

measures would be precipitate, not because the Vice-Chiefs thought that there was any threat to London, but on the ground that the Germans might still fire rockets at other targets.

171. I mention this divergence of opinion, not to claim superior prescience for myself or my staff, but because the factors involved were so delicately balanced as to give the point some interest. The argument for caution was sound so far as it went, and indeed was shortly to be justified by events; yet there was much that might have been urged on the other side. The disorganisation of the enemy's transport services at this stage must have been so great that he might well have shrunk from the task of diverting the rocket-firing organisation from France to Holland. Again, there was a time during those first few days of September when the possibility that Allied troops might reach Germany in one bound seemed not at all remote; if the Germans had appreciated this, would they have thought an attempt to fire rockets from Holland worth their while? Yet when all this has been said, the fact remains that an area from which rockets could reach London was to remain in German hands for more than seven months to come, and that during this time over a thousand rockets were to fall on British soil.

(d) *The Attacks: First Phase (London, 8th to 18th September, 1944)*

172. In the event, only a few days elapsed before brute fact justified the argument for caution. At approximately twenty minutes to seven on the 8th September Londoners on their way home from work or preparing for their evening meal were startled by a sharp report which sounded almost, but not quite, like a peal of thunder. At 1843 hours a rocket fell at Chiswick, killing three people and seriously injuring another ten. Sixteen seconds later another fell near Epping, demolishing some wooden huts but doing no other damage.

173. During the next ten days rockets continued to arrive intermittently at the rate of rather more than two a day. On the 17th September the Allied airborne operation against the lower Rhine at Arnhem was launched. Thereupon the German High Command ordered the rocket firing troops to move eastwards, and on the following day attacks on London ceased for the time being.

174. Up to that time 26 rockets had fallen in this country or close enough to its shores to be observed. Thirteen of them had landed within the London Civil Defence Region. The higher figure does not represent the total fired during the period, which was certainly not less than 29 and probably well over 30; for we know that a substantial proportion of the rockets despatched habitually miscarried.

175. Early in this opening phase two things about the functioning of the technical devices deployed to detect rockets became apparent. One was that radar stations chosen to detect rockets fired from France were not, on the whole, well placed to detect rockets fired from Holland. Accordingly we arranged to increase the number of stations keeping watch between Dover and Lowestoft from three to six, and to deploy additional radar, sound ranging, and flash spotting equipment on the Continent. No. 105

Mobile Air Reporting Unit was formed within my Command in the middle of September and despatched to Malines, near Brussels, to correlate and transmit the information obtained from technical sources across the Channel. In the meantime the War Cabinet decided that for the moment the public-warning system should not be put into effect. This decision was based on a number of considerations, some of which lay outside my province; but there is no doubt that it was justified on operational grounds alone. If the technical devices had worked perfectly, we could at best have warned the public on any given occasion that the Germans had just launched a rocket which, if it did not miscarry and was not aimed at some other target, would come down somewhere in southern or eastern England in a minute or two. And since at that stage the technical devices were far from working perfectly, our attempts to give even so rudimentary a warning as this would have led, in practice, to many false alarms and the arrival of some rockets unheralded by any warning at all.

176. The other point which emerged during this phase was that, even when the results obtained from the technical devices were good, the calculations based upon them did not, by themselves, enable us to locate the firing points with the accuracy required for the effective briefing of pilots despatched on armed reconnaissance. At best this method told us the position of a site within a mile or two; and until opportunities had arisen of adjusting the assumptions on which the calculations were based by reference to the known location of sites, as established by other means, some of the estimates obtained in this way were manifestly incorrect. Such difficulties were inevitable in the development of a new technique. They did not prevent the radar and sound ranging equipment from giving us useful information from the start. A combination of the data furnished by these two sources confirmed, for example, that the first two rockets to arrive had come from south-west Holland, as our deductions from first principles had led us to suppose they would; and within a few hours "intruder" aircraft of my Command were on their way to that area.

177. After the first day or two, however, we did not depend on technical devices to locate the firing points. One of the first measures taken by the Air Ministry when the attacks began was to brief the Dutch Resistance Movement, through the appropriate channel, to provide intelligence on this subject. A speedy method of getting this information to the Air Ministry was devised. There it was scrutinized by intelligence officers who passed all reports of probable value to my headquarters with the least possible delay. The information contained in these reports was then correlated by a member of my intelligence staff with that based on the data furnished by the technical equipment, as well as that derived from the observations of pilots on armed reconnaissance and of the many flying personnel in the Royal Air Force and the United States Army Air Forces who reported seeing the trails made by ascending rockets. Within a few days the fruits of this process pointed to a number of fairly well-defined areas, all in wooded country in the neighbourhood of the Hague, from which most