

Biggest Daylight Force Of British, Canadian Bombers Hits Germany

London, March 12 (CP).—The largest force of British and Canadian bombers ever used in daylight and fleets of American heavyweights formed a mighty armada of more than 2,550 planes which ravaged Germany's communications and industries from the Ruhr to the Baltic Sea today—partly in direct support of Russia's armies.

As the war's greatest sustained aerial assault raged through its 28th day, the RAF and RCAF, in the developing campaign to obliterate the Ruhr's industrial cities, sent more than 1,200 Halifaxes and Lancasters to unload 5,000 tons of bombs on Dortmund. At the same time 650 American heavies blasted the German naval base of Swinemunde, clogged with seaborne reinforcements for Russian-besieged Stettin.

Vital Centre Impassable

The Air Ministry said the force hurled against Dortmund was even larger than the 1,200-plane attack unleashed Sunday on Essen, which was the biggest RAF-RCAF daylight attack up till then.

By smashing at Dortmund, the bombers made impassable, "at least for the time being," a vital centre for transportation of critically needed coal from the Ruhr, without which German railways will be in desperate position, an RAF commentator said.

In addition to the Swinemunde strike, the United States 8th Air Force sent 700 bombers and 750 fighters against six railroad yards between Frankfurt-on-Main and the Ruhr, while Italy-based heavy bombers attacked oil installations in the Vienna area.

One United States bomber and three fighters were missing from today's attacks. In the last six days, the 8th has despatched some 10,200 planes and lost only 28, 15 of them bombers.

Only one flight in the protective clouds of fighters sighted enemy

aircraft today. Four United States fighters pounced on four Messerschmitt 109's near the Danish border and shot down all of the Nazi craft.

The German radio warned the attacks were continuing tonight, reporting a "weak formation of fast bombers" approaching Western Germany.

In the spectacular attack on Swinemunde the American force poured 3,250 500-pound demolition bombs on military and naval installations in an effort to block the enemy's main supply route to Stettin, 35 miles to the southeast.

Although there was no confirmation from Allied sources, it appeared obvious that the assault was made at the request of the Russians, whose forces are surging toward Stettin from a distance of only 15 miles. The thunder of the bombardment—closest direct support American heavy bombers have yet given the Red Army—probably was heard by the advancing Russian ground troops.

Opposition Light

The German radio reported bombers over Stettin itself, indicating that American heavies may have wheeled over the Pomeranian capital before roaring on to Swinemunde, which is on the outer harbor of Stettin in Pomeranian Bay.

Recent reconnaissance showed Swinemunde, one of the Germans' best Baltic ports, full of activity. Despite its importance, the bombing fleet encountered only meagre flak over the target, and was not challenged by the German air force.

The once-great armament centre of Essen was described as a dead city following Sunday's daylight raid.

RAF Mosquitos kept the offensive rolling through Sunday night by blasting Berlin with two-ton blockbusters for the 20th consecutive night, and also attacked communications targets in Western Germany.

009-035-013

149
WAR
EUROPEAN
1939
BRITAIN
AIR
FORCE
RAIDS
GERMANY