

“Steel and Fire”

In the pre-dawn hours of September 1, 1939, the Nazis unleashed a new type of mechanized warfare — the *blitzkrieg* (lightning war) — on ill-prepared Poland!

Never in the history of warfare had anything comparable been hurled at any nation. The sheer speed and destructive capacity of the Nazi *blitzkrieg* was stunning. Fifty-six German divisions (nine of them armored) sped toward Warsaw, Cracow, Lvov, and Bialystok — commanded by a galaxy of brilliant German generals: Guderian, Von Kluge, Von Bock, Von Reichenau, Von Kuchler, and Siegmund Wilhelm List.

Fifteen hundred *Luftwaffe* planes, including the dreaded Stuka dive bombers, smashed Polish airfields, railways, communications, military installations, and terrorized Polish cities.

Polish forces, under the command of General Marshal Edward Smigly-Rydz, fought bravely, but their out-dated infantry, lancers and armor proved useless against the world's mightiest phalanx of steel and fire. The Polish forces were squashed like a fragile egg in one gigantic Nazi pincer movement.

The Polish forces were adequate in number, but not in training, equipment, or in officers. Poland could eventually have mustered two and a half million men, but Hitler's *blitzkrieg* didn't allow her enough time to muster her forces. Its army had very few armored and motorized divisions, and was short of anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns.

Horses Against Machines

The pride of the Polish forces was their cavalry. Brave Polish cavalry actually charged German panzers. But men on horses of flesh can't stop men riding horses of steel — in tanks and armored vehicles. Horsed cavalry proved a woefully inadequate defense against the new technology of destructive, mechanized death administered by the Nazi *blitzkrieg*.

After only two days of fighting, the German forces had sealed off the Polish Corridor and were converging on the cities of Lodz and Cracow. By September 6, Cracow (the old imperial capital) had fallen, and the Polish army was in retreat. On September 8, the German *blitzkrieg* reached the outskirts of Warsaw.

The sheer speed of the German thrusts through Poland caught the Poles completely off guard. By the end of the second week of fighting, the Polish army had simply ceased to exist as an organized force. Many had been killed, and countless thousands were taken prisoners.

Russia Attacks Poland

Then on September 17, as the Germans pressed their attack against Warsaw, and as the remnants of the Polish army retreated toward the southeast, Russian forces treacherously struck across Poland's eastern border. Their shameful attack sealed Poland's fate. She was caught in the vice grip of two mighty armies, and her defenses had already been hopelessly shattered by the lightning German attack.

Shortly after Russia attacked Poland, the Polish Ambassador in Moscow was handed a note of explanation: "A Polish state no longer exists," said the note, and the Red army was moving in to "protect White Russian and Ukranian minorities in Poland."

The German *Luftwaffe* proved to be an highly organized and very effective instrument of war in the Polish invasion. It knocked out railways, vital communication centers, airfields (catching the Polish Air Force on the ground, and destroying most of their planes), and other nerve centers. And it terrorized Polish cities.

Even though General Von Rundstedt reached the outskirts of Warsaw on September 8, the inhabitants put up such a stiff resistance in their defense of the city that it was not captured until the 27th.

Hitler — "Act Brutally!"

Before Hitler's Nazi army was unleashed on Poland, Der Führer ordered German soldiers to show no mercy: "*Close your hearts to pity! Act brutally!* Eighty million Germans must obtain what is their right!" said Hitler.

The Russians had been surprised by the lightning speed of the German advance across Poland. The Polish army was on the verge of collapsing when Russia decided to enter the war.

On September 17, the Russians and Germans had agreed on the text of a joint communiqué which would be issued explaining the Russian action. It said that the joint aim of the Soviet Union and Germany was "to *restore peace and order* in Poland, which has been destroyed by the disintegration of the Polish state, and to help the Polish people to establish new conditions for its political life."

The Russians and Germans had previously agreed to partition Poland. Russia would receive about 75,000 square miles of Poland, and Germany would take approximately 71,000 square miles.

How great were the casualties of the German invasion of Poland? The Nazis admitted having lost 10,572 killed, but claimed to have taken 450,000 Polish prisoners. The Soviets suffered almost no casualties or losses.

France and Britain Declare War

Russo-German treachery had destroyed Poland. In the process they had unleashed the world's most devastating war.

Even though the German *blitzkrieg* attack on Poland began on September 1st, Britain and France didn't declare war on Germany until September 3rd. There was actually nothing they could now do to help their Polish ally — except offer *moral aid and comfort!* Both Britain and France were waking up from their long slumber. Disgraceful appeasement had brought them both shame and war. They now knew that Hitler's appetite was insatiable.

The "Sitzkrieg"

For nine long, suspenseful months after the fall of Poland in September, 1939, the Germans and Allies fought no important battles.

During this time, the French dug in behind their "impregnable" *Maginot Line*, and the German army sat complacently behind their *Siegfried Line* — awaiting orders for the next attack.

During this time of inaction, each side strengthened its military position, conducted small raids, took aerial photographs — and simply waited. This period of "*Sitzkrieg*" (sit-down-war) became known as the "Phony War."

What would be Hitler's next move? Where would he attack next? Nobody knew, but all of Germany's neighbors braced themselves.

Hitler's next military exercise was code named "*Weseruebung*" or "*Weser Exercise*." This invasion was the brainchild of the Navy. The German Navy had long coveted the north — thinking Germany needed bases in Norway to forestall a British blockade (which had helped strangle Germany during World War I). The Germans did not want to see their Navy again bottled up in the North Sea.

