

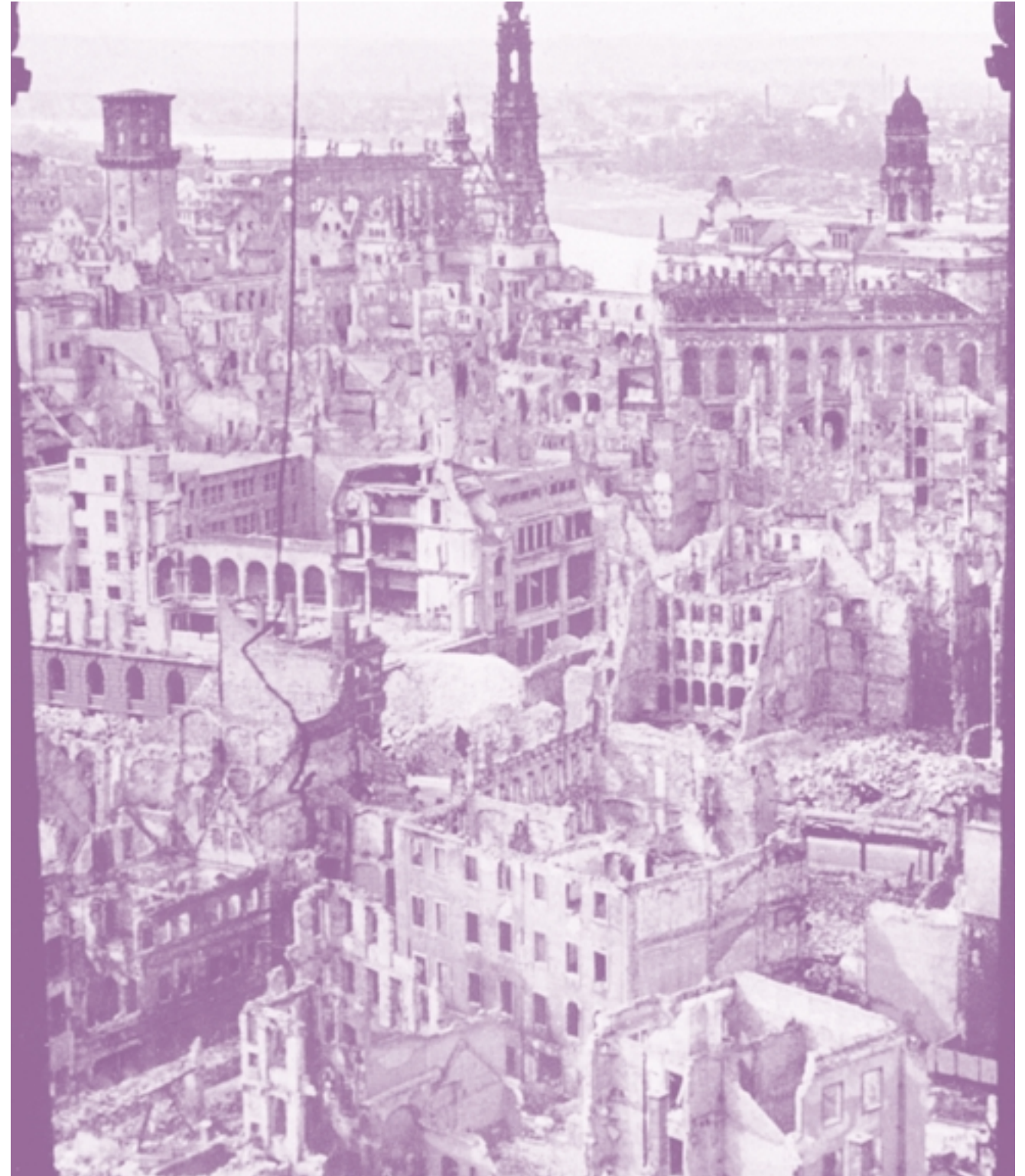
A view of Dresden's inner city after the fire storm

