

1941

#### THE BBC

The British Broadcasting Corporation, located in Bush House on the Strand, London, was the most respected and listened-to radio station in the world. Its reputation was built wholly on being truthful about world events. Millions of listeners throughout Nazi occupied Europe, at great peril to themselves, secretly listened to the news broadcasts every night at 7.30 and 9pm. The programs were introduced by the first measure of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, three dots and a dash, V-for- Victory. Then followed what was known as 'messages personnels' coded instructions to all resistance groups to prepare them for the Allied landings in Normandy. These messages were meaningless to the majority of listeners but to the informed few they could mean, prepare to blow up a section of railway line at such and such a point, or prepare to receive an incoming SOE agent at a certain landing strip. With the approach of D-day and the long awaited moment of Liberation approached, the most awaited message was the first two lines from the Paul Verlaine couplet. The first, sent on June 1, was an alert message "The long sobs of the violins of Autumn". The second, an action message "Soothes my heart with a monotonous languor". This summoned all resistance groups to arise immediately throughout France.

#### ZONDERWATER P.O.W. CAMP

In February, 1941, Italian prisoners-of-war began arriving in South Africa where the Zonderwater Camp had been established in the Transvaal, twenty-three miles from Pretoria. These prisoners were captured during the Somaliland and Ethiopian campaigns. Thousands more were brought in from the campaigns in Egypt, Libya and Tripolitania during the years up till 1943. Around 9,000 of these prisoners were illiterate and among the greatest and most lasting achievements at Zonderwater were that before the camp closed in February, 1947, all had learned to read and write their mother tongue during their six years confinement. Some 5,000 learned a trade before returning home and another 4,000 were allowed to work outside the camp on neighbouring farms. A symphony orchestra of 86 musicians was formed and a brass band of 65 instrumentalists was welded together from the prisoners. Fifteen schools were established teaching a variety of subjects.

At its peak, on December 31, 1941, there were 63,000 prisoners in the camp. A total of 233 prisoners died from illness and 76 lost their lives through accidents. What was done at Zonderwater represents a great achievement in the field of human relations in the treatment of prisoners-of-war. Their efforts were recognized by the post-war Italian Government when the Camp Commandant, Colonel Hendrik Prinsloo and three of his officers were invested with the 'Order of the Star of Italy'. Colonel Prinsloo was further recognized by the award of the 'Order of Good Merit' by His Holiness, the Pope.

#### INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

Subhas Chandra Bose, the controversial Indian nationalist leader, arrived in Germany in March, 1941. In Berlin he formed the nucleus of an Indian legion from Indian prisoners of war captured in North Africa and now in German hands. Within months recruits numbered some 3,500 men whose sole aim was the liberation of India from British imperialist rule. After the fall of Singapore on February 15, 1942, Bose and his Indian National Army, as it was now called, declared war on Britain. As the military situation in Europe began to deteriorate, Bose now sought help from the Japanese and in June, 1943, he made his way to Japan by submarine and from a Tokyo radio station he appealed to India for an uprising to oust the British. In doing so was able to enlist thousands more to the cause from British Indian troops held prisoner by Japan. The Japanese Army promised all-out support and together they fought in the disastrous campaign in Burma, the INA casualties being over fifty percent. With the re-occupation of Burma by the British, the surviving members of the INA once again became prisoners of war, this time of the British. As events turned out, Bose's dream of his victorious march to Delhi at the head of his Indian National Army never materialised. Subhas Chandra Bose was killed in an air crash in Formosa (Taiwan) when the plane carrying him to Tokyo crashed on take-off from the small Taihoku airfield at Taipei on August 18, 1945. He was 48 years old. It is acknowledged today by historians that Bose did more for the liberation of India than did any other national leader including Gandhi.

#### MADAGASCAR

The French colony island of Madagascar (228,000 square miles) off the east African coast, remained loyal to the Vichy regime until 1941. Fears that the Axis forces might use the island as a base from which they could use to cut the Allied supply line to India round the Cape of Good Hope, British and two East African brigades invaded the island on May 5, 1941, (Operation Ironclad). This was its first action against French troops in World War II. British casualties were 109 killed and 284 wounded. French casualties were some 200 killed and 500 wounded.

The total number of deaths from malaria has never been published but is estimated to be higher than those who died from battle wounds. After the invasion of the island most of the French troops who had surrendered volunteered to join De Gaulle and fight the Germans. It was the Nazi intention to solve the Jewish question by settling the Jews in Madagascar but the plan was never implemented.

#### THE LAST EXECUTION IN THE TOWER OF LONDON

This historic even occurred on August 14, 1941. German spy, Josef Jakobs, was executed while seated tied to a chair, by an eight man firing squad from the Scots Guards. The white lint target patch placed over the area of his heart bore five bullet holes from the eight shots fired. Jakobs had parachuted into Britain on January 31, 1941, and broke his leg on landing. He lay all night in a field until his cries for help were heard next morning. He is buried in an unmarked grave in St. Mary's Roman Catholic Cemetery at Kensal Green, London. (The chair on which Jakobs sat during his execution is now on display in the Royal Armouries museum in Leeds.)

#### FIRE BRIGADE TRAGEDY

April 20, 1941, was Hitler's birthday and the Luftwaffe celebrated the event by dropping 1,000 tons of bombs on London. Many schools in the city were standing empty, the children already evacuated to the country. The Old Palace School in St. Leonard's Street, Poplar, was now sub-station 24U of the London Auxiliary Fire Service. The playground was ideal for training and the parking of fire appliances.

On the night of April 20, fire service crews were standing by in anticipation of a heavy raid on the Capital. At precisely 1.53am, a land mine, dropped from a Luftwaffe bomber, scored a direct hit on the school. Thirty two firemen and two fire women were killed. The bodies of the two firewomen, mother of three Winifred Peters and twenty one year old Hilda Dupree, on duty in the watch room, were never found. This was the largest loss of Fire Brigade personnel ever suffered in the history of the fire service in Britain.

