

G.A.F. being still very disorganised owing to their moves back to Germany. Later in the month, however, fighter units staged a very spirited revival of effort against strategical bomber attacks. United States Eighth Air Force suffered fairly heavy losses on two days. About this time also, jet-propelled aircraft began to appear in operations.

356. The landing of airborne troops in the Eindhoven-Nijmegen-Arnhem area in mid-September produced a more violent reaction from the G.A.F. than had been encountered for some time in the battle areas although a tactical surprise was gained and the original landings were made without opposition. During the first three days of the operation, many sightings were made and signals intelligence reported many more enemy aircraft airborne, but in spite of favourable weather on the fourth day, this offensive was not sustained. It can only be deduced that the scale of effort of the three previous days had imposed too great a strain upon the G.A.F. organisation and possibly its crews.

357. From the 20th September to the end of the month, close support of the enemy ground forces in the area of the Allied airborne landings was the chief object of the G.A.F. in the battle areas. The scale of effort was fairly low, probably owing to weather, except on 26th September, when a total of over 200 sorties was put up, chiefly ground attacks, by fighter bombers; the pilots showed little inclination to engage in air fighting. Our claims for this day's fighting were 16 enemy aircraft destroyed.

358. The stiffening of German resistance in the air during September, mainly in the Nijmegen area in Holland was, however, accomplished at high cost. There is reliable evidence that the G.A.F. had to scrape up from its training organisation its older and more experienced pilots, a policy not calculated to produce a long term improvement in its condition. However, the G.A.F. is by no means a spent force yet, and recent technical developments, in jet-propelled aircraft, for example, are likely to make it more formidable. It would be folly to regard the G.A.F. as

"down and out". In addition, it is certain that it is working on a policy of conserving effort and building up reserves for the defence of the Reich proper. A reduction in heavy bomber attacks on G.A.F. centres of production after D-Day is a factor to be remembered in this connection. (See para. 401.)

359. *Enemy use of Jet-propelled Aircraft.*—The most important feature of G.A.F. activity during the second half of September was the appearance of jet-propelled aircraft, at first in ones and twos, later in fours and fives. In view of the fact that within the period covered by this Despatch (namely until 30th September) we have had insufficient experience of them to form reliable estimates of their activities or capabilities, I do not propose to comment on them at length. That they are a momentous landmark in the history of the air will not be denied, but final judgment on their value must be reserved for the moment.

360. Within the limits of our present experience, they appear to have been employed chiefly as fighter bombers for ground attack in a close support role, and for tactical reconnaissance. In both these roles their very high speed makes them formidable weapons and presents problems of defence not yet solved. As fighters, they have so far played a less decisive part, though their speed and particularly their rate of climb, would seem to equip them admirably for these duties. From aerial combats that have occurred up to the date of writing between orthodox Allied fighters and these jet-propelled aircraft, it would appear that their lack of manoeuvrability puts them under some disadvantage in a "dog fight", but their qualities of speed and rate of climb make them deadly if they are given the chance to "jump" the opposition.

361. When it is remembered that the G.A.F. so often refused to fight and had to be diligently sought out before it could be attacked, the losses inflicted on it are remarkable. The following figures give the victories gained by Allied pilots in air fighting alone, but do not include the destruction of aircraft on the ground or by the anti-aircraft forces of the British and American armies:—

Enemy Losses on the Western Front—6th June—30th September, 1944

| | <i>Destroyed</i> | <i>Probably Destroyed</i> | <i>Damaged</i> |
|---------------------|------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| A.E.A.F.... | 1,368 | 187 | 18 |
| U.S. Eighth A.F. :— | | | 6 |
| VIIIth F.C. ... | 1,325 | 50 | 372 |
| VIIIth B.C. ... | 193 | 108 | 208 |
| R.A.F. B.C. ... | 240 | 33 | 121 |
| | <hr/> 3,126 | <hr/> 378 | <hr/> 1,319 |

362. The losses inflicted on the G.A.F. in the heavy and damaging attacks made on its airfields subsequent to D-Day cannot be estimated with sufficient accuracy to warrant the statement of a figure. It is known they were very heavy. The chief difficulty is that photographic reconnaissance never revealed all aircraft destroyed by the Allied air forces' attacks. There is considerable evidence from the airfields now in Allied hands that the G.A.F. continued to use hangars, even after heavy raiding, for the parking and servicing of aircraft, and it was frequently found that even

more wrecks of aircraft were under cover than were at dispersal points. This G.A.F. habit made impossible the exact evaluation of the success of our attacks on its airfields.

363. *Attacks on Enemy Airfields.*—Attacks on airfields after D-Day were not made to any set plan, as they had been before the invasion. They were made as a security measure when it was found that enemy air activity was interfering with the success of our land and air operations. Even so, they were laid on only when intelligence indicated concentrations of enemy aircraft in sufficient strength to justify