

## Part 6: MARCH 1944: ETO – European Theater abcd

### A. Chapter 2: 1 – 15 March; Craven and Cate Army Air Forces in WWII, Vol III xyza

**Berlin in March.** On 4 March 1944 the Eighth bombed Berlin for the first time. The city important because GAF fighters had to defend Berlin and in doing so could be destroyed. Other attacks did not cause large fighter reactions. Yet, destroying the GAF was prime air goal. 48 Berlin attacks hit manufacturing and rail stations. They reflected the confidence in P-51 Mustang's 850-mile radius when a P-47 with two large wing tanks only had a radius of 475 miles – a huge imbalance. 49 On 4 March, bombers struck Berlin with escorts. The morale and publicity effect were astronomical as headlines blazed: "Allies over Berlin". The U.S. returned in two days 50 with 660 bombers and 1,626 tons of bombs against the largest German defense force since Big Week. They lost 69 bombers and 11 fighters vs. 180 German planes claimed. The GAF reaction meant "a ruinous wastage upon the enemy." It "reflected what was coming to be one of the most important facts in the air war: the actual air superiority of the Allies."

On 8 March, the Eighth 51 bombed Berlin ball bearings with 462 planes and 1,060 tons of incendiaries, but fighter opposition was less. They lost 37 (of 590 bombers), while fighters lost 17, but claimed 87 enemy.

The sight of compact and orderly formations 52 of American heavy bombers flying in clear sky over ... (Berlin) made a deep impression on the Berliners ... On 13 March, the Berlin papers ... broke silence ... "If the inhabitants of the capital were surprised that ... isolated enemy formations reached the capital in formation, it must be remembered that this need not be interpreted as a sign of strength at all." (Another wrote:) "If occasionally they fly in a clear sky without at the moment being pursued by the dreaded German fighters, only the layman is fooled ... (their) closed drill formation is not a sign of strength."

Eighth Air Force made just one more Berlin trip on 22 March in clouds, losing only 12 bombers of 669 that bombed. Weather spoiled other east 53 Germany efforts. Bombers returned to: Frankfurt, Brunswick, Wilhelmshaven, and Münster, CORSSBOW's and two airfields. March closed with attacks on 23 days, with maximum effort on 13, less than February. It hit "points which Allied intelligence, on (shaky) grounds ... believed vital to the enemy ... effort." The Fifteenth AF missed March POINTBLANK, but hit Italian airfields, rail yards, bridges at increased scales, 54 but not over the Alps into Germany. Clouds blocked the Alps and the Fifteenth lacked radar bombing and escorts but did "throttle the GAF in Italy". Actually, on 30 January Italian GAF "air opposition ... within Italy virtually ceased."

March was an Eighth AF "turning point" as the GAF lost its advantages to be timid. The *Luftwaffe* could hit hard; but not in a sustained effort. U.S. loss rates 55 dramatically fell as antiaircraft fire became the larger threat, but flack locations were avoided except for maximum radius missions. Solutions were smaller formations, and "Carpet" or "Window". 56

## B. Chapter 3: Plan for OVERLORD; Craven and Cate Army Air Forces in WWII, Vol III xyza 1-15 March

As the Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO) approached an end the question became: "What next for the heavy bombers?" In fact, there were no plans for the "heavies" associated with the D-Day.

**1. Plans for the Invasion<sup>1</sup>.** Each subordinate headquarters prepared their own invasion plans with great informal cooperation encouraged by **67** Eisenhower. Montgomery's HQ in St. Paul's School, London, contained air and naval officers. AEF's plans were made at Leigh-Mallory's HQ in Stanmore, and at Norfolk House. The AEF group Combined Operational Planning Committee, studied air support. On 15 April 1944 Spaatz complained he was not included. The "official" comment: "The extraordinarily high degree of cooperation ... was a matter of sober pride and of great credit to all concerned." **68**

Air dominance required a drastic wounding of plane production and airfields in a 150-mile radius were attacked forcing German planes back. Mass bombing Germany cities was not a benefit. Only in Normandy did Allies have "air supremacy"<sup>2</sup>. **69** On D-day bombers would make a heavy beach attack as the landing craft touched. As related, the CCS expanded the attack divisions to five and the invasion area. **70** Only late in the planning were parachute divisions added.

