

BOMBER COMMAND'S PAPER WAR

As the air campaign was stepped up, the quantities dropped on Germany increased to more than 1,000,000 per month. But these were not high explosive bombs or incendiaries, they were propaganda leaflets! Derek Gandy analyses the scale and effectiveness of Bomber Command's paper war.

Total war is never a straightforward business. Strangely, one of Bomber Command's most controversial activities, criticised heavily at the time as wasteful in aircraft and resources, and later considered by some as being somewhat ludicrous, was its leafletting campaign over Occupied Europe.

The policy of leafletting perhaps came naturally to the Royal Air Force. Its predecessor, the Royal Flying Corps, had the distinction of launching the world's first regular aerial newspaper. *Le Courier de l'Air* was introduced

on 6 April 1917, and dropped over the occupied areas of France and Belgium. In October that year, the crew of an RFC aeroplane shot down on a leafletting raid were tried by the Germans and sentenced to ten years in prison for dropping seditious material, which the Germans considered to be outside the rules of war. After this incident leaflet dropping was halted for nearly a year, after when raids were again authorised to drop propaganda material and calls to surrender on the defeated German Army. By all accounts, these proved very effective.

In the 1920s and 1930s the programme continued, albeit with a slightly different emphasis. The RAF was given the mandate to keep control of large tracts of the Empire, and would maintain order by bombing the villages or strongholds of rebellious tribes. Leaflets would usually be dropped on the targets a day or so in advance of the raid, encouraging the locals to vacate the area, and hopefully keeping casualties to a minimum.

At the time of the Munich Crisis of 1938, when Britain suddenly faced the very real probability of hostilities, the Air Ministry commissioned the drafting of leaflets to be dropped on Germany.

Perhaps based on the 1917 experiences, extensive counsel was taken on the legalities of dropping leaflets in time of war.

The tactic was approved, and by September 1939 plans were underway. The Air Ministry was very much going to follow the inter-war pattern of dropping warnings. One memo to the Foreign Office stated: "There is a specific type of propaganda which is of more particular interest to the Air Staff; namely the dropping of warning notes to the civil population to evacuate an area selected for attack."

This provides an important insight into the mindset of the Air Ministry on the outbreak of war. Despite clear signs from Spain, and later Poland, it would seem that they were still convinced that a gentlemanly air war could be fought, and one strictly within the rules of war. There was even talk of forming a special leafletting unit based around the Long Range Development Flight, equipped with purpose-built aircraft.

The first leaflet raid, given the operational name "Nickel", took place on the very first day of hostilities. Indeed, it could be said to be Bomber Command's first successful operation of the war.

On the night of 3/4 September 1939, two operations were carried out. Vickers Wellingtons



and Bristol Blenheims were sent to find the German fleet, but returned without making contact. At the same time, ten Armstrong Whitworth Whitleys dropped some 5.4 million leaflets (also known individually as Nickels) on the Ruhr, Hamburg and Bremen.

Through September, over sixty sorties were flown over eleven nights. Then, at this point, the programme came to an abrupt halt. Criticisms of the policy of using expensive machines and highly trained crews to deliver arguably pointless payloads, plus resurging worries over the legalities of the raids, saw them being put on hold for a fortnight, though they resumed at the end of the month. However, the sortie rates remained low with only Whitleys being employed. Finally, in mid-November 1939 it was formalised that Bomber Command would deliver 500,000 newsletters and 1,000,000 leaflets per month, equating to eight sorties.

The leaflets carried on these raids were mostly pleas to the German people for reason, along with explanations that the United Kingdom did not want war and had no quarrel with them but rather with their leadership. They were designed to be printed on 8.5 inch by 5 inch sheets, which were stacked in bundles of either 1,500 (weighing 5lbs) or 3,000 (weighing 10lbs).

A rubber band was wrapped around one end of each bundle, an inch or so from the edge, while string was tied around it lengthwise. The bundles were stacked in the fuselage of the aircraft, and crewmembers would have to cut the string on each one and drop them out through the escape hatch or the flare tube. The rubber band would then hold the bundle together long enough for it to fall clear of the aircraft, before coming loose and scattering the leaflets to the wind. From 12,000 feet, the optimum dropping height, the leaflets would take over an hour to flutter to the ground, by which time they would have been spread out over an immense area.

Despite the preparations, the Nickeling flights did not always go according to plan. Frequently the bomber crews found that conditions were

far from ideal for such a fiddly task as cutting strings and positioning rubber bands. The aircraft being used were thin skinned, and at 12,000 feet it would be bitterly cold, even without the wind that would howl along the fuselage, blasting through the gaps around the nose turret for example. The fingers doing this work would quickly be numbed and clumsy, and it was not unusual for a bundle to be accidentally dropped, the inside of the fuselage becoming a whirling mass of small sheets of thin paper.

