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Air Ministry News Service

Air Ministry Bulletin No.6757

DEVASTATION IN LÜBECK

No city in Britain has suffered so much in a single attack as Lübeck did on the night of March 28. The Germans gave us the word "blitz", they taught it to the Poles at Warsaw, to the Dutch in Rotterdam, to the Yugo-Slavs at Belgrade, and to several cities in this country. Now at Lübeck they have learned the English translation.

Lübeck lies up-river from the Baltic coast and is one of the main ports for seaborne traffic between Germany and Scandinavia. It is one of the principal ports for embarkation for troops and war supplies to Germany's northern front in Russia. Naval stores - equipment and fuel oil - and submarine building yards are there and it is there that submarine crews are trained.

The old, or inner, town of Lübeck is on an island of 570 acres (about a square mile) and it is here that the principal damage is concentrated, although there is also severe damage in several suburbs. This inner town had a population of 35,000. It was packed with what were mainly three to five storey houses, shops and public buildings.

From the latest R.A.F. photographs taken of Lübeck, it is now estimated that forty percent of this inner town - about 200 acres - has been devastated, and that about 1,500 houses in this area have been destroyed. The main area of devastation is over three quarters of a mile long, and varies in width between 200 and 600 yards. This might be compared with the area in London which lies between Seymour Street and Wignore Street to the North and Oxford Street to the south, and stretching from Marble Arch in the west as far as Oxford Circus to the east.

Destruction in the devastated area of the inner town has been largely caused by fire. The whole area is so severely gutted that it is almost impossible to distinguish the damage caused by blast from H.E. bombs.

Row after row of buildings have been left with only their walls standing. They line whole streets like open boxes to the sky. Though the photographs were taken a fortnight after the attack, some of the streets are still choked with debris and are impassable.

The port facilities have also suffered with damage to warehouses on the quays and buildings fronting the basins. One warehouse was completely burnt out.

The Town Hall, the Central Electric Station, the Market Hall and the Reichsbank are all gutted.

Another 500 houses were destroyed in the suburbs of Lübeck, including blocks of flats or tenement buildings - seven or eight such blocks were smashed by a single heavy bomb in one district.

The photographic interpreters have now compiled a long list of buildings which were damaged or destroyed.

Among them are:

Tram depot in the St. Lorenz Sud district (badly damaged)

Railway repair shops (sheds burnt out)

Main railway station (partially destroyed by fire)

Large warehouses in the port (destroyed by fire)

Gasworks (damaged by fire)

Dragerwerk factory making service respirators and oxygen apparatus for submarines and aircraft (very seriously damaged, a large number of sheds and buildings in the factory have been gutted and one or two damaged by high explosives).

Ewers und Miesmer Hartgusswerk (the greater part of this foundry has been destroyed by fire)

Jager Lübecker Apparate und Motorenbau - factory making engines and ancilliary equipment (damaged by fire)

Fr. Ewers canning and preserving factory (entirely gutted)

Ernst Hohmann iron construction works (greater part of factory destroyed or damaged by fire)

Blunk und Oltmann, producers of tar products and roof material (damaged by fire)

Carl Thiele und Sohne, enamel factory (several buildings destroyed by fire and blast)

The population of Lübeck is about 150,000, many of whom get their livelihood from the docks and the many industrial concerns. Thousands of them have now been made homeless and in many instances their means of livelihood have been taken from them. For example goods which normally passed through Lübeck will have to be handled elsewhere

The Germans themselves have admitted that it will take years to re-build Lübeck and get the city going again. The attack of March 28 was, as one pilot has said, "a very nasty dose of medicine for the enemy. There is plenty more to come from the same bottle."

NOTE:

Photographs Nos: C 2387-C2390

showing damage in Lübeck are

obtainable from P.N.A.