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GERMAN AIR FORCE POLICY

DURING THE 2ND WORLD WAR -

A REVIEW BY

OBERST BERND VON BRAUCHITSCH

TRANSLATED BY

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Oberst Bernd von Brauchitsch, the son of Feldmarschall Walther von Brauchitsch the former Commander-in-Chief of the Army, was a member of Goering's immediate circle. During the war, apart from a short period during June 1940 spent as O.C. of a Stuka unit, he served in the Ministeramt of the Reich Air Ministry (Goering's ministerial office) and from January 1943 onwards he has Goering's Adjutant in Chief.

This review was written during the summer of 1945 and should be read in conjunction with comments thereon made later in the same year by General der Flieger Karl Koller, who after two years as Chief of Staff to Luftflotte 3, became in September 1943 Director of Luftwaffe Operations and was then Chief of Air Staff from November 1944 until the end of the war. Koller has at all times numbered and in the majority of cases underlined those parts of the von Brauchitsch text commented on and his own text is numbered accordingly.

The translations of these two documents (VII/153 and VII/154), which reflect to a certain extent the contrasting viewpoints of the Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe and his General Staff, are issued separately for easier reference. These were both written after the close of events and are retrospective. A third document, of which a translation (VII/155) is issued at the same time and in conjunction with the other two documents and which contains the views of engineers from Rechlin aircraft experimental station and dwells for the most part on the technical aspect of German Air Force policy, is a reflection of contemporary informed opinion.

/I 1939 and 1940

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

- 2 -

GERMAN AIR FORCE POLICY DURING THE 2ND WORLD WAR -

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I 1939 and 1940

In Germany, in contrast to many other countries, paratroops, anti-aircraft artillery and air signals as well as flying formations were under a unified command. However, it is not necessary to make constant reference to the air signals arm in the following pages for, in its capacity as an auxiliary force, it was not intended for active participation in decisive actions. Let it merely be observed, therefore, that the performance of this arm came up to expectation in every way. Disruption of communications resulting from widespread damage to industry, economy and transport did not occur until towards the end of the war, when the air signals arm was no longer capable of restoring the situation single-handed.

At the beginning of the war the Luftwaffe Command's views regarding the employment of flying formations were as follows:-

- (1) Bomber formations were first to be employed on a maximum scale against the enemy ground organisation and then assigned both to operations against the deployment and supply of the enemy army and important targets in the field of transport and war economy.
- (2) Dive-bomber formations were to be employed primarily in clearing the way for the army to advance.
- (3) Fighter formations were to be divided between operations against the enemy air force, protection of German bomber formations and the air defence of Germany.

In the campaigns against Poland, Norway, Holland, Belgium and France the correctness of these views was completely confirmed. The employment of the Luftwaffe in this way was not only decisive but also the reason for the short duration of hostilities. All these campaigns were actual examples of "lightning warfare". As early as in the campaign against Poland the anti-aircraft artillery was not fully exploited in its normal anti-aircraft role and, as a result of correct appreciation of its combat effectiveness, was increasingly employed against armour and, in particular also for artillery concentrations and reinforcing Army artillery. The A.A. arm gave an excellent account of itself in fulfilling these tasks.

Thus, the rapid victories in the campaigns of 1939 and 1940 proved the fundamental importance of the modern air force and of its employment, which was admittedly co-ordinated with Army operations but independently controlled according to air force policy. Many theoretical results of peace-time research were corroborated in practice and a number of new discoveries was also made.

The consequences of these favourable results are obvious. For the first time in the history of warfare an air force went into action as an independent arm of the service and achieved startling successes. This necessarily had its effect on the status of the Luftwaffe. The people expected everything of the Luftwaffe and all at once it became the most popular arm of the service. However, it appears that the Command also did not abstain from these biased conclusions.

/For

For this very reason the interval which occurred before operations were resumed was all the more surprising. There is no doubt that political considerations were responsible for the fact that the success which had so far been achieved were not exploited. Two and a half months passed before the Luftwaffe was assigned to a new task -- the Battle of Britain. The supply of war and raw materials to Britain was to be cut out by attacks on the air armament industry, heavy industry, ports and shipping.

The question now arises whether the Luftwaffe was at all equal to this task. Firstly it was evident that training in operational collaboration was not adequate, the result being that bomber and fighter Geschwader approached the target as separate formations and frequently did not succeed in assembling over the target area. Secondly the defensive armament of bombers was not sufficient to eliminate the menace of British fighters. Owing to the lack of a type with sufficient range, fighter escort broke down in operations covering any considerable distance. This fact gave rise to the change-over to night operations. Successes were indeed achieved, as can be proved by reconnaissance photographs, but the effect of operations could not be lasting unless losses were prevented from rising. Not even the way out provided by the bad-weather attack could be taken as the standard of technology, and particularly that of high frequency technology, was not adequate at this time. Thus, attacks could not be made with any prospect of success unless definite minimum weather conditions existed. It was extremely difficult to forecast these conditions in time owing to the almost exclusive prevalence of westerly weather conditions, that is to say the movement of weather from west to east, and all attacks had, of course, to be made from east to west or south to north.

These are the difficulties which confronted the Luftwaffe in the fulfilment of its assigned task in the struggle against Britain. However, they by no means constituted the reason for abandoning operations against Britain.

The factor of decisive importance in the suspension of bombing attacks was the necessity for the employment of large elements of the Luftwaffe elsewhere, in this case to support the Italians after their unsuccessful entry into Albania and later for commitments in Africa. From this time onwards coming events were already casting their shadow before them.

Thus the attempt to force Britain to her knees came to an unsuccessful conclusion. Admittedly, Douhet's * theory had not been refuted, but the abandonment of this type of attack, which was at first intended to be only a temporary measure, nevertheless had the effect of shattering the faith in the absolute and all-hallowed omnipotence of the Luftwaffe.

II THE LUFTWAFFE BEFORE THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN

Apart from the concentration of dive-bomber formations in in VIII Fliegerkorps, the first and only close-support Korps, Luftwaffe organisation remained unchanged after the campaigns of 1939 and 1940. The remaining Fliegerkorps still comprised a mixture of formations. Fundamentally, the strength of these Korps was determined solely by the nature of the task in hand and the operational area. At that time only the responsible Luftflotte could effect any concentration of bomber formations which might be necessary.

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* Giulio Douhet, an Italian writer on air strategy in the years just after the first world war, who advocated mass strategic bombing.

R E S T R I C T E D

- 4 -

It can now be seen that a clear-cut division into strategic and tactical formations, that is to say the creation of bomber, fighter and close support Korps, would have provided the more effective solution. Indeed the idea as such had already been put forward, for the strategic employment of the Luftwaffe was the very subject which played a considerable part in pre-war deliberations on the conduct of air warfare.

