

Britons Petition Churchill to End Bombing at Night

Pamphlet Bears Names of Persons Prominent in Life of Nation

London, Dec. 17.—(CP)—A petition for the abolition of night bombing on the grounds that it "increasingly involves suffering to the civil population" was forwarded to Prime Minister Churchill over the signatures of a number of men and women prominent in public life.

The signatories urged the government to seek a convention for the mutual abolition of night bombing, expressing their belief that there is "a widespread desire" to end this "most indiscriminate form" of air attack.

Alternatively, the petition said, "they urge the government to announce that as from a stated date, they will discontinue night bombing, reserving the right to reconsider their decision if the German government thereafter continue the practice."

Three bishops, six members of parliament, Sir Hugh Robertson, Dame Sybil Thorndike, Prof. C. E. M. Joad, Vera Brittain and Laurence Housman were among those who signed the petition, circulated by "the committee for the abolition of night bombing."

Trace Development

Tracing the development of night bombing, a pamphlet published by the committee said that at the outbreak of war there appeared to be a tacit agreement between the British and German governments that bombing attacks should not be made on their respective territories.

For some months, it was noted, the British confined their attacks to warships and other shipping, while the first German bombing attack in which a civilian was killed was on the British fleet in Scapa Flow, March 16, 1940.

"Then on the night of May 9-10, 24 incendiary bombs and 20 high explosives were dropped in a dense wood near Canterbury without causing casualties," the pamphlet said.

"It is this incident that is claimed in Bomber Command to justify

the statement that Germany started the bombing. "We did not begin to bomb Germany until May 11, 1940, two days after the Germans had dropped bombs on the mainland of this country."

"The plane that dropped the bombs was not identified and it is apparent that it must have been one that was in distress. It was not the kind of incident that should be used to justify a major change of policy."

Britain at Disadvantage

From this beginning, the pamphlet described the increased night bombing by both sides and said that because of the distance from English bases to German targets and because of the greater concentration of industry in Great Britain than in Germany, this country is "at a serious disadvantage in this nocturnal duel."

Asking whether night bombing is effective as a military operation, the pamphlet said it must necessarily lack the precision of daylight raiding and "while it is obvious that by the wrecking of communications and the destruction of factories and stores the resources of a country are reduced and its mili-

tary effort impaired, it is doubtful if a military decision can be forced by this method."

Casualty lists were quoted to show the heavy toll of civilians taken in night raids, and the ill effects of evacuation schemes were cited.

"In a couple of years," it was stated, "these have done more to break up family life than any other influence that has operated in the past. Juvenile delinquency has reached record proportions."

Immense expenditure of public funds to provide shelters, the serious effect on national health because of nervous strain, restrictions on air and light and the crowding of persons together in public shelters, were cited among reasons why night bombing should be abolished.

The blackout, it was stated, resulted in the death of 8,000 people on the roads since the war began, caused enormous inconvenience and dislocation to national life and contributed to the depression of morale.

"Educational services have become so disorganized that they will take many years to recover, while the education of the present generation of school children cannot be made good," added the pamphlet.

Destruction of property and the housing problem which will face the country after the war were other reasons given in support of the petition.

It was stated, too, that the most severely bombed parts of Germany — Hamburg, the Ruhr and the Rhineland—are those in which Nazi influence is weakest, and "the embitterment of feeling caused by the bereavement and suffering due to night bombing is likely greatly to increase the difficulties of a permanent post-war settlement."

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