

whose potential value to the Allies was great, the problem of defending such objectives against both flying bombs and rockets was beginning to exercise the minds of the Supreme Commander and his staff. The likelihood that Antwerp and Brussels would become the main targets for the rocket during the coming winter—possibly to the exclusion of London and Norwich—doubtless contributed to the Air Commander-in-Chief's decision to leave the responsibility for armed reconnaissance with the Second Tactical Air Force even after attacks on London had been resumed.

198. As a result of this quickening of interest in "Crossbow" weapons at Supreme Headquarters, the Supreme Commander directed on the 11th October that the Chief of the Air Defence Division of Supreme Headquarters, who was responsible for co-ordinating terrestrial air defence measures in the north-west European theatre, should also assume responsibility for co-ordinating countermeasures against flying-bombs and rockets in that theatre.

199. The decision to entrust this task to a staff division of Supreme Headquarters itself, and not to the Allied Expeditionary Air Force, foreshadowed the imminent demise of the subsidiary formation. Now that the Allied Armies were firmly established on the Continent, that body, which had been formed primarily to plan and supervise air operations in support of the assault and build-up, was considered to have fulfilled its purpose. On the 15th October, therefore, the Allied Expeditionary Air Force was formally disbanded. Consequently my Command—re-named Fighter Command—and the Second Tactical Air Force became independent formations. Thereupon the constitutional responsibility for the air defence of the United Kingdom which had hitherto rested on Air Chief Marshal Leigh-Mallory devolved upon me, with this difference: I had no control over the Second Tactical Air Force. A situation in which I was responsible for defending the country against long-range rockets while responsibility for conducting the only counter-measure open to a fighter force was exercised by another Command, not under my control, was no longer merely inconvenient; it was clearly untenable.

200. I therefore negotiated with Air Marshal Coningham and with the Deputy Supreme Commander and the Air Ministry a new arrangement, whereby Fighter Command resumed responsibility for the armed reconnaissance of all known or suspected rocket-firing or storage areas in Holland west of a line running north and south through a point approximately 45 miles east of the Hague. At the same time steps were taken to assist the Air Defence Division of Supreme Headquarters in discharging their responsibility in respect of rockets fired against Continental cities. The Supreme Commander had already asked that the 10th Survey Regiment, Royal Artillery, which had been deployed on the Continent in September to undertake sound-ranging and flash-spotting on my behalf, should return to its normal duties in the field. Meanwhile, experience had suggested the possibility of doing without a Survey Regiment in Kent, where the 11th Survey Regiment, Royal Artillery, was deployed. Accordingly arrangements were now made to move the 11th Survey Regiment to

the Continent and place it at the disposal of Supreme Headquarters. No. 105 Mobile Air Reporting Unit, too, was likely to be more useful to Supreme Headquarters than it was to me; and we agreed that this, too, should be handed over. Since the accurate detection and reporting of rockets aimed at Continental targets was of direct as well as indirect benefit to my Command—for without this information we could not be sure of distinguishing the reports that related to rockets aimed at the United Kingdom or assessing their reliability—I readily assented to these changes. I also agreed to lend a number of officers to Supreme Headquarters to assist in setting up the organisation on the Continent.

201. Under the terms of these new arrangements, during the third week in October No. 12 Group once more assumed the responsibility for operations over the Hague with which I had charged them in September. From the 18th October onwards, No. 12 Group, instead of the Second Tactical Air Force, were the primary recipients of the daily "Benrep"; but we continued to keep in close touch with Air Marshal Coningham's headquarters, and reached an understanding whereby the Second Tactical Air Force undertook to do its best to reconnoitre the Hague on my behalf on any day when the weather made flying possible from Continental airfields but impossible from airfields in this country.

202. In the meantime my staff had been making a close study of the intelligence bearing on the disposition of the rocket-firing complex, and had selected five objectives at or near the Hague which seemed worth bombing. Three—the goods station and the railway yard of the main station at Leiden, and the suspected store near the Hotel Promenade at the Hague—were small targets situated close to built-up areas in places whose inhabitants were well-disposed to us and were, indeed, our Allies. On the information I had at the time, these targets seemed eminently suited to the kind of precise attack in which the Mosquito bombers of No. 2 Group specialised. Accordingly we asked that Group to attack them.\* The other two—the first consisting of living quarters and storage areas at Bloemendaal, and the second of the storage site at Raaphorst, which was credibly reported to be in use again—were larger and stood in more open situations. We therefore suggested them to Bomber Command as targets for a less precise form of attack. Further enquiry cast some doubt on the validity of our most recent information about Raaphorst, and on the 19th October we withdrew that target from Bomber Command's list, thus leaving them with Bloemendaal as their sole "Big Ben" objective.†

\* Air Marshal Coningham, of whose Command No. 2 Group formed part, had agreed to my making such requests direct to the headquarters of the Group in England.

† Strictly speaking, there were two objectives at Bloemendaal, with separate target names and numbers. The storage area round Bloemendaal church was known as "The Hague/Bloemendaal"; the neighbouring lunatic asylum in which firing troops were quartered and whose grounds were said to be used for storing and possibly for firing rockets was known as "The Hague/Ockenburg Klinier". Our suggestion was that the two should be regarded as a single complex, whose internal and external communications could be disrupted at the same time as the living quarters and equipment were destroyed, by bombing two given aiming points.