

# Air Raids

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armada 100 miles west of the capital and fought them all the way in to the target, across the city and along the homeward flight.

Returning bomber crews and fighter pilots, however, said the massed firepower of the Fortresses and Liberators and the tight screen of American fighters overwhelmed the German aerial defenses.

## CURTAIN OF FIRE

Berlin's anti-aircraft batteries threw up a vicious curtain of fire, but the Nazi fighter pilots fought a hopeless battle all the way.

The American raiders flew through clear weather and picked out their targets easily through a scattered cloud formation. At least two large areas of flame—each about one block square—were seen spreading through the city when the bombers turned away.

Bombardiers were able to dis-

tinguish such landmarks as the Nazi Sportpalast and they agreed there was no doubt they had "blasted hell out of the target."

The German fighters rose in squadrons of 100 to 150 planes as soon as the raiders appeared over the Reich, but most of them hung back until it became certain Berlin was the main objective.

Then they swarmed in to the attack, concentrating their heaviest thrusts just as the bombers began their "run" over the capital.

The fury of their own flak barrage, however, frightened most of the German fighters off, and the rest were repulsed by the bombers and their fighter escorts.

## FURIOUS RUNNING FIGHTS

While the running fights in some instances lasted anywhere from two to four hours and the Nazis described the action as one of the greatest aerial battles of the war, veteran fortress crews said it did not come up to the savage duels precipitated by the Brunswick raids on Jan. 11 and Feb. 10.

Stunned by the impact of the onslaught, Nazi propagandists were silent until United States headquarters had announced the historic operation. Then they burst into a frenzy of claims that German defenders had swarmed to the defense of their capital with everything at their command.

## WEATHER IS CLEAR

The Nazio radio admitted that "a major part of the enemy formations were able to reach the capital," half an hour after issuing a tentative propaganda claim that the American bombers "were scattered in several groups and driven off to the south when they reached the outskirts of Greater Berlin."

By Nazi account—not borne out by headquarters here—massive forces of American and German planes were locked in a great struggle over hundreds of square miles of the Reich, including the Berlin area which Reichsmarshal Herman Goering once said was immune to Allied bombs.

Reports from the U. S. eighth air force bombers indicated that the weather was clear over Germany, making it possible to carry out a pin-point assault on Berlin targets—and also enabling Nazi fighters to shoot the works in defense of Adolf Hitler's No. 1 stronghold.



S/SGT. JOHN J. O'NEIL, 21, son of Mr. and Mrs. John J. O'Neil, 99 High Street, Malden. First American Flier to fly over Berlin Saturday.

Air leaders long have been awaiting the time when American bombers could reach Berlin by daylight and single out targets which British night bombers may have missed.

Today's first word from the air

force specified that "very strong formations" were engaged. In Royal Air Force operations, where the term has been used frequently, it came to mean about 600 heavy bombers.

The early announcement mentioned the "Berlin district," but soon thereafter the censorship permitted the use of Berlin itself as the target—confirming that the bombers had reached the city.

## TAKE OFF AT DAWN

The American bomber crews were routed out hours before dawn for breakfast followed by the briefing when they learned that the "big town" was the "target for today."

The takeoff came shortly after dawn. This time the bombers did not face the ominous weather, including snow, that hung heavy over the channel and the North sea Saturday.

An hour later coastal observers reported the roar of aircraft passing over so high they were not visible, but attention was distracted from the heavies by hordes of medium bombers and fighters shuttling at a lower alti-

tude to targets in France.

Hours after the bombers were on their way, American Mustang and Lightning fighters which had a rendezvous with the bombers over Berlin were on their way.

Today's attack was the second American bombing of the Berlin district and the third daylight raid of the war by Allied planes. British Mosquito bombers thrust lightly at the capital Jan. 30, 1943.

## NEW ENGLAND BOYS FIRST OVER BERLIN

LONDON, March 5 (AP)—The distinction of piloting the first American bomber over Berlin in Saturday's attack by the Eighth Air Force went to Lieutenant William V. Owens, 197 Brevoort avenue, Columbus, O. Among his crew members were Sergeant Donald E. White of North Benning, Vt., top-turret gunner, and Sergeant John J. O'Neil, Malden, Mass., waist gunner.

## Malden Man on First U. S. Bomber to Berlin

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