

February 2008

In September of 2006, I attended the morning Mass at the Cathedral with my wife, while vacationing in Szombathely. While sitting in the Nave this bright Sunday morning, I became absorbed by the beauty of the cathedral and the restoration work that was just being completed from the bombing raids in 1945. Having learned earlier, that this "House of God" had been severely damaged at the end of World War II by a large force of bombers, I questioned myself as to "Why" and "Who" would have done this as the Allied Forces were advancing further Eastward and the Russian Front moving steadily Westward inside Hungary. Certainly this edifice presented no military value short of someone standing on the rooftop or the ledge of the clock towers as an observer.

Upon returning home to California, I searched the Szombathely Website and discovered under the heading of "Bombing of Szombathely" the following information: ... "4 waves of RAF bombers attacked the City on March 4th. 1945, resulting in 300 deaths, 70% of the buildings were damaged, 312 houses destroyed and 1200 became inhabitable, in addition to a fresco on the cupola of the cathedral that was also destroyed". Buried in these few informative lines, was a much larger story waiting to be revealed and I decided then to begin the process of discovery and to learn of the important events of this Sunday morning for myself and my extended family in Szombathely.

What follows is a story in a "Narrative Format", that contain the facts that I have obtained from US Air Force Reports and Documents of WWII and specifically the 15th. Army Air Corps station in Italy, Bomber Mission Narratives of the Bomb Groups involved this day, personal accounts and histories on the World Wide Web, Microfilm collections in the archives of the Air Force Historical Research Center in Alabama, USA and the microfilm records of the local newspaper at the Berzsenyi Dániel Könyvtár. Many letters and E-mails were sent to the Bomb Group historians here in the U.S. requesting information on their possible activities over Szombathely on March 4, 1945. Also, of great importance to this effort was the finding of a tattered and broken paper back in the bookstore on the Fő tér. Now loose of it covers, soiled from years of neglect, stained and broken, showing foxing through out - a small but precious little book by Dr. Géfin Gyula. This was indeed a treasure of great importance. Unable to read it, my wife guided me through these delicate and wonderful pages of information, as my knowledge and understanding of the cathedral's history increased steadily.

The original frescoed ceilings and paintings on the walls, the many side altars, the confessionals and the wood crafted pews, the ornate pulpits, the original organ and it's casework over the Entry did not survive, however, the strong walls of "God's House" remained defiantly steadfast on their firm footings, as the bulwark to support the new work that was to follow shortly. The cathedral would be rededicated in two short years (1947), and the restoration work would be completed in 2006 (some sixty years later).

As the sun rises this early Spring morning on Sunday, March 4, 1945, the story begins....

Corrected: 8/16/09

March 4, 1945 (a Sunday)

Szombathely: The day began as an ordinary day. Many weeks have passed without a bombing raid.(1)(2) The sky was clear and always blue these spring days, and there was a fragrance in the wind coming from Calvary Hill.(3) A Red Cross nurse awakens this morning and prepares to take her shift at the Military Hospital #523 (possibly Faludi Ferenc High School – (a college now) near the cathedral. (2) Near by, a wife who was in Szombathely visiting her wounded husband in the hospital was preparing for the morning Mass at the cathedral.(5) The citizens of Szombathely are awaking on this quiet morning, perhaps having coffee and reading the morning Vasvarmegye without knowing it would be the last edition.(6)

The Priests at the Seminary, and Bishop Sandor Kovacs at the Bishop's Palace, are preparing with prayer and busying themselves with the final preparations for today's High Mass on the occasion of the Anniversary of Pope Pius the 12th's. Coronation.(5) There is still time for the Bishop to review his address and make last minute changes. The Mass (at 10 AM) would draw many to the cathedral this day, and the service might run longer than usual.

