

from a variety of safe places to little itsy-bitsy cocoons of earth and boards—which by today's standards seem unbelievably unsafe.

Shelters were located in store basements, underground restaurants, backyard surface shelters, bank vaults, and the subways called the tubes. During the bombings, Britons awaited the gas-bomb attack, (Some 25,000 casualties were attributed to gas attack in 1915-17.) In open spaces there were gas detectors. These were a flat sheet of brass-colored metal on top of a waist-high post, resembling a sun dial. If and when terrifying fumes of poison descended, it was claimed the metal changed color.

Humanity found itself holding its breath for the impressions of poison-gas attacks were horrendous. During World War I, gas had killed over 1000 people directly. However, gas masks and gas attack never turned into the procedure for war which it was thought could have been. Indispensable as it may have seemed, to some, people were so afraid of nasty gas with its invisible way of killing, that agreeing with a ban numerous countries had implemented as soon as the war had started in 1939, Hitler forbade its use as a potent weapon. And, not a single country in the 1940's used it as a potent weapon. From firsthand accounts, we will trace a little bit of life in that insidious world of a war.

Across the airwaves, the focus of the war was on London, with daily reports personified in the voice of London, America's Edward Murrow. The sound of his radio narration was a nightly event and probably was the most listened to voice of the war at that time. There were other famous newsmen from the United States like W. L. Shirer, Eric Sevareid, Lowell Thomas, and Ernest T. Pyle. With a brief anecdote from 1940-41 by the latter, we give an account of what it was like to live in war-torn Britain. The following narrative was written in 1940 and

1941 for the syndicated Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance. It was later turned into a book. [Oddly enough the owner of the Scripps-Howard newspaper chain was anti-Roosevelt and anti-U.S. intervention.] The following are the words of reporter Pyle, known to millions as Ernie Pyle. His words are inscribed from a last outpost of freedom, at that time the last major European country left free:

"...we left the city and its wreckage behind and were out in green country again. Every open field had something in it to keep enemy planes from landing. Some fields were crisscrossed with row after row of tall white poles. Others had rolls of wire. Some had shallow ditches. Some had mounds of earth piled up in rows so geometrically regular that you would have thought they were planting crops....

Every tree, every field, every cricket ground, every house and street seemed to be doing its bit. In the backyards of suburban homes along the railroad tracks there were somber marks of what war has done to the English way of life. I mean private bomb shelters; almost every backyard had one. From the train window a shelter looked like just a large mound of dirt...All this you must remember, was still a long way from London....

Now, dusk came on, and we could no longer see fields nor bomb shelters. The conductor came through and asked us to black out the compartment. The windows have black shades on rollers, which you pull down and hook at the bottom. The windows themselves are painted black except for a square in the middle, and this is fully covered when you pull the curtain. A faint blue light shines at the top of the compartment.

Thus, we rode on toward London [by train]....

Coventry represents to Americans, and to most Englishmen too, the all-out one-night blitz at its worst. Many other cities have been blitzed since then, but Coventry remains the No. 1 example in our minds.

The Coventry blitz occurred on the night of November 14, 1940. I have read a great deal about it, and have seen many pictures of it. Further, I have seen so much hideous damage in London that you could no longer call me an amateur at viewing wreckage. However, when we drove into Coventry I was horrified.

We walked and drove around for three hours. And, late in the afternoon I realized that I had been saying to myself half out loud...over and over again like a chant: "My God, this is awful."

The center of Coventry is in ruins. All of the hotels are gone. A big newspaper office is a jumble of wilted presses and Linotype machines, with twisted steel girders sagging among them. There are not many public eating places left. You can stand on what used to be a main corner in downtown Coventry, and in three directions see nothing but waste. You can walk what was a street but, now you walk in ankle-deep mud....

Nobody has been able to put that night of Coventry's into words. The noise was fiendish. It seemed that the entire city was burning down. They say the final death toll was a little over 500. It seems almost impossible that the loss of life should have been no more than that, for Coventry is a city of a quarter of a million people.

The city had two mass burials, with more than 200 bodies in each. And such is Coventry's opinion of the Germans that they kept the time of the funerals secret...[many] were buried privately by their families. Scores of bodies were unidentified. The only way the death of some of the people was known was from the fact that their families never saw them again. I feel certain that they will still be finding bodies in Coventry long after the war is over, when the final removal of tumbled debris is undertaken.

