

The Miracle of Dunkirk: The History of the World War II Battle and Evacuation that Helped Save Britain from Nazi Germany

By Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures *Includes accounts of the fighting and evacuations written by soldiers on both sides *Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading *Includes a table of contents “The Navy, using nearly 1,100 ships of all kinds, carried over 335,000 men, French and British, out of the jaws of death and shame [...] We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. Wars are not won by evacuations. But there was a victory inside this deliverance […] 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 […] until […] the New World, with all its power and might, steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.” – Winston Churchill, June 4, 1940 “Blitzkrieg” or “Lightning War” describes the Third Reich's invasion strategy during its 1940 conquest of France not only due to the speed of the Wehrmacht advance but also its devastating effect on its ill-prepared adversaries. Mired in the paralyzing muck of plodding staff college military doctrine and demoralized as a nation by their appalling losses during World War I, the French succumbed in a few weeks to German skill and vigor. Moreover, after being lured into Belgium by a large-scale German feint, the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and over a million French soldiers found themselves cut off by the main Wehrmacht thrust. Heinz Guderian and Irwin Rommel, among others, led their panzers on an 11-day dash from the Ardennes Forest to the coast, trapping vast numbers of Allied soldiers in Belgium and northeastern France. The surrender of more than 1,200,000 isolated troops followed, yet in the midst of this disaster, the Allies contrived one coup that took even the victorious Wehrmacht aback: the evacuation of over 300,000 soldiers from the port of Dunkirk. This escape, hailed as “miraculous” at the time, provided England with a solid defensive force, the French with the kernel of a “Free French” army for the future, and the Western Allies with an invaluable boost to their morale during one of the war's darkest moments. Hitler's Order of the Day on June 5th, 1940 placed no special emphasis on the end of the Dunkirk evacuation save as the milestone marking full German triumph in the north. While a leader never celebrates the successes of his enemies, the Fuhrer's terse commentary – and subsequent, very real expectations that the British would sue for peace and possibly even overthrow Churchill - suggest that he attached little significance to the BEF slipping through his

fingers: “Soldiers of the West Front! Dunkirk has fallen… with it has ended the greatest battle of world history. Soldiers! My confidence in you knew no bounds. You have not disappointed me.” With the clarity of historical hindsight, events proved Churchill correct. Operation Dynamo, as the British named the Dunkirk evacuation mission, bolstered British morale and defenses sufficiently to keep the “Sceptered Isle” in the war. This, in turn, led to the eventual entry of the United States, whose lethal air force, powerful navy, strategic successes, and massive Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union helped doom Adolf Hitler's “Thousand-Year Reich” to a ruinous end in 1945. The Miracle of Dunkirk: The History of the World War II Battle and Evacuation that Helped Save Britain from Nazi Germany chronicles the operations that saved over 300,000 Allied soldiers from being trapped. Along with pictures of important people, places, and events, you will learn about Dunkirk like never before, in no time at all.

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