#### DUBLIN IS BOMBED (May 30/31, 1941)

On their way to attack Liverpool, four German bombers from a group of some 90, lost their way and by mistake dropped their bombs on the City of Dublin in neutral Ireland. Over 40 persons were killed and almost 2,000 persons rendered homeless. Eighteen months later on the night of April 15/16, the city of Belfast was attacked and around 800 civilians were killed. (See page 6)

#### SURPRISE! SURPRISE!

Australian-Dutch 'invasion' of Portuguese East Timor (now Timor Luru Sae) on December 16, 1941, was the first time in history that Australia violated another country's neutrality. Aussie troops (Sparrow Force) invaded Dutch West Timor and the 2/2nd Independent Company landed on the shore near Dili, the capital of Portuguese East Timor and so pre-empt a Japanese takeover. They proceeded immediately to surround the airport while Dutch troops occupied the town. Well armed, and expecting to do battle with the Portuguese military, they approached the administration building at the airport, guns at the ready.

Suddenly the main door opened and out stepped a civilian Portuguese official who tipped his hat and in perfect English said "Good afternoon". Dumbfounded, the troops stared at each other in disbelief. Not a shot had been fired. Unknown to Sparrow Force, the Australian and Portuguese governments had previously agreed to a peaceful 'invasion' of the island to help protect the inhabitants from a possible Japanese invasion. The Allied troops were to be replaced by a 700-strong Portuguese force from Mozambique but the Japanese invaded on February 20, 1942, before the Allied force could withdraw.

#### ISOLATIONISTS

Members of the 'America First Committee' held a rally on April 28, 1941, in Chicago. In the speeches, mention of Winston Churchill's name drew boos from the 10,000 person audience. A speech by Colonel Charles Lindbergh, the respected US isolationist, was interrupted by applause when he said that England was in a desperate situation, her shipping losses serious, 'her cities devastated by bombs'. Two months later, the city council of Charlotte, North Carolina, changed the name of Lindbergh Drive to Avon Terrace.

#### NAME CHANGE?

When asked his name again, Master Sergeant P. Hitler of the 101st Military Police Battalion at Fort Dix, New Jersey, replied "Sure, that's my name. Let the other guy change his."

#### WAGNER'S SCORES

For his 50th birthday, several leading industrialists presented Hitler with a case containing the original scores of some of Richard Wagner's music. They had paid nearly a million marks for the collection. Towards the end of the war, Frau Winifred Wagner asked Hitler to transfer these manuscripts to Bayreuth. Hitler refused, saying he had placed them in a far safer place. The manuscripts involved included the scores of 'Die Feen', 'Die Liebesverbot', 'Reinzi', 'Das Reingold', and 'Die Valkure' and the orchestral sketch of 'Der Fliegende Hollander'. These lost documents have never been found.

#### HOLOCAUST FIGURES?

When Frederick William von Hohenzollern (1620-1688) was elected Margrave of Brandenburg, he found no Jewish permanent settlement in his state. In 1650, he invited some Polish Jews to conduct trade in Berlin, and in 1671, he welcomed fifty wealthy Jews from Vienna to settle in the capital. So began the Berlin Jewish community. In 1933, the Jewish population of Germany was 503,000. Of these, 170,000 lived in Berlin, 25% were living on charity. Between 1933 and 1938 around 280,000 Jews managed to leave Germany despite enormous difficulties. At the war's end, only 23,000 were living in Germany. About 100,000 German Jews perished in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. Names and last known addresses of around 128,000 German Jews, victims of the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany, are listed in the German Gedenkbuch (Memorial Book) in the Federal Archives in Berlin. (previously the Bundesarchives at Koblenz). Sources differ as to the exact number of Jews killed in the Holocaust. The latest statistics put the number at 5,433,900 (about 41 %) of which just over 1.1 million, including some 200,000 children, died in Auschwitz. However, these numbers are only estimates and are, year by year, gradually being revised downwards as more official details come to hand. The Soviet figure of four million dead in Auschwitz has been proved to be false. The Holocaust should not be considered solely as to what happened to the Jews. Around seven million Gentiles, including thousands of non-Jewish Germans, millions of Russians and other Slavic races and three million [Gentile] Poles, also perished in the greatest tragedy the world has ever known.

The country that suffered most, was Poland. It had a pre-war Jewish population of around 3.2 million, some 2.9 million of whom were annihilated (88%). Of Europe's Jewish children, alive in 1939, only eleven percent survived the war, an estimated one and a half million being murdered. Of all the Nazi occupied countries in WW II, the percentage of Jews saved in Poland was the smallest. The attitude of the vast majority of the Polish population towards Jews was anti-Semitic, particularly in the eastern areas after the Soviet occupation, surpassed only by their vehemently anti-German hatred. Even some members of the Polish police joined the Nazis in rounding up Jews for deportation to the death camps. It must be said however that around 50,000 Jews were saved by Poles who helped hide them at the risk of their own lives. The 'Council for Aid to Jews' provided false Aryan documents and gave refuge to many of the persecuted Jews. Unfortunately, many of these 'aid workers' along with their entire families, paid with their lives.

The question arises 'Where was God?'. As his chosen children were being massacred by the millions, He remained silent. The silence of the Pope is evidence of his indifference to the plight of the Jews. Many other nations and religious institutions also displayed an attitude of indifference to the tragedy that was going on in Europe. What about the Jews themselves in the free countries in which they lived? There was little or no protest marches in the world's capitals, no parades or mass demonstrations, no hunger strikes in the cause of their own people who were trapped in Europe under the Nazis. To the majority it was a case of 'business as usual'.

(In all, Poland suffered 4,900,000 dead in World War II - about 20 percent of its population.)

#### CONCENTRATION CAMPS

The term was first used by the Spanish to describe their camps set up by the military in Cuba during the Spanish-American War of 1895-1898. The first Concentration Camp, for the sole purpose of the physical destruction of prisoners was set up in Holmogor by the Bolsheviks in 1921. The idea in German minds that the British invented concentration camps was fostered by Dr Joseph Goebbels during the 1930s. Propaganda picture postcards in 1938 of genuine Russian camps, were re-labelled for issue as 'Genuine British Concentration Camps in South Africa'. The British camps in South Africa, set up during the two and a half year long Boer War (1899-1902) were for internment purposes only, but the lack of proper supervision, negligence and poor hygiene, gave

the camps a bad name and caused the deaths of over 30,000 inmates, mostly from outbreaks of typhoid and measles. Thirty-one such camps were scattered around South Africa during this time.

