

The World Observer

February 28th, 1941

20 cents

BRITAIN STARTS AIR OFFENSIVE

10000 sorties, 10000 tons of bombs dropped

The Royal Air Force started her second major air offensive against occupied France this month. With 600 bombers and over 750 escort fighters the British Bomber Command set out to damage the economy in the German occupation zone in northern France. The industrial city of Lille was bombarded every second day on average.



Light bomber Fairey Battle, an agile attacker

Greatest air battles in history begun

The first British attack on the morning of February 2nd came with complete surprise. Only a handful of Messerschmitts were patrolling the cold skies, and the engines of the over 300 fighters of the 4th German Air Division were not warmed up until the British bombers were on target area. However in the bad winter weather the bombers could not precisely navigate to their industrial targets. On the following days, the bombings were repeated.

Luftwaffe practices her defense

The Luftwaffe took the challenge of the RAF and readied over 1000 fighters along the French coast in the vicinity of the city. "We didn't know when they came or exactly where but when they came we'd have a go at them", said Franz Altmann, with 20 kills German top gun during this battle. During the early stages of both the strategic battle and the individual missions the odds were even. But the British fighters were hampered by their limited range. Spitfires had to return to base shortly after intense high-speed air maneuvers. The bombers continued with reduced escorts. German fighter pilots took out part of them. The weather, hindrance to precise bombardment, now saved many bomber crew's lives.

Intense damage to French Industries

Despite the odds for dogfights becoming unfavourable after the first week, the Royal Air Force kept a high morale and continued to fulfil their mission goals: the destruction of the French armament factories now operating for Germany. On February 26th, the last day of the British bombardment, Air Marshal Arthur Harris concluded, "The industrial production of Lille has come to a standstill. Armaments factories and related industries are thoroughly destroyed".



Spitfire II, superb despite range problems

High Losses

Asked for the mission's losses, Air Marshal Charles Newell, head of Fighter Command said, "The destruction of enemy capital more than justifies our casualties". The Royal Air Force officially lists 324 aircraft as destroyed, claims 296 air kills against Germany. General der Flieger Albert Kesselring, chief of Luftwaffe operations in France claimed "the Luftwaffe lost only 150 fighters, and the British far more than they acknowledge".



Messerschmitt 109, always a foe to reckon with

U-BOATS THREAT BANISHED

Royal Navy claims Atlantic free of U-Boats

US Ships Welcome to UK

CROATS MOBILIZE

ROMANIA JOINS TRIPARTITE PACT