

pens, and till then some aircraft were parked in the open. Losses at dispersal points were not serious; the worst in my recollection was 5 aircraft destroyed or seriously damaged in one attack. Small portable tents were provided which could be erected over the centre portion of an aeroplane, leaving the tail and wing-tips exposed. These protected the most important parts and enabled ground crews to work in bad weather.

153. About this time an improvised Repair System was organised and worked well. With the hearty co-operation of the Ministry of Aircraft Production it was decided that Units should be relieved of all extensive repairs and overhauls, both because of their preoccupation in the Battle and because of the danger of further damage being done by enemy action to aircraft under repair. Broadly speaking, any aircraft capable of returning to its base was capable of another 15 minutes' straight flight to a Repair Depot: aircraft incapable of flight were sent by road. Small repairs, such as the patching of bullet holes, were done by the Unit. Two such Repair Depots were improvised about 30 miles to the west of London, and this undoubtedly prevented an accumulation of unserviceable aircraft at Fighter Stations.

154. It was also about this time that the final decision was made to relegate the Defiant to night operations. It had two serious disabilities; firstly, the brain flying the aeroplane was not the brain firing the guns: the guns could not fire within 16 Degrees of the line of flight of the aeroplane and the gunner was distracted from his task by having to direct the pilot through the Communication Set. Secondly, the guns could not be fired below the horizontal, and it was therefore necessary to keep below the enemy. When beset by superior numbers of Fighters the best course to pursue was to form a descending spiral, so that one or more Defiants should always be in a position to bring effective fire to bear. Such tactics were, however, essentially defensive, and the formation sometimes got broken up before they could be adopted. In practice, the Defiants suffered such heavy losses that it was necessary to relegate them to night fighting, or to the attack of unescorted Bombers.

155. The above remarks have carried me beyond the first phase of the Battle and into the second; but I find it impossible to adhere to a description of the fighting phase by phase. The Enemy's Strategical, as well as his Tactical moves had to be met from day to day as they occurred, and I give an account of my problems and the lessons to be derived from them roughly in the order of their incidence. The detailed sequence of events is sufficiently indicated in the Diagram at Appendix "D."

156. Throughout the Battle, of course, fighting continually occurred over the sea, and German aircraft, damaged over England, had to return across the Straits of Dover or the English Channel. Far more German than British crews fell into the sea. The Germans therefore developed an elaborate system of sea-rescue. Their Bombers had inflatable rubber dinghies, and various other rescue devices were adopted. Crews were provided with bags of a chemical known as fluorescine, a small quantity of which stained a large area of water a vivid green. Floating refuges with provisions and wireless sets were anchored off the French coast. "E

Boats" and rescue launches were extensively employed, and white-painted float-planes, marked with the Red Cross, were used even in the midst of battle. We had to make it known to the Germans that we could not countenance the use of the Red Cross in this manner. They were engaged in rescuing combatants and taking them back to fight again, and they were also in a position, if granted immunity, to make valuable reconnaissance reports. In spite of this, surviving crews of these aircraft appeared to be surprised and aggrieved at being shot down.

157. Our own arrangements were less elaborate. Life-saving jackets were painted a conspicuous yellow, and later the fluorescine device was copied. Patrol aircraft (not under the Red Cross) looked out for immersed crews, and a chain of rescue launches with special communications was installed round the coast. Our own shipping, too, was often on the spot, and many pilots were rescued by Naval or Merchant vessels.

158. This is perhaps a convenient opportunity to say a word about the ethics of shooting at aircraft crews who have "baled out" in parachutes.

159. Germans descending over England are prospective Prisoners of War, and, as such, should be immune. On the other hand, British pilots descending over England are still potential Combatants.

160. Much indignation was caused by the fact that German pilots sometimes fired on our descending airmen (although, in my opinion, they were perfectly entitled to do so), but I am glad to say that in many cases they refrained and sometimes greeted a helpless adversary with a cheerful wave of the hand.

161. Many of the targets attacked during the first two phases of the Battle were of little military importance, and had but slight effect on our War Effort. Exceptions to this were day-attacks carried out on the Spitfire works at Southampton and the sheds at Brooklands where some of our Hurricanes were assembled and tested. Both these attacks had some effect on output, which would have been serious but for the anticipatory measures taken by Lord Beaverbrook.

162. About this time one Canadian, two Polish and one Czech squadrons became fit for Operations.

163. A squadron of Canadian pilots of the Royal Air Force (No. 242) had been in existence for some months, and was one of the squadrons which went to France in June to cover the evacuation from the West Coast. On its return it became one of the foremost fighting Squadrons in the Command, under the leadership of the very gallant Squadron Leader (now Wing Commander) D. R. S. Bader, D.S.O., D.F.C., No. 1 (Canadian) Squadron, now also came into the line and acquitted itself with great distinction.

164. I must confess that I had been a little doubtful of the effect which their experience in their own countries and in France might have had upon the Polish and Czech pilots, but my doubts were soon laid to rest, because all three Squadrons swung in the fight with a dash and enthusiasm which is beyond praise. They were inspired by a burning hatred for the