The Blackout in Britain and Germany during the Second World War

Submitted by Marc Patrick Wiggam to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History
in March 2011

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ………………………………………………………………………
Abstract

The impact of air raid precautions in Britain and Germany has received little scholarly attention since the end of the Second World War. Of the protective measures brought about as a result of the invention of the bomber, the blackout was by far the most intrusive and extensive form of civil defence. Yet the historiography of the home front and the bombing war in Britain and Germany has tended to sideline the blackout, or else ignore it entirely.

The lack of study given to the blackout is at odds with the scale of its impact across wartime society. This thesis furthers understanding of the blackout and the social history of the British and German home fronts by contextualising the blackout within the development of aviation, and its social and economic effects. It also examines the impact technology could have on the relationship between state and citizens, and addresses the lack of comparative research on Britain and Germany during the Second World War.

The thesis draws on extensive research conducted in local and national government archives in Britain and Germany, as well as a wide range of secondary literature on the war and inter-war period. It argues that the blackout was a profound expansion of the state into the lives of each nation’s citizens, and though it was set within two politically very different states, it brought with it similar practical and social problems. The blackout, as the most ‘social’ form of civil defence, is an ideal aspect of the war by which to compare the British and German home fronts. Ultimately, the differences between the two countries were less important than the shared sense of obligation that the blackout principle was intended to foster within the wartime community.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Richard Overy for his invaluable advice, encouragement and patience during the writing of this thesis. I would also like to thank the members of the Bombing Group – Professor Andrew Knapp, Dr. Claudia Baldoli, Dr. Vanessa Chambers, Dr. Stephan Glienke, and my fellow PhD student Lindsey Dodd. Their help and insight at our meetings and workshops has been greatly appreciated. I am grateful for the advice of Professor Alex Walsham and Dr. Matthias Reiss, who served on my supervisory committee. My thanks also go to the many archivists and librarians in Britain and Germany whose help I benefited from on my travels, and to the Arts and Humanities Research Council for their financial support.

Mum and Dad have been incredibly supportive and understanding over the years, for which I am truly thankful. Elfrid and Øivind provided a wonderful retreat in Norway, and the Brockmann and Schilling clan fed and entertained me when I really needed it during a grey, wet and lonely October. I was grateful for the friendship of Mike Hawker and Justin Davies and their countless emails and distractions, and of Helen Steele, who made me feel a little less isolated.

Finally, I would like to thank Inger-Lise, without whose support, proof-reading and innumerable cups of coffee and tea I could not have finished. This thesis is dedicated to her, and to our new life in August.
# Table of Contents

List of Tables and Charts 5

List of Illustrations 6

Abbreviations 7

Chapter One – Introduction 8

Chapter Two – Pre-war Air Raid Precautions and Airmindedness 38

Chapter Three – The Development of the Blackout 68

Chapter Four – Adherence and Enforcement 98

Chapter Five – Crime and Sex 137

Chapter Six – Cultural and Political Reaction 172

Chapter Seven – Industry, Labour and Transport 201

Chapter Eight – Conclusion 237

Bibliography

Primary Sources 246

Published Sources 249

Websites 258
List of Tables and Charts

1.1 Cities selected 16
1.2 Major archives accessed 17

2.1 Total German bombing casualties from French and British raids 49
2.2 Total British bombing casualties from German raids 50

5.1 Sexual offences against women in Britain, 1935-1945 146
5.2 Sexual offences against women in Manchester, 1939-1944 146
5.3 Sexual offences against women in Bristol, 1939-1941 147
5.4 Sexual offences in Germany, 1937-1943 147
5.5 Sexual offences committed by juvenile Germans and foreigners, 1942-1943 148
5.6 Birth control offences in Britain, 1935-1945 152
5.7 Convictions for illegal abortion in Germany, 1937-1943 153
5.8 Prosecutions for liaisons with POWs in Germany, 1939-1943 153
5.9 Convictions for procuration in Germany, 1937-1943 155
5.10 Homosexual offences in Britain, 1935-1945 157
5.11 Punishment of youth offences in Glasgow, 1939-1940 162
5.12 Executions in Germany, 1938-1945 165

6.1 References to Christmas in broadcast news items and front reports, Christmas Eve, 1940-1942 185

7.1 Productive value of better lighting on industrial processes 206
7.2 Electricity consumption in Britain, 1937-1947 219
7.3 Electricity consumption of public lighting, 1937-1947 220
7.4 Carrying white items in the blackout, London, MO survey 1941 226
7.5 Carrying white items in the blackout, London, MO survey 1942 227
7.6 Traffic deaths and injuries in Metropolitan Police District in September-August 1939-1943, expressed as a percentage of the number in 1938-1939 227
7.7 Deaths on roads in Metropolitan Police District, 1938-1943, expressed as percentage of peace-time levels 228
7.8 Accidents on roads in Metropolitan Police District, 1938-1943, expressed as percentage of peace-time levels 228
7.9 Traffic census from the Metropolitan Police District, 1937 and 1942 229
List of Illustrations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prussian Hussars chase a balloon escaping the Siege of Paris, 1871</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘Within two hours Germany will be covered with bombers’, 1933</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘Zones for Lighting Restrictions.’ The division of Britain into zones of threat from an early draft of the Police War Instructions, October 1935</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>‘Trial Blackout’: David Low cartoon from 1938</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The idealised German ARP ‘family’, 1939</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Anticipation of juvenile blackout crime, 1937</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>‘Time marches on’: George Strube cartoon from 1939</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>German moonlight chart, 1944</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lighting experiments conducted over Stonehenge, circa 1943</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Abbreviations

ARP  Air Raid Precautions
BA Berlin  Bundesarchiv Berlin (Federal Archives, Berlin)
BA-MA  Bundes Militärarchiv Freiburg (Federal Military Archives, Freiburg)
BAYHSTA  Bayerische Staatsarchiv (Bavarian State Archives)
BBC  British Broadcasting Corporation
BRO  Bristol Records Office
IR  Infrared
IWM  Imperial War Museum
MO  Mass Observation
MOA  Mass Observation Archive
NAS  National Archive of Scotland
NSKK  Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (National Socialist Motor Corps)
RAF  Royal Air Force
RDI  Reichsverband der Deutschen Industrie (Association of German Industry)
RLB  Reichsluftschutzbund (National Air Raid Protection League)
SA  Sturmabteilung (Stormtroopers)
SD  Sicherheitsdienst (SS Security Service)
SPD  Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party)
TNA  The National Archives
USAAF  United States Army Air Forces