Italy: The morning comes early for the officers and crews of the 55th Bombardment Wing and the 15th Air Force at airbases all over Southern Italy. The routine of war seems never to change in contrast to the weather that was always at variance to the best of planning. A quick shave and off to breakfast; that was more often the same as the day before. The Pre-Flight Briefings revealed the Mission for this day as:

For the 15th Air Force: "630 plus B-24 Liberators with fighter escorts will bomb the Marshaling Yards at Sopron (2ea.), Szombathely, Knittelfeld, Zelfweg, Graz, Sankt Veit an der Glan, Wiener-Neustadt, Zagreb (2ea.) and Ljubljana. (1)

For the 55th Bombardment Wing: The 460th., 464th., 465th., and the 485th., (7) are scheduled to target the Marshaling Yards at Szombathely, Hu. By 06:30 bombs are loaded and secured in their bomb racks. Aircraft "Pre-Flight" inspections are made by each bomber crew. Pilot and crew make final checks for the mission this day. All the planning, and preparation of men and equipment now wait for the signal to start engines. Over Italy there looms now a problem - the Weather. (7)

The 460th. Bomber Group at Spinazzola, Italy dispatches 28 planes at 07:35 but is late 30 minutes in joining the 55th Bombardment Wing for the mission this day.(8)

The 464th. Bomber Group at Pantanella, Italy have 36 aircraft ready on the flight line and wait for take off which comes at 08:10, the delay being due to scattered snow showers.(9)

The 465th. Bomber Group at Pantanella, Italy have 25 aircraft depart 16 minutes late and set a course directly to the control point to make up for bad weather (snow) at take off and missing the form up. (10)

The 485th. Bomber Group at Venosa, Italy assembles on the runway with 28 aircraft and the lead aircraft was full throttled on the runway at 07:39 hours. Bad weather over the base forced the group to form up 30 miles West at 11,000 feet.(11)

By 08:15 all aircraft are now en route to Szombathely. Heavy clouds cover over the bases and were broken on the route to the IP (Initial Point). This necessitated flight altitude adjustments, but eventually the skies clear. By 11:35, the 460th. and 464th. aircraft are over Ljubljana, Yugoslavia.(8,9) Fighter escorts consisting of P-38's and P-51's are spotted at 10:45 over Trzac, Yugoslavia and were last sighted at 13:22 over Knin, Yugoslavia. Heavy persistent vapor trails were observed at 18,000 - 23,000 feet from Ljubljana to Szombathely.(11)

Cathedral at Szombathely: In a review of the Schedule of Mass Times (issued Mar. 8th. 1945) for the other churches in the area, it was noted that some services started at 10:00 AM at various locations, and

Information underlined in red was added or corrected in October 2008
Information underlined in green was added or corrected in July 2009

will assume this to be the case for the cathedral on this morning.(12) As this would be the High Mass celebrated by the Bishop, additional priests may have been called in to assist with the service as a large attendance was expected. (The cathedral seating is reported to be about 5,000?).

The above number (5,000) comes from a Bishop's Circular issued after the Rededication when there was no seating in the Nave and Transept areas. On September 14, 2008 I attended the Mass at the Cathedral (the start of the Student's School Year). There were 32 rows of 16 seats in the Nave and 9 rows of 10 seats in each of the two Transepts (692 chairs). At the back of the Nave there was space available for additional seating (Entrance Area without the glass wall in 1947) of perhaps 300 or so additional seats. In 1945, wood pews filled the Nave only and the seating may have been considerably less capacity. On the Day of Rededication, it was shoulder to shoulder inside the Nave and Transepts, and well over 100,000 worshipers in the city this day would have certainly provided for 5,000 worshipers inside.

It is unknown at this time as to the number of attendees this day, but using the term "less than full" would probably be appropriate. In 2007 the Bishop's Archives indicated less than 3,000 attended. I would put forth a possible outline of the morning service held this day at the cathedral which was a "Celebration of the Anniversary of Pope Pius the 12th." and "A Day of Adoration of the Eucharist".

Start Time:	10:00 AM
Processional, Readings and Collect	15 minutes
Address by the Bishop	15-20 minutes
Offertory and Preparation of Elements	10 minutes
The Canon of the Mass	15 minutes
Distribution of the Elements	20 minutes
Closing, Recessional, and Organ Postlude	15 minutes
Service Over: people start to leave	11:35 +/-
The Archives have the service ending at:	11:40 AM

The cathedral floor plan shows 4 exits: 3 at the East end of the Nave and 1 in the South Transept facing the Bishops Palace. The attendees now exit the cathedral in an orderly fashion. There is still no indication of an air raid warning siren. Two Priests, Dr. Lajos Kiss (assistant. to the Bishop) and Canon Jozsef Pinter have returned to the Seminary for a meal.(5)

Approximately 11:45, Early Warning sirens sound the possibility that an imminent attack is about to happen. People outside rush to take cover or head for their homes. The Reserve Sacrament is taken from the altar to the crypt for safekeeping by Associate Pastor Caplan Jozsef Lelkes. Four souls remain in the cathedral, one being the woman who came to Szombathely to visit her wounded husband.

