

HEADQUARTERS  
EUROPEAN THEATRE OF OPERATIONS  
UNITED STATES ARMY

U.S. HEAVY BOMBERS BLAST RENAULT WORKS AT PARIS

A large force of American heavy bombers struck heavily at the L and automobile factory on the outskirts of Paris in daylight today, le in the target area.

The raid was carried out against strong enemy fighter opposition, four bombers missing.

Bombing under weather conditions that permitted good visibility, the "n made their runs over the huge factory without undue disturbance from flak, which was described as "light and inaccurate."

The bombers were covered and supported by R.A.F., Dominion and Allied fighter squadrons which destroyed eight enemy aircraft, with a loss of seven fighters.

The Renault works was last attacked on the night of March 3, 1942, by the R.A.F. with such telling effect that the big factory, largest in all of France for supplying lorries, tanks and similar armament for the enemy, was put out of commission for some time. The Renault and Matford factories provide about half of all the lorries made in France for German military use. The former pleasure car factory is located at Billancourt, a suburb of Paris, in the elbow of the Seine.

Fighter opposition was largely lacking until after the bombers had made their bombing run, but encounters en route home were numerous and fiercely pressed. Yellow-nosed Focke-Wulf fighters of the Goering squadrons were observed, as well as many Me.109s.

Crewmen's opinions on the raid were apparently summed up in the language of Second Lieut. Jesse B. Duval, a bombardier from Abilene, Texas:

"Shot 300 rounds. Got an enemy fighter. Dropped my bombs on the target. Lovely weather. Lots of fun."

Major Thomas K. McGehee, of Greenville, Ala; commanding a squadron of Fortresses, described the bombing as "the best I've ever seen." He said a cloud of smoke swirled up several thousand feet, reminding him of "an Alabama thundercloud."

Capt. A.V. Martini, skipper of the famous "Dry Martini", said, "there was nothing to it; these Forts come home. We had 50 attacks from enemy fighters." The "Martini" was holed twice in the pilot's compartment and once in the navigator's "office," but neither the veteran San Francisco pilot nor any of his "cocktail kids" were injured. His co-pilot was Lt. Joseph Boyle, of Teaneck, N.J.

Navigator James A. Moberly, of Moberly, Mo., described the trip as "practically flakless." All the hits Moberly said, were in the target area. We plastered it. I saw oil tanks explode beside the factory."

Maj. Herbert O. Wangeman, of Moorepark, Cal., and his co-pilot Lt. Victor A. Plekavick, of Cambridge, Mass., said their squadron was not accosted by enemy fighters until it was ten minutes out of the target area on the way home. Then some 25 Jerrys, made up of ME109s and FW190s, attacked. The top turret gunner and the radio man of Major Wangeman's Fortress each claimed an enemy fighter destroyed.

First Lieut. Gordon L. Williams, of Fresno, Cal., the group bombardier in the lead ship of his formation, said he probably is the first American bombardier to strike a target in Paris. "We flew just to the right of the Eiffel Tower. Paris looks good to me. I hope to see it from the ground," said Williams.

"The fighters came in like gnats. There were swarms of them," reported Second Lieut. William P. Cassidy, of Brookhaven, Miss.

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Edwin Brotzman, of Laceyville, P.a., a tail gunner, said he  
Paris because it looked so swell".

Staff Sergeant, William S. Buchanan, of Unionville P.A., said the  
fighters, believed to be some of the "Libbeville kids" from the  
squadrons based in France, were troublesome. "They have yellow  
they don't fight that way", was Buchanan's summation.

haven't seen the pictures yet, "said Maj. Paul D. Brown of Orange, N.J.,  
leader of one Fortress group, "but I think they'll beat our bombing of Vegesack".

Capt. Edwin Bush, of Los Angeles, Cal., passed his hand over an aerial  
photograph of the Renault works and said: "We completely covered the whole target  
area with hits",

One group bombardier, Capt. Dean. W. Bohlen, of Rantoul, Ill., told of his  
difficulty in finding a portion of the target which had not already been bombed.  
"First I got set on the engine shop", he said, "and then bango! One of the ships  
ahead of us blow it up. Then I moved over to another large building and just as  
I was getting set they knocked the hell out of it, too. I ended up by dropping  
my bombs on the last group of buildings which had not been hit by the group  
ahead of us".

Another group was led by Lt. Col. George. L. Robinson, of Los Angeles, Cal.  
Tech. Sgt. Richard Smith, of Everett, Mass., radio gunner on the "Snap-Crackle-  
pop" of that group, declared: "I didn't get much shooting in, but I saw the  
target bombed properly. I'll have to change the wording of that song to 'The  
last time I saw Paris there were fires burning there'."

First Lt. Robert A. Saunders, pilot from Youngstown, O., was among those  
who commented upon the strong fighter opposition. "Hell broke loose after we  
left the target", Saunders said, "and continued until we met the Spitfire cover.  
I saw the Spits shoot down two fighters so quickly they never know what hit them".

"It was pretty hot to-day," said Staff Sgt. Harvey Collins, of Hoxie, Ark.,  
a waist gunner. "Those .20 mm shells bursting around us looked like a cotton  
field".

"I counted 38 enemy aircraft on a field just outside Paris, taking off,"  
2nd Lt. Earl A. Steele, bombardier from Elizabeth, Colo., related, "and in 10  
minutes they were on top of us."

The allied covering squadron joined in the melee near Rouen where they met  
the homing bombers. A fierce fight ensued with one whole Canadian squadron  
escorting a limping Fortress.