

At the start of World War II, Britain built coastal defenses to protect against a likely German invasion of the "Sceptered Isle."

By the summer of 1940, Hitler's forces were already occupying the Channel Islands. In July, of that year, German bombers began "The Battle of Britain," dropping bombs in British towns and cities.

A song was written, especially for the *Blitz* pilots. This is its English translation:

*We'll give the British lion
the final knock-out blow.
We'll deliver judgment
and smash a world empire.
Then our proudest day will come.*

*Comrade! Comrade!
The password is known ...
Hammer the enemy,
Hammer the enemy.*

Bombs on England!

Germany's goal—and that of Herman Goering—was intimidation of Britain. Britain's goal—through the use of its Hurricanes and Spitfires—was elimination of Luftwaffe planes.

Unknown to Germany, as the London Blitz began, Britain had a secret weapon to aid in its defense. A radar system provided some measure of early warnings for the embattled country. "Incoming" information, plotted on a map, helped officials to decide where (and in what strength) to begin counterattacks.

Pilots, from both sides, conducted duels - or dogfights - in the sky. German pilots called Brits "Indians." Brits called Germans "Bandits." Their objective was to shoot each other out of the sky.

"There was no time to be scared," recalls a German pilot. There was too much to do all at once.

Pilots and crews were constantly exhausted. Men, on both sides, did not expect to live.

During "The Battle of Britain," Churchill addressed Parliament on the 21st of August, 1940. Highlighting the bravery of Britain's airmen, who were fighting back against Germany's air power, the Prime Minister voiced the country's gratitude with a now-famous line:

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few. (Prolonged cheers.) All hearts go out to the fighter pilots, whose brilliant actions we see with our own eyes day after day but we must never forget that all the time, night after night, month after month, our bomber squadrons travel far into Germany, find their targets in the darkness by the highest navigational skill, aims their attacks, often under the heaviest fire, often at serious loss, with deliberate, careful precision, and inflict shattering blows upon the whole of the technical and war-making structure of the Nazi power. (Cheers.)

On no part of the Royal Air Force does the weight of the war fall more heavily than on the daylight bombers, who will play an invaluable part in the case of an invasion and whose unflinching zeal it has been necessary in the meantime on numerous occasions to restrain. I have no hesitation in saying that the process of bombing the military industries and communications of Germany and the air bases and storage depots from which we are attacked, which will continue on an ever-increasing scale until the end of the war and may in another year attain dimensions hitherto undreamed of, assure one at least of the most certain, if not the shortest, of all the roads to victory.

Even if the Nazi legions stood triumphant on the Black Sea or indeed upon the Caspian, even if Hitler was at the gates of India, it would profit him nothing if at the same time the entire economic and scientific apparatus of German war power lay shattered and pulverised at home. (Cheers.)

The biggest worry for German pilots was running out of fuel. If a Luftwaffe plane remained over enemy territory for more than eighty minutes, the flight turned into a suicide mission.

See, also:

Battle of Britain - London Blitz

Battle of Britain - Death and Dogfights

Battle of Britain - Shelter in London's Underground

Battle of Britain - Devastation in Coventry

Credits:

Clip from "The Battle of Britain," a documentary of the London Blitz which began on September 7, 1940.

Executive Producer:

Guido Knopp

Writer/Director:

Ralf Piechowiak
Alexander Berkel

Clip online, via YouTube.

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