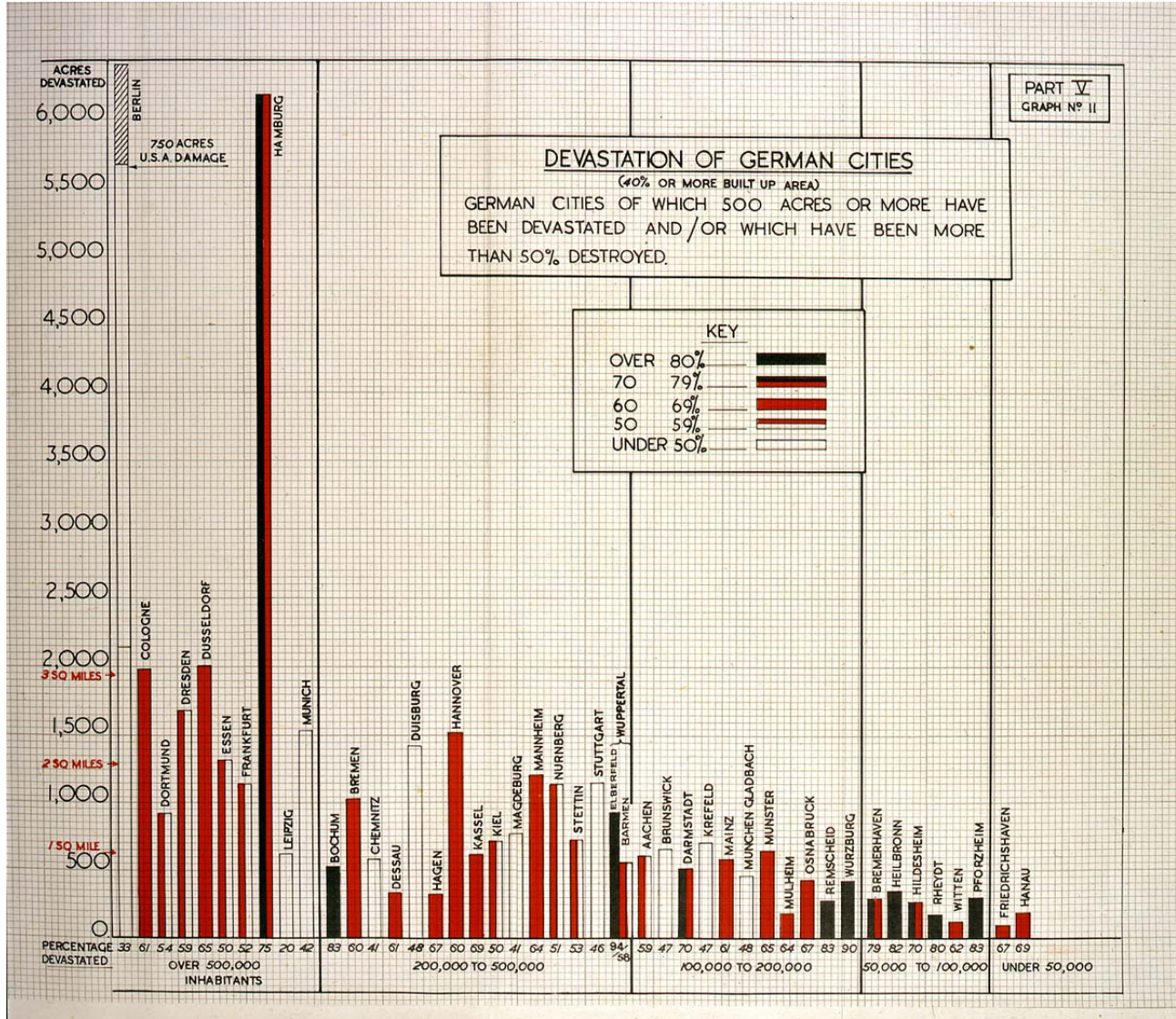


WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: HAMBURG

Graph to show devastation of German cities

Catalogue ref: AIR 16/487



What is this source?

This graph comes from a detailed report about war operations from 23rd February 1942 to 8th May 1945 by Air Chief Marshal, Sir Arthur Harris.

It shows the devastation of German industrial towns. The towns are compared according to the number of acres destroyed through the effects of bombing.

WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: HAMBURG**What's the background to this source?**

The war began in 1939 and went well for Germany at first. By 1940 Hitler controlled most of Western Europe, apart from Britain. He then attacked the USSR in the summer of 1941. This became the main campaign of the war. However, Britain was anxious to try and help her Soviet allies. Britain did not have the resources to attack Germany on the ground but they did have a fleet of heavy bombers that could attack Germany by air.

The content of Sir Arthur Harris's report covers the course of war in terms of bombing technique, tactics and types of bomb. The report also includes a summary of the bombing effort and its results.

It's worth knowing that...

An earlier report in 1941 showed that most bombs did not fall within five miles of their target. Also, daylight raids on well defended targets led to huge losses of aircraft and aircrew. As a result, the RAF Bomber Command chief Sir Arthur Harris decided to use area bombing. Basically, this meant destroying the whole city so that the industrial targets would be destroyed and so would civilian housing.

How does this source help us to understand why the RAF bombed German cities?

1. According to this graph what percentage damage did Hamburg experience?
Approximately, how many acres of the city were destroyed?
2. Which smaller cities experienced over 80% damage?
3. What does this source suggest about the effect of the bombing strategy?
4. Can this source be used to support any of the viewpoints A-D for your debate?