out of a war that wasn't theirs in the first place.¹³

After an ultimatum issued by Sir Philip Christison, commander of allied troops in the Indonesian archipelago, in which he famously threatened to 'bring the whole weight of my sea, land and air forces and all the weapons of modern war against them until they are crushed', expired without any Indonesian forces surrendering, it was acted upon on November 10. For many Indonesian authors who have written on the battle that followed, in which British forces employed fighter-bombers, naval destroyers, heavy mortars and field artillery on a considerable scale, killing thousands, the operation was, in the words of Sukarno, no less than 'a great massacre of women, children, and men'. Others have gone so far as to call the whole operation a war crime and an act of aggression.¹⁴ Many British authors, however, are surprisingly mild in their assessment of the operation. S. Woodburn Kirby states in an official history that air support was only used sparingly and only against well-marked Indonesian military targets. In addition, David Jordan points out that concerns for the safety of internees as well as rumors over high losses among own troops, akin to those suffered on October 28, were equally important reasons for the British to employ their 'weapons of modern war'. In his view, the use of artillery, naval gunfire and air support was no sign of overreaction, but of a 'cautious advance against a well-equipped foe'.¹⁵

One explanation for this divergence of conception of the violence is, of course, the difference in viewing the events from the perspective of those who fired the weapons versus those at the receiving end of the violence. Although British authors can with some right be accused of skimming all too easily over the suffering of thousands of civilian inhabitants of Surabaya, qualifying it as one great massacre or a war crime also does not do full justice

¹³ Peter Dennis, *Troubled days of peace: Mountbatten and South East Asia Command, 1945-46* (Manchester, 1987), 123; The National Archives of the UK, CAB 106/165, Monograph on the Re-occupation of the Netherlands East Indies 1945, by General Sir Philip Christison, Bart, GBE., CB., DSO., MC., D.L., Formerly Allied Commander NEI; Bussemaker, *Bersiap!*, 227.

¹⁴ Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Koesalah Soebagyo Toer and Ediati Kamil, *Kronik Revolusi Indonesia. Jil. 1: 1945* (Jakarta 1999) 139; Batara Hutagalung, *10 November '45: mengapa Inggris membom Surabaya? Analisis latar belakang agresi militer Inggris* (Jakarta 2001) ix, 357-58, 438-42.

¹⁵ S. Woodburn Kirby, *The War against Japan, Vol. V: The surrender of Japan* (History of the Second World War United Kingdom Military Series, London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1969), 331; David Jordan, "'A particularly exacting operation': British forces and the Battle of Surabaya, November 1945", *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 11:3 (2000), pp. 89-114, there 108. See also W. Meelhuisen, *Revolutie in Soerabaja* (Zutphen, 2000), 241.

to the circumstances at the time. The horror of British units that were completely wiped out after running out of ammunition was still fresh in the minds of the soldiers of the 5th Indian Division arriving in the harbor. Moreover, Indonesian troops were heavily armed, and although they made many tactical errors, there were successes as well. Guns placed on Gunungsari, a strategic hill post in the south of the city, caused the British much trouble. RAF bombers had great difficulty in taking them out.¹⁶ Suicide squads stormed British tanks in the streets and destroyed them with improvised explosives and Molotov cocktails.¹⁷ The difficult urban terrain played an important role in the decision to employ heavy fire support weapons, thereby limiting risks for soldiers who had to fight for every street.¹⁸

However, Woodburn Kirby's claim that air support was only used against carefully selected targets is not supported by the facts. On November 14 and 15, RAF pilots were given a free hand to track down enemy trains and, in their own words, had 'good sport' in strafing and bombing locomotives and carriages. The results on the ground were disastrous. Suhario Padmodiwiryo, an Indonesian fighter at the time, mentions a raid on a train in the area of Gedangan that killed many civilian passengers. Military strategist and historian A.H. Nasution describes a number of air attacks, including the bombing of a carriage full of refugees at Sidoarjo, south of the city. These attacks, 'so terrible', were aimed at frustrating logistic efforts.¹⁹ British command limited the use of air support after these incidents, not only out of prudence but also because of the limited value of air support in the dense urban environment, and the risk of hitting own troops.²⁰ As artillery and naval gunfire caused less outcry than air attacks, the British employed these weapons on a larger scale, sometimes with devastating effect: in at least one case internees were hit by shells falling in the wrong place.²¹ In fact, at a conference in 2000 the British ambassador to Indonesia made a statement of apology towards the Indonesian people for the tragic loss of life during the battle.²²

¹⁶ Moehkardi, *Akademi Militer Yogya dalam perjuangan fisik 1945-1949* (Yogyakarta 2019) 52-59; Suratmin, *Perjuangan Laskar Hizbullah dalam pertempuran Surabaya 10 November 1945* (Yogyakarta, 2017), 132; A.H. Nasution, *10 Nopember 1945* (Bandung 1976) 44-47.

¹⁷ Suratmin, *Perjuangan Laskar Hizbullah*, 115-17.

¹⁸ Petra Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen: het Nederlands militair-strategisch beleid in Indonesië 1945-1950* ('s-Gravenhage 1991), 41.

¹⁹ Nasution, *10 Nopember 1945*, 43; Padmodiwiryo, *Revolution in the city of heroes*, 186.

²⁰ Oey Hong Lee, *War and diplomacy in Indonesia, 1945-50* (Townsville, Qld. 1981), 46; Meelhuijsen, *Revolutie in Soerabaja*, 159.

²¹ McMillan, *The British occupation*, 56.

²² Chris Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten wars: freedom and revolution in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), 181.

Large-scale fighting ended around the time the strategic hill of Gunungsari was captured, on November 28. While British losses ran into the hundreds, Indonesian casualties were estimated by some authors as numbering more than 16,000, of whom up to fifty percent were civilians.²³ The city remained eerily silent after the battle, with many buildings heavily damaged.²⁴ Besides these immediate consequences, the battle had a lasting impact on both the Indonesian and British forces as well as Dutch troops, who started to arrive in the archipelago a few months after ‘Surabaya’.

Indonesian *pemuda* fighters, as well as the newly established army, experienced the devastating effects of carrying out massed attacks without proper protection or preparation. Conventional style fighting against modern armies like the British (or the Japanese and the Dutch) resulted in enormous amounts of losses, both in human lives and in materiel. ‘How many of our boys died in vain’, writes Nasution in his classic treatise *Fundamentals of guerrilla warfare*, ‘because of the mistakes of our commanders who urged them to go on hopeless attacks, to fight with bamboo sticks against tanks, to fight with grenades against artillery, etc.’²⁵ It sparked the first ideas on switching to less risky hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, although it would take until mid-1947 until these tactics were adopted on a large scale. Before that time, several battles would take place in other ‘key areas’, most notably in Bandung, Medan, Palembang, and Padang. More importantly, the battle of Surabaya sparked a fighting spirit in Indonesian society that strengthened and deepened support for the armed struggle for independence. November 10 became Heroes Day, and *pemuda* fighters armed with bamboo spears became its symbol.

The British realized they wanted to get rid of ‘the burdens of occupation’ sooner rather than later. Until that time however, they were keen to prevent a repetition of the events that took place in Surabaya – in other words, risks to own soldiers would have to be mitigated. Should troops get involved in heavy fighting again, a training instruction issued by the British command reads, ‘the maximum use of all weapons must be made from the outset’. Indeed, from the month of November onwards, air attacks on Indonesian targets soared.²⁶

²³ Meelhuijsen, *Revolutie in Soerabaja*, 262; Jordan, “‘A particularly exacting operation’”, 108; Adrian Vickers, *A history of modern Indonesia* (Cambridge, 2005), 103.

²⁴ Netherlands Institute of Military History (NIMH), Collection Helfrich, inv.no. 24, Notulen vergadering zaterdag 15 december 1945; similar observations in C.B. Nicolas, *De Mariniersbrigade te kiek* (Amsterdam, 1986), n.p.; Meelhuijsen, *Revolutie in Soerabaja*, 236; K’Tut Tantri, *Revolt in paradise* (Londen, 1960), 194-95.

²⁵ A.H. Nasution, *Fundamentals of guerilla warfare* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 31.

²⁶ TNA, WO 203, 2255, Netherlands East Indies: situation reports, 1945, Oct-Dec; idem, ADM 199: Admiralty: War History, 2325, War diary summaries: situation reports, November 1945;

The Dutch, who were rebuilding their national and colonial armies after the Second World War, understood that the government and army commanders had greatly underestimated the power of the Indonesian revolutionary resolve. While the fighting in Surabaya was still ongoing, the high command of the Dutch armed forces ordered the establishment of as much armored support units, artillery batteries, and air force squadrons as the country could muster in a short time, to support and strengthen the light infantry battalions that were already being trained.²⁷ Illustrative of the hardline perspective many Dutch officers had towards the independence movement are the comments of colonel J.P.H. Perks, liaison officer at the Allied command in Southeast Asia, in a memorandum dated November 30: 'Considering the mentality of the Indonesian races, the use of the most frightening weapons is recommended such as whistling bombs, flame throwers, rockets etc. [...] It is better to have to kill thousands of terrorists (and probably some innocent spectators) now, than to kill millions of frightened and innocent people later (although without bullets)'.²⁸ Although Perks' remarks are rather extreme, belief in a violent solution to the Indonesian national revolution was widespread, both in the Dutch military and in government circles.

Semarang Revisited

While the five-day war in Semarang was still raging, British forces landed in the harbor of the city and quickly became involved in armed clashes with *pemuda* too. After the Japanese repatriated, the British tried to secure the town in the months that followed, but found themselves in a hostile environment surrounded by Indonesian armed fighters.²⁹ Dutch troops (the T- or 'Tiger' Brigade) were allowed to disembark in April, 1946, and soon were handed over control of the territory within the city's perimeter. Indonesian fighters then began to increase their attacks on the city (which had never actually let up); the Tiger Brigade retaliated in the villages outside the perimeter, which quickly emptied of civilians and became a no man's land controlled by *pemuda* fighters. Semarang felt like a prison in which the Dutch

AIR 27, 465-35, Squadron 47, November 1945; idem, 679-6 Squadron 81; idem, 697-13 Squadron 84, November 1945.

²⁷ Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen*, 55-60; S. L. van der Wal, *Officiële bescheiden betreffende de Nederlands-Indonesische betrekkingen, 1945-1950* (hereafter NIB), *Tweede deel*, No. 82 and 245; M.R.H. Calmeyer, *Herinneringen: memoires van een christen, militair en politicus. Ingeleid en bewerkt door J. Hoffenaar* (Den Haag, 1997) 111-14.

²⁸ NIB, *Tweede deel*, No. 114, Nederlandse stafsectie bij het geallieerd oppercommando in Zuid-Oost Azië aan de chef staf van de geallieerde opperbevelhebber in Zuid-Oost Azië (Browning), 30 nov. 1945.

²⁹ Rosihan Anwar, *Sejarah kecil, petite histoire Indonesia jilid 7: kisah-kisah zaman Revolusi Kemerdekaan* (Jakarta 2015) 107-108.

were trapped.³⁰ According to historian Widodo, the situation among the displaced inhabitants of the villages around the city became so dire that the *pemuda* sought revenge and decided to try and drive the Dutch into the sea and liberate Semarang.³¹ On August 4, 1946, fifteen hundred Indonesian fighters stormed the perimeter, screaming ‘Merdeka!’ (independence) as they attacked. The assault shocked the Tiger Brigade but was quickly repelled by machine gun and mortar fire. Indonesians achieved minor successes with downing a B-25 ‘Mitchell’ bomber and damaging the airfield of Semarang, effectively shutting down Dutch air operations in the area. That same day, the Dutch carried out a counterattack, supported by Stuart tanks, 3-inch mortars and artillery.³²

Meanwhile, the headquarters of the Tiger Brigade had called in assistance from navy destroyers to compensate for the lack of air support. From the 8th of August onwards, these gunboats shelled numerous targets outside the perimeter. Most of the shelling was rather inaccurate, as proper means of observation were lacking. Not only was air observation off limits, most targets were too far inland to be observed from Semarang – let alone from the roadstead where the destroyers were anchored – and so-called bombardment maps were missing on board. In these circumstances, it was nearly impossible to effectively target Indonesian positions, with indiscriminate shelling as a result. Indeed, the main reason that those directly involved cited was the perceived two-fold moral effect of the shelling – not only damaging the morale of the opponent but raising that of own troops simultaneously.³³ The Indonesian attacks – a second one was launched on the 11th – frightened the hemmed-in Tiger Brigade. Hence, according to navy commander vice admiral A.S. Pinke, a sigh of relief went through the ranks

³⁰ A.M. Brouwer and M.F.A. Brok, *Tussen sawahs en bergen. Het leven van de soldaat in de Tijgerbrigade* (Semarang, 1948) 8-9; Jot Polman, *De brutale reis. De eerste tocht naar een nieuwe wereld* (Meppel, 1947), 104, 122; Wiyono, *Sejarah revolusi kemerdekaan 1945-1949 Daerah Jawa Tengah* (Jakarta, 1991), 90; A.H. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia, Jilid 3: Diplomasi sambil Bertempur* (Bandung, 1977), 532.

³¹ Widodo, *Sejarah TNI-AD Kodam VII/Diponegoro. Sirnaning Jakso katon gapuraning Ratu* (Semarang, 1968), 74; Ny. Rr. Soedjarah Notohamidjojo, ‘Kehidupanku dan keluarga dalam masa perjuangan 45’, in: *Angkatan 45, Dewan Harian Nasional, Letusan di balik buku* (Jakarta: Pusat Dokumentasi Sejarah Perjuangan 45, 1976), 135-156, there 141-142.

³² Historische Collectie Korps Veldartillerie (HCKVA), inv.no. 9-2, Bekendmaking over den vijandelijke aanval op Semarang op 4 Augustus 1946.

³³ Nationaal Archief, The Hague (NL-HaNA), 2.13.72, Commandant Zeemacht Nederlands-Indië, inv.no. 2218, Patrouillerapporten Hr.Ms. ‘Banckert’, steunverleening landmacht Semarang, in zee, 20 augustus 1946, de Commandant, Luitenant ter Zee der 1e klasse, G. Koudijs; idem, 2.12.19, Chef van de Marinestaf en de Bevelhebber der Zeestrijdkrachten, 1945-1948, inv.no. 473, torpedobootjager Hr.Ms. Kortenaer, Stukken betreffende de beschietingen uitgevoerd op het Westfront van Semarang in het tijdvak 12-16 augustus; idem, 540, Rapporten betreffende patrouiltochten Hr.Ms. Piet Hein, Noordkust Java, 3-17 September 1946.

when the first destroyer appeared on the coast.³⁴ The *pemuda* fighters and army units that took part in the attacks suffered heavy losses, both during the mass assault and the subsequent counterattacks, just as they had done in the previous urban battles in Semarang and Surabaya. The same pattern repeated itself in other key areas on Java and Sumatra, the principal cities that the British handed over to the Dutch in 1946. On every occasion, the fighting was intense, but apart from scoring moral victories, the Indonesian troops were forced to retreat to the hinterland in all instances. Dutch troops consolidated their positions in the cities, and when troop build-up had reached the desired level (around 140,000 soldiers, supported by attack aircraft, artillery and armored units), they launched a major offensive and conquered substantial parts of Java and Sumatra in July and August, 1947.

The TNI, defeated in open battle and driven out of many urban areas, finally felt forced to abandon their aspirations to drive the Dutch into the sea, at least in the short term. By decree of Nasution, the armed forces adopted guerrilla tactics, ending the predominantly conventional phase of the war.³⁵ Gradually, the fighting moved away from cities and towns to more rural areas, and, especially on Sumatra, mountainous jungle terrain. Demarcation lines were officially implemented, as were several cease-fire agreements brokered by the United Nations, but small Indonesian units infiltrated in Dutch-occupied areas and carried out attacks there too. The bulk of the attacks, however, occurred at the demarcation lines. Dutch troops in return regularly went on patrols across the line in search for guerrilla strongholds, resulting in several highly violent and politically contested operations.³⁶ In December 1948, a second large-scale offensive was launched, with Dutch forces not only conquering large swaths of Java and Sumatra but also capturing Sukarno and other political leaders. An intensive and widespread phase of guerrilla war ensued, making the first half of 1949 the deadliest phase of the war. Guerrilla bands attacked their opponents from all sides, and the Dutch organized violent 'sweeps' to try and secure occupied areas. Gradually, the two sides reached a deadlock, as neither party was able to defeat the other definitively.³⁷ This paved the way for a political outcome, and a date was set for a final cease fire: on the night from August 10 to 11, 1949, hostilities would end. But not before a last bloody battle was fought in the heartland of the Indonesian Republic.

³⁴ NL-HaNA, Cdt. Zeemacht, 2161, CZM to BDZ, 'Steun der Marine aan het front te Semarang', ca. 4 september 1946.

³⁵ See also Rémy Limpach, "'Ze vielen als gemaaid koren.'" Een beschouwing over de verliescijfers in Indonesië, 1945-1949', *Militaire Spectator* 191:1 (2022), 32-49, there 43.

³⁶ A.H. Nasution, *Sekitar Perang Kemerdekaan Indonesia, Jilid 6, Perang Gerilya Semesta I* (Bandung: Angkasa, 1977), 140, 164.

³⁷ Groen, *Marsroutes en dwaalsporen*, 232.

Solo: The Final Battle

Dutch tank commander Jan Eshuis of 6 *Eskadron Vecht wagens* (6th tank squadron) wrote in his diary at the beginning of August how hopeless the situation had been in Surakarta (Solo) for the past months. His tank platoon had been involved in many extremely violent encounters almost on a daily basis. ‘It is almost unbearable’, he wrote on August 4, ‘your nerves are exhausted.’³⁸ Battery officer Frans Hazekamp was also in Solo with his artillery unit at the time of the attack. On August 7, the men had just moved the guns into a shed, as the armistice was due to take effect a few days later. Then came the attack. After the Dutch troops had recovered from the initial shock, they responded with whatever means they could. Hazekamp: ‘The Spitfires bomb and machine gun and we fire at everything our observers see. [...] Everywhere the machine guns crackle and the 37 mm cannon of the tanks and armored cars rumble. Everything and everyone is shot off the street.’³⁹ Not surprisingly, all this violence resulted in large numbers of casualties. According to Indonesian historians Imran Amrin and Ariwadi, 223 soldiers were killed. The number of civilian deaths is unknown. On August 11, the first day of the cease fire, Indonesian Lieutenant Colonel Slamet Riyadi, commander of regional guerrilla unit *Wehrkreis I*, visited the Dutch commander Colonel J. Ohl. The latter was ‘devilish’ and gave Riyadi an ultimatum that is reminiscent of that of Mansergh in Surabaya, almost four years earlier. ‘He makes it clear’, says Hazekamp, ‘out before four o’clock tomorrow afternoon, otherwise the full force of the Dutch army will be used to turn Solo “into a graveyard”.’⁴⁰ And so, the war ended as it had begun: with massive attacks by Indonesian freedom fighters, brute force as a counter-reaction, and a civilian population between two fires. That the guerrillas once again carried out such a dangerous mass attack on a well-defended city, after so many bloody experiences, commanded to Dutch troops both astonishment and respect. The main reasons for the attack seem to have been, first, that the Dutch continued their violent mopping up operations after a political agreement had already been reached, and second, an effort to increase the Indonesian bargaining position at the negotiation table. The latter was also the case with another large assault on an urban center, the *serangan umum* (‘general attack’) on Dutch-occupied Yokyakarta, on March 1, 1949. Indonesian sources claim that the main reason behind that operation was to

³⁸ NIMH, 545 Collection Sweep, inv. No. 597, Dagboek van J. Eshuis, 6^e Eskadron Vecht wagens, 4 augustus 1949.

³⁹ Frans Hazekamp, *Twee broers, twee luitenants in Indië* (Baarn, 2008), 176-178.

⁴⁰ Frans Hazekamp, *Het laatste grote gevecht in Indië. Tweeduizend guerrilla’s vallen Solo aan, 7-10 augustus 1949* (Soesterberg 2011); Murdijo Djungkung, *Mengenang pertempuran empat hari di kota Solo Agustus 1949: dengan semboyan “gugur satu tumbuh seribu”* (Solo, 1988) 31-32.

show the world that the TNI was far from defeated by the Dutch. They made sure the news of the attack reached the headquarters of the United Nations in Lake Success, to strengthen the political position of the Indonesian delegation to the Security Council.⁴¹ In any case, this final battle illustrates that, although the TNI and *pemuda* fighters clearly learned from their early experiences in urban warfare, slowly but gradually switching to more risk averse, small scale guerrilla tactics, the desire to defeat and drive out the Dutch decisively was never far away, now and then taking the upper hand. In the words of historian Robert Cribb, 'the old habits of frontal warfare died hard'.⁴² When army commander General Sudirman issued orders for a total guerrilla war in 1948, he remarked that 'as long as the technical equipment of the TNI is still extremely simple, the defense of the Republican side will have to remain based on total people's defense'.⁴³ This caveat about incomplete armament reflects the line of thinking that led strategist Nasution also held. In Nasution's view, ultimate victory in an irregular war could only be achieved with a regular army in conventional battle – a generalization that, according to guerrilla chronologist Walter Laqueur, is 'of doubtful value'.⁴⁴ However, this conventional thinking does help explain why the TNI continued to carry out massive, often catastrophic attacks until the end of the Indonesian war of independence, as witnessed by the battle of Solo that ended the day before the final armistice. Other reasons for the persistence of this fatal tactic were religious fanaticism, and a general mistrust of professional western army organization. In their revolutionary optimism, many *pemuda* believed that courage alone would be sufficient to achieve victory over the colonizers.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, while the war of 1945-1949 is generally viewed as a guerrilla war, the cases analyzed above show that urban, conventional battles played a major role in the fighting, not only during the famous battles at the beginning of the conflict, but until the very end. The deadly battle of Surabaya was a turning point that not only ignited the revolutionary spirit in Indonesian freedom fighters, but changed the course of the war in more than one way – notwithstanding the fact that in the long run, small-scale guerrilla tactics proved much more effective in wearing out the Dutch.

⁴¹ See on this battle, among others, Sekolah Staf dan Komando Angkatan Darat (Seskoad), *Serangan umum 1 Maret 1949 di Yogyakarta: latar belakang dan pengaruhnya* (Bandung 1990); Lembaga Analisis Informasi Yogyakarta, *Kontroversi serangan umum 1 Maret 1949* (Yogyakarta 2000).

⁴² Robert Cribb, 'Military strategy in the Indonesian Revolution: Nasution's concept of 'Total People's War' in theory and practice', in *War & Society* 19:2 (2001), 143-154, there 150.

⁴³ Arsip Nasional Republik Indonesia (ANRI), Arsip Kementerian Pertahanan, inv. no. 1791, Perintah Siasat No.1/48.

⁴⁴ Walter Laqueur, *Guerrilla. A historical and critical study* (Londen, 1977) 368; Nasution, *Fundamentals*, 70, 79, 83.

⁴⁵ Limpach, "'Ze vielen als gemaaid koren'"; Nasution, *Fundamentals*, 31.

REMEMBERING THE URBAN BATTLE OF MONTESE 80 YEARS AFTER THE CREATION OF THE BRAZILIAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE -1943-2023

Prof. Dr. Israel BLAJBERG (Brazil)

Introduction

Like almost all South American countries, Brazil was still a rural and neutral country. There was some Nazi-Fascist influence, due to Integralism, counterbalanced by sympathy for the Americans. Brazil remained neutral, but the signs of belligerence were growing after the Conferences of the Foreign Ministers of the American Countries, held in Panama on 03 Oct 1939, Havana in July 1940 and Rio de Janeiro 28 Jan 1942.

Due to the systematic attacks on Brazilian merchant ships, and the U.S. pressure for Bases in North East Brazil to reach African and European battlefields, the Brazilian Government recognized the State of War on 22 Aug 1942, encouraged by the compensations in the form of a steel mill to be financed by the American Government.

It was decided to create and organize an expeditionary force, being the initial idea an Army Corps, composed of 3 Infantry Divisions, one from the southeast and the others from the South and North Brazil, all depending on the evolution of the war and the possibilities of these last regions. There were great difficulties to form an Expeditionary Corps, such as obsolete weaponry, outdated doctrine and poor health of the population. The Organization of FEB – Força Expedicionaria Brasileira (Brazilian Expeditionary Force) by the Ordinance of 09 Aug 1943 provided for the constitution of the 1st DIE (Infantry Expeditionary Division) and non-divisional Organs. Of 40 M population about 200 thousand were screened for FEB, equivalent to 1 M soldiers today. A great effort was made to mobilize 25,000 men, requiring postponement of the 1943 licensing, convocation of reservists, opening of military instruction schools, drawing contingents from all over the country. There were great difficulties to gather the effective, due to the poor land communications, precarious and dangerous maritime communications – due to the nazi U-boat submarine campaign, determining the option of employing Units of the Southeast (São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais), respectively 6th, 1st and 11th Infantry Regiments, and exceptionally the 9th Engineering Battalion of Aquidauana – State of Mato Grosso.

Training was carried out in Rio de Janeiro, with the new armaments, techniques and tactics, being completed in Italy after receiving the material. There were courses for officers and enlisted men, and exercises on the ground. LOGISTICS was a new science; officers took courses in the USA. The supply chain and composition of the food rations were different from the Brazilian diet, with consequences in the adaptation of the troops. The embarkation of the 25,000 men begun on 02 Jul 1944, with arrival on 16 Jul 1944 – In addition to the maritime displacements there were small contingents by air.

The Campaign took place in the North Central Region of Italy, comprising the valleys of Serchio, Marano / Panaro and Po (Fornovo), until the junction with the French Army in Susa.

Some important dates of FEB were

Engineering - 1st Troop in Combat - 09/09/1944

1st Artillery Fire – 16/Sep/1944 – Monte Bastione

Infantry - 16/Sep/1944 - Serchio Valley (Camaiole – Barga and Galicano)

- Castle Mount – Psychological Victory

- Montese – Tactical Victory

- Collechio - Fornovo – Strategic Victory

Conquest of Montese - April 14-17, 1945

“ ... On April 14, 1945, in the region of Montese, begun the most arduous battles fought by Brazilians in Italy. The operations, lasting four successive days - from 14 to 17 - took place under violent and uninterrupted bombardments...” – as referred to by FEB Commander, General Mascarenhas de Moraes, in his book “Memories” - Vol. 1 – Army Library Publishing.

Montese is a medieval village located in the foothills of the Apennines, in northern Italy, region of the Emilia Romagna, 60 km from Bologna. The importance of the conquest of the city, its strategic position, was a remarkable fact that caught the attention of the Allied commanders and the Press. Small town, almost a village, valued by the important intersection of roads and elevations. In this place took place the bloodiest combat and the one of greatest value. It was the beginning of the end of the war in Italy. In the capture of Montese by FEB, the Germans unleashed on the locality the largest concentration of artillery fire ever seen until then. This achievement resonated favorably in the upper echelons and the FEB deserved recognition and the highest praise from the American V USA Army command.

The 3 biggest victories of FEB - Brazilian Expeditionary Force in Italy were Monte Castello, Montese and the Capture of the 148th Whermacht Infantry Division. Montese accounted for almost 500 dead and wounded. Thousands of shells were fired by the Artillery in support of Montese's urban fighting. The Fire Support of the entire FEB Artillery during the night of 14 to 15 Apr, corresponded to more than 3,900 Artillery Shells.

The capture of Montese was characterized as the bloodiest battle in which the FEB participated and where the action of the commanders of small fractions, particularly Platoons, Squads and Combat Groups, was decisive.

In the spring offensive, operations began with the Germans having 28 divisions and 01 brigade and the Allies with 20 divisions and 10 brigades. The German divisions were incomplete, with serious re-completion problems and supply chain deficiencies, eight of which were engaged in the fight against the partisans.

The Allies gave priority to the Western European Theater of Operations, diverting much of the human and material resources there. The Germans kept the Allies in check in Italy for 20 months and created enormous difficulties to surrender every inch of the 1,300 km of the retreat. The conquest of Montese opened the way to the Panaro River Valley.

The mission of FEB was to invest over the Montese massif and cover the left flank of the U.S. 10th Mountain Division, which was executed by the 11th INFANTRY REGIMENT (11th RI), with FIRE SUPPORT by the 1st Group of Artillery, the 11th RI, 2nd Btl/1st RI and the 2nd Group of Artillery. Reinforcements were received from Company A of the 760 Tank Battalion (USA), and from the 2nd Company of the 9th Engineering Battalion, which kept the roads within the action zone in traffic. FEB's Mechanized Cavalry Squadron operated on the axis MONTELLO - MONTESE and took advantage of the success on the PANARO RIVER.

The enemy formations present at the front of the 4th Corps was thus constituted:

- 01 Italian Division in Massa.
- 148th Infantry Division in Serchio Valley
- 232nd Infantry Division in Monte della Torraccia.
- 114th Light Division.
- 334th DI barring access from Zocca and 94th DI to the Rhine River.
- Reserve: 90th and 29th Panzer Divisions.

The Germans had excellent observation points, decks and shelters, excellent firing ranges for tense fire guns, with observation making it possible to conduct the fire of artillery guns in excellent condition, with advantages for the defender. FEB received a Front of 25 Km and selected 5 Km, with Depth of attack of 2.5 Km.

Spring Offensive

The campaign began in April 1945 and ended on 2 May 1945. Start of FEB operations took place after the conquest of Monte Castello – an exceptional feat, a symbol for the Brazilian forces, dominating the Gothic Line, a fortified bastion that seemed impregnable, at high cost in Brazilian precious lives. Successive and brilliant victories followed in the next phase, late February 1945 until March 1945, with the preparation for the Spring Offensive, the attacks on La Serra and Castelnuovo on 22/23 March 1945. In the Spring Offensive of the Allied Forces, the IV Army carried out the Main Effort, with FEB being the Key Piece in this Maneuver, to break the position of the Genghis-Kan Line in the foothills of the Apennine Chain. Covering the Flank of the 10th Mountain Division, FEB attacks and Conquests Montese, defending the triangle Montese, Montello and Montebufoni; maintaining the massif at any price, as the mission consisted of conquering Montese, attracting enemy fires and reserves, so that the American 10th Mountain Division could descend the counterslope of the Apennines, taking advantage of the Success over Zocca and reaching the Po Valley. Montese was of great importance for its tactical consequences: the last lines of enemy defense, embedded in the watershed between the Panaro and Po rivers. The main attack was assigned to the zone of action of the 10th Mountain Division; however, the bloodiest combat took place on FEB lines. As a result of enemy bombardment, Brazilian troops suffered enormous losses. Finally, at dawn on April 18th, reconnaissance squads no longer engaged the enemy, occupying the objective.

Traditionally, Americans don't like the 13th very much, especially when it's Friday. The so-called Spring Offensive, in which Montese's victory is inserted, was scheduled for April 12; it turns out that on that day President Franklin Delano Roosevelt passed away, according to conjectures, – they appear in several books – the Americans did not want to launch the offensive on the 13th because it was Friday, preferring the next day, the 14th, which was Saturday. During the battle of Montese FEB received reinforcements of American tanks, to counter the German armor. The fighting force of the 11th RI – I and III battalions – was inoperative at the end of 17 April, being regrouped in the rear and recompleted, but there was a fear of going into combat again, if the attack continued, because almost 60% of the fractions were made up of inexperienced soldiers from the Reserve Contingent.

April 14- “D” Day of Spring Offensive

The attack on Montese was part of a major offensive planned by the Allied High Command in Italy called the “Spring Offensive.” This offensive was already being prepared, from the victories of February and March, in Monte Castello and Castelnuovo. It lasted from 9 April to 2 May 1945, covering all of Northern Italy, along a line about 30 km south of Bologna. All the Allied forces located in Italy participated in it. The German forces of 28 Divisions + 1 Brigade were confronted against the allied forces of 20 Divisions + 10 Brigades. The Effective of the Three Regiments of FEB on 13/04/1945 was

- 1st RI: 3,263 men (160 officers and 3,103 enlisted men)
- 6th RI: 3,247 men (161 officers and 3,099 enlisted men)
- 11th RI: 3,252 men (153 officers and 3,099 enlisted men)

The following units were part of the IV Corps:

- 10th Mountain Division
- 1st Armored Division
- 34th Infantry Division
- 85th Infantry Division
- 1st Expeditionary Infantry Division - FEB

The mission assigned to FEB was

- “conquer Montese and exploit success until the cutting of the Panaro River”
- “continuously replace the western (left) flank of the 10th Mountain Division” and
- “progress in the direction of Zocca - Vignola”.

War Correspondents’ View of the Capture of Montese

Capture of Monte Castello that took place on February 21, 1945, in the vicinity of Montese, placed the Brazilian Expeditionary Force as a veteran and offensive troop ready to act in the so-called Spring Offensive, whose objective was to stop the Germans to the north and liberate Bologna. It was believed in a strong German presence in Montese, a strategic point for all involved. Brazilian Press sent many war correspondents to Italy’s campaign in 1944. There were numerous newspapers of the time, especially those in the federal capital, Rio de Janeiro, that covered the campaign until the end of the war.

10 correspondents embarked for Italy along with the Brazilian troops, in the various echelons, as Rubem Braga (Diário Carioca), Thassilo Augusto Campos Mitke (Agencia Nacional), Raul Brandão (Correio da Manhã), Joel Silveira (Diários Associados) and Egydio Squeff (O Globo), as well as foreign correspondents such as Frank Noral (Inter-American Affairs) and Henry Bagley (Associated Press).

The conquest of Montese was thus narrated by Egidio Squeff: “ *In frank disintegration the forces of Kesserling, the soldiers, by the hundreds, descend the slopes surrendering themselves to our combatants. Despite the large number of Nazi prisoners, there is no evidence of the German withdrawal. The Germans retreat under pressure of American and Brazilian forces, although the number of those who surrender grows, we cannot say that the enemy is abandoning their positions without a fight.* ”

In another report: “ *I arrived in this city in the company of correspondents Joel Silveira and Mitke, the first journalists who entered it. No houses were left intact and only now can we assess the terrible effect caused by the firing of our artillery, the bloodstains on the houses signaling the violence of the battle.* ”

In the evaluation of the experts, Montese was the campaign of greater magnitude for its military aspect, because of the 4 days of intense combat, being FEB the only troop to enter the city and surrender the enemy. For the Montesinos inhabitants it was tragic: There were about 200 dead among the civilians and almost total destruction of the city, in addition to the great casualties suffered by the Brazilians, whose saga would follow later in the battles of Collecchio and Fornovo.

