



Source 7

Extracts from an Air Ministry Directorate of Intelligence report on the effects of air attacks on German morale, 2 April 1944

(Catalogue ref: AIR 40/1494)

Questions

1. According to this report, what have been the effects on Germany of the air attacks in the winter of 1943-4?
2. Does this source conclude that bombing German cities and towns is a good idea or not?
3. Do you think the views in this report would encourage or discourage the British in their decision to bomb Dresden?



HEROES & VILLAINS

Churchill & Dresden > Why target Dresden?

Source 7

ALLIED AIR ATTACKS AND GERMAN MORALE - V

This paper appreciates the effects of Allied air attacks on German morale during the period 1st November, 1943 to 1st March, 1944.

2. The outstanding feature of this period has been a series of 15 heavy attacks on Berlin which have resulted in devastation in the German capital comparable to that inflicted in earlier periods on smaller towns in Western Germany.

13. We conclude that during the period under review :-

- (i) Air attack has reduced German morale to an unprecedentedly low level, and the prevailing nervous strain has been manifested in a state of general apathy which has seriously prejudiced the German war effort and is causing the German authorities the gravest concern.
- (ii) At the same time the sufferings of the German people have not affected the determination of their leaders, who have nothing to gain everything to lose from a surrender, to maintain the regime and prosecute the war.
- (iii) Despite the slackening of administrative and routine police control consequent on the Berlin raids, the widespread anti-Nazi sentiment, to which attacks have given rise, has continued to assume a passive form. It is unlikely that active opposition will develop as a major threat to the Home Front.
- (iv) While the possibility of a sudden overthrow of the German Government from below cannot be excluded, the evidence at present available favours the view that the process will be one of gradual disintegration on the Home Front. The decline of civilian morale, while most important, would thus not be the direct cause of a German collapse.