

(b) A few outside units to be maintained at operational strength and to be available as Unit Reliefs in cases where this was unavoidable.

(c) The remaining Squadrons of the Command, which would be stripped of their operational pilots, for the benefit of the A Squadrons, down to a level of 5 or 6. These C Squadrons could devote their main energies to the training of new pilots, and, although they would not be fit to meet German Fighters, they would be quite capable of defending their Sectors against unescorted Bombers, which would be all that they would be likely to encounter.

178. The necessity for resorting to such measures as this indicates the strain which had been put on the Fighter Command and the Pilot Training organisations by the casualties which the Command had suffered in this decisive Battle.

179. In the early stages of the fight Mr. Winston Churchill spoke with affectionate railery of me and my "Chicks." He could have said nothing to make me more proud; every Chick was needed before the end.

180. I trust that I may be permitted to record my appreciation of the help given me by the support and confidence of the Prime Minister at a difficult and critical time.

181. In the early days of the War the question of the provision of Operational Training Units (or Group Pools, as they were called at that time) was under discussion. It was referred to in the correspondence which I have mentioned in paragraph 17 of this Despatch. At that time I was so gravely in need of additional Fighter Squadrons that I was willing to do without Group Pools altogether while we were still at long range from the German Fighters.

182. The functions of these Group Pools, or O.T.U.s., was to accept pilots direct from Flying Training Schools or non-fighter units of the Royal Air Force and train them in the handling of Fighter types, formation flying, fighting tactics, and R/T control and interception methods. I realised that the Fighters in France could not undertake this work and must have a Group Pool allotted primarily to meet their requirements, but I felt that, so long as we at Home were out of touch with German Fighters, I would prefer to put all available resources into new Squadrons and to undertake in Service Squadrons the final training of pilots coming from Flying Training Schools, provided that they had done some formation flying and night flying, and had fired their guns in the air.

183. Of course, when intensive fighting began, final training of pilots in Squadrons could no longer be given efficiently, and at the time of the Battle three O.T.U.s. were in existence. It was found that three weeks was about the minimum period which was of practical value, but that a longer course, up to six weeks, was desirable when circumstances permitted.

184. During the Battle the output from the O.T.U.s. was quite inadequate to meet the casualty rate, and it was not even possible to supply from the Flying Training Schools the necessary intake to the O.T.U.s.

185. The lack of flexibility of the Training system, therefore, proved to be the "bottle-neck" and was the cause of the progressively deteriorating situation of the Fighter Command up till the end of September. This statement is in no sense a criticism of the Flying Training Command. The problem, as I state it here, can have no ideal solution and some compromise must be adopted.

186. Assuming that in periods of maximum quiescence the Fighter Squadrons of the Royal Air Force require an intake of x pilots per week, in periods of intense activity they require about ten times the number.

187. It is necessary to start the flying training of a pilot about a year before he is ready to engage Enemy Fighters, and therefore the training authorities should be warned, a year ahead, of the incidence of active periods. This is obviously impossible. If they try to be ready for all eventualities by catering for a continuous output to meet a high casualty rate, the result is that, during quiet periods, pilots are turned out at such a rate that they cannot be absorbed, or even given enough flying to prevent their forgetting what they have been taught. If, on the other hand, they cater for the normal wastage rate, Fighter Squadrons are starved of reinforcements when they are most vitally needed.

188. The fundamental principle which must be realised is that Fighter needs, when they arise, are not comparative with those of other Commands, but absolute. An adequate and efficient Fighter force ensures the Security of the Base, without which continuous operations are impossible.

189. If the Fighter defence had failed in the Autumn of 1940, England would have been invaded. The paralysis of their fighters in the Spring was an important factor in the collapse of the French resistance. Later, the unavoidable withdrawal of the Fighters from Crete rendered continued resistance impossible.

190. Day Bomber and Army Co-operation aircraft can operate when their own Fighters are predominant, but are driven out of the sky when the Enemy Fighters have a free hand.

191. I submit some suggestions by which the apparently insuperable difficulties of the problem may be reduced.

(a) Start by aiming at a Fighter output well above that needed in quiescent periods.

(b) Ensure that at Flying Training Schools, pupils earmarked for other duties may be rapidly switched over to Fighter training.

(c) Organise the O.T.U.s. with a "Normal" and an "Emergency" Syllabus, the latter lasting for three weeks and the former twice as long.

(d) Fill up the Service Fighter Squadrons to a strength of 25 pilots, or whatever the C.-in-C. considers to be the maximum which can be kept in flying and operational practice.

(e) Form Reservoirs, either at O.T.U.s. or in special units where surplus pilots may maintain the flying and operational standard which they have reached.

(f) When the initiative lies in our hands (as, for instance, when we are planning to deliver an offensive some time ahead), the