By the end of December 1939, some 123 Whitley leafleting sorties had been carried out for the loss of four aircraft. Compare this to the twenty-nine aircraft lost from the 130 sent out on anti-shipping strikes in the same period. However, the questioned remained: "What practical use were these raids?" Sir Arthur Harris, when Air Officer Commanding Bomber Command later in the war, would famously sum up the leafleting campaign with the words: "My personal view is that the only thing achieved was largely to supply the Continent's requirements of toilet paper for the five long years of war."¹

However, such missions were considered by some to be valuable in several ways. Firstly, they gave both the crews and the RAF as a whole important night-flying experience over Germany. After all, the rest of the bombing force was only allowed to attack German shipping at sea – if it could be found. The leaflet raids also helped reveal what was, or was not, working in respect of RAF practices and procedures. Night flying and navigational standards were soon found to be inadequate, and steps taken to remedy this, in both training and the development of new technologies and techniques; aircrew clothing and oxygen supplies were also shown to be



sub-standard, and again solutions and improvements were sought.

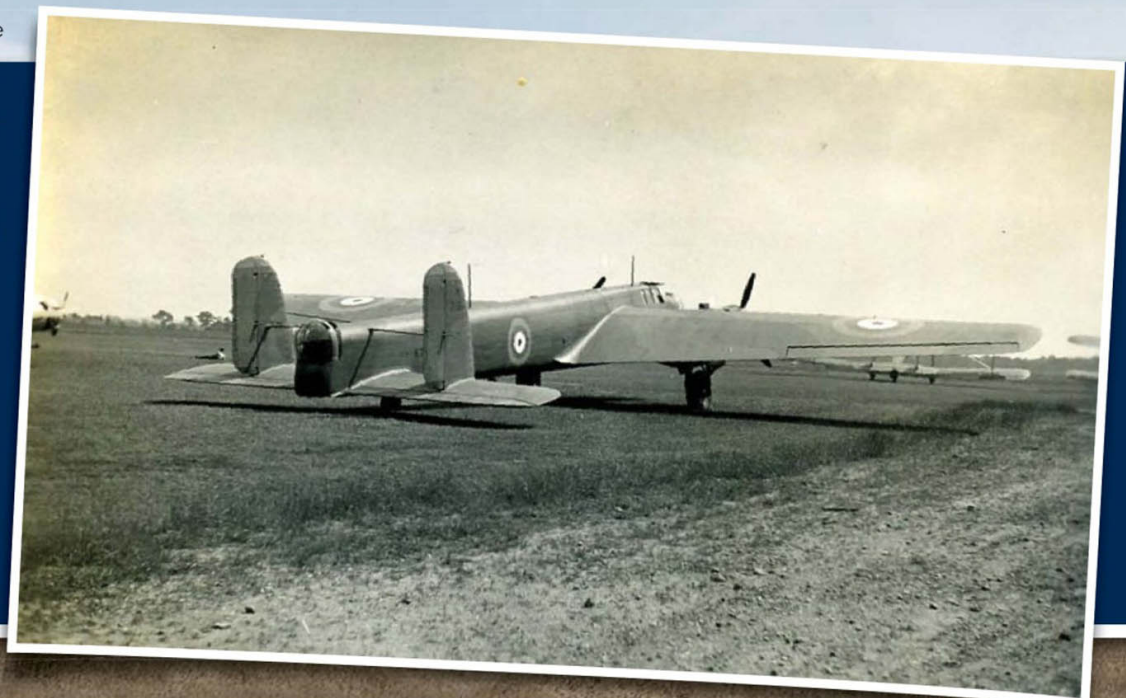
Secondly, vital intelligence was often gathered – enemy defences were mapped, and their effectiveness (or otherwise) probed. What would now be termed "pattern-of-life" information was also gleaned: the weight, patterns and types of traffic on main roads, railways, waterways and airfields were monitored to establish peak times and for signs of unusual activity.

In January 1940, the rest of the medium bomber force – the Wellingtons and the Hampdens – joined the Whitleys on Nickeling duties; clearly the RAF wanted all of their night bomber crews to build up operational experience over Germany. The raids were now pushing farther and farther into the skies over Occupied Europe. By the end of the month, aircraft were staging through French airfields to drop leaflets on targets as far away as Vienna and Prague. On the 15/16 March 1940, the longest range Bomber Command operation to date saw two Whitleys dropping Nickels over Warsaw, although the operation nearly ended in disaster (see *Britain at War* Issue No.35). In that month, some twenty-two

LEFT: Ground crew loading containers filled with propaganda leaflets – "Nickels" – into the bomb bay of a Vickers Wellington. (HMP)

ABOVE RIGHT: A member of the crew of Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Mk.V N1386 of 102 Squadron, assisted by ground crew, loads propaganda leaflets into his aircraft at RAF Driffield, Yorkshire, in April 1940. The fuselage roundel, just visible on the extreme left of the image, has had its outer (yellow) ring over-painted to reduce the aircraft's visibility at night. (HMP)

RIGHT: A 51 or 102 (Ceylon) Squadron Armstrong Whitworth Whitley pictured during the winter of 1939-1940 – during which time much of the work undertaken by such aircraft was the Nickel raids over Germany and Occupied Europe. Indeed, for both squadrons, their first operational flights of the Second World War took place on 3/4 September 1939, when the crews dropped leaflets over Germany. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)



A single Short Stirling set a new record, dropping

LUFTPOST
 Von der Royal Air Force
 abgeworfen
 No. 18
 16. September 1941

Roosevelt befiehlt: FEUER!