Also, Norway's bases would be vital in protecting vessels carrying shipments of precious Swedish iron ore, on which Germany's very existence depended.

Hitler became convinced of the vital necessity of protecting Germany's iron ore supply from Scandinavia — and accordingly he gave the green light to the planned invasion. Norway and Denmark were both added to Hitler's list of intended victims. The *Luftwaffe* had its eyes on Danish bases which it could use in raids against Britain.

Attack on Norway and Denmark

At precisely one hour before dawn on the morning of April 9, 1940, German envoys in Copenhagen and Oslo presented their ultimatum to the Danish and Norwegian governments — demanding that they instantly accept (without resistance) the “protection of the Reich.”

Denmark was in an utterly hopeless position. The Danes’ flat, pleasant little country was totally incapable of any effective defense against Hitler’s panzers.

Even so, the Danish army fought a few brief skirmishes, but by the time the Danes had finished their breakfasts, it was all over. Denmark had been conquered by the Nazis. The Danish King, on government advice, capitulated and ordered resistance to cease.

In Norway, things went a little differently. The Germans quickly took over the five principal cities and ports and the one big airfield. But King Haakon VII refused to surrender. He went into exile, and loathed the treachery of Vidkun Quisling, who had sold out to the Germans.

As the Nazis rolled over Denmark and Norway, the Allies were unable to give the Scandinavians any meaningful military assistance. Britain tried to do what she could, but her help was mainly in the form of naval assistance. The Royal Navy seriously crippled the German navy during the Nazi invasion of Denmark and Norway. German naval losses were heavy: 10 destroyers, 2 battle cruisers and 1 pocket battleship were damaged so severely that they were out of action for several months. After Hitler’s *blitzkrieg* against Scandinavia, the Führer had no fleet worthy of mention, and this German naval impotence would prove to be a very serious handicap when the time came for him to invade Britain.

Even though Britain and France had sent troops to Norway, they were unable to furnish any adequate support. The Germans continued gaining strength — particularly in airpower — and finally succeeded in driving the Allied forces from Norway in June, 1940.

This Allied defeat was soon to have far-reaching repercussions in Britain — and would bring to the helm of the British government World War II’s most talented leader — Winston S. Churchill.

After the fall of Denmark and Norway, Britain and France braced themselves for the final Nazi onslaught against Western Europe which they believed would soon come. And they were not to wait too long.

“Man of the Century”

Many have called Winston S. Churchill the “man of the century.” He was truly a many-sided genius who excelled in numerous fields, and showed great brilliance.

Winston S. Churchill (1874-1965) was born into an illustrious family

and educated at Harrow and Sandhurst. He served in Cuba with Spanish forces (1895), in India (1897), in the Sudan (1898), and was present at Khartoum, and with the Nile Expeditionary Force, where he fought hand-to-hand with the Dervishes at Omdurman in 1898. Churchill was a war correspondent in the Boer War, was captured and escaped, and engaged in various battles up till the capture of Pretoria. When Churchill returned to England, he had become somewhat of a national hero.

In 1900 he became a Conservative M.P., and subsequently served in many government posts: President of the Board of Trade (1908 to 1910), Home Secretary (1910-11), First Lord of the Admiralty (1911). In 1915 he was made scapegoat for the Dardanelles disaster (where Allied troops were slaughtered by the Turks at Gallipoli). After that military fiasco, he joined the Army in France. In 1917, he became Prime Minister Lloyd George's Minister of Munitions, and the development and production of Britain's first tanks was primarily his brainchild.

From 1919 to 1921, Churchill was Secretary of State for War. He then served as Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1924 to 1929. Churchill's sparetime occupations ranged from bricklaying to editing, and he became a good painter.

The Gathering Storm Clouds

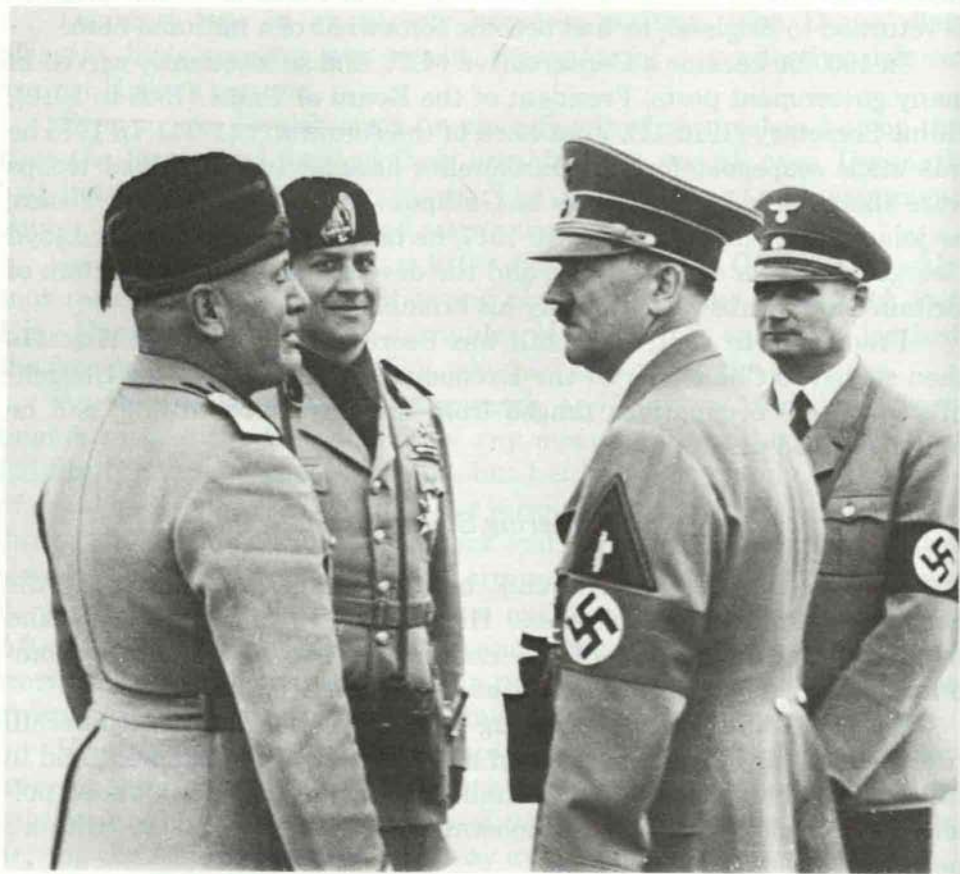
During the Thirties Churchill became increasingly angry at the British Government's supineness. He loathed Britain's cowardly and inept conduct in the face of the rising catalogue of aggressions committed by the up-start dictators, Mussolini and Hitler.

