

ANOTHER BIG ATTACK ON ESSEN

By the end of last night's big attack on Essen - an attack even heavier than that of last week - pilots reported that there was a huge rectangular mass of fire. An enormous cloud of smoke covered the target and had reached a height of 15,000 feet.

Crews agreed that there were at least two big explosions about ten minutes after the raid began. One pilot, who was making his bombing run when the second explosion occurred said that although he was flying at a great height the flames from it lit up the cockpit of his aircraft.

"When we arrived," the pilot of a Stirling said, "the whole of the target was lit up by the fires. Suddenly there was a huge explosion below us; a great sheet of flame shot up to about a thousand feet. Despite the thick cloud of smoke rising from the target, we could see the glow of the flames when we crossed the Dutch coast on our way home!"

Warned by the success of the R.A.F.'s last raid on Essen on the night of March 5, the Germans had greatly strengthened the defences of this vital industrial target.

"They seemed determined that we shouldn't get through", one pilot said. "As we approached the town, I saw three huge cones with at least fifty searchlights in each".

All pilots agreed that the flak was a good deal heavier than when they were last over Essen. Heavy and light guns, hundreds of searchlights and many night fighters took part in defence, but they failed to stop the bombers reaching their objectives, and as the attack developed the intensity of the opposition fell off.

Essen, which has a population of 700,000, is the great armament centre of the Ruhr. Though Krupps is by far the largest concern, there are many other important factories in and around the town.
