dered about the continuation of the fight against England; we thought the next step would be to throw in the entire GAF against England’s most sensitive spot, her shipping. We all agreed the thing to do would be for us all to take a torpedo on board and try and cut England’s life line. Instead of that came the battle against England itself, against London. Before the air offensive started, our General Staff promised that our opponents would consist of three hundred British fighters, part of whom would be piloted by very young and inexperienced pilots and also that, to some extent, with the exception of Spitfires their aircraft were inferior. As a result we were amazed when in the battle of Britain the three hundred fighters drew to an end. There weren’t just three hundred but at least as many as we had. At the time we had about nine hundred or a thousand fighter aircraft operating and the English had the advantage of fighting over their own territory. The British armament industry had prepared for this period with great foresight. The construction of fighters was given priority over all other types of aircraft during the battle of Britain; pilots, reconnaissance and bomber pilots were restrained in order to be able to be employed as fighter pilots in case of emergency. As a result we were faced with a fighter force of practically equal strength to ours which had the additional advantage of having plentiful material reinforcements at hand. If a pilot was shot down over England and it transpired that 60 or 70% of them landed safely by parachute the following day he went at us again in a new aircraft. That was a situation which unfortunately the GAF never experienced.

When the war started it was said: “Well, we’ll have plenty of aircraft, too many in fact; but we’ll lose our pilots; there will be a shortage of them because the training lasts so long and we won’t manage to provide the necessary reinforcements.” That situation never actually arose; it was always just the opposite. We always had enough pilots, reinforcements of crews were at hand but we lacked reinforcements of equipment of aircraft. England has to thank her policy of retraining pilots for defense and her total concentration on defense in the air for the fact she won the battle of Britain and that, after both sides were completely exhausted, we had to give it up. Now the English say that they only had twenty fighters left on the last day, or after the last day raids, but we hadn’t many more either.

The next phase of air warfare was the transition from day raids to night raids, which it was possible to keep up for a relatively long period until British night fighting had developed to such a point that night raids also became too costly for us. Then our battles in the Southeast started, followed by fighting in the East the following year. That gave England a breathing space. They were able to bring their fighter arm up to strength and increase its numbers, and above all, it enabled them to start building up their strategic air force, building bombers, which by the end of 1941 and beginning of 1942 were already coming out as four engine models.

Then we experienced a similar situation at home. Night raids started on the Reich, on Germany. We started developing night fighting, which already existed in its preliminary stages; and night fighting was developed in a relatively short time into at least a weapon to be reckoned with. The whole development was further delayed by the fact that instruments still had to be constructed, and even invented, and tested in operations. At the time our night fighting only had one aircraft, the Me-110, at its disposal; it was first used operationally as a long range fighter bomber; it was intended as a long range fighter and was then specially equipped with instru-