Dresden 1945 -

**Just
Another
Raid?**



Bomber Command of the Royal Air Force was active throughout the Second World War and, for a significant proportion of the time, was the only means by which we could carry our resistance into the heartland of the enemy and his conquered territories. Over one third of a million sorties were flown over the course of the war in Europe alone with some 9,000 aircraft lost and 50,000 allied personnel killed or reported as missing in action.¹ Targets for the heavy bomber force varied from Berlin, through the V1/V2 rocket sites at Peenemunde, to German Army positions opposing the Normandy landings. On numerous occasions, the area attacked consisted of little more than arable fields – particularly when decoys had been deployed or bombing accuracy was suspect. Some raids, such as the attacks on the dams, have entered the annals of history and legend; others have faded from the memories of all but the remaining survivors. Yet the combined Bomber Command/ USAAF Eighth Air Force raids on Dresden on 13-14 February 1945 have probably occasioned more impassioned debate than the rest put together. This debate has inevitably been fuelled by retrospective moralising, self-conscious justification of positions and an unhealthy dose of Cold War propaganda. The scope for rational discussion has been further reduced by the furore surrounding the author of the first monologue on the subject – Mr David Irving.² The fact that his book has admirably stood the test of time and is not, contrary to popular suggestion, an essay in Nazi apologia has been lost in the heat.³





In his memoirs, Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Harris points out that the attack on Dresden was 'at the time considered a military necessity by much more important people than himself'

Dresden has been represented as the epitome of all that was immoral, unethical and illegal about the allied strategic bombing campaign in World War II. Even in the immediate aftermath of the raids, the talk was increasingly of 'acts of terror and wanton destruction'.⁴ The casualty figures have been debated, revised and contested. And even those responsible for the planning and execution of strategic and operational policy have sought to distance themselves from the horror of what was, in reality, an eminently successful raid. In his memoirs, Marshal of the RAF Sir Arthur Harris points out that the attack on Dresden was 'at the time considered a military necessity by much more important people than himself'.⁵ This was a very muted response considering the many efforts to make him the scapegoat. Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby, who was Deputy Commander-in-Chief at Bomber Command and was therefore directly involved in the planning for the raid, provided the foreword to Irving's book. He wrote:

*'That the bombing of Dresden was a great tragedy none can deny. That it was a military necessity few, after reading this book, will believe. It was one of those terrible things that sometime happen in wartime, brought about by an unfortunate combination of circumstances. Those who approved it were neither wicked nor cruel, though it may well be that they were too remote from the harsh realities of war to understand fully the appalling destructive power of air bombardment in the spring of 1945.'*⁶

This paper will attempt to situate the combined raids on Dresden in the wider geo-political strategic framework prevailing in 1944-45. It will then look briefly at the raid itself and then examine the legal and ethical issues that have arisen, both from the raid in isolation and from the broader context of the strategic bombing campaign. Documentary sources have been used wherever possible. Oral evidence has been eschewed, partly because much of it is concerned with detail. With no disrespect for those involved at the time, or subsequently, there is also the risk that oral sources may alter their standpoint to suit more appropriately the moral or ethical views of the age in which they were asked to testify.

The Strategic Context and Bomber Command Policy

Notwithstanding the debate that has ensued over the years concerning the differences of opinion between Harris (as C-in-C Bomber Command) and Portal (Chief of the Air Staff), it is important to remember that the Strategic Bombing Policy was not the brainchild of one man and his staff. Rather it was an iterative process guided, from time to time, from the grand strategic level. The primacy of the strategic bomber had been a cornerstone of British and American air power thinking for much of the inter-war period. After Dunkirk, and for the next three years, it became the only feasible method by which Britain could strike back at Germany. Churchill promised in 1940 that there would be a 'continuous and relentless air offensive'. Technology, or the lack of it, ensured that the doctrinal imperative of attacking the morale of the people was adhered to due to the impracticality of more precise targeting. Improvements in navigation aids, and the increases in bomb loads, resulted in a gradual improvement in Bomber Command efficiency. The emphasis, however, was on the incremental nature of the change. Watersheds were few and far between.

A key opportunity for a major re-evaluation of policy came with the American entry into the conflict. Strategic bombing policy was discussed at the Casablanca Conference in 1943. But it was not the top item on the agenda – a key strategic area for discussion was confirmation of 'Germany first' and the ensuing argument over the desirability of an early land offensive in Northern Europe versus a Mediterranean policy.⁷ The resulting bombing directive read:

'The primary objective will be the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened'.



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Left to right: Lady Tedder, Squadron Officer Sarah Oliver (née Churchill), Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, Mrs Churchill and the Prime Minister.

Tedder (as Deputy to Eisenhower) advocated that priority continue to be given to transportation and communications targets

As Biddle has pointed out, this contained something for everyone and gave the commanders a deal of latitude,⁸ both in target sets and methodology.