DREIHUNDERT weitere Kriegsschiffe machen jetzt die Jagd auf deutsche U-Boote im Atlantik mit. Es sind die Schiffe der amerikanischen Flotte, die am 12. September, um 4 Uhr morgens, Präsident Roosevelts Befehl erhielten, sofort zu feuern, wenn sie auf Kriegsschiffe der Achsenmächte in den von Amerika bewachten Gewässern stossen sollten.

„Das Ziel der...“
 „Die Oberbefehlshaber der amerikanischen Streitkräfte haben...“
 „Die Kriegsschiffe...“
 „Die...“

VOR EINEM JAHR

WAS NICHT IM OKW-BERICHT STEHT
 DANK...
 „...“
 „...“

Ein U-Boot kapituliert



Ein U-Boot kapituliert

Ein U-Boot...
 „...“
 „...“

This time the emphasis was quite different. In the early months of the war the intention had been to appeal to the German people for peace. Now the onus was on keeping the flame of hope alive among the occupied peoples, and to keep them informed of events in the outside world.

On the night of 30/31 October 1941, a single Short Stirling from No.3 Group set a new record, dropping 2½ tons of leaflets – a staggering 1,120,000 individual Nickels – over Le Havre, Lille and Paris, each one carrying General de Gaulle's call for a national, five minute strike in protest against the Germans.

With their own news heavily censored, for much of the population of Western Europe the two mains sources of information, and for news on the course of the war generally, would be the BBC and the RAF. Regular



against mainland Europe was staged, against the German-occupied airfield at Stavanger, Norway.

Then the Phoney War ended. Suddenly, Bomber Command was much in demand. Suspending leaflet raids the crews turned their attentions to the German Army that was sweeping across the Low Countries. On the night of 15/16 May the campaign against German industry began as ninety-nine aircraft bombed the Ruhr in retaliation for the German air raids that had destroyed large areas of Rotterdam. The RAF was now putting the expertise formed during their much criticised leafletting campaigns to more destructive use.

During the fighting in France and Belgium, Bomber Command was fully committed to the fight to stem the enemy's advance across Europe. Despite taking terrible losses, they inflicted significant damage on the German forces, and even more so against the build up of shipping and materiel being gathered for the possible invasion of Britain. As autumn turned to winter, and it became clear that the UK was safe from immediate threat, leafletting returned to the agenda.

newsletters were organised and arranged – some of them would become weekly – for each country. Examples included *De Luchtpost* and *De Wervelwind* (The Whirlwind) for the Netherlands, *Le Courier de l'Air*, among others, for France, and even *Luftpost* for dropping over Germany.

In April 1942, when thirty million leaflets were dropped (bringing the cumulative total up to 250 million since the outbreak of war), some forty-eight different publications or designs were in use, many being consecutive editions of the national newsletters. These publications became highly sought after, despite harsh punishments for those found in possession of them. Intelligence reports from the

million leaflets would be dropped by the RAF.

It was in March that the RAF's war became more serious. After a German raid had seen bombs fall on and around Scapa Flow, the RAF bombed the German seaplane base on the island of Sylt. A month later, the first bombing raid



2½ tons of leaflets – a staggering 1,120,000 individual Nickels – over France

continent told of leaflets being passed in secret from household to household, even in Germany, with sometimes hundreds of people reading just one newsletter, and of avid competition to secure personal copies. Reputedly, one doctor in France even financed a highly successful drive for blood donations by giving a leaflet (supplied by the local police) to each donor.

The information on the leaflets formed the basis for underground newspapers which were produced in secret and often distributed by underground networks. It is clear that however disparaged the Nickels might be in Britain, they were a vital source of information and hope for those in occupied countries.

The Nickeling effort reached its peak in August 1942, when some 72,500,000 leaflets were dropped in just four weeks. The increasing strength of Bomber Command was one factor, another was that the leaflets were by then being dropped from containers in bomb bays, making the task much easier. Two months later, Operational Training Units began to supply aircraft for Nickeling, providing crews with valuable operational experience. The following month,

November, leaflets also began to be carried by fighters on intruder operations over northern

tight and pin-point attack, but inevitably some civilian casualties were inflicted. Anticipating this, the bombers had dropped over two million leaflets during the raid, explaining why the factory was being attacked. Between 25 and 30 May, another two million leaflets were dropped over Paris and the surrounding industrial areas, again explaining why the raid and the civilian deaths had been necessary, and including post-raid photographs.