General Crittenberger’s Statement

When the American 34th Infantry Division completely failed to attack a locality, General Crittenberger, commander of the IV Corps meeting at his HQ, blurted out:

“ *In yesterday’s journey only the Brazilians deserved my unrestricted congratulations: with the brilliance of their feat and their offensive spirit, the Brazilian Division is in a position to teach others how to conquer a city.* ” (He was referring to the taking of Montese.)

The Conquest of Montese had great repercussions; it was the biggest win in the V Army Offensive on the entire front.

On the night of 14 to 15, the area of the Montese received 2800 shells of the German artillery – this figure is 3 times higher than that received by the other Divisions of the IV Corps, in that time frame.

Lieutenant Ary Rauen, Hero of Montese

Lieutenant Rauen suffered a fatal wound in Montese. On the same occasion Lieutenant Dentist Ruy Lopes Ribeiro was hit by the explosion of a mine. An hour after the start of the deployment, the 2nd Platoon of Lt. ARY RAUEN was detained in a minefield between MONTAURÍGOLA and MONTESE, suffering heavy casualties.

Enemy fire destroyed the Wired Communications System, with the platoon detained for over 3 hours in the face of the minefield, rifle and machine gun fire, and concentrations of artillery and mortars. Lt. Rauen dies as a result of a head wound received from a mine explosion while trying to neutralize a Machine Gun Position that was causing many casualties in his fraction.

Medical Lieutenant Dr Ivon, Lieutenant Dentist Dr Ribeiro and Stretchers Team, in face of the large number of casualties come to the aid of the Platoon. 3 soldiers and the Lieutenant Dentist die; a Sergeant manages to retract and inform the Battalion commander that the team had been decimated. After the war. the name of Lt Ary Rauen was given as Historical Denomination to an Infantry Battalion of Rio Negro, his birthplace, in Paraná State.

Three Brazilian heroes

During the capture of Montese there was a singular tribute paid to three Brazilian soldiers who, on a patrol mission, when faced with an entire company of the German army, having been ordered to surrender, refused and died fighting. In recognition of the bravery and courage of those soldiers, for the way they fought, the Germans would have buried them in shallow graves and, next to the graves, placed a cross with the inscription “Drei Brasilianischen Helden” (three Brazilian heroes). They were - Arlindo Lúcio da Silva, Geraldo Baeta da Cruz and Geraldo Rodrigues de Souza - in the graduation yard of the battalion to which they belonged, after the war was erected a monument that reveres them.

Lieutenant Iporan Nunes De Oliveira and Sgt Nestor da Silva, Heroes of Montese

Lt. Iporan made a quick study of the enemy and the terrain in support of Lieutenant Rauen's platoon which was being heavily harassed. The Lt. also ordered the platoon's Deputy, Sgt. NESTOR DA SILVA, latter a retired Colonel, to coordinate the fire carried out by the 2 Combat Groups that were stranded. - Throughout the night the Brazilian troops were harassed by artillery fire, mortar fire and resistance that had not yet been subdued. The clean-up work of MONTESE continued during the morning of 15 Apr under

massive fire from German Artillery. The region of the Tower of MONTESE was only conquered around 12:00 pm on 15 April in an action commanded by Ten IPORAN himself. Today, Sgt Nestor is one of the approximately 200 Brazilian WW2 Veterans still alive, 104 years old.

Artillery Lieutenant Salli Szajnferber, Hero of Montese

Lt Salli fought in 2 great moments of the FEB, the Conquest of Monte Castello and Conquest of Montese. At Montese he was lightly wounded when in the duties of Artillery Advanced Observer with the 9th. Company of the III Battalion of the 11th. Infantry Regiment. For his bravery in action in the conquest of Montese, he was awarded by the President of the Republic with the 1st Class Combat Cross. The diploma, signed by Minister of War General Pedro Aurélio de Góis Monteiro highlights his great courage, cold blood and capacity for action during the fierce battles of April 14 and 15, 1945. Progressing through mined terrain severely battered by artillery fire, mortar fire, and automatic weapons, Lt. Salli gallantly fulfilled his mission as an Advance Observer by precisely adjusting our artillery fire.

He was also praised in Bulletin by the Commander of the Tiradentes Regiment, 11th. RI of São João D'el Rey, Col. Delmiro Pereira de Andrade, for his bravery and spirit of sacrifice in the hard days of April 14 and 15, together with the platoons terribly harassed by the enemy. His calmness, his competence and his personal bravery made him worthy of the admiration of the whole Company.

Salli Szajnferber, brave Brazilian soldier of Jewish faith, Hero of Montese, in the fighting of Italy honored the memory of Mallet, Patron of the Artillery.

Summary of casualties in Montese from 14 to 18 Apr

- 6th RI: 14 killed, 131 wounded and 03 lost (total of 148);
- 1st RI: 08 killed and 27 wounded (total of 35);
- 11th RI: 12 killed, 224 wounded and 07 lost (total of 243)
- Grand total: 426 combat casualties
 - 34 killed
 - 382 wounded
 - 10 lost.
- PRISONERS
 - 453 German prisoners

Operations in the Po River Valley - Pursuit and Exploitation of Success

“Operation Pursuit” began after the Capture of Montese, on 20 Apr 45 in the locality of Zocca, situated northwest of Montese and five kilometers from the Panaro River, cut by secondary roads. On 26 Apr in the locality of Colecchio took place the “Siege Operation”. The 148th German division intended to affect the retreat to the north.

The Brazilian maneuver, which imprisoned the vanguard and surrounded the bulk of the enemy, left no alternative but the unconditional surrender of the Germans and Italians at Fornovo di Taro (28 Apr). It was the “Crowning Operation”, the consecration of the strategic maneuver and the consolidation of FEB’s actions in the fields of Italy. The surrender of the German 148th Infantry Division resulted in the capture of approximately 15,000 prisoners of war, 1000 motor vehicles, 1500 hippomobile vehicles, 80 wagons, guns and more than 4000 horses.

Conclusion

After conquering Monte Castelo in Feb 21 1945, FEB continued a series of victories. On March 5, 1945, the Brazilians conquered Soprasosso and Castelnuovo. On 5 April 1945 the Allies entered Bologna. On April 29, the eve of Hitler’s suicide, the FEB captured, in the town of Fornovo di Taro, the German 148th Division, which meant the imprisonment of more than fifteen thousand Germans, including two generals. From that moment on, the FEB became a military occupation force. The next day, Alessandria, 60 kilometers from Turin was occupied, and, along with American soldiers, also participated in the liberation of Turin itself. On May 2, General Mark Clark ended the Allied campaign in Italy. For the Brazilians, the war was over at this moment.

In Susa occurred the joining of the Brazilian forces with the French troops, characterizing the end of the participation of the FEB in World War II. On 2 May 1945, the war in Italy ended, and on 8 May it ended in Europe, with the victory of the Allies and the definitive surrender of Germany. In almost one year of campaign in Italy, FEB presented the following figures:

Total effective: 25,334

Taken prisoner: 35

Fallen: 457

Wounded in the Theater of Operations: 2,722

Missing - (10 buried as unknown): 23

Upon returning to Brazil, FEB soldiers were received with great popular enthusiasm. The first echelon arrived back in Rio de Janeiro on July 18, 1945. The history written by FEB with golden letters in WW2, full of glories, confirms the value of the Brazilian soldier: selfless and determined when facing obstacles; highly creative and rustic, which makes it adaptable to different combat situations; and, above all, imbued with an extreme feeling of love for the Fatherland.

Brazilian troops in Italy to this day are remembered for having treated Italian families very well and sharing their own meals with them. This is the way of being of the Brazilian soldier, brave and supportive, bold and friendly, patriotic and understanding, creative and communicative, attributes that have so marked our performance, not only in those places during World War II, but also in São Domingos, Angola, Mozambique, East Timor and in Haiti, in the UN Peace Forces.

In Pistóia, at the Brazilian Military Votive Cemetery until 1960 456 FEB soldiers were buried, as well as 8 pilots of the Brazilian Air Force and 40 German soldiers, whose bodies were collected by the Burial Platoon in the lines of combat.

On December 22, 1960, the Brazilian Government arranged for the removal of the remains of these 464 heroes from Pistoia to Rio de Janeiro, in order to rest, definitively, in the Mausoleum of the National Monument to the Fallen of the Second World War, erected for this purpose, in the Flamengo Embankment. Today this Monument is an important memory spot, where many ceremonies are held in memory of the brave Allied soldiers which together contributed to the final victory of the free nations against Nazi-Fascism.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Brazil at the Verge of War



Appendix 2: Allied Divisions in Italy



Remembering the Urban Battle of Montese 80 Years after the Creation
of the Brazilian Expeditionary Force - 1943-2023

Appendix 3: FEB Operating Area



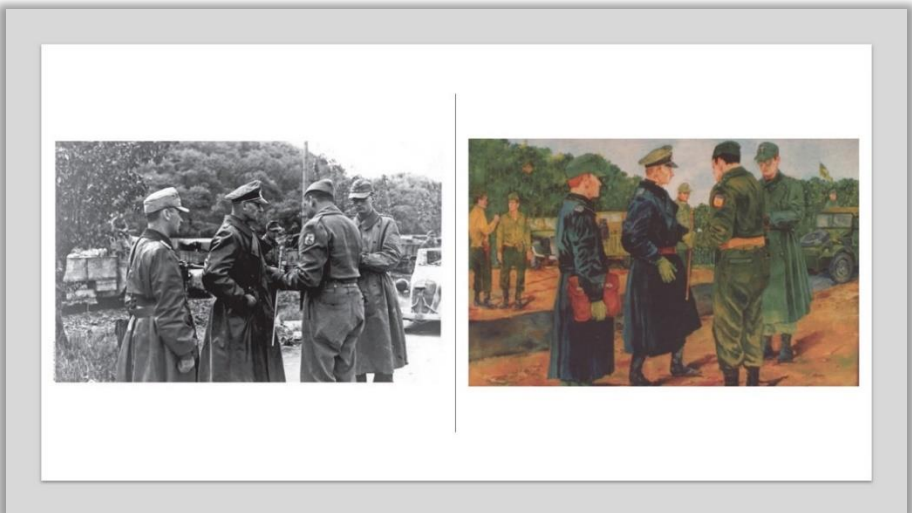
Appendix 4: MONTESE Urban Warfare



Appendix 5: Montese: Today and in 1944



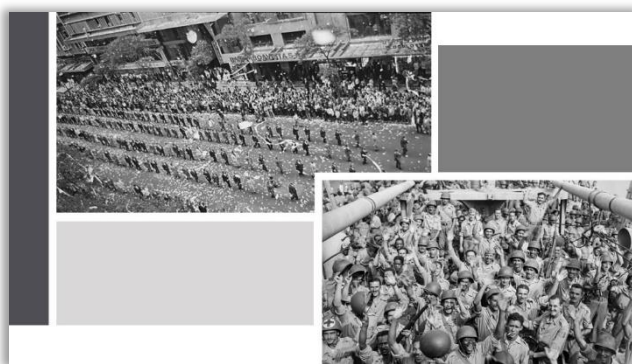
Appendix 6: Gen Otto Freter Pico, Commander of the 148th Infantry Division of the Whermacht surrenders to Brazilian Col Nelson de Mello, Fornovo de Taro, April 1945



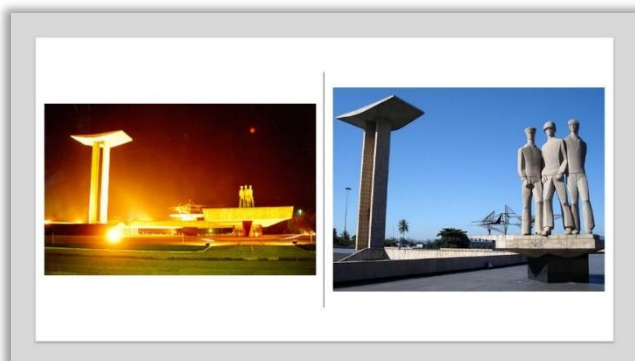
Appendix 7: Votive Monument at the former Brazilian Military Cemetery in Pistoia, and statue of General Mascarenhas e Moraes, FEB Commander



Appendix 8: Return of FEB from Italy, 1945 and Parade in Rio de Janeiro, 25 years of the V-Day, 1975



Appendix 9: National Monument to the Fallen of WW2, Rio de Janeiro



THE JAPANESE EMPIRE AND THE SECRET WARFARE IN THE VATICAN CITY STATE, 1945*

Ryotaro SHIMIZU (Japan)

Introduction

In the very final stages of World War II, Japan asked the Soviet Union to mediate a peace with the Allies. There was still effective Neutrality Pact between Japan and the Soviet Union since April 1941. However, the Soviet Union had promised the United States and Britain at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 that it would enter the war against Japan two or three months after the German surrender.¹ After the war, this diplomacy toward the Soviet Union has been severely criticized as “illusionary diplomacy.”² It is believed that the “secret agreement at Yalta” was promptly conveyed to Japan by the military attaché Onodera Makoto from Stockholm, Sweden, a neutral country. However, according to recent studies, the report was not a definite report on the Soviet Union's participation in the war.³ On the other hand, recent studies have revealed that more accurate intelligence on Soviet entry into the war was conveyed to the General Staff headquarters in Tokyo from Bern, Switzerland, and Lisbon, Portugal.⁴ In this presentation, I would like to examine what kind of battles were being fought in the neutral Vatican over the intelligence concerning the Yalta secret agreement.

1. OSS and “Unconditional Surrender”

The U.S. wartime intelligence agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), was the point of contact for peace negotiations in Switzerland. As is well known, the OSS and the Japanese side had various discussions regarding the conditions for surrender.

* This paper contains in part the presentation given at NIDS International Forum on War History in September 2022. The paper was subsequently revised and submitted to the Turkish Military History Commission in 2023.

¹ In the Yalta conference, it was agreed that the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan under the following conditions: 1) The status quo in Outer-Mongolia (The Mongolian People's Republic) shall be preserved; 2) The former rights of Russia violated by the treacherous attack of Japan in 1904 shall be restored; 3) The Chishima Islands shall be handed over to the Soviet Union.

² Hosoya Chihiro, *Ryoutaisenkan no nihon gaikou* [Japanese diplomacy in the interwar period] (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1988), 331.

³ Bert Edström, *Master Spy on a Mission: The Untold Story of Onodera Makoto and Swedish Intelligence 1941-1945* (London: amazon.uk, 2021).

⁴ Yoshimi Masato, *Shusenron: naze ketsudan dekinakatta no ka* [War termination: Why couldn't a decision be made?] (Tokyo: NHK Publishing, 2012).

Allen Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) after the war, worked primarily on peace negotiations with anti-Nazi forces in Germany. By the end of January 1945, Dulles, based at the OSS Bern branch, made contacts in Switzerland with anti-Nazi resistance groups and with German military personnel who were critical of Hitler.⁵ In a report explaining about the military personnel who took part in the failed assassination attempt against Hitler on 20 July 1944, Dulles concluded that he was convinced an affirmative program along the following lines would make the German military submit to the Americans and British before the Soviet Union created chaos in East Germany.⁶

- 1) Unconditional surrender remains an unaltered policy, but German military leaders are seriously concerned about the future of its country.
- 2) All cities in Germany are on the verge of being able to spare unnecessary destruction and achieve a resumption of economic life through proper distribution of food and supplies.
- 3) Officers of Wehrmacht who contribute to constructive policy should facilitate the liquidation of the Nazi regime.

This report was submitted by the OSS deputy director to the JCS.

By at least the end of 1944, there was a clear understanding, both at the OSS headquarters in Washington and in the European theater, that the goal should be to achieve an early end to the war, without strictly adhering to the literal interpretation of “unconditional surrender” vis-à-vis preventing the expansion of Soviet influence and minimizing the sacrifices of U.S. military personnel.

2. Yalta Conference and the Secret Warfare in Vatican

Emperor Showa had a sense of affinity with the Vatican ever since he visited it as a crown prince. When Emperor Showa (then Crown Prince) visited Europe in 1921, Pope Benedict XV reportedly mentioned in a conversation with the emperor, “The Catholic Church is the most powerful organization striving to combat radical ideologies to maintain peace and uphold order in the world. The Japanese Empire and the Catholic Church may be working together frequently in the future.”⁷

⁵ As for Dulles’ search for a separate peace with German forces, see, Allen Dulles, *The Secret Surrender* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966).

⁶ Office of Strategic Services, “Memorandum of Information for the Joint Chief of Staff (1945/1/27),” National Archives and Record Service (NARA), M1642, Roll 22.

⁷ Imperial Household Agency, *Showa tenno jitsuroku* [Records of Emperor Showa], vol. 3 (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 2015), 402.

Even before the Japan-U.S. war, the emperor valued the Holy See as a channel for peace negotiations to bring the war to an end. After its outbreak, due to the convenience of intelligence gathering and the immense spiritual influence it wielded worldwide, as well as the necessity of governing the predominantly Catholic population in the Philippines, the Emperor ordered Prime Minister Tojo Hideki to establish a legation in Vatican City in April 1942. Harada Ken presented his credentials to the Pope as the first Japanese Minister extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the Holy See.⁸

Similarly, in December 1939, the United States, although it did not have official diplomatic relations with the Vatican due to concerns about public anti-Catholic sentiments, sent Myron Taylor, a wealthy magnate in the steel industry, as a personal envoy of President Roosevelt. Furthermore, the OSS had used the Vatican as a base for intelligence activities from early on, and it is known that “Vessel” was the codename for the information.

On January 26, 1945, OSS Assistant Director Charles Cheston noted that Minister Harada conveyed the following to the Pope, as reported by Vessel.⁹

The Japanese government is positive Stalin will unconditionally refuse to abolish the non-aggression treaty with Japan. [...] The Soviet government has definitely told the Japanese Ambassador in Moscow that Soviet Union will request the British and Americans to seek the basis for a negotiated peace in the Far East, on condition that the Japanese government accedes to the Russian suggestion that the Far East peace conference be compromised of France, the United States, Japan, China, Russia and Great Britain.

Through the Department of the War, information that the Soviet Union promised Japan to renew the neutrality pact and made an appeasement proposal regarding peace in the Far East reached Brigadier General Andrew McFarland who participated as staff in the Yalta Conference.

An OSS report to the JCS on January 24 contains information from the OSS branches in Bern and Rome that anti-Hitler groups in Italy and Switzerland led by Ernst von Weizsäcker, German ambassador to the Holy See (former foreign undersecretary and father of Richard von Weizsäcker, president of West Germany from 1984 to 1994), were calling on the Vatican to mediate peace. It also included a detailed report regarding the activities and statements of Kanayama Masahide, counselor at the Japanese legation in the Vatican.

⁸ Terasaki Hidenari and Mariko Terasaki Miller, *Showa tenno dokuhakuroku* [Monologue of Emperor Showa] (Tokyo: Bungeishunju, 1995), 96-97.

⁹ OSS, “Official Dispatch (1945/2/3),” NARA, M1642, Roll 119.

According to the report, when Counselor Kanayama held a meeting on January 17 with the two acting secretary of state of Vatican, Giovanni Montini and Domenico Tardini, Kanayama stated as follows.¹⁰

Our ambassador in Moscow has informed our government that the Far East problems will be discussed when the Big Three meet. The United States, supported by Churchill, will ask for Russian help to crush Japan completely. The Anglo-Americans will ask that Russia denounce the pact of non-aggression with Japan and that Russia passively participate in the Pacific War and permit Anglo-American use of Russian air bases. Our government also understands that, before Stalin will agree to this, he will request a wholehearted attempt on the part of the Anglo-Americans to mediate, and that he will even offer to act as mediator. Our government also understands that the Big Three will discuss European problems first, and that if they are not settled to Russia's satisfaction, especially the Polish question, then Stalin will not discuss the Far East.

Kanayama then expressed hope that the Pope would help with the peace mediation before the Far East issues were discussed at the Yalta Conference. Acting Secretary of State Montini asked whether the Japanese government can offer terms for peace that would be closer to those of the Anglo-American to enable the Holy See to begin mediation. Kanayama responded that he would communicate Montini's request to the Japanese government and reiterated that the Holy See commence mediation immediately if possible.¹¹

If Kanayama's statements are true, he had a remarkably accurate understanding of the Yalta Conference. He was no doubt the first Japanese person to know the details of the Yalta secret agreement, before the conference was even held. This information was communicated not only from the OSS to the JCS but also to the State Department and the White House.

If Harada and Kanayama at the Japanese legation in the Vatican had made completely different statements to Holy See officials, what can we understand from this? It is conceivable that they had received different information from different sources. The information conveyed by Kanayama was genuine information that covered actual topics to be discussed at the Yalta Conference. The inclusion of items that the United States later requested to the Soviet Union, especially the invasion of Manchuria and the establishment of air bases in the Far East Siberia, suggests that the information was sourced from the United States. Kanayama's information on the Yalta conference was

¹⁰ OSS, "Memorandum of Information for the Joint Chief of Staff," 24 January 1945, NARA, M1642, Roll 22.

¹¹ OSS, "Memorandum of Information for the Joint Chief of Staff," 24 January 1945, NARA, M1642, Roll 22.

far more accurate and specific than the assessment sent to Tokyo by Ambassador to the Soviet Union Sato Naotake, who was said to be the source.

In fact, Giovanni Battista Montini, who later became Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), is believed to have cooperated with the OSS through Earl Brennan, a former diplomat who had been stationed in Italy and headed the Italy desk in the Secret Intelligence (SI) division at the OSS's Washington headquarters.¹² If Kanayama had accurate information regarding the detailed agenda of the Yalta Conference, the intelligence may have been conveyed from the OSS, perhaps through Montini.

On the other hand, Minister Harada's pro-Japan conciliatory information was implausible and the opposite of the assessment by Ambassador Sato in Moscow, alleged Harada's source.¹³ It thus can be assumed as disinformation. At the Yalta Conference, it served as information to raise the worth of the secret agreement vis-à-vis Roosevelt, who requested the Soviet's participation in the war against Japan.

At around this time, Vessel information was handled by Captain James Angleton, who was then with the SI division in Italy and later became a senior official at the CIA and the model for the main character of the film *The Good Shepherd* (2006). Vessel's Sub-sources included individuals connected to German, Soviet, and British intelligence services.¹⁴ Although information on European matters was full of errors, that in Japan was for whatever reason highly valued and trusted by key figures in the U.S. administration including Roosevelt himself. Vessel information was a mix of both valuable and questionable intelligence.

The Soviet Union had recognized and resumed diplomatic relations with the Badoglio government, which was established after the Allied invasion of Sicily and the arrest of Mussolini, in March 1944, before the United States and Britain did so.¹⁵ Although the Soviet Union had no diplomatic relations with the Vatican, it may have utilized the Holy See as a channel to input information favorable to itself amid a war with Germany.

The above suggests that an international, i.e., a U.S.-Soviet, intelligence warfare was taking place over the Yalta secret agreement in the

¹² Richard Harris Smith, *OSS: The Secret History of America's First Central Intelligence Agency* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 84.

¹³ As for Ambassador Sato's assessment of the Soviet-Japan relation, see, Kurihara Ken, *Sato Naotake no menboku* [Sato Naotake's Honor] (Tokyo: Hara shobo, 1981).

¹⁴ Robin W. Winks, *Cloak and Gown: Scholars in the Secret War, 1939-1961* (New York: Morrow, 1987), 356.

¹⁵ Paolo Spriano, *Storia del Partito Comunista Italiano*, vol. 5, *La resistenza, Togliatti e il partito nuovo* (Torino: Einaudi, 1975), 293-294.

Vatican, a neutral country. Regrettably, records of the telegram exchanges between the Japanese legation in the Vatican and Foreign Ministry in Tokyo from January to June 1945 have not been preserved or made public. Therefore, it is impossible to know what information Harada or Kanayama had sent (or did not send).

Meanwhile, from late May to June 1945, after the collapse of Germany, the OSS conducted peace negotiations through a different channel. Records of these negotiations are preserved both in the United States' intercepted and decrypted records called MAGIC and in Japan's diplomatic documents. There are also memoirs of OSS operatives.¹⁶ In a report to Tokyo on June 3, Minister Harada speculated as follows regarding the intentions of the United States that proposed peace negotiations to Japan:

Although the European war is expected to end, there may be further deterioration in the political situation depending on the subsequent attitude of the Soviet Union. Conversely, in the Far East, it is likely that the Soviet Union will enter into the war in the final stage and take control of Manchuria, while also inciting the Chinese Communist government to secure its foothold.¹⁷ It is noteworthy that this report, too, mentions the Yalta secret agreement to involve the Soviet Union in the war.

According to Martin Quigley, who was involved in these activities, William Donovan, director of OSS, instructed Quigley to find a way to bring a peace proposal directly to Tokyo and to negotiate Japan's surrender. After Rome fell in 1944, Donovan held audiences with the Pope and with Ambassador Weizsäcker of Germany. He regarded the Vatican as an important base for peace negotiations with the Axis powers, particularly Germany.¹⁸

In line with U.S. intentions, the negotiations with the Japanese side were conducted by Egidio Vagnozzi, a Vatican diplomat (State Department official) who had spent ten years in the United States as a member of the apostolic delegation in Washington.¹⁹

¹⁶ Martin S. Quigley, *Peace without Hiroshima: Secret Action at the Vatican in the Spring of 1945* (Lanham: Madison Books, 1991).

¹⁷ From Minister to the Vatican Harada to Foreign Minister Togo, 3 June 1945, "Bachikan shikyo yori Beikokugawa to no sesshoku ni tsuki teian ni tsuite [Vatican bishop's proposal on contact with the U.S. side]," *Nihon gaiko bunsho Taiheiyo senso 3* [Documents on Japanese foreign policy, the Pacific War 3], 1701-1702.

¹⁸ Quigley, *Peace without Hiroshima*, 80, 84.

¹⁹ Kanayama Masahide, *Dare mo kakanakatta Bachikan: katorikku gaikokan no kaiso* [The Vatican no one has written about: A Catholic diplomat's recollections] (Tokyo: Sankei Shuppan, 1980), 45, 55.

As mentioned earlier, Eugenio Pacelli, later Pius XII, had extensive diplomatic experience and maintained a close relationship with the United States, including direct exchanges of letters with Roosevelt. Nevertheless, he was quick to express concerns over Roosevelt's view of the Soviet Union as a guarantor of the post-war European order. In particular, he severely criticized Roosevelt's demand for Japan and Germany's "unconditional surrender," which was announced during the Casablanca Conference in January 1943.²⁰ Furthermore, between late 1944 and early 1945, the Pope became increasingly concerned about the dangers posed by the advancement of Soviet forces into Eastern and Central Europe. In particular, he conveyed to Taylor his concerns that the Soviet occupation of Poland and the Baltic countries, which had significant Catholic populations, went against the principles of the Atlantic Charter.²¹ The agreement reached at the Yalta Conference among Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin to establish communist control over Poland and divide Germany must have been the worst outcome for the Pope, Montini, Tardini, and others.

An estimated six million Catholics lived in Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic countries, and Poland, including the Uniates who followed the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox liturgies. Following the Russian Revolution, Pacelli, as papal nuncio in Berlin, held negotiations with the Soviet ambassador in Berlin to guarantee the activities of Catholic bishops in the Soviet Union. Subsequently, the negotiations continued with the aim of granting the Holy See's approval of the Soviet Union in exchange for the Pope's right to appoint bishops. However, the Soviet government imposed a complete ban on activities of the Catholic Church, and illegally operating priests were sent to concentration camps.²² These negotiations with the Soviet Union during the interwar period decisively influenced Pius XII's perception of the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

As has been examined, information about the Yalta secret agreement may have been communicated to the Japanese side in the Vatican in mid-January 1945, shortly before the Yalta Conference. There is no definitive evidence confirming whether this information was transmitted to the Japanese side during this period or if it reached Tokyo. However, there is no mistake that such attempts were motivated by the Holy See and U.S. intelligence

²⁰ John Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914-1958*, (London: Oxford University Press, 2006), 360-361.

²¹ Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism*, 362.

²² Bernard Lecomte, *Bachikan no himitsu: Kyoukoutyouto no himerareta nijyuseiki shi*, (translated by Yoshida Harumi), (Tokyo: Kawade shobo shinsha, 2010) [*Les Secrets du Vatican*, Paris: Perrin, 2009], 11, 20, 27.

services' clear intention to contain the expansion of Soviet influence in the post-war world and promote peace negotiations between Japan and the United States.

In addition, this presentation elucidate that an intelligence warfare was underway over the Yalta secret agreement before the Yalta Conference was held in the neutral Vatican. Intelligence about the Yalta secret agreement was utilized as a lever to promote peace negotiations between Japan and the United States. Furthermore, amid this undercover warfare, the OSS began to function as a somewhat independent actor from U.S. politics and the military, i.e., to operate as an intelligence agency.

**INCENDIES, TIRS, TIRS AERIENS COMME MODES
D'ADMINISTRATION FRANCAISE DES INDIGENES AU
CAMEROUN AVEC PAROSYSME DE LA GUERRE URBAINE
LE 24 AVRIL 1960: GRAVE INCENDIE AU QUARTIER
CONGO A DOUALA**

Prof. Dr. Daniel ABWA (Cameroon)

Introduction

Grâce à la Grande Guerre, une partie du Kamerun, protectorat allemand, tombe comme un fruit mûr dans l'escarcelle de la France en 1916. Les alliés (Anglais, Belges et Français) coalisent en effet, dès le début de la Première Guerre mondiale, pour engager une campagne de conquête du Kamerun allemand, campagne qui est concrétisée par leur victoire et le partage du butin entre Anglais et Français. La France, sans beaucoup d'efforts, reçoit ainsi les 4/5^è de ce territoire, alors que les Anglais, qui ont pourtant joué le premier rôle dans cette victoire, ne se contentent que du 1/5^è. Le congrès de Versailles qui se tient à la fin de la Grande Guerre entérine ce partage mais fait du Cameroun un territoire de la Société des Nations (SDN) confié respectivement à l'Angleterre et à la France.

Bien que territoire sous mandat de la SDN dans lequel l'Etat mandataire n'a pas le droit d'y installer une force armée mais plutôt des forces de maintien de l'ordre (police et/ou gendarmerie) et plus tard sous tutelle de l'ONU, et, par ailleurs, bien que n'ayant pas réussi à intégrer sa portion du Cameroun dans ses colonies de l'Afrique Equatoriale Française (AEF) comme l'a fait l'Angleterre dans sa colonie du Nigéria, la France fait subir aux Camerounais, toutes les affres de ses pratiques coloniales de terreur et parfois d'extermination : indigénat, travaux forcés, corvées de toutes sortes, razzias, massacres, mutilations, déplacements et regroupements des populations, têtes coupées exposées, assassinats des leaders nationalistes, pour ne citer que ces quelques actes. Cette colonisation mâtinée de violences barbares pour soumettre tous les Camerounais, sous prétexte de « pacification », atteint son paroxysme à travers les violences les plus inhumaines qui utilisent les armes à feu et les incendies meurtriers. Nous avons choisi un échantillon de trois populations camerounaises ayant subi ces violences inouïes, correspondant à trois moments successifs de l'histoire du Cameroun sous administration française. Le premier échantillon est pris dans la période du Cameroun sous mandat français ; il s'agit des populations dites Kirdi de l'Extrême Nord du

Cameroun ; le deuxième échantillon concerne la période du Cameroun sous tutelle française pendant la guerre de libération du Cameroun avec les populations dites Bamiléké des plateaux de l'Ouest Cameroun ; le dernier échantillon se rapporte au lendemain immédiat de la proclamation de l'indépendance du Cameroun sous tutelle française avec des populations ayant vécu la guerre urbaine à Douala dont le paroxysme de la bestialité inhumaine se trouve être l'incendie du quartier Congo le dimanche 24 avril 1960¹. La France, qui se présente comme le pays des Droits de l'Homme, justifie cette barbarie inhumaine par sa lecture de la colonisation que résume, en ces termes, le ministre des colonies Albert Sarraut dans son ouvrage *Grandeurs et servitudes coloniales* :

La France peut avoir deux visages : celui de la liberté tournée vers la métropole, celui de la tyrannie tendue vers ses colonies. Un grand pays comme le nôtre, où qu'il aille et qu'il agisse, doit pouvoir dire et se dire que, partout, il reste fidèle à lui-même. Il doit pouvoir regarder même sa politique coloniale en face, comme un miroir de sa conscience, et ne pas éprouver honte ou remords d'une contradiction choquante, d'une antinomie brutale entre ce qu'il fait au loin et ce qu'il fait dans son propre territoire²

Il est vrai que Richard Brunot, qui été à la fois commissaire (1938-1939) et haut-commissaire (1939-1940) de la France au Cameroun a voulu faire croire le contraire dans son ouvrage consacré au Cameroun :³

Si la France a pris la charge du Cameroun qu'elle avait conquis (sic), elle s'est attachée à éviter le reproche de colonialisme qu'on aurait pu faire au vainqueur au lendemain de la guerre mondiale (resic). Elle a voulu accomplir au Cameroun de façon assez spéciale la mission qui fut la sienne au cours de son histoire et qui demeure sa véritable raison d'être et de prospérer. Semer les idées généreuses qui libèrent les peuples, appeler les races attardées à la plénitude de l'humanité, apaiser les souffrances par l'action rayonnante d'une science désintéressée, ainsi se résument son programme et ses ambitions

¹ Nous aurions pu choisir d'autres populations ayant eu à subir les mêmes épreuves sous les Français à l'instar de celles vivant à Yaoundé, les Bassa en Sanaga-maritime, ou celles vivant dans les autres villes de la région du Moungo (Mbanga, Loum, Penja, Njombé, Nkongsamba).

² A. Sarraut, *Grandeurs et servitudes coloniales*, (Paris: Editions sagittaires, 1931), p. 120 Il a été deux fois ministre des colonies (1920-1924) et (1932-1933).

³ R. Brunot, *Le Cameroun, dans sa « création française »*, (Paris, 1932), cité par B.A. Ngando, « La présence française au Cameroun (1916-1959), thèse de doctorat en Droit, Université Paul Cézanne d'Aix-Marseille III, 2006, p. 9.