Some unity of purpose was imposed on the scene in the lead-up to the Normandy landings with the attacks on the German transportation system. Once the land offensive was established, however, differences of opinion again surfaced over priorities. Tedder (as Deputy to Eisenhower) advocated that priority continue to be given to transportation and communications targets. Spaatz (Commander of the USAAF Eighth Air Force) favoured attacks on oil, while Harris continued to insist on the maintenance of area bombing.

In late 1944 and into early 1945, it was increasingly evident to military planners that the defeat of Germany was a matter only of time and/or resources. There was, however, no room for complacency. The Germans were far from beaten and showed no sign whatsoever of merely rolling over. The Ardennes offensive in the dying days of December 1944 badly rattled the Allies,⁹ not least because they had hoped to have won the war by Christmas of that year. Furthermore the threat of new terror weapons, and even the deployment of nuclear bombs, was a very real consideration at the time.¹⁰ The Russians had already lost huge numbers of men killed and the Allies were facing mounting casualty lists as they fought their way into the heartland. Every means was therefore sought to shorten the war.

The Allies and the Russians had accepted, as early as 1943, that the strategic bomber offensive would continue to play a key role in operations against Germany.¹¹ By the time of the Octagon Conference in September 1944, the British Chiefs of Staff considered that it might become 'desirable in the immediate future to apply the whole strategic bomber effort to the direct attack of German morale'.¹² They also agreed that attacks could usefully be undertaken in support of the Russian armies.

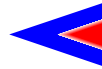
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These discussions culminated in the formulation of a plan entitled *Thunderclap*. The Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Charles Portal, presented this to his fellow Chiefs of Staff in August 1944.¹³ This envisaged a massive attack on Berlin at about the time that the German Army had been defeated in the field. The strategic bomber force would then deliver the coup de grace ending further resistance. By 1945, the Air Staff considered that *Thunderclap* might well appear to the Germans as an excellent example of close co-ordination with the Russians thereby greatly increasing the morale effect.¹⁴ In January 1945, the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) played down the possibility of German resistance crumbling, but highlighted the scope for confusion in the movement of reinforcements and refugees if, by implication, critical towns in the infrastructure were attacked.

The JIC report coincided with preparations for the Allied discussions in Malta that were the precursor to the Yalta conference with the Soviets. In the meantime, Churchill had asked the Secretary of State for Air, Sir Archibald Sinclair, what plans the Royal Air Force had for 'basting the Germans in their retreat from Breslau'. Portal's advice was that *Thunderclap* would be both costly and indecisive. He recommended that oil targets should have absolute priority along with Me 262 factories and submarine yards. Portal also echoed the sentiments of the JIC report recommending attacks on Berlin, Dresden, Leipzig, Chemnitz, 'or any other cities where a severe blitz will not only cause confusion in the evacuation from the East, but will also hamper the movement of troops from the West'.¹⁵ Sinclair replied to Churchill in a cautious tone on 26 January suggesting that oil targets should remain the priority with attacks on East German cities as a secondary option when the weather was too poor. The Prime Minister was obviously not satisfied that sufficient emphasis was being given to his wish that support be given to the Russian advance. His blistering response is worthy of quotation in full:

*'I did not ask you last night about plans for harrying the German retreat from Breslau. On the contrary, I asked whether Berlin and no doubt other large cities in East Germany, should not now be considered especially attractive targets. I am glad that this is 'under examination'. Pray report to me tomorrow what is going to be done.'*¹⁶

Without further ado, the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, Sir Norman Bottomley, wrote to C-in-C Bomber Command formally instructing him to carry out these attacks. Sinclair confirmed this to Churchill on 27 January; this minute was acknowledged and elicited no further comment. After a series of meetings involving Portal, Bottomley, Tedder and General Carl Spaatz it was agreed that oil would remain the number one priority for strategic bomber forces operating from the UK. This would be followed



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in priority by attacks on Berlin, Dresden and Leipzig; destruction of communications feeding the respective fronts; and finally the Me 262 plants.¹⁷ In London, the Vice-Chiefs confirmed these priorities with the addition of a more sustained effort against tank factories.

