



THE TERROR BY NIGHT: An incendiary raid by R.A.F. Bomber Command on Hanover in October, 1943. The streets are outlined by fires and a Lancaster is silhouetted as it passes over the target.

# Lessons of the Air War

## Part II—Air Power in Attack

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**A** BOMBER force must be flexible. It must be prepared to support the work of the Royal Navy; it must be ready to lend help to the Army; and it must also carry out independent operations such as striking at enemy war production. This last class of work is commonly called strategic bombing, because it is not connected with any definite battle. But no sharp line separates strategy from tactics, and attacks on war production, it may be argued, are certainly intended to help the other Services by depriving the enemy of armament with which to fight. This was particularly the case when British and American bombers, shortly before the landing in Normandy, concentrated their attacks on the German factories which produced fighters and on the enemy's fighter airfields. These attacks went far to ensure for the

Allies a definite supremacy in the air which greatly smoothed the path of the invading armies, and so contributed mightily to the complete collapse of Germany eleven months later.

It is as well to emphasise at this point that, despite the theories of General Douhet and Major Seversky, no attempt was made to win this war by bombing alone. From this it may be deduced with assurance that the Chiefs of Staff of the Allies were convinced that victory in that way was not possible, for they must undoubtedly have considered the possibility.

Some time before the war broke out, however, the British authorities realised that it would take a long time to raise a British Army as powerful as that of 1918. In the meantime our Allies (at that time France was the only certain Ally) would need substantial help. The French, though possessed of the second most powerful fleet, had never considered that the blockade which the British Navy would apply to the enemy was sufficient help for them—and in truth a blockade works slowly. So Britain decided that the best help she could give to her Allies, while her Army was being raised, trained and equipped, was to prepare a force of bombers that could strike beyond the battle lines at the sources of the enemy's fighting power.

That policy was not new in 1939, but it had not been publicly proclaimed. Moreover, it was very slow in taking practical shape. For many years the class then called day-



PRE-WAR DAY-BOMBER. The Hawker Hart stepped up performance by over 50 m.p.h.