

Ernie Pyle in England

'Blitz a Failure So Far and London Is Not Knocked Out'

(Continued from Page One)

buildings, Regent and Oxford Streets (great shopping centers), Pall Mall and Piccadilly, Park Lane, Leicester Square, the Strand and Holborn Circus. And the best way I can describe it is to say this: You may walk a block or two without seeing a single wrecked building. Then occasionally you will see a block that is half wiped out. But the typical block in the West End would have say two buildings completely wrecked by bomb or fire, and half a dozen damaged but not destroyed. That still leaves a lot of whole, sound buildings.

You are impressed to see how little effect a bomb has on a building unless it is a bomb of the very greatest weight. A big modern building next door to us took a heavy bomb right on top, yet it stands there today whole and beautiful, only slightly damaged.

STEEL AND CONCRETE and stone usually stand up. It is the old, age-wearied buildings of brick and dry mortar that have gone down in heart-sickening heaps.

Much of the damage is not visible to a person walking down the street. I was in a plant the rear part of which had been blown to the ground, yet from the front it looked untouched. A house next door to doom may get nothing more than broken windows.

The Savoy Hotel, for instance, stands up as big as life, but it has been hit more than once.

Yet the service—food, light, drink, politeness—goes on absolutely as usual, even to the floor porter complaining this morning that I hadn't put my shoes out for him to shine.

The damage is terrific, but what impresses me most about it, and the point I want to get over, is this—it doesn't make any difference! That sounds cold and heartless. But honestly, it's the way the British look at it. They don't feel that they have been hurt at all.

An American newspaper friend of mine who has been here through it all says the most impressive thing to him is the way secure people have abandoned their property sense. They can see their buildings go up in smoke, their savings blasted to bits, and apparently they don't care. Not long ago I got that guy in the end."

My first days here were consumed in getting all signed up and identified, something that is very necessary in a warring country. And now I have so many papers that I've had to buy an extra wallet, a leather case so big I have to carry it in a side pocket, and it is already stuffed full.

First you register with the police and get a booklet with your picture in it. You have to give them your whole life history. If you move, they must be notified.

"And Don't Lose Your Booklet!"

Then there is the national registration. Here you get another booklet, and boy don't you lose it. Then you get your food-ration book. Then you report to the Ministry of Information and get a pass with your picture in it. Then the ministry gets better cards permitting you to stay out after midnight and enter prohibited areas, such as zones of military action.

Everywhere you go people are nice to you. At the police station it took half an hour to get my business done, because a policeman had to tell me about a bombing in his neighborhood. I have never seen policemen home so friendly and helpful.

And it wasn't just because I was an American. For I watched them at other desks, where other foreigners were registering, and they got the same courteous treatment.

My particular policeman lives in a quiet suburb on a rise of ground, with a good view. And he said that the night before I arrived London was a sight to see, with searchlights and noise and fires all over town.

He said a bomb hit his block not long ago and wiped out 13 houses. But only five people were hurt and nobody killed.

On my second afternoon here I got a haircut. The barber talked all the time, and for once I enjoyed it. He knew instantly that I was an American. We all look alike to me, but these Londoners can tell an American a mile off.

It didn't take the barber long to find out that I had just arrived and that my first two nights in London had passed without a single bomb being dropped. He said we'd have some before many nights.

"And I'll tell you," he said, "if you don't get a little windy your first night then you're not much of a man. A fellow who doesn't get his wind up at the first experience isn't a man at all. He's just an animal with no nerves in his body."

He's Not Afraid Any More

I told the barber I was all prepared to be London's biggest coward. He did not to be ashamed if I was scared and did something silly. He was an air-raid warden, at night in his home suburb, and said and what did I suppose he did in his very first raid? He dived for the nearest underground shelter.

When he got down there, he said, he realized there was no place for a warden to be, and he was so ashamed he took off his badge so people wouldn't know he was a warden.

He's not afraid any more at all.

I'm mighty glad I got a haircut. The barber was a great soul. Before that I had been afraid of bombs, and also afraid to have anyone know I was afraid. Now I'm only afraid of bombs.

RAIL WORKERS GET 7 MILLION PAY RAISE

WASHINGTON, Jan. 2 (U.P.)—Wage-Hour Administrator Philip B. Fleming today ordered wage rate increases of more than \$7,000,000 annually for 70,000 railroad workers including Red Caps, Pullman porters and dining car waiters.

Wage increases to become effective

March 1, also will affect track, shop and terminal workers, watchmen, office and other railroad employees. It is the third largest wage increase ordered by the administration.

The order will make effective recommendations of the Railroad Carrier Industry Committee for minimum wages of 36 cents an hour for employees on trunk line railroads and 33 cents an hour for short

lines. The Bureau's investigation was made by Toner M. Overley, manager, who was out of the city today.

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