

MILITARY

HISTORY

Battle of Britain

July-October 1940

Ian Murray



CHURCHILL SPEECH

What General Weygand has called The Battle of France is over. The battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. 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 the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, 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 a perverted science. Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say,

“This was their finest hour”.

Winston Churchill

Speech to the House of Commons 18 June 1940.



"The Battle of France is over. I expect the Battle of Britain is about to begin."

The battle received its name from a speech Winston Churchill delivered to the British House of Commons on 18 June 1940.

This speech, as much as any other single factor, kept Britain in the war, ultimately leading to the defeat of Nazi Germany.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

STATE OF THE WAR BEFORE THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

In May and June 1940 Germany had swiftly invaded and defeated Holland, Belgium, Norway and France. The German Navy had suffered heavy losses in Norway. The British Expeditionary Force escaped the continent via the evacuation of Dunkirk but their tanks and artillery necessary to defend Britain had to be left behind.

Winston Churchill became Prime Minister 10 May 1940 after a vote of no confidence in Neville Chamberlain. There were divisions in the Conservative party with many opposed to Churchill's appointment. Many politicians and large numbers of the general public wanted Britain to surrender. Lord Halifax –appeasement.

War Cabinet

Conservatives-Churchill, Chamberlain, Halifax-Labour Atlee, Greenwood

British diplomats using Swiss business men as intermediaries were talking of peace negotiations with Germany government officials in June/July 1940.

Hitler always had plans to invade Russia and expected Britain to surrender in July 1940. On 19 July 1940 he delivered a speech in Berlin offering peace with England under certain conditions.

As instructed by Churchill, Lord Halifax as foreign minister rebutted the proposal but he was still trying to negotiate a peace settlement even as the battle of Britain raged.

The German Navy and Army high command were well aware of the difficulties in mounting an invasion of England. After heavy losses in Norway the German navy was no match for the English Navy. The German Army had not planned and was not trained or equipped for an amphibious invasion.

For an invasion to succeed Germany would require complete air superiority by the Luftwaffe over the RAF. Reich Marshal Herman Goering claimed that the Luftwaffe could eliminate the RAF in a matter of days.

Eventually, Hitler on 16 July 1940 ordered operation Sea Lion for the invasion of England with a preparation time of only four weeks. Germany aimed for air superiority by 1 August 1940.

The Germans began gathering barges and landing craft from Germany and Holland in readiness for an invasion. Eventually, the date for operation Sea Lion to take place was extended out to 15 September 1940.

THE ATTACKERS - GERMANY

POLICY - Destroy the RAF to allow Germany to invade Great Britain.

In theory Germany had many advantages in the goal of gaining air superiority over Britain

- Far greater numbers of bombers, fighters and pilots.
- Pilots were more experienced from fighting for General Franco in Spain and then in the conquest of the European countries.
- Luftwaffe very confident as they had met little resistance in previous air battles because the defeated European countries did not have effective air forces.

German objectives changed several times during the battle as a result of interference from Hitler and lack of a definite strategy.

During the battle German pilots suffered from combat fatigue and their morale sank to dangerous lows as the battle wore on. In combat, the Luftwaffe bombers were completely out classed by the RAF fighters and suffered huge losses.

THE DEFENDERS - GREAT BRITAIN

POLICY - Destroy the as many enemy aircraft as possible to prevent a German invasion

BRITISH AIR DEFENCE PLANNED AND IN PLACE

Air Marshall Hugh Dowding -Dowding System

Radar Observer corps Barage balloons anti aircraft guns

Group Head Quarters Operation Room

Fighter command headquarters Sector station headquarters

Four Geographical areas-Groups

- Advantage of flying over home territory.
- Locating the attacking aircraft and being ready to intercept them.
- Usually had the advantage of height
- German intelligence was weak

British pilots were beaten down by gruelling 15 hour shifts and constant Luftwaffe bombing of their air fields. Pilots often flew several missions a day on only a few hours sleep, and many took amphetamine pills just to keep themselves awake.

The British developed an air defence network that would give them a critical advantage in the Battle of Britain. The Dowding System – named for Fighter Command’s Commander-in-Chief Sir Hugh Dowding – brought together technology, ground defences and fighter aircraft into a unified system of defence. The RAF organised the defence of Britain into four geographical areas, called ‘Groups’, which were further divided into sectors. The main fighter airfield in each sector – the ‘Sector Station’ – was equipped with an operations room from which the fighters were directed into combat.