Almost from the very beginning of Hitler's rise to power, Churchill regarded him as evil and as a world menace. Both in Parliament and in his writings, he thundered and fulminated against the weak-kneed policies of *appeasement*, and he constantly spoke out against Britain's neglect of her national defenses.

Churchill didn't have a very high regard for Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. He once said that Chamberlain "looked at foreign affairs through the wrong end of a municipal drainpipe."

When Chamberlain returned from the Munich Conference, waving his piece of paper, proclaiming "Peace with honor, peace in our time," Churchill wasn't impressed. He denounced Chamberlain's Munich Pact as "a total and unmitigated defeat!" Furthermore, he told the British, "You have gained *shame*, and you shall get *war*." Black, angry storm clouds of war were at that very moment gathering over the continent of Europe.

What kind of a man was Churchill? He was a man of action, and lived every moment of life to the fullest. Even during Britain's darkest days, he remained cheerful, confident of the ultimate victory for the island people, and their Allies.



Hitler and his junior partner, Benito Mussolini, made strange bedfellows. Churchill called Hitler a "ferocious maniac," and referred to Mussolini as a "whipped jackal." Rudolf Hess is on Hitler's right. Hess later flew to Britain in a vain attempt to get Britain and Germany together. — *Wide World Photo*

Even in the face of national catastrophe, Churchill remained cheerful — retained a mischievous twinkle in his eye. Churchill's wit and humor are well-known. Once, after a rather heated exchange in Parliament, a woman M.P. — who was more noted for her strong-willed independent mind than for her beauty — turned on Churchill: "Mr. Churchill, you're drunk." "And you, madam," replied an irritated Churchill, "are ugly. But I shall be sober tomorrow."

Churchill made many enemies. He did not like to work with committees. He loathed sipping tea, while conducting endless discussions and debates about trivia. He wanted to get on with doing the job.

Churchill In Limbo

Churchill tended to the political right, and because of his outspokenness, he was in political limbo for a decade. But when the chips were down, and when Britain faced the darkest hour of her long history, the British people knew to whom they should turn. They knew Churchill to be a man of ability, of education, of courage and conviction. They also knew he was a man of action — a man who could get things done! With his tremendous sense of humor, his indomitable will and his bull-dog determination, he, more than any other man, could inspire the nation and lead it to ultimate victory.

On the very day that Chamberlain declared war on Nazi Germany (September 3, 1939), he appointed Winston S. Churchill First Lord of the Admiralty.

During the eight months of "Sitzkrieg" (Sit-down War or "Phony War") Britain remained confused and torpid.

But when the Nazis invaded The Netherlands, in May, 1940, all Britain at last woke up. They realized war was on their very doorstep. Prime Minister Chamberlain immediately resigned after Hitler invaded Holland, and Churchill was asked to form a coalition government.

Churchill was then sixty-six (about the age when most men are winding up their careers), but he was on the threshold of his most demanding and glorious period of accomplishment. He had proven himself a capable writer, and he possessed formidable oratorical powers. He was able to galvanize British resistance, and to inspire the nation to tighten its belt, to work and pray for the victory which then looked rather remote and illusive. When Churchill took office, Hitler bestrode the continent of Europe like a maniacal colossus. He cast his giant Nazi shadow over most of the continent.

Britain stood utterly alone! She needed a man of vision, of courage, a man of iron-willed determination. And Providence had supplied just such a man in Winston S. Churchill.

Nazis Attack France

The *Sitzkrieg* had continued for eight months. Then in a series of lightning moves Hitler's *Wehrmacht* quickly overran Denmark and Norway in April, 1940. The British and French knew Hitler would soon direct the spearhead thrust of his panzers at the very heart of France.

The order to unleash the German war machine against western Europe was given on May 10, 1940. On that morning, German troops swarmed into Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.

The Allies foolishly assumed the Germans would use the same maneuver they had tried in World War I. Instead, the Nazi war machine, using armored units, paratroops and dive bombers, struck at Luxembourg and the heavily wooded Ardennes Forest.

Three Nazi Spearheads

Hitler sent three spearheads into Western Europe the morning of May 10th, 1940 — commanded by Generals Von Bock, Von Leeb and Von Rundstedt.

