

Air Ministry News ServiceBOSTONS OVER FRANCE

A chemical factory at Lille, 27 miles inland from Dunkirk, was bombed today by Bostons of Bomber Command.

The Bostons, with fighter escort, were over France for 23 minutes. A similar attack by enemy bombers on England would mean a raid on Guildford with the enemy entering at Worthing, and after bombing, sweeping round and out over Beachy Head.

"We all know how different it would be", said a pilot "if a German formation ventured as far over England in daylight."

A Fock-Wulf 190 fighter went down after a combat with smoke pouring from it, and another was damaged.

The first F.W. fell to a gunner in the leading Boston. He saw it when it was 400 yards away. "He was coming in to attack the third Boston in our formation", the gunner said. "I got him in my sights and held my fire until he was fifty yards off. Then I fired and went on firing until he was only ten yards from the Boston he was attacking. I could see bullets cutting in to his fuselage all the time I was firing. Suddenly he turned completely over and dived straight down with smoke coming from him. I watched him until he had fallen four thousand feet below us. The Boston he had attacked got safely home."

The other F.W. attacked a Boston from astern. Our gunner saw his bullets hit the F.W. engine cowling. "As I was firing", he said, "I could hear the crackle of the enemy's bullets against our fuselage. One cannon shell exploded on our port propeller and knocked a chunk out of it. I don't think we were hit any more. Then there was a crimson burst above us which warned the enemy fighters to keep off and warned us that flak was coming up. It was fairly accurate but didn't interfere with our bombing run".

The Spitfires escorting the Bostons to Lille met a large number of enemy fighters trying to get through to the bombers.

German ground defences also put up an intense flak barrage.

The Bostons, however, were brought through to their objective and bombed a chemical works.

A Polish wing of our fighters was heavily engaged over the target area.

On the way back from the target to the French coast there were running fights between the Spitfires and about forty enemy fighters. One F.W. 190 was destroyed by a Squadron Commander.

Another Spitfire wing which was escorting the squadron of bombers also had running fights with about twenty enemy aircraft. These combats lasted until the French coast was reached on the return journey.

During these scraps one of the bombers was seen to be hit and eight Spitfires were told off to escort it. It went down apparently to make a forced landing and the eight Spitfires had to fight their way out to the coast against a considerable number of enemy fighters. One of the eight protecting Spitfires was lost.

But the members of his squadron damaged two enemy aircraft and shot the tail off another and saw it go down in a spin. Its end could not be seen and it can only be claimed as a probable.

In a further sweep late this afternoon, Fighter Command's sixth offensive operation of the day, the enemy did not come up to fight.

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