The leaflet declared: "We know that only victory can bring some consolation to

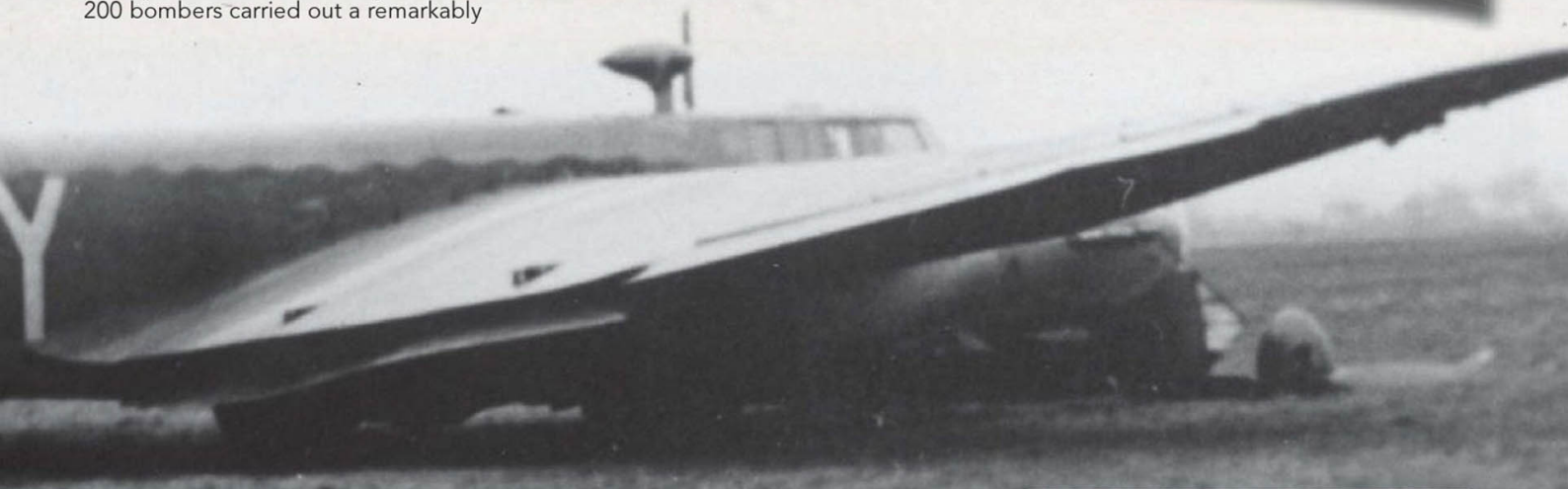
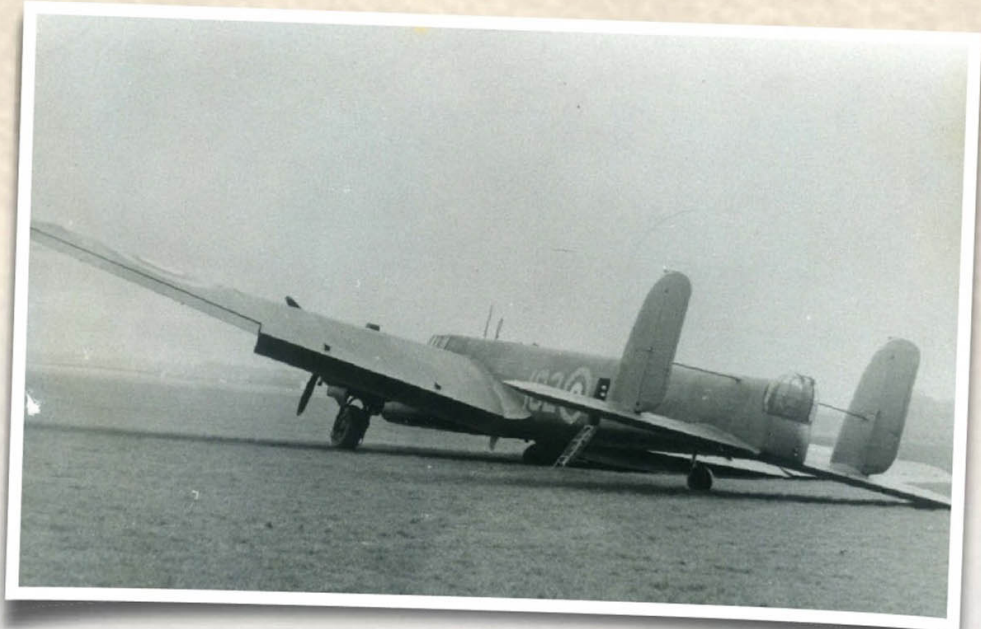


ABOVE: Revived from the First World War, the French language propaganda leaflet *Le Courrier de l'Air* – "Air Mail" – was one of the Allied propaganda newspapers dropped by air into Occupied France. This edition was the third printed in 1942. (HMP)



Europe, while Bomber Command "nickeled" Italy for the first time.

By this stage of the war, apart from general war news and messages of encouragement, some leaflets were more specifically targeted. A good example would be the raid against the Renault factory near Paris on 3/4 May 1942. Some 200 bombers carried out a remarkably



MAIN PICTURE and ABOVE: Two Whitleys pictured having come to grief after participating in Nickel raids during the winter of 1939-1940. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)

"They were keenly collected, copied and disseminated – even in Germany".