The plot now moves to Yalta where the debate over who said what to whom becomes complex. Cold War Soviet propaganda has emphasised that the Russian delegation in the Crimea had no responsibility for the bombing of Dresden.¹⁸ The Allies were unequivocal in their inclusion of Dresden in the target list, in particular with its importance on the Berlin – Leipzig – Dresden railway. The Russian Deputy Chief of Staff, General Antonov, submitted a formal memorandum to the Allies requesting, *inter alia*, that air attacks against communications should be carried out ‘in particular to paralyse the centres: Berlin and Leipzig’.¹⁹ The use of the wording ‘in particular’ makes it, at best, disingenuous for the Russians subsequently to suggest that they had not requested action at Dresden. Although the documentary evidence from the Russian perspective is limited, it is highly improbable that informal or non-minuted discussions had left them in any doubt as to Allied intentions. It is worthy of note at this stage that Harris’s role had been no more sinister than as a recipient of very high-level instructions.

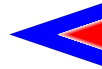
The Raids

Dresden had a pre-war population of about 600,000. By 1944, this had been swollen by refugees, prisoners of war and undoubtedly a number of folk seeking to exploit the city’s reputation as being exempt from air raids. For what was Germany’s 7th largest city to have escaped until 7 October 1944 had not gone unnoticed. The city and its environs hosted numerous targets of military and industrial significance.

These included an optical factory, a glass works, two plants producing radar components, an arsenal and finally a poison gas factory. Dresden had become a key nodal point in the German postal and telegraph system.²⁰ In addition, the infrastructure of Saxony was such that Dresden was indeed a key point in the communications of the region for refugees and the military. It was the hub connecting the two major rail lines between Berlin and Leipzig and accordingly was a troop concentration area. There was therefore no logical reason – other than its distance from

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Lincolnshire – for it to have been exempt from air attack. The USAAF Eighth Air Force first visited Dresden on 7 October 1944 with 30 effective sorties against the industrial areas. This attack was followed with a raid on the marshalling yards 16 January 1945 (133 effective sorties).²¹

By early 1945, German night fighter defences had become threadbare. The crews were tired and aviation spirit was at an absolute premium. Even though the area of the homeland and occupied territory that had to be defended had shrunk considerably under Allied and Soviet attack, the scale of air attacks was steadily increasing. The impact of the combined bomber offensive with its escorting long-range fighters had taken its toll on the Luftwaffe. Furthermore, the demand for heavy calibre artillery was huge; it has been estimated that even though over 20,000 artillery pieces were deployed for air defence purposes (and therefore not available for land warfare), there were still insufficient guns to protect everything.²² Dresden was comparatively low on the priority list, hence its earlier escape from air attack contributed to its eventual demise.



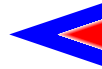
A reconnaissance photograph of Dresden-Friedrichstadt marshalling yards after the bombing raids.

Harris planned his attack on Dresden accordingly. He elected to use a double blow. The first wave would convince the Luftwaffe that it was the main raid and their fighters would be back on the ground refuelling when the second and larger raid would have unfettered access to the target. The gap between waves was to be three hours during which time the defences and rescue services would be swamped, and still in the open when the main raid arrived. Over 800 aircraft were launched on the two raids with devastating effect. These were followed the next



day by the USAAF with over 200 sorties against the marshalling yards. In terms of precision targeting, ‘marshalling yards’ have been used by the USAAF as a euphemism for area bombing. But by early 1945, accuracy had improved to the point whereby such targets could be defined with a reasonable expectation that they would be

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hit. The importance and scale of the yards made them a worthwhile target in their own right.²³ Furthermore, the designated MPIs (mean points of impact) for the 92nd Bomb Group show seven precise targets (five based on the rail network and two industrial) with the centre of the city as an eighth 'target of opportunity'.²⁴ For Bomber Command, contemporary maps held by the Air Historical Branch unequivocally show the aiming point as the centre of the Old Town.²⁵

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Considerable areas of the city were devastated by the ensuing firestorm with its attendant hurricane force winds. Most public buildings along with all of the Old Town were gutted. The arms plants were reduced to about 20% of their earlier capacity. Casualty figures have been extremely contentious,²⁶ but it is estimated that some 25,000 people were killed and at least the same injured. More emotive estimates are ten times these figures. The Eighth Air Force was to revisit Dresden on 2 March and 17 April. For Bomber Command it was a highly successful raid and the city dropped to 62nd on their target list and was not revisited.²⁷

The Immediate Aftermath

For those directly involved in the planning of Bomber Command operations, the immediate response to the raids was almost certainly one of relief that the casualty lists were relatively low, followed by satisfaction over its success. The whole issue was, however, compounded by a press release and interview given by Air Commodore C M Grierson at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force in Paris.²⁸ The ensuing Associated Press (AP) despatch stated that Allied Air Chiefs had made the 'long awaited decision to adopt deliberate terror bombing of German population centres as a ruthless expedient to hastening Hitler's doom'.²⁹ This was widely published in America and was broadcast in Paris. Public opinion in the US had hitherto been fed a diet that emphasised the precision of the American bombing campaign. Concern was only partly alleviated by Marshall's statement that it had been carried out at Russian request.

