

SINGLE POLISH FIGHTER ESCORTS BRITISH BOMBERS

Behind the recent announcement that the D.F.M. had been awarded to a Polish Sergeant pilot is the story of how, single-handed, he escorted a group of Stirlings during their return from a bombing raid on enemy territory.

On a clear, sunlit day a Polish fighter squadron took off from its aerodrome and flew out over the Channel to meet the Stirlings at a pre-arranged spot. Just as they approached the bombers a number of Messerschmitts attacked out of the sun. A fight developed, and, after driving off the attackers, the Polish squadron went in pursuit, leaving the sergeant pilot to guard the Stirlings on his own. For a time he expected his squadron to return and form up with him, but at last he came to the conclusion that they had lost him.

The Stirlings were now flying in close formation towards their base with the lone Polish fighter hovering vigilantly over them. They had already covered a great part of the way when five German planes dived straight for the Stirlings. With their whole attention on the bombers they did not see the fighter up above, and before they had time to do any damage, the Polish sergeant pilot had swooped on them. Taken by surprise, they immediately broke away and scattered, but the Pole was not to be tempted into following them and leaving the bombers unguarded.

He returned to his position above the Stirlings. When any German planes approached he attacked them and returned to his place, and by good manoeuvring he kept them away from his charge.

At last the coast of England appeared and a few minutes later the Stirlings were back at their base intact. The sergeant pilot was tired, but very happy that he had completed his task so successfully.

With his D.F.M. he has other souvenirs of that fight which he prizes greatly. They are letters from the mothers whose sons were in the Stirlings he defended. He is keeping them so that one day, if he returns to Poland, he can show them to his own mother.

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