#### EXTERMINATION CAMPS

The first camp in which Jews had been gassed was Chelmno in Poland. The first gassings took place in December, 1941. This was the first camp mentioned by name in the West. A train had left Holland on November 20 carrying 726 deportees, on the 24th, another train with 709 Jews departed and on November 30 a total of 826 Jews were deported. All the Dutch people knew was that the trains were heading east for Poland. The word 'Auschwitz' was unheard of in the West until April 18, 1943, when an eye-witness report reached London. However this report was never made public.

In 1942, the Allies knew of the wholesale massacres taking place in camps such as Chelmno, Treblinka, Belzec, Sobibor and Majdanek but the horror of Auschwitz was still to emerge. Conferences were arranged, telephone calls and telegrams exchanged, discussions took place and notes were passed back and forth but nothing was actually done and all this time the deportations and killings went on and on. Even in December, 1943, when the airfield at Foggia in Southern Italy was captured, thus bringing the camps within range of Allied bombers (a round trip of just under 1,300 miles) the camp at Auschwitz was still not identified as the destination of the deportee transports. On May 31, 1944, the complex at Monowitz was photographed for the second time and Auschwitz itself was photographed but the row upon row of prisoner's huts, which was holding around 52,000 prisoners, failed to register as an extermination camp in the minds of Allied intelligence services.

On April 7, 1944, two Jewish prisoners, Rudolf Vrba and Alfred Wetzler, escaped from the camp and headed for Slovakia where they reached the village of Skalitz on Friday, April 21. Next morning they travelled to Zilina where they contacted the Jewish Agency. Their report, together with the report of two other escapees, Peter Mordowicz and Arnost Rosin, eventually reached London and on June 18, 1944, brief details were heard on the radio during a broadcast from the BBC. This alerted the outside world to the reality of Auschwitz. The first photographs to reach the west were of corpses scattered around the Majdanek camp. These were taken by the Red Army on January 3, 1945. On June 1, 1942, a Polish underground newspaper, 'Liberty Brigade' published the first news of the gassings of thousands of Jews in the Chelmno concentration camp. This was seven months after the gassings began. Auschwitz had still to be liberated.

#### MASS MURDERER

SS Brigadier Odilo Globocnik established the four extermination camps of Treblinka, Belzec, Majdanek and Sobibor and is responsible for the murder of over one million people, mostly Jews, who died in these camps. He also played a leading role in General Plan Ost (East) which involved the relocation of around eighty million people, Poles, Jews, Russians, Czechs, Ukrainians and Balts, to areas in western Siberia. The plan was to be implemented after the defeat of the Red Army and Communism. These deportees were to be replaced with German settlers in the hope of creating a racially pure Nazi Utopia, a fulfilment of Hitler's racial version of a Thousand Year Reich. Arrested in Austria by British agents, Odilo Globocnik, the greatest ethnic-cleanser of the Nazi era, committed suicide by biting on a cyanide capsule as soon as his identity was revealed.

#### I. G. FARBEN

This German company built its own camp next to the main Auschwitz camp. Called I. G. Farben, Auschwitz, it was built to produce synthetic rubber and in 1943, 118,600 tons were produced. At least 50,000 prisoners died during its construction from starvation and exposure to the cold. In its foundations lie the bodies of many prisoners who were buried where they fell, in the wet cement. British POWs in the camp were forced to work in the building of the camp during their 14 months imprisonment. As the Russians approached they were given the choice of marching East towards the Russian lines or west towards the Allied Lines 700 kilometres away. All chose to march west. The gas, Zyklon B, (Hydrocyanic acid) was produced by I. G. Farben's subsidiary company 'Degesch'. After the war the five directors of Degesch were acquitted by German judges at the Frankfurt Trial because they decided that the accused could not have known what the specially ordered gas was actually for.

#### CHUNGKING DISASTER

The worst tragedy to hit this Chinese town was in June, 1941. Situated at the junction of the Kialing and Yangtze rivers, the town of Chungking was repeatedly bombed by the Japanese. To shelter the inhabitants the local authorities built under the city the world's largest dugout shelter (estimated capacity: 30,000). During one air-

raid, lasting over four hours, the ventilation system broke down and hundreds of people rushed outside to catch a breath of fresh air between raiding waves. A sudden alarm sent them rushing back clogging the shelter's narrow entrance. Those inside clawed and tore at each other in a mad frenzy as they tried to get out. The guards lost their heads and locked the milling mass inside and then fled. With the air cut off, those inside slowly suffocated. The first official count of the dead was put at 461. A week later the death toll finally amounted to around 4,000.

Another disaster to hit China was at the BENXIHU COALMINE now under Japanese control in the state of Manchukuo. Chinese miners were forced to work 12 hour shifts under terrible conditions. On April 26, 1942, a gas and coal dust explosion ripped through the mine causing the deaths of 1,549 miners. Twelve of these were Japanese overseers the rest Chinese. Removal of the bodies took 10 days to be buried in a mass grave. This was the world's worst coal mine disaster ever.

#### SAVED BY ANTI-CIRCUMCISION

Many Jewish lives were saved by an anti-circumcision operation performed by some caring doctors. Dr. Josef Jaksy, a Czechoslovakian urologist, made a small incision on the patients penis and then issued a certificate that stated that they had recently been circumcised for purely medical reasons. Dr. Feliks Kanabus, a Polish surgeon, with the help of two other doctors, pooled their knowledge and performed around 140 operations by attaching skin from other parts of the body to the penis in order to hide the circumcision.

#### LEGAL RESIDENTS

By 1942 there were only 9,150 foreign Jews legally resident in Switzerland. (area 41,344 square kilometres) That is 980 more residents than in 1931. Many of these were the richer Jews who had fled Germany leaving behind their shops, factories and other properties. These were quickly snapped up, dirt cheap, by unscrupulous Swiss businessmen who made their fortunes out of Jewish miseries.

