

846. 15/2/42 4.30 P.M. Lt. Hall & Mr. Smith.

BOMBER COMMAND --- THE FILM RECORD OF A SWEEP OVER FRANCE.

Up to date there have been over three hundred offensive sweeps by the Royal Air Force over enemy occupied Europe; ~~more than three hundred times, not counting night raids, German garrisons holding down the people of a conquered continent have heard the roar of~~

*and Coastal Command.*

~~Bomber, Fighter and Coastal Command engines. This is the newsreel record of one of those sweeps carried out by Bomber Command Blenheims, with an escort of Spitfires and Hurricanes.~~

~~It is a day of good visibility, with clusters of cumulus cloud -- ideal banking weather; and the ground staff prepare their planes we go into the briefing room with pilots and crews to await the Wing~~

Commander. This morning the air has the vital tang of that champagne that sprang from the soil of France; once our ally; now as the lodging of German troops and Luftwaffe that same earth must shudder beneath the impact of British bombs.

*Naturally, a good deal of the briefing is secret -- that part we must take for granted.*

Since war began, we have heard so many Air Ministry communique reporting action over enemy territory, we take them as a matter of course: it is well to pause here and reflect upon the cold courage with which each man must await his zero hour. ~~These few minutes are crammed the same emotions that their fathers knew a quarter of a century ago, going over the top. Each one puts his life in pawn; beside that, the small sacrifices of the home front seem small indeed.~~

Now, zero hour has struck. The Blenheims are taking off.

Heading south-east, towards that part of our coast that we called Hellfire Corner in the Battle of Britain. Fighter Command in those autumn days of 1940 cleared home skies of Junker and Messerschmitt: they drove the Luftwaffe back and gave Bomber Command the chance to attack.

They're heading for the Rendez-vous; and right on a split second of time they meet their escort of fighters over Canterbury. They cross the coastline; leaving our island fortress for shores now hostile, across the English Channel.

Fighters gain height and step up into position like a company of crack infantry on parade.

And As they near their objective the Bombers split up as instructed at the Briefing. Now we're over Northern France; the fighters peel off to sweep a path clear of possible interceptors --- except for flak the Blenheims will run in unchallenged.

Now the Blenheims with their loads of bombs are about to dive on the target.

Bomb aimer all set; factories in France doing Hitler's work are about to go out of action. And there go some of the bombs. ~~Smoke below is at least one sign of the works of Hitler's production.~~

Ack-ack gunners on the ground are wide awake --- and shooting accurately. We switch to a camera fixed in one of the Hurricanes; the pilot banks and dives and climbs at hundreds of miles an hour.

No Messerschmitts are there to interfere --- so the fighters dive to attack targets on the ground.

~~The ground below is the land of France where Nazis rule: and this is one place where they don't rule the skies.~~

The Blenheims have done their job; <sup>and while</sup> they are returning safely to their bases, ~~but~~ another fighter sweep has come out ground- strafing and shooting up coastal shipping: more of Hitler's war machine is scheduled for a pasting.

Right on the minute once again, bombers and fighters have now reformed to return to their home bases; prim as a schoolgirl crocodile after unloosing hell ~~on the coast.~~

Back over the coastline of Britain --- the ramparts that have guarded the house of freedom for a thousand years; on the loud <sup>at the aerodrome Control</sup> speaker the voice of the returned raiders speaks to the duty officer. All our aircraft returned safely <sup>from</sup> ~~after~~ this operation.

But the job isn't over yet: the all-important report to the Intelligence officer must be made immediately on landing. ~~It's not just the haphazard unloading of explosives and metal; it's an exact science and this its results are carefully tabulated in a masterplan.~~

It's just another day's work in the R.A.F. ~~Just a job to men who were not brought up to want war or to like war, but when the need arose they took on one of the world's greatest jobs because somebody had to do it.~~ They wouldn't expect you to call them a race of heroes; ~~in fact, they'd probably blush if you did.~~ But until someone thinks of a better name --- ~~how will do.~~

*it'll do!*