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It may be said without hesitation that the standard of training at the outbreak of war was inadequate. The few years that were available for the creation of the Luftwaffe did not suffice for training to reach a high average level. The efficiency of formations was repeatedly reduced by the creation of new units, thereby entailing a constant weakening of the standard of a unit each time its efficiency had been restored. This would necessarily have its effect when formations of appreciable proportions were employed as the overall level of efficiency is always determined by the lowest standard present. These deficiencies were particularly prominent in fighter and bomber formations, while a more stable situation existed in the dive-bomber arm.

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All in all it is quite clear that the formation of the Luftwaffe, which is, of course, primarily a technical arm, presented exceptional difficulties with regard to the training of an officer's corps of a high technical standard. Owing to the speed with which all of these problems had to be overcome, deep-seated results could not be achieved.

The technical standard of equipment in 1939 could be described as modern in every way. The Me 109 and He 111 had already been delivered to formations and the Ju 88 was being brought into service. The Ju 87 dive-bomber, which should have been replaced with all speed according to opinion at that time, nevertheless acquitted itself excellently. Bomb-release equipment was at the peak of its potential efficiency at that time, an appraisal of armament might give rise to some doubt, while high-frequency technology met with a lack of comprehension on the widest scale, its significance not being recognised and its development therefore regarded as of secondary importance. As regards personnel, the training of officers in technical matters was inadequate, as was that of engineers in tactical matters. Furthermore, owing to the provisions of the Versailles Treaty, at least 15 years experience had been lost in the fields of research, development and industry as well as in the service itself. Everywhere there was a lack of specialists who had acquired theoretical and practical experience through the years and essential data had been forgotten by the remaining aces of the First World War.

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Luftwaffe armament planning suffered from the many-sided and inconsistent nature of the demands imposed upon it. Decisions on which objectives were to be achieved and the course which would have to be taken to this end were not worked out in detail. Not once did the necessary verbal agreements and arrangements between the General Staff and the Director General of Air Force Equipment on the one hand and the C-in-C. on the other reach the decisive stage. Even the tactically biased technical demands made by the service itself were not clearly defined. Thus, deficient technical knowledge in the officers corps necessarily led to serious mistakes, especially as co-operation between all the authorities concerned was inadequate and both imagination in the technical field and farsightedness were lacking. Instead of pressure and representations being tenaciously maintained, occasional efforts to further a particular development often failed to attract sufficient attention at command. In the following war years the inadequate technical standard of the service had a regrettable aftermath, a fact which became of decisive importance to the decline of both the efficiency and status of the Luftwaffe.

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R E S T R I C T E D

22 The consequences of discontinuing further development, which steadily became increasingly noticeable, would not have been so much in evidence if this measure had been counter-balanced, at least at the outset, by an appropriate increase in production. As a result of the Battle of Britain the Luftwaffe made exacting demands for increased production and when the spectre of a war on two fronts materialised these demands, this time including anti-aircraft requirements, were again put to the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces. Production could not of course be increased with the material quotas and labour at the disposal of the Luftwaffe and it would therefore have been necessary to make inroads into the quotas available to the armed forces as a whole.

23 It was quite clear to the Luftwaffe Command that the tasks of a war on two fronts could not be carried out with the forces available and the rate of supply expected from the armaments industry. One of the two theatres of operations would have to make do without Luftwaffe support since any dividing up of the small forces available was out of the question.

24 An increase in the Luftwaffe quota was refused by the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces but in spite of this Hitler issued the order to prepare for offensive action. The objection that the Luftwaffe could not possibly provide effective support without discontinuing operations against Britain was rejected as unjustifiable and the order for the offensive was upheld. Every practical objection was overruled by Hitler's decision that Luftwaffe formations based in the West would only be employed temporarily on the Eastern Front so that operations in the West might subsequently be resumed. Hitler's only concession was the promise of the ~~Supreme~~ Command of the Armed Forces that by the winter of 1941 at the latest the Luftwaffe would receive quotas, industrial capacity and labour to increase production, if necessary by the release of about 500,000 men from the Army. However, owing to the course of events, this promise was also illusory.

25 The theory of strategic air warfare had already been discussed in detail before the war and was also applied extensively in the campaigns of 1939 and 1940. In spite of this, however, neither the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces nor that of the Army accepted the problems inherent in the strategic employment of the Luftwaffe as a matter of common concern. On the contrary, both the Army and Navy regarded the Luftwaffe as an auxiliary arm to be employed for the purpose of facilitating and carrying out land and sea warfare. This lack of understanding was often so great that the independence of the Luftwaffe as the third arm of the service was seriously regarded as unnecessary and a hindrance to operations. It was beyond all comprehension that for a country such as Germany with its limited resources the establishment of separate Army and Navy air forces was not possible. Members of the other services frequently failed to recognise that in the case of the Luftwaffe decisive success could be achieved only by the concentration of all available forces.

27 In contrast to this misguided outlook, the Chief of Air Staff at that time - later Generaloberst Jeschonnek - being acutely aware that the Luftwaffe was the one arm of the service which could be most rapidly transferred and concentrated, had ensured even before the war that the Luftwaffe possessed extreme mobility as regards the possibility of moving formations. Admittedly, the ground organisation prerequisites laid down for this purpose consumed resources on a large scale, but this factor had to be accepted in favour of greater mobility. Until the commencement of operations in the East, Jeschonnek unequivocally supported the employment of the Luftwaffe on a strategic and mobile basis.

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R E S T R I C T E D

- 6 -

III PLAN OF CAMPAIGN

The successes in the first campaigns of the second World War were achieved with comparative ease. There were other contributory reasons in addition to numerical superiority over any individual enemy country, but to describe these would involve exceeding the limits of this subject. One enemy country after another was defeated at incredibly short intervals. By means of skilful politics the government had so far successfully avoided being forced into a war on two fronts.

From these lightning campaigns however the Command drew conclusions which can only be described as ill-considered and which later had serious consequences. These victories appeared to have proved that the data produced by the intelligence service on military and economic strength of the various countries concerned were overestimated. The Command regarded those data as the exaggerated misgivings of an over-cautious General Staff, which was perhaps even narrow in its conceptions. 28
The General Staff's findings on the Russian war potential therefore met with a totally unjustified distrust on the part of the Command.

