

find hard to understand. All this I saw to-day, writes a *Free French Correspondent*, when the Air Ministry gave me special facilities for visiting the station where the first Free French fighter squadron to be formed in Great Britain has now assumed an operational rôle. That rôle is the defence of one of the most vital areas in Scotland.

“Paris” and “Versailles” Flights : 25 Enemy Planes to their Credit

Do not imagine, however, that because this is the first Free French fighter squadron (it has been christened the “Ile de France”) the pilots are all newcomers to the game. Between them, and flying with British units, the pilots of its “Paris” and “Versailles” flights have 25 “official” or “probable” enemy planes to their credit.

Consider Captain X. . . ., one of the two flight commanders. He is a Breton, 29 years old, who has more than 1,000 flying hours to his credit. In the fighting in France he broke his arm and was sent to a coastal hospital under German supervision. In the middle of the night he got up and, with his arm in a sling, walked down to the harbour. There he saw a small tramp steamer. With a minimum of fuss he requisitioned it. He collected some French sailors and asked them to join him, then, in the same cool, unhurried way, proceeded to take from the quay all the coal he would need. In this way he came to England, without a single maritime chart and across water strewn with mines.

Dived Through a Wall of Fire

Captain X. . . . has attacked and damaged thirty-one enemy ships.

He set on fire two seaplanes and a gasometer in Ostend harbour. He is a reticent man who is not over fond of journalists, and the best stories of his exploits came from a colleague.

“We were over Nieuport,” he told me. “The ack-ack was simply terrific. There were at least 50 anti-aircraft batteries as well as innumerable machine guns, all blazing away with everything they had. Did you see “Target for Tonight?” Well, imagine what you saw there multiplied by ten. I tell you, there was a sheer wall of fire.

“Usually, one looks for a gap in the fire through which one can dive on to the objective. This time there was no such gap. But Captain X. . . . didn’t hesitate, he just went slap into it. He did the job and came back again, miraculously unhurt. And then, while I was still trying to get my breath back, he dived down again and repeated the performance!”

Vichy’s Omission

This colleague told me something else. The French authorities were so impressed by Captain X. . . .’s daring escape with a broken arm from a military hospital, that they included the feat in a book entitled “The Fifty Finest Acts of Courage of the War.” The book was published with the approval of the Vichy Government—but, omitted to add that Captain X. . . .’s object in escaping had been to join General de Gaulle!

The second flight commander has also had considerable flying experience. He was in the French Air Force from 1927–30, and served in the Podgha operations preliminary to the operations of Djebel Sagho, in Morocco. He managed to go to America after

the armistice and rejoined General de Gaulle from Canada. He has made seventy-eight operational flights in Britain, of which thirty-five were over France and Belgium,

and has damaged, or set fire to, twenty enemy ships.

Both the flight commanders served previously with the famous “Churchill” Squadron.

THIRD INTER-ALLIED CONFERENCE

Declaration Based on the Hague Convention

When the Inter-Allied Conference was held for the third time, on the 13th January, at St. James’s Palace, nine allied countries were represented. General de Gaulle, M. Maurice Dejean, National Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, M. R. Offroy and M. J. E. Paris represented Free France. The conference was opened by Mr. Anthony Eden, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and was presided over by General Sikorski (Poland).

At the suggestion of the French National Committee, the Allies met to approve and sign the text of the following declaration, which was based on the Hague Convention of 1907, forbidding belligerents in occupied countries to perpetrate acts of violence against civilians, and on the joint declaration made by President Roosevelt and Mr. Winston Churchill :

“Whereas Germany, since the beginning of the present conflict which arose out of her policy of

aggression, has instituted in the occupied countries a régime of terror characterised in particular by imprisonments, mass expulsions, the execution of hostages and massacres.

“And whereas these acts of violence are being similarly perpetrated by the allies and associates of the Reich and, in certain countries, by the accomplices of the occupying Power.

“And whereas international solidarity is necessary in order to avoid the repression of these acts of violence simply by acts of vengeance on the part of the general public, and in order to satisfy the sense of justice of the civilized world.

“Recalling that international law, and in particular the Convention signed at The Hague in 1907 regarding the laws and customs of land warfare, do not permit belligerents in occupied countries to perpetrate acts of



Fourth and third from left :
General de Gaulle and
M. Dejean

violence against civilians, to bring into disrepute the laws in force, or to overthrow national institutions.

