

CZECH SQUADRON'S ANNIVERSARY

Pilots of one of Fighter Command's all Czech Spitfire squadrons celebrated their first anniversary on Saturday by taking part in a large scale sweep in which Boston bombers were escorted to Bruges.

The squadron was part of the escort, and was flying above the bombers. On the way out from the target they saw 12 F.W.190s a thousand feet above them, which attacked our escorting wing. Only one Czech pilot was able to engage and the F.W. he hit was damaged.

About 30 other enemy fighters seen in formation by the Czech squadron during the operation did not attempt to interfere with the bombers or their escort. After escorting the Bostons back safely the Czech squadron held an anniversary celebration by decorating Group Captain H. Broadhurst, D.S.O. and Bar, D.F.C., A.F.C., and Wing Commander R.P.R. Powell, D.F.C., leaders of the fighter wing in which the squadron flies on offensive operations.

The presentation was made by the Czech A.O.C., Air Vice-Marshal Janousek, who pinned the Czech flying badges on the two British pilots.

This Czech Spitfire squadron is an outstanding example of co-operation between our Allies, who have made this country their home for the duration of the war, and their British comrades.

The birthday was celebrated by a dinner, following the presentation and the Czech pilots paid a tangible tribute to the British aircraftmen and sergeants who form the ground crews by giving them what one described as a "slap-up" lunch and then sending them off to a theatre, where the pilots had bought seats for them.

The Czech pilots are nearly all former members of the Czech Air Force who escaped from their country after the Germans overran it and reached England by way of Africa, France and other routes.

Many of them flew with other fighter squadrons until a year ago when they formed their own squadron. They had their first offensive operation in March of this year, shot down their first F.W.190 on the 28th of that month, and have since destroyed 6 more German fighters, all on offensive operations.

In the mess on Saturday evening, after the toast of the King and Dr. Benes, a toast was drunk to their first British squadron leader, Squadron Leader Sinclair, who later handed over the squadron to a Czech leader, also a Czech, ^{afterwards the present leader} described his squadron's activities in the present offensive and paid tribute to the British ground crews without whose devotion to duty they could not fly.

A tribute was also paid to the adjutant, who is the oldest member of the squadron and an Englishman known to all his Czech comrades as "father".