Neither the inter-dependence of political factors nor the production and military potentials as compared with those of the enemy required the necessary attention. Yet these are the fundamental considerations for any plan of campaign. 29

German military superiority was regarded as great enough for the risk of a second front to be taken. Moreover, it was already evident then that Italy was seeking advantages on her own account. Every expert on the military and political situation in Italy must have been convinced that a new and exceptionally difficult front for Germany would of necessity open up in that quarter.

The defective co-ordination of military actions by the Axis powers since mid-1940 and the plan to attack Russia, - which had not been fully considered and was based on presumption, - before the war in the West had been finally concluded are sufficient to justify a negative answer to any question concerning the existence of a plan of campaign. 30

The order for the attack on Russia could only have been given as a result of an absolute misconception of the existing circumstances, rejection of all reasonable considerations and disregard of the fresh problems arising in the African campaign and the threatening complications in the Balkans. Nevertheless, Hitler held resolutely to this plan from the end of 1940. 31

Until then we had succeeded in keeping our rear free when each campaign began. Now the problem of a war on two fronts was accepted immediately, although the elimination of Britain had not been carried out and for that matter could not be carried out with the means available. How, then, could two different problems be solved at the same time. 32

Most of the available Army formations were free for assignment and the state of the Luftwaffe had been described in the previous chapter; thus, the Navy was the only service which could remain in action against Britain. It is already evident from this fact that the over-all conduct of the war was not made dependent on the assessment of all the available factors, but was assessed solely from the Army standpoint. 33

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R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

- 7 -

34 Being clearly aware of the state of the Luftwaffe, the C-in-C was completely opposed to the attack on Russia. This point of view was derived not only from that fact that it was essential for the Luftwaffe to remain on operations against Britain, but also from a number of other considerations which, however, are of no interest in the scope of this review. The Luftwaffe C-in-C's misgivings, objections and even evidence were summarily rejected by Hitler; there was no way of influencing the decisions which had been reached. *

In spite of every objection Hitler held to his plan, imagining that Russia also would be defeated in a lightning campaign. He ordered that all available flying formations be committed to the start of the campaign and intended returning to the West the bomber formations and such fighter formations as were necessary after the first successes had been achieved. Besides a few fighter Geschwader, only close-support and transport formations were to remain in the East. After this campaign had been concluded the Luftwaffe was to receive the reinforcements which had been so repeatedly requested.

The position may be summed up as follows:-

The absence of a logical plan of campaign, the obstinate over-estimation of every possibility and the complete misconception as regards space and time were the causes of all the difficulties which occurred later and it was Hitler who brought them on himself.

IV THE RUSSIAN CAMPAIGN - 1941

35 Only a small circle of initiated persons was informed about the starting of the war against Russia. At that time Hitler had issued a new order concerning secrecy: "Nobody, no officer or soldier may know more than is essential to the execution of his duty and even such information as this may not be disclosed until the very last moment". In view of the notoriously ruthless punishment meted out for the smallest offences against "Fuehrer Orders", it was part of the proceedings that even senior officers who should have been informed for service reasons were taken completely unawares by new events. Thus, the order to attack Russia came as a bolt from the blue to the German people and the vast majority of servicemen alike. Everyone had regarded the activity in the East as precautionary measures. Fear and anxiety were to be seen on faces everywhere.

36 As had always been the case hitherto, the theory of strategic employment of the Luftwaffe, that is to say the assignment of flying formations to operations against the enemy air force on the ground and in the air, was also pursued at the commencement of the Russian campaign.

* The following are verbatim extracts from evidence given by Goering before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg:-

".... I urged him (the Fuehrer) most particularly not to start a war against Russia at that moment, or even a short time after; not that I was moved by considerations of international law or similar reasons; my point of view was decided by political and military reasons only. First, at all times since the seizure of power I, perhaps of all the leading men in Germany, was the one who considered conflict with Russia as a threatening menace to Germany I now told the Fuehrer that in spite of this basic attitude I always feared this danger from Russia and always recognised it, but that I was asking him to leave this danger in abeyance and if at all possible direct Russia's interests against England. ...".

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- 8 -

There were only just over 900 serviceable fighter, bomber and close support aircraft available, but these were admittedly superior to the Soviet Air Force in every respect except numerically. In spite of these small forces, maximum exploitation of available strength by launching a large number of sorties - five, six or more daily - resulted in exceptionally heavy losses being inflicted on the Soviet Air Force in the very first days of the campaign, primarily by destruction on the ground. The figures quoted in official reports on these losses were not merely confirmed when ground forces reached the enemy airfields but were found to be appreciably greater.

This was the last occasion on which the Luftwaffe was employed strategically. Air warfare in its proper form was not resumed, no doubt because more and more strength had to be transferred to the Mediterranean area.

37

The Luftwaffe C-in-C and Chief of Air Staff agreed that the vital issue now was to decide the outcome of the war quickly by employing all available resources. This alone gave them hope of being able to resume strategic operations against Britain. Ground support therefore played a prominent part in the future assignment of tasks to the Luftwaffe. Accordingly, these tasks concerned tactical support of ground forces in action, targets of opportunity on roads and railways and operations against reserves and supply. The resultant "pampering" of ground forces proved later to be an exacting task and played its part in preventing a revival of the theory of strategic operations. The Luftwaffe sank more and more into the role of an auxiliary arm.

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The problem of increasing air armament production was repeatedly brought to the forefront by the heavy expenditure of aircraft in the performance of these tasks. This question was in urgent need of solution if operations against Britain were to be resumed at all. Admittedly, a certain increase was possible with the actual quotas allocated to the Luftwaffe, especially as armaments plants were being provided with PoW labour. However, no universal solution was found to this vital problem and the assistance assured by the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces remained a paper promise.

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In the matter of the procedure to be adopted concerning the development of new aircraft types, opinions were so diverse that it was agreed to improve the performance of existing types to escape the dilemma. The order issued by Hitler in the summer to the effect that all development which could not be completed within six months were to be immediately suspended proved to be an obstacle in this respect.

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These deficiencies in the fields of development and production led to the death of the Director General of Air force Equipment, Generaloberst Udet, in November, 1941. His successor was Generalfeldmarschall Milch.

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The status of the Luftwaffe was also affected by other events.

Hitler had taken an increasing personal interest in the direction of the Army even at the time of the campaign in France. This increased considerably during the campaign in Russia, especially when it became apparent that any hope of concluding this campaign before the arrival of winter would have to be abandoned.

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R E S T R I C T E D

- 9 -

42 Consequently, discord arose between Hitler and the Army leaders on the subject of the direction of operations in the East. Instead of making the greatest effort to settle these differences, the Luftwaffe, represented primarily by the Chief of Air Staff, supported Adolf Hitler in this issue. Jeschonnek gradually adopted this policy to an increasing extent, a fact which, among other reasons, led to the strained relations which existed between himself and the C-in-C during 1942 and 1943.

