

dered about the continuation of the fight against England; we thought the next step would be to throw in the entire GAF against England's most sensitive spot, her shipping. We all agreed the thing to do would be for us all to take a torpedo on board and try and cut England's life line. Instead of that came the battle against England itself, against London. Before the air offensive started, our General Staff promised that our opponents would consist of three hundred British fighters, part of whom would be piloted by very young and inexperienced pilots and also that, to some extent, with the exception of Spitfires their aircraft were inferior. As a result we were amazed when in the battle of Britain the three hundred fighters drew to an end. There weren't just three hundred but at least as many as we had. At the time we had about nine hundred or a thousand fighter aircraft operating and the English had the advantage of fighting over their own territory. The British armament industry had prepared for this period with great foresight. The construction of fighters was given priority over all other types of aircraft during the battle of Britain; pilots, reconnaissance and bomber pilots were restrained in order to be able to be employed as fighter pilots in case of emergency. As a result we were faced with a fighter force of practically equal strength to ours which had the additional advantage of having plentiful material reinforcements at hand. If a pilot was shot down over England and it transpired that 60 or 70% of them landed safely by parachute the following day he went at us again in a new aircraft. That was a situation which unfortunately the GAF never experienced.

When the war started it was said: "Well, we'll have plenty of aircraft, too many in fact; but we'll lose our pilots; there will be a shortage of them because the training lasts so long and we won't manage to provide the necessary reinforcements." That situation never actually arose; it was always just the opposite. We always had enough pilots, reinforcements of crews were at hand but we lacked reinforcements of equipment of aircraft. England has to thank her policy of retraining pilots for defense and her total concentration on defense in the air for the fact she won the battle of Britain and that, after both sides were completely exhausted, we had to give it up. Now the English say that they only had twenty fighters left on the last day, or after the last day raids, but we hadn't many more either.

The next phase of air warfare was the transition from day raids to night raids, which it was possible to keep up for a relatively long period until British night fighting had developed to such a point that night raids also became too costly for us. Then our battles in the Southeast started, followed by fighting in the East the following year. That gave England a breathing space. They were able to bring their fighter arm up to strength and increase its numbers, and above all, it enabled them to start building up their strategic air force, building bombers, which by the end of 1941 and beginning of 1942 were already coming out as four engine models.

Then we experienced a similar situation at home. Night raids started on the Reich, on Germany. We started developing night fighting, which already existed in its preliminary stages; and night fighting was developed in a relatively short time into at least a weapon to be reckoned with. The whole development was further delayed by the fact that instruments still had to be constructed, and even invented, and tested in operations. At the time our night fighting only had one aircraft, the Me-110, at its disposal; it was first used operationally as a long range fighter bomber; it was intended as a long range fighter and was then specially equipped with instru-

ments for night fighting, but with no other improvements.

At first we tried equipping the approach lanes used by the enemy with a belt of searchlights which were to illuminate the enemy aircraft approaching at night. Our night fighters were waiting above and tried to attack the enemy aircraft and shoot it down while it was in the cone of searchlights. It was a fairly exciting but not very successful enterprise. At the same time we developed the so called dark night fighting restricted to a given area. It was based on the following principle: a whole belt of radio transmitter beacons was placed along the entire coast, from Jutland down as far as possible towards the Brest area. An aircraft, a night fighter circled around each of these beacons whenever enemy aircraft were approaching, and these night fighters were directed to the enemy aircraft by control from the ground. The disadvantage of this method was that the instruments we had at the time only covered a radius of 20 KM; they described exact circles of 20 KM, adjacent circles of 20 KM; there was a second similar belt of them behind the first forming a double ring. If you succeeded in directing your own night fighters on to the tail of the enemy aircraft while it was within this 20 KM radius, by instructing it to: "fly slightly to the left or to the right, or somewhat higher or lower". The exact height and everything was given to the fighter until he was immediately behind the enemy aircraft, could see it and attack it visually.

This method of night fighting, this restricted area night fighting, as it was called, was to be built up in such a way that this one belt extended all along the coast and then there was to be a second belt, a little inside the Reich, running from North of the Ruhr district, west of the frontier of the Reich down as far as Switzerland. That was the second belt which was planned; then thirdly, there were planned similar belts near the most important objectives, the Ruhr district, Frankfurt on Main, the industrial area of the Upper Rhine, Berlin, etc. That was to be the third line of defense.

These night fighter tactics would have been more successful and some aircraft were actually shot down; the number varied between 15, 20 and 25 per night, had not the enemy adopted their tactics to our defense methods. How did British bombers avoid being shot down? Firstly, they approached at a very high altitude and secondly, after these areas where our night fighters were operating had become known, the enemy dived down to cross these areas at the greatest possible speed. Their aircraft nosed down, that is, they converted their height into speed and thus reduced to a minimum the period in which they could be attacked.

After we monitored that by instruments covering twice the radius and able to locate the enemy and direct our fighters within a 40 KM radius instead of 20 KM, the enemy changed to a policy of approaching in thick streams, that is to say they assembled all their bombers over England and approached like a narrow stream at low level. It was the real bomber stream, as we are experiencing it even today in daylight. It put our night fighters under a great disadvantage, as it was no longer possible to direct individual fighters with all those enemy targets; even when it was possible we could only bring three, four or five night fighters into fighting contact with those enemy aircraft.

Of course the development of our tactics continued during this time; we switched over to free lance night fighting when each aircraft was fitted with an instrument, a radar, to enable it to home on to enemy aircraft on its own once it had been directed into the neighborhood of the stream of enemy bombers. That was the period when our night fighter successes increased and we used to