

sometimes divergent courses. "Because of the impotence of the OKW," says Albert Speer, the former Reichsminister of Armaments and War Production, "I had to negotiate and make decisions separately with the three Services."

228. According to the same authority, the development of the flying bomb was begun towards the end of 1942 because the German Air Staff grew jealous of the success achieved by the Army in developing their own long-range missile, the A-4 rocket. Thus, from the outset the two weapons seem to have been competitors. An attempt to co-ordinate their use at the operational level was, however, made in December, 1943, when a military formation called LXV Army Korps was given overriding control over both weapons. The efficacy of this measure is doubtful, since the staff of LXV Army Korps seem to have had an imperfect understanding of the flying bomb, and were sometimes at loggerheads with Flakregiment 155 (W), the Luftwaffe formation immediately responsible for its operation. I daresay there was something to be said on both sides.

229. Despite these disagreements and uncertainties, by the spring of 1944 the notion of using the two long-range weapons to remedy the shortcomings of the bomber force seems to have been generally accepted. Outwardly the odds against a German victory had become so great that those in the know could hardly have found the will to go on fighting if they had not been sustained by the mysterious promise of new scientific marvels, reinforced by the hope of driving a wedge between the Allies. Koller, the last Chief of the German Air Staff, has said that "the final role of the flying bomb and the A-4 rocket was to replace the bomber arm of the Luftwaffe entirely." Hitler expressed a similar intention when addressing representatives of Flakregiment 155 (W) at Berchtesgaden soon after the flying bomb campaign had begun. Yet even at that stage inconsistencies of aim and viewpoint were evident. Only a few months earlier the aircraft industry had been directed to continue the production of bomber types; while LXV Army Korps, true to its tradition of conflict with Flakregiment 155 (W), envisaged the simultaneous use of flying bombs and bombers. Finally, Goering, who as head of the Air Ministry and Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe was ultimately responsible for the decision to adopt the flying bomb, is said to have had little faith in the weapon; while Speer, who was ultimately responsible for its production, was certainly not unaware of its defects.

230. On one further point, at least, the Germans were agreed: the time to use the long-range weapons was *before* the Allies could set foot in north-west Europe, in order to postpone the day and gain time for dissension to spring up between the United Kingdom, America and Russia. The A-4 rocket was an ill-favoured monster, slow to reach maturity; but tests of the flying bomb in the summer of 1943 were so promising that the commencement of active operations before the end of the year was ordered. Whether attacking London with flying bombs was a good way of upsetting Allied plans for the assault is arguable; but very likely the Germans clung to the hope that opposing views about the diversion of our

resources to the defence of the capital would split the western Allies, and the consequent delay in opening the new front detach us both from Russia.

231. The bombing of the "ski sites" and other factors led to a postponement of this programme. The landings in Normandy on the 6th June, 1944, took the Germans tactically by surprise and found them still not ready to use the flying bomb. Thereupon LXV Army Korps, apparently on Hitler's instructions, peremptorily ordered Flakregiment 155 (W) to begin operations on the 12th June. The precise grounds of this decision are never likely to be known. The opportunity to use the long-range weapons to delay the Allied assault had gone, if indeed it had ever existed. But the Germans may still have hoped to gain time by exploiting the harassing effect of the bomb and hampering the flow of reinforcements and supplies. Moreover, it is improbable that we need look very far for the motive that prompted such a natural reaction to events. At moments of crisis the impulse to retaliate against an England which had upset all Hitler's plans by perversely refusing its allotted role was never far below the surface. The Germans quickly publicised the flying bomb as "revenge weapon No. 1": and their propaganda may well have contained a hint of their real purpose. With the "west wall" in jeopardy and defeat on the horizon, Hitler may have seen no more than the need to strike back and hope for a miracle.

232. In any case such hopes as the Germans may have entertained were bound to be disappointed. During the next ten months they were to launch well over 10,000 flying bombs at London, thereby squandering about a million and a half gallons of sorely-needed petrol and a productive effort which, according to Speer, would have been better employed in turning out 3,000 fighters. Whether Germany would have gained anything decisive if every one of those peevish darts had found its mark is open to question. But for us the effects would certainly have been embarrassing. As it was, our casualties in the two V-weapon campaigns included 8,938 persons killed and 24,504 seriously injured, while over 200,000 houses were destroyed or severely damaged and over a million more suffered less important damage. We may therefore be thankful that the number of bombs which reached the London Civil Defence Region was not 10,000 but 2,419.

233. I fancy that Londoners in particular will readily acknowledge their debt to the gunners, fighter crews, balloon crews, and a host of others whose skill, devotion, and unfailing toil brought about the premature descent of far more bombs than reached the target. Nor will they forget the involuntary but cheerful contribution of their neighbours in Kent, Sussex, Surrey, and other counties surrounding London, whose fields and gardens were graveyards for buzz-bombs stricken by the way. Despite the care that we took to bring the bombs down away from houses whenever we could, the path of damaged or defective bombs was sometimes unpredictable. Like their neighbours in London, some of the dwellers in "bomb alley" met their deaths in the front line. It is right that I should record, however, that our efforts were so far successful that the casualties caused by the bombs which failed to reach the target were only a fraction of the total.