43 Jeschonnek's outlook regarding the conduct of air warfare changed with increasing distinctness in favour of ground support and in the end he was unable to steer clear of this notion. It is particularly tragic that the man who in peace-time and at the beginning of the war supported this very conception of strategic air warfare of exceptional mobility later became the man to dig its grave.

44 The constant differences of opinion between the Supreme Command of the Armed forces and the C-in-C Army and his Chief of General Staff thereupon resulted in supreme command of the Army being assumed by Hitler himself, - an event of far-reaching significance to the Luftwaffe. As C-in-C Army and at the same time Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces and Head of State, Hitler was even less likely to act as a compensatory factor from that time onwards. As a matter of course he first of all established all the necessary conditions in the Army command to ensure that his orders were carried out. The fundamental importance of the Luftwaffe was not recognised and its requirements were made to take second place to those of the Army.

It is quite clear that it was not possible to obviate differences of opinion in this way, let alone achieve unity.

45 Towards the end of the year America entered the war. Admittedly, this in itself presented the Luftwaffe with no immediate problems, but should at least have given rise to the adoption of fresh measures in the armament industry. Once again it was Hitler himself who, totally failing to grasp the situation, misjudged the newly arising problems and completely underestimated the speed with which America was able to throw its armament production into the balance.

The situation at the turn of the year can be summed up briefly - Britain had not been eliminated, developments in Russia were giving rise to anxiety and America had become a new enemy.

46 Thus, there was already uneasiness regarding the future development of the war when 1941 drew to its close.

V 1942

The only hope of providing a favourable solution to the complicated war situation lay in the possibility, despite the entry of America into the war, of still concluding the campaign against Russia before the intervention of appreciable American forces.

47 In any case, according to what was then known about American bombers and their armament, renowned and successful fighter pilots were of the opinion that defensive measures would not entail any particular difficulties. On the basis of their experience they did not regard the problem of the escorting fighters as of such decisive importance. Above all, the ranges later attained by fighters were not considered possible at that time.

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R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

- 10 -

The Luftwaffe was able to carry out its assignments in Russia satisfactorily, but unfortunately with the proviso that bomber formations were employed almost exclusively on tactical operations in support of the Army.

The situation in the Mediterranean area proved to be completely different. In this theatre the Luftwaffe was faced with an insoluble problem since the forces available were clearly insufficient to satisfy the multiplicity of demands. The Command's plans could not be adjusted to the means available. The elimination of the British naval base of Malta and the R.A.F. units stationed there was regarded as a most difficult task and in this case too a successful conclusion was not achieved, a contributory factor being the Italian Navy's failure to act. Moreover, the Luftwaffe was a participant in the operations in Africa and was also heavily burdened by the air transport assignments which were necessary to compensate for the lack of shipping.

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In view of this tense situation there was no longer any question of resuming air operations against Britain. On the contrary, Britain had been able to bring her air armament industry up to maximum output and was now in a position to provide concentrated support for the offensive in Africa in co-operation with American air units.

As the Axis supply problem could not be solved with the means available and the Allies were able to bring up men and material and deploy according to plan, the die was cast in Africa when the fore-doomed offensive against Egypt was launched. The success of the British offensive at the end of 1942 bore unmistakable testimony to German inferiority in the air in this theatre.

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Even if the Luftwaffe was not already appraised according to its proper importance at the time of its successes, a glaring warning signal should have been given at the very latest by the course of events in the Mediterranean theatre. For the first time the Luftwaffe was unmistakably inferior; nevertheless, this finding was not concerned so much with the technical aspect but rather with bare numbers. Thus, there was not a moment to be lost in drawing the necessary conclusions from this observation.

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However, at the same time the situation regarding the air defence of the Reich threatened to lead to a similar result. In this area increasing British night attacks necessitated the development of a night fighter organisation. XII Fliegerkorps was formed for this purpose and was also responsible for co-operation with the anti-aircraft artillery and the development of the aircraft reporting service. However, it was necessary in turn to extract the night fighter aircraft required for this purpose from the already inadequate production effort.

Similarly, Hitler's order for reprisal attacks on Britain in the autumn of 1942 was a result of the increasing R.A.F. raids on Germany. However, although directly subordinate to Hitler, sufficient forces for effective counter-measures could not be assembled even for the "Attacks on Britain" (Angriffsfuehrer England) Command.

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Thus, if this numerical deficiency were not overcome as soon as possible, all hope of a decisive victory on the part of the Luftwaffe would have to be abandoned. The Luftwaffe command recognised the necessity for a considerable increase in production, but it was not possible to secure preferential treatment of the Luftwaffe's requirements in view of the system of distributing quotas among the three services. Admittedly in many a conference the General Staff's requirements were brought into alignment with industrial potential to increase output but a rise in production figures adequate to the situation could not be achieved by this means.

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R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

- 11 -

55 In addition, the newly created Industrial Advisory Council was supposed to provide relief by improvements in mass-production methods and other economies, but these were all only partially effective measures.

56 Nothing much had happened in the field of development either. The Director General of Air Force Equipment attempted to do justice to service demands by consulting the Air Officers commanding the various branches of the Luftwaffe, i.e. by exploiting operational experience and the resources of the General Staff's 6th Abteilung. * The consequence was constant modification and improvement of types, which provided very little in the way of relief and instead caused enormous disruption of mass-production.

57 It is extremely difficult to explain the failure in the field of development. A large number of converging factors were involved. The absence of development between 1938 and 1941 could no longer be remedied. Bomber types for which provision had been made, such as the Ju 288 and the He. 177, were fairly well advanced as regards the airframe, but the engines which formed the basis of these designs had either not yet reached the final stage of development or were not yet ready for production. The principal reasons for this situation were no doubt in -
58 sufficient technical understanding on the part of the General Staff, insufficient tactical ability and inexperience on the technical side of the service, lack of imagination, inadequate co-operation and conflicting interpretations.

59 Accordingly, the absence of noteworthy successes during 1942 caused a further decline in the prestige of the Luftwaffe. As early as the summer of 1942 the Reichsmarschall no longer had any authoritative influence in his capacity as C-in-C Luftwaffe. His position had been undermined in the departments in his charge and in some cases he was already completely excluded. His reluctant attitude in the Russian campaign and the Luftwaffe's reverses had contributed to this situation. Hitler's
62 constantly increasing intervention in the direction of the Luftwaffe, thus causing Jeschonnek to become more and more dependent and the differences between himself and Goering to intensify, was by no means the least important factor involved.

