

Coal production was down to 38 percent and steel output to 15 percent of normal. The supply of gas and electricity fell similarly. The combined index of raw material production went down to 37 (1942=100). Car-loadings in March were only 15 percent of the normal level and were still falling. "The German economy," Speer wrote in his report of March 15, "is heading for an inevitable collapse within 4-8 weeks." Even if the final military victories that carried the Allied armies across the Rhine

and the Oder had not taken place, armament production would have come to a virtual standstill by May; the German armies, completely bereft of ammunition and motive power, would almost certainly have had to cease fighting by June or July.

In the actual case-as in most other cases in the history of wars-the collapse occurred before the time when the lack of means would have rendered further resistance physically impossible.

FOOTNOTES: [1] * January 21, 1943

No. C.C.S 116/1/d. [2]* Airframe factories were chosen in preference to aero-engine factories, though it was realized that attacks on the latter would have a more lasting effect. But attacks on the former were regarded as having a more immediate effect on first line strength; also the intelligence about airframe production was considered better than that on aero-engine production.

The End

A CHRISTMAS NOTE HIGH OVER THE SKIES OF GERMANY

This story was reprinted from "Poop From Group" the publication of the 401st Bomb Group.

On Tuesday, December 19, 1944, the Eighth Air Force went after tactical targets in an attempt to hold up the German counter-offensive launched in the Ardennes three days before. We were returning from our fifth mission which was to Koblenz, Germany. We were rejoicing because there was no flak, no enemy fighters, no casualties and no battle damage. However, thick freezing fog had closed our airfield at Deenethorpe and we were diverted to Predonnick airfield. We spent four days waiting for the weather to clear.

On December 23rd we attempted to fly to our home airfield but we were diverted again this time to Deopham Green airfield. I was a twenty-one year old Californian and I was experiencing my first white Christmas. I was thousands of miles from home, homesick and feeling sorry for myself because I was not spending Christmas with family and friends. The severe winter weather added to the discomfort of my life. The flying clothes I had on for the last six days felt uncomfortable and it was difficult to walk in the heavy flying boots.

It was a bitter cold Sunday morning, December 24th, Christmas Eve, and we were preparing for our sixth combat mission. Deopham Green airfield was covered with a light freezing mist. Because of the diversion of December 19th, the group was taking off from six different airfields. Our aircrew, named the "Grumlin Gremlins", was commanded by Lt. John Gerber, pilot. We loaded our gear and equipment into our B-17G, 44-6146 and made our usual inspection of the Flying Fortress. We were loaded with 2780 gallons of gasoline and

with five, 500 pound incendiary bombs. I checked the radio equipment and tuned the transmitter and receiver. We waited for the signal to start the mission. The green flare signal was finally given and we took off over a runway coated with ice at 0830 hours.

The 401st Bomb Group was scheduled to bomb an airfield near Darmstadt Germany. However, the operational records indicated that we attacked the marshalling yards and factory areas of Koblenz, Germany. This was to be a maximum effort and our group had 48 aircraft airborne. The 401st furnished a complete 36 aircraft group for the 94th "B" formation. The Eighth Air Force was dispatching over 2000 bombers and over 800 fighters. I was taking part in the making of history. Hundreds of aircraft stretched over the skies for hundreds of miles for as far as the eyes could see, "the largest force of bombers and fighters ever dispatched".

Little did I know that an airfield in my home state of California would be named after General Frederick Castle the Air Leader of this large armada. It was his heroic action to save his crew on this historic mission that would earn him posthumously our country's highest honor for bravery.

I settled into my routine as radio operator as we reached the assembly area and joined our squadron, group and the division stream. We were on our way to our assigned target and I was monitoring the assigned radio frequencies given to me. There was always static on the Liaison receiver and it took my full attention and concentration to monitor and copy the radio code from these frequencies.

As we approached the flak areas I put on my flak helmet and vest. Our intercom was working intermittently but I could hear some talk about engine problems. I was too busy monitoring my frequencies to be aware that two of our engines were running very rough. As we were approaching the IP point the pilot feathered engine no. 1. As we began the bomb run we engaged for about 27

minutes with moderate but accurate flak. We observed 6 to 8 jet aircraft identified as ME 262s which circled our formation.

As we reached the IP point, I turned on the bomb strike camera. I began the task of discharging chaff, which is metalized paper strips that reflect radar beams and reduced the accuracy of radar data used by flak gunners. I had to be careful working because the oxygen mask had a tendency to pull away from my face when the oxygen hose was stretched too far. The lack of oxygen would cause one to pass out. I could hear, over the intercom, the concerns of the crew about the flak and the fighters. I was pretty scared, I could hear the thump of the flak bursting around and I was saying my usual prayers.

While opening one of the boxes of chaff I found a slip of chaff paper with a hand written note. It was like a note in a Christmas card. Time seemed like an eternity as I read the note. The thump of the flak and my fears seemed to disappear. I became calm and I momentarily forgot all about the airwar. This note was meant for me. It read:

"If you've no Girl Friend to care where you roam. And if you've no Wife sitting waiting at home. If you'd care for a pen friend, then now is the time. To sit down and write Joy or Winnie a line.

Miss Winnie Bevan
106, Eversly
Barnehurst, Kent

Miss Joy Chaplin
26, Hurst Rd.
Erith, Kent

I was thinking about these girls as I resumed my task of sliding the chaff bundles into the special dispensing chute.

I was beginning to wonder if I was going to be able to write Win or Joy a line. We had dropped our bombs, were losing

(Continued on next page)