The German *blitzkrieg* against The Netherlands lasted only four days. Nazi paratroops did most of the work, while the *Luftwaffe* attacked military installations and airbases. The German attack had begun on May 10. By the 14th, it was all over! Holland realized Allied assistance was not going to be able to save her from certain conquest at the hands of Hitler's invincible, and merciless *blitzkrieg*. The Netherlands quickly sued for peace.

After the fall of Holland, the Nazis were free to direct their military might against the Belgians, and then attack France through the Ardennes. Belgian forces were quickly overcome. By the second morning of the invasion (May 11, 1940) a general retreat was ordered. At this same time British and French reinforcements arrived. But this was just what the Germans wanted.

The Nazis hoped that British and French forces would rush to the aid of Belgium — leaving France quite exposed to the Nazi onslaught!

By the tactical error of throwing their best forces into the fight in Belgium, the Allies left the Germans free to launch their attack through the Ardennes, with the sure knowledge that by the time the Allied forces could be redeployed against them, their own panzer units would be well on the way to the Channel coast.

As German Army Group B pushed rapidly into northern Belgium, diverting the attention of 36 Allied divisions, Army Group A traversed the Ardennes, and crossed the French frontier on May 14th — the very same day the Dutch surrender was accepted.

Nazi Trap Almost Closes

Nazi troops met little resistance from the weak French units guarding the sector between the end of the Maginot Line and central Belgium. German panzer units quickly broke through their defenses and headed straight toward the coast. Generals Guderian, Reinhard and Hoth raced westward. By May 20 Guderian's units reached the Channel. Then they turned northward, and struck out for the important ports through which any Allied forces would have to be evacuated — if they were to avert total disaster.

At this moment, the situation looked very bleak for the Allies.

The swift-moving German forces had established a wedge of steel and fire between the British and French forces in Belgium and the remnants of the French Army in France.

What were the Allies to do? Whatever they did had to be done quickly or their forces would be annihilated by the German panzer units, already poised for the kill.

After the Belgians and Dutch had hastily surrendered to the advancing might of the German army, the British Expeditionary Force suddenly found itself in a very precarious position. They were cut off from the French forces in France, and their only route of escape was quickly being blocked. The Germans were almost ready to close their trap on the Allied forces.

Though the British forces tried to break through the German wedge to link up with the French forces to the south, they were unable to do so. The German lines held firm. Now the Allied forces (British, Belgian and some of the French units) knew they were in immediate peril of being surrounded and cut off.

Hitler's Strange Order

Now German forces were between the Allies and the coast. What then suddenly developed has baffled historians ever since. Why did Herr Hitler fail to let the German army quickly move in for the final kill?

What caused Hitler to hesitate when "certain victory" lay within his grasp? His forces were now ready to annihilate the Allies, as their swift-moving panzers surged forward to enclose the Allies.

As General Guderain's panzers rushed north, Von Rundstedt's panzer forces were racing southward from Belgium, and it looked as if they would certainly be able to entrap the Allied forces and prevent them from reaching Dunkirk on the coast. Their forces were closer to that port city than were the Allies. There was nothing to stop them from closing the jaws of their gigantic trap of steel and fire — nothing to prevent them from cutting the Allies off from Dunkirk. Had they closed

their panzer trap, *evacuation* of the Allied Expeditionary forces *would have been impossible!*

At this point in history, Hitler issued one of his strangest orders. He ordered his general to halt their race to entrap the Allies at Dunkirk. As a result, the Allied armies safely reached Dunkirk right under the muzzles of the German big guns.

Hitler ordered: "Dunkirk is to be left to the Luftwaffe." Later reports explained this strange order as the direct result of the fat ego of Goering who wanted the glory to go to the *Luftwaffe*. Hitler acquiesced to Goering's wish, thus permitting the Allies to escape certain death at his hands.

Fog-and-Cloud Cover

Then another strange incident occurred. As the German generals sat helplessly near Dunkirk — ostensibly waiting for Goering's *Luftwaffe* to destroy their enemy — a suffocating fog closed in. The English channel became calm — so calm that the smallest boats could sail on it without risk of being capsized.

On May 26th, the day the Belgians surrendered, the British War Cabinet gave the order for "Operation Dynamo" (the evacuation of Dunkirk) to go into immediate effect.

While Allied forces raced toward Dunkirk, the British government had organized one of the largest and oddest assortment of boats the world has ever known — for the purpose of evacuating as many of the Allied troops as possible. This motley flotilla of nearly 1000 boats saved the Allies from total defeat!

There were over 400,000 Allied soldiers bottled up in Dunkirk, and it was hoped that perhaps 30,000 of these could be evacuated before the Germans closed in, making further evacuation impossible.

But Hitler's strange order — his fatal hesitation — saved the day. The Germans didn't realize what was happening, and did not, therefore, attack the Allied troops being evacuated until May 29th.

"The Miracle of Dunkirk"

Never in the history of the world did such a motley assortment of boats and ships carry out such an operation. Various Royal Navy ships, cruisers, destroyers, ocean liners, private boats of every type and description, including motor boats and even row boats, were used in this gigantic evacuation.

In fact, most anything which would float was used in this strange rescue mission which occurred right under the very noses of the Nazis —

right under the muzzles of their big guns — and right under the shadow of the *Luftwaffe*.