(2-01-08) **Additional Information:**

A. Mar. 4th., 1945 was a "Day of Adoration of the Eucharist" and "A Celebration of the Anniversary of Pope Pius the 12th."

B. This mornings service was ended by Chaplin Jozsef Tornyo.

C. Approximately one hour later contrails are noted high in the sky over Szombathely foreshadowing events that will shortly materialize.

D. German Military Reconnaissance report that triple chained bombs hit the Nave and Choir Loft. (12)

E. Two Canons are killed at "House of the Canons" at #3 or #5 Janos Szily Street. The Seminary is located at #1 Janos Szily Street. (Just pass the Seminary to the North - the two smaller buildings).

They were: a. Papal Prelate Canon and Archbishop's Vicar's General, Dr. Lajos Kiss.

b. Cathedral's Canon, Jozsef Pinter.

F. The Bishop was scheduled to speak at a Mass held this day at 5:00 PM. but this service was never held.

G. (12:42) Four people were in the cathedral, two died (one is unknown), and the woman at the small pulpit with broken bones who survived. A second survivor, Dr. Janos Lanyi, also survived the bomb's blast by hiding next to the Maria Altar. As he exited the cathedral by the side door off the South Transept, he was met by Fr. Erno Bonto who lived at the Deficiencia at the back of the Cathedral. Mr. Lanyi worked for the Justice Ministry which had moved from Budapest to Szombathely prior to the bombings of March 4, 1945. (18) One woman, a Mrs. Jozsef Pavo (from Szeged) was found in the rubble under the organ loft during the process of removing debris days later. She had come to the cathedral to pray for her husband who had died earlier. (19) Two Theological Students were also killed in the Bishop's Palace which was hit this day and the damaged portion of the building was never rebuilt.

Conclusions: The attendance at the last service of the morning (March 4, 1945) may have been considerably less in numbers. Except for four individuals all in attendance escape the bombing and exit the church in time.

Reconnaissance Report: Intelligence Annex #109 of 3 March 1945 (excerpt)

Plan Baker: Directs attacks against rail lines emanating from VIENNA and passing to Hungary and Yugoslavia. More importance is given these targets in that they are so located that traffic may reach the Hungarian and Yugoslavian fronts without originating in Vienna. Szombathely, Sopron and Hegyeshalom Marshaling Yards are key communications points in Hungary. Enemy Situation, FLAK. Szombathely: Scant to moderate accurate flak may be expected. Enemy Aircraft: No appreciable change in the fighter appreciation of the enemy capabilities from the Vienna area. Crews will be briefed in references to the increased likelihood of accidental attacks by small formations of enemy fighters. These formations may consist of tactical aircraft making patrols, and they constitute a threat to unescorted bombers or stragglers. It is recommended that special time in gunners' briefing be devoted to the recognition of Russian aircraft which may be operating the general area of the targets. Significance of Target: Szombathely: This Marshaling Yard is one of the most active rail centers in Hungary at the present time. Quite a few secondary and primary routes converge here, and thus Szombathely serves a wide area on the Hungarian front. The yards are located on the east side of the town, with mostly open areas adjoining the east side of the target. The target is long and narrow running north and south. Considerable facilities are present for repair and sorting of supplies. All six of the lines emanating from Szombathely are steam operated. Reconnaissance aircraft of 2 March showed 430 units including 12 tank wagons present. Due to constant turnover, the numbers on March 4th. may have been more or less than the preceding quoted figure.

Dr. Tibor Kosztolányi in his book Emlékkönyv II, Szombathely 1944-1945 writes, that 50 wagons filled with bombs were removed during the bombing raids of March 4th. 1945, by a German Engineer who took this train to Vép to save the munitions. (pg. 174-175.)