**DER FÜHRER
ÜBERNIMMT
DAS
KOMMANDO**



ABOVE: A member of 102 Squadron shows a number of VIPs around a Whitley following its return from a Nickel raid the previous night. (Courtesy of Chris Goss)

BELOW LEFT: A single sheet propaganda leaflet that was dropped over German targets in 1940. Printed on both sides, it is headed "Er braucht Kanonenfutter!" – "Cannon fodder needed." (HMP)

BELOW RIGHT: The burnt-out wreckage of 37 Squadron's Vickers Wellington Mk.Ia P2515 (LF-H) after it was shot-down by flak during a Nickel raid on the night of 23/24 March 1940. Having taken off from RAF Feltwell, the bomber crashed in flames in a wooded area of the Eifel mountains in western Germany. One member of the crew was killed in the crash – the Second Pilot, Sergeant D.W. Wilson – whilst the remainder were taken prisoner. However, the pilot, Flying Officer Paul F. Templeman, had sustained serious burns, injuries from which he died on 31 March 1940. (HMP)

After the 1,000 bomber raid on Cologne on the night of 30 May 1942, leaflets were dropped informing the rest of Germany of the magnitude of the attack and to expect more of the same (and worse). Churchill was quoted in one leaflet: "From now on we shall bomb Germany on an ever increasing scale, month by month, year by year, until the Nazi regime has either been exterminated by us or – better still – torn to pieces by the German people themselves."

On the same leaflet Britain offered Germany, "Justice for all, punishment of the criminals, economic equality and security". However, the demand was also made that the "German people must act themselves in order to free themselves from Hitler's gangster rule".²

Other Nickels had far more nefarious intent. In 1941 the Political Warfare Executive had begun producing black propaganda for the RAF – "black" in that this material would not be in any way recognisable as propaganda.³ There would be no way to identify the objects as British in origin, hopefully magnifying its impact.

would be dropped by the RAF. Some were subtle – such as sheets of stamps intended to undermine the German economy or postal service, or with small changes made to their designs to foster suspicion of the German Government; bogus wanted posters; or even items which were designed to look like German propaganda, but with alarming or subversive messages.

Some were more direct, and took advantage of local events or uneasiness. In November and December 1941, RAF Mosquitoes dropped copies of a forged letter purporting to be from Colonel Werner Mölders, a First World War German ace, around Luftwaffe aerodromes near Münster. Mölders had died in November in an aeroplane crash while on his way to the funeral of another First World War ace, Ernst Udet.

Mölders had been a highly popular figure, and known to be a staunch Roman Catholic who was uneasy about some Nazi policies. In the letter, to a Catholic priest, he apparently criticised the Nazis' anti-religious stance, a not-uncommon sentiment in Germany. The letter was rapidly disseminated across Germany, fuelling the unease of many, and was still being read from pulpits across the country six months later. An extensive Gestapo investigation was launched, in

In all, over 375 million "black" leaflets, booklets or other items

Wer zahlt für Hitlers Krieg?

Deutsche Frauen und Mütter: es ist Krieg! Zum zweiten Mal in einem Menschenleben – Krieg! Ein Krieg, den eure Wächter 7 Jahre lang vorbereiteten und durch den Überfall auf Polen entfesselten. Und Krieg heißt

taufendfacher Tod!

Was ist aus eurem Leben geworden? Ständliche Angst um eure Häuser draußen; endloses Schlangegehen. Allein mit den Kleinen, die dem schrecklichen Hunger der Unterversorgung ausgehert sind, – denn Butter und Vollmilch sind für die Reicheren – da, wie üblich am 15. Febr. Misp und klar koste. Und das ist erst der Anfang! Hitler koste euch: –

„Es kann drei, fünf oder sieben Jahre dauern...“

Ist möglich, wo es euch brechig geht, fangen die Herren Nazis an, euch zu schmeicheln. Oben so mächtig wie bei Kriegsbeginn der Sozialismus – Kammel begann. Denn jetzt brauchen sie euch – und das Regime zittert um seine Machtposition.

Eure Männer und Jungen sollen für einen Eroberungskrieg sterben. Und die Regierung zahlt die

deutsche Frau!

Lebte im Jahre 1940 aus Germany

Er braucht Kanonenfutter!

weil es an Deutschland liegt, wird es keinen Krieg geben. nationalsozialistische Regierung ist überzeugt, daß niemand einem Krieg Nutzen zieht. Wir wollen nichts anderes, unsere gegenwärtigen Reichsgeringen erhalten.“ Adolf Hitler, 1934.

Niemals ist ein Volk so irreführend worden.

