

A HEAVY ATTACK ON STUTTGART

There was such a concentration of bombers over Stuttgart last night that at times they got in each other's slipstream as they made their runs over the target or circled round the town.

The attack lasted for three quarters of an hour.

It was one of the brightest nights of this year, and crews found the target as easily as they could see the results of the attack.

Once over France there was very little cloud and a bright moon illuminated every landmark. Crews who arrived when the attack was under way also had the glow of fierce fires to guide them on the last lap of the journey to Stuttgart.

"There was a terrific red glow in the midst of the target", one pilot said, "and black smoke was rising from it". All reports agree that the fires were highly concentrated. "I saw a huge square of raging fire", said the pilot of another bomber, "and bombs were bursting in the centre of it. One solitary gun was still firing from near the middle of this flame. A building suddenly blew up and fell across a street".

Except in the air - it was exactly the right light and weather for night-fighters - the defences of Stuttgart were not very strong.

Wing-Commander H.R. Coventry, Captain of a Halifax, flew around Stuttgart many times during the attack in order to bring back a special report of the bombing.

"There was flak coming up from various towns near our route", he said, "but nothing to bother us. North of the town there were about eight searchlights which seemed to be of little use, and the anti-aircraft fire was only moderate.

"I saw the target glowing red, with four or five particularly large columns of smoke bellowing up from it in the moonlight. As we turned at last to go home the bombs were still going down. By this time you could not discern the details for the fire and smoke.

"Everywhere one looked there were other bombers. You could see them from miles away. We were constantly bumped/as we were caught in the slipstream of aircraft ahead of us".  
about

"It was just an inferno", declared another Halifax Captain, and Flying Officer Murray Hicks, a Lancaster Captain making his 25th raid, said he was able to watch the whole development of the fires in the factories of Stuttgart. "The steel girders against the flame in the interior" he said, "made it seem as though we were looking through the bars into a burning prison. The smoke rose to 8000 feet and hung in a dense cloud. Through it I could see plenty of 4000 lb. bombs bursting among tall factory buildings".

/Reports

Reports of combats with night fighters are still being sifted and prepared but already three night fighters are known to have been destroyed, and another was probably destroyed.

A Halifax shot down two Messerschmitt 110s.

A Junkers 88 was sighted by a Stirling crew on the return journey. The enemy opened fire and set alight the petrol tank in the starboard wing of the Stirling. This blazed for 20 minutes before it went out, and meanwhile the bomber was an easy mark for the fighter. But the rear-gunner and the mid-upper gunner kept up such constant fire that they were able to keep off the fighter, and in the end the pilot out-maneuvred it.

The large and highly specialised engineering industries in Stuttgart make it one of the most important centres of war industry in the whole of Germany.

The two largest firms there are the Bosch electrical equipment and aircraft component works and the Daimler Benz motor and military transport works. Submarine engines, aero engines, and many kinds of components are made in the various factories in and around the town which has a population of 500,000.

On the route a number of our bombers flew very low. Gunners actually shot up goods trains and many other targets as they hedge-hopped across country.

A Stirling shot up four goods trains, and another shot up two, as well as a goods yard, gunners seeing their incendiary bullets hitting trucks on a siding and starting a fire.

Another Lancaster's gunners attacked a barracks in Germany. "I could clearly see", the pilot said, "a man shining a torch at a window of the barracks. Perhaps he was inviting the rest of them to come out and look at the bombers. When my front gunner raked the building I saw the torch go one way and the man the other".

A low flying Stirling collided with a pylon near a power station. There were many blue flashes, and the underneath of the bomber's fuselage was damaged. Some of the incendiaries in the bomb bay caught alight and had to be jettisoned.

On the return journey the crew sighted two fighters, one of which made an attack. The mid-upper gunner drove it off.

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