The Air Space over Szombathely: The 485th Bomb Group arrives in the area and misses the IP (Initial Point) to start the bombing run due to clouds and extremely hazy conditions over the city. The Mickey Operator (the Radar Operator in the lead plane), who was using an H2X radar scope, turns the formation onto its final approach, but is unable to keep the target (The South Marshaling Yards) on his screen. Over the city outskirts, the Bombardier re-defines the target, executes necessary corrections and releases the bombs in the lead aircraft. The aircraft to the sides and rear of the lead, visually Que on the lead drop while two boxes of aircraft were on C-1 autopilot. (See 485th Mission Narrative Report at this web site). (11)

Twenty seven aircraft were over Szombathely at 12:42 and 26 aircraft dropped 52 tons of 500 lb. RDX High Explosives (208 bombs) on the city. One aircraft returned to base loaded due to bomb rack malfunction. The bomb spread was determined by the aircraft spread (into 4 boxes- in 2 Groups: Group 1 – Able and Baker, and Group 2 – Charlie and Dog), and it would be probable that the bombs falling from the last aircrafts in the formation (the Dog Box) would have resulted in hitting the cathedral. The time over the city was 45 seconds in one pass. (See the bomb patterns described on page 2 of the Narrative Mission Report and Bomb Plot Photograph for the 485th.). German anti-aircraft flak was encountered and noted as coming from the railroad tracks (possibly mounted on rolling stock) at the Marshaling Yards. Three aircraft received minor flak damage. No casualties. A course was set for the return to base and 25 aircraft had landed by 15:59 hours.(11). One aircraft #49393 lost altitude over Szombathely and headed East. See Story from “Tower Calling” of the 485th., (March 2007) “Downed in Hungary” by David Heiman, Lt. Colonel, USAF, retired, of the March 4, 1945 event. (16)

At the Cathedral: Dr. Gefin Gyula, in his addendum to his book "A Szombathelyi Székesegyház" of Nov. 27, 1945, writes in regard to this raid and uses the term "Chained Mines". He writes in 1945: "2-3 bombs hit the Nave and 1 bomb hit the Sanctuary area.(13) Inside the cathedral a woman cries for help under the ruins at the small Pulpit. She survived with multiple bone fractures. Her husband was the soldier in the nearby hospital for whom she had come to Szombathely to visit.(5)

The Bishop's Palace received one hit at the back rear corner of the building nearest the cathedral. The seminary on the north side of the cathedral took one bomb and two priest were killed. Their names were Dr. Lajos Kiss (Asst. to the Bishop) and Canon József Pinter. (5)

The floor plan of the cathedral shows a possible explosion pattern within the Nave and the Sanctuary areas. We will never know for sure the number or the pattern in the Nave, but I have sent selected copies of the bomb damage photographs to be reviewed by the 460th Bomb Group Historian in Florida, Mr. Duane Bohnstedt, who was an Ordnance Specialist with the 460th Bomb Group at this time in Italy. With his help and kind understanding to me, he has concluded the following:

A. One, two, or possibly three bombs (500 LB. RDX, fused at .1 - .01 seconds) would have caused massive damage to the Nave.

B. The roof structure was blown upward and away from the cathedral to the second column line complete. Massive amounts of debris were found outside as well as inside the cathedral and in the streets near by.

C. The speed of travel for a 500 lb. bomb dropped from 23,500 feet would have been approximately 225 - 250 MPH (360km - 400km). The bombs would have probably penetrated the roof structure and the frescoed ceilings, and being fused at .1 - .01 of a second, would have exploded within the confines of the cathedral walls and ceiling areas without hitting the floor.

D. The outward pressure and heat of the explosions would have totally pulverized all the contents of the cathedral insides. How the unnamed woman survived the blast and heat at the small pulpit area is a miracle of God's intervention.

E. Fragmentation marks on the remaining walls and ceilings were more prevalent on the south side walls rather than the North side. Blast lines on the wall areas in the photograph of the small pulpit would indicate that the bomb or bombs may not have hit the pews below but rather exploded higher in the airspace of the Nave reducing marble and frescos to dust. Side wall paintings on the North side small altars (3 each) survived and were somewhat protected from the bomb's blast and heat. (13)

Air Space over Szombathely: At 13:06A hours the 465th Bomb Group arrived over the city with 25 aircraft (AC). Having left the base at 07:40 they were late in assembly due to poor weather conditions and this group arrived in the vicinity of Szombathely where they turned three miles to the West of the IP (Initial Point) to make their bomb run over the Marshalling Yards. Visual navigation was used in route to the city except in the area of the Alps where an undercast caused the unit to rely on PF (Pathfinder Radar). The lead navigator turned the formation over the IP (Initial Point) and the bombardier was able to pick up the target (the South Marshaling Yards). The cross winds which were high this day forced the bombardier to kill more drift than had been present in the bomb sight. This was the only difficulty encountered by the lead bombardier. As the formation didn't fall into boxes in trail at the IP (Initial Point), there were only two leaders sighting for the course. The auto pilot of one lead a/c was not operative so a manual run was made. Two a/c reported malfunctions. 25 a/c were over the Szombathely M/Y at 22,100 feet on a heading of 105 degrees and these aircraft dropped 50 tons of 500 lb. RDX bombs. Photos show the pattern of bomb strikes were immediately short of the M/Y with five or six strikes extending into the yard amongst the freight cars, and the cutting of tracks. Two direct hits were observed on the South tracks' converging choke point.