The despatch gained a brief exposure in London prior to heavy censorship. The matter was subsequently raised in parliament on 6 March 1945 by Mr Richard Stokes MP.³⁰ As he rose to speak in the House, Sinclair rose from his seat and pointedly left the Chamber. Stokes read out the AP despatch in full and then accused the government of hiding the true nature of the

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bombing campaign from the British public. Sinclair replied some hours later that the government was not wasting its time on purely terror tactics. Although criticism was relatively muted, the seeds had been sown for later outbursts of conscience.

At a more elevated level, the Prime Minister put pen to paper in what has been described variously as among the ‘least felicitous... of the long series of war-time minutes’³¹ and ‘an astonishing minute’.³² He wrote:

‘It seems to me that the moment has come when the question of bombing German cities simply for the sake of increasing terror, though under other pretexts, should be reviewed. Otherwise we shall come into control of an utterly ruined land.... The destruction of Dresden remains a serious query against the conduct of Allied bombing. I am of the opinion that military objectives must henceforth be strictly studied in our own interests rather than that of the enemy.’³³

Portal immediately instructed Bottomley to ask for Harris’s comments. His personal letter to the C-in-C is reproduced in full in Seward’s *‘Bomber’ Harris*.³⁴ Bottomley summarised the Prime Minister’s note, reiterated extant policy and invited the C-in-C to comment. Harris’s reply was prompt and predictably pungent. He pointed out in characteristically blunt terms that the suggestion that the Bomber offensive had been conducted for the ‘sake of increasing terror, though under other pretexts’ was an insult both to the Air Ministry policy and to the crews that had carried it out. Harris went on to highlight the misperceptions over Dresden that would be obvious to any psychiatrist – ‘it is connected to German bands and Dresden shepherdesses’. Rather, ‘Dresden was a mass of munition works, an intact government centre and a key transportation point to the East. It is now none of those things.’ He went on to discuss the policy underlying the Bomber offensive, concluding with the warning that such scruples as the Prime Minister was considering would lengthen the war and increase the task facing the army both in Germany and against Japan.

Portal strongly backed the stance taken by his C-in-C and Churchill withdrew his minute. The revised version made no mention of Dresden. The attack, however, was something of a turning point in that the genie was now out of the bottle and the role and purpose of the offensive was subject to rather more debate – on both sides of the Atlantic. In the UK, this increased as it became more obvious that the war was going to be won and that such destruction would require to be more rigorously justified. In America, the USAAF had to go to considerable lengths to disguise the extent to which area bombing had been undertaken. Webster and Frankland suggest that Dresden represented something of a turning point in terms of the morale of the German people. They point out the Gestapo had maintained ‘an artificial morale’ until word got out as to the scale of the destruction³⁵ in Dresden. They admit, however, that unwillingness to admit defeat remained widespread until the bitter end.

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Legal and Ethical Factors

At first sight, it must appear to be faintly ridiculous for legal and ethical issues to feature at all in what, at the time, was total war against the most obnoxious regime ever to challenge world peace. A quick glance, however, at the indexes of a wide range of books on international legal issues and ethics shows that Dresden features as almost as regularly as does debate on the wider strategic bombing campaign. As stated above, the AP Despatch effectively ensured that the genie was let out of the bottle at this point even though other raids (such as those on Hamburg) could have provided the turning point if it had been based on tangible criteria such as the use of firestorm tactics.

