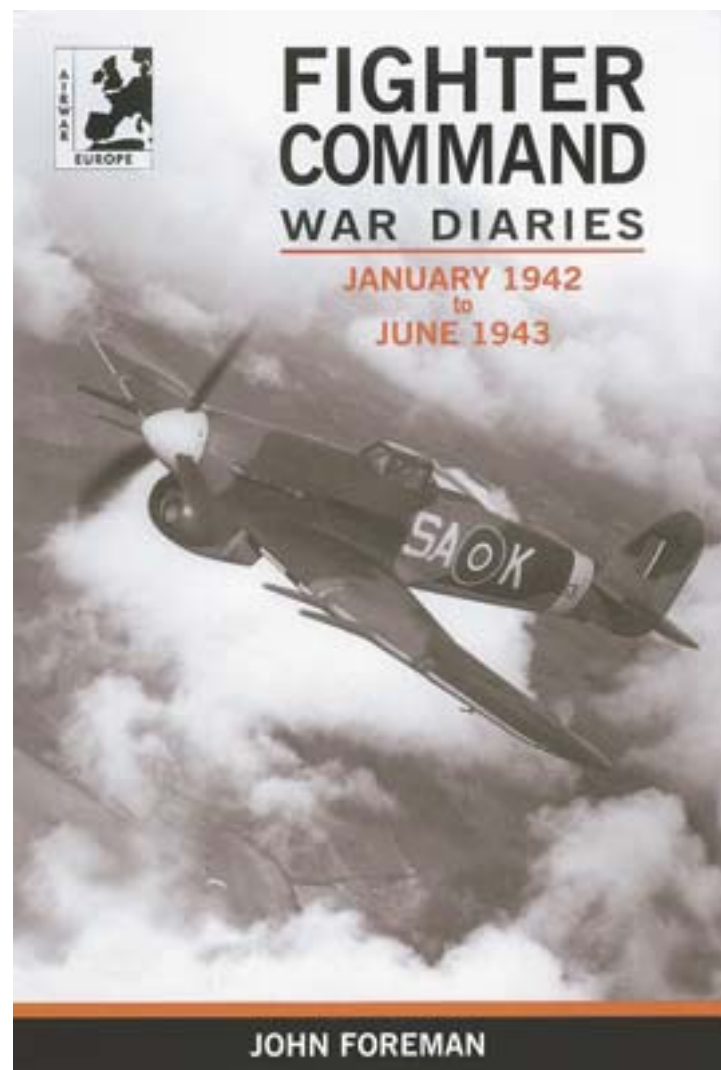


FIGHTER COMMAND - WAR DIARIES JANUARY 1942 TO JUNE 1943

John Foreman

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The third volume in this continuing series shows Fighter Command in its darkest hour. The introduction of the Focke Wulf 190 in the autumn of 1941 had come as a terrible shock to Fighter Command pilots. The Spitfire V, which had enjoyed parity if not outright supremacy over the Messerschmitt Bf109F was, at a stroke, completely outclassed. Professor Kurt Tank's new design was faster and more heavily armed than the Spitfire and the British losses soon became almost unsupportable. In mid-1942 the new Spitfire IXb began to enter service, but painfully slowly. Thus the majority of Fighter Command single-seat fighter pilots were obliged to carry on with the older version. The older Hurricane was still being used, but its usefulness as a pure fighter had gone. Instead, it was increasingly being used as a fighter-bomber, with bombs and later, rockets. But for this wonderful workhorse, *'the writing was on the wall'*. The new Typhoon, fast, heavily armed, was a purpose built assault aircraft and would supplant its older stable mate.

The year of 1942 was, perhaps, a time to match the sheer valour demonstrated during 1940. Dogged determination and courage saw them through into 1943 and, as the newer fighters arrived, so the carnage over France, Belgium and Holland began to diminish. 1942 was also the beginning of the great alliance between the British and the Americans, for the US 8th Army Air Force began to arrive later in the year. At first a trickle, but mounting into a veritable torrent, the combined forces were eventually to sweep the Germans from the skies.

The beginnings of this partnership were seen in 1943.

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