Nous allons, dans cette contribution, montrer, dans un premier temps, comment armes à feu et incendies ont été utilisés pour soumettre les Kirdi et les Bamiléké (1) et ensuite, nous examinerons le paroxysme de cette barbarie dans la guerre urbaine de la ville de Douala

I/ Incendies, Tirs et Tirs Aériens comme Méthodes d'Administration Coloniale Française sur les Kirdi et les Bamiléké au Cameroun

A/ Le Cas des Populations Dites Kirdi⁴

Il faut entendre par populations dites Kirdi, ces populations autochtones du Nord-Cameroun qui, très tôt, ont refusé de se convertir à l'islam et ont rejeté l'autorité des envahisseurs foubé et mandara. Pour la plupart, ces Kirdi se sont réfugiés dans des zones inaccessibles aux chevaux foubé (massifs montagneux, plaines inondables etc) et ont, jusqu'à l'arrivée des Européens (Allemands d'abord et Français ensuite) réussi à conserver leur indépendance. Il faut cependant faire la distinction entre les Kirdi des plaines et ceux des montagnes. Les Kirdi des plaines sont ceux qui se sont installés soit dans les vallées des fleuves et des rivières (Benoué, Logone, Mayo-Kebbi, Mayo-Loué, etc.), soit aux pieds des massifs montagneux et des plateaux (Mandara, Atlantika, Adamaoua...). Ce sont pour la plupart les Moundang, les Toupouri, les Massa (avec leurs groupes voisins que sont les Gisési, Muséi, Bougoudoum, et les Pouss de Guirvidig), les Guiziga, les Baya, etc.

D'accès relativement plus facile que les Kirdi des montagnes, c'est vers eux que les Français se dirigent en priorité dès leur prise de possession du Cameroun. En vue de les soumettre et de les organiser pour une administration coloniale efficace, en bénéficiant comme ailleurs au Cameroun du travail pionnier des Allemands, ils adoptent une attitude alternant violence (opérations de police) et tentatives d'apprivoisement. C'est ce qui ressort des instructions données au commandant de la région Nord-Cameroun par le commissaire de la république Théodore Paul Marchand en février 1924 :

L'ère des opérations de police étant close, par lettre n° 994/c en date du 4 décembre 1923, j'ai adressé à votre prédécesseur de nouvelles instructions et ai précisé quelles devraient être désormais les modalités de notre action. Aux tournées de pacification doivent se substituer les tournées administratives, beaucoup plus modestes

⁴ Dans l'ouvrage que nous avons commis en 1998 intitulé *Commissaires et hauts-commissaires de la France au Cameroun (1916-1960)*. Ces hommes qui ont façonné politiquement le Cameroun, Yaoundé, PUY et PUCAC, 1998, nous avons consacré aux populations dites kirdi 21 pages de 136 à 157 sous le titre « Marchand et la soumission des kirdi du Nord-Cameroun. Sauf indications contraires, les informations sur ces populations sont tirées de ces pages.

comme effectifs, qui mettront l'indigène en confiance et l'attireront à nous. Les Kirdi doivent, dans les groupements nouvellement formés et directement administrés par nos chefs de circonscription et de subdivision, être accoutumés à une vie sociale organisée⁵

Par cette attitude de violence modérée, les Français réussissent à avoir quelques résultats positifs avec certains Kirdi de plaine qui acceptent de se laisser administrativement organiser mais, il n'en est pas autant avec les kirdi des montagnes

Les Kirdi des montagnes ont, en effet, choisi de s'isoler dans des sites-refuges et de vivre par ce fait dans les conditions extrêmement difficiles pour marquer ostensiblement leur individualisme et leur rejet de toute forme de soumission autre que celle qu'ils s'imposent eux-mêmes. A leur endroit, et jusqu'à la fin de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, les Français les placent sous l'autorité militaire en vue de donner à la présence de cette armée coloniale un caractère dissuasif et une facilité à mener des opérations de conquêtes abusivement appelées « opérations de police » ou encore « opérations de pacification ». Jusqu'en 1939, les Français usent et abusent contre ces Kirdi des montagnes des opérations de conquêtes à telle enseigne qu'aucune tournée des fonctionnaires d'autorité ne se fait sans être accompagnée d'une troupe de la colonial.⁶ Dès le départ, ces opérations de conquête ont un caractère éminemment offensif car elles consistent à attaquer les Kirdi montagnards pour les amener à reconnaître l'autorité française. En 1920, par exemple, pour justifier sa proposition d'une opération de conquête au nord de la circonscription de Garoua, notamment sur les monts Tengelin, les plateaux de Bori et Daba, le capitaine Piton, après avoir indiqué le caractère insoumis des Kirdi de ces zones déclare:⁷

Cette situation ne peut s'éterniser. Pour arriver à obtenir la soumission de ces rebelles, il faudra frapper dans les groupements les plus importants: groupement de Daba situé à 18°43' de longitude et 10°2' de latitude, groupement Bori, situé à 13°43' de longitude et 9°54' de latitude. Chacun de ces groupements comprend environ une vingtaine de villages et 4000 guerriers, armés de flèches empoisonnées et de sagaies qu'ils manient avec dextérité

C'est contre ces Kirdi que l'armée coloniale utilise indifféremment armes à feu et/ou incendies ponctués de massacres des populations qui n'ont

⁵ Cité par J. Lestringant, « Le pays de Guider au Cameroun. Essai d'histoire régionale », s. l, s.d., p. 196.

⁶ L'armée française dans ses colonies est dénommée « armée d'Afrique » pour l'Algérie et l'Afrique du Nord et « armée coloniale » ou « la coloniale » pour le reste de ses colonies.

⁷ ANY (Archives Nationales de Yaoundé), APA 12065/E, région nord et circonscription de Maroua, réorganisation de la région ; limite de la région ; lettre du 16 août 1920.

pour toutes armes de défense que flèches, lances et sagaies. Entre 1923 et 1933, sous l'autorité du commissaire de la république Marchand, nous avons recensé six cas d'opérations de conquêtes dirigées contre les montagnards qui, par des actes d'hostilité, refusent ostensiblement de se soumettre aux injonctions de l'autorité coloniale française. C'est le cas avec les kirdi des villages Libam-Liline (1925-1926), des villages Mokong (1927), des villages de Gousda (1928), du village de Mada (1929) du village Oudélé (1932) et du village de Lamséi (1933).⁸ Les soldats de la coloniale se félicitent des violences qu'ils ont utilisées pour juguler ces résistances, comme on peut le constater dans le rapport du lieutenant Magnien, chef de la subdivision de Mora à l'issue de ce qu'il désigne « tournée d'impôt effectuée en pleine disette, du 15 janvier au 24 février 1932, dans les massifs kirdi »⁹

Le 22 janvier, je commençais la perception dans le massif mouktélé par le quartier baldama. L'impôt est entré intégralement, mais il a été nécessaire de procéder à la destruction de 40 Saré sur un piton assez excentrique pour contraindre les kirdis de cet endroit à s'acquitter. Du 30 au 31 janvier, je suis dans le massif guemjek ou dans le quartier kourof, j'ai dû brûler 31 Saré. Des difficultés rencontrées à Dougay m'amènent à brûler quelques Saré alors que j'avais dû m'y imposer par la force l'année précédente, mais à Tala Masda, la perception est rapide en raison de la leçon du passé. Dans le massif mada, je fais brûler encore quelques Saré tout en constatant que le manque d'argent s'est fait sentir grandement dans ce massif comme ailleurs suite à la pénurie du mil dont souffre les kirdis... Onze Saré ont été brûlés à Ouldémé tandis que Golda, le recouvrement est facile car l'an passé j'avais dû y brûler quantité de Saré

Ce qui ne ressort pas explicitement dans ce rapport du lieutenant Magnien, c'est l'absence de l'utilisation des armes à feu, même s'il reconnaît avoir « dû s'imposer par la force », ni le nombre de Kirdi tués et les actes de vandalisme perpétrés pendant ces opérations de conquête. Ces faits ressortent dans d'autres rapports. En 1927 chez les kirdi de Moukong, le capitaine Vallin reconnaît qu'il a donné « l'ordre de tirer sur les archers se découvrant au plus près. Six coups de fusils furent tirés, il y eut trois Kirdis tués et le calme suivit »¹⁰ Au village de Mada en 1929 il affirme avoir donné « l'ordre de tirer sur tout archer apparaissant : 18 coups de fusil tuèrent trois hommes... ».¹¹ Le

⁸ D. Abwa, *Commissaires et...*, pp. 141-150.

⁹ ANY, APA 11876/F, rapport de tournée effectuée du 15 janvier au 24 février 1932 dans tous les massifs kirdi par le lieutenant Magnien, chef de la subdivision de Mora

¹⁰ ANY, APA12013/E, Affaires du village réfractaire Libam. Soumission, affaires diverses-correspondances 1924-1927. Lettre du capitaine Vallin au chef de la circonscription de Maroua, du 17 août 1927.

¹¹ ANY, APA 10036, circonscription de Mokolo, rapport de tournée n° 92.

capitaine Deparis, chef de division de Mokolo, signale quant à lui le massacre de Tigréa avec 34 de ses hommes et 12 plus ou moins grièvement blessés ; à la suite de ce massacre, le capitaine Deparis se fait accompagner par le sergent Finidori à qui il donne « l'ordre... et à trois miliciens de tirer : deux Kirdi tombèrent et les autres s'enfuirent ».¹²

Quant aux actes de vandalismes, ils sont avérés car après les tirs des armes à feu et les incendies des Saré, les militaires français n'hésitent pas à mettre la main sur toute bête trouvée dans les parages et à s'emparer du mil cultivé par ces populations. Ces actes de vandalismes, considérés « butins de guerres », sont présentés par ces vandales comme compensations des impôts non collectés. C'est ce que dit triomphalement le capitaine Deparis : « Nous détruisons le Saré du chef, puis une dizaine de Sarés avoisinants ; exclusivement autour du saré du chef, dans un rayon de 10 mètres, nous faisons couper le mil ».¹³Le rapport du capitaine Maronneau est autrement plus explicite : « Nous rentrons au campement à 13 heures avec nos prisonniers et pas mal de mil. Dès maintenant, les prises en bétail et en mil couvrent l'impôt et une amende égale au montant des taxes... »¹⁴

Ces actes de violences et de vandalismes ne mettent cependant pas fin à la résilience des Kirdi montagnards car toute victoire obtenue par l'armée coloniale n'est qu'éphémère puisque tout prétexte est bon pour que ces Kirdi retournent dans leurs sites-refuges en vue de refuser à nouveau de se soumettre. Certains n'hésitent même pas à narguer ouvertement les troupes coloniales à l'instar de cette voix d'un crieur entendu en septembre 1926 dans les villages Kirdi Libam-Liline par les chefs de l'expédition et qui disait : « Pourquoi le blanc n'est-il pas fatigué de nous demander une chose impossible ? Nos grands-pères faisaient la guerre, nous ferons comme eux. Ne plus faire la guerre ? C'est comme si on nous demandait de nous laisser mourir de faim ».¹⁵

La réalité de ces échecs est reconnue par le commissaire de la république Théodore Paul Marchand dans son rapport à la SDN pour l'année 1931¹⁶et même sous son successeur Auguste François Bonnacarrère, le chef de circonscription de Mokolo le confirme en disant que « nous essayons de parlementer, mais nos tentatives répétées sont toujours restées sans le moindre succès ».¹⁷ Il a fallu attendre l'arrivée du commissaire Jules Vincent Victor

¹² Ibid, rapport du capitaine Deparis n°99 du 26 juillet 1928.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ ANY, APA 11858, incidents de Golda et d'Ouldéné-Madavré 1933-1934.

¹⁵ ANY, APA 12013/E rapport de tournée n° 97 du 26 septembre 1926.

¹⁶ CAOM (centre des archives d'outre-mer), Fonds Togo-Cameroun, carton 37, rapport à la SDN pur 1931.

¹⁷ ANY, APA 11858, lettre n° 66/Ts du 17 avri 1934.

Repiquet (1934-1936) qui adopte à leur endroit une autre démarche dénommée « politique de présence » et les effets induits de la Seconde Guerre mondiale pour connaître un début de normalisation entre Kirdi montagnards et autorités coloniales à travers la diminution progressive des opérations de conquêtes en faveur de celles des mains tendues comprenant des « cadeaux politiques » en vue de « l'apprivoisement de ces populations ». La plupart de ces Kirdi sont cependant restés dans leurs sites-refuges, même si quelques-uns ont fini par descendre dans les plaines où ils ont accepté avec réticence de payer « l'impôt du blanc ». Qu'en est-il des populations dites Bamiléké ?

B/ Le Cas des Populations Dites Bamiléké

La plupart des chercheurs s'étant intéressés aux origines du mot « Bamiléké » affirment qu'il provient de deux termes : *mbat* qui signifie montagne et *liku* qui se traduit par savane.¹⁸ C'est dire qu'au départ, le mot « bamiléké » ne désigne pas un peuple, mais un paysage géographique que l'on trouve à l'ouest et au nord-ouest du Cameroun. Toutefois, les populations qui s'installent dans ce paysage, organisées en chefferies autonomes aux désignations spécifiques distinctes les unes des autres et n'ayant aucune unité linguistique, vont finir par adopter ce mot et le transformer en générique rassembleur. De ce fait, on parle aujourd'hui de « pays bamiléké », de « populations bamiléké ». Il faut à la vérité de dire que les autorités coloniales françaises y ont été pour beaucoup dans cette transformation d'un paysage en générique d'une population dite bamiléké. C'est le constat qui a été le nôtre dans une analyse antérieure dans laquelle nous faisons savoir qu'en 1935, les Français décident de changer les désignations des circonscriptions administratives du Cameroun placé sous leur autorité, en leur enlevant leurs étiquettes ethniques, à l'exception de celles des Bamiléké et des Bamoun. En effet, dès leur prise de possession du Cameroun en 1916, les Français donnent aux circonscriptions administratives des dénominations hétérogènes prenant en compte les villes, les peuples et les populations regroupés. On trouve des circonscriptions dénommées Kribi-Lolodorf-Campo, Edéa-Eséka, Douala-Yabassi, Mora-Garoua... avec chacune un chef-lieu dans l'une des villes citées. Les populations de l'Ouest étaient elles aussi dans une circonscription hétérogène dénommée Baré-Fumban-Nkongsamba avec pour chef-lieu Fumban. Ayant cependant constaté qu'une telle dénomination peut courir le risque de donner à penser qu'une préséance ou une prééminence est accordée à une ville et au groupe ethnique du chef-lieu sur les autres groupes ethniques de la même circonscription administrative. Pour ce faire, les Français, en 1935, décident que désormais ces circonscriptions administratives sont

¹⁸ E. Ghomsi, « Les Bamiléké du Cameroun (essai d'étude historique des origines à 1920) », thèse de doctorat de 3^{ème} cycle, Université de Paris, 1972, pp. 10-12.

désormais dénommées régions et elles doivent être identifiées par des éléments pris dans la nature environnante. On trouve ainsi les dénominations suivantes : régions du Logone et Chari, de la Sanaga Maritime, du Margui-Wandala, du Mbam, du Nkam, de l'Adamaoua, de la Bénoué, du Dja et Lobo, du Haut-Nyong,...etc. Deux grandes exceptions cependant : la région Bamoun et la région Bamiléké:¹⁹

deux régions (qui) demeurent homogènes avec des identifiants qui sont des génériques rassembleurs des populations: région Bamiléké et région Bamoun . Si pour la région Bamoun, ce générique correspond bien à un peuple homogène placé sous l'autorité d'un unique sultan/roi dans un territoire aux contours et frontières bien déterminés, il n'en est pas de même pour la région dite Bamiléké dont les populations n'ont aucune unité linguistique ni territoriale puisqu'elles sont disséminées dans une mosaïque de chefferies autonomes les unes des autres à l'image des cités grecques antiques » écrivions-nous dans une analyse antérieure²⁰

Telles se présentent les populations dites Bamiléké qui vont subir incendies, tirs et tirs aériens de la part des troupes coloniales françaises. Pourtant, au départ, rien ne pouvait présager d'une telle évolution, les populations dites Bamiléké ayant très tôt accepté de se soumettre aux Français comme ils l'ont fait auparavant avec les Allemands. Albert Temgoua, dans sa thèse consacrée aux résistances des Camerounais à la conquête allemande, n'en signale aucune dans le pays dit Bamiléké²¹. S'inspirant de la stratégie allemande qui consiste à laisser la gestion des Bamiléké à leurs chefs selon leurs traditions, les Français y adoptent également une administration indirecte à la française comme ils l'ont fait avec les lamibbe foulbé du Nord-Cameroun.²² En 1933, lorsque Bonnecarrère, que nous avons qualifié de « codificateur de l'organisation administrative de la chefferie traditionnelle »²³ décide de hiérarchiser les chefferies en chefferies supérieures ou de premier degré à la tête de toutes les chefferies d'une subdivision ou d'une circonscription, en chefferies de cantons encore appelées

¹⁹ Pour en savoir sur l'organisation administrative du Cameroun sous administration française, lire : D. Abwa, *Cameroun. Histoire d'un nationalisme 1884-1961*, (Yaoundé: Editions CLE, 2010), pp. 149-167.

²⁰ D. Abwa (sous la direction de) « Camerounais : il faut fumer le calumet de paix » pour ne pas donner raison à Jean Lambertson » in *Bilinguisme, multiculturalisme et vivre ensemble. Une réflexion des universitaires camerounais*, (Yaoundé: Proximité, 2019), p. 388.

²¹ A.P. Temgoua, « Les résistances à l'occupation allemande du Cameroun 1884-1916 », thèse de doctorat d'Etat en Histoire, Université de Yaoundé I, 2005.

²² Lire à ce propos, D. Abwa, « "Commandement européen" "commandement indigène" au Cameroun sous administration française de 1916 à 1960 », thèse de doctorat d'Etat en Histoire, Université de Yaoundé I, 1994.

²³ D. Abwa, *Commissaires et...*, pp. 191-201.

chefferies de deuxième degré ou chefferies de groupement qui sont au-dessus des chefferies de village qui sont quant à elles de troisième degré, les chefferies Bamiléké, comme les lamidats foubé du Nord-Cameroun, ne subissent aucune hiérarchisation, chacune gardant son autonomie et son rang de chefferie de groupement qui n'a aucune autre autorité au-dessus d'elle. Ce faisant, en harmonie avec les chefs bamiléké, la soumission de leurs populations est acquise aux Français et la participation de ces dernières est peu visible dans les violences politiques qui secouent le Sud Cameroun en quête de l'indépendance par les armes réclamée par l'UPC à partir de 1955.

Lorsque les Français décident d'interdire l'UPC le 13 juillet 1955, ce parti, qui depuis sa création le 10 avril 1948, revendique la réunification et l'indépendance du Cameroun, se retire dans la clandestinité à Boumnyebel et s'y organise en structure paramilitaire dénommée CNO (Comité National d'Organisation) pour revendiquer par les armes la souveraineté du Cameroun sous tutelle française. Pendant cette phase du CNO et jusqu'à l'assassinat du Mpodol Ruben Um Nyobé en 1958, aucun Bamiléké n'apparaît ni dans l'équipe qui cordonne cette guerre, le Secrétariat Administratif/Bureau de Liaison (SA/BL), ni dans les unités militaires que sont les brigades, bataillons, régiments et compagnies, ni dans les « groupes d'intensification du mouvement (GIM) mis en place par le CNO.²⁴ Cette absence peut s'expliquer par le fait que le cercle d'actions du CNO est circonscrit, dans un premier temps, loin du pays Bamiléké, précisément en Sanaga Maritime, à Douala, Yaoundé, Mbalmayo, Sangmélina, Nkongsamba.²⁵

Les Bamiléké vont cependant intégrer le mouvement de lutte pour l'indépendance du Cameroun lorsque celui-ci est déporté en pays bamiléké le 10 octobre 1957 par l'action du chef traditionnel de Baham, Pierre Kamdem Ninyim et *Martin Singap*, le bâtisseur d'une structure paramilitaire nouvelle, le Sinistre de la Défense Nationale du Kamerun (SDNK).²⁶ Du fait des dissensions entre les dirigeants du SDNK, cette structure paramilitaire de l'UPC est dissoute en 1959 et une nouvelle la remplace le 31 mai 1959 sous l'appellation Armée de Libération Nationale du Kamerun (ALNK).

Sous la houlette de ces deux structures paramilitaires satellites de l'UPC, SDNK et ALNK, le pays Bamiléké devient un important épiceutre de

²⁴ Les informations tirées d'un document frappé du sceau « secret » exploité par Daniel Abwa signale pendant cette période l'activisme d'un certain Victor Nantia, président du comité central UPC de Dschang qui organise des réunions et distribue des tracts venus de Douala dans les groupements de Bafou, Babadjou, Balessing, Bangang et Bamendjinda. Lire D. Abwa *Commissaires et...*, p. 281.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 235-279.

²⁶ Th. Deltombe...*KAMERUN!*..., pp. 227-230 ; D. Abwa, *Commissaires et...*, pp. 281-301. *Sauf indications contraires, les informations qui suivent sont tirées de ces deux ouvrages.*

la lutte de libération du Cameroun avec des maquis pro upécistes qui gangrènent toutes ses villes, les obligeant ainsi à connaître des guerres urbaines avec exacerbation des incendies, tirs et tirs aériens de la part des troupes coloniales françaises.

Il faut à la vérité de dire que le mouvement insurrectionnel en pays Bamiléké commence comme un conflit interne opposant les Bamiléké pro upécistes et les Bamiléké pro administration française et tout tourne autour de Kamdem Ninyim, le jeune chef de Baham qui brise l'harmonie jadis observée entre chefferies dites Bamiléké et autorité coloniale française. Après son retour de France où il faisait ses études secondaires et après avoir succédé à son père décédé en mai 1954, ce jeune chef adopte une attitude de contestation ouverte qui met dans l'embarras les autorités françaises qui hésitent à l'attaquer de front puisque supposé être pénétré de la culture française, pour avoir fait ses études en France. Le lieutenant Escoffet qui a suivi la montée en puissance de cette désobéissance rapporte ce qui suit :

A partir de ce moment, sûr de sa force, Ninyim confirme sa position de leader upéciste en organisant à Baham et à Bafoussam-ville des réunions au cours desquelles il ne fait pas faute de proclamer avec virulence sa position anti-colonialiste. Du mois d'avril au mois de novembre 1956, il contacte les Baham du Moungo auxquels il donne des consignes ; il contacte également les upécistes de Douala ; il organise des meetings dont les principaux ont été ceux des 13 et 14 juillet ; il déploie notamment une grande activité envers ses ressortissants pour les conseiller de ne pas payer l'impôt à l'administration.²⁷

Face à tant d'intrépidité et pour éviter que les autres chefs ne soient contaminés par sa désobéissance, les autorités françaises profitent d'un prétexte pour le faire arrêter, juger, condamner à deux ans de prison ferme et à cinq ans d'interdiction de séjour dans sa chefferie, destituer et remplacer par son frère Téguia ; exiler et mis en résidence surveillée à Yokadouma.²⁸ C'est cette série d'événements autour de ce personnage qui met le feu aux poudres dans le pays dit Bamiléké. C'est d'abord les incendies qui font leur apparition, générés par les Bamiléké antagonistes, c'est-à-dire les partisans du chef déchu et ceux du chef désigné par les autorités françaises au mépris des règles de transmission de pouvoir dans le pays Bamiléké. Le SDNK prend en effet l'initiative de ces incendies comme le révèlent les auteurs du *KAMERUN...*

²⁷ SHAT (Service Historique de l'Armée de Terre), 6H264, Dossier3, situation politique de la Région Bamiléké du mois de mai 1955 au mois d'avril 1959, p. 6 souligné dans le texte.

²⁸ D. Abwa, *Cameroun. Histoire...*, pp. 282-286.

La création du SDNK est le prélude à une unité d'attaques de grande ampleur. La cible principale : les chefferies qui collaborent avec l'administration. Dans la nuit du 13 au 14 juillet 1957, c'est naturellement celle de Baham qui est attaquée par une centaine d'assaillants. Son chef contesté, le fon Jean-Marie Tégua, échappe à l'attentat, mais son palais est mis à sac. Le symbole est frappant car l'intégrité physique du chef bamiléké, investi de pouvoirs à la fois politiques et religieux, est censée être inviolable. Cinq nuits plus tard, c'est la chefferie Bahouang, dont le chef avait soutenu Tégua qui est attaquée... Le 30 octobre, c'est au tour de la chefferie Batcham d'être pris pour cible...²⁹

Parallèlement aux incendies et sacs des chefferies collaboratrices orchestrées par le SDNK et plus tard par l'ANLK, les symboles du pouvoir colonial sont également pris d'assaut, comme le révèle le lieutenant Escoffet :

En ce qui concerne les actions menées contre les « valets du colonialisme », ils sont nombreux entre octobre et décembre 1957. Escoffet cite un certain nombre de cas dont : la tentative d'assassinat perpétrée contre l'administrateur Kame Samuel le 31 octobre alors qu'il se rend de Bafang à Bafoussam ; il est attaqué sur la route de Batié où il essuie des coups de feu ; les cas des massacres de Youdom Jean, conseiller municipal de Batié et Motchibong Deffo dans la nuit du 3 au 4 novembre ; le 6 novembre, à Bayangam, le notable Tchuenta Vincent est assassiné tandis que plusieurs personnes sont blessées et de nombreuses concessions pillées ; dans la nuit du 6 au 7 novembre, le tuteur du chef Bangou, Mankan Ndiffou est sauvagement tué tandis que le 8 novembre celui du chef Bamendjou est également assassiné. L'assassinat qui suscite cependant le plus d'émoi auprès de l'administration coloniale et de la classe politique camerounaise est celui du conseiller à l'Assemblée Territoriale Wanko Samuel ainsi que 6 villageois alors qu'il se trouve en route, à bord de sa voiture, dans le groupement de Batoufam le 13 décembre 1957.³⁰

Avec l'entrée en scène de l'ALNK, la situation évolue ; on ne s'attaque plus seulement aux valets de la colonisation, mais surtout aux acteurs de la colonisation eux-mêmes. Il faut signaler la participation en masse des populations Bamiléké, femmes et enfants compris, dans les attaques contre les troupes coloniales, l'église catholique et les administrateurs français eux-mêmes. Les bulletins de renseignements hebdomadaires (BRH) et quotidiens (BRQ) en font un écho éloquent :

²⁹ Th. Domergue...*KAMERUN !...*, p. 229.

³⁰ D. Abwa, *Cameroun. Histoire*, pp. 295-296.

Le 19 octobre une patrouille de Gendarmerie et de garde camerounais se heurte, dans le groupement Bameka, à un rassemblement de 3000 femmes dont beaucoup s'étaient peintes en ocre (signe coutumier de volonté de mort). La horde a essayé d'envelopper la patrouille qui pour se dégager a dû tirer en l'air (BRH N°7, p. 15)... Le 22 octobre- en opération de recherche du maquis de Singap Martin dans la région de Fontsa-Touala deux sections constatent au cours de leur progression que toute la population est en effervescence. Les routes et les pistes ont été saccagées. Les villageois se sont enfuis par groupes... Le 23 octobre- la population féminine de Bamougoum agit en masse : sur la route de Dschang-Bafoussam où des véhicules sont agressés à coups de pierre. Sur la piste Bafoussam-Bapi où un pont est détruit. Autour du camp des gardes à Bafoussam. Sur le terrain d'aviation de Bafoussam dont la piste est détériorée (BRH N°7 p. 7). Le 24 octobre- La population féminine de Bamougoum dès six heures du matin reprend ses démonstrations de masse dans le groupement et aux environs de Bafoussam (BRH N°7 p. 8). Le 28 octobre- Une patrouille mixte Gendarmerie-Armée est agressée par une bande de 150 femmes hurlantes et menaçantes. Pour se dégager la patrouille est mise dans l'obligation de faire usage de ses armes. Toute la population s'est groupée et occupe les crêtes.³¹

Pour ce qui est de l'église catholique considérée comme complice de l'administration coloniale, ses missions de Bafang (du 29 au 30 novembre 1959), de Bangang (du 6 au 7 décembre 1959) et de Fonakeukeu (le 27 décembre 1959) sont attaquées, incendiées et pillées par les combattants de l'ALNK. Les autorités administratives françaises elles-mêmes ne sont pas épargnées : le 21 décembre 1959, le sous-préfet de Bafang, en visite sur la route Kekem-Bafang, est assailli par une foule hostile de près de 1500 hommes qui l'oblige, pour sa sécurité, à abandonner sur place sa Land-Rover de service. Lorsque le 26 décembre 1959 il envoie un peloton de gardes la récupérer, celui-ci est également entouré d'un rassemblement d'hommes et de femmes contre lequel il fait usage de ses armes à feu pour desserrer cet étai et couvrir son repli. Ce peloton subit, lui aussi, des coups de fusil de chasse.³²

On peut dire, qu'avec les structures paramilitaires SDNK et ALNK, entre 1957 et 1959, la guerre urbaine est véritablement ouverte en pays Bamiléké et les troupes coloniales n'y vont pas de main morte en utilisant incendies meurtriers, tirs et tirs aériens. Les témoignages sont nombreux qui attestent la réalité de ces violences inhumaines utilisées pour mâter ces populations hostiles à l'endroit de l'impérialisme français. Parmi ces

³¹ Ibid, pp. 305-306.

³² SHAT 6H 248, période du 23 au 29 décembre inclus.

témoignages, nous allons retenir la description qu'en fait Jean Pierre Moutassi qui nous semble être un bon résumé de l'ensemble de ces témoignages :

Pendant trois ans, le général Max Briand avait combattu le nationalisme à l'Ouest. L'armée coloniale utilisait des méthodes guerrières importées d'Indochine et d'Algérie connues pour leur brutalité. Ces méthodes avaient valeur de référence pour les Officiers français ayant combattu dans ces deux pays. Pour faire le maximum de victimes et produire un effet psychologique, l'armée avait opté pour les bombardements intensifs des localités, faisant des milliers de victimes civiles. La France menait des opérations commandos dans toutes les localités bamiléké, faisant à chaque fois des centaines de morts : A Bameka du 26 au 27 septembre 1959, « l'Opération Omo » avait mobilisé plus de 13000 hommes. Le bilan fait état de l'arrestation de 1000 personnes et plusieurs tués. En novembre 1959, les villages entiers avaient été anéantis au napalm, notamment les localités de Bafoussam, Dschang, Baham, Bagangté, Mbouda, Bangou, etc. Dans d'autres localités de la Mifi, la Menoua, le Haut-Nkam, les Bamboutos, et le Ndé, les autorités coloniales avaient lancé des attaques pour détruire des quartiers et des villages. Les habitations et les commerces étaient ensuite confisqués. La subdivision de Mbouda était secouée par les combats particulièrement meurtriers.³³

Dans les faits rapportés ci-dessus, il y en a un qui est objet à controverses entre les témoins oculaires et les historiens : les Français ont-ils utilisé le napalm pour vaincre la résistance des Bamiléké ? Dans le volumineux ouvrage consacré à cette « *guerre cachée aux origines de la françafrique* », les auteurs interviennent dans cette controverse par la question suivante : « Feu aérien : « napalm » ou « cartouches incendiaires ? ».³⁴ Après avoir interrogé les témoins oculaires camerounais et les acteurs français, les auteurs arrivent à la conclusion suivante :

« En dépit de ces affirmations, qui tendent à devenir « vérités historiques » à force d'en « entendre parler », personne ne semble avoir jamais trouvé, dans les archives ou ailleurs, de preuves incontestables de l'usage de napalm lors de l'offensive militaire franco-camerounaise de 1950. Tous ceux qui, rares il est vrai, en ont cherché des traces formelles- l'évocation, par exemple, de ces « bidons spéciaux » qui désignaient le napalm dans les archives de la guerre d'Algérie- sont, jusqu'à présent, rentrés bredouilles. Et certaines pistes se sont révélées des cul-de-sac. »³⁵

³³ J.P. Moutassi, *Epilogue...*, pp. 124-125.

³⁴ Th. Deltombe... *KAMERUN !...*, pp. 420-425

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 421-422.

Napalm avec ou sans napalm, une vérité historique s'impose : avec les tirs aériens, le feu est venu du ciel pour tout détruire en pays bamiléké. C'est pourquoi des voix s'élèvent de plus en plus pour parler de « génocide bamiléké ». Par ailleurs, avec le napalm ou sans le napalm, les troupes coloniales n'ont pas réussi à vaincre la résistance des Bamiléké car dès la proclamation de l'indépendance du Cameroun sous tutelle française le 1^{er} janvier 1960, commence dans le pays bamiléké comme dans d'autres régions du Cameroun la deuxième guerre d'indépendance qui va durer 11 ans.³⁶

Avec ces tirs aériens accompagnés du feu en pays Bamiléké, on pouvait croire avoir atteint le sommet de l'horreur compte tenu de l'importance des destructions tant en vies humaines qu'en matériel. Ce serait compter sans la hargne des Français à utiliser toutes les formes de brutalité possibles pour soumettre les Camerounais à leur autorité. Le paroxysme en matière d'horreur va être atteint en un seul jour, le 24 avril 1960, avec le grave incendie du quartier Congo à Douala.

II/ Le Cas des Populations Résidant à Douala avec Paroxysme de la Guerre Urbaine entre Pouvoirs en Place : Le Grave Incendie, le 24 Avril 1960, du Quartier Congo à Douala

Dans une étude comparative que nous avons menée antérieurement entre les villes de Douala et Yaoundé,³⁷ nous sommes arrivés à la conclusion, qu'à la différence de Yaoundé, Douala est une ville essentiellement frondeuse. Elle a manifesté sa fronde contre la volonté de spoliation des terres Douala par les Allemands, fronde qui a abouti, le 8 août 1914, à la pendaison de Rudolf Douala Manga Bell et son secrétaire Adolf Ngosso Din. Elle a manifesté également la même fronde contre les autorités coloniales françaises qui, pour la réduire, ont utilisé incendies meurtriers, tirs et tirs aériens accompagnés de feu. Pour ce faire, avant de présenter le paroxysme de cette guerre urbaine concrétisé par l'incendie du quartier Congo en 1960, nous allons au préalable analyser comment incendies, tirs et tirs aériens ont été utilisés contre les femmes (1931), les défenseurs syndicaux (1945) et les défenseurs de l'indépendance du Cameroun (1955).