Leigh-Mallory had vigorously opposed paratroops. But going to five assault divisions delayed the invasion which AAF used for training and more planes. The first final air plan was the "Initial Joint Plan, NEPTUNE, of 1 February 1944" **71** to fill COSSAC's "vague study", such as: planning procedures, command, training, beach studies, build-up and mounting forces. The plan rejected Leigh-Mallory control of strategic air; stated the Allies would not have air supremacy; said "No" to bombing "V" weapons; and supported bombing French railways into a non-functioning status!

USSBS		Jagd Type Fighter			
Single engine		New	Repaired	Total	Delta
Jan.	1,315	1,162	237	1,399	106%
Feb.	1,016	794	320	1,114	110%
Mar.	1,377	934	373	1,307	95%
Apr.	1,696	1,016	456	1,472	87%
May	1,907	1,380	384	1,764	93%
June	2,177	1,704	571	2,275	105%

**2. The Transportation Issue.** The plan to partially destroy the railroads of west Europe saw a protracted controversy, but Eisenhower ordered it done. He diverted Eighth Air Force and RAF Bomber Command to bombing railroads "causing the contempt of many" by suspending the oil bombing campaign, losing **72** air supremacy before D-Day and both killing French citizens and destroying their

<sup>1</sup> A quirky footnote states Supreme HQ in south London outskirts of Bushy Park was near USSTAF headquarters. A comical mishap occurred, however, since the site chosen for Eisenhower as Bushey Heath near Leigh-Mallory's headquarters. U.S. planners confused the two, but Eisenhower nevertheless remained where he had been "Park -- ed".

<sup>2</sup> "Air supremacy" is second best and while air "superiority" is the best. Air "parity" is to be avoided.

cities. Given its importance, it receives fulsome treatment as it was so controversial. Interdicting European railroads was always planned because the German army vitally depended upon rails for movements. But destroying the French rail system was a novel war idea without precedence or data. Air Marshall Tedder, Deputy Supreme Commander and Eisenhower confidant, plus Leigh-Mallory promoted the “transportation plan” of Solly Zukerman, a zoologist, railroad bombing in Italy had succeeded.

The plan ... (came from the) AEAF bombing committee, where Leigh-Mallory, (Dr.) Brant, and Zuckerman discovered (ever) more ... advantages ... (arguing against) the frigidly unreceptive attitude of the British generals from SHAEF and the Eighth Air Force ... Zuckerman likened the railway network to a nervous system, damage to any part ... (affected) the whole ... attrition (of the French railroad system required) ninety days ...

**73**

The advocates estimated ... that 33, then 40, later 79, and finally 101 railway centers would have to be bombed ... (creating a) veritable railway desert ... (Whatever) was left could be canalized ... (and) strafed ... or stranded by line cuts.

Rail interdiction did not exist as a theory, but was massive rail bombing after the invasion, not before, to slow traffic. Zukerman hoped to paralyze the French rail system, halting German reinforcements and supply of Normandy forces. The plan was to “paralyze”, not impede, the French rail system. A 12 February study held European rails moved 66% of German traffic; its loss would be catastrophic. Key nodes were “rail centers” at 500 acres each would leave “a heap of ruined trackage and equipment and burned-out facilities.” The Allies had capacity. From February to D-Day 108,000 bomb tons could be dropped with 45,000 tons for rails but needed big bombers! Spaatz and Harris immediately said “No”.

**74** Spaatz held to the POINTBLANK’s air supremacy as Eighth AF objectives. Destruction of German aircraft manufacturing was at a crescendo with air supremacy close. Bomber Harris argued the best OVERLORD support

... was ... attacks on German cities ... (The) “transportation plan” ... was based on ... the false assumption that interdiction would not be effective. But Leigh-Mallory ... (stood firm making) it clear that he intended for the strategic air forces to begin the rail center bombings under his own direction by 1 March 1944.

Apprehensive ... Spaatz informed General Arnold, who replied ... (it) might have tragic consequences ... (and) also warned General Eisenhower that a premature shift ... to rail centers ... might result in a battle for air supremacy over the beachhead on D-day. The supreme commander ... (delayed) more than a month ... (as) **strategic air forces ... (pursued) German aircraft production and won a momentous victory which ... (was not as overwhelming as proclaimed) nonetheless guaranteed Allied air supremacy for the rest of the war.**

An imposing list ... opposed the transportation plan ... Churchill, Sir Alan Brooke, Portal, Doolittle ... (The favored) interdiction to attrition ... a shattered railway system ... (would) hamper ... liberating armies ... SHAEF circulated an analysis by a French agent **75** ... (it) would injure French

civilian traffic far more ... British railway experts ... (were) emphatically in favor of ... (a small) interdiction program ... (since) only one-fifth of the French railway system was ... German military traffic ... Others ... (argued) a rail center was the worst ...

