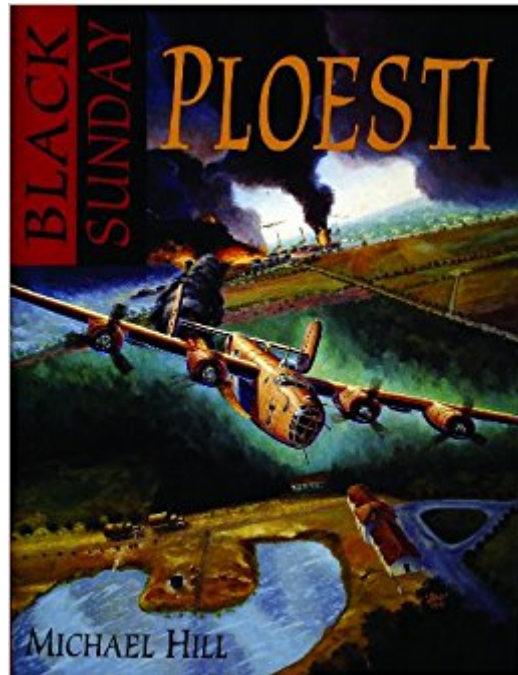




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Black Sunday: Ploesti!



Synopsis

Tidal Wave! August 1, 1943. The legendary low level raid on Ploesti, Rumania by the 376th, 93rd, 44th, 389th and 98th Bomb Groups, is described by author/historian Mike Hill in this new large format, 50th Anniversary book. Never before published photos taken during the raid, many from the original negatives, dramatically show the raid, and give the reader a sense of the intensity of fierce flak, and aerial combat. Mike has interviewed many of the surviving veterans of the mission, giving the story a personal flavor from the unique view-point of the crew members. Also included is a complete listing of the aircraft and crews that flew the mission. Mike Hill also the author of The Desert Rats: The 98th Bomb Group and the August 1943 Ploesti Raid. The dust jacket artwork for this new book is by Mike Boss.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Simply engrossing and inspirational. The valor demonstrated by these bomb crews was amazing. I have read the official history of the 376th Bomb Group and this work is right on target with what is written here with even some info not noted in the official history. Great photos. I really liked the section at the end of the book detailing the fate of every plane and listing the names each crewman - I made myself read aloud the name of every airman who was either wounded or killed in action.

Great book very informative lots of depth

I was eleven years old when this happened and I remember the impact that it made on the war and

on the world.

Very well illustrated

Fantastic book on a daring WWII raid carried out by Allied Forces using the venerable B-24 Liberator. Liberators doing their thing in Romania!

This is an exhaustive minute-by-minute account of the "mission to Hell". Michael Hill has somehow managed to unearth or hold interviews with as many Ploesti veterans as humanly possible to create an overall account consisting of the in-plane experiences and eye-witness testimony of those who were there, in the air and on the ground. Fascinating and often previously unpublished accounts go beyond what I ever knew about this over complicated mission that fell apart almost as they were taking off from the Libyan desert. In my extensive library of air combat, THIS is one of my most prized volumes.

Hill's book provides a detailed description of the famous Ploesti raid, from the preparation for the incursion, to its execution. This exposition is aided to an extraordinary degree to the many photographs, drawings, and maps. This treaty includes official drawings of the refinery facilities provided by the USAF--drawings which I think were first made to aid in guiding the attack. The order of battle is provided as well, with drawings of the mass of planes for each bomb group and the names of the crew for each plane. The photographs themselves are simply amazing. Some photographs show adjacent planes in the attacking bomb group as well as Romanian countryside and houses. A 1943 high altitude areal photo shows the city of Ploesti itself. Of special interest to me are photographs of the nose art for many of the B-24 bombers that participated in the raid. Many of the painted figures were somewhat salacious in nature, depicting shapely young women in various states of undress. These include Valient Virgin, Satan's Angels, The Urgan' Virgin, Flak Alley, Available Jones, Trouble, Sack-Time Sally, Touch of Texas, Blonds Away, The Oklahoman, Tondelao, The Sad Sack, Daisy Mae, Shanghai Lil, Li'l De-Icer, Yen-Tu, Fertle Myrtle, the Vulgar Virgin, and Baby. Various cartoon characters (including Daisy Mae as already mentioned) including Li'l Abner, Joe Carioca (a parrot), and Dopey of the Seven Dwarfs with bomb in hand as "Little Joe." The whiskey brand "Old Crow" is also represented. These various inspirations for naming aircraft remind me of the P-51 piloted by my Dad's first cousin, the son of a revenue agent (i.e. U.S. Dept. of Revenue agent whose tasks included destroying illegal moonshine stills), which was named after

the Li'l Abner character "Moonshine McSwine."

