

DRESDEN 1945 -- The Real Holocaust!

By **George T. Parker**

Sixty years ago, as Allied planes rained death and destruction over Germany, the old Saxon city of Dresden lay like an island of tranquility amid desolation. Famous as a cultural center, and possessing no military value, Dresden had been spared the terror that descended from the skies over the rest of the country.

In fact, little had been done to provide the ancient city of artists and craftsmen with anti-aircraft defenses. One squadron of planes had been stationed in Dresden for awhile, but the Luftwaffe decided to move the aircraft to another area where they would be of use. A "gentleman's agreement" seemed to prevail, designating Dresden as an "open city".

On Shrove Tuesday, February 13th, a flood of refugees fleeing the Red Army, sixty miles away, had swollen the city's population to over a million. Each new refugee brought fearful accounts of Soviet atrocities. Little did those refugees retreating from the Red terror imagine that they were about to die in a horror worse than anything Stalin could devise.

Normally, a carnival atmosphere prevails in Dresden on Shrove Tuesday. In 1945, however, the outlook was rather dismal. Houses everywhere overflowed with refugees and thousands were forced to camp out in the streets, shivering in the bitter cold.

LITTLE GIRLS IN CARNIVAL DRESS

However, the people felt relatively safe; and although the mood was grim, the circus played to a full house that night as thousands came to forget for a moment the horrors of war. Bands of little girls paraded about in carnival dress in an effort to bolster waning spirits. Half-sad smiles greeted the laughing girls, but spirits were lifted. No one realized that in less than twenty-four hours those same innocent children would die in Churchill's fire storms. But, of course, no one could know that then. The Russians, to be sure, were savages, but at least the Americans and the British were "honorable".

So when those first alarms signaled the start of fourteen hours of hell, Dresden's people streamed dutifully into their shelters. But they did so without much enthusiasm, believing the alarms were false, since their city had never been threatened from the air. Many would never come out alive, for that "great democratic statesman", Winston Churchill, in collusion with that other "great democratic statesman", Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had decided that the city of Dresden was to be obliterated by saturation bombing.

TO IMPRESS STALIN

What were Churchill's motives? They appear to have been political, rather than military. Historians unanimously agree that Dresden had no military value. What industry it did have produced only cigarettes and china. But the Yalta Conference was coming up, in which the Soviets and their Western Allies would sit down like ghouls to carve up the shattered corpse of Europe. Churchill wanted a trump card -- a devastating "thunderclap of Anglo-American annihilation" -- with which to "impress" Stalin.

That card, however, was never played at Yalta because bad weather had delayed the originally-scheduled raid. Yet Churchill insisted that the raid be carried out anyway to "disrupt and confuse" the German civilian population behind the lines.

Dresden's citizens barely had time to reach their shelters. The first bombs fell at 10:09 p.m. The attack lasted twenty-four minutes, leaving the inner-city a raging sea of fire. "Precision saturation bombing" had created the desired firestorm .

A firestorm is created when hundreds of smaller fires join in one vast conflagration. Huge masses of air are sucked in to feed the inferno, causing an artificial tornado. Those persons unlucky enough to be caught in the force of wind are hurled down entire streets into the flames. Those who seek refuge underground often suffocate as oxygen is pulled from the air to feed the blaze, or they perish in a blast of white heat intense enough to melt human flesh.

One eyewitness who survived told of seeing "young women carrying babies running up and down the streets, their dresses and hair on fire, screaming until they fell down or the collapsing buildings fell on top of them."

There was a three-hour pause between the first and second raids. The lull had been calculated to lure civilians from their shelters into the open again. To escape the flames, thousands of civilians had crowded into the Grosse Garden, a magnificent park nearly one and a half miles square.

The second raid came at 1:22 a.m. with no warning.

Twice as many bombers returned with a massive load of incendiary bombs. The second wave was designed to spread the raging firestorm into the Grosse Garden.