Wächter nahmen eure Männer, nicht um Deutschland zu verteidigen, das niemand bedroht hatte, sondern um

Machtraum

zu gewinnen. deutsche Frauen und Mütter, sollt mehr Kinder in die Welt setzen. „Es muß eine ständig wachsende Geburtenziffer Verlust an der Front „jettmachen“, schrieb Himmlers am 4. Jan. 1940. Und im über schrieb die letzte Zeitung ganz offen, daß jedes deutsche ein „Ersatzmann“ sein müsse.

ist die Wahrheit:

nenfutter ist der Preis, den Deutschlands Hitler für den Eroberungskrieg zahlen müssen. Ich deutsche Frauen, fällt die schwerste Last. Ihr seid ein Opfer des Nazi-Krieges. Verlaßt euch darauf, nach die Mütter lassen den Krieg, wie alle Mütter der Welt, wissen, daß ihre Söhne kämpfen, um das zu verteidigen, er verloren habt – die

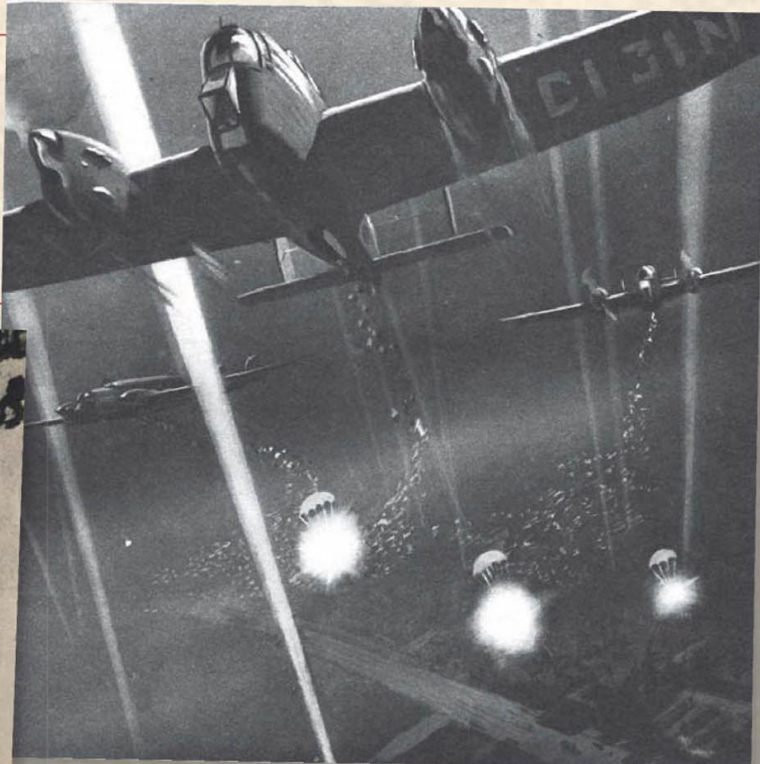
Freiheit.



the families, comrades, and compatriots of those who have lost their lives in this operation. It is in order to bring the day of this final and absolute victory closer that we are working night and day."



RIGHT: A contemporary artist's illustration of the Nickel raid on Berlin that took place on 27 February 1940. The original caption states that it shows aircraft "dropping flares and leaflets on Unter den Linden – Berlin's Oxford Circus". Between the first Nickel raid to Berlin on 1-2 October 1939, and 2 March 1940, the aircraft of Bomber Command undertook seven sorties to the German capital. (HMP)



Dieser Brief wurde bei einem deutschen Soldaten in Russland gefunden. Die Schreibertasche hat bereits am 7. September gewusst, was ihr Mann in Russland brauchen werde. Aber Hitler, der „alles von vornherein einkalkuliert hat“ kam erst 3 Monate später darauf. Am 21. Dezember erfuhr das deutsche Volk, dass es seine Woll- und Fettsachen abgeben müsse, um Hitlers Versäumnis gutzumachen.

DAS VERDANKT IHR EUREM FÜHRER!

the course of which even Mölders' mother was interrogated. Incredibly, at no point were the RAF or the British suspected of involvement.

Other, more general, Nickels were even more successful. Forged ration books would create havoc in localised areas, while perhaps the most enduring

was the "Malingers Booklet". This gave advice to soldiers or workers on how to fake or simulate illnesses. The booklet went through over twenty editions and almost doubled in length from 64 pages to 104 pages during the course of the war. Each edition had a different front cover to disguise it – such as dictionaries, railway

timetables, novels, travel-guides. It must have been successful, as a translation was later distributed by the Germans among the Allied forces in Italy. As late as 1980, almost exact copies were being circulated by left-wing groups in West Germany.

The Nickeling campaign in Europe carried on until the middle of 1944, from which time the D-Day landings and Allied advances rendered them all but obsolete. A final, brief return was seen in April and May 1945 when the campaign flared again as Allied aircraft dropped leaflets bearing news and instructions as to what to do after the surrender of Germany to prisoners of war in the many camps across Europe.