This bizarre flotilla of vessels constantly shuttled back and forth from Dunkirk to English ports carrying so many men that the boats were sometimes in jeopardy of sinking. Meanwhile a protective umbrella of dense fog prevented the German Air Force from doing nearly as much damage as it otherwise would have been able to do.

This unique evacuation continued from May 26th to June 4th, when it finally became impossible to evacuate safely any more Allied soldiers. By this time, approximately 340,000 British, French and Belgian troops had been evacuated and safely landed in Britain. Many of them would live to fight and help bring the Third Reich crashing down in defeat only a few years later.

This evacuation of over a third of a million Allied soldiers from Dunkirk — right from under the Nazis' noses — has ever since that day been referred to as the "Miracle of Dunkirk."

When Hitler and his generals finally woke up and realized what was happening, when Hitler became convinced that Goering's *Luftwaffe* was not going to be able to stop the Allied evacuation, it was *too late* to prevent what was in fact already a *fait accompli*. The mass evacuation of the Allied soldiers in Britain's "Mosquito Armada" was just about over. The Allies, thanks to Hitler's strange order which halted the German generals, had been able to set up a fairly defensive ring around Dunkirk — a strong enough defense to hold the Germans off (once the Nazis decided to resume their attack) until most of the Allied soldiers had been evacuated from Dunkirk.

Another factor in the final evacuation of the Allied troops at Dunkirk was the superb skill and gallantry which the Royal Air Force displayed. During the air battle at Dunkirk they were outnumbered by four or five to one, but were able to inflict heavy damage on the *Luftwaffe*, and destroy more planes than they lost. This brilliant R.A.F. victory caused the Germans to realize that they had a formidable enemy to overcome. The Royal Air Force would be difficult to defeat.

"My Hands Were Tied"

It was Field Marshal von Rundstedt's Army Group A which held the Allied troops, as sitting ducks, in his grasp. Von Rundstedt later complained:

If I had had my way the English would not have got off so lightly at Dunkirk. But *my hands were tied* by direct orders from Hitler himself. While the English were clambering into the ships off the beaches, I was kept uselessly outside the port unable to move. I recommended to the Supreme Command that my five panzer divisions be immediately sent



Hermann Goering, corpulent, vain, ostentatious, served as chief of the Luftwaffe during World War II. Goering boasted that he would destroy the RAF in just a few days, but his vanity was punctured during the Battle of Britain by the gallant British pilots.

into the town and thereby completely destroy the retreating English. But I received definite orders from the Führer that under no circumstances was I to attack. . . .

And he added:

The bad weather has grounded the *Luftwaffe* and we must now stand by and watch countless thousands of the enemy get away to England right under our noses!

By why did Hitler order von Rundstedt to halt his advance?

The Führer apparently feared the possible cost to his straining tanks — if they effected a direct ground assault over difficult terrain, while the French armies to the south hadn't yet been destroyed.

Hitler also overrated the destructive power of air bombardment. He let Goering persuade him that it would be better to let the glory go to the German *Luftwaffe*, than to the German generals — some of whom were not members of the Nazi party.

And, apparently, Hitler entertained the silly notion that if he didn't annihilate the British army at Dunkirk he could better negotiate a peace with Britain. At that time, Hitler nurtured the vain idea of total victory. It never even occurred to him that he might eventually lose the war.

Many have since asked if the calm, overcast weather and the strange order, given by the Führer himself, for the German panzers to halt their attacks, was just an *accident*, or did some Guiding Hand "interfere" (to use Churchill's wording) to make sure that the Allied forces were not annihilated at Dunkirk?

Few will now deny that the entire course of World War II would have been drastically altered had the Allied troops hopelessly at bay at Dunkirk been killed or captured.

Hitler Hesitates

Even after over a third of a million Allied troops had been evacuated to England, Hitler failed to follow up on his strategic advantage when Britain lay virtually open to his Nazi forces. Why did Hitler hesitate to invade England? Hadn't British troops left all their military hardware on the beaches at Dunkirk?

After the Dunkirk evacuation, the British were still at the mercy of Hitler. But somehow, he appears to have been totally blind to this fact.

Was he fearful that the Royal Navy, still having command of the seas, would annihilate his forces if he tried to conquer their island home after Dunkirk?

Later reports revealed that Britain only had about one hundred tanks at this time, and since she had sent most of her elite divisions to

the Continent before Dunkirk, she only had two or three poorly-equipped divisions ready for battle in Britain. Such a pitifully small handful of men would not have been able to defend their nation against a merciless Nazi onslaught.

The German Army could field forty-five assault divisions, ready for "Operation Sea Lion" had they decided to go ahead with the attack. And many others were ready to follow up the invasion. What could a few divisions of poorly equipped British troops have done against such overwhelming odds?

Perhaps even German paratroops could have conquered Britain, if they had been supported closely by the numerically superior German *Luftwaffe* — which then outnumbered the R.A.F. three or four to one!

The United States was then completely unprepared for war, and could not have given sufficient help quickly enough to prevent Britain falling before an all-out Nazi invasion.

But Hitler was uncertain! Confused! He felt unsure of himself. Hermann Goering convinced the Führer that Germany must attain air superiority over Britain before she could launch a successful invasion against the British.

What was the Nazi main military aim? They determined to break the back of the Royal Air Force, then launch their "Operation Sea Lion" against an impotent enemy, who had virtually no army, and a shattered air force.

