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I am sending you herewith what I wrote about the attack on the Gestapo Headquarters, after my visit to Copenhagen. If you should have some time to spare, I should be most grateful if you would read this through and let me have your comments.

I should very much appreciate your help on a few points. One is in a book written in Danish, on the Resistance - I have seen a photograph taken by a member of the Resistance of the Mosquitoes flying over Copenhagen : the number of the photograph was : 196. Do you think it might be possible to obtain a copy of this photograph?

The second point is that I should appreciate if you could let me know what happened to the various people who are mentioned in my account after the War. I am enclosing a list of the names. If I quote them in my book, I should like to be able to place them in their proper position after 1945.

I am still hoping that we might meet in London during one of your coming visits. Please contact me at the Embassy if you do come to England.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely

Lt. General Avic Baron M. Bonnet CVO DFC  
Military, Naval and Air Attaché

Major S. Truelsen  
Gothersgade 133  
D - 1123 Copenhagen

When I arrived at Fersfield in Norfolk with 27 other Mustangs from 64 and 126 Squadrons, the Mosquitoes from 140 Wing were already there. The airfield was one of those built in wartime and had been used by light bombers in the last two years, until these had been moved to the continent.

We did hear when we got to the Mess that we were confined to camp and that we would have to attend a briefing on this special operation for which we had been gathered together with the Mosquito boys. Dave Drew, one of my flight commanders in 64 Squadron, had given me an explanation of the raid in which we were expected to take part one morning when the fog at Bentwaters kept us on the ground. "It's going to be an exciting do," he told me, "and we have already been screened to take part in it in January". Nobody except the Wing Commander Flying, Bird Wilson and Rutland the Squadron Commander and myself were to be in the picture, but unfortunately the weather was very bad and the show was postponed indefinitely."

He showed me the map and right on the far eastern side was the town of Copenhagen which was to be the place that we were to attack; looking at this point I had some fear of the lengthy sea crossing and all that this meant - flying in a single-seater over the water for a few hundred miles and then having to cross the Danish mainland, Jutland and the islands in order to reach this distant target. Most of the German fighters were in the south of the Schleswig-Holstein area and, therefore, if they received a warning and wished to put up some strong opposition either on the way in or on the way back, they could quite easily cut us off and bag a few of our bombers and fighters. Nevertheless, I did agree with Dave Drew, it would be an exciting show!

*Further  
to 500 miles  
from occupied*

In the Mess at Fersfield there were quite a few distinguished officers who had come with the Mosquito boys from France. Their A.O.C., Air Vice-Marshal Basil Embry, was there with the airfield commander, Group Captain Bateson, and wing Commanders Kleboe Randale and Denton, respectively the Commanding Officers of 21, 464 and 487 Squadrons. I had brought with me quite a strong team of experienced Mustang boys, including Arne Austen, the Norwegian Squadron of 126, Jan Flinteman, a Dutchman, Flight Commander of the same Squadron, Dave Drew and Ned Kelly from 64 Squadron; all of them were veterans with many hours' offensive operations. All those available were keen to go.



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*Gestapo  
controlled parts  
of the country  
like main port  
were*

The briefing room was set up in the Intelligence Section and there was, beside the normal maps which were used, a model of the town of Copenhagen standing in front of us. In the middle of the town was the building which we were to destroy. This building was the Headquarters of the Gestapo and it was to be destroyed in the same way as the Mosquitoes had previously completely wrecked Gestapo buildings in The Hague, Oslo and Aarhus. The Aarhus bombing had been a lucky one from the attacking point of view because not only had the bombers wrecked the place, but their attack took place during a meeting attended by a number of high level ~~officials of the Secret Service~~ *who* were killed.

After the attack on Aarhus, the Gestapo officials became worried about their Headquarters in Copenhagen and in order to give them extra protection, they had built 22 cells on the sixth floor of the building and had put the most important members of the Resistance in these cells, hoping that their presence there would prevent the Royal Air Force from attacking the building. This made the attack much more tricky than any of the previous ones; the building in the middle of the town had to be singled out by the bombers, the ~~ground~~ *four* floor had to be destroyed while the top floor was to be saved.