At 13:24 hours, the 460th Bomb Group consisting of 28 aircraft arrive over the City of Szombathely at 22,000 feet. To avoid collision with the 464th. who were also arriving at this time, the 460th. made two 360 degree turns over the city to allow winds to clear out smoke from the target area. On an axis of 181 degrees, the South Marshaling Yard became visible and a bomb run was started. The Group Commander ordered aircraft boxes to aim for the center of the Marshaling Yard where several large white warehouses were observed near the railroad tracks. 27 planes dropped 53 tons of 500lb. RDX Bombs (212 bombs) fused at .1 -.01 second on the South Marshaling Yard and southward to the Szent Flórián körút residential area of the city. Bomb Plot photographs show all hits away from the Fötér and cathedral. Two aircraft had bombs hang in their racks and did not drop. All aircraft returned to the base that afternoon. No casualties reported.(8)

At 13:29 hours, the 464th Bomb Group consisting of 39 aircraft arrived in the sky over the city at 23,500 feet. On a southeast axis across the city and over the South Marshaling Yards, they dropped 74.75 tons of 500lb RDX explosive (299 bombs). The bomb run of 2 minutes over the target had several aircraft (9ea.) with malfunctions in the drop zone. Flak damage from German batteries was described as intense to heavy, and eight aircraft received flak damage but were able to return to base. One aircraft crashed. All other aircraft returned to base by 15:50 to 16:00 hours. Bomb plot photographs showed heavy concentrations of bombs from the Main Square to the South Marshaling Yards and beyond. The cathedral area was not hit.(10)

At the Cathedral: This morning the sky was clear and blue and there was a gentle wind bringing the smells of spring to the city. By mid-afternoon the weather turned cool as a weather front moved into the city. The sky became cloudy and was filled with heavy smoke mixed with dust.

Those who survived in their shelters now exited and migrated around the city and to the cathedral site.

“... In the evening we went to see the cathedral. It was a sad sight. At the place of the Nave, we only saw a large debris mountain which blocked all the view behind it. ...the whole city was in ruins. There were dead and injured people everywhere in the streets.” (14)

“.... I got as far as the Bishop Szily Statue now facing his ruined cathedral. The scenery was frightening. We had sunshine in the morning and a gentle wind was blowing the trees. But when the enormous destruction ended, snow started falling on the city as if Nature itself was trying to cover up the shame of destruction.” (15),(03)

Summary:

The following conclusions are now put forward for consideration, having been gathered from the attached material to date ([Nov. 2009](#)).

1. **Time of the Bombing:** There is a 5 minute discrepancy between the newspaper accounts and Air Force documentation. The Mission Narrative of the 485th. places the planes over the city at 12:42, the newspaper 12:40 - 13:00, and the yearly commemoration @ 12:47 (Vas Népe of March 4, 2005). All military timepieces were set to GMT time which was transmitted by a radio signal daily. Pilots and crew members would commonly “Hack” their watches, (to set time), on a daily basis, usually at morning briefings. Correct time was critical for navigation needs such as finding locations on maps or charts, for measuring fuel consumption and to rendezvous with other bomber groups at specific latitudes and longitudes. I would suggest that the time of 12:42 as being more accurate, while the 12:47 time may have been derived from tradition, errors in time keeping on the steeple clocks (possibly blast damage moving the clock hands that remained) or fast wrist watches, or the recollections of eye witnesses in oral histories that have been handed down.