Thus, in 1942 the Luftwaffe had become equal to its commitments in the East, but was inferior in Africa and too weak in the West. Over the Reich itself the disparity between bombing attacks and defensive successes increased steadily, especially towards the end of the year.

VI 1943

Two severe defeats left their mark on the spring of 1943 - Stalingrad and Tunis. The Luftwaffe was also most seriously affected by these two battles in connection with the orders issued for the conduct of ground operations.

63 The battles on the Don, in which Italian, Rumanian and Hungarian troops streamed back in a straggling mass along the entire length of the front, led to the encirclement of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad. Hitler insisted on the retention of this city, which had been declared a fortress. Supply was to be ensured by air transport until the intended relief was accomplished. This task was much too difficult for the Luftwaffe, which was already severely weakened, and could be accomplished only by a maximum effort and provided the two airfields in this area were held.

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* Department for allocation of aircraft, crews and anti-aircraft artillery equipment.

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

- 12 -

Air transport had already increased in importance in the Mediterranean theatre and during the advance into Russia. However, the measures now required entailed infinitely serious consequences for the Luftwaffe. Those directing the war on land repeatedly ordered fresh strong-points to be set up and decreed the direst penalties for the commanders concerned in the event of failure. The demands made by the former for the supplying of these strong-points coupled with the inconceivably difficult weather conditions which prevailed during the winter were to the Luftwaffe like a knock-out blow.

For example, all available forces in Russia, the Reich and other theatres were concentrated for the Stalingrad operation. Air transport became a mania. As the transport formations were inadequate numerically, bomber formations also had to be employed exclusively to perform this task.

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It was not long before the only available airfields were lost. Moreover, the ground forces committed to the relieving operation were not able to achieve their objective. Nevertheless, the order to hold Stalingrad remained in force.

Thus, Stalingrad became the Verdun of the Second World War. Inflexible adherence to the plan of campaign once it had been ordered and incorrect assessment of the situation resulted in this major collapse, which affected the Army and Luftwaffe alike.

Similarly, Luftflotte 2 did not succeed in fulfilling its commitments in Africa owing to Allied air superiority. Losses of maximum severity were accepted in this theatre, but defeat could no longer be averted.

With the invasion of Sicily a few weeks later the Allies set foot on European soil again for the first time. In order to counter-balance this situation, the bomber formations concentrated in the West for employment against Britain were rapidly transferred to Italy. However, even this measure could no longer prevent the Allied penetration into Europe. In the autumn these same formations were returned to the West for the previously ordered reprisal attacks on Britain.

In view of this method of sacrificing the Luftwaffe to the advantage of the conduct of ground operations, all trace of the conception of strategic employment had vanished. The way in which forces were to be employed operationally was decided by Hitler himself and announced via the Chief of the General Staff. When support for ground forces became less effective owing to the Luftwaffe's heavy losses the Army voiced the severest recriminations.

65

Meanwhile an equally difficult situation had arisen in Germany as a result of the air attacks. The production plants of the Reich had to be protected at all costs if the battle-fronts were not to collapse for lack of supplies.

The Air forces employed against Germany had already reached a strength which could only be opposed by German forces adequate to the occasion.

66

Inside the Luftwaffe both the men and those in direct command were aware that only intensive concentration of forces could be of any avail. Until an intensive fighter production effort was commenced it was necessary to withdraw fighter formations from the various battle-fronts in order to strengthen the defence of the Reich. In addition, this full-scale concentration of forces would have provided the opportunity of demonstrating unequivocally that the Luftwaffe is not an auxiliary arm but has quite definite tasks to perform within the framework of the over-all direction of the war.

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68

/Unfortunately

Unfortunately, the Supreme Command of the Armed forces was not able to reach a decision to this effect. Moreover, according to a most detailed assessment of the overall situation, it would have been necessary to reshape completely the war production planning for each of the services. It would also have been necessary to ascertain which service demands could be set aside in favour of the Luftwaffe. For example, the solution to this problem could have been found by holding up naval armament production following the collapse of the U-boat campaign.

However, a decision to this effect was not reached. As no appreciable reinforcements could be obtained from the existing armament production effort, the only course of action remaining was as follows: concentration of the bulk of fighter formations in the Reich and modification of the aircraft construction programme in favour of fighters and at the expense of bombers. This idea was strongly supported by the Director General of Air Force Equipment and the A.O. Fighters. Nevertheless, it was self-evident that the efforts of the entire armament industry would be in vain if protection against air attacks were not successfully provided.

The Supreme Command of the Luftwaffe could not reach a decision regarding the final consequence of this action, which would entail abandoning offensive operations temporarily. Thus, after several unsuccessful but constantly repeated interviews between the C-in-C and Hitler, fighter formations were thereupon in July and August withdrawn from the battle fronts to reinforce the defence of the Reich. Under these circumstances it was therefore necessary to accept the fact that the already heavily engaged ground forces would consequently be obliged to rely on even less air support.

At first these measures succeeded in producing a number of successes against daylight incursions by American four-engined bombers, and this situation existed for at least as long as the Americans failed to solve the problem of the long-range fighter.

At the same time it was possible to reduce R.A.F. heavy bomber attacks considerably by reshaping night fighter procedure and bringing S.N.2* into service.

In the solution of these problems, which were of vital and even decisive importance to the command and status of the Luftwaffe, it was clearly evident that the Luftwaffe Chief of Air Staff was tied down to the manner in which air warfare had hitherto been conducted. Thus, the divergent views of the C-in-C and the Chief of Air Staff led to the decision to replace the latter. It was intended to give Generaloberst Jeschonnek command of a Luftflotte. However, Hitler objected to this measure and at his insistence Jeschonnek remained at his post. The differences of opinion were not removed by this action and instead this difficult situation finally led to the death of Generaloberst Jeschonnek.

General Korten was appointed as his successor. Mutual confidence was restored and the C-in-C's influence was also increased to a certain extent without becoming decisive.

Thus, for example, having repeatedly fought for this solution, General Korten succeeded in concentrating the bomber formations in the East as IV Fliegerkorps (He 111's). Hitler finally consented to this measure only after constantly repeated representations. On several occasions this build-up was threatened at the last minute by the Army's supply problems.

/In

* Standard air interception equipment used by German night-fighters.

R E S T R I C T E D

- 14 -

In the West too a definite centre of main effort (Schwerpunkt) was to be attained within the Luftwaffe by converting the "Attacks on Britain" command into IX Fliegerkorps and by establishing a special Korps (X) for anti-
shipping operations. 74 75

Nevertheless, in spite of every effort reverses increased in every theatre of operations. Where was the reason for this to be found ?