Spaatz's ... (response was) a "Plan for the Completion of the Combined Bomber Offensive"... on 5 March 1944. This study repudiated the transportation plan ... Now that the enemy's air force was broken, the strategic air forces could attack two other vital target systems ... oil and rubber ... The effects ... on all fronts would be so drastic that the enemy 76 ... might ... (not) oppose OVERLORD, or even to continue the war ... (Very strident claims. The) destruction of) the German Air Force (was a) second ... attack rubber and tire industries as third, and, as a last resort, bomb rail centers in the *Reich* ...

Yet, the transportation gained support. Somehow Air Chief Marshal Harris was won against Spaatz' oil plan as another panacea. RAF Portal backed it, but the best champion was Tedder who opposed Spaatz's oil program as too late. Instead, all tactical and strategic air forces meant German traffic could scarcely move. Spaatz lost that Germans used just 50-80 trains per day and lost all air commanders. 77 So called in Gen Eaker from the MTO who advised Eisenhower against the transport plan. At a conference at WIDEWING, Saturday, 25 March 1944, Eisenhower adopted the transportation plan as the one action allowing for important air forces contributions in the first OVERLORD weeks. He wrote Marshall "there is no other way in which this tremendous air force can help us, during the preparatory period, to get 78 ashore and stay there." Spaatz agreed Eisenhower's decision was justified. The British War Cabinet, and Prime Minister, were appalled with civilian casualties estimates of 160,000 in a "ruthless use of air power". Eisenhower overcame British cabinet and French hesitations with sober military necessity for a successful landing driving the Germans quickly. Churchill wrote FDR he was not convinced. Arnold and the War Department backed Eisenhower.

**3. Command of the Heavies.** Beyond railroads, the question became how best to use big bombers? The U.S. and U.K. chiefs' November 1943 decision gave Eisenhower command during OVERLORD, but the British kept Bomber Command autonomous. Gen Arnold wrote Eisenhower the AAF would place its forces under his control. Eisenhower requested 79 full power over missions. Spaatz agreed for tactical, but not his strategic forces. Then Spaatz and Tedder informally agreed to follow their Mediterranean campaign rules. Leigh-Mallory, the OVERLORD air commander-in-chief. Refused and planned to control all strategic air with a large staff to prove it. Leigh-Mallory's personality was his undoing.

During early 1944 ... Churchill and the Air Ministry resisted American pressure to bring RAF Bomber Command into the invasion structure ... (But) Leigh-Mallory, as air commander for OVERLORD ...(sought) to direct strategic air ... (alarming) USSTAF ... Essentially, "that" officer was not well-liked in U.S. circles! (His) ideas ... "evoked the reverse of enthusiasm in Spaatz" who refused giving "that officer" any significant control. Even the British felt the same. The ... 26 March 1944 (transportation plan thus appointed) Tedder, not Leigh-Mallory ... (to direct) the transportation plan in parallel with USSTAF and RAF Bomber Command and AEF.

Eisenhower cured his Churchill problem stating he commanded the bomber forces, so Churchill relented. "... With Churchill's opposition surmounted, Eisenhower, Portal, and Spaatz ... **80** placed the strategic air forces under the supreme commander ... (where) Tedder would supervise OVERLORD air operations ... for SHAEF, that the (air) security of the British Isles (against V-weapons had) precedence ... (until) Allied armies were established on the continent ...

**Eisenhower directed the largest air force in the history of the world.** Interestingly, Leigh-Mallory was OVERLORD air commander-in-chief -- but not until June 1 and only a short time. Command saw "awkward relationships" where Tedder had one American on his staff of nine officers. **81** "Personality" conflict were shunted. Historians provide an insight **B2** that Spaatz believed air forces should be free of all others since: "a properly conducted strategic air war would eliminate ... (an) invasion by land forces ... (creating) a mere occupational operation ... (But he agreed) to subordinate air power ... making the victory in the last analysis a land victory won ... Spaatz and Arnold were reconciled ... Hence the AAF agreed to ... the command structure ... "Informality worked. Gen Morgan quipped no one could show on "an organizational diagram the channels through which General Eisenhower's orders reached his aircraft." But they did to "good effect!" **83**

### **C. March 1 - 15, 1944: Eighth AF Bombing Logs Excel Format, Buersh xyza**

The first one-half of March had six days of over 200 B-17's bombing. But five days saw the arriving B-24's flying above 150 missions, portending a day when 400, 500 (maybe even 1,000) bombers would attack Germany. For P-38's and P-47's, by March 1945 large flights were almost daily. Seven days had 700 fighters up and large groups flew 10 of 15 days!

