

*An Me 109G equipped with 20MM wing guns takes off, headed for the Allied bomber stream penetrating deep into the heart of Germany.*

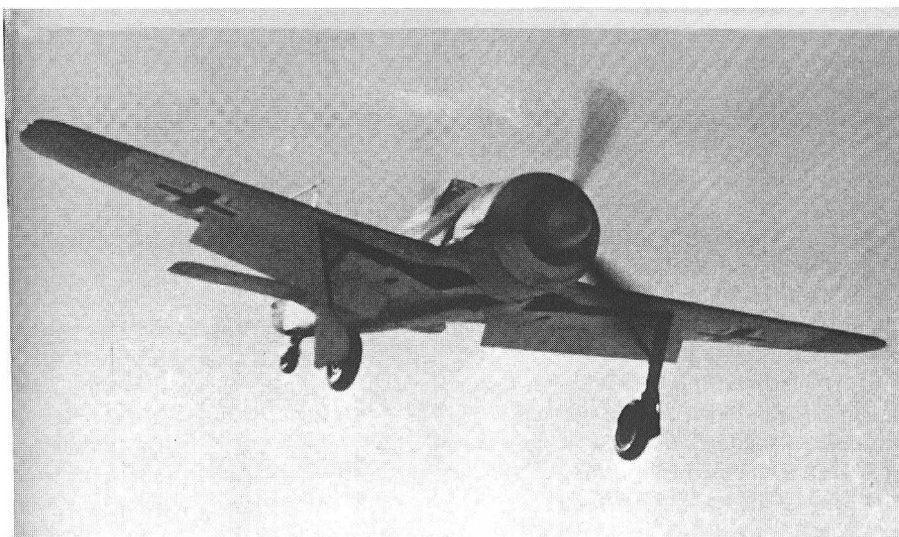
nounced as having been shot down, 67 or 68 were actually found on Reich territory and in the occupied countries i.e. barely half the number announced and about 300 were reported as having been shot down. How can one explain that? Is it simply the pilot's dishonesty or are there other reasons? I can assure you that there are other reasons, and one of them is as follows: in an air battle everything happens so tremendously quickly that the whole thing is over in a few seconds. One fellow fires on an aircraft and it catches on fire, in the same instant a second fighter, say further behind on the right, fires at the same aircraft; the pilot sees that it's on fire; still a third fighter comes up and in his excitement doesn't see that it's on fire, open fires on it as well, and suddenly the bomber falls earthwards. Result: three fighters report shooting down an aircraft. In addition to all that: after air battles like those, aircraft always landed all over the place, fighters which took off from Munich landed in Holland, on the North Sea coast, or in the industrial area, and there they handed in the reports of their victories at the airfield HQ. In addition to which the pilot rang his home airfield and said "I shot one down." Again a duplicated report. Why? Because the authorities have demanded to know within two hours the exact numbers of aircraft shot down. I know of one single instance only where a 'Division Kommandeur' refused to pass on a report, because the 'General'... was rung up maybe three, four, five times by the Reichsmarschall. "How many aircraft did your fighters shoot down?" and he kept repeating: "I can't say, they haven't arrived back yet; they landed

all over the place; if I do tell you, the reports may turn out false."

Why weren't the successes any greater? At that time the 'Defense of the Reich' had already about 250 to 300 fighter aircraft. The long range fighter bomber Geschwader 26, to which I belonged, was then also withdrawn from both the eastern and southern fronts and put on to Reich defense. You will have noticed that it never happened either in the east or the south that 50, 80 or 100 of our aircraft flew in a body and carried out any major operation. In Russia they flew in 'Rotten' of two or 'Schwarme' of four. The fighters, that is. What were the long range fighter bombers doing? They had been dropping bombs and had thereby lost all feeling for flying as fighters, and now, thanks to a situation forced on us by the enemy, thanks to the huge formations in which they fly in and which in turn can only be attacked with huge formations,

our fighter arm suddenly had to conduct the fight in a strength to which it was never accustomed. The few who could have done it right from the beginning of the war were no longer there, they had already been killed. As a result only individual dog-fights developed in all those raids. An enormous number of us arrived, a crew of 30, 50 sometimes 60 aircraft, but each pilot simply attacked wildly at random. Result: Each of them was shot down wildly at random.

The long range fighter bombers and the FW-190 then received, in addition to their other armament, the so called 'mortar shell 21 cm, the one you know from the 'Nebelwerfer'. That would have been a marvelous thing had we had the necessary sights for it.



*An FW-190 drops his flaps preparatory to landing at a forward airfield*