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after diving the P-47s should climb again and gain position for another attack rather than turn immediately in pursuit.

Other German pilots flying under 20,000 feet, and sighting Allied fighters above them in a position to attack, turn and climb towards the Allied fighters

in an endeavor to meet them head on, and thus have an equal chance of getting in a burst.

Another common type of evasive maneuver employed is to go down in a tight spiral or spin with a view to engaging the Allied fighters at a more favorable altitude or escaping at tree-top level.



## The Development of Me-262 Interception Tactics

**CREWS** of Eighth Air Force bombers and fighters on deep penetrations have watched the tactics of the intercepting Me-262s pass through two stages of development and arrive at a third. Because the third stage appears to be the most effective and efficient use of jets as interceptors, it is probable that its form of tactics will be the one opposing our strategic operations from now on.

**First Stage**, beginning with our first jet sightings and lasting until February of this year, appeared to be experimental in nature, and the relatively few operational jets were being used in what might be called "capability tests." Pilots were in the process of feeling out the possibilities of their aircraft. Both heavies and escort frequently reported sighting jets, but actual attacks were rare, and seemed generally to be more accidental than planned. They may have resulted from momentary eagerness on the part of Luftwaffe pilots on training flights, although possibly some were planned combat experimentations.

**Second Stage** of development was rather short and consisted of more or less *bona fide* interceptions. Most of the engagements, however, were with escorting fighters, with only a few determined attacks on bomber formations. Stragglers were pounced upon when found. Combat with our fighters had the apparent purpose of causing them to drop external tanks, thus decreasing effectiveness of their escort by reducing the length of time they could remain with the bombers.

A logical follow-up on this type of assault would have consisted of attacks on the bomber boxes by conventional aircraft after the escort had been spread thin. However, on the two operations in this period in which Me-262s were aggressive in attacking escorting fighters (those of 9 February and 22 February), this follow-up did not take place (SUMMARY No. 66, page 4; No. 69, page 5).

**Third Stage** in Me-262 interception tactics is assumed to have begun on 3 March (SUMMARY No. 70, page 4). Reaction by Me-262s on that date to the Brunswick-Magdeburg penetration is estimated from evaluated sighting and encounter reports to have consisted of possibly 30 to 40 sorties, a reaction

approximately equal to that taking place on 22 February. Tactics employed on the latter date were, however, entirely different. The jets deliberately avoided the fighters and pressed attacks on the heavies only when the escort was not in the immediate vicinity, *i.e.*, practically on top of the bomber boxes, or after it had been drawn away by a chase after other jets.

The relative success obtained by the GAF jets on 3 March (four bombers downed against a claim of two Me-262s destroyed by the bomber gunners and none by the fighters) should be a fair indication that this general method of attack will be followed henceforth. The example makes quite clear that a comparatively small number of jets, in contrast to the large numbers of conventional fighters reacting in the past, can be rather annoying when used intelligently.

**Tactics on 3 March:** Analysis of the Me-262 tactics on this date reveals that the jets preferred to attack from either 6 or 12 o'clock. In most cases, attacks from other directions turned out to be feints. No preference was shown regarding the level of approach, but high approaches were generally not very high and low ones not very low. The number making a particular pass varied from one to four, but when more than one attacked, an echelon (almost in trail) formation was used. Breakaways varied considerably, though they always combined a change in altitude with a change in direction. Bomb groups were bounced while strung out in bombing formation and the jet completely ignored German flak when attacking.

The Me-262 pilots did not seem to be particular as to which group of the bomber column they attacked, and they were not averse to climbing back for a second pass after diving away from the first one. In some instances the jets seemed to glide with power off when attacking, probably to obtain a longer firing burst by lessening the rate of closure.

Another point worth noting is that the jets seem to be less tied down by poor weather conditions than the FW-190s or Me-109s, probably because the pilots flying them are a little more experienced and have better instrument backgrounds. Recently, also, Me-262s have been interfering with some success with photo reconnaissance operations.



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