		EIGHTH AIR FORCE DAILY RECORDS																														
		B-17's				B-24's				US Bomb Crew			Lutwaffe			P-38 & P-47 Escort				P-51 Escort				Lutwaffe			US Crew					
No.	Mission	Area	Type	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	KIA	WIA	MIA	Dwn	Rep	50%	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Fly	Dwn	Fin	Rep	Los	Dam	Prob	KIA	WIA	MIA	
<b>Wed, 1 MAR 1944</b>			None																													
243	Brest	Fran	Info	5	0	0	0																									
<b>Thr, 2 MAR 1944</b>			Info	592																												
244.1	Frankfurt	Germ	Rails	293	8	0	0	82	1	3	0	17	9	91	2	0	2		478	3	0	8	111	0	0	0	17	2	4	0	0	
244.2	Chartres	Fran	Air	84	1	0	12											234	1	0	0	47	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1		
245	Caen	Fran	Info	5	0	0	0																									
<b>Fri, 3 MAR 1944</b>			748	Largely cancelled weather																												
246.1	Wilhelmshaven	Germ	Navy	75	9	0	0	4	2	0	0	5	11	103	3	1	1		573	1	2	14	130	6	0	0	8	1	3	0	1	
246.2	CARPETBAGGER French Underground FFI							2																								
<b>Sat, 4 MAR 1944</b>			502																													
247	Berlin	Germ	Indus	249	15	1	120	Abort weather				3	11	141				563	8	3	6	121	16	1	1	9	6	4	2	0		
<b>Sun, 5 MAR 1944</b>			224																													
248	Cognac	Fran	Air					164	4	1	23	0	1	35	14	2	5		662	2	2	0	88	3	1	1	14	0	12	2	1	
249	Le Mans	Fran	Info	5	0	0	0																									
<b>Mon, 6 MAR 1944</b>			730	WORST BOMBER LOSSES																												
250.1	Berlin	Germ	Indus	248	18	2	172					2	8	184	97	28	60		86	1							4	0	13	0	0	
250.2	Tempin	Germ	Indus	226	35	3	121					0	15	345					615	5	3	4					36	7	12	0	2	
250.3	Genshagen	Germ	Indus	198	16	1	54					15	8	148								100	5	2			43	1	20	0	0	

Additionally, the P-51 force was growing in operations with seven days of over one hundred fighters and the last few with over two hundred fighters. P-38 and P-47's were relentless. Seven days launched over 550 fighters. There was heroic effort in nine of the 15 day in the period! To be clear, Eighth AAF was getting 275 big bombers and six hundred fighters up every other day! Here then, the student can see the day-to-day effort! Numbers illuminate adjectives. One can sense the power of three hundred big bombers droning toward Germany with 600 fighters flitting above "seeking out trouble!"

## 1. Key Dates

1 March: German's form special staff to increase fighter production. Speer controls fighters.
4 March: Eighth AF —first Berlin attack.
5 March: USSTAF—Oil plan -- knock out German synthetic fuel production.

6 March: Eighth AF -- first major mission over Berlin. Severe losses a record 69 bombers. Four to Sweden.
6–7 March: Bomber Command—experiments transport targets. Accuracy is higher.
9 March: Eighth AF—third major Berlin attack, negligible opposition. 1 bomber to Sweden.
15 March: Fifteenth Air Force—bombs Cassino, Italy.