³⁶ D. Abwa, « L'ALNK (Armée de Libération Nationale du Kamerun) et le deuxième échec de la guerre d'indépendance au Cameroun (1960-1971) » in *Acta 2021 Independence wars since the XVIII century, XLVI International congress of military history (29 August-3 September 2021, Athens*, vol...ii, (Athens: Greece, 2022), pp. 381-414.

³⁷ D. Abwa, « Douala et Yaoundé : deux ville,s deux tempéraments, deux destins » in *Eno Belinga et j ;p ; Vicat.Yaoundé, une grande métropole africaine au seuil du troisième millénaire*, (Barbeduc: Les classiques africains, 2001), pp. 53-63.

A/ « On Fusille les Femmes au Cameroun »³⁸

La crise économique de 1929 qui sévit dans le monde atteint le Cameroun de plein fouet en 1931.³⁹ Et comme les autorités coloniales en fonction au Cameroun sous administration française ne peuvent attendre aucun secours du budget de la métropole, le commissaire de la république Théodore Paul Marchand a l'obligation de trouver dans sa colonie (même si le Cameroun n'est pas une colonie à proprement parler) les moyens financiers pour financer sa colonisation. Non seulement il décide, par un arrêté pris le 30 décembre 1930, d'augmenter le taux de l'impôt de capitation des populations camerounaises dont les revenus sont pourtant faibles, mais aussi de l'étendre à toutes les femmes, même celles qui ont des enfants de moins de douze ans et qui en étaient exemptées auparavant.⁴⁰ Les chefs Douala sont obligés de collecter cet impôt au taux élevé mais ils se heurtent à la grogne des hommes et au refus catégorique des femmes. Le 31 janvier 1931, ces dernières adressent une lettre d'indignation au commissaire de la république Marchand à laquelle ce dernier ne daigne pas répondre. Par la suite, les femmes s'organisent en association pour coordonner leurs actions et choisissent leurs leaders : Jemba Muduru, Ewudu Jemba, Johanna Isad'a Mbappè Bwanga et Etika Dika.⁴¹

Lorsque, lassés d'attendre l'impôt des femmes, les autorités coloniales de la ville interrogent à ce sujet les chefs indigènes, elles reçoivent la réponse cinglante suivante : « les femmes ne veulent pas payer ». Informé, Marchand ordonne qu'une pression plus forte soit faite aux chefs afin qu'ils fassent preuve de plus de fermeté à l'endroit des femmes et que cet impôt soit impérativement collecté. En guise de pression, le chef de région Courtade convoque à cet effet tous les chefs à une réunion à l'issue de laquelle il fait condamner à trois mois de prison le chef de Bonabéri, Mbappè Bwanga, le père d'une des leaders des femmes Johanna Isad'a Mbappè Bwanga, en prétextant qu'il « a dilapidé pour des fins personnelles une partie de l'impôt ». Ce prétexte ne convainc personne car tous savent qu'il s'agit d'une manœuvre d'intimidation pour obliger les femmes à se soumettre et à s'acquitter de leur impôt de capitation.

³⁸ C'est le titre donné à cet événement à Douala par la Une du journal de la ligue de *La Race Nègre*, N°5 d'août 1931. Nous avons, dans notre ouvrage, *Commissaires...* nous avons consacré les pages 183 à 184 à cet événement et les informations ci-dessus en sont tirées.

³⁹ Lire à ce sujet, F. Kouo, « Les répercussions de la crise économique de 1929 au Cameroun » *Afrika Zamani*, n° 10-11, décembre 1979.

⁴⁰ CAOM, Fonds Togo-Cameroun, carton 37, rapport à la SDN, 1931, p. 43.

⁴¹ Th. Same, « Les duala : de la contestation anti-coloniale au compromis 1884-1938 », mémoire de DIPES II, ENS, 1989, p. 104 ; lire aussi L. Moume Etia, *Cameroun, les années ardentes. Aux origines de la vie syndicale et politique*, (Paris: J.A. Livres, 1991), pp. 29-37.

Au lieu d'intimider les femmes, cette manœuvre les enrage plutôt car désormais, elles bravent l'autorité française à travers des tracts qu'elles impriment clandestinement et distribuent discrètement dans les quatre chefferies douala pour inviter au boycott du fisc. Cette désobéissance, bien que discrète, est connue des autorités françaises qui, en riposte, profèrent des menaces fortes à l'endroit des chefs qui finissent par livrer les noms des responsables du mouvement de protestation des femmes. A Bonabéri, Johanna Isad'a Mbappè Bwanga est arrêtée le 21 juillet 1931. C'est justement ce qu'il ne fallait pas faire car les femmes cessent de se cacher; elles descendent dans les rues en brandissant bâtons et slogans pour exiger la libération de leur compagne de lutte. C'est au cours d'une de ces descentes que le gendarme Thiébaud, exacerbé par tant de hardiesse, prend son fusil et tire sur les femmes, dont une, Mme Bopongo Kwala est restée paralysée avec quatre balles dans le corps qui n'ont pas pu être extraites.⁴²

Rendant compte de cette tragédie dans son rapport à la SDN, Theodore Paul Marchand minimise la gravité de cette barbarie en disant:

Cette condamnation (de Johanna Mbappè Bwanga) fut l'occasion, le 22 juillet, de manifestations dans les divers quartiers de la ville, manifestations auxquelles ne prirent ostensiblement part que des femmes. Elles furent dispersées sans difficulté dans les quartiers de Bali et à Bonabéri. Au quartier de Déido, *un rassemblement de femmes* eut lieu devant le Commissariat de police tenu par un gendarme métropolitain. Ce dernier, perdant son sang-froid et dans le but sans doute d'effrayer les manifestantes, prit un fusil de chasse et tira trois cartouches à plombs en l'air et à terre. Trois femmes furent atteintes très légèrement par ricochet. Une seule fut transportée à l'hôpital avec quelques grains dans les pieds ; son état est sans gravité d'ailleurs. Les autres rejoignirent aussitôt leur domicile.⁴³

Cette volonté de minimiser cette brutalité n'a pas empêché le journal *La Race Nègre*, dans sa livraison du 5 août 1931 de publier in extenso le télégramme que les femmes douala lui avaient envoyé tout en adressant une copie au ministre des colonies accompagnée d'une correspondance dans laquelle la ligue fait état de ses « *protestations les plus indignées* ». ⁴⁴ Comme il fallait s'y attendre, il n'y eut aucune réaction du côté français.

⁴² *La Race Nègre* n°5, août 1931.

⁴³ CAOM, AgFOM, carton 719, dossier 1856, lettre n° 362 CF du 30 juillet 1931.

⁴⁴ *La Race Nègre* n° 5, août 1931.

B/ Douala Septembre 1945 : Tirs, Tirs Aériens et Massacres des Camerounais Syndicalistes

Vaincue dès e début de la Seconde Guerre mondiale par l'Allemagne nazie qui a occupé une partie de son territoire à l'issue de l'armistice signée par le maréchal Pétain, la France ne doit sa survie du côté des Alliés vainqueurs qu'à la rébellion du général de Gaulle et le soutien de la Grande Bretagne. Toutefois, bien qu'ayant toléré la présence de la France Libre du général de Gaulle aux côtés des Alliés, le président américain, Eisenhower, ne considère pas le général de Gaulle comme la légitime représentant de la France puisque, pour lui, il n'est qu'un rebelle. Ce faisant, il ne lui permet pas d'assister aux premières rencontres des potentiels vainqueurs qui préparent déjà l'après-guerre. Pour convaincre le président américain de sa légitimité qui lui permet de parler au nom de la France, il convoque, sur proposition de René Pleven, commissaire national aux colonies dans le CNFL (Comité National de la France Libre) et après consultation de l'Assemblée Consultative Provisoire d'Alger, la conférence de Brazzaville qui se tient du 30 janvier au 8 février 1944.⁴⁵

Pour convaincre davantage son interlocuteur de sa « bienveillance » envers ses colonisés, il fait adopter des résolutions qui présupposent des avancées sur les plans politique et social. Sur le plan social qui nous intéresse ici, la conférence de Brazzaville prend deux options supposées améliorer les conditions de vie des colonisés : la fin de l'indigénat et des travaux forcés, et surtout l'autorisation accordée aux indigènes de créer des syndicats. Cette possibilité accordée aux indigènes est très mal accueillie par les colons et les administrateurs français au rang desquels le haut-commissaire Hubert Carras qui a pourtant participé à cette conférence.⁴⁶ Ces colons et administrateurs français considèrent en effet qu'à Brazzaville, les organisateurs ont pris des « résolutions irresponsables et irréfléchies ». ⁴⁷ A contrario les Camerounais accueillent cette résolution avec un grand enthousiasme, d'autant plus qu'à leur retour de Brazzaville en février 1944, René Pleven, ministre des colonies de la France Libre et principal artisan de la conférence, Félix Guin, président de l'Assemblée Consultative Provisoire et Albert Gazier, délégué de la Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) font escale à Yaoundé et y tiennent

⁴⁵ A.Eyinga, *Démocratie de Yaoundé T1, Syndicalisme d'abord 1944-1956*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 1985. L'auteur y fait une analyse fort pertinente de la convocation de cette conférence, pp. 7-41.

⁴⁶ D. Abwa, *Commissaires...*, pp. 286-292. Dans cet ouvrage nous lui donnons le titre suivant : « Hubert Eugène Paul Carras, le “ Camerounais ” de la conférence de Brazzaville (1943-1944) parce que depuis 1925, il n'a plus quitté le Cameroun jusqu'en 1944 et y a gravi tous les échelons de la hiérarchie administrative coloniale.

⁴⁷ Tous les numéros de *Le Cameroun Libre* du mois de février et celui du 31 mars 1944 témoignent de cette colère des colons français au Cameroun.

un important meeting dans la salle du Tribunal des Races de Yaoundé.⁴⁸ A l'issue de ce meeting, René Plevén accorde une audience à Léopold Moume Etia, Philémon Sakouma et Ruben Um Nyobè à qui il annonce l'autorisation prochaine du syndicalisme.⁴⁹

Galvanisés par cette information, Sakouma et Um Nyobè invitent des évolués camerounais à une réunion à Yaoundé le 23 février 1944 en vue de créer un cercle d'évolués comme le leur a conseillé Plevén. Informé de cette initiative, Carras entre dans une grande colère, convoque les initiateurs de la rencontre des évolués et leur tient à peu près ce langage : « Un cercle de évolués ici ? Jamais. En revanche, si vous voulez former une association des fonctionnaires, allez-y ».⁵⁰ Il continue dans l'intimidation des évolués indigènes en cherchant à mettre un terme aux contacts quasi quotidiens que certains Français, notamment Gaston Donnat, Soulier, Lalurie, Brébaut, Guerpillon... entretiennent avec des indigènes évolués dans le cadre des « cercles d'études ». Pour ce faire, d'après Abel Eyinga, il « diffusa une lettre circulaire par laquelle il enjoignait les différents directeurs et chefs de service européens de faire en sorte que le personnel indigène évite certaines fréquentations jugées dangereuses et compromettantes. Allusion à peine voilée aux rendez-vous nocturnes chez Donnat ».⁵¹

Comme prévu, un décret du 7 août 1944 est pris et étend le droit de créer les syndicats aux sujets français des colonies, conformément aux résolutions de Brazzaville. Pour ne pas changer, Hubert Carras s'empresse lentement à le promulguer au Cameroun, mais, obligé, il finit par le faire avec un mois de retard le 7 septembre 1944.⁵² La promulgation de cet arrêté soulève de facto une fièvre syndicale chez les Camerounais encouragés en cela par les centrales syndicales de la Métropole en quête de représentations dans les colonies. Du fait de l'attitude hostile de Carras à l'implémentation harmonieuse des résolutions de Brazzaville, les autorités françaises installées à Alger décident de mettre un terme à son séjour au Cameroun en refusant de lui confier à nouveau une colonie à administrer.⁵³ Il est remplacé par Henri Pierre Nicolas que nous avons qualifié de « maladroit » puisque par sa gestion du Cameroun, il laisse face à face colons et syndicalistes camerounais, créant ainsi un environnement sulfureux qui donne lieu aux massacres de septembre 1945.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Ph. Gaillard, *Le Cameroun, T1*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1989), p. 167.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 167.

⁵¹ A. Eyinga, *Démocratie de Yaoundé...*, p. 60.

⁵² *Journal Officiel du Cameroun (JOC)* 1944, p. 666.

⁵³ CAOM, EEII 4118 (5), dossier Carras, fiche N°1.

⁵⁴ Malgré les recherches minutieuses menées tant aux Archives d'Outre-mer à Aix-en-Provence qu'aux Archives Nationales à Yaoundé, nous n'avons pas pu obtenir un document retraçant la

L'élite camerounaise salariée, de plus en plus acquise aux idées novatrices que véhiculent certains Français, transforme les rendez-vous nocturnes de chez Donnat de cercle d'études, en syndicats.⁵⁵ Le 18 décembre 1944, la fièvre syndicale des premiers jours se transforme en action plus réfléchie et l'Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun (USCC) voit le jour.⁵⁶ L'objectif visé par cette fusion syndicale c'est de promouvoir une action concertée des revendications et des actions pour un mieux-être des travailleurs syndiqués. Affiliée à la CGT française, l'USCC entend s'ouvrir aux syndicats des colons blancs et elle convoque à cet effet une réunion à la salle des fêtes d'Akwa où n'assistent que quelques Français, notamment ceux du cercle d'études, Lalurie, Lapeyre, Donnat et Soulier.⁵⁷

Que des indigènes réussissent à se constituer en syndicats pour revendiquer leurs droits dans un système colonial rigide, cela ne peut que susciter la colère de ceux qui, depuis longtemps, profitent de la soumission passive qui leur est exigée. Et, c'est à juste titre que Richard Joseph aboutit à la même conclusion en affirmant : « Les syndicats du Cameroun n'eurent pas la chance de ceux de Côte d'Ivoire qui purent se développer sans l'opposition de l'administration ; en effet, les militants de l'USCC ne devaient pas seulement affronter l'opposition de l'administration, mais aussi celle des colons (...) et du clergé catholique ». ⁵⁸ Cette hostilité envers le militantisme syndical camerounais ne décourage nullement ces derniers qui n'hésitent plus à afficher ouvertement leurs mécontentements quand leurs droits sont violés. Ce qui n'est pas du goût des colons français.

Effectivement, les colons n'acceptent pas cette nouvelle attitude des salariés indigènes qu'ils qualifient d'outrecuidante. D'après eux, le vent de Brazzaville est entrain de ruiner la situation magnifique qu'ils vivent jusque-là et dont le point culminant a eu lieu pendant la guerre. Pour faire pièce à la création de l'USCC et ses salariés indigènes, les colons blancs, ayant favorablement apprécié le caractère faible du nouveau haut-commissaire et son attitude favorable à leur endroit, créent, à leur tour, le 15 avril 1945, l'Association des Colons du Cameroun (ASCOCAM) dont l'objectif est de défendre leurs intérêts.⁵⁹ Dans cette association, aucune méprise n'est possible sur la qualité du colon telle qu'elle est définie dans ses statuts : « Sont colons, toutes les citoyennes et citoyens français non africains, travaillant

carrière administrative de Henri Nicolas. La seule certitude qui nous a été donnée à Aix-en-Provence, c'est qu'il est arrivé à l'administration coloniale par « recrutement latéral ».

⁵⁵ Les statuts du cercle d'études sociales et syndicales ont été publiés au JOC du 15 décembre 1944, p. 826.

⁵⁶ A. Eyinga, *Démocratie de Yaoundé...*, pp. 81-82.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 66.

⁵⁸ R. Joseph, *Le mouvement nationaliste au Cameroun*, (Paris: Karthala, 1988), pp. 81-82.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

personnellement à la colonie, sous la seule réserve qu'ils ne soient pas salariés de l'Etat. Sont provisoirement exclus, tous les autochtones, même citoyen français. Les étrangers peuvent faire partie de l'Association »⁶⁰. Voilà qui est bien clair !

Le ton est donné ! Les populations vivant au Cameroun sont divisées en trois camps : celui des indigènes regroupés au sein de l'USCC dans laquelle militent quelques fonctionnaires français ; celui des colons qui exclue non seulement les indigènes mais aussi les fonctionnaires français ; enfin, celui des fonctionnaires qui ne peuvent ou ne veulent s'affilier dans aucun des deux camps. La quête du leadership est ainsi lancée entre ces trois camps.

C'est ASCOCAM qui, en premier, engage les hostilités en convoquant à Douala, le 5 septembre 1945, les Etats Généraux de la colonisation française au cours desquels les assises de Brazzaville sont de nouveau condamnées et les colons invités à se montrer plus entreprenants.⁶¹

Dès le lendemain de cette rencontre, des tracts au ton agressif de cette association circulent invitant les colons à l'action. Dans l'un de ces tracts, on peut, en effet, lire ce qui suit :

Membres de l'Association et autres qui avez sacrifié votre jeunesse, votre activité, vos disponibilités, êtes-vous décidés à assister passivement à la lutte qui s'est engagée ? Admettez-vous d'être les seuls qui n'avez pas participé aux sacrifices pécuniaires que se sont imposés les autres territoires ? Voudriez-vous courir le risque de perdre le fruit de vos longues années de labeur et, fait encore plus grave, faire perdre à la France un Empire colonial qui représente et notre gloire passée et notre espérance future ? Voudriez-vous que la France, sans Territoires d'Outre-mer soit inscrite comme une petite nation ? Vous ne le voulez pas. C'est pourquoi, aujourd'hui, nous vous lançons un deuxième appel...⁶²

Déjà chauffés à blanc par ces tracts, les colons sont en plus encouragés à l'action par le clergé catholique qui stigmatise « la nouvelle mentalité des Noirs sous l'instigation des démagogues utopistes imbus de l'esprit de Brazzaville » et qui estimait que la conférence dans ses résolutions, n'avait pas fait preuve de prudence ni de sagesse en remettant « entre les mains des Noirs non préparés des armes du syndicalisme ».⁶³ Face à cette montée d'adrénaline entre les positions des Camerounais regroupés dans l'USCC et

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ A. Eyinga, *Démocratie de Yaoundé...*, p. 87.

⁶² Ibid, p. 87.

⁶³ Cité par L. Ngongo, *Histoire des forces religieuses au Cameroun*, (Paris: Karthala, 1982), pp. 180-182.

qui refusent que leurs droits soient violés et les colons de l'ASCOCAM prêts à défendre leurs intérêts par tous les moyens, Henri Nicolas, le haut-commissaire ne prend aucune initiative pour mettre un terme ou atténuer l'escalade de la violence qui se dessine à l'horizon. Et ce qui devait arriver, arriva : les 24 et 25 septembre 1945, ont lieu ce que nous appelons les « massacres de 1945 » et que d'autres qualifient de « grève sanglante des 24-25 septembre 1945 »,⁶⁴ ou encore « les émeutes de septembre 1945 »,⁶⁵ « les événements des 24, 25, 26 septembre 1945 ». ⁶⁶ Tout commence le 20 septembre lorsque les manœuvres du chemin de fer et du port de Bonabéri expriment leur mécontentement en projetant une grève pour réclamer l'augmentation de leurs salaires. Paradoxalement, ce sont les salariés non syndiqués les plus déterminés pour cette grève alors que les syndiqués s'y opposent et ont même envoyé une délégation pour informer les autorités de l'imminence de celle-ci et leur désapprobation à y participer⁶⁷. Bien que prévenu, Henri Nicolas ne prend aucune initiative, ni pour empêcher la grève, ni pour proposer une augmentation des salaires réclamée par les manœuvres, ni pour prévenir les débordements éventuels. La grève projetée a effectivement lieu le lundi 24 septembre et elle se transforme en émeute au cours de laquelle plusieurs Camerounais sont massacrés. La violence s'est donc particulièrement manifestée pendant cette grève, Camerounais et colons français se rejetant la paternité de l'initiative.

Pour les colons, ce sont les indigènes qui sont à l'origine de la violence qui a donné lieu aux tueries de septembre 1945 puisqu'ils sont parti de chez eux avec l'intention bien arrêtée d'user de la violence car il étaient munis de bâtons, gourdins et coupe-coupe. De ce fait, ils n'ont été que des victimes obligées de se défendre et s'ils se sont emparés des armes à feu, c'était pour palier l'incompétence du gouverneur qui n'a pris aucune disposition pour les protéger. En bref, s'il y a eu des morts, la faute en incombe aux grévistes⁶⁸. Pour les syndicalistes camerounais, ce sont les colons qui ont poussé et ont participé aux tueries de septembre 1945 à Douala car, d'après Jacques Ngom, ce ne sont pas les syndicalistes camerounais qui arboraient « bâtons, gourdins, coupe-coupe, mais plutôt des « sand-sand boys », des jeunes chômeurs et de jeunes aventuriers des bas-fonds ameutés et même payés par les colons dans le but de trouver un prétexte pour nuire à l'USC⁶⁹.

⁶⁴ A. Eyinga, *Démocratie de Yaoundé...*, p. 89.

⁶⁵ R. Joseph, *Le mouvement...*, p. 81.

⁶⁶ A. Eyinga, *Démocratie de Yaoundé...*, p. 89.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Anonyme, Cameroun français. Les événements de Douala des 24, 25, 26 septembre 1945, s/l s/d, p. 7.

⁶⁹ *Le travailleur camerounais* n° 30 du 30 septembre 1948 : discours prononcé par Jacques Ngom lors de la troisième commémoration des événements de septembre 1945.

Par ailleurs, ils ne se reconnaissent aucune responsabilité dans la demande des armes à feu faite par les colons qui n'ont subi ni menaces ni provocations de leur part qui justifieraient celle-ci ; cette demande d'armes à feu émane essentiellement de leur volonté de les utiliser pour liquider les syndicalistes et leurs leaders.

Colons de l'ASCOCAM et syndicalistes de l'USCC sont cependant d'accord sur le fait que le haut-commissaire Henri Nicolas est le principal responsable de l'escalade constatée les 25 et 26 septembre et les tueries qui s'en ont suivi en ordonnant que 50 colons sur les 150 demandeurs soient armés. C'est également avec son approbation que les aviateurs par des tirs aériens et la police avec « des mitrailleuses sur les canons et les motos armées » sont entrés en jeu⁷⁰. En décrivant les événements de septembre 1945 à Douala, Richard Joseph n'hésite pas sur les termes en faisant de Henri Nicolas le responsable de ce « massacre »⁷¹:

Quand le Gouverneur circula dans les rues, il se trouva confronté à des groupes de Blancs prétendant que la situation échappait à tout contrôle et qu'il leur fallait être armé. Les témoignages diffèrent sur ce point, mais il semble que certains Blancs étaient déjà armés en sortant dans les rues, que d'autres purent s'emparer d'armes au dépôt militaire, et qu'enfin le Gouverneur tenta de légaliser ce fait accompli en armant quelques civils qu'il plaça sous le commandement d'un certain lieutenant Gibelli. Les Européens se mirent à tourner dans Douala et la suite ne peut être décrite que comme un massacre, les huit morts et les vingt blessés du rapport officiel ne reflétant certainement pas la réalité. Les Blancs utilisèrent même un avion, duquel ils mitraillèrent les émeutiers

Cette première cohorte des martyrs sociaux de la conférence de Brazzaville va être suivie d'une seconde dix ans plus tard, celle relative aux résolutions politiques de la conférence de Brazzaville.

C/ Douala 1955 : Tirs, Tirs Aériens et Massacres des Camerounais Nationalistes

Après les massacres de septembre 1945, la France s'emploie désormais à éviter toute violence ouverte contre les Camerounais. Pour ce faire, les autorités de Paris s'organisent pour n'envoyer au Cameroun que des hauts commissaires totalement acquis à l'esprit de Brazzaville en vue de faire la différence avec les deux précédents, Hubert Carras et Henri Nicolas. Le premier dans cette catégorie est Robert Delavignette qui, avant d'arriver au

⁷⁰ Anonyme, Cameroun, p. 7.

⁷¹ R. Joseph, *Le mouvement...*, p. 84.

Cameroun, a fait ses preuves comme chef de cabinet du ministre des colonies Marius Moutet, puis directeur de la prestigieuse Ecole coloniale qui prépare les futurs administrateurs à leurs fonctions coloniales.⁷² Homme pétri d'expériences des pratiques coloniales françaises, Delavignette, dès son arrivée au Cameroun, transfère la capitale de Douala à Yaoundé où il s'attèle « à la réconciliation des inconciliables, à éviter une nouvelle escalade entre Européens et indigènes du Cameroun, afin de mettre en application le nouveau statut né de la constitution de la quatrième République. Néanmoins il n'a pas pu empêcher les grèves des nationalistes camerounais qui n'acceptaient pas ses choix prioritairement et exclusivement dirigés vers les indigènes considérés comme « amis de la France » et son hostilité ouverte contre ceux qu'il considérait comme « les ennemis de la France » parce qu'ils « osaient » avoir une opinion contraire à celle des Français. Il y eut ainsi, entre le 15 février et le 15 avril 1946, cinq mouvements de grèves et entre septembre 1946 et avril 1947 il en eut seize de grande envergure. Il réussit cependant à imposer l'esprit de Brazzaville à travers les différentes élections qu'il organisa au⁷³ Cameroun.⁷⁴ Toutefois, la querelle qui oppose les Camerounais « amis de la France », militants de la JEUCAFRA (Jeunesse Camerounaise Française) et de l'UNICAFRA (Union camerounaise française) qui soutiennent la présence française au Cameroun aux Camerounais « ennemis de la France » militants du RACAM (Rassemblement du Cameroun) hostiles à la présence française n'est toujours pas tranchée au moment où il quitte le Cameroun. Son successeur, Robert Casimir, qui assure son intérim et qui n'a pas le même tact que lui l'envenime au point de donner l'occasion aux nationalistes camerounais de créer enfin un parti politique qui revendique ouvertement l'indépendance du Cameroun. C'est l'existence de ce parti politique qui va donner lieu aux massacres des hommes politiques camerounais en 1955.

C'est le haut-commissaire René Hoffherr qui est au Cameroun lorsque le 10 avril 1948, il est surpris par les statuts d'un parti politique dénommé Union des populations du Cameroun (UPC) déposés à Douala par les « dix de Sierra ». Obligé de reconnaître officiellement la naissance de ce parti politique, il se réfugie dans un premier temps dans un dilatoire qui dure quelques mois mais finit par lui donner le sésame nécessaire pour lui permettre de fonctionner officiellement. Cette reconnaissance est prise pour une faute par les autorités de Paris qui le remplacent par un autre haut fonctionnaire plus expérimenté.

⁷² CAOM, PA 19, dossier Delavignette ; et P. Messmer, « Robert Delavignette » in *Hommes et destins*, T.8, 1988, pp. 228-234.

⁷³ Pour en savoir plus sur Hoffherr au Cameroun, lire D. Abwa, *Commissaires...*

⁷⁴ Sous le titre « René Hoffherr, « l'homme par qui arriva la faute (1947-1949) », pp. 332-343.

A la suite de Hoffherr, c'est Jean Louis Marie Soucadaux qui prend les rênes du Cameroun français après plus d'une vingtaine d'années dans l'administration coloniale en Afrique occidentale française (AOF) qu'en Afrique équatoriale française (AEF). Ce haut fonctionnaire que Georges Chaffard décrit comme un « un homme prudent et madré, qui regarde toujours où il met les pieds »⁷⁵ avait pour missions, d'après Daniel Abwa «de combattre l'UPC sans prêter le flanc à la condamnation du conseil de tutelle qui estimait légitime l'aspiration de chaque peuple à l'indépendance ; il devait également, sans le faire grossièrement, empêcher l'UPC d'utiliser les cadres que lui offrait la constitution de la IV^e République pour atteindre son objectif ».⁷⁶ Pour exécuter à bien ses missions, Soucadaux opta pour un « gentlemen corps à corps » qui consiste « à s'opposer à l'UPC par la manœuvre politique sans utiliser tous les moyens de répression mis à sa disposition par le pouvoir colonial ».⁷⁷ Grâce à cette stratégie, de 1949 à 1954 il n'y eut pas de massacres de Camerounais sous Soucadaux qui ne réussit cependant pas à réduire au silence l'UPC dont l'audience ne faisait que s'agrandir tant auprès des Camerounais qu'au niveau du conseil de tutelle de l'ONU. Une situation devenue intolérable tant la France ne voulait pas entendre parler de l'indépendance du Cameroun.⁷⁸ Soucadaux est alors remplacé par Roland Pré, un haut-commissaire habitué à mâter les nationalistes qui s'opposent à la France.⁷⁹

La réputation de la brutalité de Roland Pré envers les indigènes africains était si bien établie que l'annonce de sa nomination au Cameroun souleva un tollé général de la part des parlementaires du Cameroun présents à Paris et certains d'entre eux, à l'exception du docteur Aujoulat et Douala Manga Bell, intervinrent auprès du chef de l'Etat français, René Coty, pour lui signifier leur inquiétude et leur opposition.⁸⁰ J.M. Zang Atangana est plus précis lorsqu'il affirme que Jules Ninine, l'Antillais député du Cameroun, s'était exclamé à l'annonce de cette nomination : « Si Roland Pré est maintenu au Cameroun...le sang ne tardera pas à couler ».⁸¹ Roland Pré ne fait point mentir sa réputation car, dès sa prise de fonction, il adopte une stratégie

⁷⁵ G. Chaffard, *Les carnets secrets de la décolonisation*, T2, (Paris: Calman Levy, 1967), p. 361.

⁷⁶ D. Abwa, *Commissaires...*, p. 345

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Pour mieux s'imprégner de l'activité de Soucadaux, lire le chapitre qui lui est consacré sous le titre « Jean Louis Marie André Soucadaux pour un « gentlemen corps à corps » avec l'UPC (1949-1954), pp. 343-356.

⁷⁹ Nous avons consacré un chapitre sur Roland Pré au Cameroun sous le titre « Louis Charles Joannes Roland Pré de si triste mémoire (1954-1955) » in D. Abwa, *Commissaires...*, pp. 356-373.

⁸⁰ A. Eyinga, *Introduction à la politique camerounaise*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985), p. 361.

⁸¹ J.M. Zang Atangana, *Les forces politiques du Cameroun réuni*, T1, (Paris: L'Harmattan 1985), p. 85.

double : Pousser l'UPC à la faute afin de l'abattre. Pousser ce parti à la faute consistait à le harceler en permanence tant dans la vie quotidienne de ses militants que dans ses meetings privés ou publics afin de pousser à réagir. Ce harcèlement a non seulement exaspéré la patience des Upécistes mais aussi certains Français qui y voyaient un risque de dérapage. C'est le cas du journal *France Observateur* dans son édition du 5 mai 1955, sous le titre « Quel but vise Roland Pré au Cameroun » recense les provocations suivantes :

Il y a trois semaines, France-Observateur signalait la politique de répression pratiquée au Cameroun par M. Roland Pré. Depuis lors la situation n'a fait que s'aggraver : le 18 avril d'importantes forces de police opéraient de nombreuses perquisitions au siège de l'Union des Populations du Cameroun et aux domiciles des principaux militants de cette organisation, saccageant les domiciles d'Um Nyobé et d'Abel Kingué et emmenaient comme otages la femme d'Um Nyobé ainsi que 24 militants qui ne furent relâchés qu'à la suite de vigoureuses protestations populaires. Quelques jours plus tard, des expéditions punitives étaient organisées contre les populations de Bafoussam et de Méiganga coupables d'avoir hissé le drapeau de l'ONU. Bilan : 23 blessés dont 12 hospitalisés. M. Roland Pré semble vouloir pratiquer au Cameroun une politique analogue à celle par laquelle le gouverneur Pectoux ensanglanta jadis la Côte-d'Ivoire.⁸²

Par cette stratégie, Roland Pré réussit à atteindre son objectif, celui de pousser l'UPC à la faute car la régularité de ses harcèlements et provocations finissent par exaspérer les leaders et militants de l'UPC qui changent le mot d'ordre jusque-là utilisé : ne pas céder aux provocations et déjouer tous les guets-apens. Eugène Wonyu, un des leaders de l'UPC de cette époque, révèle que dans un discours tenu à Yaoundé, par lequel il manifeste son exaspération, le président de l'UPC Félix Roland Moumié ordonne à ses militants de répondre désormais « du tac au tac » aux provocations de l'administration.⁸³ Et Daniel Abwa de conclure : « Les carottes étaient désormais cuites car le ver était enfin dans le fruit. Il suffisait maintenant à Roland Pré de persister dans ses actes de provocations pour voir ses efforts couronnés de succès car une simple étincelle pouvait embraser le Cameroun et favoriser l'interdiction de l'UPC. C'est ce qui arriva du 22 au 30 mai 1955 ».⁸⁴ Le Cameroun entre en effet dans un cycle de violences opposant les forces de l'ordre aux militants de l'UPC. Tout commence à Mbanga le 22 mai 1955 et Richard Joseph en fait une description forte saisissante :

⁸² *France-Observateur*, 5 mai 1955.

⁸³ E. Wonyu, *De l'UPC à l'UC : témoignage à l'aube de l'indépendance (1953-1961)*, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1985), p. 49.

⁸⁴ D. Abwa, *Commissaires...*, p. 368.