#### THE CABINET WAR ROOMS

The nerve centre of British planning and conduct of the war was the War Cabinet Rooms. Situated at Storey's Gate in London, close to the houses of Parliament, the Foreign Office and Downing Street. Its location was one of the best kept secrets of the war. The War Rooms were once the cellars of the Board of Education building and covered an area of six acres with around 150 rooms including sleeping quarters, canteens and dining rooms. The roof was reinforced with tram lines and a three foot thick layer of cement. Churchill had doubts that it could withstand a direct hit from a 500 lb bomb. At the height of the war, over 600 people worked in the War Rooms which were abandoned on August 15, 1945, as no longer required. Only six rooms were kept, preserved exactly as they were, as a memorial to those dark days of 1939/45. They are now the responsibly of The Imperial War Museum and were opened to the public in 1984.

#### US PILOTS

Seven American volunteer pilots fought alongside the RAF pilots during the Battle of Britain. One, P/O William Fiske, died of wounds on August 17, 1940. (Could P/O Fiske have been the first American casualty of World War II ?) Only one of the other six, Pilot Officer Havilland, survived the war. (During the Battle of Britain, the German Luftwaffe lost 1,882 planes, the RAF lost 1,265 planes. In all, 537 pilots were lost to Fighter Command, 718 pilots to Bomber Command and 280 pilots were lost to Coastal Command.)

#### EAGLE SQUADRONS

Many American pilots served in the Royal Air Force and in order to circumvent the US Neutrality Act they assumed Canadian or South African nationality. They formed the Eagle Squadrons, approved by the British Air Ministry in September, 1940, and operated within the RAF Fighter Command. The first Eagle Squadron was No. 71 Squadron, formed with Hurricanes at RAF Station, Kirton-in-Lindsay, in Lincolnshire. The ultimate total of US pilots thus serving numbered 243 with additional squadrons Nos. 121 and 133 operating from Kirton-in-Lindsay and Coltishall respectively. On September 29, 1942, airmen of the three Eagle Squadrons of the RAF were transferred into the US 8th Air Force the first contingent of which arrived in England on May 12, 1942. Long before the USA entered the war, American volunteer pilots were already assisting the Chinese Nationalists in their war against the Japanese. Known as the 'Flying Tigers' they were led by Colonel (later General) Claire Chennault. Flying the P-40 fighter plane their insignia was the Shark's Mouth painted on the nose.

## INVASION BUILD-UP

As of September 16, 1940, in spite of RAF bombing, the build-up of invasion barges in the German held Channel ports continued to increase. Reconnaissance photos showed 600 barges at Antwerp, 230 at Boulogne, 266 at Calais, 220 at Dunkirk, 205 at Le Havre and 200 at Ostend. This was in anticipation of a second attempt at an invasion of Great Britain in 1941 after the winter had subsided.

## SPITFIRE vs HURRICANE

Contrary to popular belief, it was the Hurricane not the Spitfire that saved Britain during the dark days of 1940. The turn-around time (re-arm, refuel etc.) for the Spitfire was 26 minutes. That of the Hurricane, only 9 minutes from down to up again. During the Battle of Britain the time spent on the ground was crucial and as one fitter/mechanic of No. 145 Squadron quipped: "If we had nothing but Spits we would have lost the fight in 1940." The Spitfire was an all metal fighter, slightly faster, had a faster rate of climb and had a higher ceiling, while the Hurricane had a fabric covered fuselage, was quicker to repair and withstood more punishment. With the for and against of both fighters they came out about even. The majority of German planes shot down during the four month period were destroyed by Hurricanes. For much of the Battle of Britain, the Spitfires went after the German BF 109s at the higher altitudes, while the Hurricanes attacked the bomber formations flying at lower altitudes. This cost the enemy a total of 551 pilots killed or taken prisoner. During the war a total of 14,231 Hurricanes and 20,334 Spitfires were produced. The famous Rolls-Royce 'Merlin' engine evolved through 88 separate marks and was fitted in around 70,000 Allied aircraft, including the famous Lancaster bomber, during the six years of war. In the hectic battles in the sky over southern England many pilots returned to base utterly exhausted and routinely fell asleep as they taxied their plane to a stop. Ground crews often had to help the sleeping pilot from the cockpit after he returned from combat.

## FEUDING

During the Battle of Britain, a bitter feud developed between 12 Group Commander Leigh-Mallory and the New Zealand Commander of 11 Fighter Group, Keith Park. At the height of the battle, Leigh-Mallory failed to send his forces to the aid of Park. Park never forgave him for this. When Leigh-Mallory was made Commander of Allied Forces after D-Day the American Air Force Commander, General Spatz, made it clear that under no circumstances would he serve under him.

## SPONSORED FIGHTERS

Many Spitfires used in the Battle of Britain were sponsored by private companies and individuals. Money raised in cities, towns and villages was used to buy a Spitfire at a cost of £5,000 each. They bore names such as Dogfighter bought by a well known Kennel Club, Dorothy was bought by women whose name was Dorothy, Gingerbread by red-haired men and women, Unshackled by donations from P.O.W.s and so on. The largest donation received came from Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands who donated £215,000 to purchase an entire squadron of 43 Spitfires.



The Spitfire

#### RAF B-17 AND CONTRAIL CALAMITIES

In an air attack on the German city of Wilhelmshaven in 1941, the RAF flew the American B-17s for the first time in combat. It proved a near disaster for its RAF crews who experienced high altitude difficulties with the plane. Severe operational losses due to anti-aircraft flak and Luftwaffe fighters, were caused by the streaming of telltale contrails.

#### INTO THE FIRE

In February, 1941, men of the Australian 22nd Brigade (8th Division) boarded the liner Queen Mary anchored off Toronga Park Zoo in Sydney. Embarking more troops when the ship called at Fremantle in Western Australia, the ship left harbour and turned north. It was then that the troops were told that their destination was Singapore, not Europe where all the action was. To be used as garrison troops in this outpost of Empire was a bitter disappointment for the 5,750 soldiers on board.