Americans still mistrusted Leigh-Mallory's command of the AEF. Plus, new 1 March OVERLORD priorities undercut strategic bombing plans, but Spaatz had accepted a 1 March "Switch" to OVERLORD efforts. Spaatz and Harris cooperated because Eisenhower demanded it. **235.**

**2. By late February the CBO had destroyed the *Luftwaffe*. (Comment: A stark statement!)**

Spaatz committee had three priorities *circa* **236** February: 1) air supremacy by D-Day; 2) possible early German collapse; and 3) maximize OVERLORD. He finalized a "plan for the Completion of the Combined Bomber Offensive": 1) oil, 2) fighters, 3) ball bearings, 4) rubber and 5) bombers. Oil needed 15 visual bombing days for the Eighth: 10 days for the Fifteenth. Losing 27 refineries cut oil 50% -- **237** devastating! When Ploesti failed, Germany only had synthetic oil in small clusters mandating "good weather days". It was H2X raids on cities "with calamitous results" for civilians. Conflicts with the transport plan disputes saw Spaatz push his "oil campaign" -- "the most far-reaching use of strategic airpower that ... (may end) resistance in a shorter period than we ... thought possible."

For Bomber Command, March 1944 closed the Battle of Berlin in a whimper with Berlin standing and production climbing. Here weather, distance, and an efficient defense thwarted Bomber Command. In March Harris launched seven large raids—4,971 bomber sorties with 21,978 bomb tons – with Mosquito raids added. The first two, 1 and 15 March, hit Stuttgart losing just 4 of 502 bombers (< 1%). The second lost 37 of 813 (4.6%). The next two hit Frankfurt losing 3.6% of 1,543 aircraft. Tactics worked if the Command did not go far east of the Rhine.

On 24 March, the last heavy Berlin bomber raid had Germans correctly guessing for a debacle as scattered bombers drifted over flak positions that took a high toll of 72 out of 726 heavy bombers (**10% loss**). Two nights **299 300** later was Essen, an easy target where he lost just 9 of 677 bombers (1.3%).

Then came the infamous Nürnberg raid, 30 March, as German night fighters shot down bombers crossing the English Channel in the "**death ride of Bomber Command ....**" **RAF lost 95 of 710 bombers, a whopping 13.4% WWII record!** Losing so many in two missions stunned Bomber Command. "Harris ... resisted any notion that his force possessed the bombing accuracy ..." Teddard said Harris felt he "could undertake nothing other than 'mass fire raising ...'" Then Portal realized Harris was avoiding the transportation plan, so on 4 March he chose the March to May Pointblank and Overlord targets. Next, were raids on Friedrichshafen's tank and radar. Then six French marshaling yards as others tested Bomber Command's accuracy. Rail yards in populated tested accuracy. **Bomber Command was stellar - 301 with small civilian casualties** (22 deaths per raid). **Bomber Command proved, against its will, it could hit small targets at night more accurately than the Eighth in daylight!**



So “the roles of the Eighth and Bomber Command ... reversed ... Bomber Command had dropped ... three times ... (more) on transportation targets as the Eighth—46,000 to 13,000.” Spaatz was pleased that he could focus on his primary target – destruction of the *Luftwaffe*.

The Eighth sought German fighter defenses. Berlin produced 302 dogfights. On 3 March, 748 fighters flew to Berlin, then another 502 headed there, but only one wing made it. On 6 March, 730 bombers had a 125-mile-long Berlin column – in “one of the deadliest air battles of World War II.” The Eighth lost 69 of 672 bombers – a huge 10.3% -- with 347 damaged. 303 Fighters had 81. The Eighth returned on 8 March for Erkner ball bearings and the city center losing 37 of 539 bombers for 7% , but 19 fighter groups claimed 79 Germans. Next day with clouds, B-17s hit Berlin and central Germany. The Luftwaffe offered scant resistance, so only 6 or 239 bombers were lost – mostly flak.

### 3. Davis, COMBINED BOMBER OFFENSIVE March 16-31, 1944

#### 1. Key Dates:

16 March: Eighth Air Force—four B-17s and three B-24s intern Switzerland.
18 March: Eighth Air Force—12 B-24s and four B-17s interned in Switzerland.
19 March: Fifteenth AF —hits strength of 14 heavy bomber groups. 298
22 March: Eighth Air Force—one B-24 interns Sweden.
25 March: SHAEF—Gen Eisenhower selects transportation over oil plan.
29 March: Fifteenth Air Force—largest raid yet; almost 400 heavy bombers.
30–31 March: Bomber Command—lost 96 of 795 bombers at Nürnberg. Cuts attacks back.

The air force in-fighting angered Eisenhower. On 25 March he 239 announced he would not decide between camps but “I will request relief from this command.” Bomber Command had surprising accuracy bombing rail yards that were offset by increased casualties that were “prohibitive”! Teddar argued for transportation plan: 1) all agreed the Luftwaffe was No. 1 target; 2) only an all-out transport attack could disrupt Germans by D-Day; and 3) Eisenhower wanted the “Transportation Plan”. 240 Spaatz had poor arguments and his sparse presentation aided the transportation plan. Finally, a British oil expert reported the Germans had large oil reserves. Eisenhower overruled Spaatz.

