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CZECH SQUADRON'S SECOND BIRTHDAY

Today is the second anniversary of the formation in Britain of a Czechoslovak Wellington squadron. This squadron has dropped three million pounds of bombs on Germany and Italy while operating under Bomber Command, and has also flown one million miles in the battle of the Bay of Biscay with Coastal Command.

This squadron took part in the thousand bomber raids on Bremen, the Ruhr and Cologne. Altogether, the Czechoslovak Squadron has attacked sixty targets in Germany and Italy including Turin, Stettin and Genoa.

Nearly all the men of this squadron escaped from Europe to fight the Germans. Many of them have served in the Polish, French and British Air Forces, joining each in turn as the Germans occupied the first two countries. Other squadron members served in the Russian and Hungarian Air Forces after the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the Germans, or in the French Foreign Legion in North Africa.

After the fall of France, many of them had to "escape" again before they could get to Great Britain to continue their fight. Some of them wear Czechoslovak and Polish honours, and others have the Croix de Guerre, awarded for service in France in the early days of the war.

Every bomb which the squadron has dropped on Germany has brought its own personal satisfaction to the air and ground crews. Now they are taking part in the battle of the Bay of Biscay, which is being fought between the aircraft of Coastal Command and the U-boats plying between the Western Atlantic and the French ports. The squadron has had its successes in this battle.

So keen are the squadron air crews on their fight with Germany that several of their air gunners and navigators have, after completing their operational tour, taken the pilot's course during their "resting" period and have returned to the squadron as pilots for their next tour.

Interrogation sometimes has its difficulties. One Czech pilot landed the other day at a strange aerodrome after being in combat with an Arado. The intelligence officer who interrogated him described it afterwards.

"The pilot spoke Czech, Bessarabian and a little French. I replied in Swahili and various other languages. We misunderstood one another perfectly - and we ended up by working out the combat with two books on the floor and the Czech's few words of English."

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