Leaflets were also dropped over the PoW camps in the Far East, though this theatre of war saw Nickeling on a much smaller scale than in Europe. Between September 1942 and July 1943, only a

ABOVE: Produced by the Political Warfare Executive in 1942, "The Fuhrer Takes Over Command" leaflet was first disseminated by aircraft on the night 28/29 January 1942, and was last dropped on 10/11 February 1942. The photomontage technique seen here was commonly used by the Political Warfare Executive. For instance, one leaflet criticising the Wehrmacht's efforts in Russia depicted Hitler rubbing his hands whilst superimposed over a montage of numerous dead soldiers lying in the snow. The image was accompanied by a quote: "I feel so fresh, the spring is coming, (Adolf Hitler, 24 February 1941)." (HMP)

BELOW LEFT: Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Harris, Commander in Chief of Royal Air Force Bomber Command, seated at his desk at Bomber Command HQ, High Wycombe. After the war Harris, writing on the subject of the RAF's wartime leaflet campaign, noted: "I have consistently regarded such methods of warfare as wholly ridiculous and a complete waste of time." (HMP)

BELOW RIGHT: Surrounded by bundles of leaflets, two members of a Whitley crew despatch their non-lethal cargo during a Nickel raid. According to one press account published in March 1940, the aircraft involved would fly "so low that the pilots knew in which streets they were dropping leaflets"! The same crew found that they "met no resistance worth speaking of". (HMP)



VERHÄLTNIS DER VERLUSTE

(Der Kampf hat keine Verluste, die nicht durch die Luftwaffe verursacht sind)

DEUTSCH

DEUTSCH

BRITISCH

BRITISCH

FLUGZEUGE		MANNschaften	
Deutsch	Britisch	Deutsch	Britisch
16. Juni - 7. Aug.	285	5,41	718
8. - 31. Aug.	1079	3,71	2230
Zusammen:	1364	3,91	2948

UND IN DEUTSCHLAND ...

Tag und Nacht bombardieren englische Flieger lebenswichtige Punkte der hitlerschen Kriegsmaschine u.a. in:

Augsburg (Messerschmitt)	Eisen	Jena (Zeiss)	Müncheln (Bayr. Maschinen)
Dresden (Messerschmitt)	Essen (Krupp)	Kassel	Nürnberg
Bamberg (Junkers)	Frankfurt	Karlsruhe	Regensburg
Bielefeld (Aluminiumwerke)	Fulda	Kiel	Stettin
Böhlen	Görlitz	Köln (Rheinische Kraftwerke)	Südwestfalen
Breslau	Halle	Krefeld	Wuppertal
Bromberg (Pöckel-Wulf)	Hamburg	Leipzig	Zürich
Chemnitz	Darmstadt (Junkers)	Magdeburg	
Düsseldorf	Dresden (Junkers)	Mannheim	
Dresden (Junkers)	Dresden (Junkers)	Mannheim	
Dresden (Junkers)	Dresden (Junkers)	Mannheim	
Dresden (Junkers)	Dresden (Junkers)	Mannheim	
Dresden (Junkers)	Dresden (Junkers)	Mannheim	

Sieht das nach einer deutschen Luftherrschaft aus?!

This is one of the earliest leaflets dropped by the RAF over Germany. It was dropped on 8 September 1939 by a Whitley Mk.III K8985 (DY-J). Flown by Flying Officer W.C.G. Cogman, this aircraft took off from RAF Driffield at 23.59 hours on 8 September 1939 to undertake leaflet dropping over Germany. However, in the early hours of the 9th, the aircraft strayed into neutral airspace over Belgium and the plane was forced to land at Nivelles aerodrome. Both the bomber and crew were interned; while the latter subsequently returned to Britain, the Whitley was reported to have been destroyed on the first day of the German attack on 10 May 1940. Having returned to duties, Cogman was shot down on 19 May 1940, whilst at the controls of Mk.V N1417 (DY-B). Cogman was the only member of the crew to evade capture (one man was killed) and was reported safe on the 20th. However, he is believed to have drowned when the SS Aboukir was sunk whilst outward bound from Ostend to Britain on 28 May 1940. (Both courtesy of Chris Goss)

Deutsche Luftwaffe über Grossbritannien GESCHLAGEN!

Warum hat Hitler versprochen Siegerparade am 15. August in London nicht statt Göring, immerhin ein Fachmann, die Entscheidung mit abzustimmen, die Entscheidung mit abzustimmen, die Entscheidung mit abzustimmen...

ÜBER ENGLAND ABGESCHOSSENE DEUTSCHE MASCHINEN:

	Bomber	Jagdflugzeuge	Unbestimmt	Zusammen
16. Juni - 7. Aug.	150	117	18	285
8. - 31. Aug.	389	417	73	879
Zusammen:	539	534	91	1164

Das bedeutet, dass die deutsche Luftwaffe vom 16. Juni bis 31. August (Tote und Gefallene zusammen gerechnet) etwa 2968 Mann verloren hat.

In den obigen Abschnitten sind nur einwandfrei feststehende Abschüsse angegeben. Darüber hinaus wurden noch etwa halb so viele weitere Maschinen so schwer beschädigt, dass sie wohl nicht mehr nach ihren Flugplätzen zurückkehren konnten. Fragt Göring, was aus ihren Besatzungen geworden ist!

