

intake of Flying Training Schools should be adjusted to cater for the additional stress which can be foreseen.

(g) (And this applies principally to overseas theatres of war where rapid reinforcement is impossible.) Let the Day Bomber and Army Co-operation Squadrons have a number of Fighters on which they can fly and train as opportunity offers. This is a revolutionary suggestion, but it is made in all seriousness. If their Fighters are overwhelmed the Day Bomber and Army Co-operation units will not be able to operate at all. No very high standard of training should be attempted, especially in Radio-controlled Interception methods: but the intervention of these units as Fighters, working in pairs or small formations, might well prove to be the decisive factor in a critical situation.

192. It will be observed that, at the end of the second Phase of the Battle, the power of reinforcing by complete units had substantially disappeared. We still possessed an effective reserve of trained pilots, but they could be made available only by stripping the Squadrons which were not engaged in the South and South-East of England.

193. The effective strength of the Command was running down, though the fact was not known to the public, nor, I hoped, to the Germans. They for their part must certainly be feeling the effect of their heavy losses, but there was very little indication of any loss of morale, so far as could be seen from a daily scrutiny of the examinations of Prisoners of War. Our own pilots were fighting with unabated gallantry and determination.

194. The confidence of the German High Command probably received something of a shock about this time. The sustained resistance which they were meeting in South-East England probably led them to believe that Fighter Squadrons had been withdrawn, wholly or in part, from the North in order to meet the attack. On the 15th August, therefore, two large raids were sent, one to Yorkshire and one to Newcastle. They were escorted by Fighters. The distance was too great for Me. 109s, but not for Me. 110s.

195. If the assumption was that our Fighters had been withdrawn from the North, the contrary was soon apparent, and the bombers received such a drubbing that the experiment was not repeated. I think that this incident probably had a very depressing influence on the outlook of the German High Command.

196. As I have said, our own pilots were fighting with the utmost gallantry and determination, but the mass raids on London, which were the main feature of the third phase of the Battle, involved a tremendous strain on units which could no longer be relieved as such. Some Squadrons were flying 50 and 60 hours per diem.

197. Many of the pilots were getting very tired. An order was in existence that all pilots should have 24 hours' leave every week, during which they should be encouraged to leave their station and get some exercise and change of atmosphere: this was issued as an order so that the pilots should be compelled to avail themselves of the opportunity to get the necessary rest and relaxation. I think it was generally

obeyed, but I fear that the instinct of duty sometimes over-rode the sense of discipline. Other measures were also taken to provide rest and relaxation at Stations, and sometimes to find billets for pilots where they could sleep away from their Aerodromes.

198. During this third phase the problem arose, in an acute form, of the strength of Fighter formations which we should employ. When time was the essence of the problem, two squadrons were generally used by A.V.M. Park in No. 11 Group. He had the responsibility of meeting attacks as far to the Eastward as possible, and the building up of a four-squadron formation involved the use of a rendezvous for aircraft from two or more aerodromes. This led to delay and lack of flexibility in leadership.

199. On the other hand, when No. 12 Group was asked to send down protective formations to guard the aerodromes on the Eastern fringe of London, it was often possible to build up big formations, and these had great success on some occasions, though by no means always.

200. Because a similar situation may well arise in future, I think that it is desirable to enter into some detail in this connection.

201. I may preface my remarks by stating that I am personally in favour of using Fighter formations in the greatest strength of which circumstances will permit, and, in the Dunkerque fighting, where we could choose our time and build up our formations on the outward journey, I habitually employed four-Squadron formations as a preferable alternative to using two-Squadron formations at more frequent intervals; but, during the attacks on London, the available strength of Fighters did not admit of this policy, nor was time available.

202. I quote from Air Vice-Marshal Park's report:—

"The general plan adopted was to engage the enemy high-fighter screen with pairs of Spitfire Squadrons from Hornchurch and Biggin Hill half-way between London and the coast, and so enable Hurricane Squadrons from London Sectors to attack bomber formations and their close escort before they reached the line of fighter aerodromes East and South of London. The remaining Squadrons from London Sectors that could not be despatched in time to intercept the first wave of the attack by climbing in pairs formed a third and inner screen by patrolling along the lines of aerodromes East and South of London. The fighter Squadrons from Debden, Tangmere, and sometimes Northolt, were employed in wings of three or in pairs to form a screen South-East of London to intercept the third wave of the attack coming inland, also to mop up retreating formations of the earlier waves. The Spitfire Squadrons were redispersed so as to concentrate three Squadrons at each of Hornchurch and Biggin Hill. The primary rôle of these Squadrons was to engage and drive back the enemy high-fighter screen, and so protect the Hurricane Squadrons, whose task was to attack close escorts and then the bomber formations, all of which flew at much lower altitude."

203. I think that, if the policy of big formations had been attempted at this time in No. 11