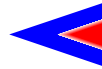
The presentational aspects of warfare as an extension of political activity have considerable importance for those involved, especially at the higher levels, in the prosecution of a campaign. Adherence to the tenets of international law was, and remains, an integral part of this process – notwithstanding the ephemeral nature of the discipline as it was understood prior to the formation of the United Nations. In the relatively calm pre-war (and hence pre-Warsaw, Rotterdam and Coventry) days of June 1938, Neville Chamberlain cited international law in his formal guidelines to Bomber Command. He stated unequivocally that:

- ‘1. It is against international law to bomb civilians as such and to make deliberate attacks on the civilian population.
2. Targets which are aimed at from the air must be legitimate military objectives and must be capable of identification.
3. Reasonable care must taken in attacking those military objectives so that by carelessness a civilian population in the neighbourhood is not bombed.’³⁶

Chamberlain went on to state in the House of Commons that not only was bombing civilian populations contrary to international law, but that in his opinion such action would not be a successful war winning tool. His ethical and legal approach was heavily influenced by the practicalities of the matter.



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These statements on the understood legal principles of the time were entirely consistent with those laid down by Trenchard in 1928 in what effectively became his 'last will and testament'. In a paper that started as a presentation to the Imperial Defence College and was then circulated to fellow Chiefs, he dealt at length with the need to target military objectives and avoiding 'indiscriminate bombing of a city for the sole purpose of terrorising the civilian population'.³⁷

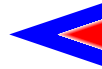
The air staff, a decade later, was more concerned with expediency than with the legalities. Slessor points out that our capabilities were such that decisive results could not then be achieved. Chamberlain's directives were translated, after much debate, into operations orders that could be issued to the Command; considerable doubt remained as to what could be reasonably described as military objectives. Slessor dismissed the Draft Hague Rules (see below) out of hand and concluded that, without doubt, 'sooner or later, the gloves would have to come off'.³⁸

Attempts to regulate the conduct of warfare had gathered pace towards the end of the 19th Century with, *inter alia*, the formal prohibition of the bombardment of undefended towns. By 1907, the possibility of bombardment from the air led to the inclusion of the clause 'by whatever means'.³⁹ The Hague Conference of 1925 had no hesitation in banning chemical and biological forms of warfare, but the regulation of air warfare was left in draft form. The 1923 Draft Hague Rules were never adopted in binding form, but at the time they were regarded (by lawyers if not by the Air Staff) as an authoritative attempt to clarify and

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formulate rules for the conduct of air warfare. They were based on the customary rules and principles underlying the laws of war on land and at sea. Article 22 precluded the use of 'Aerial bombardment for the purpose of terrorising the civilian population, of destroying or damaging private property not of military character'.⁴⁰ Notwithstanding the absence of formal ratification the Draft Rules did acquire a positive standing and were generally taken to be authoritative at the 1932-34 Geneva Disarmament Conference. Efforts to ban military aviation in toto were to no avail and binding resolutions were not forthcoming.⁴¹ As war spread through Europe, all of the rules, however imprecisely formed, were broken by all sides. What adherence there was, such as to the prohibition of chemical warfare, was more out of fear of the opposition's capability than for jurisprudential considerations.⁴² Geoffrey Robertson QC has suggested that Allied embarrassment over the RAF's use of area bombardment 'against Dresden and other German cities' resulted in this form of warfare not being specifically outlawed in the 1949 Geneva Conventions.⁴³ It could be argued, however, that this had more to do with post-war reliance on nuclear weapons, which would flatten cities, than concern over Dresden. It nevertheless shows the frequency with which the raid appears in such work.

By winter 1944, with the war far from won,⁴⁴ international legal considerations were barely worthy of note. Ethical issues, if considered at all, were dominated by the need to win the war as quickly as possible. As has been suggested, the AP Despatch



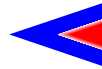
was probably the catalyst for the formation of post-war ethical stances. The advent of the Cold War greatly exacerbated the temperature of the rhetoric. The annual tolling of bells throughout East Germany to correspond to the duration of Bomber Command raid on Dresden is evidence of the propaganda effect sought and achieved – especially when it was mimicked in West Germany. The ethical and philosophical debate has continued ever since. To some extent, this is understandable and even beneficial. Clark has argued that just because a principle is ignored in practice, there is no reason to question its philosophical force.⁴⁵ Clark does not mention Dresden in this context – he talks more generally about strategic bombing before going on to the nuclear debate.