Le 15 mai, une réunion non autorisée fut organisée par l'UPC à Mbanga dans la région du Moungo : elle fut dissoute par les troupes et l'incident fit de nombreux blessés parmi les participants et les forces de police. Le lendemain, la section UPC de Mbanga décida d'organiser une autre réunion et déclara que toute intervention de l'administration recevrait une violente riposte. Cette seconde réunion se tint le 22 mai : quand la police commença à dissiper les cent à cent-cinquante participants, ces derniers se retranchèrent à l'endroit prévu d'où d'autres upécistes, qui y étaient dissimulés, chargèrent les forces de l'ordre ; l'affrontement fit de nombreux blessés parmi les manifestants et les forces de police dont un membre décéda des suites de ses blessures à l'hôpital.⁸⁵

Les premières victimes tombent donc à Mbanga tandis que d'autres suivent à Douala (du 22 au 27 mai), Nkongsamba (25 mai), Loum (25 mai), Yaoundé (26-27 mai), Ngambé dans le Babimbi (28-29 mai). D'ailleurs, pour s'assurer une réussite totale de sa stratégie, Roland Pré ne se contente pas des seules forces de police installées au Cameroun car il fait venir des renforts des territoires voisins de l'AEF. La bataille entre ces forces françaises et les nationalistes camerounais est très inégale car les premières utilisent les fusils et grenades alors que les seconds utilisent machettes, gourdins et barres de fer. En cinq mois seulement de présence au Cameroun, Roland Pré réussit un massacre comprenant, selon les sources officielles françaises, vingt-six morts (vingt-et-un manifestant, quatre civils dont deux Européens et un membre des forces de l'ordre) et cent quatre-vingt-neuf blessés (cent quatorze manifestants, treize civils dont onze Européens et soixante-deux membres des forces de l'ordre). Les sources de l'UPC évaluent cette boucherie à cinq mille victims.⁸⁶

D/ Douala, 24 Avril 1960, Paroxysme des Incendies, Tirs et Usages des Arcs et Flèches au Quartier Congo

Dans une étude antérieure, nous avons démontré qu'au moment où Ahmadou Ahidjo, alors Premier ministre de l'Etat sous tutelle du Cameroun fait la proclamation de l'indépendance du Cameroun à la première heure du 1^{er} janvier 1960, les armes de l'ALNK crépitent dans de nombreuses villes du Cameroun pour protester contre cette indépendance considérée comme fictive. Dans la ville de Douala, les tirs de fusils sont entendus dans des quartiers et le camp de gendarmerie de Mboppi est même attaqué par ceux qu'on appelle les « rebelles ».⁸⁷ C'est dire que partout au Cameroun, ce n'est pas la liesse pour

⁸⁵ R. Joseph, *Le mouvement...*, pp. 279 et 281.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 291.

⁸⁷ D. Abwa, « ALNK... ».

tous les Camerounais et à Douala une grande tragédie a lieu au quartier Congo le dimanche 24 avril 1960. Que s'est-il passé ce jour-là dans ce quartier ? Pourquoi cela s'est-il passé ? Que retenir de ce paroxysme de la guerre urbaine orchestrée par l'administration française dans un territoire prétendu devenu indépendant le 1^{er} janvier 1960 ?

Deux témoins oculaires décrivent, chacun, à sa manière, cet incendie occasionné par un hélicoptère qui déverse sur le quartier un liquide inflammable accompagné sur le terrain par les tirs des soldats français et les flèches des Haoussa sur des victimes innocentes. Le premier de ces témoins est l'historien Enoh Meyomesse, fils d'un fonctionnaire affecté à Douala qui raconte ainsi ce qu'il a vécu personnellement :

24 avril 1960, une bagarre se déclenche en début d'après-midi entre Bamiléké et Haoussa au quartier New Bell, non loin du quartier Congo. Subitement, autour de 14-15 heures, ce dernier s'embrase, le feu prend simultanément à plusieurs endroits. Le quartier Congo est habité en majorité par les Bamiléké. Au moment où le feu prend, curieusement, l'armée, arme au point, tout comme les Haoussa, a déjà entièrement bouclé le quartier. On assiste alors à des scènes d'apocalypse. Les personnes, surprises par le feu et qui tentent de s'en échapper, sont abattues, froidement, soit par les militaires, soit par les Haoussa, armés de leurs arcs et de flèches. Lorsque le feu prend fin vers 17 heures, il ne reste plus rien des baraquements de ce quartier, et le nombre de morts par le feu, se dispute avec celui par les balles et par les flèches. Les statistiques officielles font état de 5000 personnes sans abri. S'il y a eu tant de sans- abri, à combien pourrait s'élever le nombre de morts ?... Certaines sources feront état de près de 2000 morts et iront jusqu'à ajouter que, « vers 15h ce jour, un hélicoptère de l'armée française survolait les maisons et jetait de l'essence pour attiser le feu.⁸⁸

Le second témoin oculaire de ce massacre du quartier Congo est un certain « camarade CHOULEOM Raphael (qui) a vécu l'incendie du quartier Congo dans lequel il vivait ». Il raconte ses souvenirs à *Cameroun web-Actualités of Monday, 4 January 2021* qui les rapporte ainsi qu'il suit :

Le camarade CHOULEOM Raphael aujourd'hui âgé de 85 ans est un témoin privilégié de l'histoire du Cameroun. Upéciste convaincu et convaincant... (Il) a vécu l'incendie du quartier Congo, quartier dans lequel il vivait avec son frère aîné.... Nous sommes le dimanche 24

⁸⁸ E.meyomesse « Lvraine histoire du Cameroun » (https://www.facebook.com/VraieHistoireCameroun/posts/362841187639153), sur www.facebook.com (consulté le 21 décembre 2020).

avril 1960. Ce matin-là, le jeune CHOULEOM Raphael amateur de football quitte la maison pour se rendre au stade Akwa pour suivre des rencontres de foot. Aux environs de 15 h, il aperçoit depuis le stade une épaisse couche de fumée et d'immenses flammes se dégageant du quartier Congo. Le jeune entame une course folle en destination de son quartier pour s'enquérir de la situation. A quelque 50 mètres du quartier, il trouve des soldats blancs portant des rangs avec des fusils pointés devant. Le quartier était en flammes, ceux qui sortaient des flammes pour s'échapper trouvaient face à eux des armes à feu pointées. Il ne leur restait plus qu'à choisir entre mourir calciner dans les flammes ou périr cribler de balles. Et de l'autre côté du quartier, non loin du camp Berteau, les ressortissants du Nord-Cameroun (Haoussa) occupaient l'espace avec des flèches pointées. Ici encore, ceux qui voulaient s'échapper des flammes devaient choisir entre mourir calciner dans les flammes ou périr cribler de tirs et de flèches. Le quartier était bouclé d'un côté par des soldats français, des suppléants camerounais et de l'autre côté par des Haoussa. Le jeune CHOULEOM Raphael qui voulait s'approcher pour mieux observer la scène est vigoureusement chassé par un Français. Des témoins affirment avoir aperçu un hélicoptère survoler le quartier y déversant un liquide inflammable. La majorité des constructions du quartier étant en carabotte (planche), cela va favoriser l'incendie du quartier. Cet incendie criminel fera des milliers de morts. Le bilan n'a jamais été établi... Dans l'impossibilité de sortir de cette zone de flammes, des hommes, femmes et enfants plongeaient dans des puits profonds et s'y noyaient. C'était l'horreur....⁸⁹

Les deux témoignages ci-dessus sont formels pour attribuer la paternité de cet incendie criminel à la France, le 24 avril 1960, cette France qui a pourtant fêté solennellement l'indépendance du Cameroun le 1^{er} janvier 1960 avec 101 coups de canon tirés devant plus de 60 délégations des pays étrangers et institutions internationales invitées par elle.⁹⁰ C'est cette France qui a pris sur elle de mettre intentionnellement le feu qui a pris « simultanément à plusieurs endroits » du quartier Congo et qui a, pendant plus de 2h de temps attisé ce feu à travers un hélicoptère pour faire le maximum de victimes. Aucun homme, ni femmes, ni enfants n'ont été épargnés, comme le confirme aussi Meyomesse en affirmant connaître « une mère avec ses 3 ou 4 enfants carbonisés, d'autres voulant fuir le feu morts de noyades dans des puits ».⁹¹ Le bilan de cet incendie criminel est une boucherie

⁸⁹ « Incendie du quartier Congo à Douala. Un témoin raconte. » Web 4 janvier 2021. S.3 K. Vues. 25 janvier 2022 You Naja TV.

⁹⁰ Lire à ce propos, J.C. Tchouankap, *Cameroun (1960-2011) 50 ans d'indépendance et de réunification en 50 dates expliquées et commentées*, s/1, 2014, p. 8.

⁹¹ E. Meyomesse, « La vraie histoire.... ».

humaine jamais égalée au Cameroun d'où la pertinence du terme « paroxysme » utilisé pour caractériser cet événement. Pourquoi tant de cruauté, de bestialité de la part des autorités françaises ?

Les explications données par les deux témoins pour justifier cet incendie criminel rapportent des faits qui méritent d'être analysés avec précaution. Pour Meyomesse, c'est à cause de l'assassinat d'un Haoussa par les nationalistes de l'ALNK (Bamiléké) et le sac par ces derniers des magasins des Français après en avoir blessé un que le quartier Congo a été incendié⁹². Donc, les faits montrent que tout se passe à New Bell, certes pas loin du quartier Congo mais pas au quartier Congo. Pourquoi alors avoir incendié le quartier Congo ? Est-ce seulement parce qu'il est soupçonné « d'être le repaire des combattants de l'ALNK à Douala »?⁹³ CHOULEOM Raphael apporte quant à lui des précisions qui diffèrent de celles de Meyomesse : il s'agit des conséquences des élections locales qui voient la victoire de DEFFO Sébastien, candidat de l'UPC, face à KACHE, candidat des Haoussas. D'où des heurts entre les Haoussas du quartier musulman encore appelé quartier Haoussa et les habitants du quartier Congo.⁹⁴ Il ne parle pas d'assassinat mais de mécontentement entre Bamiléké et Haoussas. Même si tel était le cas, que viennent faire les Français dans cette « querelle familiale » et surtout avec cette volonté de tout brûler et de tirer sur tout ce qui bouge ?

La vérité c'est que les Français qui n'acceptent pas de voir que les énormes privilèges qu'ils se sont garanti par l'indépendance qu'ils ont octroyée à une frange de Camerounais (affaires étrangères, défense, monnaie, enseignement supérieur et richesses du sous-sol restent aux mains de Paris), contre l'avis d'une autre frange qui n'en voulait pas, soient contestés par les nationalistes, combattants de l'ALNK. Ils ne veulent en aucun cas les perdre et pour ce faire il ne faut rien négliger pour les protéger. Le quartier Congo est alors une victime expiatoire innocente qu'il faut sacrifier pour effrayer à jamais les nationalistes et les contraindre à accepter enfin cette indépendance en déposant les armes.

Le « paroxysme atteint dans l'inhumanité française » dans l'incendie du quartier Congo ne produit pas dans l'immédiat les effets escomptés sur les combattants de l'ALNK, même si les autorités politiques camerounaises en ont été très traumatisées⁹⁵. Non seulement l'ALNK ne dépose pas les armes

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ « Incendie du quartier Congo. Un témoin raconte... »

⁹⁵ Le camarade CHOULEON Raphael nous apprend que le président AHIDJO est descendu personnellement à Douala pour calmer et que le préfet du Wouri, Guillaume Nseke en a été si choqué qu'il a été évacué en France de maladie ; par ailleurs, compte tenu de ce drame, aucun

et, malgré tout l'accompagnement apporté par l'armée française à la jeune armée camerounaise pour combattre l'ALNK (assassinats des leaders, têtes mises à prix...), il faudra attendre onze ans (1971) pour voir les dernières velléités de résistance de l'ALNK s'estompées. Pour atteindre cet objectif, le gouvernement camerounais, à la différence du gouvernement français, a su allier et le bâton et la carotte⁹⁶.

Conclusion

Il ressort de ce qui précède que la France s'est imposée par la violence au Cameroun et aux Camerounais. A travers les incendies, les tirs et tirs aériens ponctués de massacres, elle l'a prioritairement utilisée dans la gestion administrative et militaire des populations camerounaises. Chaque fois que ces dernières élevaient une contestation ou une protestation, aucun espace de dialogue ne leur était proposé. Il fallait absolument se soumettre ou périr. Et comme les Camerounais, dans leur tempérament, ont horreur de se soumettre sans avoir compris la raison d'être de cette soumission, les Français ont, partout, usé de la violence dont les séquelles sont encore présentes dans de nombreux esprits. Les tentatives de violences psychologiques utilisées aujourd'hui par les Français, en dénonçant, chaque fois, « un sentiment anti français », dans l'espoir de faire oublier les atrocités de ses violences physiques, resteront vaines tant que les Français continueront de refuser d'assumer la responsabilité des actes inhumains perpétrés. Il est, plus que temps, pour la France, de chercher à « fumer le calumet de la paix » pour une relation apaisée, franche, sincère et gagnant- gagnant avec le Cameroun. Sinon, elle va tout perdre comme cela s'est déjà produit ailleurs.

Camerounais ne souhaitait être préfet à Douala à tel point que Jean Fochivé fut obligé d'accepter de cumuler sa fonction de coordinateur de la police avec celle de préfet du wouri.

⁹⁶ D. Abwa ; « ALNK... ».

LA BATAILLE DE JADOTVILLE DANS LA CRISE CONGOLAISE EN SEPTEMBRE 1961

PhD Cand. Aby TINE (Senegal)

Introduction

Depuis la fin de la Seconde Guerre mondiale, la Révolution africaine a émancipé près de 200 millions d'hommes, 28 nations se sont libérées, par les armes ou par la révolte purement verbale, de la domination coloniale. Mais cette formidable vague libératrice s'est brisée en 1960 contre un barrage : celui que lui opposait l'Afrique sous domination blanche.¹ De ce processus d'émancipation naquit un climat d'insécurité miné par des conflits en Afrique. Le Congo n'en fait pas exception. En effet, ces événements bouleversèrent totalement la situation congolaise avec ses nombreux conflits dont *la bataille de Jadotville qui surgit dans la crise congolaise en septembre 1961*.

Le 11 juillet 1960, la province du Katanga déclare son indépendance, deux semaines après l'émancipation du Congo - Kinshasa, le chef-lieu de la colonie belge. Cette déclaration d'indépendance sous la houlette de Moïse Tshombe est consolidée par l'appui de l'union minière du Haut Katanga. Moïse Tshombe sollicite aussi de l'aide militaire et logistique belge. Malgré cette volonté de s'émanciper qui déclencha une bataille à Jadotville, l'Etat du Katanga n'est pas reconnu par l'ONU.² Quels sont les facteurs endogènes et exogènes du conflit de Jadotville? Comment l'intervention de l'ONU et celle de la communauté internationale ont impacté sur le plan politique, diplomatique et militaire de cette crise? Cette étude vise à contribuer à l'historiographie de cet aspect militaire de l'histoire du Katanga à travers les sources écrites et iconographiques.

Cette étude, structurée en deux grandes parties, analyse d'une part les facteurs qui sont à l'origine du conflit et le déroulement des opérations de la

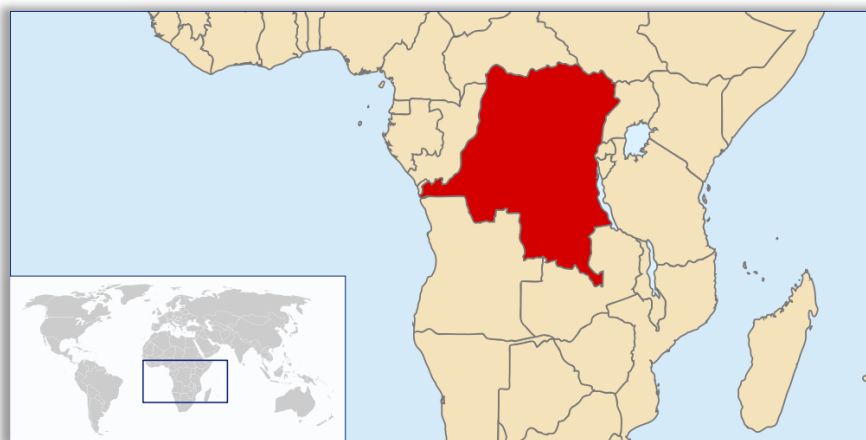
¹ Ziegler, Jean, *La contre-révolution en Afrique*, Paris, Payot 1963, vol. 1. p. 11.

² L'ONU est une organisation internationale créée en 1945 après la seconde Guerre mondiale. Véritablement mondial en remplacement de la société des nations unies (SDN) enfin de sauvegarder de l'avenir de la paix et de résoudre tous les éventuels conflits non par la force mais, par la négociation publique et de fournir une plate-forme de dialogue, elle dispose de plusieurs instances autour de l'assemblée générale : le conseil de sécurité, le conseil économique et social, la cour internationale de justice et de agents spécialisées. D'autres organes sont chargés de diverses questions et forment ensemble le système des Nations Unies qui vise à assurer la paix du monde et à protéger les droits de l'homme dans le monde entier. Tiré : <http://www.gallica.fr.définition/ONU>. Consulté le 13 Février 2023.

bataille de Jadotville.³ D'autre part elle aborde les conséquences politiques, diplomatiques et militaires de la bataille.

I. Présentation du Congo a la Veille de l'indépendance

Le Congo belge (avant 1960) ou Congo-Kinshasa (1960 à 1970) est un Etat situé en Afrique Equatoriale. C'est le troisième Etat africain par la superficie après le Soudan et l'Algérie. Ce pays, dénommé *Zaïre* de 1971 à 1997 par Mobutu est limitrophe d'une dizaine d'Etats. La position géostratégique du Congo au cœur du continent, les frontières partagées avec une dizaine de pays, les ressources naturelles immenses, le potentiel hydroélectrique peuvent expliquer la réticence de la métropole (Belgique) devant les mouvements d'émancipation et la convoitise des super puissances (USA, URSS) et de la Chine pour le contrôle du pays dans un contexte de guerre froide.⁴



Carte 1: Situation du Congo (ex Zaïre)⁵

³ La cité fut renommée *Jadotville* par l'administration coloniale belge en 1931 et le 21 décembre 1943 elle fut érigée au statut administratif de ville. Jadotville fut la troisième ville après Léopoldville (Kinshasa) et Élisabethville (Lubumbashi). Elle reprendra le nom de *Likasi* le 27 octobre 1971. Jadotville est situé à 1,326 mètre d'altitude et la population s'élève à 422,414.

⁴ Marie-France Cros et François Misser, *Géopolitique du Congo (RDC)*, Complexe, 2006 et Min Tiêt Trân, *Congo belge, entre l'Est et l'Ouest*, Nouvelles Editions Latines, 1962 cité par le professeur Mor Ndao.

⁵ <https://fr.wikipedia.org>.

II. Contexte

Il est important de rappeler que cette bataille intervenait dans un contexte assez particulier. Un contexte marqué par la difficulté qu'avaient les autorités belges pour le contrôle de l'espace politique et économique de la province. En effet, après avoir annoncé l'indépendance congolaise le 30 juin 1960, une table ronde fut convoquée à Bruxelles. Les ministres belges et les dirigeants africains siégèrent du 20 janvier au 20 février pour déterminer ensemble les étapes de l'émancipation. Ils élaborèrent une loi fondamentale qui devait couvrir la période de transition séparant l'accès à l'indépendance de l'entrée en vigueur de la constitution congolaise. Ainsi, des élections aux parlements provinciaux et aux deux chambres de parlement central eurent lieu en 1960.⁶ Le 1^{er} juillet, M. Kasavubu, le président de la République et M. Lumumba, président du conseil, entrèrent en fonction à Léopoldville. C'est dans ce contexte qu'intervient un bouleversement socio-politique et militaire suite à la déclaration d'indépendance du Katanga. C'est la bataille de Jadotville du 13 au 18 septembre 1961.

III. Les Facteurs du Conflit et le Déroulement des Opérations de la Bataille de Jadotville

L'influence de la première guerre mondiale, dans le processus de décolonisation a été moins déterminante que celle de la seconde guerre mondiale. Elle ne remet pas en cause les fondements de la domination coloniale, mais marque le début de l'affirmation du principe du « droit des peuples à disposer d'eux-mêmes ». La seconde guerre mondiale met fin aux mythes de la supériorité raciale et de l'invincibilité de l'homme blanc. La participation de millions de combattants venus des colonies pour la libération de la métropole et les sacrifices qui en ont résulté conduisent à une prise de conscience qui s'est manifestée par la naissance des mouvements de libération nationale.

Au Congo, Moïse Tshombe créa la confédération des associations du Katanga (CONAKAT) en 1957. Ce parti politique, par le biais de Moïse Tshombe aspire à repousser les Baluba du Kassai, principaux employés de l'Union minière. Il bénéficie du soutien de la couche blanche présente au Katanga qui souhaite garder leurs privilèges en se souciant d'un pouvoir centralisateur en gestation au nord du Congo. En mai 1960, le CONAKAT remporte les élections provinciales contre le parti Baluba. Malgré cette victoire, les promesses d'émancipation ne furent pas respectées car le mouvement national congolais (M.N.C) de Patrice Lumumba se voit attribuer les portes feuilles de l'intérieur et de la défense nationale. Cette décision

⁶ Ziegler, Jean, 1963, vol. 1. p. 11.

entraîna une mutinerie et un climat de violence le 5 juillet à Léopoldville puis le 9 juillet dans la province Katangaise. En effet, au moment où un processus de restauration de l'ordre est amorcé par les parachutistes belges, Moïse Tshombe proclama l'indépendance du Katanga le 11 juillet. La force publique, seule force armée constituée du pays, se mutina contre ses officiers blancs; la mutinerie dégénéra rapidement ; le gouvernement de Lumumba ne contrôlait plus la situation ; des troupes belges intervinrent ; la plus part des cadres européens fuirent le pays.⁷ Face à ce climat d'insécurité, l'ONU est sommé d'intervenir.

1. Jadotville, l'Échec de la Première Grande Mission de la Paix de l'ONU

L'organisation des Nations unies dispose d'une force militaire ayant pour rôle le « maintien ou le rétablissement de la paix et de la sécurité internationale », sur ordre de son conseil de sécurité. Depuis 1945, elle a été envoyée dans plusieurs zones de conflits pour protéger la population civile ou encore servir de force d'interposition.



Image 1: Troupe Irlandaise Envoyé par l'ONU au Congo en 1960⁸

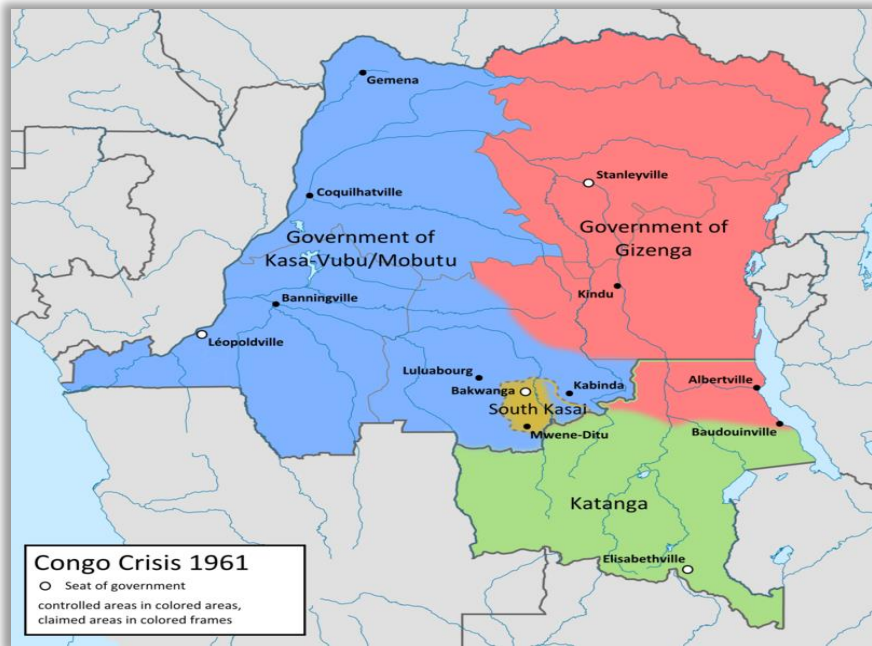
En 1960, l'ONU envoie l'armée irlandaise pour effectuer sa deuxième mission de maintien de la paix, l'opération des nations unies au Congo (O.N.U.C). À leur création, les Forces de maintien de la paix ne devaient utiliser la force que dans des cas de légitime défense et non pour imposer la

⁷ Ziegler, Jean, 1963, vol. 1. p. 23.

⁸ La bataille de Jadotville dans la crise Congolaise en septembre 1961 Images - Recherche Images (bing.com).

paix. La mission au Katanga est la seule exception notable d'usage effective de la force par les casques bleus. Par la suite, cette limitation de la force a été revue, pour donner plus de marge de manœuvre aux casques bleus.

Depuis le 4 septembre 1961 était basée à Jadotville la compagnie A du 35th infantry Bataillon irlandais, sous les ordres du commandant Quinlan. 155 irlandais occupaient quelques maisons de la route Jadotville-Elisabethville.⁹ Le 13 septembre 1961, l'ONU déclenchait au Katanga¹⁰ l'opération Morthor visant à mettre fin par la force à la sécession de l'Etat du Katanga.



Carte 2: La Crise Congolaise en 1961¹¹

Carte des parties contrôlées par les acteurs de la crise congolaise : en *bleu*, le gouvernement de Léopoldville ; en *rouge* le gouvernement de rébellion basé à Stanleyville; en *vert* le Katanga autonome ; en *jaune* le Kasai indépendant.

⁹ [Http : //www.isd.sorbonneonu.fr/blog/le-siege-de-jadotville-lechec-de-la-premiere-grande-mission-de-maintien-de-la-paix-de-l'ONU](http://www.isd.sorbonneonu.fr/blog/le-siege-de-jadotville-lechec-de-la-premiere-grande-mission-de-maintien-de-la-paix-de-l-ONU).

¹⁰ Était la région la plus riche du pays, principale foyer de minéraux grâce à son industrie minière. Le Katanga fournissait 70 à 80% des richesses du Congo.

¹¹ état du Katanga - Bing images.

La province du Haut-Katanga compte 6 territoires et 2 villes, 7 chefferies, 13 secteurs, 82 groupements, 8 cités (ou communes rurales dans la nouvelle subdivision : Kipushi, Kambove, Kasenga, Mitwaba, Pweto, Sakania avec statut de chefs-lieux de territoire sans Kasumbalesa), 39 quartiers, 23 postes d'encadrement administratif et de villages par territoire. À cela s'ajoutent deux villes : Lubumbashi, chef-lieu de province, et Likasi.¹²

2. Le Siège de Jadotville

Le *siège de Jadotville*, aussi connu sous le nom *bataille de Jadotville* est un conflit armé qui a eu lieu près de la ville congolaise de Jadotville, (courant Likasi), en Septembre 1961, entre l'un des « département armée irlandaise fonctionnant sous le contrôle de l'ONU et les départements sécessionnistes Katangaise soutenu par des mercenaires européens français et belges. La bataille a commencé le 13 Septembre et, après cinq jours de combats, les troupes irlandaises, laissées sans munitions et peu de nourriture et d'eau, se sont rendus aux assaillants le soir du 17 Septembre.¹³



Image 2: Le siège de Jadotville en 1961¹⁴

¹² Likasi, anciennement baptisée Jadotville, se situe à proximité des montagnes de Mitumba et de Kundelungu. Son nom vient de *dikashi* qui veut dire «bonnes odeurs des argiles ». Cette ville se situe à 10° 57' 47'' de latitude sud et 26° 46' 40'' de longitude est, à une altitude moyenne de 1270 m. Elle s'étend sur une superficie de 245 km² à environ 120 km de Lubumbashi dans le sud-est du pays. Elle est limitée au nord par l'ancienne ligne de chemin de fer Likasi-Lubumbashi, depuis sa jonction avec le chemin de fer Likasi-Tenke jusqu'à la ligne de transport d'énergie électrique de haute tension Mwadingusha-Likasi ; au sud, par la rivière Panda dans son cours est-ouest; à l'est, par la rivière Buluo et à l'ouest par la rivière Panda dans son cours nord-sud.

¹³ <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Siège-de-Jadotville> (consulté le 19 juillet 2023).

¹⁴ siège de jadotville - Recherche Images (bing.com).

3. La Chronologie des Évènements

La bataille de Jadotville malgré sa courte durée, s'est déroulée en plusieurs étapes.

Samedi 9 septembre : la 3^e Compagnie de Police Militaire katangaise renforcée de mercenaires et de soldats katangais établit des barrages sur toutes les approches de la ville. Les irlandais commencent à creuser des tranchées autour des maisons qu'ils occupent. Cette précaution est une des causes principales du peu de victimes qu'ils connaîtront à l'issue des combats.

Le 11 septembre marque la rencontre du commandant Quinlan avec le bourgmestre et des officiers katangais en vue de les convaincre que son unique mission était le maintien de la paix.

Le 13 septembre à 7h : 40mn du matin, des obus de mortier s'abattent sur les irlandais : C'est le début des hostilités. En effet, l'alimentation de la ville en eau et en électricité est coupée par les Katangais. Par téléphone, les katangais entament une guerre psychologique, menaçant les irlandais d'être taillés en pièces et dévorés s'ils ne se rendent pas. Les soldats de l'ONU espèrent que des renforts en provenance d'Élisabethville pourront les délivrer. Une première colonne de secours onusienne est bien partie mais elle ne parvient pas à franchir les 2 ponts de la Lufira fortement défendu par l'armée katangaise.

Le 14 et 15 septembre on note la poursuite des attaques par les soldats katangais encadrés par des mercenaires européens, principalement français et belges. L'unique Fouga Magister de l'aviation katangaise effectue des mitraillages et des lancers de bombes de 50 kg.

Le 16 septembre au matin, un hélicoptère Sikorsky H-19 de l'ONU piloté par un Suédois et un Norvégien parvient à se poser à l'intérieur des positions irlandaises, amenant de l'eau en jerrican et des obus de mortier de 81 mm (alors que les Irlandais n'ont que des mortiers de 60 mm). Touché par des tirs du sol, il ne peut repartir (réparé, il sera intégré à l'aviation katangaise). Il s'avère que les jerricans ayant contenus précédemment du mazout, l'eau apportée est imbuvable. Pour empêcher l'arrivée de renforts onusiens à Jadotville, les Katangais font sauter le pont ferroviaire sur la Lufira, gardant le contrôle du pont routier. Ne disposant plus que de très peu d'eau et de nourriture, le commandant Quinlan se résout en début de soirée à accepter des négociations en vue d'un cessez-le-feu. Un accord oral est obtenu et les combats stoppent.

Le lendemain (*17 septembre*), les irlandais apprennent que la deuxième tentative d'envoi d'une colonne de secours a de nouveau échoué la veille devant le pont de la Lufira. Dès lors, à 17h : 00mn, un acte de reddition est signé par le commandant et le ministre de l'Intérieur Godefroid Munongo.

Malgré l'intensité des tirs, la troupe onusienne ne déplore aucun mort et seulement cinq blessés. Les pertes katangaises sont estimées à environ 150 tués et blessés, dont une trentaine de mercenaires. Dans la nuit du 17 au 18, l'avion du secrétaire général des Nations unies Dag Hammarskjöld,¹⁵ qui se rendait à Ndola pour rencontrer Tshombe afin de négocier un arrêt des combats, s'écrase dans des circonstances troublantes.

Le 18 septembre, les 158 combattants sous mandat de l'ONU sont internés comme prisonniers de guerre à l'hôtel de l'Europe à Jadotville.¹⁶ Et le 23 septembre, 32 autres combattants (26 Irlandais et 6 Italiens), capturés dans les combats à Elisabethville, sont amenés à l'hôtel de l'Europe. Ce massacre coûta le cher en vies Katangaises : vingt. L'opération de l'ONU avait été conçue et exécutée comme une action visa à la destruction de ce groupe de soldats.¹⁷



Image 3: Un hélicoptère H-19 Source¹⁸

III. Les Conséquences du Conflit de Jadotville

Les conséquences de ce conflit sont à la fois d'ordre politiques, diplomatiques et militaires. Durant le conflit, certaines actions ont été menées par différents acteurs pour tenter de mettre fin à celui-ci. C'est le cas de l'État, de l'Eglise, des ONG nationales et étrangères, ainsi que de certains autres membres de la Communauté Internationale. Ces efforts se sont avérés peu concluants et n'ont produit qu'une paix de façade.

¹⁵ Dag Hammarskjöld, né le 29 juillet 1905 à Jönköping en Suède et mort dans un crash aérien le 18 septembre 1961, en Rhodésie du Nord, est un diplomate suédois, qui fut secrétaire général des Nations unies de 1953 à 1961. Le prix Nobel de la paix lui fut décerné l'année de sa mort, à titre posthume.

¹⁶ <https://www.historyanswers.co.uk/history-of-war/the-real-siege-of-jadotville-part-i-teenage-peacekeeper-john--remembers/> [archive].

¹⁷ Livre blanc du gouvernement Katangais sur les événements de septembre et décembre 1961, 1962, p. 10.

¹⁸ Siège de Jadotville — Wikipédia (wikipedia.org).

Sur le plan politique, la révocation du premier ministre congolais, sans l'appui du Parlement, a jeté le Congo dans une anarchie dont il n'est pas encore sorti. La dualité de l'exécutif a été mortelle pour le nouvel Etat. Bien entendu, cet aspect institutionnel n'est pas la cause unique de la crise. Sous un autre régime, le Congo n'aurait évité ni la mutinerie de l'armée, ni les menaces séparatistes. Mais la controverse juridique sur la légitimité du pouvoir a certes contribué à accentuer la confusion et le désordre.¹⁹

En effet, depuis l'accession à l'indépendance en Afrique, la majeure partie des pays africains soufflent encore des difficultés dans ce sens. En Congo, si l'indépendance a permis à l'Etat d'être, désormais, responsables de la conduite des affaires politiques de leur paix, elle ne leur a pas livré la clé de la constance politique, ni donnée accès aux moyens politiques permettant de transformer sûrement et rapidement leurs conditions de vie.

Au plan diplomatique, le Congo des années 1960 constitue un enjeu dans la confrontation Est-Ouest (J. Gérard-Libois, 2010). D'une manière générale, l'utilisation de la force par l'ONUC a eu des conséquences pour le système des Nations Unies dans sa politique de maintien de la paix. Pour plusieurs observateurs, l'ONUC fut assimilée à un outil de la politique étrangère américaine.²⁰ Du côté soviétique, dès le début de la crise congolaise, l'URSS, à travers les déclarations de Khrouchev, adopta une attitude menaçante avec des menaces d'intervention qui accélèrent l'internationalisation de l'affaire congolaise.²¹

Durant l'exercice de l'ONUC, l'état des diplomates et des hauts responsables de l'opération ONUC paraît confus dans les champs de bataille psychologique et militaire. Ce revirement subjectif de la diplomatie l'opération se serait justifiée par les circonstances des relations internationales, les motivations des autorités de l'ONU et l'effet des pressions extérieures.