There was no co-ordination between the direction of operations and the production effort. The armaments industry was directed on the basis of demands made by the individual services, which adjusted these to the expectation that when individual programmes were reviewed it would not be possible to avoid cancellations. The consequence was that the armament industry was not able to carry out the programme and in this effect it was not the industry but the Supreme Command of the Armed forces which failed to come up to expectations. With regard to the planned centres of main effort in the direction of operations it was necessary to decide to whom was to be given the highest supply priority on the basis of the overall situation. Instead of a sweeping solution there were only makeshift measures everywhere and for every gap that was stopped two more appeared. 76 77

This discord was still further aggravated by recriminations. It seemed as if Hitler was governing solely on the principle of "divide and rule." 78

At all events 1943 produced no successes and nothing but reverses everywhere. Moreover, it was evident that the Allies were exerting every effort in preparing for the invasion. Were the armed forces still capable of accomplishing this task single-handed ? And what had become of German foreign policy ?

VII 1944

The Allies constantly increasing successes were produced by five decisive factors:-

- (1) the H2X* and H2S * installations,
- (2) long-range fighters,
- (3) the lead in the field of radar,
- (4) the gyro-controlled gunsight
- (5) numerical superiority in aircraft.

The destruction in Germany, especially in the case of surface targets such as cities, could never have assumed such vast proportions but for the possibility of carrying out bad weather attacks. 79 80

The strength of the German bomber Korps (IX Fliegerkorps, for example) declined increasingly and even IV Fliegerkorps no longer received any replacements. Offensive and defensive operations could no longer be carried out with the means available. Production was no longer able to replace equipment which had been lost or had become unserviceable. There was no alternative but to concentrate on the production of fighters, for if industry and communications were not protected the supply system would be bound to break down sooner or later.

/This

* Known to the Germans as "Meddo" and "Rotterdam" respectively

1 This view was finally accepted in all authoritative quarters following
 2 the exceptionally successful attacks on the German air armament industry
 31 in February 1944. The Fighter Staff was established and the production
 3 of fighter aircraft was given top priority by the entire industry.
 4 Bomber production was deferred and suspended altogether in the summer of
 1944. Then, when it was too late, the entire existing armament potential
 was at least available. Executive control was assumed by the Minister
 for Armament and War Production instead of the Director General of Air
 Force Equipment.

82 By developing former Luftwaffe planning, fighter production was
 increased considerably, established types being retained. At this
 juncture the underground plants which had been commenced with the Luftwaffe's
 inadequate resources were completed, the bomb-proofing of industrial
installations was carried on with all speed and industrial evacuation
 schemes which had been started were continued. The commencement of mass-
 production of the Me 262 and Ta 152 and, on a smaller scale, of the Ar 234
 as well as of particular importance in this connection. Admittedly,
 projects for new bombers did exist, but these aircraft were not to be
 constructed until adequate fighter defence was available. Hitler agreed to
 this programme which, although drawn up with the co-operation of the C-in-C
 was put into effect by the Armament Ministry (Saur) without the participation
 83 of a single Luftwaffe officer.

84 In addition to aircraft, the anti-aircraft artillery constituted a means
 of defence. During the course of the war it had acquitted itself well
 against aircraft and in ground operations alike. Experience had shown
 that only a concentration of guns at the target to be defended produced
 successful results. Since much of the A.A. artillery was committed to
 the battle-fronts, the number of guns available was not sufficient to enable
 effective concentration in view of the large number of targets in the
 Reich. It was thereupon decided, with special reference to the synthetic
oil plants, which targets of primary importance were to be allocated A.A.
concentrations. Only first-class guns, such as the 88/41, 105 and 128 mm
 calibres were used at these target concentrations.

The Army demanded A.A. artillery in increasing quantities for use as
 anti-tank weapons and to reinforce its own artillery. The A.A. Assault
 Regiments were frequently the cornerstone of ground actions.

85 Hitler himself had often demanded an increase in the production of A.A.
 artillery. Unfortunately, the extremely vital reorganisation of the
 disproportionate production of guns, searchlights and ammunition was not
 sanctioned in spite of repeated representations. Thus, in the summer of
 86 1944, shortage of ammunition resulted in restrictions on expenditure, yet
there were quantities of unused searchlights in the A.A. supply depots.

The aircraft reporting service, i.e. information concerning the air
 situation, was of decisive importance to a policy of defensive air warfare.
 A remarkably high outlay of equipment and personnel for development and
 servicing was necessary to cover an area extending from the occupied areas
 in the West across the entire Reich with an appropriate network of radar
 stations and to provide the requisite communications. These factors
 extended the existing armament programme considerably.

87 The Reich defence formations employed to protect this armament project
 were always obliged to fight against a technically and numerically superior
 enemy. The forces available were never sufficient to pin down the
 escorting fighters and at the same time enable the specially equipped
 assault formations to attack the four-engined bombers with greater ease.
 However, as the four-engined aircraft were causing the damage, action
against them was a primary consideration. By comparison operations
 against the escorting fighters, however essential, were obliged to take
 second place.

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- 16 -

As action against the strongly escorted bomber formations with inadequate forces was ineffective and costly, the "1,000 fighter action" was initiated, the contingency of unopposed day-time penetration raids being accepted. This meant that until a minimum strength of 1,000 fighters had been reached no action was to be taken against heavy bomber attacks. Moreover, the standard of training was to be raised in the meantime. The "1,000 fighter action" had almost been achieved numerically on D-Day, but the standard of training was still not satisfactory.

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Unfortunately, it had to be accepted from the outset that the results of the fighter production effort and the commencement of mass production of jet aircraft would not now be established before the expected invasion started. The Luftwaffe's prospects of strengthening ground defence were slight as it was the enemy who enjoyed absolute supremacy in the air. On this score there could no longer be any doubt whatsoever on the part of the Supreme Command of the Armed forces. If the ground forces did not succeed in the task of repulsing the invasion on the beach it could not be demanded of the Luftwaffe in its condition at that time. The latter was not even in a position to achieve temporary parity in the air, much less air superiority over the battle area.

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Considerable losses in aircraft and serviceability occurred even during the transfers to the West. During the invasion bomber, ground attack and fighter formations were not able to attack without sustaining extremely heavy losses while achieving few successes; frequently they did not reach their objective at all.

Allied air superiority prevented the assembled Army reserves from being moved up promptly to the points at which the enemy had landed by parachute, glider and boat. Germany's absolute inferiority in the air decided the outcome of the invasion in favour of the Allies.

Only remnants of the Luftwaffe formations emerged from the subsequent collapse in France.

