

WESTERN EUROPE 1939-1945: HAMBURG

Pamphlet relating to bombing issued by the Ministry of Information, 1942-1943

Catalogue ref: INF 2/8



WESTERN EUROPE 1939–1945: HAMBURG**What is this source?**

The Ministry of Information produced this pamphlet.

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. For a while the main attack on Britain was by air. He tried to destroy the Royal Air Force. When this failed he switched to bombing British cities.

The bombing of U.K cities by Germany, better known as the Blitz, ended in 1941. From then until 1944 the only way to attack Germany was by air. The RAF and USA air forces did this relentlessly.

It's worth knowing that...

The Germans had bombed British cities heavily in 1940–41. As a result there was strong support for the RAF to bomb German cities. This pamphlet was clearly designed to generate support for the policy.

There is an interesting contrast between this source and the other pamphlet about bombing that you can find in the box of sources. Britain was sensitive to criticisms of carrying out terror raids and therefore being as bad as the Nazis. This is why the government also produced pamphlets that explained the purpose of the Allied bombing raids.

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

1. According to this source, what is the main justification for British bombing?
2. How does the pamphlet get its message across?
3. Do you think that the British people would have supported the view of this source at the time?
4. Compare this source to the other pamphlet about bombing in the source box.
5. In 1941 a British government investigation showed that very few RAF bombs fell even as close as five miles to their target. Does that information come through in this source?
6. Can this source be used to support any of the viewpoints A–D for your debate?

Use the debate summary table to record your choice of sources.