Daylight found Coventry in a daze. I have friends in Birmingham who were here by dawn. As they drove into town they found people leaving the city by any means at hand. My friends say the look of horror in the faces of these people was something they can never forget. Everyone was stunned. YOU COULD ASK A SIMPLE QUESTION and they either did not know the answer or would just stare at you. Their minds seemed dead...most of Coventry ruins will have to lie where they are until peace comes. Coventry will not look like a normal city again until many years after the war.



Any American apprehended overseas in a foreign uniform could receive a stiff penalty of \$20,000, 10 years and loss of citizenship. Before December Seventh, three squadrons of swift fighter pilots, mostly sneaky volunteer Americans, were covertly flying in the Royal Air Force, in the "Eagle" squadron.

	Men who took part	Men killed
United Kingdom	2,331	418
Poland	144	30
New Zealand	129	14
Canada	91	19
Czechoslova- kia	87	7
Belgium	27	6
Australia	21	14
South Africa	22	9
Free France	14	0
Ireland	10	0
United States	9	2
Southern Rho- desia	2	0
Jamaica	1	0
Palestine	1	0

Nationalities of the world who flew with the Royal Air Force in the summer of 1940.

Poison gas drills are held in various suburbs. Recent tests showed some masks out of fit—gas gets in through the side. Four hundred masks a day are being lost or left on subway trains. The newspapers continually berate the public about not carrying masks, yet not one person in a hundred does it.

The whole spirit of the war is different from that of the [first] World War. Over here there doesn't seem to be the pumped-up, hysterical hatred that we had for Germany in the World War. I've heard Germans referred to as "the Boche" only once in London. You don't hear atrocity stories told around here about the Germans...the spirit of bravery in the face of death is different in this war too. You all remember, or at least have read about, the eat-drink-and-be-merry-for-tomorrow-we-die attitude of soldiers on leave...champagne and girls and on with the dance while there's still time.

That is not true in this war. There is night life in London, but not that daredevil kind of night life. Late parties are rare. Drunkenness is not common. Allied soldiers on leave act much like civilians in peacetime. For in this war it isn't the soldiers who may die tomorrow—it's the people.

Maybe you would like to hear something about Americans in England. Well, there are approximately 4000 of them. If you would tell that to any individual American who lives

here he would be amazed, because the most gregarious one probably does not know more than a hundred. Outside of newspapermen, I haven't met a dozen Americans altogether. But 4000 is the Embassy's figure.

Some 1600 of those 4000 want to go home, and have notified the Embassy to that effect. But there is no way for them to get there unless they fly to Lisbon, and you have to pull to get a seat on the plane to Lisbon. Unless the United States sends another ship to Ireland, these people are here for the duration. Most Americans think it is ridiculous that our government refuses to let them travel home on British ships, because of the danger yet forces them to stay here amid constant danger.

Of these 4000 Americans, not more than 200 take an active part in American doings; the rest just go their own ways. They are scattered all over England. The retired people mostly live in the country, out of harm's way. So far as I can learn, only one American has been killed by a bomb in England, and only a few have been hurt. The number of those who have been scared green is not available at the moment. Americans over here have been active in donating money to British relief.

This war has driven millions underground like moles. On an average, one fourth of London's population has slept underground in the past six months. In certain sections, such as the Borough of Stepney in the poor East End, with its population of a quarter of a million, they say that on bad nights ninety-nine percent of the people are down below. It is a sorry life. I have been in shelters night after night. I've been in about fifty of them in all, from the lowliest to the most luxurious, from vast stockyards of places that hold 14,000 people, on down to refined little underground homes buttressed like Gibraltar....When I say that only a fourth of London is burrowing in these winter nights, don't get the idea that the other three-fourths are out around the town. Only a few thousand are. The rest are at home, behind their blackout curtains.

In the past weeks bad weather has disrupted the raiders, and they have been over London on an average only four nights a week....the shelter people go to the same shelters each night. They sleep in the same spots, either in bunks or on the floor. The Ministry of Health is installing bunks so fast there are now some 350,000, and before spring the

number will probably pass a million....

Air Raid Warden: "How many down there?"

Air Raid Warden: "Are there any expectant mothers?"

A Voice: "No, not yet governor.

"Give us time. We've only been down here 20 minutes."

Some day when peace has returned to this odd world I want to come to London again and stand on a certain balcony on a moonlit night and look down upon the peaceful silver curve of the Thames [River] with its dark bridges. And standing there, I want to tell somebody who has never seen it how London looked on a certain night in the holiday season of the year 1940. For on that night this old, old city was...ringed and stabbed with fire.