The Fall of France

The Germans launched their new offensive against France on June 5th. In only four days, the French army was in hopeless retreat. About this time the strutting Mussolini, seeing Hitler's phenomenal success, decided it was time for him to get in on the spoils of victory. He, therefore, declared war on Britain and France on June 10th. But the Italian army proved to be militarily inept, and did little except invade a small part of the coast of southern France, although this Italian offensive did tie down some of France's best troops, and prevented them being used against Hitler in the north of France.

President Roosevelt denounced Mussolini's attack on France: "The hand that held the dagger has struck it into the back of its neighbor."

Mussolini's son-in-law, Ciano (whom Il Duce later had shot) wrote in his diary: "I am sad, very sad. The adventure begins. *May God help Italy.*"

Some time later (after Mussolini attacked Greece), Churchill revealed his contempt for Il Duce:

Here surely is the world's record in the domain of the ridiculous and the contemptible. This whipped jackal, Mussolini, who to save his own skin has made all Italy a vassal state of Hitler's empire, comes frisking up to the side of the German tiger with yelpings, not only of appetite — that could be understood — but even of triumph.

The German onslaught against France, like previous Nazi invasions, proved unstoppable. By June 14th, German units entered Paris. Other units pierced the Maginot Line from Germany two days later.

This smashing German victory caused a major split in the government of France. Patriotic Frenchmen wanted to move their government to North Africa and continue their struggle against Hitler. Others were ready to *capitulate!*

Churchill offered to unite Britain with France under a single unified government — if the French would continue the struggle. But the demoralized French refused his offer.

Hitler's Revenge

The aging, tired Premier Henri Philippe Petain decided to surrender to the Nazis. Accordingly, France signed a humiliating armistice with Germany on June 22nd. Hitler used this occasion to get gratifying revenge against the French for the humiliating armistice which Germany had had to sign in 1918.

Hitler insisted that the French would have to sign their armistice on the same spot, in the forest at Compiègne, and in the same old railway car which was used for the 1918 signing.

Adolf Hitler arrived at Compiègne in his big, black Mercedes at precisely 3:15 p.m. His face was grave, solemn, yet brimming with bitter *revenge!* It was clear that he was receiving immense satisfaction from this triumphant occasion — a scornful inner joy at being able to take part in this reversal of fate.

The pompous Hitler, followed by a clutch of officers, strode up to a large granite block and read the inscription engraved (in French) in high letters: "HERE ON THE ELEVENTH OF NOVEMBER 1918 SUCCUMBED THE CRIMINAL PRIDE OF THE GERMAN EMPIRE — VANQUISHED BY THE FREE PEOPLES WHICH IT TRIED TO ENSLAVE."

Both Hitler and Goering read the inscription. Hitler's face was filled with scorn, anger, hate, revenge and triumph. Later, Hitler glanced back at the granite block with contemptuous anger. His glances and his sweeping gestures were indicative of his desire to erase the words on the granite block with a single sweep of his high Prussian boot. Hitler had come to even the score with Germany's old enemy, France. Hitler and Goering stood to attention, gloating, while the Chief of his Supreme Command, General Wilhelm Keitel, read the conditions of armistice to the waiting, humiliated, French delegation. Hitler didn't wait for the

ceremonies to end, but he, Goering, Hess, von Ribbentrop, and a strut of Nazi officers left — while the band played “*Deutschland Uber Alles*”.

Hitler then divided France into two zones. Germany occupied northern and western France, and set up the Vichy government under Petain in southern France.

Many thousands of Frenchmen fled to North Africa and Britain so they could continue the fight against the Nazis. Brigadier General Charles de Gaulle became the leader of a Free France movement, headquartered in London. Churchill later remarked of De Gaulle, who often irritated him: “The heaviest cross I have to bear is the Cross of Lorraine.”

Hitler now controlled most of Europe from Scandinavia in the North to Bordeaux, France in the South. The German boot was firmly, oppressively planted over this part of the globe, and the high boot of Nazism would continue to cast its dark shadow over Europe for another five years.

Britain All Alone

Now, Britain realized she stood totally *alone*! Germany had allied herself with Russia in a non-aggression pact a few days before invading Poland in September, 1939. Hitler now stood astride the continent of Europe, and plotted the invasion of England. But Britain was hopelessly unprepared for such an attack. True, the cream of her army was now back in England (having narrowly escaped annihilation at Dunkirk), but they had to leave all their weapons behind on the beaches at Dunkirk. The British possessed few weapons with which to fight the Nazis at that dark hour in their history. And their Royal Air Force was about one-third the size of the *Luftwaffe*, and her pilots were not so experienced as the Germans.

What would Britain do? Hitler thought the British would not be so foolish as to even try to continue the struggle. He vainly hoped they would see reality, and he believed it would be just a matter of time until they came to their senses and sued for peace — as the Poles, the Danes, the Norwegians, the Dutch, Belgians, Luxembourgers and the French had all done!

Now, Britons realized what it meant to be *alone*. Even well-meaning Americans and members of the Commonwealth of Nations were at that time totally unable to give Britain any meaningful assistance.

The British Lion

Churchill gave a birthday speech in 1954, and he looked back modestly on his role as Britain’s Prime Minister during her terrible struggle with Nazism. He said:

I have never accepted what many people have kindly said, namely that I inspired the nation. Their will was resolute and remorseless, and as it proved, unconquerable. . . . It was the nation and the race dwelling all around the globe that had the lion's heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar!

But no one who knew Churchill doubted that this stout-hearted lion did much to give Britons courage, hope and inspiration — especially during the dark days when invasion seemed imminent.