*The Danish  
illegal govern-  
ment*

The request to carry out the operation had been sent from the Danish Resistance whose members were being caught one by one and which was gradually losing *some of* their best and most efficient patriots of what was called the Freedom Council. The *German* information on the Resistance movement were becoming dangerously exact. The records had to be eliminated.

The official request put to Basil Embry had been turned down, but the situation was so desperate that a new request for help was sent by the survivors who were in the field to the Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower. General Eisenhower had given "carte blanche" to the Commander-in-Chief 2ATAF and he had given his blessing provided that the operation did not interfere with the running of the land battle. The Ardennes offensive in December and the beginning of January demanded all of the 2ATAF's available attacking aircraft and then in late January the bad weather had set in and prevented any operations from taking place against Copenhagen. The code name of this operation was "Carthage".



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On 20th March, the weather seemed to be fine for 48 hours and the go-ahead was given by the A.O.C. Our two Squadrons, 64 and 126, had been selected to carry out the escort because they were equipped with Mustang III s, which had an extra rear fuselage tank giving an extra 45-minutes flying time. We were to escort the Mosquitoes to the target and carry out anti-flak attacks on the anti-aircraft positions deployed on both sides of the target.

The briefing lasted more than two hours; we received all the details of what had to be done. Navigation, as far as we were concerned, would be an easy matter; we would follow the Mosquitoes which were lucky enough to have a navigator in each aircraft. Air Vice-Marshal Embry gave his part of the briefing and told us of the precautions which had been taken to ensure that no civilian casualties would be caused by bombing. A great accuracy in the course was requested; the bombs had to be dropped on the ground floor, to kill as many Germans as possible and destroy all the records - 11-seconds <sup>high</sup> bombs would be used. While the Mosquitoes were attacking, the Mustangs would attack the flak positions.

Group Captain Bateson was the leader of the Mosquitoes and told how the bombers would attack: low-level <sup>fly</sup> ~~below~~ on the deck up to the coast, in complete radio silence to achieve an element of surprise. Then we would fly across Jutland as one whole formation with three separate Mosquito flights of six aircraft followed by two Mosquitoes armed with cameras; these latter were supposed to take pictures of the country-side and the target, at the beginning and at the end of the bombing. When we would reach the island of Seeland, Bob Bateson would mention the code name "Umleitun" which meant "Diversion" in German and at Lake Tiss, <sup>he</sup> would go ahead with six aircraft, while the second lot would complete an orbit, thus giving the proper spacing, and the third formation would complete two orbits and then proceed. Our course was about 70° to bring us over Roskilde from where we would pick up the road and railway to Copenhagen. Then, when arriving over Frederiksberg, we would take a turn of 15° to the left and go straight for the target.

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+ 1 Reserve

1 Reserve

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✓ main



(4)

I decided to place 12 aircraft with the first lot of Mosquitoes while the second and third lots would have 3 aircraft, 4 on each side. Early in the morning of the 21st, before the briefing was over, Squadron Leader Storer of 234 Squadron arrived with an extra four aircraft which he brought in to act as spares. As they were available, I decided to put them up to follow our raid and on arrival at Copenhagen to go straight for the airfield north of the town called Varlose where they might arrive in time to catch any fighters taking off, if they were alerted by the ground defence as the whole formation flew across the Danish coast.

After the attack was carried out, the whole formation was to go up to the north of Seeland, then turn to port and fly back to the United Kingdom, remaining at low level. Squadron Leader Sismore gave the navigation instructions, the land marks, the target description, the course to follow.

The last part of the briefing was the most dramatic: it was given by Major Truelsen of the Danish Army. He had escaped from Denmark in 1944 when he was warned that the Gestapo were closing in on it. He had been one of the active members of the resistance Centralised Intelligence Service which the Danes had organised in a very effective way and through <sup>which</sup> they were sending information to the U.K. on all the German activities, their deployment, including the position of all the anti-aircraft guns and units which were stationed on Danish territory. Major Truelsen gave us the position of all the defence on the way and showed us the route which had been selected by Squadron Leader Sismore to bring us over Copenhagen, avoiding any strongly defended positions.