Two weeks later Japanese forces attacked Singapore and the garrison was forced to surrender. In the defence of the city, 1,789 Australian soldiers died. The fighting in Malaya and including Singapore, cost the Australians 2,178 killed and 1,306 wounded. Two days after the surrender, 14,792 Australians and some 35,000 British troops found themselves behind the walls of Changi Prison as prisoners of war. (Regrettably some prisoners were beaten up by Indian Sikhs who had gone over to the enemy and were now being used as guards in the prison.)

#### AIR RAID SHELTER TRAGEDY

At 11.12pm on Saturday, May 3, 1941, the air raid sirens sounded in North Shields, a town on England's north-east coast. A lone German bomber dropped four bombs on the town, two exploding harmlessly, the third hitting a private house killing the two occupants. The fourth bomb made a direct hit on the three-storey Wilkinson's Lemonade Factory, the basement of which was used as a communal air raid shelter and on this night was crammed with 192 men, women and children. The top three storeys, filled with heavy factory machinery, collapsed onto the basement trapping the occupants and killing 102 persons including 36 children under the age of 16. Three others died later in hospital bringing the final death toll in the shelter to 105.

#### Mussolini JNR. PLANE CRASH

The son of Italy's dictator, Benito Mussolini, was killed in an air crash on August 7, 1941. Twenty-three year old Bruno, second son of the Fascist leader, died when the four-engined bomber he was testing, crashed near San

Guisto Airport at Pisa. Three of the crew were killed and five injured. Mussolini flew at once to the Santa Chiara Hospital and sat beside his son's body for hours before talking to the five wounded survivors. At 17, Bruno became the youngest pilot in Italy and acquitted himself on bombing missions during Italy's attack on Ethiopia.

#### BOMBER CAPTURES U-BOAT

On August 27, 1941, while patrolling the convoy lanes off the Hebrides islands, west of Scotland, Squadron Leader J. Thompson heard his co-pilot yell out "there's a U-boat to starboard". Thompson immediately turned his Coastal Command Hudson in the submarine's direction and swooped down releasing a stick of bombs on the submerging U-boat. On his second run he saw that the U-boat was surfacing again. He attacked this time with all machine guns blazing only to see the crew (about 40) pouring out of the control tower waving white handkerchiefs and white shirts. Thompson then wirelessly sent the news to the nearest surface craft and circled the submarine until help arrived. This is believed to be the first capture of a submarine by an aircraft in history.

#### LEARN A LANGUAGE

A bookseller in German-occupied Copenhagen displayed a book and poster in his shop window saying 'English In 50 Hours, Learn English Before The Tommies Arrive'. He was immediately ordered by the occupation authorities to remove it. Next day a new book was displayed with a poster saying 'German In 50 Hours, Learn German Before Our Friends The Germans Depart'.

#### SHELTER TRAGEDIES

On September 8, 1940, a direct hit on an air-raid shelter in the Peabody Housing Estate in Whitechapel, London, killed 78 persons. In Germany, up to March, 1945, over 120 direct hits on shelters were recorded. On July 26, 1943, an underground shelter in Hannover, Germany (Attacked 125 times) was hit, killing 110 persons. On September 23, 1944, another shelter in Hannover received a direct hit killing 172 people. On March 15, 1945, a shelter on Kornerstrasse in Hagen was destroyed by a high explosive bomb. The remains of nearly 400 people were recovered from the ruins.

#### SHOPPING CENTRE TRAGEDY

During the siege of Leningrad, a German bomb struck the city's largest shopping bazaar, Gostiny Dvor, on the main thoroughfare, Nevsky Prospect. Hundreds of people had run from the street into the store to shelter from the air-raid on September 19, 1941. A total of 98 persons were killed and another 148 wounded.

#### THE FIRST AMERICAN MERCHANT SHIP SINKING

The first US merchant ship sunk by the Japanese was the 2,140 ton Army-chartered steam schooner Cynthia Olson on passage from Tacoma to Honolulu. Sunk on December 7, 1941 by shelling from the submarine I-26, 1,827 kilometres north-east of Honolulu. The crew of 33 and two military men were all lost.

#### PEARL HARBOR

The Japanese attack on the American naval base in Hawaii on December 7, 1941, launched the Pacific War. Casualties were 2,403 Americans, including 68 civilians killed and 1,178 wounded. Four warships, the Arizona, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and California, were sunk and five others damaged, 198 aircraft were destroyed and 162 damaged at the two US Air Force and Naval bases. US Admiral Bloch was later to declare 'The Japanese only destroyed a lot of old hardware'. Most of the US Fleet was out at sea, none of the newer ships were in the harbour at the time of the attack. Next day, December 8, at 4:10pm, after 22 years and 25 days of peace, the US declared war on Japan. (Question; Would the US have entered the war if the Japanese had not attacked Pearl Harbor?) War production in the USA, 1941-1945, was 10 Battleships, 137 Aircraft Carriers, 48 Cruisers, 349 Destroyers.

The Japanese attacking force consisted of 31 ships with 253 aircraft. Japanese losses were 29 planes with 55 airmen killed and 5 midget submarines lost. In total, 64 deaths. (The first American casualty of the Pacific War was seaman Julius Ellsberry from Birmingham, Alabama, who was killed during the attack.) On January 26, 1942, a Board of Inquiry found the Commander-in-Chief US Fleet, Admiral Kimmel and the Commander-in-Chief Hawaiian Department, General Short, guilty of dereliction of duty. Both were dismissed. The new commander of the Pacific Fleet was Rear Admiral Chester Nimitz.



#### LUCKY HIT

During the attack on Pearl Harbor, a Hawaiian DC-3 airliner, coming in to land, was hit by a Japanese tracer bullet and set on fire. A minute later, the plane was hit by another bullet which hit the valve of a fire extinguisher, thus putting out the fire!

#### AMERICA'S FIRST PRISONER

The first prisoner of war captured by the Americans was Uaziro Sakamaki, an ensign in the Imperial Japanese Navy. He was captured on the morning of December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor after his midget submarine was blasted out of the water by depth charges. After the war he returned to Japan and found work with the Toyota Motor Corporation before retiring in 1987. Sakamaki died on November 29, 1999, aged 81.