2. **Harris and Bomber Command support.** Harris wanted to bomb eastern Germany in darkness allowed. Eisenhower agreed to focus on using the U.S. Eighth and Fifteenth forces 241 Spaatz argued 50% of his planes had to find targets that would force a *Luftwaffe* response -- only oil worked. Portal disagreed. Once the *Luftwaffe* saw the rail system threat, they would begin “an all-out campaign”. Spaatz wanted “deep raids” forcing Germans to engage. Portal raised a “show-stopper”: the fear of large civilian casualties. This was a “deal-killer” for Churchill. But Eisenhower took command of all air



forces to give Teddar control. It was historic -- Eisenhower chose transportation over the oil plan and air command arrangements were affected. 242

Critics have disputed the wisdom ... Much ink and emotion have flowed over the actual benefits derived from the transportation plan ... (Critics say) bridge busting and bombing of supply dumps would have consumed less ... (and) critics bemoan the “national disaster” of the delay in the oil campaign, which ... severely restricted Germany’s ability to wage war.

**3. Spaatz and the Oil Plan.** Spaatz had no proof oil was key. But Bomber Command had 26 French rail targets to force Harris into full participation to Spaatz’s pleasure. Spaatz wrote Portal and Eisenhower on “The Use of Strategic Bombers in Support of Overlord” calling for heavy rail attacks but then switched back to favoring oil attacks “... the effect from the Oil attack ... (is) more far reaching (and a) sure disaster for Germany. The Rail attack can lead to harassment only ...” So, he sought simultaneous attacks on “both the oil and transportation ...” He suggested his 243 fighter-bombers strike rails and synthetic fuel with Bomber Command making day attacks on French rails and Ruhr at night. Fifteenth would bomb transportation as the Russians were ready to capture Ploesti. And after Ploesti, Hitler only had synthetic oil. Specifically, targets for the Eighth were:

1. The Luftwaffe and ball bearings,
2. The nineteen rail targets already selected in occupied countries, and
3. The thirteen major synthetic oil plants.

For the Fifteenth were:

1. The Luftwaffe and ball bearings,
2. Rail transport in Rumania and selected targets in southern France,
3. Synthetic oil plants in south Germany, and

**4. Political targets in the Balkans.** On 22 March, 1,474 bombers and fighters, hit Berlin to lose just 12 bombers and 12 fighters. They further struck air industrial targets (Augsburg and Friedrichshafen 16 March and 18 March) losing 66 of 1,343 planes (5%) as U.S. escorts claimed 113 GAF but losing 15 AAF planes. A north-central Germany raid on 23 March lost 28 of 707 bombers and 4 fighters for 20 Germans downed. Little opposition meant the Luftwaffe could not attack each deep penetration. 304 In March the Eighth lost 349 heavy bombers (24.6%) – nearly 3,500 aircrew members; overall losses fell from 3.6% (February) to 3.3 % March. Fighter losses were only 1.6 %. Arnold reduced training two weeks. Instructors flew combat missions while crews returning instructed. Luftwaffe day fighters lost 56.4% of their planes by 1 March.

**5. German Narrow Margin Response to the Eighth’s New Tactics.** German night fighters stopped Bomber Command raids, but day fighters lost to the U.S. Increased intensity and tactics with a faulty organization and incompetent leader doomed the *Luftwaffe* October 1943 to March 1944. Göring ordered pilots to ignore U.S. 305 escorts -- impossible. Some struck first to force U.S. planes to drop their fuel tanks, but there were no safe bases for German fighters. They withdrew into Germany to face poor choices. If Allied planes were on anti-air missions, German planes remained set, but if too few fighters hit escorted bombers only U.S. fighter squadron engaged. 306 If large forces attacked, so what? U.S. fighters shot them down too. If all U.S. escorts hit German fighters, no problems!

