

Every Fighter Unit of RCAF Employed Supporting Attack

London, Aug. 19 (CP). One-third of the German Air Force's fighter-plane strength in the West probably was destroyed or damaged today in the fierce sky battles that raged over Dieppe on a scale comparable to the titanic struggles of the Battle of Britain two years ago.

The Germans are believed to have had a force of about 500 fighters based in the West zone, and it is known that 82 of these were certainly destroyed today, and 100 others were probably destroyed or damaged.

United Nations planes providing a great canopy over the Commando landing and land operations beneath were estimated to number more than 1,000—the largest daytime air armada ever sent up from this island.

Every Canadian fighter squadron was in action. Canadian Army co-operation squadrons were in action for the first time, possibly supporting Canadian troops who spear-headed the nine-hour assault on Nazi installation in the Dieppe area. This was not certain, however, as the co-operation squadrons may have been used on Channel patrol duty.

There was this difference between the fighting today and that in the Battle of Britain: The Germans lost four to five machines for every British one lost in the R.A.F. defensive battle two years ago. And today the losses given so far indicate the Nazis could do little better than claim one Allied machine for every one they lost.

Nazi Loss Heavy.

Conditions today were even less favorable for the United Nations air forces than they were for the Germans, who came over England in swarms in 1940. For one thing, they were met by a Nazi force big in numbers, and for another, their chief task was the protection of the Allied ground and sea forces.

The German losses must be considered "very heavy," in the view of qualified observers, especially in relation to the total air strength in this theatre. It was believed these losses would produce some drain on German air strength in other areas. Allied losses were ninety-five planes.

One indirect outcome of the air successes over Dieppe will probably be a softening of German air power against Russia, particularly if the Nazis find it necessary to withdraw fighters from the eastern front to replace losses in the west.

The air protection afforded the ground forces was unparalleled in British fighting history.

"It is a very gratifying feature of the raid," a R.A.F. commentator said. "Both the nation and the R.A.F. have been waiting for this day when our troops would get the support they deserved. They got it today."

There was no doubt that a number of British planes were lost giving protection to the troops by low-flying attacks. But those air assaults must have eased the position for the ground forces.

The protective planes zoomed thick and fast over the Channel.

By mid-afternoon several squadrons had made as many as six sweeps, pausing only to refuel and rearm. Action throughout the day was fast and heavy.

Under the command of Squadron Leader Keith Hodson of London, Ont., a fighter squadron also formed part of the escort for American Flying Fortresses which blasted at the Nazi fighter base at Abbeville, France.

After the attack on this base, the

fighter squadron flew over the Dieppe sector. There it fought several Dornier 217's, latest Nazi dive-bomber.

Constant Procession.

Hodson, from fifty yards, got in one long burst at a Dornier and Sergeant M. Zobell of Raymond, Alta., fired all his cannon and machine-gun ammunition into a second dive-bomber. Meanwhile, Sergeant Stanley Cosburn of Calgary attacked two other Dorniers and was rewarded by seeing bullets rip into both.

A Focke-Wulf 190 was sighted by Hodson during the fight. He fired a burst of cannon fire into the enemy's fuselage.

Throughout the day, beginning with the first grey streaks of dawn, there was intense aerial activity over the Channel. Off the south coast, air battles were going on almost continually. Observers reported a "constant procession" of aircraft flying over the coast and explosions "on the other side."

Important in the Allied air action was the work of twenty-four Ameri-

can Flying Fortresses, which, at the start of the Dieppe action, raided the German fighter drome at Abbeville before many planes could leave the ground.

All the Fortresses returned home, after all but one had dropped their bombs on or near the target. Three were damaged by anti-aircraft fire, and the radio operator of one was the only casualty. He had an injured kneecap.

Runways, fuel dumps and plane dispersal areas were hit.

Abbeville is thirty-eight miles from Dieppe.

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