

World War II. – “The Blitz”

This information report describes the events of “The Blitz” during the Second World War in London. The attacks between 7th September 1940 and 10th May 1941 are known as “The Blitz”. The report is based upon information from <http://www.secondworldwar.co.uk/>, <http://www.worldwar2database.com/> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blitz.

Prelude to the War in London



*Attack on Thames Haven
in 1940*

The Second World War started on 1st September 1939 with the German attack on Poland. The War in London began nearly one year later. On 24th August 1940 the German Air Force flew an attack against Thames Haven, whereby some German bombers dropped bombs on London. At this time London was not officially a target of the German Air Force. As a return, the Royal Air Force attacked Berlin. On 5th September 1940 Hitler ordered his troops to attack London by day and by night. It was the beginning of the Second World War in London.

The Attacks

First phase



*A street in London after the first
attacks on 7th September 1940.*

The first phase of the Second World War in London was from early September 1940 to mid November 1940. In this first phase of the Second World War Hitler achieved great military success. Hitler planned to destroy the Royal Air Force to achieve his goal of British invasion. His instruction of a sustainable bombing of London and other major cities like Birmingham and Manchester began towards the end of the Battle of Britain, which the British won. Hitler ordered the German Air Force to switch their attention from the Royal Air Force to urban centres of industrial and political significance.

The day attack on 7th September 1940 followed a strategy change and was the beginning of the “London Blitz”. As first the German Air Force attacked the Port of London. Over 300 bombers escorted by over 500 fighters attacked the Port of London, the East End of London, which was the industrial centre of the city and they attacked other important cities. Some bombers

missed the Port of London and bombed residential areas around the Port. In London there were very few air-raid shelters, so that many civilians were injured. In the night from the 7th

to the 8th September 1940 another 133 bombers attacked the Port of London. In total, over 400 Londoners were killed on this night and nearly 2,000 were injured.

After the huge destruction of these first attacks, the mood was distressed. The people were stunned and did not know what had happened to them.

Second phase

Between November 1940 and February 1941 the German Air Force attacked London and industrial and port cities like Birmingham, Liverpool, Plymouth and Manchester. It was the second phase of the War in London. Herman Göring, the chief of the German Air Force, ordered the troops to attack the industrial and port cities only at night and changed with this instruction the successful strategy of the first phase of the Second World War.

The biggest attack was on 29th December 1940 in London. This attack destroyed much of London. By good fortune and the efforts of many volunteers, St Paul's Cathedral survived intact. The poor winter weather led to a drop in attacks until March 1941.



St. Paul's Cathedral 30th December 1940

Final attacks

The final attacks were from March until May 1941. The German Air Force changed their strategy in 1941 again. Karl Dönitz persuaded Hitler to attack British seaports.

On 6th February 1941 the German Air Force concentrated its attacks on the port of London and on other important ports.

One of the final attacks was the "Belfast Blitz", which was carried out on 15th April 1941 in Belfast.

In London there were numerous attacks. A series of heavy attacks culminated in a very strong attack on London on 10th May. The German Air Force destroyed or damaged many important buildings, including the British Museum, the Houses of Parliament and St. James's Palace. "The Blitz" ended on 10th May, as the largest part of the German Air Force was needed for the impending invasion of Russia.



Destroyed and damaged London houses after the hard attack on 10th May 1940.

The Second World War ended after the capitulation of the German army on 15th August 1945.

Conclusion

As London was bombed people were scared and panic broke out. The people fled to the air-raid shelters and they stuck together. Volunteers helped to rebuild houses, searched for survivors and helped injured people. It was a very difficult time for the people in London, which they had mastered by the cohesion.

“The Blitz” killed over 41,000 Londoners and injured over 49,000 Londoners in the time from 7th September 1940 until 10th May 1941. Over 1,5 million homes were damaged or destroyed. This number corresponds to a third of London's housing stock. Similarly, important buildings like the Houses of Parliament and the British Museum were destroyed or damaged. In total over 50 million people were killed in the Second World War.

Overall, “The Blitz” destroyed a lot of London and in the years after the Second World War the British started to rebuild London. The mood during “The Blitz” was distressed and the people were desperate.

Sources:

<http://www.secondworldwar.co.uk/>

<http://www.worldwar2database.com/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blitz

[http://www.hitlersukpictures.co.uk/uploads/images/Thames_Haven_Refinery_Attack_455 .jpg](http://www.hitlersukpictures.co.uk/uploads/images/Thames_Haven_Refinery_Attack_455.jpg)

<http://www.raf.mod.uk/bob1940/september7.html>

Katharina Heinzl