#### FIRST ACT

The first plane shot down in the Pacific War was a British Catalina flying boat of RAF 205 Squadron. Flying out of its Kota Bharu base in Malaya, together with a Lockheed Hudson of the Royal Australian Air Force, they spotted the Japanese invasion fleet heading for the Malayan coast on the afternoon of December 6, 1941. Venturing too close, the Catalina was shot down.

#### ALIENS IN THE U.S.A.

The US Department of Justice reported in August, 1941, that of all non-Americans citizens who registered under the Alien Registration Act, 694,971 were from Italy, 449,022 from Canada, 442,551 from Poland, 416,892 from Mexico, 366,834 from The Soviet Union, 315,004 from Germany, 291,451 from Great Britain and 91,843 from Japan, a total of 4,921,439. On January 1, 1942, US Attorney General Francis Biddle, issues orders to all German, Italian and Japanese aliens to hand in their short-wave radios, cameras and firearms to their local police stations. They were also forbidden to change their address without permission and, if living on the east coast, to obey a 9pm to 6am curfew.

#### GERMAN/AMERICANS

The US Government viewed persons of 'enemy ancestry' as potentially dangerous. This included American born and naturalized citizens and those with permanent residence. The latter had come to the US seeking freedom and opportunity. They simply could not fathom the government's behaviour when their civil liberties were completely ignored, their families torn apart and sent to different internment camps, their assets frozen for the duration of the war. American civilians held prisoner in Germany were exchanged for German-American internees. On arrival in Germany some men were arrested by the Gestapo as spies and put in camps, leaving their families destitute again.

In January, 1945, the liner SS Gripsholm carried 1,000 exchangees to Germany. The last German / American was released from Ellis Island in August, 1948. Upon release, all internees (31,280) were sworn to secrecy and threatened with deportation if ever they spoke of their ordeal. Many returned to their former homes only to find the houses vandalized, the contents stolen or damaged. Confronted with feelings of anger, confusion, resentment, bitterness, guilt and shame, they desperately tried to mend their broken lives. Personal justice was denied to these German/Americans while the government acknowledged mistreatment of Japanese internees and granted them financial compensation.

#### JAPANESE/AMERICANS

Driven by hysteria after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the US arrested 737 Japanese Americans immediately and on the 11th another 1,370 were detained. In all, 16,849 Americans of Japanese ancestry were relocated in ten specially built War Relocation Authority Camps in the USA. Around 70% of these had already become US citizens. This amounted to the greatest deprivation of civil liberties by the US government since slavery. Most of these camps were located in California. Opened in March, 1942, all were closed by 1946 most internees being released well before the end of the war. In Latin America, around 2,000 Japanese were rounded up so the US would have prisoners to exchange with Japan. During the Japanese/American internment, 5,918 babies were born. A total of 2,355 internees joined the US armed forces and around 150 were killed in combat. The 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team was formed after its

members petitioned Congress for the privilege to serve in the war. It became the most decorated unit in US military history earning 21 Medals of Honor as well as 9,486 Purple Hearts.

After the war, 4,724 US citizens of Japanese ancestry, angered by this terrible injustice, renounced their American citizenship and returned to Japan. In 1988 the government apologized for this injustice and awarded the former internees over \$US1 billion in compensation. One question these internees were asked is whether they would renounce their fealty to the Japanese Emperor but their answer was "if you never had a loyalty to Japan, how could you renounce it?" There were no renunciants among the German or Italian Americans in US Camps.

It is strange that in Hawaii, the ethnic Japanese, over 30% of the Hawaiian population, were not interned after Pearl Harbor. The US Government later agreed that the nation had acted hastily in its treatment of aliens and that the vast majority of them were loyal to America. Deaths from natural causes in the camps accounted for another 1,862.

#### ITALIAN/AMERICANS

During the war, a total of 51,156 Italian nationals were also interned in the USA at various times. These included the hundreds of Italian seamen from ships impounded in US ports at the outbreak of the war with Italy in June, 1940. The largest camp for Italian male internees was at Fort Lincoln in North Dakota. Later they were interned at Fort Missoula, Montana. In 1942 there were around 600,000 Italian residents in the USA who had not become US citizens. All were branded 'enemy aliens' by the US Government and 114,000 were restricted in their travel. Around 10,000 were compelled to move inland from their coastal area homes in California. As from October 10, 1942, the 600,000 Italian citizens living in the USA would no longer be classified as enemy aliens. This was the result of the splendid showing the Italians have made in meeting the test of loyalty to their new country.

#### INTERNEED

After Pearl Harbor, the Canadian government interned around 22,000 Japanese Canadians. The Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney, later apologized for this unjust treatment, stating "No amount of money can right the wrong, undo the harm or heal the wounds." A tax-free lump sum of \$21,000 was paid to each internee.

#### THE WORKERS PARADISE

After the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941, German soldiers wrote home to their families describing the conditions they found there:

"The poverty, misery and filth we have seen in the past few weeks are indescribable. Wherever we look there is filth, decay, desolation, misery, death and suffering. People here know nothing about electric lights, radio, newspapers and the like. The houses they live in are just shanties with rotten straw roofs. Not even the farmers have enough to eat, all they have is a cow and perhaps a pig. There is lice and filth everywhere, they sit in their hovels and remove lice from each other. We look in vain for some sign of construction, for a trace of progress or a bit of culture. Only the Jews and party functionaries live well. It is worse than we imagined. One has to see it to realize how beautiful Germany is."

#### RELOCATION MIRACLE

As the German forces advanced eastwards the Russians started a unprecedented relocation of its war industries. In July, 1941, their vast manpower was employed to move its industrial cargoes to safer regions of the Soviet Union. A total of 1,523 complete factories were dismantled and moved further east. Soon, 667 plants were back in operation in the Urals, 226 in the Volga region, 322 in Siberia and 308 in Central Asia. On October 16, the Soviet government moved from Moscow to Kuibyshev, 525 miles to the east leaving Joseph Stalin, the only high official remaining in the capitol.

