

Winston Churchill - This was their finest Hour! - 1940



“Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fall, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth lasts for a thousand years, men will still say, ‘This was their finest hour!’”

“A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty.”

“A wonderful story is unfolding before our eyes. How it will end we are not allowed to know. But on both sides of the Atlantic we all feel, I repeat, all, that we are a part of it....We may be proud, and even rejoice amid our tribulations, that we have been born at this cardinal time for so great an age and so splendid an opportunity of service here below.”

“Never in the field of human conflict, has so much, been owed by so many, to so few!””

Editors Note: I

Dunkirk evacuation

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The Dunkirk evacuation, codenamed Operation Dynamo by the British, was the evacuation of Allied soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk, France, between May 26 and June 4, 1940, when British and French troops were cut off by the German army during the Battle of Dunkirk in the Second World War. Winston Churchill called it the greatest military defeat for many centuries, warning that “the

whole root, the core, and brain of the British Army” was stranded in Dunkirk. He hailed their subsequent rescue as a “miracle of deliverance.”[1]

In nine days, 338,226 soldiers — 198,229 British and 139,997 French [2]— were rescued by a hastily assembled fleet of 860 boats. Many of the troops were able to embark from the harbour’s protective mole onto 42 British destroyers and other large ships, while others had to wade toward the ships, waiting for hours to board, shoulder deep in water. Others were ferried from the beaches to the larger ships, and thousands were carried back to England, by the famous “little ships of Dunkirk,” a flotilla of around 700 merchant marine boats, fishing boats, pleasure craft and RNLI lifeboats — the smallest of which was the 15-foot fishing boat, Tamzine, now in the Imperial War Museum — whose civilian crews were called into service for the emergency. The “miracle of the little ships” remains a prominent folk memory in Britain.[3][4]

the “Blood, toil, tears, and sweat” speech of 13 May, and the “This was their finest hour” speech of 18 June.

More than 300,000 troops were evacuated from Dunkirk and the surrounding beaches in May and June 1940. At the time the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said it was “a miracle of deliverance”. Dunkirk writer David J. Knowles explains what happened.

“A miracle” - is the best description of what happened at Dunkirk in May and June 1940.

Hundreds of thousands of troops were rescued from the German advance in the nick of time.

The troops were desperately needed back on the home shores to help defend against a Nazi invasion. They were rescued from the harbour and beaches near to Dunkirk by a curious assembly of many different types of craft.

Many of the little ships, such as motor yachts, fishing boats and all manner of other such craft, were privately owned.

It seemed like a victory in just getting the troops back - over a third of a million of them - to fight another day.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/765004.stm>

4 June 1940

“I have, myself, full confidence that if all do their duty, if nothing is neglected, and if the best arrangements are made, as they are being made, we shall prove ourselves once again able to defend our Island home, to ride out the storm of war, and to outlive the menace of tyranny, if necessary for years, if necessary alone.

At any rate, that is what we are going to try to do. That is the resolve of His Majesty’s Government—every man of them. That is the will of Parliament and the nation.

The British Empire and the French Republic, linked together in their cause and in their need, will defend to the death their native soil, aiding each other like good comrades to the utmost of their strength.

Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail.

We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France,

we shall fight on the seas and oceans,

we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island, whatever the cost may be,

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, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old."

Endnotes:

http://www.presentationhelper.co.uk/winston_churchill_speech_fight_them_on_beaches.htm

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