The months preceding June 1944 were dominated by the knowledge that there could be no thought of continuing the war unless the invasion were successfully repulsed. Suddenly this fact was no longer true. The war was continued. The considerations which led to this decision cannot be discussed at this juncture.

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This change of outlook concerning the prospects of the war might also have had a decisive influence on the timing of the attempted assassination of 20 July. Following its failure every objection and politically inclined statement was silenced by the severest punishments and the inhuman procedure of imprisoning relatives. Every turn of speech which might be interpreted as defeatist incurred the most extreme penalties. The plot was covered up comparatively quickly by propaganda and police pressure. On the other hand new secret weapons and the like were constantly referred to in speech and print. Nobody could believe these inventions were all nothing but propaganda, for it was inconceivable that a government would deceive its own people and on such a scale. The population accepted the horrible misery of the bombing on the basis of this belief alone. Nevertheless, there must have been some prospects to justify the continuation of the war. Naturally, the German people were not able to see through this greatest deception until it was too late, that is to say when the collapse occurred.

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The position of the Luftwaffe, which could not fulfil its commitments, became increasingly difficult. If no successes were being achieved in the air, then this arm of the service was not justified in having young active personnel while the Army was no longer capable of replacing its losses. As early as the winter of 1942 230,000 men fit for general service were released, mainly from the ground organisation, to form 20 Luftwaffe Field Divisions. In addition, there were the paratroop units, which had to be constantly supplemented and, in some cases, reorganised. As from this moment there were incessant references to the young Luftwaffe personnel by the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces and that of the Army and at home by the Party, and these increased in the summer of 1944. Wherever men were needed, the Luftwaffe was obliged to provide them. Altogether more than 1,000,000 men were released to the ground forces in this way. This procedure inevitably produced certain consequences: the ground organisation was completely drained, the anti-aircraft artillery at home consisted mainly of men of higher age groups, labour service personnel, auxiliary volunteers, Luftwaffe auxiliaries and women and the Luftwaffe signals service was replenished on a considerable scale by female auxiliaries.

92 The order to continue the war, the absence of modern aircraft and the lack of appropriate numbers compelled the C-in-C to take his men
severely to task on frequent occasions, the consequence being discord
within the service itself. For this reason the death of the Chief of
Air Staff, Generaloberst Korten, from injuries received on 20 July ¹ also
93 meant an extremely serious loss for the C-in-C and service alike, for he
had known how to re-establish a relationship of trust. His successor ²
was not acceptable to Hitler and had to be replaced.

94 Everyone was aware that there could be no question of a German recovery unless the enemy's superiority in the air was destroyed. Orders were therefore issued for a "3,000 fighter action" in a final all-out effort. Daylight incursions by heavy bombers were at last to be brought to a standstill by employing an adequate number of the old types of aircraft. By November about 2,400 fighters had been successfully assembled in the Reich. Training was intensified with fuel especially granted for this purpose. Defensive operations against enemy incursions, which were continuing in the meantime, were deliberately suspended. However, the plan for the "3,000 fighter action" was thereupon brought to nothing by the order for the Ardennes offensive.

95 Since the middle of the year there had been differences of opinion between Hitler and Goering concerning the employment of the Me 262 which led to the most bitter disputes. The weakness of the Luftwaffe caused Hitler to delay the launching of the Ardennes offensive until the arrival of persistent bad weather conditions, which would prevent the Allies from employing their air forces. The Luftwaffe itself was assembled for a very carefully prepared attack on enemy ground organisation in the area Holland - Belgium - Northern France. However, in view of the weather
96 conditions, it was not able to act and achieve its well-known success ³ until 1 January 1945.

The end of German military power could not have been more clearly demonstrated than by the failure of this final offensive.

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1. In the attempt on Hitler's life.
2. General Kreipe
3. The German losses (approx. 200) were in fact entirely disproportionate to the successes claimed.

R E S T R I C T E D

- 18 -

The most serious collapses had occurred on both the main fronts. In the East large areas of East Prussia and Poland extending to the Bug were lost and in the North Finland fell to the enemy. The Allies were on German soil in the West and East and their mastery of the air was more firmly established than ever.

The closing days of the year were characterised by discord on a vast scale in the overall command, the most bitter antagonism between Hitler and Goering which had developed steadily since 1941, the severest recriminations against the Luftwaffe which was not solely to blame for this situation and the onset of chaos.

Only dire terror still kept the war going.

VIII 1945

Following the failure of the Ardennes offensive preparations for a resumed advance into Germany were to be expected in the West.

97

In the East the Russian offensive from the bank of the Bug was imminent, this having been under preparation and known about for some time past.

In Hungary Budapest had been encircled.

Everything which could be scraped together had been used for the Ardennes offensive.

Thus, the Eastern front had not only been starved, but had even been obliged to assist the Western Front. Army reserve units had been assembled but had been transferred to Hungary. Any further loss of ground in this theatre would endanger the last remaining natural oil fields, and their capture would have resulted in the loss of the last source of fuel. Possibly for this reason Hitler decided to transfer the Sixth S.S. Panzer Army from the West to the Vienna basin, whence it was intended to relieve Budapest and attack in Poland with the subsequently available forces. This planning also determined the Luftwaffe's assignments.

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The execution of these measures was impeded on the widest scale by Allied mastery of the air and in particular by the disorganisation of the transport system. Nevertheless, Hitler held fast to this line of thought even after the Russian Bug offensive had made considerable progress, East Prussia had been cut off and the Oder had been reached in the north and actually crossed in the south.

100

The Allies' air power hung over the Reich. The synthetic oil plants were no longer producing, the entire transport system collapsed and the most difficult supply conditions arose in all quarters. Ammunition was in short supply everywhere. Although exerting every effort, the aircraft industry, which had been dispersed for reasons of air defence, was able to assemble only a fraction of the components which had been manufactured in the most widespread places.

It was no longer possible to send the fighters powered by the Otto engine into action owing to technical inferiority and lack of fuel. The few Me 262's which had at last been released for fighter operations were no longer able to achieve any worthwhile successes although they acquitted themselves well. The common will to resist had flagged.

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Untested aircraft accumulated at airfields as if in mockery.

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R E S T R I C T E D

- 19 -

As had so often happened in this war, the remaining aircraft fuel supplies had to be used for air supply operations. One need only mention Budapest, Breslau, Glogau, Danzig and East Prussia. Other aircraft took off to attack the bridges over the Oder.

102 During the winter an idea for a strategic air offensive was once again conceived, but was subsequently not put into effect. The Russian power stations, and especially those in the Gorki area, were to be put out of action by means of composite aircraft. * However, the airfields required for reasons of range were lost. Moreover, these operations could of course no longer have been expected to have any effect at this juncture.