2. **Eye Witness Accounts:** Eye witness accounts and newspaper reports are broadly accurate with the Mission Narrative Reports that were made by the Bomb Groups following the missions each day. For an example:

Condensation Notations: Recorded in the Mission Narrative Reports of the 485th. of this day, "...Heavy persistent vapor trails from 18,000 to 23,000 feet from Ljubljana to the IP (initial point)-Szombathely. Visibility unrestricted." In the Vás Népe of March 4, 1995 - Story #2 (14) "... I call the stripes that the airplanes leave in the sky - Smoke", and the Vás Népe Newspaper of March 3, 1990 - Story # 5, "... we could see the "Milky Way" behind the Liberators up in the sky". (15) The bombing altitudes over Szombathely were: 460th. was at 22,000 feet, the 464th. was at 21,000 feet, the 465th. was at 22,100 feet and the 485th. was at 23,500 feet.

3. **Statistics of the Day:** The Vas Nepe newspaper reports on Mar 4, 2005 the following statistics:

Time: 12:40 - 1300	Actual: 12:42 (485th)
Number: 118 - B-24s	Actual: 117 planes w/fighter protection (unknown).
Waves: 3	Actual: 4*

* The 460th and the 464th Bomb Groups were separated by five minutes and this may have been construed as a single wave of 66 aircraft.

4. **Number of Bombs Hitting the Cathedral:** In the Addendum to Dr. Géfin Gyula's book "A Szombathelyi Székesegyház" he writes: "Three chained mines landing in the Nave area and one in the Sanctuary". The newspaper also has picked this up on March 4, 2005 (Vas Népe). The Air Force in my reading, has never dropped "chained ordnance" from B-24s or B-17s. Bombs are racked in a horizontal position, one above another and when the bombs are released, they will all drop at once in free fall out of the bomb bay. As they fall, the bomb's design responds to the resistance of the tail fin that results in turning the bomb to a vertical position during the fall. The attached Mission Narratives report that in several cases, bombs were "hanging up in the bomb bay racks and not releasing". This was usually corrected by the crew in the return flight, and bombs were released, if possible into the Adriatic Sea before landing. If the bombs could be "re-safeted" they might try to land with them, but this was always a risky thing to do, and the pilots would probably prefer to drop them rather than risk an explosion at touchdown.

I believe that the term "chained mines" (13) (possibly coined by German accounts), is used to describe a close explosion of multiple bombs falling in a line or grouped together, which was quite possible with the right atmospheric conditions. Note: ordnance with guidance systems had not yet been developed. The carpet bombing or the saturation of bombing is usually in relation to the aircraft overhead and its location in the formation spread in what are known as "Formation Boxes". (Generally 4 Boxes to a Bomber Group, and they would be named Abel, Baker, Charlie and Dog.), four Boxes to a bomber group with a total spread of 500-1500 feet above or below and the same distance to the sides. Most drops were made by visual observation on the lead aircraft that used a targeting system. In this case, it was a Norden visual sight equipped with a radar scope using H2X radar for aid in detection of the target (usually used in bad weather). The operator of the radar unit was known as the Mickey Operator. The bomb hitting the ground would then be in the same relationship to the drop position above. In early years of the war, bomb sights were new, and not very many were available. The lead plane was first to receive this sight and due to secrecy, the bombardier would remove the bomb sight and take it with him when he left the plane upon his return to base. By 1945, most planes were equipped with Nordens and the newly developed H2X technology as well as Pathfinder radar.

The wide spread of bombs landing on the ground was well recognized by the 15th Air Force during raids early in the war, and the Air Force revised its stance to Daylight Bombing as being more accurate and effective to minimize non-combative casualties on the ground. All bombs dropped this date were RDX explosive with delayed fuses set to .1 -.01 delay. Resulting fires that were reported about the city were probably the result of gas lines breaking or the combustion of chemicals in the impact area. You can note in the damage photos taken inside the cathedral, that very little fire damage occurred to building materials on the ground, floor areas, walls or remaining ceilings.

5. **Ordnance:** RDX is a High Velocity compound and was used along with General Purpose bombs with compounds of lesser velocity. However, planes were loaded with the same class and size of bombs rather than mixed loads. The Air Force discovered early in the bombing of the German oil facilities, that exploding bombs were just as effective as incendiaries due to the fact that when breaking containers, storage tanks and pipe lines, the heat from the explosion was enough to set off major fires in the refineries. In the case of the cathedral, we have one bomb exploding in the Sanctuary causing heavy damage to the interior, but the roof remains intact with the exception of the penetration hole.

The Nave however, lost the roof complete to the second column line, which probably would require multiple explosions. Two or three bombs would have been catastrophic and the pressure and heat of the explosions would not have been survivable, yet two people did survive.

