

morale; killing civilians was an unavoidable byproduct, a means of achieving the goal but not necessarily the goal itself. Although there is evidence to suggest that by late 1943 Arthur Harris, Commander-in-Chief of Bomber Command, was viewing German civilians as the primary target of the bomber offensive, he was probably accepting the reality that in attempting to wipe out entire industrial centres, civilians were becoming less and less "collateral damage."

The directive of February 1942 setting out the policy of area bombing was secret but only inasmuch as all such directives were classified secret during the war. There was nothing secret in Britain or Canada about the intent or the results of the massive raids. The grave losses and the terrible devastation were reported daily on the BBC. Few aircrew were under any illusion after 1942 that they were unleashing incredible destruction on German cities and that civilians were being killed in large numbers. The unavoidable effect of creepback and the limitations of contemporary navigational and bombing aids were well-known. As John Bates and Murray Peden pointed out in their submission to the Sub-Committee, aircrew knew that

a torrent of bombs...aimed at a set of target indicators far below...would usually cover a circular area two or three miles in diameter, and that people not in shelters in that broad area were at considerable risk...No one could be under the slightest misapprehension that houses, factories, warehouses, gas and electric plants - in short everything in the area, was being hit by the saturation bombing.⁽²³⁾

Walter Thompson posed a simple question: "How...could a pathfinder airman, whose job it was to mark targets with flares, not be privy to the policy he was carrying out?...We knew that the bombs would be widely dispersed."⁽²⁴⁾ Aiming points were still often industrial targets, if for no other reason than to concentrate the bombing on built-up areas. But as several witnesses pointed out, the factories being targeted were often surrounded by workers' dwellings. The result could be every bit as deadly as a direct attack on a residential area.

As for the suggestion in the film that the Canadian Government was never consulted about the directive of February 1942, this may be true. At the same time, Mr. Halliday pointed out that the Government of Mackenzie King showed no interest in the higher direction of the war.⁽²⁵⁾ Had it been consulted, there is little doubt what its response would have been. It is clear from King's diaries that the Prime Minister knew civilians were being killed in the bomber offensive, but made no objections.

(23) 2 June 1992, p. 15-16.

(24) Proceedings, 7:78-79.

(25) Proceedings, 6:10.