#### LENINGRAD

The 900 day siege of Russia's second largest city cost the lives of around one and a half million civilians and soldiers. Food was so scarce that thousands were dying each day from hunger, disease and cold. With temperatures reaching minus 30°C, around 53,000 people died in the month of November. On Christmas Day, 1941, an estimated 3,700 inhabitants died from starvation. Many just collapsed in the street, their bodies soon

covered by snow and their whereabouts not known until the spring thaw. Cannibalism was resorted to on a number of occasions, the main victims being young boys and girls who were waylaid on the streets and murdered, in many cases by women, driven to desperation to get food for their hungry children. Stalin's suspicions of the party leadership in Leningrad increased when his orders to break out through the German lines were not implemented. After the war he had them all arrested, and taken to the secret police headquarters for interrogation. Tortured and forced to confess to treason they were all executed along with their families. The heroes of Stalingrad were now turned into enemies of the people. In January, 1944, the Russian winter offensive pushed the surrounding German troops fifty miles back from the city's perimeter, allowing railway links with Moscow to reopen and relief supplies to reach the now liberated city. Victory was celebrated by the hanging of a dozen captured German officers in the city centre who were accused of war crimes. (Leningrad, which was never occupied by the Germans, has now reverted to its pre-war name, St Petersburg. It was here in St Petersburg that the German film 'The Downfall' was filmed.)

#### 'D-DOG' B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

The first B-17 'Flying Fortress' to be shot down in World War II was 525 D-Dog based at Kinloss, Scotland. Delivered to 90 Squadron of the RAF and flown by a British crew, D-Dog was shot down on September 8, 1941, by Lt. Alfred Jakobi's Bf-109 of 13/JG77 based at Stavanger-Sola near Oslo. The B-17, piloted by Canadian Flying Officer David Romans and his co-pilot Flying Officer F. G. Hart, plummeted to the ground in a near vertical dive and exploded just before hitting the mountainside at Bygland killing all seven crew members. The bodies were buried in the local Church Cemetery at Bygland by a Luftwaffe unit. In spite of its huge publicity the B-17 was no match for German fighters and drastic changes in armaments and other equipment were undertaken before the B-17 became the true backbone of USAF units stationed in Britain. A total of 12,726 B17s were built at a cost of \$276,000 each. Later, the B29 replaced the B17 at a cost of \$639,000 each. The most famous B29 was named 'Bockscar' which dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Since Pearl Harbor (Dec.1, 1941) to the end of the war in the Pacific, the US had lost 22,948 aircraft in combat operations. This involved the loss of 19,265 lives.

#### LIBERTY SHIP

The first of the 2,751 Liberty ships built was the SS Patrick Henry, launched in 1941. President F. D. Roosevelt delivered a speech using 'Liberty' as the theme. He referred to Patrick Henry's famous quote "Give me liberty ... or give me death." Stating that these ships would bring liberty to Europe the name stuck, thence 'Liberty Ships'. Most of these ships were named after prominent (deceased) Americans. Eighteen were named after outstanding African-Americans. The only person to make an actual visit to a Liberty ship named in his honour was a Frances J. O'Gara, presumed killed in action but in fact was a prisoner of war.

#### P.O.W. ESCAPE ATTEMPT FROM BRITAIN

During the war, no German prisoner of war escaped from Britain. Many believe that Franz von Werra was the most notable escapee but von Werra made his escape in Canada, where he was sent as a P.O.W. (In Canada there were twenty-one Prisoner-Of-War camps set up during World War II.)

The most audacious attempt was made by Lt. Heinz Schnabel and Oblt. Harry Wappler on November 24, 1941. The two Luftwaffe officers were prisoners in Camp No.15 near Penrith, Northumbria (formally the Shap Wells Hotel). Forging papers that identified them as two Dutch officers serving in the RAF, they made their way to the RAF airfield at Kingstown near Carlisle. Without difficulty they entered the station and with the help of a ground mechanic started the engine of a Miles Magister, of which there were fifty parked around the airfield. Taking off, they headed for the sea and Holland, a distance of some 365 miles. Over the North Sea they realized they could not make it (the maximum range of a Magister was 367 miles on full tanks). Rather reluctantly they decided to turn back and landed in a field about five miles north of Great Yarmouth. Back at Camp No. 15 again, the two daring escapees were sentenced to 28 days solitary confinement.

#### P.W.E. (Political Warfare Executive)

Concerned with the 'black' propaganda broadcasts to Germany and enemy occupied Europe. All who tuned into the wavelength believed that the station was operating inside Germany. The personalities mostly concerned with the P.W.E were, Sefton Delmer, Richard Crossman, Ian Fleming, Robert Bruce-Lockhart and David Bowes-Lyon. The headquarters of P.W.E. was at Woburn Abbey, the home of the Duke of Bedford. In 1941 the station employed a staff of 213 people.

#### AIR ACE KILLED ON WAY TO FUNERAL

On November 21, 1941, one of Germany's leading air aces, Oberst Werner Moelders, 1913-1941, was killed when the plane, an HE-111 bomber in which he was a passenger, hit a factory chimney in fog and rain near Breslau. He was on his way to the state funeral of General Ernst Udet (1896-1941) Chief Air Inspector General of the Luftwaffe who committed suicide on November 17, 1941. Moelders, who had achieved 115 kills, 68 of which were achieved in the western theatre, was replaced by the fighter ace Adolf Galland (103 kills) who retained the post until January, 1945. (Werner Moelder's grave lies next to Ernst Udet's in the Invaliden Friedhof in Berlin.)

#### BRITISH ULTIMATUM

Following the British ultimatum to end their conflict with Russia, the Governments of Britain, Canada, New Zealand and India declared war on Finland, Hungary and Rumania (December 6, 1941). In Britain, 150 Finnish nationals are arrested and in the US, 6 Finnish ships are seized in US ports and placed under protected custody.

#### FIRST AMERICAN NAVAL CASUALTY

The first US naval casualty of the war was the US destroyer Kearney, torpedoed and damaged off Iceland while on convoy escort duty. Eleven men were killed. The first US Navy loss was the destroyer Reuben James torpedoed and sunk off Iceland while escorting a British convoy from Halifax (October 31, 1941) 115 men were lost.

#### JAP-HUNTING REQUEST

After Pearl Harbor, the Department of Conservation in Nashville, Tennessee, handed in a request for six million licenses to hunt Japs at a fee of \$2 each. Back came a note "Open season on Japs - no license required."

