

23 February 2017

France under Friendly Bombs is Focus of Lecture

Date: 9 March 2017

Time: 6.30pm

Cost: FREE

Location: University of Wolverhampton, MC001, Millennium City Building, Wolverhampton Campus

The Allied bombing campaign against targets in France during the Second World War will be the focus of a lecture taking place at the University of Wolverhampton next month. The lecture entitled 'France under Friendly Bombs, 1940-1945' will be presented by Professor Andrew Knapp, Emeritus Professor of French Politics and Contemporary History at the University of Reading, also an accomplished author on the subject.

Taking place on **Thursday 9 March 2017**, this lecture is a continuation of the joint partnership between the University's Department of War Studies and the Royal Air Force Museum. Delivered by emerging and established researchers, these lectures explore a variety of air power related topics ranging from historical themes to contemporary issues.

During this first lecture for 2017 at the University, Professor Andrew Knapp will discuss how studies of the Allied strategic bombing offensive during the Second World War have tended, logically, to focus on the main target, Germany. Yet, over one in every five bombs dropped by the Allies on continental Europe during the Second World War fell on France. Although most of the raids were linked, directly or indirectly, to the Normandy landings, the Allies bombed France from June 1940 till April 1945, and they killed over 57,000 French civilians – a figure of the same order as the British civilian death toll from German action in the same period. This lecture offers an overview of a comparatively neglected aspect of the Allied offensive.

The lecture will begin with a focus on the offensive against France from the Allies' perspective. When and where did most of the raids take place and what were the main target sets? How relevant to France were non-material objectives such as morale and what opposition did Allied aircraft face from the Luftwaffe? What political problems were presented by bombing a friendly people, and how, if at all, did bombing techniques differ between raids on France and the Reich? Professor Andrew Knapp will examine how successful this aspect of the Allied offensive was, before moving on to consider the French reactions to the Allied offensive.

The second part of the lecture will focus on the French reactions from a variety of perspectives, including the Vichy state's efforts to develop civil defence, evacuation measures, and emergency relief. There will be discussions around Vichy's attempts to use the raids for propaganda purposes and the Allies' attempts to justify their actions to the French public. Intercepted letters and telephone calls will be used to highlight the French public opinion at the time, both in general and in relation to Allied aircrews. Professor Andrew Knapp will conclude the hour and a half lecture by reflecting briefly on the wider issue of bombing friendly populations to liberate them and the political costs and benefits.

Dr Ross Mahoney, RAF Museum Aviation Historian said:

"While Germany was the primary target for the Allied bombing campaign in the Second World War, occupied countries, such as France, were also attacked. Targeting occupied countries presented its own

set of challenges for both the attackers and the attacked. In this lecture, organised by the RAF Museum and hosted in conjunction with our partner, the University of Wolverhampton, Professor Knapp, a recognised expert on the bombing of France during the Second World War, will discuss some of the issues related to the challenge of bombing France.”

The Trenchard Lectures in Air Power Studies form part of the RAF Museum's Research Programme for 2017. **'France under Friendly Bombs, 1940-1945'**, is the first of three joint lectures taking place at the University of Wolverhampton this year. The second lecture in the series will take place in June and the final lecture of the year in November.

This FREE lecture will be held at the University of Wolverhampton, MC001, Millennium City Building, Wolverhampton Campus, at 6.30pm on Thursday 9 March. As spaces are limited, organisers advise visitors to book their tickets in advance via the Museum's website to avoid disappointment.

For further information about the Museum's research programme or to book your FREE ticket to the lecture, please visit the Museum website www.rafmuseum.org/cosford.

Ends...

Notes to Editors:

For more details about the RAF Museum's Research Programme, please email Dr Ross Mahoney at ross.mahoney@rafmuseum.org

About Professor Andrew Knapp:

Andrew Knapp is Emeritus Professor of French Politics and Contemporary History at the University of Reading. He has also taught at three Paris universities.

His recent publications include *Forgotten Blitzes: France and Italy under Allied Air Attack* (with Claudia Baldoli: London: Continuum, 2012) and *Liberal Democracies at War: Conflict and Representation* (edited, with Hilary Footitt: London: Bloomsbury, 2013). In French, he has published *Les Français sous les bombes alliées, 1940-1945* (Paris: Tallandier, 2014), and *Bombardements 1944: Le Havre, Normandie, France, Europe* (edited, with John Barzman and Corinne Bouillot: Rouen: Presses Universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 2016).

He has also worked on documentaries for French television on the subject of bombing, and has written extensively on French political parties (especially the Gaullists) and elections.

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