Göring created five 307 air regions, but no central control. Lack of fighters arose from: 1) heavy losses and 2) inefficiency. U.S. escorts destroyed German plans. Before 1944, Germans waited for escorts to leave bombers naked, but P-51 Mustangs with drop tanks had the range needed to end the tactic. German twin engine fighters stayed out of machine gun range using 210 mm rockets on U.S. bombers, but U.S. single-engine fighters out-classed German twin engine planes that were “helpless”. By late 308 March, twin-engine fighters seldom defended. In December 1943, the *Luftwaffe* used 3-group attacks so one group got through. There were many accidents. The Me-262 jet was a mere

... nuisance ... too little, too late.” The *Luftwaffe* “suffered from ... fundamental shortcomings ... as being too) identified with the Nazi leadership ... (via) Hermann Göring ... (who) placed his own interests ahead of ... the Luftwaffe. What doomed ... (all was) utter self-interest ... and the 309 complete fecklessness of ... leadership when faced with rational wartime production decisions.

Hitler’s irrational, feckless leadership had “an economy geared to butter and guns ... (so too late) did the Germans finally begin to make substantial cuts in consumer production.” But the U.S. and U.K. were too far ahead. The *Luftwaffe* never increased its size as overconfidence spread a “lack of urgency”. Pilot training was too small until late 1942 disaster. The 1943 class of 3,276 was no help when 2,870 pilots were lost. Essentially, the *Luftwaffe* trained just enough pilots to cover those killed! 310

**6. Fifteenth Air Force in Italy. The AAF grew from 1,86 single-engine pilots in 1942 to 49,500 in 1943!** The Fifteenth Air Force went from 30 to 100 planes over targets as increased bomb tons made bombing more deadly. Operation STRANGLE interdicted copious quantities of goods. On 2 March it hit Anzio to snuff the last great counterattack. On 15 March came bombing the city Cassino, then the “third Battle of Cassino” and then 43 planes bombed Allied soldiers including Gen Sir Oliver Lesse, British Eighth Army commander. 311 Vienna, Austria -- the capital city without a country because so many of its monuments were ruined after peace in 1919. In WWII Vienna was bombed again and often for its aircraft plants, but Spaatz had wanted to hit the Ploesti refineries. On 5 March he asked Air Chief Marshal Charles Portal for permission, he received no answer. On 17 March Spaatz twice asked for Ploesti. Portal ordered the Fifteenth’s to capitals of Budapest, Bucharest, and Sofia, not Ploesti.

**7. Strategic Bombing and the Balkans.** Portal was caught in a quarrel between targeting oil and transport and Anglo-American bombing policy for Bulgaria, Rumania, and Hungary. For Portal it made little sense to cut natural petroleum, if the Allies would not then destroy synthetic plants. Portal said Ploesti refineries were too scattered. His orders against Balkan capitals augmented 312 Allied political and military objectives and using these three minor countries, would validate prewar strategic bombardment theories to break will of an enemy to force a surrender. Bulgaria was the first “subjected to Anglo-American coercion through strategic bombing” as eight Bulgarian divisions helped occupy Yugoslavia and Greece and anti-guerilla activities. In October 1943, Churchill meeting found:

We cannot tolerate any longer these activities of [the] Bulgarian jackals ... (and) a sharp lesson should be administered ... forcing them to withdraw their divisions from Yugoslavia and Greece ... adding to Germany’s difficulties ... We have carefully considered the best method of bringing Bulgaria to heel ... (with a) surprise air attack on Sofia, accompanied by leaflets ... would have ... most immediate effects warning ... Relatively small diversion of air resources required for above would be well worth while [sic] if Germany has to choose ...

**313** In the end, the U.S. agreed but deferred to Eisenhower who provided little more than a “tardy demonstration” as 90 B-25’s dropped only 140 tons on rail yards in Sophia then three small B-24 raids and two with just 48 bombers for a total of 352 bomb tons. Further raids rose totals to 960 bomb tons with many small raids had “A large portion of Sofia’s population, including government bureaucrats, fled the city ... disrupting the administration of the country ... stimulated opposition ... Bulgaria’s modest contribution to **314** the German war effort ... “ Its salutary effect was Bulgarian offers to switch sides to the Allies.” The history devotes 11 more pages to the Balkan issues and negotiations in WWII – which exceed the scope of this effort. **315 to 328**

## **F. March 16 - 31, 1944: Eighth AF Bombing Logs Excel Format, Buress xyza.**

**1. March Data.** Seven days of 15 saw 500 or more bombers attack -- undreamed of forces just one year prior. It was not only 500 bombers, but 500 fighters. They flew in groups to escort bombers on the way out, over the target and on the back, each fighter force able to take out *Luftwaffe* defenders in the air and then later the ground. By March 1944, bombers delivered overwhelming attacks every other day in reasonably poor March weather.

