The Battle of Britain, 1940

Contribution of Fighter Command

The Fighter Command was divided into a number of groups who were responsible for the defence of a certain area. The groups were lead by various Air -Vices, like 12 Group, led by Air Vice-Marshal Trafford Leigh-Mallory, which was responsible for the Midlands area. When the areas had been 'allocated', these were further divided into sectors containing airfields (in each sector), operations room, repair and maintenance, as well as commanding satelli te-landing grounds, i.e. to refuel. The Fighter Command acted as a defensive network by using the combination of fighter aircraft, radar and ground defences, allowing flexibility. The operating headquarters of Fighter Command was Bentley Priory, where it passed informati on on to the Filter Room on finding out of a possible attack, and so the Group Operations room was alerted, and the commanders would choose which sector would intercept, and the fighter squadrons were also alerted.

Contribution of Radar (Radio Direction Finding)

This was very important to the defence network, as when a new generation of faster, better aircrafts were designed, the British knew that their early warning techniques must improve. This couldn't simply be by flying aircrafts over to send warning s as this was beginning to prove to be too expensive. Due to rapid scientific progress, by 1940, aircrafts flying over 10,000 feet could be detected between 50 -120 miles away. The Germans didn't really recognise the significance of the Radar system and onl y the British really did, as this helped them notify the commanders, and also to send sectors to help. This network allowed Britain to receive raw data about aircrafts and put it to the best possible use.

Contribution of British Fighter Aircraft

Britain had 2 main fighter aircrafts and the rest backed them up (Fighter Command), the aircrafts were the Hurricane and the Spitfire. These new planes, developed for 1940, could reach speeds of 100 miles per hour faster than their predecessors, as well as increased armament. The Hurricane was more advanced in low altitude manoeuvrability, and could withstand a lot of damage from the enemy aircrafts. The Spitfire was very similar to the Messerschmitt 109, however the latter had better high altitude manoeuvrability. However these English machines were enhanced before the war, with new propellers etc. Although there were more Hurricanes than Spitfires, both played their parts in the battle with the Fighter Command, leading to an English victory.

Contribution of Ground Defences

The ground defences consisted of the Observer Corps, anti aircraft guns, balloons and searchlights. He Observer Corps dealt with the inland tracking of German aircrafts. Also they helped to man many posts when the actual war broke out, The Anti-Aircraft Command, set up in 1939 pr otected aircraft factories, airfields, ports, naval bases and industrial areas, however the factories were the most important. Searchlights were used to report German aircraft activity back to the guns operations room. Balloons were used to try and force German aircrafts to fly at higher altitudes so bombing accuracy was minimised and that heavy aircraft accuracy was increased. These balloons were particularly accurate against dive bombers.