DIE FLIEGER, DIE GÖRING VERLOREN HAT, KANN GOEBBELS NICHT NACH DEUTSCHLAND ZURÜCKFLÜGEN

FÜR ANGESCHÖRTE VON GEFANGENEN werden deren Namen in den regelmäßigen deutschen Sendungen des britischen Rundfunks verlesen. Lesende möge Nachrichten in deutscher Sprache täglich 22.00, 23.15 und 0.15 Uhr (373,1; 261,1; 49,59; 42,10; 41,49; 31,55 und 30,96 m); 6.00 und 6.30 Uhr (373,1; 49,59; 41,49; und 30,96 m); 14.30 und 15.30 Uhr (49,59; 49,10; 41,49; 25,36; und 25,29 m).

LEFT: Another early RAF propaganda leaflet. With the main heading "Deutsche Luftwaffe über Grossbritannien Geschlagen!", or "German Luftwaffe over Great Britain Beaten", it goes on to detail the extent of the Luftwaffe's losses - from a British perspective of course. Possibly retained as memento of one aircrew member's involvement in leaflet-dropping operations, this example has the pencilled annotation: "This is one of the ... of leaflets dropped by the RAF all over Germany during Sept & Oct 1940." (HMP)

British air-dropped leaflets as the source of a malicious attack on German propaganda, whereby a mathematical formula was given to help derive true casualty rates on the Eastern Front from those that the Germans published.

Clearly, the Germans saw the leaflets as subversive and a very real threat to morale. This, no doubt, was one of the reasons why Bomber Command undertook one of the largest and most concerted propaganda campaigns the world has ever seen. ■

couple of million leaflets were dropped. The languages they were printed in included Japanese, Urdu, Hindi, Chia, Kachin and Karem.

From April 1943, a regular Burmese newsletter was produced: *Lay-nat-tha*, or *Spirit of the Air*. In August 1945, two RAF Thunderbolt squadrons were tasked with searching for PoW camps and dropping news and instructions to them. Over the course of four days, Operation *Birdcage* saw the aircraft drop some eighteen million leaflets in a somewhat novel fashion. Bombs, each with 20,000 Nickels inside, were rigged to explode at between 6-8,000 feet, showering the

RIGHT and BELOW: Two views of an early casualty of the Nickel raids - 102 Squadron's Whitley Mk.III K8985 (DY-J). Flown by Flying Officer W.C.G. Cogman, this aircraft took off from RAF Driffield at 23.59 hours on 8 September 1939 to undertake leaflet dropping over Germany. However, in the early hours of the 9th, the aircraft strayed into neutral airspace over Belgium and the plane was forced to land at Nivelles aerodrome. Both the bomber and crew were interned; while the latter subsequently returned to Britain, the Whitley was reported to have been destroyed on the first day of the German attack on 10 May 1940. Having returned to duties, Cogman was shot down on 19 May 1940, whilst at the controls of Mk.V N1417 (DY-B). Cogman was the only member of the crew to evade capture (one man was killed) and was reported safe on the 20th. However, he is believed to have drowned when the SS *Aboukir* was sunk whilst outward bound from Ostend to Britain on 28 May 1940. (Both courtesy of Chris Goss)

leaflets over the landscape.

So what use was leafletting? Had it been a waste of resources? Every indication seems to suggest that for the Nickel missions this was almost certainly not the case, that the occupied peoples of Europe set great store by the RAF's leaflets. They were keenly collected, copied and disseminated - even in Germany.

Apart from the "black" material, which created suspicion and discontent as well as more tangible results (when forged ration books were found, the authorities would close down all shops in nearby towns), even the overt propaganda was taken seriously by the Germans. In 1940, British leaflets were dropped criticising the performance of the Luftwaffe's much vaunted Messerschmitt Bf 109, particularly the way it would vibrate in tight turns, and calling it the "Flutterschmitt". In one week, no less than twenty-five broadcasts were made by the German propaganda machine across a variety of radio networks countering this claim.

On one occasion, Joseph Goebbels personally spoke on the radio to refute a Nickel that compared British and German shipping losses. Likewise, a series of broadcasts in March 1942, on various French and Belgian networks, specifically referenced

- Notes:**
1. Sir Arthur Harris, *Bomber Offensive*, (Collins, London, 1947), p.36.
 2. Lee Richards, "The Day Is Coming: British Aerial Propaganda to Germany, 1940-44", which can be read on the extremely informative website www.psywar.org.
 3. Formed in August 1941, the Political Warfare Executive reported to the Foreign Office. Whilst its staff were mostly drawn from SO1, which had been until then the propaganda arm of the Special Operations Executive, the organisation was controlled by a committee initially comprising Anthony Eden (Foreign Secretary), Brendan Bracken (Minister of Information) and Hugh Dalton (Minister of Economic Warfare), together with officials Rex Leeper, Dallas Brooks and Robert Bruce Lockhart as chairman (later Director General).