They came just after dark, and somehow you could sense from the quick, bitter firing of the guns that there was to be no monkey business this night.

Shortly after the sirens wailed you could hear the Germans grinding overhead. In my room, with its black curtains drawn across the windows, you could feel the shake from the guns. You could hear the boom, crump, crump, crump of heavy bombs at their work of tearing buildings apart. They were not too far away.

Half an hour after the firing started I gathered a couple of friends and went to a high, darkened balcony that gave us a view of a third of the entire circle of London.

As we stepped out onto the balcony, a vast inner excitement came over all of us—an excitement that had neither fear nor horror in it, because it was too full of awe. You have all seen big fires, but I doubt if you have ever seen the whole horizon of a city lined with great fires—scores of them, perhaps hundreds.... The greatest of all the fires was directly in front of us.

Flames seemed to whip hundreds of feet into the air. Pinkish-white smoke ballooned upward in a great cloud, and out of this cloud there gradually took shape—so faintly at first that we weren't sure we saw correctly—the gigantic dome and spires of St. Paul's Cathedral. St. Paul's was surrounded by fire, but it came through. It stood there in its enormous proportions—growing slowly clearer and clearer, the way objects take shape at dawn. It was like a picture of some miraculous figure that appears before peace-hungry soldiers on a battlefield. The streets below us were semi-illuminated from the glow.

Immediately above the fires the sky was red and angry, and overhead, making a ceiling in the vast heavens, there

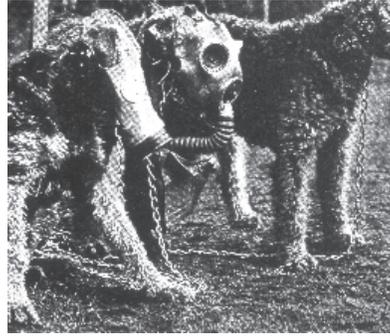
was a cloud of smoke all in pink. Up in that pink shrouding there were tiny, brilliant specks of flashing light. After the flash you could hear the sound. Up there, too, the barrage balloons were standing out as clearly as if it were daytime, but now they were pink instead of silver. And now and then through a hole in that pink shroud there twinkled incongruously a permanent, genuine star—the old fashioned kind that has always been there....

About every two minutes a new wave of planes would be over. The motors seemed to grind rather than roar, and to have an angry pulsation, like a bee buzzing in blind fury.

The bombs did not make a constant overwhelming din as in those terrible days of September. They were intermittent—sometimes a few seconds apart, sometimes a minute or more. Their sound was sharp, near by; and soft and muffled, far-away. They were everywhere over London.

When life has simmered down to the point where you have to choose between being bombed and living like swine on the floor of a dungeon, then life has indeed become pretty bleak. And this isn't just in London. All over England people are burrowing in shelters at night. Millions of them are living through these sixteen-hour winter nights like that—just down there waiting in a tube or a basement or a dugout."

There it was. A world which felt the horrors of war greater than anything ever experienced before. From Europe and war, there outpoured a realm of people trying to escape. A tiny fraction of new people were the school children. In October of 1940 alone, over 2700 young children began to settle down in the new world, America, and onto some framework of life and new school systems. From September of 1940 to May of 1941, British civilian losses were 39,678 dead and over 46,000 injured. After mid-November of 1940, German bombers deconcentrated from London, but this does not mean England was spared. Coventry, England, received a devastating attack on November 14; it was the center of aircraft and machine tool factories.



As late as December, 1940, all throughout Britain, people still believed a German invasion would occur. (Unknown to the world, Hitler by then had ordered a postponement of the invasion.) Lisbon, Portugal, formed the only major free seaport left in Western Europe. Its bursting capacity swelled in humanity. One reporter described the city as “the needle’s eye through which must pass all non-fighting travel between Europe and anywhere else.” Various steamships took port there. Three great warring nations conducted regular passenger

airline service into Lisbon: Germany, Italy, and Great Britain.

Nazi Germany had a blockade on Great Britain.

Throughout most of World War II, Great Britain was virtually surrounded by German submarines and newly-formed long-range maritime reconnaissance air bombers called the FW-200 Condors, based at the ends of the European continent.

However, Democratic Britain did not fall. Her people were able to survive the ordeal, and stubbornly held a refusal to inherit the galleries of Nazi occupation and darkness. With the seas surrounding the country like some protective moat, and the pilots and navies protecting the lands and peoples—in conjunction with spirit and the will to be free, they successfully held their defensive lines along the craggy coastlines and spanning inlands.