Autres conséquences fâcheuses de l'affaire concernent en fait moins le Congo lui-même que d'autres Etats africains. Il s'agit de la fermeture de la

¹⁹ La crise congolaise et les institutions politiques africaines / INSTITUTIONAL CAUSES OF THE CONGO CRISIS Author(s): François Perin Source: *Civilisations*, Vol. 11, No. 3 (1961), pp. 285 Published by: Institut de Sociologie de l'Université de Bruxelles Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41378271> Accessed: 12-05-2023.

²⁰ Voir: Gibbs D, « The United Nations, international peacekeeping and the question of impartiality : revisiting the Congo operation of 1960 », *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 38(3): 359-82, 2000.

Weissman, Stephen R. (1974) *American Foreign Policy in the Congo, 1960-1964*, Cornell Univ. Press.

²¹ Documents Diplomatiques Français, Commission de publication des DDF. Pièce 177, Note de la sous-direction d'Afrique « Politique américaine au Congo et intérêts français », Paris 15 mars 1965, pp. 447-448.

frontière et la suppression du trafic fluvial avec le Congo Brazzaville; l'absence du Congo Kinshasa et ses deux partenaires de l'Union des États d'Afrique centrale (UEAC).

Sur le plan militaire, le siège de Jadotville a suivi après les tensions diplomatiques durant les réunions de l'ONU à New York et au déploiement de soldats afin de protéger les colons belges face au risque de massacres pouvant être perpétrés par la tribu Baluba notamment. Cependant, tout cela est à présent vu comme manipulation afin de pousser l'ONU à envoyer ses troupes dans les régions où elles n'étaient pas les bienvenues. Les soldats de la paix tombaient en embuscade et servaient d'otages où d'outils de propagande.

Cela explique que la diplomatie ne peut suffire, là où la force des armes s'avère nécessaire : le refus persistant de Moïse Tschombé de se plier aux résolutions onusiennes devait fatalement conduire l'ONUC à réduire la sécession katangaise par la force. La fin de l'année 1961 voit en effet la défaite militaire du leader katangais. La réconciliation entre le « gouvernement » pro-lumumbiste de Stanleyville et le gouvernement central de Léopoldville était déjà en bonne voie.²²

Les conflits avaient aussi des conséquences sur le plan économiques. Ils conduisent à une montée du chômage et à une perte de revenu, car ils perturbent l'activité économique, détruisent l'infrastructure, génèrent de l'incertitude, font augmenter les coûts de transaction et favorisent la fuite des capitaux. Les dépenses sociales sont souvent comprimées afin de permettre une hausse des dépenses militaires. L'économie subit des changements structurels. Il importe de traiter les conséquences d'un conflit violent, non seulement pour des raisons humanitaires, mais aussi pour réduire la probabilité de récurrence du conflit.

1. L'ONU dans l'histoire de la Sécession Katangaise

L'intervention de l'ONU sous l'invitation du gouvernement central avait pour objectif de mater la sécession katangaise de réaliser l'unité nationale, et de mettre fin aux conflits qui déchiraient le pays. Sa présence était perçue comme la victoire d'un groupe antagoniste contre l'autre.²³ Au début du mois d'août 1961, les troupes onusiennes débarquèrent à Elisabethville avec la mission d'évacuer du Katanga tout le personnel militaire étranger venu par une autre voie que celle de l'ONU, et de poursuivre les enquêtes sur la mort de Lumumba.

²² I. Leclercq, 1964, p. 195.

²³ L. Bulanda, 1997, p. 16.

Pour ces deux motifs, l'arrivée des onusiens était saluée avec joie dans le camp du Cartel, représenté par les luba Kasai, et la balubakat de Jason Sendwe, contre la Conakat de Tshombe. Les autorités katangaises étaient opposées à cette présence étant donné que leur armée était dirigée, organisée et entretenue par les officiers belges et les mercenaires venus des différents pays de l'Europe occidentale.²⁴ Les autorités katangaises, mécontentes du soutien du Cartel à l'action de l'ONU, se mirent à persécuter les partisans ennemis de la Conakat.

Ces persécutions étaient caractérisées par des enlèvements nocturnes effectués par le service de sécurité du gouvernement katangais et ces exactions commencèrent le 29 août 1961. Les casques bleus de l'ONU qui 68 représentaient un espoir de mettre fin à ces dissensions ethniques et de sécuriser toutes les parties en conflit, mèneront également le jeu des puissances impliquées dans ce conflit.

Le livre blanc²⁵ met en exergue la mission que l'ONU devait réaliser durant son intervention au Katanga. Il s'agissait de:

Mettre en fuite le gouvernement katangais;
Établir à sa place un haut-commissaire congolais communiste;
Désarmer la gendarmerie katangaise;
Installer l'ANC au Katanga;
Provoquer la guerre civile entre les Baluba-Kasai et les Katangais;
Mettre en fuite, par ces moyens, la population européenne;
Etablir alors, définitivement, l'unitarisme et le protectorat onusien».

L'ONU sera remise en question même par la Belgique à cause des actions militaires de l'ONUC au Katanga que M. Spaak, ministre belge des Affaires Etrangères avait désavoué et condamné. On prête à M. Spaak la déclaration selon laquelle « l'ONU fait au Congo une politique soviétique payée par les Américains ».²⁶

Menant déjà la politique des puissances, pendant cette période de la guerre froide, l'ONU n'a fait qu'utiliser la méthode coercitive pour calmer la situation et imposer la paix dans la province déchirée par des guerres interethniques et mettre fin à la sécession. Cette intervention de l'ONUC a ainsi rendu inefficace le processus de résolution des conflits et la réconciliation des différentes forces en présence.²⁷ Cette action, même si elle a protégé la population, a donné une paix apparente, une victoire militaire qui

²⁴ L. Bulanda, 1997, p. 6.

²⁵ Livre blanc du gouvernement Katangais sur les événements de septembre et décembre 1961, 1962, p. 5.

²⁶ Kaumba & Kalumba, 1995 b, p. 26.

²⁷ Kasolwa : 2014.

n'a pas su réconcilier et réparer les cœurs de la population. De l'ONUC à la Mission de l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation (MONUSCO) en RDC, en passant par la Mission des Nations Unies (MONUC), toutes les missions de l'ONU n'ont jamais été organisées dans le but de résoudre les conflits en RDC.²⁸ Par contre, elles n'ont contribué qu'à jouer la carte des occidentaux dans le pays.

L'ONU n'était qu'une cohue de troupes bigarrées sans idéal ; opposés aux katangais répartis en groupes petits et durs, elle ne pouvait réussir. Cet échec, l'impute aux mercenaires européens, afin de voiler, d'un brumeux mystère, la froide vérité. Certains soutiennent que l'ONU n'avait pas cherché à désarmer la gendarmerie : c'est certainement faux, puis que la garnison au Nord, ou l'ONU était de loin supérieur en nombre, elle le fit. À Elisabethville, elle ne le put.²⁹ Cette vision simpliste s'est brisée sur la résistance farouche d'un peuple, et elle seule qui, en cette épreuve de force, a sauvé le pays.

2. L'action de la Communauté Internationale

L'Action de la Communauté Internationale en soutien aux problèmes liés à la paix ou au développement multisectoriel en République Démocratique du Congo en général, et dans la province du Katanga en particulier, reste d'une importance capitale dans cet environnement interdépendant. L'appui circonstanciel a été accordé pour contribuer au maintien du climat de paix et à la réinsertion des sinistrés du conflit ethnique Kasaien-Katangais. Nous pouvons illustrer quelques cas des Organisations Internationales et autres Organisations Gouvernementales et non-Gouvernementales comme l'Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'Alimentation et l'agriculture (FAO), l'Unicef, la Vision Mondiale, les Médecins sans Frontières, le Caritas, Oxfam, Programme alimentaire mondial (PAM) qui sont intervenues directement ou indirectement par d'autres ONG locales interposées, comme le Service d'Appui et de Développement Régional Intégré (SADRI), le Bureau de Diocésain de Développement (BDD).

Il semble que la France avec la Belgique ont officieusement aidé à financer et à fournir une gendarmerie pour l'Etat du Katanga. Les intérêts économiques français dans la région étaient très importants et la constitution d'un gouvernement favorable à la politique africaine des français était aussi un atout majeur.

L'assistance technique offerte par les institutions spécialisées, sous la direction de l'ONU, l'action diplomatique suivie par M. Dag Hammarskjöld, puis par son successeur M. U Thant, le soutien apporté à celles-ci par le conseil

²⁸ Kongo Time, 2016.

²⁹ Ibid.

de sécurité et de l'assemblée générale, allaient permettre peu à peu au Congo, grâce à l'ONU, de sortir de l'ère de chaos où il avait été plongé. Comme toute guerre ou bataille les conséquences sont toujours désastreuses mais permettent de tirer pleins d'enseignement, il en est ainsi de la bataille de Jadotville.

3. Leçons et Enseignements du Conflit de Jadotville

La mission de maintien de la paix de l'ONU au Congo est une opération riche en enseignements.

Sur le plan militaire la première phase de la mission de l'ONU au Congo est affaiblie par un défaut de collaboration du système aérien. À cela s'ajoute l'isolement des troupes onusiennes et le système de ravitaillement non planifié et donc inefficace. Cependant, cette situation s'est inversée en faveur des casques bleus durant la seconde phase d'intervention grâce à la dotation d'une flotte aérienne. Dans le cadre d'un conflit, les renseignements précis sont cruciaux. Ce constat ne prévalait pas pour l'ONU car de mauvaises informations ont conduit à une rupture de la planification. Toujours dans cette dynamique, il est nécessaire de prévoir le pire. Si les commandants de l'ONU avaient songé au pire des scénarios, la compagnie A aurait bénéficié d'un soutien aérien et terrestre adéquat. L'excès de confiance des soldats peut aussi engendrer l'échec. Bénéficiant d'un meilleur armement et d'une supériorité numérique, les Katangais sentaient une victoire au préalable. Ils ont mal estimé la détermination des soldats de la paix irlandais.

Sur plan diplomatique ce conflit constitue une scission entre deux membres permanant du conseil de sécurité de l'ONU: Les USA et l'URSS. Cette mission très couteuse de l'ONU s'est répercutée dans les missions qui suivirent celles du Congo. À titre illustratif le coût annuel de la mission de l'ONU au Congo est estimé à 66 millions de dollars ce qui contraste avec le budget de l'ONU à cette époque. L'expertise diplomatique est un fondement pour une mission diplomatique. La crise du Congo a été la première mission de maintien de la paix de l'ONU avec une composante militaire importante. Il a servi de terrain d'entraînement pour les opérations ultérieures, bien que les forces de l'ONU aient de nouveau connu des revers au Rwanda en 1994 et en Bosnie-Herzégovine en 1995.

Sur le plan politique les négociations étaient prioritaires au début de la crise sachant que l'espace politique représentait aussi le cadre social à travers les différentes ethnies qui composent le Congo. Le système politique a instauré une division sociale avec une retrouvaille d'ethnies de part et d'autres des deux parties en rivalité. Et ces groupes humains peuvent être des ennemies dans le passé. Le cas échant, un conflit politique peut basculer vers

une guerre civile. On peut se permettre de citer le cas des hutu et des tutsi au Rwanda en 1994.

Constatant les séquelles du conflit et tirant les enseignements de ce dernier, gouvernements et nations doivent s'unir pour mettre en place un équilibre des forces par la dissuasion militaire, la réforme administrative, la sensibilisation civique, les rencontres avec les leaders des deux parties pour les négociations en optant pour la résolution pacifique des conflits.

Puisque ces conflits sont susceptibles de ressurgir à tout moment selon les enjeux politiques ou économiques du moment,³⁰ l'amour du prochain est un élément important dans la résolution des conflits et la réconciliation des parties prenantes.

Conclusion

Le conflit Katangais trouve ses origines dans le passé colonial et postcolonial de la RDC. La base socio-politico-économique mise sur pied depuis la période coloniale et postcoloniale, et les attitudes d'intolérances souvent manifestées par ces groupes antagonistes, étaient les conséquences de ces situations de conflit. La province du Katanga constitue une poudrière capable de s'enflammer à tout moment. Cette situation des conflits intervient souvent au moment de crises politiques, notamment pendant les moments électoraux.

L'intervention des Nations Unies au Congo, depuis le 13 juillet 1960, constitue jusqu'ici l'épreuve la plus significative et la plus délicate subie par l'organisation. Les faits sont d'une complexité particulière. La situation politique, diplomatique et militaire s'est plusieurs fois transformée au cours de ses jours du conflit : interventions étrangères, désorganisation du gouvernement central, sécession de plusieurs provinces, massacres et pillages, tractations diplomatiques et emploi de la force armée par l'ONU.³¹ Cette situation rend difficile l'harmonie, la réconciliation, la paix et le développement économique durable de la province.

En ce qui concerne l'intervention de l'ONU au Congo, Kandolo Kasolwa Ilunga³² soutient que l'organisation a souvent ainsi rendu inefficace le processus de résolution des conflits et la réconciliation des différentes forces en présence. Il en est de même des politiciens en quête de positionnement qui utilisent la même stratégie de victimisation d'un camp au

³⁰ World Vision: 2002; Sadri2: 1994-2000; Bdd3: 1994-2000; Amka: 1995; Amka: 1996; D. Dibwe, 2005, p. 97.

³¹ Cl. Leclercq, 1964, p. 11.

³² Kandolo Kasolwa Ilunga, « Pour une modèle chrétien de réconciliation dans la société Luba », université de Montréal, Thèse de doctorat de 3e cycle, 2014, 364p.

détriment de l'autre. Il résulte de cet exposé succinct des opérations effectuées par l'ONU ainsi que leurs activités furent menées sans aucun succès.

Le siège de Jadotville a eu des conséquences importantes. Les 155 soldats irlandais ont été capturés et détenus en tant que prisonniers de guerre pendant plus d'un mois avant d'être libérés. Les pertes du côté katangais ont été estimées à environ 300 morts et 1000 blessés tandis que les pertes irlandaises ont été limitées à cinq blessés. Le siège a également été critiqué pour la mauvaise gestion de la crise congolaise par les Nations Unies.

Malgré l'importance des moyens mis en œuvre et la multiplicité des attaques effectuées les points principaux de la résistance katangaise, les résultats obtenus par les forces des Nations-Unies sont pratiquement nuls³³.

³³ Livre blanc du gouvernement Katangais sur les événements de septembre et décembre 1961, 1962, op. Cit., p 41.

URBAN COMBAT IN A MARITIME ENVIRONMENT THE TET OFFENSIVE IN SOUTH VIETNAM'S MEKONG DELTA, 1968

Dr. Edward J. MAROLDA (USA)

Many students of the Vietnam War are familiar with images of heavy fighting by Americans and Vietnamese, both allies and enemies, in the jungles, forests, and flat lands of the Asian country. Less well known but especially relevant to the conflicts of the 21st century were the cataclysmic struggles for the population centers in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN), especially in the country's Mekong Delta. In 1968, that region was South Vietnam's richest agricultural area and home to one-half of the population. The Delta was crisscrossed by 3,000 nautical miles of rivers, canals, and other waterways separated by broad expanses of swamp and inundated low land. Only one major road, QL 4, traversed the region from the capital Saigon to Ca Mau in the far southwest. As a result, much of the population was concentrated in a number of large cities and towns, whose control was essential both to the government of the Republic of Vietnam and its internal Communist adversary, the National Liberation Front (NLF). The NLF's armed component was the 80,000-strong People's Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF), better known to Americans and South Vietnamese as the Viet Cong.¹

Prior to 1968, President Nguyen Van Thieu's government and military forces maintained firm control of the nation's urban centers while the Viet Cong operated around them in forests, mangrove swamps, jungles, and seasonally inundated lowlands. That situation changed suddenly on 30-31 January 1968 during the annual Tet lunar new year celebration and self-imposed seven-day allied ceasefire. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese military

¹ For additional information on the battles for the urban centers of the Mekong Delta during the Tet Offensive, see Thomas J. Cutler and Edward J. Marolda, eds., *The Brown Water War at 50: A Retrospective on the Coastal and Riverine Conflict in Vietnam* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2023); William B. Fulton, *Riverine Operations, 1966-1969 in Vietnam Studies* (Washington: Department of the Army, 1973); Marolda, *Combat at Close Quarters: An Illustrated History of the U.S. Navy and the Vietnam War* (Annapolis: NIP, 2018); Richard L. Schreadley, *From the Rivers to the Sea: The U.S. Navy in Vietnam* (Annapolis: NIP, 1992); John Darrell Sherwood, *War in the Shallows: U.S. Navy Coastal and Riverine Warfare in Vietnam, 1965-1968* (Washington: NHHHC, 2015); Erik B. Villard, *Staying the Course: October 1967 to September 1968 in Combat Operations, United States Army in Vietnam* (Washington: US Army Center of Military History, 2017); Andrew Wiest, *The Boys of 67: Charlie Company's War in Vietnam* (London: Osprey, 2012).

forces stormed 36 of South Vietnam's 44 provincial capitals, including the major cities of Saigon and Hue. The Communists also assaulted 13 of the Mekong Delta's 16 larger cities and towns.

One of the first urban centers in the Delta to fall was My Tho, located on a tributary of the Mekong River in Dinh Tuong Province southwest of Saigon. In a tactic often repeated in Delta attacks, following a rocket and mortar barrage three Viet Cong battalions totaling 1,200 troops stormed into the city. Local guerrillas, who knew every building, street, and allied defensive position, served as guides for the assaulting forces. Many of the invaders took up fighting position in schools, orphanages, churches, and medical facilities, hoping the Americans would not bomb those sites. Viet Cong troops quickly occupied much of My Tho and threatened to overwhelm scattered South Vietnamese units of the 7th ARVN (Army of Vietnam) Infantry Division, half of whose men were off duty for the holiday. Also under threat was a base occupied by a 10-boat section of U.S. Navy river patrol boats and a small number of special operations SEALs and American advisors.

Also just before dawn on the 31st, 800 Viet Cong fighters of the 518th Main Force Battalion and the 516 Local Force Battalion stormed Ben Tre, a city of 75,000 people situated eight miles south of My Tho. Within a day and a half, the attacking force had seized most of the city and pushed the defenders, two South Vietnamese infantry battalions and a small number of U.S. military and civilian advisors, into a four-square-block area around the Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) compound. The situation looked dire for the understrength allied forces trapped there.

Finally, on the fateful morning of 31 January, two enemy battalions totaling 1,200 men attacked Vinh Long, the capital of Vinh Long Province on the Co Chien branch of the Mekong. The assault prompted U.S. naval forces there to evacuate to USS *Garrett County* (LST-786), then deployed a few miles from the city. The size of the city, home to 110,000 civilians and the site of numerous South Vietnamese and U.S. military bases and headquarters, posed a particular problem for the attackers. They could not seize all of their targets at once, but the several pockets of unbeaten allied forces in and around the city were still in grave danger.

The operational situation facing the allied side in the wake of these early Tet attacks presented both challenges and opportunities. One major challenge—common to urban warfare throughout the centuries—was how to conduct military operations without destroying the cities and killing their civilian inhabitants. The nation-wide scale of the offensive also meant that the allied command would not be able to dispatch infantry and aircraft reinforcements to any but the most critical Delta battle sites. Allied leaders

were especially concerned that with QL 4 interdicted by enemy forces at many points, the only feasible way to move troops and supplies would be by water and by air. Conversely, the allies possessed many advantages that could be exploited to recover the lost cities, deal a severe blow to the Viet Cong, and extend RVN government control to a wide area of the Delta. The keys to allied success in the Delta during the Tet Offensive would be mobility, firepower, combined arms tactics, logistics, and allied cooperation.

The allies' most vital quick reaction force during the Tet Offensive was the U.S. Army-U.S. Navy Mobile Riverine Force (MRF). The joint force was established in 1967 at the urging of General William C. Westmoreland, Commander U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (COMUSMACV). The ground combat element of the MRF was the 2nd Brigade (and later also the 3rd Brigade) of the 9th Infantry Division. The primary combat formations of the 2nd Brigade were the 47th and 60th Infantry Regiments and the 4th Artillery. The latter unit's 105mm howitzers routinely operated from barges tethered for stability to trees on the riverbanks. The division's armed and transport helicopters further enhanced the mobility and firepower of the three-battalion infantry regiments.

The Navy half of the MRF was the Riverine Assault Force (Task Force 117) with two (later two more) 400-man River Assault Squadrons. Each squadron operated five monitors protected with plate and bar armor and armed with 40mm and 20mm guns, .50-caliber machine guns, mortars, and grenade launchers. Another three similarly armed and armored craft served as command boats. Each squadron's 26 armored troop carriers (ATCs) could embark a 40-man infantry platoon. Other vessels mounted flame throwers or water cannon to destroy enemy foliage-covered bunkers dug into riverbanks. Several boats boasted helicopter landing pads for the speedy evacuation of wounded soldiers and sailors. Each squadron operated specially designed patrol boats for minesweeping and escort tasks. What gave the MRF its great mobility was Task Force 117's Mobile Riverine Base that consisted of 10 LSTs, barracks ships and craft, repair vessels, and a tug. Ships operated by Naval Support Activity, Saigon, kept the MRF and its shore base at Dong Tam well supplied with fuel, ammunition, and supplies.

By early 1968, the MRF was battle-hardened and experienced, having fought and won major battles against the enemy's main force battalions during 1967. In a series of operations named Coronado, the force killed thousands of Viet Cong fighters. As captured documents confirmed, for instance, in June 1967 the MRF virtually destroyed the 450-man 5th Nha Be Main Force Battalion. Rear Admiral Kenneth L. Veth, Commander Naval Forces, Vietnam (COMNAVFORV), related that after MRF operations in one enemy stronghold, "the size of the enemy units encountered has grown smaller and

the percentage of prisoners taken versus enemy killed has risen steadily. Increasingly large caches of weapons have been uncovered. River Assault Craft now move freely through areas where two months ago ambush with [rocket propelled grenades] or recoilless rifles could be anticipated at any moment. In summary it appears that a VC haven and stronghold, rarely ventured into by ARVN in the past has been reduced to an area containing only scattered and poorly organized VC guerillas.”²

Army 0-1 Birdog aircraft provided the MRF with eyes from the sky to spot enemy movements and direct artillery and air strikes on the Viet Cong. U.S. Air Force AC-47 and AC-130 gunships brought considerable firepower to the battlefield with organic guns and rockets, as did fighter-bombers based at Binh Thuy Air Base near Can Tho and Bien Hoa Air Base near Saigon. Planes from these airfields could be over the MRF battles in 15 to 30 minutes. B-52 bombers on occasion hit selected targets in the Delta but the heavy concentration of civilians in the region ruled out a systematic use of the big bombers. Another U.S. Navy command that exploited the Mekong Delta's maritime environment was the U.S. Navy's River Patrol Force (Task Force 116). Each of the command's river divisions operated two 10-boat sections based ashore and on LSTs deployed in the rivers. The fighting vessels of the River Patrol Force were 32-foot-long river patrol boats (PBRs) armed with two twin .50-caliber and two 60mm machine guns, and a grenade launcher. The highly maneuverable boats, powered by Jacuzzi jet pumps, could turn on a dime and speed along the rivers at 25 knots. Supporting Task Force 116 was Helicopter Attack Light Squadron 3 (HAL-3), better known by its nickname, the “Seawolves.” Two-plane detachments of HU-1B helicopters, “Hueys,” operated from LSTs in the rivers and from shore bases. The rotary-wing aircraft carried a powerful array of miniguns, rockets, and 60mm machine guns.

The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) contributed to the combat power and mobility of the allied military contingent in the Delta. In 1968, the Vietnam Navy (VNN) operated hundreds of ships and craft there. The naval service's Fleet Command operated submarine chasers, escorts, motor gunboats, large support landing ships, minesweepers, and logistic ships and craft. The larger vessels boasted 40mm and 20mm guns and .50-caliber and 60mm machine guns. The River Force fought with former U.S. LCM 6 and LCM 8 landing craft and American-built river patrol craft. These vessels performed combat, patrol, transportation, and logistic duties. The VNN's 13 River Assault Groups (RAGs) operated from bases in Saigon and throughout the Delta. Three ARVN infantry divisions, the 7th, 9th, and 21st, totaling 40,000

² Quoted in Fulton, *Riverine Operations*, 125.

men, operated there, as did ranger battalions and thousands of paramilitary territorial troops. The Vietnam Air Force (VNAF) flew propeller-driven A-1 Skyraider attack planes and H-34 Sea Horse and UH-1B helicopters.

Despite this formidable concentration of allied military power and might, by early February 1968 thousands of Viet Cong fighters had infiltrated and seized all but small allied-held pockets in My Tho, Ben Tre, and Vinh Long and were threatening Can Tho. To the surprise of the Communists, most of the civilians in My Tho and the country's other urban areas did not surge into the streets to welcome the Viet Cong as liberators. Indeed, they fled into the countryside or tried to find shelter from the combatants' bombs, rockets, and rifle fire. Reports that enemy fighters were executing some South Vietnamese government officials and even wounded ARVN soldiers did not endear them to much of the population.

The Fight for My Tho

Launching one of the first counterattacks in the Delta, the PBRs of River Section 532 teamed up with ARVN rangers to fight their way up a canal, surprising and decimating a VC unit. Then the MRF, like the U.S. cavalry in many American Western movies, rushed to help the embattled forces in the city. As Captain Robert S. Salzer, the commodore of the MRF's Task Force 117 (and later Commander Naval Forces, Vietnam), observed, the only difference this time was that the Indians were already in the fort!³ My Tho's proximity to Dong Tam, the MRF's shore base only five miles away, enabled a quick reaction to the crisis in the city. In the afternoon of 1 February, Task Force 117 landing craft deployed battalion-size elements of the 47th and 60th infantry regiments to the southwestern corner of the city. The soldiers advanced methodically northward. General William B. Fulton, commander of the Army's 2nd Brigade and later assistant division commander of the 9th Division, observed that "the fighting was intense and continuous and of a kind new to the riverine battalions," which had been used to maneuvering through rice paddies and jungle. In addition, "the city had to be cleared slowly and systematically" because "pockets of enemy resistance had to be wiped out to prevent the Viet Cong from closing in behind allied troops." The "troops moved in and out of doorways, from house to house, and from street to street." Particularly well-defended enemy positions were reduced by artillery, air strikes, and naval gunfire. In one instance, "tactical air strikes with napalm were called in and dislodged Viet Cong troops holding a guard tower near a highway bridge."⁴

³ Robert S. Salzer, U.S. Naval Institute, Oral History.

⁴ Fulton, *Riverine Operations*, 150-51.

The MRF's "Dustoff" medical evacuation helicopters quickly picked up and transported wounded soldiers to the ships offshore for treatment. After nightfall, surviving Viet Cong troops withdrew from their positions and fled into the countryside. By late morning the next day, allied forces had eliminated enemy resistance in the city. The battle cost the lives of three American and 25 South Vietnamese soldiers. Hundreds of VC fighters, some as young as 14, were killed or wounded. From a military standpoint, the two-day operation was a success and the RVN was now back in control of an important urban center. But the city and its people paid dearly for that accomplishment. Allied artillery fire and air strikes and Viet Cong mortar and rocket attacks killed and wounded more than 700 civilians, created over 39,000 refugees, and destroyed close to 5,000 houses and other structures.

The Retaking of Ben Tre

The action then shifted to Ben Tre, the capital of Kien Hoa Province. The city had long served as an inspiration to the Communists since it was the site of the first major rebellion against the RVN. Surrounded by two branches of the Mekong River and other waterways, Ben Tre proved to be an ideal operating environment for the employment of naval power. Even as the MRF was securing My Tho, River Patrol Force PBRs of River Sections 534 and 532 poured heavy fire into enemy forces threatening the almost-surrounded MACV compound. The river patrol boat sailors used their .50-caliber and 60mm machine guns to prevent enemy troops from crossing the Ben Tre Bridge and attacking allied positions from the river side. Light Antitank Weapons (LAWs) proved especially effective at demolishing buildings harboring Viet Cong fighters. As an American soldier remarked to a reporter from the *Washington Post*, the PBRs "saved our bacon that day."⁵

USS *Harnett County* (LST-821), deployed in the Ham Luong River, employed its 40mm guns in support of the PBRs and kept the boats well-supplied with ammunition and fuel. Another allied asset, air power, then joined the battle when HAL-3 helicopter gunships and U.S. Air Force AC-47 "Spooky" aircraft arrived overhead and began pummeling enemy forces. On 1 February, helicopters landed elements of two infantry battalions from the division's 3rd Brigade into the city. The units immediately took heavy fire from enemy troops holed up in buildings and from snipers. The battalions sustained 16 casualties and could not advance. Coming to the aid of the soldiers, who were unfamiliar with urban combat, were fixed-wing and helicopter gunships, artillery, and naval gunfire. The combined air and naval fire obliterated enemy positions and drove the surviving troops into the open where they became prey to allied arms. After three days, the 9th Division troops had secured the city

⁵ Quoted in Sherwood, *War in the Shallows*, 298.

and moved into the countryside to keep pressure on the fleeing enemy soldiers. During the fight for Ben Tre and the surrounding countryside, the allies killed 328 Viet Cong fighters. The government of South Vietnam was once again in control of Ben Tre. The keys to allied success had been their mobility and firepower that enabled the employment of ground, air, and naval forces in a coordinated, all-arms counterattack.

After the battle, a 9th Division soldier captured the bitter irony of the allied victory in Ben Tre and indeed of urban combat throughout time. He told Australian journalist Peter Arnett that “it became necessary to destroy the town to save it.”⁶ Ben Tre was flattened, with 5,000 buildings destroyed. The battle also created 30,000 refugees. Close to 2,000 Vietnamese civilians were killed or wounded in Ben Tre and the surrounding region. One cause of the death and destruction was the employment by Viet Cong and allied forces of tracer bullets coated with a phosphorous chemical. The rounds set the city of thin wooden homes, stores, and other structures on fire. Because of heavy fighting in the city’s streets and alleyways, firefighters could not prevent the spread of the resulting conflagration. Ground, air, and naval gunfire also took a heavy toll of more substantial structures.

The Fire Brigade Recovers Vinh Long

Like Ben Tre, Vinh Long was virtually surrounded by water and naval forces there joined early in the fight to save the city and its essential military bases. After evacuating 2,500 dependents and other civilians to islands in the Co Chien River, the Vietnam Navy put up a stout defense of its naval base. On 31 January, the river combat craft of RAGs 23 and 31 poured sustained fire into advancing Viet Cong troops. Pilots, aircrews, and base personnel of HAL-3, under fire from enemy mortars, joined with U.S. Army maintenance personnel to beat back early enemy attacks on Vinh Long’s airfield. That same morning, light tanks and armored personnel carriers of the ARVN 2nd Cavalry Regiment arrived and drove the enemy from the environs of the airfield. Army troops airlifted to the base at dusk further reinforced the defenders. From 2-4 February, the armored cavalry unit, an ARVN ranger unit, and a battalion of South Vietnamese soldiers deployed into the city by river craft fought street-by-street in an effort to eject the Viet Cong from the city. During that same time, River Section 535 joined with VNN forces, SEALs, and U.S. rear echelon personnel to defend the Vinh Long naval base.

What enabled the allies to eject the enemy from Vinh Long was the arrival on 4 February of the MRF. Task Force 117 vessels and Army helicopters deployed two battalions of troops into the area. With the support

⁶ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 298.

of gunfire from River Assault Division (RAD) 92 and RAD 111, the ground troops cleared VC troops from the city's environs. Late on 5 February, soldiers of the 47th and 60th regiments, after eight days of non-stop combat ashore, retired to barracks ship USS *Colleton* (APB-36). The MRF's sailors ensured that their compatriots were provided with hot showers, food, and undisturbed sleep. By 6 February, the heavy fighting for Vinh Long was over. While the MRF had suffered the death of five fighting men and the wounding of 76 more, it had inflicted hundreds of casualties on the Viet Cong and secured the city.

General Fulton observed that "the effectiveness of the Mobile Riverine Force at each city resulted in a reduction of the Viet Cong attacks to harassing actions and elimination of the threat to the city." He added that "by using in combination with the Mobile Riverine Base, which moved large numbers of troops and support elements between the areas, assault water craft, and supporting helicopters the Mobile Riverine Force not only moved quickly to each new area but also arrived in strength and was able to sustain operations as needed."⁷

Following the city battles, Rear Admiral Kenneth L. Veth, Commander Naval Forces, Vietnam, stressed to his command that "now is the time to resort again to the basic tactic of concentrate and clobber. The enemy is moving about. Sometimes lost, and very vulnerable to ambush. Recommend all units move to the offensive. This is a time when ingenuity can pay off."⁸

The Concentration of Force at Can Tho

Mobility, firepower, and combined arms warfare also enabled allied forces to thwart the enemy's assault on Can Tho, home to 166,000 South Vietnamese and the site of the major airfield at Binh Thuy. When allied intelligence discovered in mid-February that a 2,500-strong Viet Cong force had set its sites on the city, the MRF sprang into action. The Mobile Riverine Base, with 9th Division troops embarked, steamed from its base at Dong Tam to Can Tho, a distance of more than 100 miles. Complementing logistic support by the Mobile Riverine Base, Army logistic commands in the central Delta provided the combat forces with fuel, rations, and construction materials and facilitated the evacuation of casualties. Once off Can Tho, the MRF, River Patrol Force PBRs, and South Vietnamese naval units defeated one VC unit after another. Realizing the futility of their assault on Can Tho, Viet Cong forces finally attempted to escape into the surrounding region. On the 17th, the MRF virtually surrounded and bludgeoned a large VC force near the Bassac River. The U.S. commands lost 19 soldiers and 2 sailors killed in action but

⁷ Fulton, *Riverine Operations*, 154-55.

⁸ Quoted in Marolda, *Combat at Close Quarters*, 109-110.

killed 68 VC soldiers and captured 280 mortar, rocket, and recoilless rifle rounds. This proved to be the enemy's last attempt during the Tet Offensive to occupy and hold a major urban center in the Mekong Delta.

Allied and Viet Cong operations and weapons inflicted grievous damage on the Delta's urban centers during the Tet Offensive. The fighting destroyed much of those cities, killed many innocent civilians, and drove thousands of people from their homes. The enemy, however, had consciously chosen the cities as their battleground. To concede their capture, the government of the RVN and its U.S. ally would have had to accept defeat in the war. Regardless of cost, they had no choice but to recapture the urban centers and free the population from Communist occupation.