The year-to-date effort was 15,222 B-17 and B-24 sorties in three months! Over 20,300 in three months with fighters added. Over 700 big bombers were lost with 5,400 crew lost – again in just three months! However, the effort was so massive, losses were just 4% of the total. Fighters flew a huge 27,600 missions in only three months with far lower losses – only 10 likely killed, with about 300 as POW’s. These were truly heartening statistics.

YTD were 20,260 big bomber sorties – a crushing number. Sorties of six hundred, or more, bombers per day were standard. The loss of 750 bombers in three months was sad but expected given the ferocity of German resistance. The B-17 had 75% of the flights, but the B-24’s had increasing plane numbers and percent of participation, with losses of 3.5% and 4.7% respectively. They sound low, but if a crew had to fly 25 missions without a break, odds where they would be shot down as one mission equaled 4% of their total minimum. The odds were not 50/50! YTD 445 bomber crew were killed, 680 wounded, but 7,204 were MIA!

But they shot down 2,735 German planes with another 1,000-enemy ranked as 50/50 losses. Fighter pilots flew 27,600 missions (7,400 more than bombers) with lower losses of 3.2%. Far few fighter were lost - only 270 in three months.



The authors defend “area bombing” because U.S. “precision bombing” was “area bombing” in disguise that exhausted Germany’s energy and production cushions forcing limits on raw materials for the military. “But the results are hard to measure and there are other difficulties ... the moral issue.”

Yet, the true strategic purpose was to eliminate German air power! On 6 June 1944, Eisenhower announced: "If you see fighting aircraft over you, they will be ours." German fighter defenses only had 160 aircraft -- 80 operational on D-Day. SHAEF had air superiority for the entire invasion – created by the strategic bombers since June 1943. In truth, the GAF was defeated before D-Day 58 through attrition of its air forces, trained pilots and fighter plane manufacturing. To repeat: the air victory was won before D-Day. British Air Marshall Bottomley in August 1947 concluded: "(Air) superiority which was an absolute prerequisite ... (and) the greatest contribution made by any force was that made by the Strategic Air Forces ... " *(Comment: A conclusion so obvious, it is missed. A year prior it had been a faint hope!)*

### **3. The Defeat of the German Air Force --- The Unfavorable Post-War U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey.**

The authors acknowledge the unfavorable post-war Strategic Bombing Survey to argue it did not denigrate from the efforts or sacrifices of aircrews. "... (The) story of the defeat of the GAF remains ... complex ... While it is not the purpose of this history to ... retrace the ground thoroughly surveyed ... (in) the **(hyper-critical) U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, some of the problems, paradoxes, and enigmas ... bear re-sketching** if for no other reason, in the interests of a clearer understanding of what strategic air power can and cannot do."

**Most baffling was aircraft expansion despite daylight bombing. The Allies believed the GAF was dying, but in 1943 it maintained and then increased fighter forces to be a bigger threat in 1944.** After the February 1944, 59 Germans could not oppose daylight bombing. So, it was a post-war surprise to hear German single engine fighter production rapidly increased into September 1944. The authors claim bombing did not fail – it began in April 1943 as Germany massively increased plane production that month. The CBO and new production accelerated together. February 1944 attacks hit full plane pipelines that diversified to double production 60 in 1944 over that of 1943 – a coincidence.

Second, the U.S. Bombing Survey also counted repaired planes so its 25,860 single engine fighters accepted in 1944 included repaired planes, not new ones based upon a document found after the war showing new and repaired German plane engines and these totals match German production figures proving that many “new” planes were older, refurbished. The USSBS post-war survey counted repaired planes as new fighters to skew the percentages and to hold the bombing campaign was not as effective as claimed because the Germans made 2,000 more new fighters per month when one-third were old ones repaired. Bombing of factories was far more effective than the survey concluded. 61 Pilot training was a problem as they had less training due to fuel shortages for more losses, more pilots ill-trained. 62

... Big Week ... (Spring 1944 forced) the GAF ... to admit defeat ... (when after) the last quarter of 1943 ... (it suffered) steadily increasing number of losses ... By March, the ability of the GAF to ... (engage) on anything like equal terms ... (began) deteriorating whereas the capabilities of the Allies were improving. If the German losses ... were less than claimed ... the GAF ... was

swamped by a force superior ... (in numbers and quality thus) in February and March 1944 a significant defeat.