This more general approach to the whole ethical debate has much to commend it – raising the issues at stake to the big picture rather than taking a raid in isolation. Talking only of Dresden invites emotive debate as forewarned by Harris with his pithy comments on ‘Dresden shepherdesses’. Garrett in *Ethics and Airpower in World War II*, adopts a broader approach in advocating that alternatives to the area bombing campaign, as a means of attacking Germany and utilising assets, could have been explored at the military strategic level or above. Examples include transfer of Bomber Command assets to the anti-U boat campaign. Walzer in *Just and Unjust Wars*⁴⁶ places Dresden in its wider context, pointing out that not only should the raid be seen in the context of other attacks against cities such as Hamburg and Berlin, but also in the light of the numbers killed during the siege of Stalingrad.

The Allied bombing raids on Dresden have remained the subject of intense debate ever since the publication of the AP Despatch with its connotations of ‘terror bombing’. A possible cause of the interest may have been the remarkable results of the operation in comparison with other raids. Hamburg and Berlin were devastated, but had to be revisited many times. Nuremberg was attacked, but is remembered more for the scale of Bomber Command losses than the devastation wrought below.

It could be argued, however, that the extent of the ensuing debate alone has ensured that Dresden has been consigned to a category of its own. The result of this has been an inflationary spiral in which scholars have become increasingly wound up in the minutiae. This paper has sought to bring a sense of perspective to the whole, rather than to concentrate on detail. The decision to attack key communications cities as ‘targets of first importance’ was not only taken at the highest levels but tardy behaviour was criticised by the Prime Minister. The attacks on these cities were entirely consistent with Allied bombing policy of the time – on both sides of the Atlantic. Furthermore, the planning, execution and weapon selection were consistent with the standard procedures of the time. There is no question of the scheme having been hatched within Bomber Command, the Air Staff and certainly not by Harris in isolation.

Much has been made as to whether or not the Russians specifically requested attacks on Dresden. The controversy was largely fuelled by Cold War propaganda rather than the merits of the answer *per se*. Even if surviving documentary evidence does not specifically include Dresden by name, its strategic importance would guarantee its inclusion *de facto*. Unless Allied



and Soviet discussion had specifically excluded the city, its fate was sealed. Dresden was in any event a strategic target in its own right. Its industry as well as its communications links made Germany's seventh largest city vulnerable to attack.

In retrospect, Dresden may have appeared to those at political and military strategic levels to have been a turning point in their pragmatic, ethical or legal thinking about the prosecution of the war. At the time, it was more likely that it was just another event in the long process of bringing the war to a speedy conclusion. Admittedly it came at a time when thoughts were turning increasingly to the management of the post-war mess and the likely advent of the Cold War. That the destruction of a fine city should have become a propaganda tool does justice to neither the plight of the victims on the ground nor the bravery of the crews for whom Dresden was the 'target for tonight'.

To the operational commanders, the formation commanders and the crews in their charge, the raids on Dresden, and other East German cities, were part of the complex tapestry that represented their part in waging war against the most odious regime then known to mankind. To them, it was just another raid.⁴⁷

NOTES

- 1 Figures taken from Martin Middlebrook and Chris Everitt, *The Bomber Command War Diaries: An Operational Reference Book 1939–1945*, Midland Counties Publications, Leicester, 1996, page 11.
- 2 David Irving, *The Destruction of Dresden*, Kimber, 1963.
- 3 See for example, Roger Boyes, 'Dresden Strafing Myth is Shot Down', *The Times*, April 19 2000, page 18.
- 4 Alexander McKee, *The Devil's Tinderbox, Dresden 1945*, London, Souvenir Press, 1982, Chapter 11. An attempt to produce a book review of this volume was the catalyst for this paper. Much of it is highly emotional and air power students should not necessarily regard it as a 'standard historical work'.
- 5 MRAF Sir Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive*, London, Greenhill Books, page 242. First published by Collins in 1947.
- 6 Air Marshal Sir Robert Saundby, Foreword to David Irving, *The Destruction of Dresden*, Elmfield Press, Morley, 1974.
- 7 For a full discussion on the Casablanca Conference from a non air power perspective see David Fraser, *Alanbrooke*, Harper Collins, London, 1997, pages 283 – 298.
- 8 Tami Davis Biddle, 'British and American Strategic Bombing', in John Gooch (ed), *Air Power Theory and Practice*, Cass, London, 1995, page 120.
- 9 B H Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War*, Cassell, London, 1970, page 639 describes the £5 bet between Eisenhower and Montgomery that the war would be over before Christmas 1944. The American was destined to lose by a considerable margin.
- 10 Sir Maurice Dean, *The Royal Air Force and Two World Wars*, Cassell, London, 1979, page 287.
- 11 Confirmed in the Tehran Conference 28 November – 11 December 1943.
- 12 CCS.520/3 (Octagon)
- 13 Sir Charles Webster and Noble Frankland, *Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany 1939–1945*, Vol III, Part 5, HMSO, London, page 100.
- 14 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 101.
- 15 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 101.
- 16 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 103.
- 17 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 104 and David R Mets, *Master of Air Power; General Carl A Spaatz*, Presidio Press, California, 1988, page 274.
- 18 For an example of the lengths to which the post-war Allies had to go to counter such propaganda, see the declassified USAF study carried out by the Historical Division of the Research Studies Institute of the Air University, *Historical Analysis of the 14–15 February 1945 Bombings of Dresden*, 13 April 1953. It runs to 37 pages plus supporting documents.

