

“Living in the Love of the Common People”

By Alan Miles ([email](#))

On the morning of August 16th 1944, my mother Dolly and her sister Ellen (my aunt) decided that as it was a Saturday, they would take my sister and my cousin to the Saturday morning pictures at the Granada Cinema in Hoe St, Walthamstow. They decided to leave the children's prams at my aunts in Carr Road, Walthamstow and walked up to Hoe Street.

After the film had finished they left the cinema to go somewhere else, and decided to get a bus from the stop in the High Street. But then they realised (and fortunately in hindsight), that they had to go and collect their prams, from Carr Road. They started to walk along Hoe Street, and then a siren gave out the 'take cover' wail. So my Mum and aunt rushed to find shelter, then they heard the horrid drone of a V1, as its propulsion jet began to cut-out. There was a strange sound of chains rattling from the craft, so my Mum told me.

There was a prolonged eerie silence for about twelve seconds and around 9.52am, the rocket bomb known to most as the Doodlebug exploded on the Burton's Tailors, which was a small departmental store. It killed seventeen people, and seriously injured 62. One of the stories that came to me of this incident, was all the dead were mysteriously unmarked. They were carried to the Granada in the foyer which became a temporary mortuary. I can only imagine the shock and the panic that ensued after, and there must have been a lot of heroic people, who attempted to save a lot of people who may have been trapped in the rubble, as well as ambulance man who arrived, the voluntary ARP, policemen, and firemen, all who helped the injured, the afraid and laid the dead out in the Granada.

These people never seemed to have received the recognition by monument or plaque in their remembrance. Very often I have read about people who have rescued others in the war, often when bombs are still falling, risking their own lives through what appears selfless love. With regard to my mum and aunt, this was the second time they narrowly missed being killed by Nazi bombs.

That was a V1 attack one of Hitler's' weapons, a short while later V2 missiles were launched at London. Whilst the V1s were launched by the Luftwaffe, the V2s almost in competition were launched by the German army. The coalition government of the time knew that they were coming sooner or later. They had good knowledge of the V1s, but found that the warhead was smaller than expected; even so that warhead was one ton of high explosive.

The government did know that they were quislings Nazi sympathisers that would aid the Nazi targeting. Herbert Morrison MP spoke in the House of Commons as follows after a wave of V1s hit London on June 15th 1944 he said :_

“Last night's attack was more serious and I have not as yet got full particulars of the casualties and damage nor the number of pilotless aircraft destroyed before they could explode. Meanwhile it is important not to give the enemy any information which would help him directing his shooting by telling him where his missiles have landed”.

It was known to many, that there were Nazi sympathisers who were very anti-Semitic who did provide the Nazis with details and particulars to help in directing their V1s.

Hitler whilst in talks with Harry Truman, promised not to bomb any cities in Britain, Hitler however alleged that we bombed his cities while he kept faithful to his promise. In retaliation he promised revenge yet to come, after our air raid attacks on Germany. Hitler addressed a rally on November 8th 1944, he said

“Believe it or not but the hour of revenge will come. For thank God, even if we can’t reach America for the time being, another state lies within our reach and this we will deal with”

With references to his remarks about America, that he could not reach, the Nazis were planning to build a transatlantic three stage missile which would carry a nuclear warhead to America. We can see now it was the utmost urgency to enter Germany as soon as possible. So the Nazis released their vengeance weapons on us not yet known as V1s. They were commonly called Doodlebugs, Buzz Bombs and Rocket Bombs.

In Walthamstow we received twenty one V1 Bombings , Wanstead received 23 , Leyton 24. On July 9th 1944 two major incidents happened in Leyton. The first in Norlington and Claude Roads killing 18 people, and seriously injuring about 47, this happened at approximately 12.30pm. On July 27th at approximately 6.05pm Vansittart Road, 34 people were killed, and 24 were seriously injured. In all this time , the government tried to keep silence over these missiles. They were known as either P1s or Flys. Fortunately, the American Press who were in England reporting managed to take photographs and details of many incidents. This enabled us to have some record of the damage caused.

I wish to write about was the care and love given to one another and the selfless acts of heroism. Here is one of the many examples that can be given.

Mrs Dorothy Poslitt tells of her frightening experience when she got caught in the blast of a V1 whilst sitting on the top floor of a bus travelling through Silvertown. She was travelling to a local cinema to see Arthur Askey starring in ‘Up in Annie’s Room’. She said **“I remember a man pushed me down a big red light, no noise or explosion of any sort, and then thick black dust and smoke. The Doodlebug had landed right on top of the pub opposite, in the blast I got smothered in blood which mostly came from the man who had pushed me down. He was cut about the face whilst I had cuts to my hands and a torn muscle in my right leg where I was sandwiched between the seats”**

She goes on to say that people were helping people off the bus while the First Aid Man tended to her injuries and put a label around her neck. The conductress was killed and there was a huge hole through her middle, and also the driver was dead laying slumped over his wheel. Also there were a few passengers downstairs who were dead. How remarkable that in the aftermath of this explosion there seemed to be no panic, no screaming, just people who survived, calmly helping others off the bus, and obviously without concern of their own lives. This was very common in the Blitz and in various bombings thereafter, this is why I have called this article “The Love of The Common People”.

Returning to the present day the EDL decided to march along Forest Road in Walthamstow (approx a year ago) protesting against ‘Islamification’. Whatever their arguments are I am not interested. This movement is clearly fascist so ironically, on the site of where the V1 dropped, groups of various people of various religions of race, creed and colour with their young children who were playing on swings, rallying together to protest vigorously against

intrusion of a fascist group marching through Walthamstow. All the people that rallied together to oppose the fascists met in' the love of the common people'

It would be very fitting and meaningful that a plaque could be placed in dedication and remembrance, to those people who selflessly helped so many others when the V1s were dropped.

Source of quotes, statistics, and stories from " The East End Then and Now" edited by Winston G Ramsey , published by After The Battle publications in 1997