The mobility, firepower, logistical capability, and cooperation of the American and South Vietnamese forces had enabled them to respond almost immediately to the enemy's attack on My Tho, Ben Tre, and Vinh Long and ongoing assault on Can Tho. The MRF, the "fire brigade of the Delta," moving from one battle site to another, had facilitated the successful fights for these cities. During the Tet Offensive, the MRF traveled more than 600 miles throughout the Delta. Its combat accomplishments earned the command a Presidential Unit Citation. Admiral Veth observed that during the Tet battles, "the Army and Navy elements [of the MRF] operated cohesively to restore order in the besieged Delta."⁹

The allied forces brought to the fight overwhelming naval, ground, and air power that the enemy could not withstand for more than a few days. The bombs, rockets, miniguns, and machine guns employed by allied aircraft, the 40mm and 20mm guns, machine guns, and mortars fired by the Riverine Assault Force, and the weapons of the PBRs were used to great effect against the enemy. Finally, U.S. and South Vietnamese forces fought and won these battles side by side.

⁹ Quoted in Schreadley, *From the Rivers to the Sea*, 139.

THE BLOODY BATTLE IN THE CITY OF SUEZ – OCTOBER 1973

BGN. (Res.) Dr. Dani ASHER (Israel)

The Yom Kippur War is a bleeding wound in Israel in general and among the people of the generation in particular. As a result, there is a lot of research and personal writing about it. In the battle in Suez on the last day of the war, the 162nd Division was required to close in on the Egyptian Third army east of the canal, and to take over the city of Suez served as a crossing to it. On October 22, news slowly trickled into Sadat's consciousness and his commanders about the takeover of the West Bank of the Suez Canal by IDF forces and the true state of their army. The Egyptian High Command did not assess in time the scope and significance of the breach into the West Bank. Thus, the Egyptian army found itself in considerable distress.



It lost 254 aircraft, mainly suffering from a shortage of pilots. Their armored divisions were severely beaten; the 16th Infantry Division and the 21st Armored Division were almost completely destroyed; The Third Army

was severely damaged and the Egyptian Army lost its offensive capability; On the horizon was an encirclement of the entire army. Beginning on the morning of October 23, thousands of Egyptian outposts surrendered and became prisoners of war. In total, 8,372 Egyptian prisoners were captured by the IDF, some 6,000 in the three days between October 20 and 23 alone. This led to increased involvement on the part of the units in collecting and guarding prisoners. But it is worth noting that the Egyptian army still demonstrated fighting ability.

News of an expected ceasefire on 22 October caught the 162nd Division in a general charge south. She was arrested near the city of Suez. No one was surprised by the violation of the ceasefire. The IDF aspired to reach lines where its superiority would be more clearly demonstrated, in the hope that they would serve as a basis for post-war arrangements. This was reflected mainly in the southern sector¹.

On October 23, at 18:50, Maj. Gen. Gonen the head of the IDF Southern Command instructed Maj. Gen. Magen, commander of the 252nd Division, "The 252nd Division will complete the encirclement of the Third Army - and at the same time serve as a flank bolt west of the city of Suez." War flares up again The move to encircle the Third Army bore fruit.

At 23:00 on the night of 23 October, the 401st Brigade of the 252nd Division arrived at Ras Adabiyah on the coast of the Gulf of Suez, after moving at full lights on a rear axis at the foot of Jabel Atqah. In the port of Adabiyah was the headquarters of the Egyptian naval arena. On the morning of October 24, two ships joined the mission, with Col. Zeev Almog, commander of the Red Sea theater. Following the ships, landing craft evacuated 1,500 Egyptian prisoners, including the commander of the Egyptian theater. Thus, the Egyptians were deprived of their last anchorage near the Third Army, and tightened the closure of the city of Suez and the Third Army forces besieged on the east bank, both by land and sea.

With the exception of the city itself, the 162nd Division and the 401st Brigade closed in on the Third Army from the Gulf of Suez in the south to Jenifa in the north. IDF forces held the Cairo-Suez road from kilometer 101 eastward, and Egyptian forces still operated in the area, remaining trapped in their pockets. This successful move effectively encircled the Third Army, which consisted of over 20,000 soldiers and 300 tanks At the same time, at 01:00 on October 24, the Security Council approved Resolution 339, jointly submitted by the United States and the Soviet Union. Its essence is an immediate ceasefire and a return to the October 22 lines.

¹ Amiram Ezov, , Decision , Who won Yom Kippur war, Dvir, Or Yehuda, Israel (Hebrew) 2020.

“Provided it if it is not Stalingrad”

On October 24, in the middle of the night, a wireless call woke Maj. Gen. Eden in the war room on Jabal Jenifa. On the line was Brigadier General Uri Ben Ari, the deputy Commander of the Southern Command: Brenchik, (The nickname of the 162ed Division) I'm not letting you sleep. We don't know if there will be a ceasefire. In the meantime, we want you to occupy Suez - provided it's not Stalingrad. If it is Stalingrad, but if it is not Stalingrad, If it's just like that Beersheba, (in our War for Independence – 1948), then conquer It. If it's Stalingrad, a house-to-house war, thank you very much.

The initiative to take over the city was that of the front headquarters. No explicit approval was found from the chief of staff for such a move. In light of the signs of disintegration of the Third Army, which had been seen on the ground the day before, the command headquarters assumed that the conquest of the city was possible without getting involved in a fierce battle.

On the night of October 24, the 162nd Armored Division stood at the gates of Suez, tired and worn out, but paradoxically, perhaps, also aggressive – and with a strong tailwind of success in recent days.

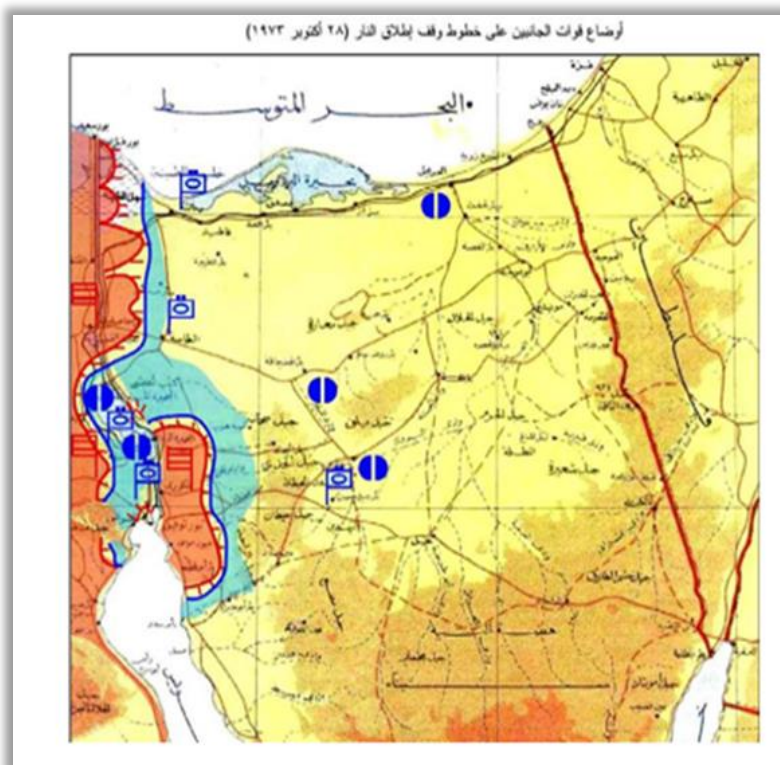
The huge city of Suez, with its tall buildings and wide streets, stood half desolate. Surprisingly, however, little information was about her.



General Adan said: “We knew there was a commando battalion in Port Ibrahim in a very bad situation, (shouting ‘Gewald’) and asking to surrender. There is another commando battalion in the east of the city, and there are escapees, several hundred who fled from the Third Army into the city. The city was not empty, but we predicted the disintegration of the Egyptian forces. Therefore, I accepted the assumption that no special difficulties are expected in the conquest of the city.” No intelligence information about the Egyptian forces in the city, little air and artillery support, and hasty planning, as well as the definition of the demands of the senior command, embodied in the statement of the deputy commander of the command, Uri Ben Ari were the basis for the plan of the 500th Brigade and other forces that were diploid into that battle. The one that put the 433rd Battalion on the main axis of the city with the intention of taking over Port Ibrahim (a port located on a tongue leading out of the city).

The task was assigned to the commander of the 162nd Armored Brigade with the 500th Armored Brigade and its commander, Arie Keren, and with auxiliary infantry forces gathered from everywhere. Under the pressure of time, the planning was hasty, based mainly on the shock entry of an armored column led by the 433rd Battalion into the city’s main street and the rapid collapse of its defense. At 09:00 on October 24, the entry of the forces began. At the head was an armored battalion, commanded by Nahum Zaken, followed by a paratroopers battalion, commanded by Yossi Yaffe. Within an hour, the invading battalions were deeply entangled in its streets. Some are on the main road, others in its alleys. Many organized and disorganized Egyptian forces that took advantage of the height advantage and the density of the buildings and the multitude of roads, alleys, courtyards and windows to shoot light arms and anti-tank launchers and throw grenades at the tanks and the armored personnel carriers and the open caterpillars of the infantry and relief soldiers .





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At the end of the day, the forces withdrew, and the Egyptians were able to record a considerable tactical achievement. However, in historical jargon, this was a “Pyrrhic victory.” IDF forces held the Suez-Cairo Road. Egyptian forces were captured in various pockets and captured. Above all, the siege ring of the Third Army remained tight and stable. Suez city stand alone

² Yoel Sharon, One Battle Too Many, TV movie, Israel (Hebrew) 2013.

³ Nachum Zaken, Suez is not Stalingrad – The story of the Tank battalion’s fighting in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, Ma’arachot, IDF, (Hebrew), 2021.

and didn't fall till the end of the War. The operation to encircle the Third Army did bear fruit, but the Battle of Suez is an expression of the contradiction between the systemic/strategic and tactical perspectives. In the end, it did not serve the systemic purpose, and in fact almost thwarted it. The main dilemma of the Israeli forces in the battle was whether to continuing the mission forward or rescuing and retreating and evacuating the casualties and the remainder of the battalion.

In real time, the command echelons did not ask themselves the question of whether the move was militarily necessary. Capturing a big city is a far-reaching step. Under the circumstances of the end of the war, and within an official ceasefire, was such a move appropriate? Was it necessary after the 401st Brigade completed the encirclement of the Third Army on the night of 23-24 October? IDF commanders believed that the takeover of the city dealt a fatal blow to Egyptian prestige and also tightened the siege on the army.

Failure in battle was painful. About 80 dead and 120 wounded. The pain was exacerbated by the controversial necessity of the move. It was the heavy price that overshadowed, at the end of the day, the great success. Maj. Gen. Eden concludes: "Today I regret that the mission was assigned and that I did not object to accepting it... The reason is simple - we were sensitive to additional casualties, so it would have been better not to try to take over the city. Especially since it didn't change the strategic situation."

BEIRUT CAMPAIGN 1982

Col. Dr. Benny MICHELSON (Israel)

Introduction - Fighting in Urban Terrain – 1982 “Peace for Galilee” War

Humans have fought in cities since before Joshua and the Israelites breached Jericho's walls. Cities are important, to people, governments and, therefore, armies. The Israeli Defense Force (IDF) 1982 during Lebanese campaign is a historical example. This campaign pitted a mechanized, technologically advanced, casualty sensitive army against conventional and unconventional opponents in a media-saturated, urban environment. Throughout the campaign, the IDF faced a paradox: move rapidly through urban and mountainous terrain to conform to a political timeline, yet inflict minimal casualties, minimize collateral damage, and sustain few casualties. These constraints affected how the IDF would conduct the campaign and especially in urban terrain. Multi-Casualties battles, like Jerusalem during the Six Day War (1967) or Suez during 1973 (War of Atonement) would not be acceptable. To achieve its objectives within the parameters, the IDF would use a combination of surprise, mass, and tactical flexibility. Generally, this approach proved successful. In this campaign, the IDF fought the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) and the Syrian Army. The PLO was a well-financed and armed terrorist/guerrilla organization. It was equipped with a variety of Western and Soviet Bloc small arms, anti-tank weapons, and various artillery pieces, mortars, and even tanks. The Syrian Army was a relatively modern army equipped with Soviet equipment. The IDF's goal was to drive the PLO out of Lebanon and neutralize Syria's influence in Lebanon. To accomplish this, 8 (eight) IDF divisions would advance into Lebanon. These units would move rapidly. The advance elements would bypass resistance and follow-on forces would reduce bypassed enemy strongpoints. In the course of this drive north, the IDF would fight in three significant urban areas: Tyre, Sidon, and Beirut. In August 1982, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was firmly rooted in Beirut, but under siege by Israeli forces. The PLO had been entrenched in south Lebanon, abutting Israel's northern border, for years, launching cross-border attacks, and firing artillery shells and Katyusha rockets at northern Israel towns and villages. On June 6, Israeli troops crossed the border, ostensibly to push the PLO back 40 km, so its fire means could not threaten Israel. But the IDF pushed north all the way to Beirut and had been attacking the city from the sea, air and land, cutting off food, water and power.

The Siege of Beirut - Phases of the Campaign:

June 6 — “Peace for Galilee War” begun.

June 9-13 — battles on Beirut southern external belt of defense, along DAMUR - HALDE.

June 13 – achieving Beirut encirclement.

June 25-31 – battles on Beirut eastern external belt of defense, ALEII – BAHMADUN area, completing the encirclement and tightening the siege.

July 1982 – static siege.

Aug. 1-11 – “biting” the urban area, fighting on Beirut southern internal belt of defense, the international airport and EL-UZAY suburb and eastern internal belt of defense the hippodrome and the “museum”.

Aug. 11-12 – surrender of the Syrian Army and PLO in Beirut and signing an evacuation agreement with the US envoy Philip Habib.

Aug. 21 — About 350 French troops arrive as an advance unit of the international force to supervise the evacuation, which begins that day.

Aug. 23 — Lebanese legislature elects Bashir Gemayel president of Lebanon.

Aug. 25 — The remaining international troops arrive, including 800 U.S. Marines.

Sept. 1 — Evacuation of PLO personal (8300) and Syrian soldiers ends.

City of Beirut – Capital of Lebanon

In 1982, Beirut was but a shell of its former splendor. By the 1960s, the city had gained the deserved reputation as the Paris of the Middle East. Beirut was fought on a scale even larger than Tyre or Sidon. It was large, 50 square km, with 600 – 700,000 inhabitants. A French city influenced also by American architecture. The skyline was studded with ancient and modern buildings (3-4 stores but also 13-14 stores). During the twentieths and thirtieths of the twentieth century, the city was the French High-commissioner location. In World War Two the British Army conquered the city after occupying Damascus and Damur layout of defense. In 1958, a civil war in Lebanon was denied by landing of US Marines at Beirut. Beirut served as a financial, educational, and cultural center for the Arab world. Rue de Banques was rumored to possess half the Arab wealth. American University and St. Joseph

University was both prestigious institutions of higher learning, attracting students from the Arab elites in the entire Middle East. The press was relatively free, and many Arabs could print their ideas in the publishing houses of the city. At 13 April 1975, a civil war started in Lebanon who continue until 1982. That war divided Beirut in two sectors: west and north dominated by Christian forces and population and east and south by Muslim population ruled by Syrian Army and PLO terrorists. Unfortunately, the Lebanese Civil War, dramatically changed the city's quality of life. War brought much destruction and left a divided Capital.

Besieged Syrian Forces

Syria consider Beirut as a key area in Lebanon and had stationed its 85th Mechanized Infantry Brigade reinforced by Infantry Battalion no. 622 in west Beirut. ORBAT of that force:

3 Mechanizes Infantry Battalions.

One tank Battalion – T-54/55.

One Artillery Battalion.

One Engineer Company.

One A/T Company.

One AA Battery.

2 PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army) brigades: HETIN and KADASYIA.¹

PLA Armor Regiment no. 420 (60 tanks).

Commando Battalion no. 226 (belonged to 36th Special Operations Regiment).

Units of 569 Division - About one Battalion size.

EL ASAD Battalion (Lebanese Militia of BAAT' party).

Comprising some 10,000 men, the brigade possessed thirty T-54/55 tanks, armored personnel carriers, 18 - D-30 - 122mm, howitzers, 82mm mortars, Katyushas, 130mm field artillery, and 57mm AA guns. The Syrians deployed in the southern parts of west Beirut.

Besieged PLO Terrorist Forces

The PLO was an umbrella organization for a number of different terrorist groups. Yasser Arafat was the chairman of the PLO Executive Committee as well as the commander in chief of all PLO military forces. He

¹ Syrian Army formations employed by Palestinians.

also directly controlled Fatah, the largest group. In addition to FATAH, at least four other Palestinian organizations were in west Beirut: The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, and *al-Saiqa*, controlled by Damascus. The PLO forces deployed on the PLO headquarters and the three refugee camps of Sabra, Shatilla, and Burj al-Barajnah as military bases.

PLO forces in Beirut were the largest in Lebanon:

AJANADIN PLO forces (brigade size FATAH force).

Several other battalion size groups.

BADER forces from Jordan.

PLO (and other terrorist groups) HQ at PHAKHANI neighborhood.

Artillery, communication, engineers and logistic units.

All together about 10,000 terrorists (8,300 expelled).

The PLO headquarters had constructed three levels underground shelters. By the time of Operation *PEACE FOR GALILEE*, the PLO had prepared bunkers and tunnels in anticipation of an Israeli invasion. It had stockpiled arms, fuel, food, and medicine. In 1981, the Palestinians had also begun constructing a number of secret emergency command posts. Central control assumed by PLO Chief of the General Staff – Brigadier Saad Sayel (Abu Walid) from an operation center (room) – underground bunker.² Beirut city divided into 7 (seven) PLO sectors of defense and some sub-sectors.

Major PLO weapons: 24 – T-34 tanks, 200 artillery pieces (including 12 – BM-21 rocket-launchers), 4 AA guns ZU-23x4, hundreds of AA machine-guns and personal SA-7 missile launchers.

² Born in Kafr Qalil, near Nablus, in 1932; studied Military Engineering at the Jordanian Military College, graduating in 1951; enrolled at military courses in Britain in 1954; joined the Jordanian army in 1956 and became an infantry brigade commander; underwent further military training in Egypt and Iraq in 1958 as well as in Britain then the US (1960 and 1966); left the Jordanian army in Sept. 1970 and joined Fateh; became Fateh commander of the Yarmouk forces; chaired the PLO's Higher Military Committee in the Lebanon from the late 1970s; was a senior aide of PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and served as his chief-of-staff; military commander of the PLO PNC member; served mostly in Lebanon, holding the rank of a Brigadier; in 1976, was involved in direct consultations with the US ambassador to Lebanon about protection of the US Embassy; was elected member of the Fateh Exec. Committee in its Aug. 1980 conference in Damascus; was killed in the Beka'a Valley, Lebanon, on 29 Sept. 1982 (PLO leaders accused Syria, while others suspected the Abu Nidal organization to be behind the assassination); was buried in Al-Yarmouk Refugee Camp, Syria; the PA has named its Military Academy in Jericho after him;

IDF's IPB (Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield)

In anticipation The IDF was faced with the daunting prospect of operating inside a large modern city. Since LITANY Operation (1978) the possibility of a large-scale operation in Lebanon increase. the Intelligence Branch of IDF Northern Command begun preparing intelligence aids: air-photo enlargements, Orto-Photo, maps of different scale, Sector Files and villages files. At March 1982, a special project was initiated evolving also the IDF General-Staff intelligence branch – Beirut Sector File.

The aim of that file was to provide IDF units, evolved in contingency operation plans with Lebanon Capital comprehensive intelligence knowledge about Beirut to enable conquest of the city and govern it after. File Contents: explanation about the file, introduction and general review of Beirut. Doctrinal aspects of Enemy Courses of Action defending Beirut. Terrain summery, model of enemy deployment to defend Beirut. Urban warfare lessons learned from 1958 and 1976 battles during Lebanon Civil Wars. Collecting intelligence in urban terrain. Operational analysis of Beirut defense in and around the city. The infrastructure installations that enable control of the city. That file disseminated to IDF units at the beginning of May 1982 – one month before the war started.

Fighting on the External Belt of Defense: 7 – 13 June 1982, Encirclement of the City

The forces of 96 division under command of Brig-General Amos Yaron advanced toward Sil village (Halde junction) along the seashore rout. That division had 4 brigades: 2 infantry – “Golani” and 35th paratroops and 2 armor - 211 and 188. To breach over the external belt of defense from the south, that IDF division fought three battles. The beginning looks promising, when at 7th of June the paratroops reached Damur and engaged with Beirut defense forces for the first time. Next 24 hours lost because order from the Supreme Command to halt the advance towards Beirut and the forces stopped. This recreation time exploited by both sides to regroup and prepare for the anticipated battle. The Syrians deployed two mechanized infantry battalions, two tank battalions, one commando battalion reinforced with anti-tank weapons and dozens of terrorist groups. Center of gravity of the Syrian force lay on the exit seashore rout south to the international airport at Sil village – HALDA junction.

The first attack of Sil village abreast along the seashore on the 9th of June failed. The second attempt on June 10th not succeed as well. On 11th June a ceasefire was declared in Lebanon. The terrorists in Beirut area did not

respect the ceasefire, and the fighting continued with the Syrian units also. On other Lebanon sectors the fighting stopped. A third attack on Sil village launched by 188 armor and GOLANI infantry brigades launched and at that time they accomplished their mission. HALDA junction occupied and IDF forces reached Beirut suburbs. After the third battle, the path to Beirut opened to them. The Paratroopers Brigade advanced into mountainous terrain while fighting against the Syrian and terrorist forces. On June 13, shortly before noon, they joined forces with the Christian forces in the Shima village. From there, the forces advanced in the territory under Christian domination, towards East Beirut. PLO terrorists and the Syrian forces were cut-off and isolated into the city of Beirut.

Strengthening the Envelopment: 22 – 25 June.

The ceasefire in the Beirut region was unstable. IDF forces were positioned to the east and south of the Lebanese capital, but the Syrian and terrorist forces occupied the west of the city and the ridge on ALEI-BAHMADUN area that dominates the eastern city. Attempts to stabilize the ceasefire failed and it was decided to tighten the siege on Beirut. From June 22 to June 25, the 96th and the 162 divisions attack from south and east respectively, and conquered the region that dominated Beirut. The Syrian forces: 62 mechanized infantry brigade, two commando regiments and one artillery regiment annihilated. Some survivals at this point run away to the Bekaa valley. With this takeover, the IDF obtained control of the Beirut-Damascus Road and control over Beirut by the east. Last hope to open a route to besieged forces for reinforcement or evacuation vanished.

The Siege: 13 June – 12 August 1982.

The IDF objective surrounding Beirut was not a building-by-building fight to destroy the PLO. Instead, it was more focused: not the destruction but the withdrawal of the PLO from Lebanon. Therefore, the IDF limited the scope and duration of the ground fighting in Beirut. Firepower played a more prominent role here than earlier in the campaign. Beirut was too big to overwhelm with numbers. Actual ground fighting was defined strictly to PLO and Syrian - held areas. These areas, like before, would be isolated and then thoroughly saturated by fire before any ground forces advanced. The destruction was greater than that inflicted earlier in the campaign, but the casualty-conscious IDF determined it could not afford to do otherwise. IDF operations during the static siege of Beirut lasted approximately one month. Fighting was mainly in the southern and eastern parts of the city. The IDF had the PLO and Syrian forces in Beirut isolated and could bring all its pressure on them.

On 22nd of June Operation HONG-KONG started. IDF Northern Command establish a team of experts who collected information about the infrastructure installations of Beirut. Based on the Sector File already exist, electricity, water system and sewage professionals supported by Christian population functionals affect that infrastructure as well as the communication, transportation and food. That activity pushes the inhabitants of Beirut to press PLO and Syrian forces in order to surrender. Piecemeal, limited ground attacks, led by company-sized teams of infantry; tanks and self-propelled artillery pieces escorted by cutting water or electricity were used in these operations. These so-called “salami” tactics, named because they sliced off small pieces of enemy-controlled territory, accomplished their goal of pushing the PLO into an ever-shrinking area. 31 July – 1 August: Operation Olive-Tree: the international airport and Hai-E-Salum suburb occupied. 3-5 August: operation Benei-Zait: EL-UZAY, Hippodrome and MUSEUM suburbs occupied. The ground activities, combined with Psi-Ops and the most intense close air support and artillery fires of the campaign, made the PLO, after many cease-fires and negotiations, agree to leave Lebanon.

Surrendering Negotiation and Agreement.

An agreement was finally reached on August 18, under which French troops would arrive in Beirut on August 21. They would be joined by US and Italian forces. Their mission - to ensure the PLO leaves Beirut. The evacuation got underway on August 21, when several hundred PLO fighters boarded a ship for Cyprus. In the following days, the evacuation picked up pace, and on August 30, it was the turn of PLO chairmen Yasser Arafat, wearing olive-green military fatigues and with his trade-mark black-and white checked keffiyeh headdress, to board a ship taking him from the city where the PLO had had its headquarters. Some eight and a half thousand PLO members were expelled to Tunisia. Another two and a half thousand ended up in other Arab states. Arafat had been in Israel’s crosshairs for years. According to reports, an Israeli sniper even had him in his sights during the siege of Beirut, but was under orders not to fire. The US was acting as his protector.

Towards the middle of August, an agreement was reached for the Syrian and PLO surrender. Expelling of the Palestinian terrorists and forces from Beirut. The evacuation was carried out under the aegis of an international force. The terrorists were expelled by sea to the Arab States, which were ready to receive them, and the Syrian forces were expelled by the Beirut-Damascus road to the territory held by the Syrian forces in the Bekaa region. The expel was completed on August 31.

Although Israel failed to kill Arafat, for the PLO, the evacuation from Beirut was a clear, painful loss. Among some Israeli officials, there was a

feeling of triumph, but it was to be short-lived. The PLO was obviously defeated, but it tried to put the best face on it. They wore fresh uniforms. They had red kaffiyehs, all of them holding their rifles on these crowded trucks. And the trucks then slowly drove all these people to those huge ferries from Greece or Cyprus. While on the roof, snipers were still shooting from west Beirut and Israeli intelligence people were there with huge telescopes taking pictures of each and every PLO person boarding the ships. That was going on for most of the day. And then the PLO moved to Tunis.

For Israel, the relocation of the PLO from Beirut meant the group was now vulnerable, As far as Arafat is concerned, he's just arrived in Tunis and began operating. Now, the idea of the first Lebanese war was in fact to reach Beirut and cut "the head of the snake", as it used to be called. And in this way Israel would be able to have real autonomy rather than an autonomy governed and influenced by Arafat. The departure of Arafat from Beirut turned out to be the high watermark of Israel's Lebanon war. After Israel's ally, Christian leader and president-elect Bachir Gemayel was assassinated on September 14, Israel stood by as a Christian militia entered two Beirut refugee camps, Sabra and Shatilla, supposedly to clear them of stay-behind PLO fighters and massacre hundreds of civilians. IDF forced to occupy the entire city of Beirut in order to stop the massacre and provide law & order to the population – Operation Iron Brain.

Syrian Forces Fighting Significance.

Uncompromising fighting Focused on the external defense belt and key areas into the city. The main fighting on the built-up area carried by PLO terrorists.

Terrorists Fighting Significance.

IDF halt after Sidon landing used to regroup and preparations in Beirut.

Participation along the external belt battles.

Shock after HALDA occupation and complete the preparations for siege.

Dealing with siege difficulties: food, water, electricity.

Morale problems.

Dealing with "hunting" the leaders.

Poor resistance at the end – the last phase of the siege battles.

IDF Lessons

IDF was able to adapt to the urban terrain mission of the 1982 Lebanese campaign. Despite being a heavy force, the IDF proved that such a force could operate in an urban environment. Where other armies failed, the IDF did not, due to its flexibility, adaptability, training, and small unit leadership. Some units in the IDF did better than others in urban terrain. The difference lay in pre-invasion training and preparations. Those units that trained in some of the captured villages in the Golan and the Sinai were more prepared than those that did not. This training was conducted in small villages that were necessarily not representative of the large modern cities of Lebanon, but urban training can be conducted successfully in relatively modest training areas; large city-sized structures are not necessary. What matters most is for soldiers and leaders to learn the fundamentals of operating in and around buildings.

Another important subject concerns the use of armor in urban areas. Tanks could operate relatively safely in urban areas in conjunction with dismounted infantry. Thinner-skinned APCs were found vulnerable to AT fire and were withdrawn from fighting. To protect infantry on the move, the IDF began using armored engineer vehicles; this is a good example of IDF flexibility. Other armies in similar circumstances have tried similar adaptations before. Battles in Chechnya and Somalia amply demonstrate the danger thin-skinned vehicles face in the modern urban environment. The history of armored vehicles has shown a general trend of progressively greater and greater armor protection. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to posit whether there is any such thing anymore as “light” armored vehicles. Small, disorganized PLO AT teams savaged IDF APCs near Tyre. As the IDF has fought in Lebanon over the years, its infantry rides in a variety of “battle taxis” made from converted tanks. Modern western armies, including the British, American, spent large sums of money and effort to equip its armies with heavily armed but lightly armored IFVs (Infantry Fighting Vehicles). The IDF, with considerably more recent combat experience deems it more prudent to favor armor over speed or firepower. Those who plan the future of the mounted force should bear this in mind.

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Appendices





KALEIDOSCOPE OF WAR AND PEACE: CITY OF VALETTA AND THE MEDITERRANEAN IN THE 20TH CENTURY*

Dr. Nobuyoshi ITO (Japan)

Introduction

In all times and places, human beings have performed their activities more or less concentratedly. Development of every city has been deeply affected by these human activities, ranging over political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions. Above all, human history has been inseparable from sanguinary elements of war, with the situation surrounding the city no exception. In addition, to a considerable extent, it can be said, history of military affairs has been centre of world history.

Therefore, as large numbers of people have gathered to lead their social lives, the city has become the arena of fighting and conflicts, and it has even been one of the major targets of warfare. The progress of urbanisation in the modern world has made battles over the city vitally influence the course of war. However, the existence of the city has also been connected to the dynamism for peace: we can find lots of diplomatic negotiations and civil movements named after the specific city. Through perspective of the city, historians can extract richer human and social aspects of war and peace. With the above context in mind, this paper focuses on the city of Valletta, capital of Malta,¹ and tries to examine history of the 20th century briefly from the lens of the city. The characteristic of Malta as an island nation in the Mediterranean has inextricably connected it to history of warfare and statecraft in the broader region. In the 19th century, Malta came under the rule of Britain, and the national port of Valletta, the Grand Harbour, brought about the unique role of the city as a strategic base of the British naval hegemony in the Mediterranean. So, the city of Valletta embraced its vital importance to maintain the British imperial defence in the broader region.

This paper then argues the experience of Valletta and Malta in the 20th century, which overlaps with history of war and peace. Malta played its important role during the two world wars. During the First World War, the Imperial Japanese Navy was also heavily involved in the Mediterranean

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¹ For the basic information of the city, see Lino Bianco, "Valletta: A city in history," *Melita Theologica*, vol. 60, no. 2 (2009).

affairs. The interwar period witnessed the imperial power struggle over Malta, mainly between the British Empire and Fascist Italy. And in the Second World War, while the Axis powers executed heavy air raids against Malta, which caused great casualties especially in Valletta, the islanders developed their heroic resistance, leading to victory in the Mediterranean Theatre.

Besides, the post-war era highlighted Valletta's unique characteristics more and more. Worldwide development of the Cold War and decolonisation inevitably affected Malta. These circumstances made Valletta the arena of not only tough negotiations over conflicting issues but also of peace activities, which in turn resulted in the end of the Cold War. Thus, it would be meaningful to survey the course of history of Valletta in the modern world, especially from perspective of war and peace. This paper, relying on the broader preceding works on modern history referring to Valletta and Malta,² attempts to shed new light on this historic city at the centre of the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, since the central area of the city is at just 0.61 square kilometres and the Functional Urban Area covers the whole island, this paper will deal with Valletta and Malta interchangeably within the context.

1. Valletta and the Mediterranean in the Modern Age

Throughout European history, the Mediterranean has been an arena of human activities, including many wars and conflicts. Located in the centre of this Great Sea,³ the island of Malta has also shared these historical events. As the later capital of Malta, *la Citta Valletta* was named after Jean de Valette, the Grand Master of the Order of Malta, who succeeded in defending the island against the invasion by Ottoman Empire during the Great Siege in 1565.⁴ The Order of Malta also sent their ships to the Battle of Lepanto in 1571 and continued to reign the island until the end of the 18th century.

In July 1798, the French headed by Napoleon Bonaparte landed Malta and occupied the island until 1800, but they were soon ousted by the revolutionaries supported by Britain. Then Malta was incorporated into the British Empire and became the Crown Colony in 1813, which determined the course of events surrounding the island in the subsequent centuries.⁵

² See such as Peter Elliot, *The Cross and the Ensign: A Naval History of Malta 1798-1979* (London: Granada Publishing, 1982); Robert Holland, *Blue-Water Empire: The British in the Mediterranean since 1800* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

³ David Abulafia, *The Great Sea: A Human History of the Mediterranean* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).

⁴ Definitely, a masterpiece that discusses the theme from the broader perspective would be Fernand Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, 2^e éd. (Paris: Armand Colin, 1966).

⁵ Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, esp. chaps. 1-2.

In the 19th century, the British Empire reached its climax known as *Pax Britannica* and enjoyed its naval hegemony.⁶ Especially, the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the establishment of the Empire Route to India, largest and most important colony, gave the Mediterranean an even greater strategic importance. Besides, the role of the Royal Navy in supporting imperial interests in the region connected bases laying the foundation for Britain's military interests.⁷

It was in this context that Malta obtained the decisive position in the Mediterranean. The naval arsenal on Malta symbolised the British military presence in the region. Throughout the British colonial rule, the Grand Harbour functioned as a strategic point for the Royal Navy and as the home port of the Mediterranean Fleet.⁸ The fact that the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet was a particularly prestigious post in the Royal Navy suggested the overwhelming importance of Malta above all.⁹

At that time, Britain was also a central actor in the European international relations.¹⁰ In the Mediterranean, the historic rivalry unfolded between Britain and its long-time opponent, France. Political and military tensions with Russia also arose frequently within the context of the Eastern Question concerning the Ottoman Empire. In addition, especially from the latter half of the 19th century, the growth of emerging powers such as Germany and Italy could not be overlooked. Even though its national power gradually declined, Britain continued to view the Mediterranean as a cornerstone of its imperial presence. Thus, the city of Valletta and the island of Malta remained the core of the British interests in the region, which would last the era of world wars in the following century.