- 19 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 105.
- 20 Irving, *ibid*, page 71.
- 21 Figures taken throughout from the Eighth Air Force Target Summary cited in Webster and Frankland, page 109.
- 22 Figures kindly supplied by Seb Cox, Head of the Air Historical Branch (RAF).
- 23 Biddle, *ibid*, page 125.
- 24 Mark A Clodfelter, 'Culmination Dresden: 1945', in *Aerospace Historian*, September 1979, page 135.
- 25 Dresden and Freital District Map No 82 A.1.9; Zone Map of Dresden Air Ministry No 484/29; Bomber Command Report N585. Also night photographs Nos 558 & H2S photo No 30.
- 26 See the discussion in Dudley Saward, '*Bomber*' Harris, Sphere Books, London, 1985, page 392. Irving initially estimated the death toll as being between 35,000 and 220,000. In a letter to *The Times* on 7 July 1966, he revised these figure downwards to 18,375.
- 27 Clodfelter, *ibid*, page 136.
- 28 Clodfelter, *ibid*, page 136.
- 29 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 113.
- 30 Stephen A Garrett, *Ethics and Airpower in World War II – The British Bombing of German Cities*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1993, page 118. It should be noted that this book does not command universal approval as a balanced survey on the ethical debate of the era.
- 31 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 112.
- 32 Saward, *ibid*, page 382.
- 33 Prime Minister to General Ismay (for Chiefs of Staff Committee) and the Chief of the Air Staff; 28 March 1945.
- 34 Saward, *ibid*, page 383.
- 35 Webster and Frankland, *ibid*, page 224.
- 36 Garrett, *ibid*, page 28.
- 37 The full text, along with the responses from CIGS and the First Sea Lord can be found in Webster and Frankland, IV, pages 71 – 83. See also H Montgomery Hyde, *British Air Policy between the Wars 1918 – 1939*, Heinemann, London, 1976, page 223.
- 38 MRAF Sir John Slessor, *The Central Blue; Recollections and Reflections*, Cassell, London, 1956, pages 213 – 214.
- 39 For a full discussion on this area see Frits Karshoven, *Constraints on the Waging of War*, International Committee of the Red Cross, Geneva, 1991, Chapter 2.
- 40 Reproduced in full in Adam Roberts and Richard Guelff, *Documents on the Laws of War*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989, page 121 et seq.
- 41 Roberts and Guelff, *ibid*, page 122 and Philip S Meilinger, 'Clipping the Bomber's Wings: The Geneva Disarmament Conference and the Royal Air Force, 1932 – 1934', *War in History*, 1999 – 6 – 3.
- 42 Geoffrey Robertson QC, *Crimes Against Humanity: The Struggle for Global Justice*, Penguin, London, 2000, page 174.
- 43 Robertson, *ibid*, page 185.
- 44 The casualty figures for February 1945 onwards – and the Russian statistics in particular – bear eloquent testimony to this bland statement.
- 45 Ian Clark, *Waging War: A Philosophical Introduction*, Clarendon, London, 1988, page 90.
- 46 Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, Harper Collins, 1977, page 160.
- 47 The title for this paper and its ending comments were based on the statement by MRAF Sir Michael Beetham made in a newspaper report (Alan Evans 'RAF Top Brass stay away from Dresden event', *The Times*, 13 Feb 95) marking the 50th Anniversary of the raid; he commented 'It may seem a bit cynical but Dresden was just another target. It was a devastating blow to German morale and contributed to Hitler's defeat'.



Eurofighter 2000
The black paint scheme is not an operational feature of the aircraft.

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