Then Major Truelsen showed us the position of the Gestapo building which was in the Shell House in the centre of the town beside a lake and he pinpointed on the map the modern theatre building with the specially shaped dome which would be the turning point before the bombing run. He told us fighters position of the anti-aircraft batteries and he said that the German battle cruiser Nurnberg was in the harbour and how heavily it was armed. Furthermore, there might well be some German warships which were heavily armed with anti-aircraft <sup>guns</sup> defence measures.

*Loganise  
and look  
He was now in  
charge of Intelligence  
division from 1944  
Hill and also  
him and us*



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Major Truelsen finished off by making a pathetic plea to the Air Force to do the job properly and to enable those very fine important prisoners to escape. We then walked round the model and saw what Copenhagen would look like from the air. Basil Embry had had this fine gadget made by some of his craftsmen, highly qualified men who had to be able to build up relief models of targets which were particularly difficult for the attacks. In the case of the Copenhagen building, one of the features which made it stick out better was that the Germans had painted camouflage stripes on the building, hoping to conceal it, but in fact making it more noticeable as it was the only one to be camouflaged in Copenhagen.

*Patrol Intelligence*  
*Intelligence* I thought how well informed Major Truelsen was about the situation in Denmark. In fact, he was in daily contact with the members of the Danish resistance, and the man who <sup>was leader of Special Force</sup> succeeded him as head of the special operation force was Ole-Lipmann. When he was sent back to Denmark in the beginning of February 1945, Lipmann was directing the resistance members who were collecting information on the Germans activities. These informations were sent to England, either by message through Sweden or by direct radio transmission. The radio sets were transported to various points in Denmark. There was only ten minutes to send messages through a special coded system - then the resistance man had to disappear.

Normally, it only took a few minutes for the Germans Direction Finders to pinpoint the transmitter and to capture it. Therefore, most of those transmitters were only used for one operation: the operator had to be quickly away - this was one of the most dangerous job.

Lipmann had been requested by the resistance movement's top people to have the strike against the Shell House carried out. He was told that the attack would be carried out, but he did not know when and how. The waves of arrests of important patriots made this still more desirable by the end of February. The numbers of leaders was quickly reducing, Rehberg, Tiem Roth and Prior had been captured.

Listening to the plea made by Major Truelsen, I remembered the similar cases in Belgium told at the time of the liberation, how some of the leaders in the resistance had been captured, tortured, sentenced to deportation or death.



In some cases this had happened a few hours before they might have been liberated by the Allied Forces. It sometimes meant only a few minutes difference for their life to be saved.

U-39  
In my mind, there was no doubt about the skill of the bomber's crew, but I was worried about what would happen to those prisoners on the 6th floor, as a mistake in dropping a bomb at 375 miles per hour could so easily happen.

I gave my part of the briefing: I placed 126 leading, 64 with the second and third formation, and 234 to cover the withdrawal. We now moved out to our aircraft and got ready for the take off scheduled for 0840. The time over target was to be 11.15, and the plan was to attack in the middle of the morning when everyone would be at work and the maximum of Gestapo officials would be in their offices.

The Mosquitoes took off first and formed up over the airfield. Then we got in the air and when we were all gathered together, we moved on a course towards the sea and towards Denmark. The time was 0845, the sky was clear, but the sea was very choppy; there was a strong north-easterly wind which made the ride at 0-feet very bumpy. Visibility was very good: looking down over the waves, we could estimate the strength of the wind and we were bouncing up and down in the air with the feeling of riding in a speedy car over Belgian cobbles. The fighter boys were amazed at the correction made over the sea by the navigator leader. This was a few minutes before reaching land - he was using binoculars and had spotted the land mark <sup>in</sup> at a distance.

After an hour's flight, we came in sight of the coast of Jutland which we crossed, as the navigator later told us, within a hundred yards of our pinpoint. Flocks of birds took off amongst the formation. One of the Mustangs of 126, flown by Flight Lieutenant Holmes, was hit by a bird. He gave some warning on the R/T which made us all feel a little nervous and in two words I told him to go back escorted by Flying Officer Durham. We crossed the dunes on the deck and we really were hedge-hopping over the obstacles of Jutland. The country side was bright and green on this early spring morning. We could see the farmers working in the fields. The whole formation was still quite compact, a big gaggle of Mosquitoes covered on both sides by formations of Mustangs.