#### DECLARATION OF WAR

On December 11, 1941, the US Senate declared war on Germany and Italy. With only one short speech, the Senate voted 88-to-0 for war against Germany, 90-to-0 for war with Italy. There was one abstention, Republican Pacifist Jeannette Rankin called out "Present" - a refusal to vote. The House of Representatives voted war with Germany, 393-to-0. After the vote was taken the chamber was filled with the noise of stamping feet from the galleries as the public stomped out. It seems that the war with Italy vote (399-to-0) wasn't worth waiting around for.

#### AMERICAN SERVICEMEN IN AUSTRALIA

The first US troops arrived in Australia at Brisbane, Queensland, on Christmas Eve, 1941. Almost one million American servicemen passed through Australia during the war. About 7,000 Australian women married their American boy friends and travelled to the USA as war brides.

#### THE FALL OF HONG KONG

On Christmas Day, December 25, 1941, the blackest Christmas in the history of the British Empire, the territory and island city of Hong Kong fell to the Imperial Forces of Japan. This was the first British colony to fall since 1791. After seventeen days of vicious fighting against hopeless odds, the defenders were forced to surrender. These brave fighting men included the British 1st Middlesex Regiment, the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Scots, two Indian infantry battalions and a small detachment of Royal Marines, two Canadian battalions, the Winnipeg Grenadiers and the Royal Rifles of Canada, all helped by a Chinese Regiment. Known as Force "C", it consisted of 1,975 officers and men. British residents were conscripted into what was called the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. In all, the defenders numbered around 10,000 and faced the Japanese combat troops of Major-General Ito Fakeo which numbered about 60,000. After the fighting, those still alive ended their sojourn in Hong Kong as prisoners-of-war and for the next three years and eight months endured the most primitive conditions in Japanese camps where many died of starvation and disease. The worst tragedy being the 843 prisoners who drowned or were shot during the sinking of the Lisbon Maru by the American submarine Grouper. The ship was taking prisoners to mainland Japan when attacked, the captain not knowing who or what was on board.

#### THE FALL OF SINGAPORE

The supposedly impregnable fortress of Singapore fell to Japanese forces on February 15, 1942, shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Considered to be the greatest defeat in the history of the British Army, the speed, ferocity and surprise of the attack, combined with the sinking of the warships the Prince Of Wales and the Repulse, caused Churchill to write 'In all the war I never received a more direct shock'.

Around 15,000 British troops were captured in Singapore, 14,972 Australian troops plus some 37,000 Indian troops and Malaya volunteers. These troops felt very badly let down by the powers that be in London and began to hate the name 'Churchill' whose persuasive speeches led them to believe that they were sent there to defend the great 'Fortress' of Singapore. The fact was that Singapore was no fortress but a poorly defended outpost of the British Empire. Even the big guns provided for its protection were placed pointing the wrong way, out to sea. The Japanese attack came from behind through the jungle and mangrove swamps. Many of the attacking troops were riding bicycles commandeered during their march down the Malay Peninsula. The end came on Sunday, the 15th, when General Percival surrendered the garrison to the Japanese commander, General Yamashita.

#### CHEMICAL WEAPONS

On Japan's Inland Sea lies the small 17 hectare island of Okunoshima, about 40 kilometres south-west of the city of Hiroshima. It was on this island Japan built facilities to produce chemical weapons from 1929 to 1944. Its workforce consisted of 225 men but later, in 1937, this expanded to 2,645 and in 1944 the labour force was between 5 and 6 thousand. Production ceased in June 1944 after 5,100 metric tons had been produced and the facility switched to explosives and balloon bombs. Working conditions were horrendous, the average working day lasting between 11 and 13 hours. Local women and even school children were forced into the workforce only to suffer greatly from the effects of leaking mustard gas tanks (7,500 tons already produced as well as tear and chlorine gas. Luckily these gasses were not used in WW1 but used extensively in 1938 against the Chinese and Russian troops during Japan's invasion of Manchuria. It is estimated that 7.38 million chemical munitions were produced by Japan during WWII ready to be deployed against Allied forces if they dared to set foot on Japan proper. Today the island of Okunoshima is a recreation hotel resort most of the concrete structures have been demolished and all chemical gasses dumped in the sea off the Chinese coast. A small museum has been opened to educate visitors about Japan's relatively unknown military past.

#### 1941 BRITISH CASUALTIES

In the first five months of 1941, British civilian casualties from German bombing raids amounted to 18,007 killed and 20,744 injured. April and May, 1941, saw the heaviest death toll with 11,459 killed and 12,107 injured. In the next seven months, till the end of December, 1941, 1,637 deaths were reported and 1,829 injured.

#### FHQ WOLFSSCHANZE

In the summer of 1940, construction began on the new Hitler's Headquarters in East Prussia in preparation for the coming attack on the Soviet Union in 1941. Eight kilometres east of the town of Rastenburg (now Ketrzyn in Poland) an ideal site was found in the Gorkitz Forest. Covering an area of around 2.5 square kilometres the 100 or so structures was entrusted to the Organization Todt which employed several thousand skilled workers as well as hundreds of forced labourers from the conquered European nations. Some of the houses and bunkers built for the top Nazis had walls measuring over eight metres thick and roofs up to ten metres, considered safe from the largest bombs then in use. All the roofs, roads and paths were covered with camouflage netting making it difficult to see from the air. The area was surrounded by thousands of mines (some reports say 54,000). This would make it the strongest fortified place on earth.

On November 20, 1944, Hitler's special armoured train left Bahnhof Gorkitz carrying the German Führer back to Berlin. He never visited the Wolfsschanze again. He left behind instructions for Fieldmarschall Keitel to demolish the whole of the Wolfsschanze (Operation Inselsprung) before the Russians arrived, now only a hundred kilometres away. Visitors today stand in awe at the enormity of the ruins and try to contemplate the enormous amount of explosives needed to complete the destruction before the complex was abandoned.

#### AMERICAN SERVICEMEN IN BRITAIN

In Britain, the Yanks were said to be "overpaid, oversexed, overfed and over here." The Americans countered this by saying the Brits were "underpaid, undersexed, underfed and under Eisenhower."