

maximum effort against the Allied assault forces. A bombing plan was therefore prepared which aimed at driving the G.A.F. fighters on to bases as far from the battle as were the Allied fighter forces, by destroying its bases within 130 miles radius of the assault area. Enemy bomber bases even further inland were also scheduled for attack.

32. Moreover, as I considered it possible that an intense air battle might last for anything up to a week following the launching of the assault, it was necessary to have on hand a strong enough force of fighter aircraft to ensure that the enemy would be completely mastered in any such battle. I refer to the constitution and use of this fighter force in Part III of this Despatch.

"Crossbow" Operations.

33. Throughout the whole of the preliminary and preparatory phases of the operation, I had to take into account the need to maintain a sufficient weight of bombing attacks on "Noball" targets. "Noball" was the code word used to designate the sites being prepared by the enemy for attacks on the United Kingdom with flying bombs and rockets. The operations against these sites carried out under the title of "Crossbow" had begun as early as 5th December, 1943, and constituted a considerable diversion of bomber effort. This bombing, while it did not, of itself, succeed in completely eliminating the menace of the flying bomb, was fully justified, in view of the fact that the original scheme had to be abandoned by the Germans. Details of the effort involved and an indication of the results achieved are given in Part III of this Despatch.

34. The diversion of bombing effort on to "Noball" targets, however, was not wholly unprofitable, even if judged from the point of view of "Neptune" alone. The medium and light bomber crews gained invaluable experience in finding and attacking small and well concealed targets and inevitably improved their standard of bombing accuracy. Moreover, much of the flying in these winter and spring months was carried out in very bad weather conditions. Again the crews gained invaluable experience in instrument flying through bad weather. These were all gains that were to stand us in good stead later in the battle.

(b) Operations during the Assault.

35. My plan for the use of air power in direct support of the assault called for the fulfilment of the following principal air tasks:—

(a) To protect the cross-channel movement of the assault forces against enemy air attack, and to assist the Allied naval forces to protect the assault craft and shipping from enemy naval forces.

(b) To prepare the way for the assault by neutralising the coast and beach defences.

(c) To protect the landing beaches and the shipping concentrations from enemy air attack.

(d) To dislocate enemy communications and control during the assault.

To accomplish these tasks, detailed plans were produced and a record of the manner in which these plans were put into operation appears in Part III of this Despatch.

(c) Operations Subsequent to D-Day.

36. The planning of air operations during the post-assault phase of the battle was along two lines. The first part included the continuation and expansion of attacks designed to interfere with the movements of enemy supplies and reinforcements, in addition to other detailed plans covering the operations of the heavy bomber forces in close support. These plans were produced at my main headquarters. The second part of post-assault planning covered the changing needs of the ground situation and this day-by-day planning was co-ordinated and controlled through the headquarters of Advanced A.E.A.F.

37. In the foregoing paragraphs I have set out briefly the main principles which guided the planning of air operations before, during and after the assault. A general picture of these air operations as planned is given in the attached map.* More detailed descriptions of the individual plans evolved to implement these principles will be found in Part III where such descriptions fit in more logically. In the final part of this Despatch I have included some considerations governing our general planning.

38. I should like to emphasise that my Planning Staff, like my Operations Staff, was Allied in the true sense of the word, and that both the American and British components worked together most successfully under the direction of my Senior Air Staff Officer, Air Vice Marshal H. E. P. Wigglesworth, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.C.

PART III—NARRATIVE OF OPERATIONS.

(a) Preliminary Period.

Air Superiority essential.

39. Air superiority was the principal prerequisite for the successful assault of Europe from the West. The winning of air superiority was therefore the cardinal point of air planning. Air operations to ensure that the requisite degree of air superiority had been gained by D-Day were begun in the preliminary phase and continued during the preparatory phase. On D-Day itself a series of concentrated attacks was made on the G.A.F. airfields in the pre-selected area; but as a result of the earlier operations, I was confident that the necessary degree of air ascendancy had been gained sometime before D-Day and advised yourself, the Allied Commanders and the Chiefs of Staff to this effect. In the event, the German Air Force was more impotent than I expected.

40. I have set out in the following paragraphs some of the efforts of the strategical bomber forces directed to securing air superiority during the preliminary period. The medium and light bomber forces of the A.E.A.F. were throughout this period engaged in support of the strategical bomber programme and in meeting the commitment for attacks on flying bomb and rocket sites.

41. The long-term strategic bombing plan directed against enemy centres of production and assembly of aircraft and aircraft components, principally by the United States Eighth Air Force and also by Royal Air Force Bomber Command, and the United States Fifteenth Air Force operating from the Mediterranean, inflicted crippling blows on the supply and maintenance organisation of the German Air Force.

* Maps not reproduced.