

knowledge of the enemy's plans. I believe, however, that aligned with these causes was a psychological factor. It must be remembered that for many months past the chief threat had seemed to come from the "ski sites". The use of our bomber forces against the "ski sites" had therefore been felt as a necessary, but still an unwelcome, diversion of effort at a time when interest was focussed on the coming European operations. To the officers responsible for directing offensive operations the success of the attacks on the "ski sites" must have come as a great relief. In the circumstances, they would have been hardly human if they had not been more reluctant than perhaps they realised to recognise that the neutralization of the "ski sites" had not averted the menace after all.

49. I think, therefore, that at the end of May and in the first half of June the threat from the "modified sites" was under-estimated, not in the sense of a failure to apprehend it intellectually, but in the sense that it was not felt as keenly as the original threat from the "ski sites" six months earlier. If it had been, I do not doubt that the "modified sites" would have been attacked as vigorously then—despite their shortcomings as targets—as they were a few weeks later, when "Diver" had begun.

50. Whether this would have had much effect on the subsequent course of events is another matter. The question is one to which no final answer is possible. My own opinion is that a well co-ordinated series of attacks on the "modified sites" during the weeks immediately preceding the "Diver" campaign would have been worth making, but that nothing short of the destruction of all the sites would have prevented the Germans from using their new weapon sooner or later. Nor does my belief that the menace of the "modified sites" was under-estimated necessarily imply that I think the omission to attack the sites was wrong in the light of the knowledge available at the time. Even if their dangerousness had been fully realised, there would still have been strong arguments against attacking them. And while it is easy to be wise after the event, at the time there was no means of knowing how imminent the danger was. On the contrary, until some 36 hours before the first pilotless aircraft was launched, such intelligence as was available suggested that the "modified sites" were not likely to be used for several weeks.*

51. The fact remains that during the first half of June the Germans were able to press on with their preparations to bombard us with pilotless aircraft, virtually unmolested by our bomber forces.

52. At that stage, one of the tasks of my Command was to prevent German reconnaissance aircraft from approaching the areas where our forces were concentrating. In this we succeeded even beyond our expectations. Partly

on this account, the landings in Normandy early on the 6th June achieved complete tactical surprise. Even on subsequent days, when the Germans had had time to appreciate what we were doing, air opposition was far from energetic. Naturally enough, the Air Commander-in-Chief and his staff were jubilant, and had little time or inclination to think of pilotless aircraft.

53. It was equally natural that my staff and I, with our defensive preoccupations, should not entirely share this optimism. It seemed to us that things were going almost too well. So much was at stake for the enemy that we dared not believe he would let us have everything our own way. We could not help suspecting that he still had something up his sleeve.

(c) *The Attacks: First Phase (13th June to 15th July).*

54. Events were soon to substantiate our doubts. Shortly after midnight on the night of the 12th-13th June the German long-range guns opened fire across the Channel. In this there was nothing novel; what was unusual was that for the first and last time during the war, a town some miles from the coast was shelled. Eight rounds fell at Maidstone, one at Otham, two-and-a-half miles to the south-east, and twenty-four at Folkestone. The bombardment doubtless achieved its purpose, inasmuch as it gave some people the impression that a novel weapon was being used and tended to create an atmosphere of uncertainty and rumour. At least one Me.410 flew over the London area during this phase and was shot down by anti-aircraft fire near Barking.

55. At 0400 hours the shelling stopped. A few minutes later an observer on duty at a Royal Observer Corps post in Kent was passed by an aircraft which made "a swishing sound" and emitted a bright glow from the rear. In common with all his colleagues, he had been briefed to recognise pilotless aircraft; and in accordance with his instructions he shouted "Diver". The missile continued over the North Downs "making a noise like a model-T Ford going up a hill" and fell to earth with a loud explosion at Swanscombe, near Gravesend, at 0418 hours. During the next hour three more of the missiles came down at Cuckfield, Bethnal Green, and Platt (near Sevenoaks) respectively. No casualties were suffered except at Bethnal Green, where six people were killed and nine injured; in addition a railway bridge was demolished.

56. The attack then ceased for the time being. I came to the conclusion that so small an effort did not justify the major re-disposition of the anti-aircraft defences required by the "Overlord-Diver" Plan. The Chiefs of Staff agreed. I therefore gave orders that the plan was not to be put into effect until we could see more clearly what was going to happen. In the meantime the existing defences were authorised to engage pilotless aircraft on the same terms as ordinary aircraft. I had already arranged that a visual reconnaissance of the most likely launching areas should be flown; and at the instance of the Air Ministry several attacks were made on three of the so-called "supply sites" on the 13th, 14th and 15th June. These absorbed the whole of the bombing effort that could be spared from other

* On the 11th June, however, the Air Ministry received a report which stated that a train loaded with missiles had passed westwards through Belgium two days earlier. On the same day photographic reconnaissance revealed unusual activity at six of the "modified sites". This information did not reach my headquarters until after the German offensive had begun; but little or nothing would have been gained if I had received it earlier, for the defence plan had been ready since March, and I should not have ordered deployment merely on the strength of these two reports.