

of the rockets fired at London seemed to be coming.* By keeping a close watch on the information pointing to these "suspected areas" and ensuring that it was passed to the Fighter Groups concerned by means of frequent and full reports from my intelligence staff, I was able to satisfy myself that our armed reconnaissance effort was employed to the best advantage. During the ten days which this phase lasted, pilots of my Command carried out approximately 1,000 sorties of this kind. They attacked a variety of targets, including road, rail, and water transport vehicles and installations, suspicious constructions, and German troops. On one occasion when Tempests attacked a suspected firing point an explosion occurred so violent as to wreck the leading aircraft. Afterwards a large, shallow crater was seen, such as might have been caused by the detonation of a rocket in the firing position.

178. At this stage I was made responsible for directing and co-ordinating all operations by air forces based in the United Kingdom against the rocket-firing area as well as the bases of the German flying bomb air-launching unit.† This meant that besides using my own aircraft for such tasks as were within their power, I could ask Bomber Command or No. 2 Group, Second Tactical Air Force, to bomb any objectives which seemed to me to call for attack by heavy, medium, or light bombers. But there was nothing mandatory about these requests, and I had no means of ensuring that they were carried out, save that of making representations to higher authority if direct appeals should prove unavailing. My relations with Bomber Command and No. 2 Group left nothing to be desired; but since both had many calls on their resources, mere reiteration on my part and goodwill on theirs were not enough to ensure that my demands should always receive neither more nor less than their due. These difficulties become more intelligible if the requirements for rocket counter measures which preoccupied my attention are fitted into the vast perspective of air operations at that time. In the circumstances it would have been too much to expect a series of firm and favourable decisions on the part of a well-informed and competent higher authority, by means of which alone detailed and adequate response to my special needs could have been ensured. As it was, the Air Commander-in-Chief was busy with the offensive battle, and in any case had no power to direct Bomber Command in matters of this nature; while the Air Staff at the Air Ministry were naturally reluctant to give other than very broad directions to operational commanders.

179. Soon after the rocket attacks had begun, intelligence was received which suggested that the Germans had made preparations to store rockets on three properties situated at Wassenaar, just outside the Hague, and named respectively Terhorst, Eikenhorst, and Raaphorst. At the first two there were comparatively small wooded areas, which for various reasons seemed eminently suitable for the purpose; Raaphorst was a rather extensive property, and we were not sure which part of it was meant. In any case we had no proof that any of the storage shelters which were said

to have been constructed on the three properties were actually in use. Nevertheless, I concluded that the Germans must be storing their equipment somewhere, and presumably also supplies of fuel and rockets, unless they were living entirely from hand to mouth. Accordingly, after weighing the probabilities carefully, I invited Bomber Command to bomb given aiming-points at Terhorst and Eikenhorst. Meanwhile, as early as the 14th September, and before receiving my request, they had sent a small force to attack Raaphorst. An aiming point close to the main road bordering the property was chosen. A few days later fresh intelligence gave us the probable location of three supposed storage areas on the Raaphorst estate, one of them close to this aiming point.

180. The first attack carried out by Bomber Command in response to my request was made on the 17th September, when a small force attacked Eikenhorst, dropping 172 tons of bombs. The bombing was well concentrated, and a large explosion was seen to occur in the course of it. No further attacks were made during the first phase of the rocket offensive, which ended on the 18th September.

(e) *The Lull (19th to 25th September, 1944).*

181. During the next week no rockets arrived in this country. Towards the end of that period secret informants reported that the firing troops had received orders on the afternoon of the 17th September to leave the Hague, and been seen departing with their equipment towards Utrecht. We know now that this information was correct; but the arrival of a rocket at Lambeth on the evening of the 18th, coupled with a report that rockets had been fired from Wassenaar on that day and the next, made us a trifle disinclined to give it credence at the time.* I decided that for the present armed reconnaissance sorties over the Hague and its neighbourhood should be continued, and the suspected storage sites at Wassenaar be left on the list of "Crossbow" targets which I wished to see attacked by Bomber Command. If no more rockets should come from the Hague or Wassenaar within the next few days, the sites would lose their value as targets and be taken off the list.

182. Accordingly, aircraft of my Command continued to fly armed reconnaissance and "intruder" sorties over the Hague and its environs during the period from the 19th to the 25th September, so far as the weather and the demands of the Arnhem operation allowed. On the 19th, three whole squadrons from No. 12 Group—to which I had delegated responsibility for supervising the conduct of air operations a few days previously—were sent to attack objectives in an area south-east of the race-course at the Hague, from which we believed the Germans had been firing rockets. Troops, transport vehicles, and buildings there were all attacked. On the previous night (as on two other nights about this time) "intruder" aircraft bombed a railway station at Woerden which an agent had mentioned in connection with the supply of rockets to the Hague.

* During the first phase a few rockets were fired at London from the Island of Walcheren as well.

† See paras. 133-134, above.

* The rocket fired on the 18th must have been a parting shot from a rear detachment of the departing troops. The report that firing occurred on the 19th was doubtless a mistaken one; or perhaps the message was misconstrued.