BLACK SUNDAY PLOESTIMICHAEL HILLSCHIFFER PUBLISHING, 1993HARDCOVER, \$59.99, 257 PAGES, PHOTOGRAPHS, MAPS, DIAGRAMS, CHARTSPloesti was a Romanian town situated north of Bucharest, which provided as much as 60% of Germany's crude oil supply-twelve large oil refineries, producing an estimated 9 million tons of refined gas annually, were located there. According to U.S. estimates, these refineries produced 86% of the refined petroleum products of Romania, and had 96% of its cracking capacity. Ten of the refineries were located in the city itself, one was very close to Ploesti, and the last was twenty miles to the north in Campina. The oil fields of Ploesti were one of the main sources of energy for the German military machine in the war against the former Soviet Union.The targets in Ploesti were: Astra Romana (15% of the Romanian total production); Romano Americana (11%); Concordia Vega (13%); Phoenix Unirea (6%); Dacia Romana (3%); Phoenix Orion (4%); Columbia Aquila (3%); Standart Petrol Block (5%); Redevanta (2%); and Xenia Redevanta (3%). In Campina, the Steaua Romana Refinery produced 13% of total Romanian oil production, and the Creditul Minier Refinery at Brazi produced another 5%. The refineries Astra Romana, Romano-Americana, Concordia Vega, Standart Petrol Block, and Steaua Romana were considered the priority targets because of their larger capacities and important cracking units. A target linked to Astra Romana was the Constanta Pumping Station at Ploesti, a terminal for many Ploesti refineries that pumped oil to the Constanta port on the Black Sea.Even before the beginning of Axis hostilities against the former Soviet Union in June, 1941, the German military mission in Romania was assigned as its main task the protection of Romanian oil fields and installations. The defenses in the Ploesti area were very strong. Protective walls were constructed around the refineries and the storage tanks were camouflaged. The blackout discipline of the city was considered good. Strong anti-aircraft defenses surrounded Ploesti, and the city also had inner anti-aircraft defenses. The airfields at Bucharest were thirty miles to the south, and the aircraft hangars in the immediate area could put up a strong defensive force. The Romanian Air Force totaled about 6,000 men and 600 aircraft. Besides operations on the Eastern Front, its main mission was the protection of the oil production line.The U.S. Army Air Force had attacked Ploesti previously but with negative results. As part of Operation TIDAL WAVE, the 1 August 1943 attack was planned by the staff of Major General Lewis Brereton,, commander of U.S. Ninth Air Force, who decided to launch the attack from bases in Libya. The units assigned to the mission were the 44th, 93rd, 98th, and 376th Bombardment Groups (BG), which were assigned the targets in Ploesti, and the 398th BG set against the targets in Campina. Each B-24 was bombed with 1,000 and 500-pound

demolition bombs, with incendiary bombs mixed in. The attack this time was planned for minimum altitude, 100 to 300 feet. After flying more than 1,100 sorties during the first three weeks of July, 1943, the five combat groups were withdrawn from combat and trained near Benghazi, Libya, where they attacked reproductions of the Ploesti targets. On 1 August 1943, 177 aircraft carrying 1,726 crew members under the command of Brigadier General Uzal G. Ent headed toward the Ploesti area, across the island of Corfu, the mountains of Yugoslavia, and the Danube River. Surprise wasn't achieved as the Germans were reading Ninth U.S. Army Air Forces codes. When the mission's top two navigators were shot down before arriving at the target, confusion followed. The five U.S. bombardment groups didn't return to their bases as a unified force. Only the 98th BG and the 44th BG remained together. Ninety-two aircraft reached Benghazi, nineteen landing at Malta, Cyprus, or Sicily, seven landing in Turkey, and three crashing into the sea. Fifty-four aircraft were lost with forty-one being shot down. There were 532 U.S. crewmen either killed, wounded, or taken as POWs. Ploesti was the only American air action which would see the awarding of five Medals of Honor. Despite accurate bombing under very difficult conditions, which caused heavy damage, the results of the Ploesti raid were less than expected. It was estimated that 42% of the refining and cracking capacity (it was only running at 60% capacity before the raid) was destroyed for four to six months. After the 1 August 1943 raid, the Astra Romana Refinery was quickly repaired and producing at a higher rate than before the raid. The Romano Americana Refinery escaped the low-level raid, but was heavily bombed on 10 August 1944. The production facilities of Columbia Aquila were completely destroyed, but the tank farm remained almost intact. The Steaua Romana Refinery was very heavily damaged. In spite of this, bombing attacks continued and in April, 1944, a campaign was begun against it by the Fifteenth U.S. Army Air Force based out of Italy. By the time the Soviet Union captured it in August, 1944, all the installations had been totally destroyed.

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