In Rev. Dr. Ferenc Sill's book, he writes ... "One of the bombs detonated on the roof while the other two that followed immediately went off in the inside of the church". (20) The "Inspectors Report" by Geza Hell (Construction Engineer for the reconstruction) of 20 August 1945, reported a displacement of 46 cm (18 inches) of the Tympanum, (the triangle portion of the front wall just below the roof and between the clock towers), which would indicate a detonation high in the barrel-vault / attic-roof area of the Eastern wall over the organ loft. (24) Photographs reveal a long crack running downwards near the right clock tower (as viewed from the street) that can be viewed in the "Early Reconstruction Photographs" of this Web Site.

In 2008 I noted and photographed Fragment Damage from the a bombs casing, explosive material, or flying debris deep into the Trancepts that was never repaired and remains as a reminder today. This evidence would indicate that one bomb of the three that fell in the Nave area, was forward or closer to the crossing while the remaining two bombs were deeper in the Nave closer to the organ.

6. **Recap. of the Bombing this Day Only (March 4, 1945):**

<u>Bomber Group</u>	<u>Mission #</u>	<u>Planes</u>	<u>Altitude</u>	<u>Arrival</u>	<u>Tons Dropped</u>	<u># of Bombs</u>	<u>Course</u>
485th.	152	26*	23,500	12:42	52	208 RDX	150°
465 th .	155	25	22,100	13:06	49.75	199 RDX	105°
460th.	169	27	22,000	13:24	53	212 RDX	181°
464th.	173	39	23,500	13:29	75	299 RDX	140°
		117			229.75	918 RDX	

(450.5 metric tons)

*1 aircraft #3438 was over the city but could not drop due to bomb rack malfunction and returned to base with its bomb load.

(9-19-07) **Additional Information:**

Footnote (17) - Unit History for March 1945 of the 55th. Bombardment Wing (H), it is noted that the Bomb Accuracy over Szombathely this day, (March 4, 1945), was 26.1% of bombs fell within 1,000 ft. (330 +/- Meters), of the aiming point (the South Marshalling Yard). The remaining 73.9% of 229.75 tons, (or 170 tons = 680 each 500 lb. bombs), fell at points around the city over 1,000 feet of the South Marshalling Yard.

Note: In viewing the Bomb Plot Photographs of the 485th., note the color of the clouds rising up from the explosions. Major fires would have rendered the clouds grey or black depending on what was burning. The city is obscured by dust clouds, so I have added a triangulation to show where the cathedral is located..

7. **The Great Miracle:** The great miracle of the day was that Dr. Lányi János who was protected by the Maria Altar and walked out of the side door in the Transept and the woman who survived the bombing at the small pulpit in the Nave. This writer hopes to learn of her name and where she had traveled from.

I have no information of warning systems used in the city at that time or by whom they were controlled.

Footnotes:

1. Confirmed Bombings on Szombathely
2. Newspaper Article #7 *
3. Newspaper Article #1 *
4. Newspaper Article #4 *
5. Newspaper Article #6 *
6. Mar. 4, 1945 Newspaper "A Halalos Tavasz" Vasvarmegye
7. Operations Order #109 of 3 March 1945
8. Narrative Mission Report 460th. for Mar. 4, 1945 *
9. Narrative Mission Report 464th. for Mar. 4, 1945 *
10. Narrative Mission Report 465th. for Mar. 4, 1945 *
11. Narrative Mission Report 485th. for Mar. 4, 1945 *
12. Mass Time Document issued on Mar. 8, 1945
13. Dr. Gefin Gyula Addendum of his book in 1945
14. Newspaper Article #2 *
15. Newspaper Article #5 *
16. Article "Downed in Hungary" by David Heiman, Lt. Colonel, USAF, ret. *
17. Unit History for the 55th Bombardment Wing (March 1945 supplement) *
18. Newspaper Article of March 4, 2009 (Vas Népe) (Nemethy Maria)
19. Newspaper Article #12 of March 4, 2002 (Nemethy Maria)
20. Dr. Ferenc Sill's Book "200 years of the Szombathely Diocese" pg. 128
21. Hell Geza: "Damage Evaluation"

*Full versions of reference documents may be found in Hungarian and English by linking off the "Site Map" page of this Web Site.

Information underlined in red was added or corrected in October 2008
Information underlined in green was added or corrected in July 2009