

Nuremberg Is Smashed By British, Canadians At Cost of 96 Planes

R.C.A.F. Loses 13 Ships as Great Armada Pours Death and Destruction on Germany

London, March 31.—(AP)—A great armada of R.A.F. and R.C.A.F. bombers numbering probably more than 1,000 smashed at the southern German transport centre and Nazi congress city of Nuremberg and other points in the Reich last night at a cost of 96 planes—the heaviest toll ever taken of an Allied air fleet in a single operation. The R.C.A.F.—which made a big contribution to the blistering attack—lost 13 bombers. The Canadian bomber group loss was five less than the record of 18 lost by the R.C.A.F. in the heavy attack on Leipzig on the night of February 19-20. Thirteen R.C.A.F. bombers also were missing after the last heavy night attack on Berlin on March 24-25. The record R.A.F. loss was announced just as the entire German network with the exception of Vienna in Austria shut down this morning shortly after the warning that “enemy planes are approaching.”

Great Bomb Load

The first German warnings said the daylight raiders were over Hesse-Nassau province in Prussia in which Frankfurt is situated.

The announced loss last night, which contrasted to German claims of having inflicted the greatest defeat of the war on the R.A.F. with the shooting down of 132 four-engined bombers, was incurred in the 17th heavy bomber operation in March by the R.A.F.'s sky fleets.

The brief Air Ministry communique made no reference to the bomb load, but it used the term “in very great strength,” suggesting that probably 2,000 long tons of bombs were dropped, despite the distance involved.

Are Unescorted

Unprotected by shields of escorting fighters such as guard American daylight formations and only lightly armed, the big R.A.F. and R.C.A.F. bombers fell easy prey to Nazi night fighter pilots and anti-aircraft gun crews, who could silhouette them against the moonlit sky.

The big air battle of the night sky swirled over Germany and occupied territory during almost the entire 1,100-mile round trip between Britain and Nuremberg, with an average of one bomber plummeting to earth every 11 miles. Nearly 700 airmen were believed to have been killed or captured.

The Air Ministry also announced that R.A.F. and R.C.A.F. fighters flew offensive patrols over northern France yesterday and that during the night intruder planes ranged over the Continent, shooting up airfields in France, the Low Countries and Germany itself.

Nuremberg Attack

One fighter and one intruder were missing from these operations.

Mines were also laid in enemy waters during the night by R.A.F. bombers.

The attack on Nuremberg—the scene of Adolf Hitler's pre-war Nazi party rallies and the peacetime centre of the toy industry—was the ninth of the war on that city.

Previous blows had devastated 103 acres of Nuremberg's built-up area.

The city is one of the most important railway and industrial centres of southern Germany. It is the site of important war plants, and the junction of railway lines leading from the Ruhr to southeast Germany and from Berlin to Munich and Italy. It had a peacetime population of 450,000.

The record loss suffered by the

R.A.F.—which the Germans attributed to their fighters rather than to their ground defences—demonstrated that Goering's air force still has a potent wallop on the occasions when it cares to take the risk.

Strike at Airfields

The attack followed a day in which British-based American fighter-bombers struck at enemy airfields near the Netherlands-German border. American heavy bombers remained at home, but an official announcement in Naples last night said United States heavyweights, in the largest force ever sent against a single target from Mediterranean bases, had blasted Sofia, Bulgarian capital, yesterday while it was still smoking from a smashing R.A.F. night attack.

The Nuremberg foray, involving a round trip of more than 900 miles for the four-engined bombers, constituted a thrust into a section of Germany to which, according to neutral reports, Hitler has moved some of his war industries from the more accessible areas in the west.

London had another brief alert last night, but an official announcement said scattered bombs caused only slight damage and a small number of casualties.

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
BRITAIN
AIR
FORCE
RAIDS
GERMANY