

FIGHTER OFFENSIVE

Fighter Command carried out four large-scale sweeps over occupied territory to-day.

A considerable number of dog-fights took place during the afternoon, but on the morning sweep bombers were escorted to Zeebrugge without opposition. Twelve enemy fighters were seen in the distance, but the escorting Spitfires reported on their return that "the enemy showed no inclination to interfere with our schedule."

In the early afternoon strong formations of Spitfires, flying as two separate sweeps at the same time, swept the skies over Northern France. The Germans, faced with this dual offensive, concentrated their opposition. One sweep met no opposition, while the other encountered about 30 enemy fighters, some 20 of which were engaged.

"We were about ten miles inland," said an English Spitfire pilot from this formation, "flying high, when we saw about 20 mixed F.W.190s and Me.109s about to dive on a Spitfire squadron below. We attacked them, destroying one and damaging others."

"Our squadron commander followed his victim down from 20,000 to 5,000 feet before breaking away. The Hun was still going down in a terrific dive."

"A Norwegian sergeant-pilot had an exciting duel with an Me.109 which got on his tail. The Hun refused to be shaken off, and a running fight developed at sea-level off the French coast. By an amazing manoeuvre the Norwegian at last managed to get round for a head-on attack on his pursuer. Two bursts and it crashed into the Channel."

When four F.W.190s tried to dive on a Spitfire squadron near Hardelot, Polish pilots in another squadron dived on them. They shot down one without loss to themselves.

The F.W.190 destroyed fell to a sergeant-pilot who saw his victim bale out at 22,000 feet.

A member of the squadron said: "We are delighted that the sergeant had success to-day. He has damaged two Huns already within a week, but this is his first confirmed victory."

"In damaging one F.W.190 a few days ago, he probably saved the life of one of his fellow-pilots in the squadron."

The squadron which scored the successes made a rendezvous over a South-Coast town, and were watched by crowds as they left the English coast.

Soon afterwards many squadrons of fighters, making rendezvous for the third of the days' operations, were seen over another seaside town. Flying at 7,000 feet, they made an impressive spectacle in the bright sunlight.

This sweep went to Lille, where dog-fights took place, again at a very great height.

A Czech pilot also saw his victim bale out after being attacked. "When I opened fire, he promptly jumped for it," said the Czech. "He was at 24,000 feet, and I did not see his parachute open."

The Czech then had another combat, after which he lost height, and a few seconds later an F.W.190 with half a wing missing dived past him. It was almost certainly the one I had fired at," he said.

In these dog-fights four F.W.190s were destroyed, several more were rated as "probables", while others were damaged.

The fourth sweep was carried out without loss to ourselves.

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