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Looking ahead to the leading Mosquito, I could see his number 2 sticking him like a keen, young pilot officer. In fact, his number 2 was Wing Commander Smith, none other than Basil Embry, the A.O.C. of the group. He had been told that he was not to fly over enemy territory and there he was, flying calmly in the wing of his leader, Group Captain Bateson.

Our crossing of Jutland was fast and then we reached the island of Funen before again flying over the water of the Great Belt. As we reached the lake which had been pinpointed as the separating point of the three formations of Mustangs, Group Captain Bateson gave the code word "Umleitung" and the formations separated with about two-minute intervals between them, the first lot going straight on. We were still right on the deck; this orbiting of 30 aircraft round the lake did not seem to produce any extra difficulties; the training of all the pilots was very good and they were able to operate in large numbers just as well as in a formation of two or three aircraft.

The route to the target was picked up by Squadron Leader Sismore, the navigator of the leading aircraft. He spotted Frederiksberg and then the new theatre and called to his pilot, "target sighted". Air Marshal Embry was still in position and so was the number 3 Mosquito of the first formation.

In the Gestapo Headquarters, nobody was aware of the danger which was coming from the sky and was really only a few miles away. Captain Borking had been called for interrogation by one of the officers of the Gestapo and was standing in the office with two armed sentries looking at him, their backs to the window. At this moment, he suddenly saw aircraft diving down from the sky towards the <sup>building</sup> target and thought that they did not look like German aircraft. In a flash of a second, he took the heavy wooden table in front of him, turned it over and flung it against the sentries. At that same moment, the first bomb fell and he was able to run out into the corridor. The Germans were too amazed to react.

The first five Mosquitoes had spotted the target; they had put their noses down and let their bombs fall on the ground floor as planned. Then, right on the deck, they made up for their escape. During this time, the Mustangs were attacking the two flaks posts, but as



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there had been no warning given, the flak posts were not manned and the guns were still covered with tarpaulins. These, they set on fire.

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- Frenchy  
Schulz  
first or last filed

Wing Commander Kleboe, who was leading the second lot of three Mosquitoes in the first flight, was concentrating on his formation and did not see a signal mast about a mile away before the target. His wing hit the mast and he tried to bring his aircraft down in a park short of the target with one engine stopped. Suddenly, before he reached the ground, the wing broke off and the aircraft crashed in the main street. Flames and smoke rose up into the air as the bombs went up

The first lot of aircraft had cleared the target and were now flying to the north of Copenhagen. The flak had been very light. The first bomb fell at 11.14; the air alert was given at 11.16. Eleven seconds after the bombs were dropped, they went up and started a fire. The Germans who were not killed or wounded ran to the shelters. On the top floor of the building, the Danish patriots had heard the aircraft fly over, then the bombs drop and the rattle of the Mustang fighters attacking the flak posts.

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Paul Bruun was in a cell with Count Wellensbock. He ran to a window and saw R.A.F. plane in the air. He heard the bombs fall and the whole building began to shake violently; plaster fell from the wall of his cell. Morgen Fog who was in one of the cells next door, had heard the aircraft fly overhead, but at one stage thought that they might be Germans, as they had been in the habit of flying over the building to frighten the prisoners. He heard the machine guns and thought that the Germans were making a mistake and pulling the wrong switch! He looked through a small window above his bed and at that moment the bombs fell down. His first reaction was to cover his head with his hands, so he would not be hurt by a falling brick.

Professor Brandt Rehberg, among other patriots, crawled under the lower bunk of his cell and only came out when everything was calm again. He dressed, took his gold watch and things of value and then tried to open his door, but this was well locked. The prisoners could smell the smoke and feared that the building might be on fire; they were unable to open the doors of their cells. *on kept on hanging against them -*



