



SUPPLEMENT TO The London Gazette

Of Tuesday, the 10th of September, 1946

Published by Authority

Registered as a newspaper

WEDNESDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER, 1946

*The Air Ministry,
September, 1946.*

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN.

The following despatch was submitted to the Secretary of State for Air on August 20th, 1941, by Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh C. T. Dowding, G.C.B., G.C.V.O., C.M.G., A.D.C., Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Fighter Command, Royal Air Force.

PREAMBLE.

1. I have been instructed by the Air Council to write a Despatch on the Air Fighting of last Autumn, which has become known as the "Battle of Britain." The conditions are a little unusual because, firstly, the Battle ended many months ago, secondly, a popular account of the fighting has already been written and published, and, thirdly, recommendations for Mention in Despatches have already been submitted.

2. I have endeavoured, therefore, to write a report which will, I hope, be of Historical interest, and which will, in any case, contain the results of more than four years' experience of the Fighter Command in peace and war.

August 20, 1941.

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN.

PART I.—PRELIMINARY.

3. In giving an account of the Battle of Britain it is perhaps advisable to begin by a definition of my conception of the meaning of the phrase. The Battle may be said to have started when the Germans had disposed of the French resistance in the Summer of 1940, and turned their attention to this country.

4. The essence of their Strategy was so to weaken our Fighter Defences that their Air Arm should be able to give adequate support to an attempted invasion of the British Isles.

Experiences in Holland and Belgium had shown what they could do with armoured forces operating in conjunction with an Air Arm which had substantially achieved the command of the Air.

5. This air supremacy was doubly necessary to them in attacking England because the bulk of their troops and war material must necessarily be conveyed by sea, and, in order to achieve success, they must be capable of giving air protection to the passage and the landing of troops and material.

6. The destruction or paralysis of the Fighter Command was therefore an essential prerequisite to the invasion of these Islands.

7. Their immediate objectives might be Convoys, Radio-Location Stations, Fighter Aerodromes, Seaports, Aircraft Factories, or London itself. Always the underlying object was to bring the Fighter Command continuously to battle, and to weaken its material resources and Intelligence facilities.

8. Long after the policy of "crashing through" with heavy bomber formations had been abandoned owing to the shattering losses incurred, the battle went on. Large fighter formations were sent over, a proportion of the fighters being adapted to carry bombs, in order that the attacks might not be ignorable.

9. This last phase was perhaps the most difficult to deal with tactically. It will be discussed in greater detail later on.

10. Night attacks by Heavy Bombers were continuous throughout the operations, and, although they persisted and increased in intensity as Day Bombing became more and more expensive, they had an essentially different purpose, and the "Battle of Britain" may be said to have ended when the Fighter and Fighter-Bomber raids died down.