“Some Chicken!”

On May 15, 1940, the new French Premier, Paul Reynaud phoned Churchill and told him: “We have been defeated! We are beaten.”

The Prime Minister found it hard to believe. Churchill later wrote: “I did not comprehend the violence of the revolution effected since the last war by the incursion of a mass of fast-moving armor.”

Churchill had tried to get the French to continue the fight rather than surrender to the Germans. Speaking before the Canadian Parliament in 1942, Churchill said:

When I warned them (the French) that Britain would fight on alone, their generals told their Prime Minister and his divided Cabinet: ‘In three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken!’ Some chicken! Some neck!

But the French generals were still doubtful about Britain's ability to withstand the Nazi onslaught. So they asked Churchill how England would be able to hold out. Churchill replied:

So I said that of course I was not a military expert and I was always very careful in not meddling in these sort of questions, but that my professional advisers told me that the best way to deal with such an invasion would be to drown as many as possible on the way over, and knock the rest on the head as they crawled ashore.

There can be no doubt that the stout-hearted Churchill intended to do everything within his power to stir up the British nation to resist Hitler with everything they could lay their hands on.

“We Shall Fight”

As Britain braced herself for the expected Nazi assault on their island home, Churchill spoke to the British people over the radio — and urged them to fight with everything they had — should Hitler dare attack them. At that dark hour, Churchill assured his fellow countrymen:

We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; *we shall never surrender!*

Then, giving vent to his usual humor, the Prime Minister covered up the microphone with his hand and added: "And if we can't do that we'll hit them on the head with bottles."

The Battle of Britain

Hitler had run roughshod over all the nations of northwest Europe — except Britain! Now his mighty panzers were perched menacingly across the English Channel — just waiting the final order to invade England. It looked as though the English were about to be doomed to the same certain, swift fate which had so quickly, and so relentlessly, overtaken Poland, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Luxembourg, Belgium and France.

But, from Hitler's point of view, there were two disturbing facts. His German naval forces had been badly mauled by the Royal Navy during the attack on Norway in May, 1940. Secondly, it was unclear whether or not the *Luftwaffe* would be able to master the Royal Air Force.

Goering apparently finally convinced Hitler that the *Luftwaffe* should be able to destroy the R.A.F. in short fashion.

Hitler had boasted he would march into London in two more months — after the fall of France! His High Command were ordered to plan an invasion of the British Isles, called Operation Sea Lion. All the while, a deluded Hitler still secretly hoped Britain would surrender without the Führer having to use his panzer persuaders.

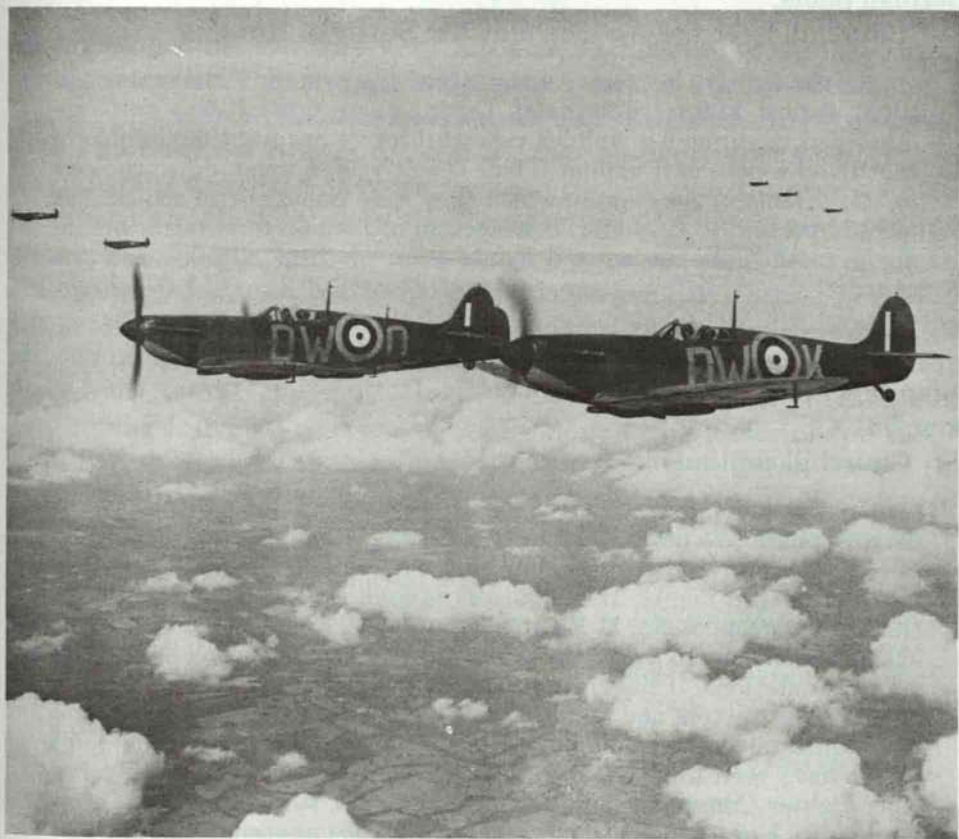
It was on July 10, 1940 that the German *Luftwaffe* began blasting British airfields, sector control centers, radar stations, and aircraft factories. The *Battle of Britain* (called "Operation Eagle" by the Germans) had begun. Hitler planned to knock out the Royal Air Force, and so cripple their communications that the British would be utterly unable to continue the air battle over Britain.