The Luftwaffe had been destroyed or, rather, was completely eliminated.

103 The day of unconditional surrender came irrevocably nearer. Every expression of opinion referring to this state of affairs and every remark alluding to the situation incurred the direst penalties. The last four months of the war continued under the compulsion of this terror, which no longer allowed any trace of humanity to prevail. One person no longer trusted another.

104 This slaughter could not be ended while Hitler was alive. Arrest and the death penalty were all that existed. Goering received this sentence as late as 23 April after he had attempted to put an end to this madness.

The chaos which reigned everywhere was terminated by the unconditional surrender of 9 May 1945.

IX CONCLUDING REMARKS

The considerations and reasons which led to political decisions are not known and for this reason only the actual event itself can serve as the point of departure in these pages. Moreover, any thoughts which came to mind have been set down merely from memory and in a subjective manner.

There is no doubt that the Luftwaffe was the decisive weapon in the second world war. Its fundamental importance had been clearly recognised beforehand. It was able, therefore, to fulfil its assignments satisfactorily as the means at its disposal represented the peak of contemporary technical achievement and, together with an outstanding combative spirit, were adequate numerically to achieve successes which appeared improbable when considered in the light of the material available.

The mechanism of command still functioned without the crippling discord which did not become a customary feature until after failures had occurred and they became the subject of discussion.

105 Further problems arose as a result of underestimation of the strength required and illogical prosecution of the war against Britain, no matter whether against the British Isles themselves or at the approaches to the Mediterranean.

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* "Pick-a-back" aircraft known as 'Mistel' (Mistletoe) which consisted of a Ju 88 heavily loaded with explosive charges surmounted by a Me 109 so arranged that the pilot in the latter controlling the two aircraft coupled together could release the Ju 88 at close range against the selected target. Originally planned for use against major naval units in the Allied landings in Normandy, but only small numbers were available in time and such operations as were carried out proved wholly abortive.

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R E S T R I C T E D

- 20 -

The burden of prosecuting the war against Britain fell to the Luftwaffe and the Navy. In view of the existing ratio of strength only the Luftwaffe could make a decisive contribution. Interest should have been centred on strengthening and improving the efficiency of this arm. The direction of the air war against Britain differed from previous campaigns, in which an enemy country was occupied by the infantry, in that the objective was to achieve a lasting effect.

However, the men, material and quantity were not equal to the waging of strategic air warfare. It cannot be stated whether this situation was recognised, but the necessity of changing over from daylight to night attacks might be interpreted as such.

106

The entry of Italy into the war produced far-reaching consequences and brought a new front into existence. The Italy which concealed her extremely limited power was of far greater importance than the Italy which was not able to take over the Mediterranean front with her own resources, but which nevertheless undertook in addition a campaign against Greece which was intended as a Blitzkrieg but which in fact failed from the start to get underway. Thus, to assist their Italian "Ally", the Germans were obliged to make serious preparations which also involved the Luftwaffe so that the latter was already committed on two fronts from the beginning of 1941.

However, aircraft development and production, which have already been described, bore no relation to the nature of the tasks assigned to the Luftwaffe. Nevertheless, air armament was not given the necessary priority within the framework of Germany's total armament potential, for Hitler had given precedence to other considerations, namely the fight against Bolshevism.

Differences arose on this subject which were at first completely concealed from many people. The objections raised by the C-in-C Luftwaffe were overruled by promises which could never be kept and preparations were made for the campaign according to Hitler's plans with the emphasis on the production of armaments for the Army.

When, at the end of 1941, it was subsequently evident that the planned Blitzkrieg against Russia was collapsing and that Britain had made good use of the suspension of the air war and was by then launching attacks against Germany which were constantly becoming more noticeable, operations against Russia on purely Army lines were nevertheless maintained.

This failure was followed by the entry of the U.S.A. into the war. The speed and strength with which this country was to become an effective opponent was grossly underestimated. This event did not, as was no doubt intended, facilitate the prosecution of the war: on the contrary, the forces of the three great powers had now been spurred on and Germany had nothing with which this situation could be appropriately counter-balanced.

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At this juncture, however, and particularly after the Army had been placed under the direct command of Hitler himself, the Army's requirements did not permit the increase in air armament which the Luftwaffe had recognised as essential.

Just as an avalanche, once underway, runs its course irresistibly, so Germany was subsequently inundated by events. The one conclusion which should obviously have been essential in view of the enemy's armament was not drawn. Compared with production for the Army and the U-boat programme, air armament continued without any special classification. Hitler himself, was in fact aware that the situation could be saved by increasing aircraft production, but appeared to be unable to establish

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R E S T R I C T E D

necessary prior conditions owing to the heavy armament demands made by the other services. At the same time the Luftwaffe's commitments and the enemy's pressure increased rapidly. The Luftwaffe was certainly aware of its own potentialities; how effective bombing attacks could be launched, how to set about a decisive anti-shipping campaign, what equipment would be needed for the defence of the Reich and how to accomplish transport and close-support tasks; all that was lacking was the means. Bungling was constantly in evidence and the Supreme Command of the Armed forces failed to reach effective decisions.

Disagreements and recriminations increased in proportion to the growth of difficulties at the battle-fronts.

The evident failure of the Luftwaffe should really be defined more accurately as "technical and numerical inferiority". Apart from the first campaigns it had always been confronted by a technically, tactically and numerically superior enemy. With reference to this fact it must again be stated that the reasons for this situation have a very early origin; as regards development as early as 1938-39 and in the case of production during the period 1938-41. It was no longer possible to fill these gaps during the war. The new and technically excellent weapons such as the Me 262, Ar 234, He 162, Ta 152, rocket-firing weapons and defence equipment and remote-control installations etc. were not available until the last six months of the war. On the other hand the Luftwaffe was always behindhand in the field of radar. However, output on an appreciable scale could no longer be produced from the chaos which was already taking shape. The moment had come too late.

Too late ! a phrase which characterised an infinitely great number of actions and measures of the second world war.

The armed forces stood alone in this colossal struggle. Contrary to expectation, political expedients were not employed at all, either in the occupied territories in the West or among the Russian people. On the contrary, in the latter case a number of political measures were carried out, the effect of which was not evident until later, but was then all the more noticeable: the partisans were not so much the product of Stalinistic aims as of the policy of German commissars. The people of the East were classified as inferior, an action which sowed the seeds of hatred and reaped the harvest of the partisans.

It was widely believed that an entirely different procedure would have been called for, if not by political discernment and accurate appreciation of the situation then at least as a result of political discretion.

Nothing of the sort can be found; the services were supposed to do everything single-handed.

Everything had been ruined and only chaos remained.