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LUFTWAFFE'S BLACK MONDAY

The Luftwaffe got the biggest shock of its career just after day break on New Year's Day, in the fiercest air battles since the Battle of Britain. R.A.F. and American Fighters, small arms fire from men of the R.A.F. Regiment and ack ack defences combined to make a kill of well over 300 enemy 'planes - a record for any single day since the war started. This latest slaughter of the German Air Force came when several hundred H.E. 109s, and F.W. 190s, with a few jet 'planes, hedgehopped across the flat countryside to blitz the airfields of the British Second Tactical Air Force in Holland and Belgium.

Make no mistake about it, it was a tough fight while it lasted. As these pictures show, quite a few British aircraft and transport were caught on the ground and the enemy made the most of his tempting target. A number of airfields scattered over a wide area were attacked in a multi-pronged raid planned by the best brains of the Luftwaffe and carried out by their most skilful pilots.

Local fire brigades gave a hand in fighting the fires.

R.A.F. fighter pilots accept the challenge and scramble to their aircraft to give battle in what was to prove the most profitable carve-up of the Luftwaffe.

Shortly before the big attack, U.S. aircraft were busy shooting up enemy fighters in the normal run of duty. These combat shots give some idea how American pilots helped to clip the German raiders in the New Year's Day attack.

At least one Nazi pilot very soon had enough. He jumped for it.

A combat film taken from an R.A.F. Tempest shows another Tempest following a German Air Force fighter going down on fire.

Some of the 'planes shot down, ploughed into buildings and left their trail of wreckage on rooftops, and in rooms and staircases.

An enterprising scrap dealer could have picked up everything from engines to propellers on that day. People on their way to work found the streets littered.

More important than the 'planes was the loss of trained pilots and crews which the Luftwaffe can't replace. Scores of pilots (formation leaders among them) were killed or taken prisoner in our territory. We lost eight aircraft and only six pilots in combat.

Totting up the profit and loss account, the enemy met with a certain amount of success but at enormous cost. The bitter was well and truly bit.

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