9

Lijst Hansen, a police officer, had been detailed the morning of the raid to leave with two guards probably for a concentration camp. When downstairs, their party found that they had missed the transport which should have taken them away; the prisoner was put back into his cell. He was there when the raid came. His cell was filled with dust from the falling plaster; he tried to think what was happening and realised that the building had been bombed. Like the others, he tried to get out but could not open the door. He took a heavy oak stool and hit the door with all his might. He managed to destroy enough of it so as to scramble through. When he got into the corridor, he was surprised to see that there was an empty space where part of the building had been and that the roof had been completely blown off. From the sixth floor, he could now see the whole of Copenhagen. He then had some luck: he met the guard who was standing at his post at the end of the corridor and he asked him for the keys. The man looked at him, most amazed: he could not understand what he was saying, neither what was happening. One of the prisoners from a nearby cell shouted "Schlussel" - "Keys" in German. The guard went into his pocket and brought out the whole bunch of keys. So, Lijst Hansen went round opening the cell doors of his fellow prisoners; one by one they came out of their cells.

*instead of  
being  
escorted*

*Antalven*

The second lot of six Mosquitoes were now over Copenhagen. The fire started by the burning Mosquito puzzled the leader, Wing Commander Iredale. He could not make out why two lots of fires were burning and why there were two lots of smoke. He gave an order not to drop any bombs and decided to make an orbit over the town. He made this turn at 360°, but while he was doing this, the German battle-cruiser and the ships in the harbour opened fire and there was a terrific ack-ack barrage over the town. It was an amazing sight to see these six ~~aircraft~~ <sup>mosquito</sup> swarming over the rooftops and round the church spires of the town, followed by eight Mustangs.

*Dangerous*

Wing Commander Iredale managed to pull his aircraft round and he and his numbers 2 and 3 dropped their bombs in the right place. Number 4 could not make the turn; he overshot. He was hit by flak from one of the naval vessels. Two of the aircraft of the formation made a mistake in selecting the right fire on the ground and they dropped their bombs on a place near the burning Mosquito. It was a French children's convent, Ecole Jeane d'Arc, where about 150 children



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1942  
were at school. They had moved down to the shelters in the basement when the Mosquito crashed in the street. When the bombs started to fall, the building went up in flames.

At that time, the third formation was arriving over the town, led by Wing Commander Denton. The two leading aircraft dropped their bombs on the target, but the four others dropped theirs on the burning school. The flak was pretty severe by this time. Flight lieutenant Dréw was leading the right-hand section of four Mustangs from 64 Squadron. He was hit by flak and tried to retaliate against the guns, but his aircraft went out of control and crashed in the middle of the town. He had been so keen on this show; he had not known that it would be his last. His number 2, Flying Officer Hamilton, an Australian of 64, was hit as well, but he proceeded with the rest of the formation, hoping to make a safer spot and if possible, regain allied lines.

The attack was over, the building of the Gestapo was a mass of rubble and was burning fiercely. The Mosquitoes and Mustangs were proceeding north and then turning to the west, setting course on the reciprocal towards Jutland to the U.K. One of the Mosquitoes hit by flak, crashed to the north of Seeland.

On the way back, Flying Officer Hamilton force landed his Mustang in Jutland, while another Mosquito of 487, flown by Flying Lieutenant Pattison with Flight Sergeant Pygban a Norwegian navigator, was hit by flak over Funen and crashed into the sea.

The return was an endless low-level flight. Some of the Mosquitoes were getting short of fuel; two of them were hit. Wing Commander Denton, had his aircraft damaged by flak and no hydraulics left; he came back from the raid and was ordered by Basil Embry to go and empty his guns before he made a safe belly landing. Flight Lieutenant Dempsey flew back for over 400 miles with only one engine. He landed safely at Fersfield.

We had lost four Mosquitoes and two Mustangs. One of the pilots, Flying Officer Hamilton, was safe. When he force landed in Jutland, the Germans thought that Mustangs had bombed the target and could not make out how a fighter had been able to fly all that distance to the target with bombs and return. In Copenhagen, the prisoners were getting away from the building taking advantage of the confusion which resulted after the raid.



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As quickly as they could, the prisoners liberated by police officer ~~Captain~~ Ljst Hansen, ran downstairs by the back staircase - the main one had been blown up by the blast.

They were walking in a long file and some of the prisoners were carrying their suitcases - they still had a strong fear to be caught by the Germans who might be waiting for them at the bottom of the stairs.

