

On a mission with the RAF over Berlin, Cpl. Jack Coggins, a Yank staff artist, looked on the night sky and saw the bright bursts of flak, the brilliant target indicators, the searching lights of the enemy ack-ack forces, the dark shapes of Lancasters moving into their target, and composed this painting.

With D-Day now a reality, it is the artillery, the infantry, the men in the tanks who have taken over the major part of the burden of finishing the war in Europe. But the role of the RAF from 1940, and the combined achievement of RAF and USAAF since 1942 in all its detail and meaning is still to be written. It has been a savage, spectacular warfare. In the minds of men who might otherwise be thinking the things of peace it took the form of cool, logical and terrible figures - the destruction of a certain number of key industrial locations in Germany and the destruction of a certain number of precision targets.

No one can blink the fact that this was savage. But the cue had been Hitler's, who had stated that the most savage attack was the most merciful since it more quickly ended resistance. That was the purpose of the mounting air offensive - to destroy until the enemy grew tired of being destroyed. Under this plan Cologne was one of the first of the German cities to be told from the air that war can come home - with redoubled force - to the makers of war. Hamburg learned that lesson, too. So did Leipzig, Munich, Bremen, Kiel, and, at last, Berlin.

By day the thin red line drawn in USAAF briefing rooms stretched longer and longer across the map of Europe. The first operations of Forts and Libs into Germany were, actually, "task force" operations. But, with the daylight attacks on Berlin, it was made clear that sorties, to any part of enemy-held Europe, were not "task force" but big scale military operations.

Whatever may happen from now on to the finish, the men who flew these ships and manned these guns by night and by day were the pioneer soldiers of the Second Front. They marched the airplanes into Germany. They shook down to the ground the security of the German Home Front. They smashed her factories. Now, the men who had been standing by are fighting their way onto European soil, and the airmen of the U.S. and of Britain fly overhead, giving them needed air support. The Air War continues even as the greatest of land wars moves towards its climax.