"The undersigned Representatives of: The Government of Belgium, the Government of Czechoslovakia, the Free French National Committee, the Government of Greece, the Government of Luxemburg, the Government of the Netherlands, the Government of Norway, the Government of Poland, and the Government of Yugoslavia ;

"(1)—affirm that acts of violence thus perpetrated against the civilian populations are at variance with accepted ideas concerning acts of war and political offences, as these are understood by civilized nations,

"(2)—take note of the declaration made in this respect on 25th October, 1941, by the President of the United States of America and by the British Prime Minister,

"(3)—place amongst their principal war aims the punishment, through the channel of organized justice, of those guilty and responsible for these crimes, whether they have ordered them, perpetrated them, or in any way participated in them,

"(4)—determine in a spirit of international solidarity to see to it that (a) those guilty and responsible, whatever their nationality, are sought for, handed over to justice and judged, (b) that the sentences pronounced are carried out.

"In faith whereof the signatories duly authorized have signed the present declaration."

General de Gaulle's Speech

After General Sikorski had read the declaration, General de Gaulle

made a short speech in which he affirmed Free France's desire to see that the guilty parties who have "succeeded in establishing in Europe a more frightful régime of terror than that installed by the Barbarian hordes at the beginning of the Middle Ages," should not be allowed to evade just punishment. He spoke as follows :—

"The French National Committee approves all the more the Joint Declaration read to us by General Sikorski, since France has been invaded by Germany three times within a period of seventy years, and has therefore suffered thrice in less than a century the atrocities inevitably accompanying all German occupation.

"But, as the strength of the Reich grew, the extent and violence of these atrocities increased. To-day our enemies, by placing all their technique and all their skill at the service of their ferocity, have succeeded in establishing in Europe a more frightful régime of terror than that installed by the Barbarian hordes at the beginning of the Middle Ages.

"In signing this Joint Declaration to-day we mean, like all the representatives of occupied countries, to declare solemnly that Germany alone is responsible for the outbreak of this war and that she shares with her allies and accomplices responsibility for all the atrocities that proceed from it. We demonstrate our firm intention to see to it that all the guilty parties and men who are responsible in any way should not be allowed to evade just punishment as did those of the other war.

"But if it is legitimate and necessary to ensure full punishment for crimes committed, it is quite as legitimate and necessary to take the essential measures so that a renewal of such crimes should be made impossible. We

are certain that the solidarity which unites martyred Europe to-day will continue to manifest itself to-morrow, when our task will consist in ensuring that Germany will never again be in a position to harm the world."

GENERAL DE GAULLE PRAISES RUSSIAN SPIRIT

Broadcast to the French People.

In a radio speech to the French people on the 20th January, General de Gaulle spoke in praise of the magnificent fighting powers of our Russian ally. "This nation of 175 million inhabitants is worthy of greatness," he said, "because it knows how to fight, and because it rose up, armed and organized itself, and because its cohesion remains unshaken by the most dire trials." General de Gaulle also pointed out how much the liberation of the French people was dependent on a Russian victory. Below are extracts from his speech :

"All true Frenchmen acclaim the Russian victory.

"So far as Germany is concerned, the war front in the East to-day is nothing more than snow-covered cemeteries, deplorable trainloads of wounded soldiers, and generals who have met with sudden death. Of course, we do not for a moment suppose that this is the end of the enemy's military strength. But there can be no possible doubt that the Germans have just suffered one of the greatest setbacks in history.

"While the force and prestige of the Germans are tottering, we see the star of Russian

strength rising to its zenith. The world is witness to the fact that this nation of 175 million inhabitants is worthy of greatness because it knows how to fight, that is to say, to suffer and to strike, and because it rose up, armed and organized itself, and because its cohesion remains unshaken by the most dire trials.

"The French people greet the success and ascension of the Russian people with enthusiasm, for now the liberation and vengeance of France have become pleasant probabilities. The death of every German soldier who is killed or frozen in Russia, the destruction of every German gun, plane or tank in the Lenin-grad, Moscow or Sebastopol sectors, gives France yet another chance to rise up again and conquer.

"Suffering France is with suffering Russia. Fighting France is with fighting Russia. France, in the slough of despair, is with Russia, which has been able to climb from the darkness of the pit to the radiance of greatness."

*"La France a perdu une bataille !
Mais la France n'a pas perdu la
guerre."—General de Gaulle.*