On June 4th, Churchill had told the British Parliament:

The great French Army was very largely for the time being, cast back and destroyed by the onrush of a few thousand armored vehicles. May it not also be that the cause of civilization itself will be defended by the skill and devotion of *a few thousand airmen?*

German planes outnumbered the British about three to one. Churchill later wrote:

By August the *Luftwaffe* had gathered 2669 operational aircraft, comprising 1015 bombers, 346 dive bombers, 933 fighters and 375 heavy



British Spitfires patrol the skies over England, ready to take on the fury of Hermann Goering's Luftwaffe.

fighters. The Führer's Directive No. 17 authorized the intensified air war against England on August 5.

Luftwaffe planes were faster, and had a quicker rate of climb, but British planes were more maneuverable and better armed. Furthermore, British pilots fought over their home territory, and therefore had a great strategic and psychological advantage. They were *fighting to defend their island home*, and were intensely more determined than were the German pilots.

Churchill later wrote concerning the Battle of Britain:

In the fighting between August 24 and September 6, the scales had tilted against Fighter Command. During these crucial days the Germans had continuously applied powerful forces against the airfields of south and southeast England. Their object was to break down the day fighter defense of the capital, which they were impatient to attack. Far more important to us than the protection of London from terror bombing were the functioning and articulation of these airfields and the squadrons working from them.

Britain knew that it must not let the Germans knock out its communications centers and airfields. If they lost these, they were doomed!

Churchill continued:

In the life-and-death struggle of the two air forces, this was a decisive phase. We never thought of the struggle in terms of the defense of London or any other place, but only who won in the air. There was much anxiety at Fighter Headquarters at Stanmore, and particularly at the headquarters of No. 11 Fighter Group at Uxbridge. Extensive damage had been done to five of the group's forward airfields, and also to the six sector stations. If the enemy had persisted in heavy attacks against the adjacent sectors and damaged their operations rooms or telephone communications, the whole intricate organization of Fighter Command might have been broken down. It was therefore with a sense of relief that Fighter Command felt the German attack turn onto London on September 7, and concluded that the enemy had changed his plan.

Then Mr. Churchill went on to point out that Fighter Command was being seriously drained of both *planes and pilots* — has lost 103 pilots killed, and 128 seriously wounded, from August 24th to September 6th, and had also lost 466 Spitfires and Hurricanes. Churchill added: "Out of a total pilot strength of about 1000, nearly a quarter had been lost. . . ."

If the German *Luftwaffe* had continued to press its attacks against British airfields and communications, it would no doubt have soon succeeded in knocking out the R.A.F. Britain would then have been a sitting duck — unable to defend herself effectively against the screaming Stuka divebombers, and against the whole array of German fighters and

bombers. Hitler could have then ordered Operation Sea Lion be put into effect. Britain would probably not have lasted one month against a hail of steel and fire raining down upon her comparatively ill-equipped and helpless army. The British would have gone down to certain defeat!

A Change in German Strategy

It was very fortunate for Britain and for the world that the German Air Force decided to start attacking British cities, and diverted its destructive fury from the vital airfields and communications centers. This gave Britain time to get her breath. America was now beginning to increase its supply of planes and munitions to England.

The Battle of Britain reached its apex on September 15th. On that day Britain destroyed fifty-six German planes. Shortly afterward (on October 12th) Hitler realized the Germans would not gain air superiority over Britain, and formally called off Operation Sea Lion until the following spring; and by that time (July, 1941) Hitler again postponed his invasion of England until after he had destroyed Russia!

Churchill said that Britain lost 915 aircraft during the Battle of Britain (July 10th through October 31, 1940), while the Germans admitted having lost 1733 aircraft — nearly double the losses of the R.A.F. The British *claimed* to have destroyed 2698 enemy aircraft during this period. Perhaps the true figures will never be known.

Sir Winston Churchill concluded:

No doubt we were always oversanguine in our estimates of enemy scalps. In the upshot we got *two to one* of the German assailants, instead of three to one, as we believed and declared. But this was enough. The Royal Air Force, far from being destroyed, was triumphant. The stamina and valor of our fighter pilots remained unconquerable and supreme. Thus Britain was saved. Well might I say in the House of Commons, 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.'

The outnumbered British pilots and planes had beaten off the German air attacks. This victory in the Battle of Britain undoubtedly did as much damage to German pride and morale as it did good for British morale. Why did Britain gain a great victory during the crucial Battle of Britain?

Britain's Chief Air Marshal, Sir Hugh Dowding, Commander-in-Chief, Fighter Command, clearly stated why he thought the British won the Battle of Britain:

I say with absolute conviction that I can trace *the intervention of God*, not only in the battle itself, but in the events which led up to it, and that if it had not been for this intervention, the battle would have been joined in conditions which, humanly speaking, would have rendered victory impossible.

Churchill later wrote of this titanic air battle: "The odds were great; our margins small; the stakes infinite."

What had happened to Hitler and Goering that made them switch their aerial strategy from destroying aircraft factories, airfields, sector stations, and the Royal Air Force? Why did they turn to the futile attempt to knock out London and other large population centers? Why did the Germans turn away from *strategic bombing* to the bombing of Britain's cities — right at the very time when they were about to succeed — when Britain was hurting badly?

Indeed, was the winning of the Battle of Britain — like the escape of troops at Dunkirk — a miracle wrought by a Divine Hand?

How often in the course of history we see the indisputable invention of a gracious Providence.