Morgen Fog remembered seeing the offices on the ground floor covered with plaster and looking as if they had not been used for years. At a corner, Professor Brandt Rehberg was standing looking at all the dead bodies lying about. Both were still frightened at the thought that the Germans were going to appear in force. But, those enemies still valid were hiding in the shelter. A number of dead Germans were lying in the rooms of the building which was by now fully ablaze. These two prisoners got away safely - Captain Borking who had been the first to escape while being interrogated got out in the court-yard <sup>when</sup> the bombs were falling. He tried to go to a shelter but found it packed with Germans, so he ran away through a gap made by a bomb in the concertina fence, saw a tramcar and climbed aboard. Two other prisoners later climbed aboard a same tram. One got in front, near the driver to be in a better position to watch if the Germans would be coming to check identity papers. The driver saw this man covered with dust, but did not say anything. The escaped prisoner turned round and next to him was someone else with as much dust on his suit as himself. Both patriots were in the same tramcar without knowing it - they were travelling to freedom.

Two Alnfedt-Mollettrup brothers were prisoners: one was killed, while the other escaped. His reaction was to go straight to the first barber shop next to the building and asked for a haircut. When later, the Germans came into the shop looking for escaped prisoners, they did not recognise him and he managed to get away after the barber had attended to him.

Two of the prisoners were trapped in their cell - Poul Sørensen, a Danish Member of Parliament, Poul Bruun, a business man. When they managed to get out, the staircase was on fire. They went down one floor and then could not go any further. They jumped out from the fourth

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Jout  
from West  
Pavel



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floor aiming at a wooden hut below - Poul Sørensen broke both his legs while Bruun landed on barbed wire concertina and one of his leg had to be amputated. The resistance managed to get many of the prisoners of the Shell House across to Sweden.

*Frank  
Saw*  
The aircraft flown by Wing Commander Kleboe had crashed on fire in the Albrenlierg Garages in Frederiksberg Allé. The area was bombed by aircraft of the second and third wave. When the aircraft crashed, Sister Hélène ordered the children of the Catholic school Jeanne d'Arc to evacuate their class and with their teachers to take shelter in rooms in the basement including the dining-room. As far as Anne Marie Wissum, one of the school girls, remembers there was no panic. The building was shaken by explosions, the children felt the blast like a strong air pressure, then there was the noise of the bombs going up and the heat and smell of fire.

In the rooms there was chaos, a table fell on Anne Marie - the whole atmosphere was thick, dusty and grey, the building was on fire, the air was unbearable. This awful impression lasted quite some time. It took half an hour for the relief party of firemen and civil defence workers to reach the school which in fact was only a few hundred yards away from their barracks. By this time many children were choked by lack of air.

*from  
destroyed*  
Sister Hélène was trapped under the rubble, it took her a great deal of determination to free both legs. Spikes were falling on her but she was saved. Out of a total of 150 children, 87 and 28 adults were killed. In the Shell House the files of the Gestapo were completely destroyed, 30 Germans were killed. 27 resistance patriots out of 34 escaped. *for too*

The attacking force lost four Mosquitoes and two Mustangs, one of the pilots Flying Officer Hamilton was saved. Many of the Mosquitoes were damaged by anti-aircraft fire, or by debris from the buildings or by branches and trees collected on the way.

We learned in the afternoon, that the attack on the target had been a tremendous success - It was only later that we heard of the sad news of the number of children killed - this was one of the unfortunate and tragic risks of war where an accident can lead to catastrophe.



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In their combat reports, the Mosquito's crews of 464 reported considerable heavy and light flak and finished off by stating that the building was well and truly "pronged". 487 started their reports "This was a great day for the boys". The result of this attack was rated 100%. 64 Squadron did mention heavy and light flak from the harbour and 126 reported the gun positions which had been still covered when they were attacked.

This was how the attack on the Gestapo Headquarters went. From a military point of view, it was a great success. From a human point of view, it brought sadness and sorrows to many families. The population of Copenhagen accepted the losses stoically. The resistance leaders had been saved and many of those who might have suffered or who would have been killed by the Gestapo were spared.

What I found the most inspiring, was the real link between those in the field fighting their clandestine war, and the Air Force, which resulted in such a <sup>fine</sup> ~~good~~ planning and good execution of the raid.