⁶ As a classic work on the British naval hegemony, Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Penguin, 2017). See also Jeremy Black, *The British Seaborne Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

⁷ Paul Caruana-Galizia, "Strategic colonies and economic development: real wages in Cyprus, Gibraltar, and Malta, 1836-1913," *The Economic History Review*, vol. 68, no. 4 (2015), pp. 1250-1276.

⁸ Carmel Vassallo, "Servants of Empire: The Maltese in the Royal Navy," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, vol.16, no. 1-2 (2006), pp. 273-289.

⁹ Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, p. 334.

¹⁰ In respect to European international affairs and British diplomacy in the 19th century, see A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch (eds.), *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy 1783-1919*, Three Volumes (New York: Macmillan, 1923).

2. Valletta and Two World Wars

(1) The First World War

During the First World War, the Mediterranean deservedly became one of the most crucial foci in the European naval warfare. As a base of Anglo-French allies in the region, Valletta and the Grand Harbour acquired particular importance.¹¹ At the same time, off the coast of Malta frequently broke out the naval battles and the large number of wounded so which made the island known as “the Nurse of the Mediterranean,” due to the large number of wounded soldiers who were accommodated in Malta.¹² Within the context, the Imperial Japanese Navy also took part in the Mediterranean theatre of operations. The basis of Japanese entry into the theatre was the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, originally signed in 1902. After the Russo-Japanese War, the focus of the renewed treaty shifted towards Germany, and the outbreak of the Great War had a great influence on the alliance.¹³ Britain repeatedly requested that Japan should send its naval units to counter the threat of Central Powers in the Mediterranean. Japan finally decided to comply the British request in February 1917, and the newly created *Dai-ni Tokumu Kantai* (2nd Special Squadron) departed to the Mediterranean on 18 February.¹⁴

The Squadron arrived at Malta on 16 April, when the Central Powers practiced their unrestricted submarine warfare most aggressively. Thus, based on Malta, the squadron commanded by Admiral Satō Kōzō was charged with the important and severe task of escorting Allied shipping in the theatre.¹⁵ Ships belonging to the unit carried out their mission very well, accompanying nearly 800 Allied ships and transporting 70,000 troops. One of the highlights of their operations was the rescue of the passengers of British transport SS *Transylvania*, torpedoed off the Gulf of Genoa, saving almost 3,000 people.¹⁶

¹¹ Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, pp. 147-148.

¹² “Malta earns the title ‘nurse of the Mediterranean’,” *Times of Malta*, 16 November 2014.

¹³ On Anglo-Japanese military cooperation including the Mediterranean during the First World War, see Timothy D. Saxon, “Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation 1914-1918,” *Naval War College Review*, vol. 53, no. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 62-92.

¹⁴ Yoichi Hirama, “Rising Sun in the Mediterranean: The Second Special Squadron, 1917-1918,” *Il Mediterraneo quale Elemento del Potere Marittimo* (Roma: Ufficio Storico della Marina Militare, 1998), pp. 43-45.

¹⁵ “Chichū-kai, Indo-yō, Taisei-yō ni okeru Jōkyō, Taishō 6 nen (3) [Situation in the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean (3), 1917],” Kaigun Gunrei-bu/Dai 2 Tokumu Kantai Shirei-kan [Naval General Staff Office/Commander, 2nd Special Squadron], 1 February 1917 to 22 May 1917, in *Kōbun Bikō* [Notes of the Official Documents], Kaigun-shō [Ministry of the Navy], Kaigunshō-Nichidoku-T3-284, National Institute for Defense Studies [NIDS], available at Japan Center for Asian Historical Records [JACAR], Ref. C10080598300.

¹⁶ Hirama, “Rising Sun in the Mediterranean,” p. 46; Saxon, “Anglo-Japanese Naval Cooperation 1914-1918,” p. 80.

The British War Cabinet concluded that “the escort of two Japanese torpedo-boat destroyers” was “handled with great skill and gallantry,” to succeed in picking up the majority of survivors.¹⁷ On 11 June 1917, one of the unit, destroyer *Sakaki*, was torpedoed and badly damaged by Austro-Hungarian submarine off the coast of Crete, resulting in 59 deaths and 15 injuries.¹⁸ For all these heavy casualties, the 2nd Special Squadron accomplished their mission until July 1919. This achievement led to the improvement of the Japanese reputation, which also influenced Japan’s position in the international relations after the war.

Over 100 years later, the memory of the Japanese Imperial Navy which played its active role in the Mediterranean during the Great War remains in Malta. The Japanese sailors who died in the Mediterranean — most of the entombed were killed in the attack on *Sakaki* — lay buried at the Kalkara Naval Cemetery, overlooking the Grand Harbour, and there can be found the cenotaph of them. Therefore, the historical tie between the Mediterranean and the Far East, however restrictive, lies in the experience of Imperial Japanese Navy during the Great War.¹⁹

(2) From the Interbellum to the Second World War

After the First World War, Britain still managed to retain its power to deal with both Europe and the empire, although its politico-military capacity declined visibly. Since the imperial defence had vital significance for the defence of Britain itself, especially in the 1920s, successive British governments pursued active diplomacy toward the European continent and sought effective commitment.²⁰ Despite these measures, the European international order was seriously shaken in the 1930s by the rise of Nazi Germany. Besides, inter-state disputes over colonies also intensified, forcing

¹⁷ WC 133, Minutes of a Meeting of the War Cabinet, 7 May 1917, CAB 23/2, The National Archives of the United Kingdom, Kew, London [TNA].

¹⁸ “Taishō 6 nen 6 gatsu 11 nichi Dai 11 Kuchiku-tai Dai 1 Shōtai (*Matsu, Sakaki*) Sentō Shōhō [11th Destroyer Flotilla, 1st Platoon (*Matsu, Sakaki*), Detailed Battle Report, June 11, 1917],” Dai 2 Tokumu Kantai Shirei-bu [Headquarter, 2nd Special Squadron], 27 June 1917, in *Kōbun Bikō*, Kaigun-shō, Kaigunshō-Nichidoku-T3-34, NIDS, available at JACAR, Ref. C10080080400.

¹⁹ “Malta and the Imperial Japanese Navy’s Second Special Squadron in WWI,” *Times of Malta*, 21 May 2017. In addition, the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Malta and offered a wreath at a memorial monument in the cemetery in May 2017. “Visit to Malta,” May 27, 2017, Prime Minister’s Office of Japan. <https://japan.kantei.go.jp/97_abe/actions/201705/27/article2.html> [accessed 13 December 2023]

²⁰ John W. Young, *Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century* (London: Arnold, 1997), chap. 4; David Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the 20th Century*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 2000), chap. 5; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System 1830-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), chap. 10.

Britain to take difficult decisions. In the Mediterranean, the expansionist policies of Fascist Italy were directed not only at North Africa but also at Britain's strategic positions, namely Malta.²¹ Furthermore, Germany dictated by Adolf Hitler, whose ambitions spanned globally, would ultimately clash with Britain. Therefore, during the Second World War, the Mediterranean inevitably became critical for the British imperial defence as a key area on the Empire Route.

In the fierce battles that followed, Britain confronted the Axis powers in the Mediterranean Theatre, which was essential to connect the European and North African fronts. Situated in the centre of the Mediterranean, the presence of Malta was extremely vital by both the Allied and Axis powers, partly because it was in a strategic place for maritime transport. Malta was in a prime location for the Allies to interrupt the Axis powers' supplies to North Africa; the latter sought to take control of Malta to deter from the former's intention. Under these circumstances, the island became the focal point of the Mediterranean Theatre.²²

Wary of the war, the Royal Navy had already moved the base of the Mediterranean Fleet from Malta to Alexandria of Egypt in the latter half of the 1930s. But after the war had broken out, as the German Luftwaffe was sent to Sicily, the city of Valletta and its main port, the Grand Harbour, became targets of heavy air raids. The local forces fought back bravely, and in London, the Prime Minister Winston Churchill stressed the need to maintain a strong air defence posture.²³ Unique to Malta, the locals cooperated resolutely with the British forces: some kind of solidarity was formed, sharing a sense of crisis that transcended the ruler-ruled relationships of the colonial empire. This strong unity between the two sides further highlighted the standing of Malta during the war.²⁴

²¹ Douglas Austin, *Malta and British Strategic Policy 1925-43* (London: Frank Cass, 2004); Henry Frenedo, *Europe and Empire: Culture, Politics and Identity in Malta and the Mediterranean (1912-1946)* (Santa Venera: Midsea Books, 2012). See also Alexis Rappas, "The Transnational Formation of Imperial Rule on the Margins of Europe: British Cyprus and the Italian Dodecanese in the Interwar Period," *European History Quarterly*, vol. 45, no. 3 (July 2015), pp. 467-505. On the origin of the Second World War in the Mediterranean, Reynolds M. Salerno, *Vital Crossroads: Mediterranean Origins of the Second World War, 1935-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

²² Much of the following section is based on the author's preceding article. Nobuyoshi Ito, "British Imperial Defence in the Mediterranean during the Second World War: Focusing on the Battle of Crete and the Siege of Malta," *Security & Strategy*, vol. 3 (January 2023), esp. pp. 136-140.

²³ WM (41) 8th Conclusions, 20 January 1941, CAB 65/17, TNA.

²⁴ The Catholic Church played a large role in mobilising people and many residents reportedly participated in the dangerous work of repairing the airfield runway. Holland, *Blue-Water*

Nevertheless, as the Siege of Malta by the Axis powers intensified, the island faced increasingly serious fuel and supply shortages which hampered aircraft reinforcements.²⁵ After the fall of Crete in June 1941,²⁶ air raids on Malta as the next target became much fiercer. Coinciding with the intensification of the offensive on the North African front, the battle on Malta entered a critical phase that would determine the course of the Mediterranean Theatre. In 1942, the Axis strengthened their offensive campaign, creating an even more dire situation for Malta. Land forces and submarines based on Malta were no longer able to withstand the intense bombardment by the Axis and were forced to retreat to Gibraltar and other places.²⁷ The Allied powers had a growing concern regarding the defence capabilities of Malta, and the British War Cabinet struggled to address them.²⁸

Whether Malta could be adequately resupplied and readied for the offensive was regarded as affecting no less the island's survival than Britain's position in the Mediterranean Theatre and, by extension, the fate of the Allies.²⁹ On 15 April 1942, King George VI of Britain conferred the Award of the George Cross on people of Malta in recognition of their sustained struggle and endurance. As the most pressing issue, several supply operations to Malta were carried out, but they failed miserably in June 1942. This meant that the success or failure of the subsequent operation was vital to the fate of the island. The Royal Navy planned the largest transport operation from Gibraltar to Malta, named Operation Pedestal, in July 1942.³⁰ At that time, the most urgent commodity apart from food was oil, but the Royal Navy was unable to furnish tankers large enough to meet Malta's needs and fast enough

Empire, pp. 217-218, 253-254; Anastasia Yiangou, "The Political Impact of World War II on Cyprus and Malta," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2014), pp. 106-107.

²⁵ From Foreign Office [FO] to Cairo, Telegram No. 722, 14 March 1941, CAB 65/22, TNA.

²⁶ As for the battle of Crete, Stephen Prince, "Air power and evacuations: Crete 1941," in Ian Speller (ed.), *The Royal Navy and Maritime Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), pp. 67-87; David Stubbs, "Reappraising the Royal Air Force Contribution to the Defense of Crete, 1941," *The Journal of Military History*, vol. 84, no. 2 (April 2020), pp. 459-486. Also see Heinz A. Richter, *Operation Merkur: Die Eroberung der Insel Kreta im Mai 1941* (Ruhpolding: Verlag Franz Phillip Rutzen, 2011).

²⁷ I.S.O. Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East, Volume III (September 1941 to September 1942): British Fortunes reach their Lowest Ebb* (London: HMSO, 1960), chap. 7.

²⁸ Minute from Eden (Foreign Secretary) to Attlee (Lord Privy Seal), 13 January 1942, B/651, FO 954/14, TNA.

²⁹ Confidential Annex, WM (42) 24th Conclusions, Minute 1, 25 February 1942, CAB 65/29, TNA. See also Greg Kennedy, "Sea denial, interdiction and diplomacy: The Royal Navy and the role of Malta, 1939-1943," in Ian Speller (ed.), *The Royal Navy and Maritime Power in the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), pp. 58-59.

³⁰ For more information on the operation, Milan Vego, "Major Convoy Operation to Malta, 10-15 August 1942 (Operation PEDESTAL)," *Naval War College Review*, vol. 63, no. 1 (Winter 2010), pp. 107-153.

to sail with the convoy. It was therefore decided that the United States would provide the tanker SS *Ohio* owned by Texaco. Although an intense Axis attack was fully expected, the Chiefs of Staff acknowledged the exceptional urgency of the operation and Churchill asked the War Cabinet members to firmly support whatever decision was taken.³¹

A convoy of transport ships escorted by the support fleet of the Royal Navy, under heavy Axis attacks, sought to enter a port on Malta from 11 to 13 August.³² Though the convoy suffered significant losses, four transport ships succeeded in delivering valuable supplies to Malta and the tanker *Ohio* also managed to arrive in the Grand Harbour in the morning of 15 August. Crowds that gathered in the harbour waved and cheered, and a brass band played the patriotic song “Rule, Britannia” to welcome the ship. For the Maltese people, the arrival of *Ohio* was truly the “Miracle of Santa Maria”.³³

The successful operation provided a foothold for turning the situation around in the Mediterranean Theatre. The report submitted shortly after the completion of the operation emphasised that many lives were lost in the operation but the memory of their conduct “will remain an inspiration to all who were privileged to sail with them”.³⁴ In this way, the Operation Pedestal was remembered as a symbolic event in the Mediterranean Theatre and history of Malta during the war.

3. Valletta in the Post-war Era

(1) Under the Shadow of the Cold War

The post-war world soon witnessed a new significant antagonism of the Cold War, mainly between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, especially in the early stage, the British imperial interests also played a considerable role. Although its politico-military capability and presence were seriously decreased due to the two world wars, Britain still retained its dependent territories, colonies, and sphere of influence around the world. Particularly, the Eastern Mediterranean was one of the focal points: the Truman Doctrine of 1947, which led to the entry of Greece and Turkey into

³¹ Minutes of COS (42) 223rd Meeting, 31 July 1942, CAB 79/22, TNA; Confidential Annex, WM (48) 101st Conclusions, Minute 1, 1 August 1942, CAB 65/31, TNA.

³² Regarding the overview of the operation and the evolution of the battles, see WP (42) 360 (Also COS (42) 373), Weekly Résumé (No. 154) of the Naval, Military and Air Situation, 13 August 1942, CAB 66/27, TNA.

³³ Vego, “Major Convoy Operation to Malta, 10-15 August 1942 (Operation PEDESTAL),” pp. 137-142; Holland, *Blue-Water Empire*, pp. 259-260.

³⁴ Report on Operation “Pedestal” by Vice-Admiral E.N. Syfret, August 25, 1942, *The London Gazette*, Supplement, No. 38377, 10 August 1948, p. 4505.

the Western alliance in 1952 and set out the Cold War confrontation in the region, originated from the British request, that the US should assume the burden to defend Greece against the Soviet aggression.³⁵

The stability of the Mediterranean was also vital to the newly established North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the allies sought to control the security in the region, and Britain recognised this issue as a matter of national prestige. When NATO discussed the creation of a naval force in charge of the Mediterranean, the Royal Navy found its new role for the Mediterranean Fleet. In December 1952, an agreement was reached to establish the NATO Mediterranean Command, commanded by the officer of the Royal Navy, who was also the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet. The headquarter of the Command was based on Malta, and thus the British naval and air bases in the Mediterranean were made available to the allies.³⁶ This meant that Valletta and the Grand Harbour had significant and symbolic importance for the geographic and functional consideration, and the facility in the island also gained the new role for the Western alliance within the context of the Cold War. Malta continued to be the focus on the strategic competition in the southern region of the European continent, but the expectation that the island would keep its stability under the Western superiority did not last long – another factor in the post-war international order would soon influence Valletta.

(2) The Impact of Decolonisation

Another major trend of the latter half of the 20th century was the end of the European colonial empires. In many cases, the process of decolonisation followed the intense anti-colonial movements, insurgencies, and independence wars. At first, European states regarded these phenomena as the challenge against their interests and often adopted the measures of counterinsurgency. The rise of worldwide anti-colonialism, however, deprived them of the legitimacy and morality to maintain their colonies, finally resulting in the eventual decolonisation in Asia and Africa.

³⁵ Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 121-127, 142-146; Svetozar Rajak, "The Cold War in the Balkans, 1945-1956," in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Volume I: Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 203-208.

³⁶ However, the US Navy's Sixth Fleet was outside the jurisdiction of the headquarter. North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), MC 0038/3, Report by the Standing Group to the North Atlantic Military Committee, "Command Organization for the Mediterranean," 5 December 1952. Also see Dionysios Chourchoulis, "High Hopes, Bold Aims, Limited Results: Britain and the Establishment of the NATO Mediterranean Command, 1950-1953," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 20, no. 3 (2009), pp. 434-452.

Naturally, as the largest colonial empire in the modern world, Britain was not extraneous to the stream of decolonisation.³⁷ Within this context, the city of Valletta and the island of Malta also experienced the cataclysmic post-colonial period.³⁸ Although the British and Maltese people survived the siege during the Second World War, the subsequent rush towards decolonisation reached the island as well. The confusion surrounding reconstruction of the socio-political order led to the declaration of a state of emergency, deprivation of autonomy, and a reversal to direct rule.³⁹ Under these circumstances, in the 1950s the local authority tried to achieve Malta's "integration" with Britain, but this initiative mercilessly failed.⁴⁰ After that, the momentum to independence rose more and more in the Maltese people, and Britain was forced to deal with difficulties.⁴¹

Malta finally gained independence in 1964, but Britain continued to hold its military presence on the island such as the dockyard at the Grand Harbour and concluded mutual defence and economic agreements, which would persistently enable the British and NATO forces to use facilities on Malta.⁴² On the other hand, since Britain also sought to reduce its military presence stationed in Malta due to the financial consideration, the newly independent Maltese government fiercely resisted this movement. The conflict over the British military commitment to Malta, at that stage, resulted in the former's successive concessions which prioritised not deteriorating

³⁷ The author once argued the issue in relation to decolonisation. Nobuyoshi Ito, "Beyond the "master-narrative" of decolonisation: Reconsidering the end of empires in the 20th century," *ACTA 2021, Independence Wars since the XVIII Century: XLVI International Congress of Military History (29 August-3 September 2021, Athens), Volume 2* (Athens: Hellenic National Defense General Staff, Hellenic Commission of Military History, 2022), pp. 319-335.

³⁸ There are only a few works that deal with Malta's road to independence, such classic contributions as Dennis Austin, *Malta and the End of Empire* (London: Frank Cass, 1971); Victor Mallia-Milanes (ed.), *The British Colonial Experience 1800-1964: The Impact on Maltese Society* (Msida: Mireva Publications, 1988).

³⁹ *British Documents on the End of Empire [BDEE], Series B, Volume 11: Malta*, pp. xxxv-xxxix.

⁴⁰ Simon C. Smith, "Integration and Disintegration: The Attempted Incorporation of Malta into the United Kingdom in the 1950s," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 35, no. 1 (March 2007), pp. 49-71.

⁴¹ On the issues concerning Malta's independence and its aftermath, see Simon C. Smith, "Conflict and Co-operation: Dom Mintoff, Giorgio Borg Olivier and the End of Empire in Malta," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 17, no. 1 (2007), pp. 115-134; Simon C. Smith, "Dependence and Independence: Malta and the End of Empire," *Journal of Maltese History*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2008), pp. 33-47.

⁴² Parliamentary Command Paper, Cmnd. 3110, *Agreement on Mutual Defence and Assistance between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Malta*, 21 September 1964; Cmnd. 3111, *Agreement on Financial Assistance between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Malta*, 21 September 1964.

relations with the latter.⁴³ In the 1960s, however, the decline of Britain's global politico-military influence proved to be inevitable. Gradual reduction of forces in the Mediterranean was also irreversible within the British government.⁴⁴ As a symbolic event, permanent station of the Royal Navy on Malta finally departed from the region: the Mediterranean Fleet was to be dismantled.⁴⁵ Despite the strong opposition by the Maltese side,⁴⁶ the process was carried out steadily. On 5 June 1967, Admiral Sir John Hamilton hauled down his naval ensign as the last Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet. The fleet, which had decorated history in the Royal Navy for centuries, ended its role here.⁴⁷ The Admiralty House, the residence of successive Commander-in-Chiefs, located in Valletta, would later be remodeled into the National Museum of Fine Arts.⁴⁸ The main force of the Royal Navy quietly disappeared from the Mediterranean which had supported the British naval mastery. The concurrent British decision to withdraw from east of Suez in January 1968 had a further impact on the deployment of British forces on Malta. The island then began to shed the remnants of British colonial rule in the 1970s. For Britain, the early abandonment of military facilities was not envisioned, and thus the Conservative government headed by Edward Heath offered Malta a new financial aid of £5 million annually.⁴⁹ However, as a result of the general election in June 1971, the Maltese Labour Party won by one seat, and its leader Dom Mintoff was inaugurated as the new Prime Minister. Mintoff had experienced the disastrous failure of "integration" in 1950s, making him proselytised to the formidable anti-British politician. He insisted on the eliminating NATO facilities and increasing the British financial aid, which was just "compensation" for military installations on the island.⁵⁰

⁴³ For example, *BDEE, Series B, Volume 11*, nos. 239, 240. See also Smith, "Dependence and Independence," p. 45.

⁴⁴ Letter from Hohler (Assistant Under-Secretary, FO) to Murray (Athens), "Britain and the Eastern Mediterranean," 23 February 1967, FCO 9/5, TNA.

⁴⁵ On this, see also Nobuyoshi Ito, "Britain and the Dissolution of the Mediterranean Fleet: Convergence of the End of Empire and Alliance Management," *Briefing Memo*, NIDS, January 2021.

⁴⁶ DP 23/67 (Final), Chiefs of Staff Committee Meeting, "Command Structure in the Mediterranean Area," 9 May 1967, DEFE 25/243, TNA.

⁴⁷ Afterwards, the position of Commander-in-Chief was changed to a two-star ranking in which the Flag Officer Malta served as Commander of NATO's Southeast Mediterranean Command, under the Allied Forces Southern Europe based in Naples, with the position subordinate to a commander of the US Navy.

⁴⁸ Elliot, *The Cross and the Ensign*, pp. 224-225.

⁴⁹ Edward Heath, *The Course of My Life: My Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1998), p. 498.

⁵⁰ For Mintoff, what Britain had paid to Malta was nothing more than "charity." DOP (71) 35, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, "Malta," 23 June 1971, CAB 148/116, TNA.

Suddenly, Valletta became the scene of tough negotiation between Britain and Malta. Initial talks ended up exposing the conflict between the two governments. The British defence secretary, 6th Baron Carrington, reported as follows:

I pointed out that it was illogical to ask for more money and at the same time to say that our facilities should be reduced or restricted. At this Mintoff became angry, saying that the amount was peanuts compared with our expenditure on such things as nuclear weapons.⁵¹

Likewise, the British High Commissioner in Valletta despatched a telegram saying “the first 40 minutes consisted only of sparring” at the bilateral talk in the next morning.⁵² Britain had to deal with Mintoff’s repeated unreasonable demands ever since so that it asked for moral and financial support from its NATO and Western allies. However, the response to the British requirement was generally negative.⁵³ Thus, without allied active assistance, Britain was forced to carry out a series of barren negotiation with Mintoff.

Heath government became annoyed at Mintoff’s incoherent and unpredictable arguments, and gradually began considering that the British military presence and facilities on Malta should be abandoned rather than submission to the unreasonable demands.⁵⁴ Raucous controversy continued over 9 months, and in March 1972, as a result of the belated US and NATO mediation,⁵⁵ the new Anglo-Maltese defence agreement was just barely concluded. The renewed agreement provided that Britain and NATO would pay total £20 million to Malta annually, and all military facilities and troops would be withdrawn from the island 7 years later.⁵⁶ It meant that the British imperial and post-colonial presence in Malta would be lost by 1979, which would inevitably and directly affect NATO’s strategy in the Mediterranean

⁵¹ Watson (Valletta) to Foreign and Commonwealth Office [FCO], Telno 498, 20 July 1971, PREM 15/521, TNA.

⁵² Watson to FCO, Telno 501, 20 July 1971, FCO 9/1426, TNA.

⁵³ For example, *Documents diplomatiques français 1971, tome II, 1^{er} juillet - 31 décembre*, n^o 38; *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1971, Band III: 1. Oktober bis 31. Dezember 1971*, Dok. 387.

⁵⁴ See such as CP (72) 4, Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, “Malta: Draft White Paper,” 10 January 1972, CAB 129/161, TNA; CM (72) 1st Conclusions, 11 January 1972, CAB 128/50, TNA.

⁵⁵ Note for the Record, “Malta: Defence Secretary’s Meeting,” 14 February 1972, FCO 9/1548, TNA; *Foreign Relations of the United States 1969-1976, Volume XLI: Western Europe; NATO, 1969-1972*, doc. 246.

⁵⁶ Cmnd. 4943, *Agreement between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Malta with respect to the Use of Military Facilities in Malta*, 26 March 1972. See also Smith, “Dependence and Independence,” p. 47.

due to the loss of military arsenal in the region. In this way, the remnants of the British Empire were to fade away from Valletta and the Grand Harbour at the end of the 1970s.

(3) Arena for Peace: Valletta from Détente to the Malta Summit

After the confounded conflict between Britain and Malta, the latter developed more independent and multi-layered diplomacy, mainly within the non-aligned strategy.⁵⁷ Mintoff tried to find a new way to become a neutral actor for Malta's survival as a nation-state. At the same period, in Europe had come an opportunity for rapprochement between the West and the East, namely European détente, simultaneously with the US-Soviet relations.⁵⁸ Under these circumstances, Mintoff advanced his peculiar style of diplomacy, which also largely disturbed the European international relations in the era of détente.

With regard to the multilateral diplomatic efforts on the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), Malta played a critical role as well.⁵⁹ As the question of security in the Mediterranean were raised since 1973, the Maltese delegation stucked to the full participation of Arab Mediterranean states, because their "security was closely dependent on the security of these countries." Coincidentally, there occurred a number of conflicts and confusing situations in the broader region ranging from North Africa to Near East, mainly due to the Yom Kippur War in October 1973, the claim of Valletta obtained a certain degree of persuasion.⁶⁰ Malta also asserted that some kind of solidarity among the former colonies existed. The Maltese ambassador then threatened that unless his claims were accepted, he would "block consensus on all the Helsinki recommendations," which meant one of the CSCE's basic principles might never be achieved. Eventually, the issue on the Mediterranean highlighted the negotiations toward the final accord of the CSCE by the ultimatum by Valletta.

While Malta finally agreed to the Helsinki recommendations, Mintoff again assumed his demands during the negotiations in Geneva from

⁵⁷ Paul Caruana Galizia, *The Economy of Modern Malta: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 251-253.

⁵⁸ As for the brief history of détente, especially from perspective of American Cold War strategy, see Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The Rise and Fall of Détente: American Foreign Policy and the Transformation of the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: Potomac Books, 2013).

⁵⁹ The following description on the CSCE negotiations mainly relies on Nicolas Badalassi, "Sea and Détente in Helsinki: The Mediterranean Stake of the CSCE, 1972-1975," in Elena Calandri, Daniele Caviglia and Antonio Varsori (eds.), *Détente in Cold War Europe: Politics and Diplomacy in the Mediterranean and the Middle East* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), esp. pp. 64-66.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

September 1973 to July 1975. On 11 September 1973, he indicated that Malta would withdraw from the military structure of NATO, which clarified his tendency to reduce Western presence in Malta and to approach the non-aligned world more and more. The Cyprus crisis in summer 1974 further enhanced the gravity of the Mediterranean security,⁶¹ which deeply related to confidence-building measures as one of the CSCE's main principles. For Valletta, a series of events proved that "the only ways to reinforce confidence were dissolution of the military bloc, disarmament, and independence of Europe from both superpowers" and measures should be complemented by a Euro-Arab organisation. This brought about the US and Soviet embarrassment, and both tried to let the European Community take the initiative in the issue of the Mediterranean. Accidentally, the Mediterranean became the region where the integrated Europe could "demonstrate their ability to ease tensions," which was the contingent result of the irregular actions by Valletta.

In the Helsinki Final Act concluded in August 1975, the Mediterranean was specially referred to as the independent section, known as the "Mediterranean Declaration."⁶² Still, Mintoff strongly asserted that the Mediterranean should be the frontline of détente, and he actively repeated his claim on the peace in the region. From February to March 1979, the CSCE's expert meeting on the Mediterranean, was held in Valletta within the follow-up process, and Malta played an influential role as a host nation. For other participants, the outcome in Valletta would be important for the continuity of the CSCE, especially relating to the ongoing meeting in Belgrade and to the future meeting in Madrid.⁶³ At the meeting of experts in Valletta, the Maltese delegation mentioned that "for centuries the Mediterranean region has been the scene of successive hostilities" fought by varying protagonists and asserted the importance of broader cooperation in the region.⁶⁴ Economic, social, and

⁶¹ On the 1974 Cyprus crisis, large numbers of works have been accumulated. For example, Jan Asmussen, *Cyprus at War: Diplomacy and Conflict during the 1974 Crisis* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008); Andreas Constandinos, *The Cyprus Crisis: Examining the Role of the British and American Governments during 1974* (Drakes Circus: University of Plymouth Press, 2012).

⁶² Conference on Security Co-operation in Europe [CSCE], "Questions relating to Security and Co-operation in the Mediterranean," *Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe Final Act* (Helsinki, 1 August 1975), pp. 36-37.

⁶³ Letter from Tait (Head of CSCE Unit, FCO) to Sands Smith (European Department, Ministry of Overseas Development), "CSCE: Valletta Meeting on Mediterranean Cooperation," 3 January 1979, FCO 28/3962, TNA.

⁶⁴ Background Paper, "Outline of Current Action on the Protection of the Mediterranean Environment and the Need for Collaborative European Involvement," Annex to Proposal by the Delegation of Malta, "Co-operation in the Protection of the Mediterranean Environment," CSCE Meeting of Experts on the Mediterranean, Valletta, 13 February 1979, FCO 28/3964, TNA.

cultural dimensions were primarily concluded, and the meeting as a whole went safely and sound. Confidence-building measures of the CSCE also favourably functioned, as far as the above issues concerned.⁶⁵

After that, Belgrade follow-up meeting from 1977 to 1979 would bear little fruits due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. On the other hand, successive Madrid follow-up meeting in the early 1980s, faced with the Polish crisis and many difficulties, would manage to succeed in keeping the channels between the East and the West.⁶⁶ Within these contexts, the expert meeting in Valletta was placed in the peculiar precedent of the CSCE process after Helsinki.

Then, in the end of the 1980s, Malta was to symbolise another epoch in the 20th century. The US-Soviet summit of 1989 was held in Malta,⁶⁷ and leaders of two superpowers, the US President George H.W. Bush and the Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, declared the end of the Cold War lasted over 40 years on the island.⁶⁸ Malta summit constituted the memorial moment of the contemporary world, and thus Malta inscribed its name in history of war and peace.

Conclusion

This paper has briefly overviewed modern history of Valletta, the island of Malta, as a Mediterranean city, mainly from perspective of politico-military affairs surrounding the city, the island, and the region. Valletta's unique position, both historic and geographic, has provided the city with plenty of experiences concerning the modern warfare and international relations.

In this paper, it has been expressed that Valletta has often been the centre of main epochs in the 20th century. The city happened to be present at the critical moments of war and peace, which might cover almost all topics on international history in the modern times. Due to its importance located at the centre of the Mediterranean, Valletta was inevitably regarded as a strategic target in both the Great War and the Second World War, and not least in the interwar power struggles. Furthermore, in the post-war era, the city

⁶⁵ Letter from Eldred (Floriana, Malta) to Tait, "CSCE Valletta Meeting," 18 April 1979, FCO 9/3967, TNA.

⁶⁶ CSCE, *Report of the CSCE Meeting of Experts on Economic, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation in the Mediterranean* (Valletta, 26 March 1979).

⁶⁷ The Main venue was Birżebbuġa, 13 kilometres from Valletta.

⁶⁸ "Remarks of the President and Soviet Chairman Gorbachev and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters in Malta," December 3, 1989, Public Papers, George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

<<https://bush41library.tamu.edu/archives/public-papers/1291>> [accessed 13 December 2023]

experienced the dynamic torrent of major topics that fully covered the globe. Progress of the Cold War doubtlessly affected Valletta's position as a strategic focal point in the Mediterranean, and at the same period, Malta's road to decolonisation and post-independence friction with Britain as its former suzerain state raised complicated issues, in which many stakeholders in Western Europe and the Atlantic alliance were involved. In the meantime, Valletta also conducted its unique foreign policy as a non-aligned state, leading to peace talks and finally providing the two superpowers with a place of the end of the Cold War.

To a greater or lesser extent, of course, every city shares some kind of similar experiences in modern history.⁶⁹ Even so, Valletta has distinctively shown a cataclysm of politico-military affairs and international relations in the 20th century.⁷⁰ The city has every dimension of humanity, like a "kaleidoscope," which certainly distinguishes its uniqueness. Thus, modern history of Valletta, a historic city on the Mediterranean island, teaches us polymorphous viewpoints of war and peace, which can enrich our understanding of the world.

⁶⁹ The comparison to such other islandic nation in the Mediterranean as Cyprus would be valuable. For instance, Yiangou, "The Political Impact of World War II on Cyprus and Malta," shares the comparative viewpoint. Furthermore, see also Robert Holland, "Cyprus and Malta: Two Colonial Experiences," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, vol. 23, no. 1 (2014), pp. 9-20.

⁷⁰ One can otherwise describe a course of the 20th century to be a "roller-coaster," as an eminent historian portrayed the European post-war history. Ian Kershaw, *Roller-Coaster: Europe, 1950-2017* (London: Allen Lane, 2018).