It was a complete "success". Within a few minutes, a sheet of flame ripped across the grass, up-rooting trees and littering the branches of others with everything from bicycles to human limbs. For days afterward, they remained bizarrely strewn about as grim reminders of Allied sadism.

At the start of the second air assault, many were still huddled in tunnels and cellars, waiting for the fires of the first attack to die down. At 1:30 a.m. an ominous rumble reached the ears of the commander of a Labor Service convoy sent into the city on a rescue mission. He described it this way:

"The detonation shook the cellar walls. The sound of the explosions mingled with a new, stranger sound which seemed to come closer and closer, the sound of a thundering waterfall; it was the sound of the mighty tornado howling in the inner city."

MELTING HUMAN FLESH

Others hiding below ground died. But they died painlessly -- they simply glowed bright orange and blue in the darkness. As the heat intensified, they either disintegrated into cinders or melted into a thick liquid often three or four feet deep in spots.

When dawn broke, a three-mile column of yellow-brown smoke curled up into the sky. The mass of smoke drifted over the country-side toward Czechoslovakia, scattering debris the man-made tornado had sucked up.

A homeowner, some fifteen miles from Dresden, found his garden littered with prescriptions and pill boxes from a pharmacy in the inner city. Papers and documents from the gutted Land Register Office showered down on the village of Pirna, some eighteen miles away.

Shortly after 10:30 on the morning of February 14th, the last raid swept over the city. American bombers pounded the rubble that had been Dresden for a steady thirty-eight minutes. But this attack was not nearly as heavy as the first two.

HOSPITAL PATIENTS MACHINE GUNNED

However, what distinguished this raid was the cold-blooded ruthlessness with which it was carried out. Mustangs appeared low over the city, strafing anything that moved, including a column of rescue vehicles rushing to the city to evacuate survivors. One assault was aimed at the banks of the Elbe River, where refugees had huddled during the horrible night.

In the last year of the war, Dresden had become a hospital town. During the previous night's massacre, heroic nurses had dragged thousands of crippled patients to the Elbe. The low-flying Mustangs machine gunned those helpless patients, as well as thousands of other old men, women, and children who had escaped the city.

When the last plane left the sky, Dresden was a scorched ruin, its blackened streets filled with corpses. The city was spared no horror. A flock of vultures escaped from the zoo, and fattened on the carnage. Rats swarmed over the piles of corpses.

One eyewitness to the aftermath of Churchill's scheme to impress Stalin gave this account: "Next to the tram shelter was a public lavatory of corrugated iron. At the entrance was a woman about thirty years old, completely

nude, lying face-down on a fur coat. A few yards further on lay two boys, aged about eight or ten, clinging tightly to each other. They too were naked. Their legs were stiff and twisted into the air. As far as we could make out, they were suffocated by lack of oxygen."

WORSE THAN HIROSHIMA

A Swiss citizen described his visit to Dresden two weeks after the raid: "I could see torn-off arms and legs, mutilated torsos, and heads which had been wrenched from these bodies and rolled away. In places the corpses were still lying so densely that I had to clear a path through them in order not to tread on arms and legs."

The death toll was staggering. The full extent of the Dresden holocaust can be more readily grasped if one considers that 250,000 persons died within a fourteen-hour period, whereas the dead at Hiroshima numbered only 71,879.

Allied apologists for the massacre have often "twinned" Dresden with the English city of Coventry. But the 380 killed in Coventry during the entire war cannot begin to compare with the 250,000 slaughtered in fourteen hours at Dresden. Moreover, Coventry was a munitions center, a legitimate military target. Dresden, on the other hand, produced only china -- and cups and saucers can hardly be considered as military hardware! It is interesting further to compare the respective damage to London and Dresden, especially when we recall the schmaltz put out by Hollywood about the "London Blitz". In one night, 1600 acres of land were destroyed in the Dresden massacre. London escaped with only 600 acres during the entire war.

In one ironic note, Dresden's only conceivable military target -- its railroad yards -- was ignored by Allied bombers. They were too busy concentrating on helpless old men, women and children.
