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Air Ministry News Service

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POLISH BOMBER CREW'S ORDEAL

While flying at a height of a thousand feet over the North Sea a Wellington, manned by a Polish crew, was attacked simultaneously by two Focke-Wulf 190s. The enemy fighters came in very fast and the Polish captain, Pilot Officer M, turning to port, dived to sea level. The fighters followed the Wellington down and made attack after attack with cannon and machine-gun fire. The Polish rear-gunner kept up a running commentary to help his captain to take evasive action. All the time the rear-gunner also kept firing at the fighters until his ammunition had run out: then, though wounded, he made for the beam guns and went on defending his aircraft. The fighters, which had been making quarter and beam attacks, now changed their tactics and came in from front and rear. The Polish front-gunner replied to their fire with burst after burst. By now, all the Polish crew were wounded except Pilot Officer M, and the wireless operator, and the Wellington was badly damaged in many places. Suddenly the starboard engine caught fire; the aircraft dropped and hit the water, but Pilot Officer M, managed to keep it under control and continued flying on the port engine. Still the fight continued. The enemy did not cease their attacks until the aircraft at last crashed into the sea.

Pilot Officer M, was knocked unconscious. When he recovered, he found himself in the water, not far from the sinking Wellington. He dragged off his harness, his boots and his flying helmet, and swam for the dinghy which was afloat but upside down. In the meantime, the wireless operator had been thrown back into the fuselage by the inrush of water: he came forward again under the water and climbed out of the pilot's hatch. He, too, swam to the dinghy. It was two hours before he and the pilot were able to right the dinghy. While they were trying to do so, a Wellington appeared a mile or so away. They could not signal to it with the Very pistol because it was in the water with the rest of the dinghy equipment. The aircraft had sunk by now.

Some time after they had hauled themselves into the dinghy, they were seen by a Hudson, which circled over them until a sea-rescue launch arrived and picked them up. All the rest of the crew went down with the aircraft.