Radar gave early warning of Luftwaffe raids, which were also tracked by the Observer Corps. Information on incoming raids was passed to the Filter Room at Fighter Command Headquarters at Bentley Priory. Once the direction of the raid was clearly established, the information was sent to the relevant Group’s headquarters. From there it was sent to the Sector Stations, which would ‘scramble’ fighters into action.

The Sector Stations received updated information as it became available and further directed airborne fighters by radio. The operations rooms also directed other elements of the defence network, including anti-aircraft guns, searchlights and barrage balloons. The Dowding System could process huge amounts of information in a short period of time. It allowed Fighter Command to manage its valuable – and relatively limited – resources, making sure they were not wasted.

Fighter Command setup

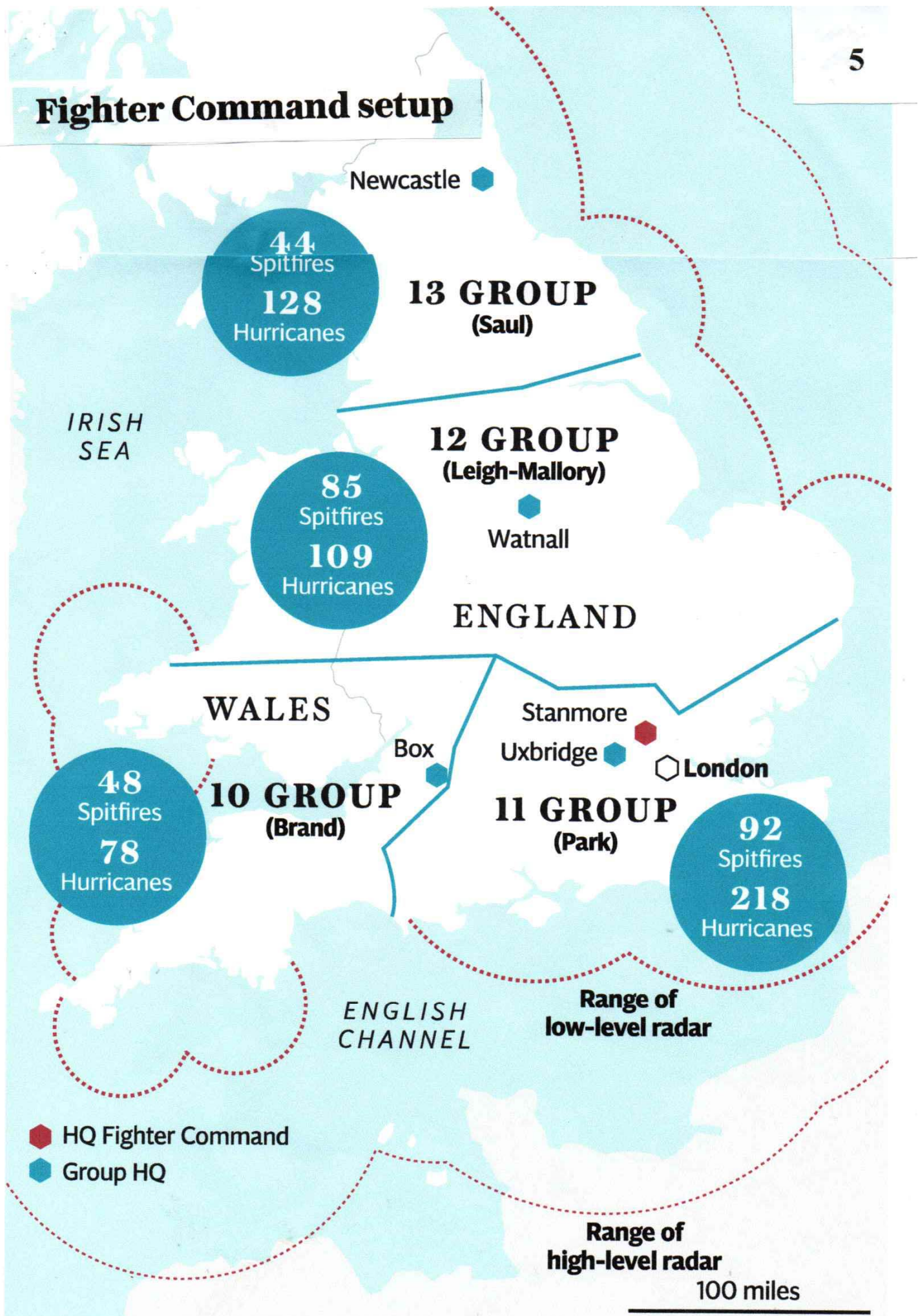
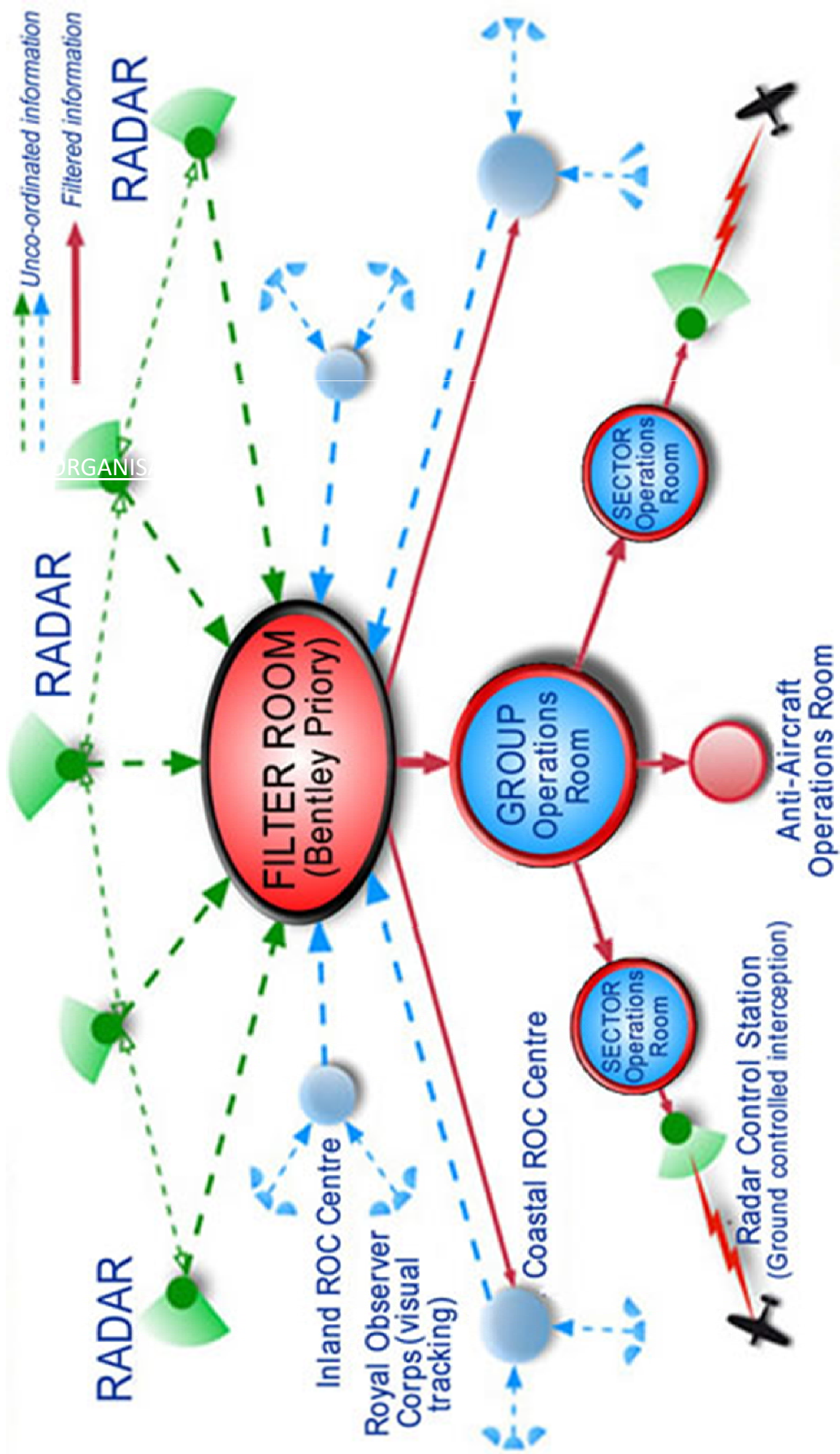


Diagram of the Dowding System, Britain's air defence network that controlled both the flow of intelligence and the communication of orders during enemy raids.



The British had developed a highly effective air defence network



Group Headquarters, Uxbridge: radiolocation plotters, by Roland Vivian Pitchforth.

The Battle of Britain



Belligerents

United Kingdom
Canada
Free Poland

Nazi Germany
Italy

Commanders and leaders

Hugh Dowding
Keith Park
T. Leigh-Mallory
Quintin Brand
Richard Saul
L. Samuel Breadner
Zdzisław Krasnodębski

Hermann Göring
Albert Kesselring
Hugo Sperrle
Hans-Jürgen Stumpff
R. C. Fougier

Units Involved

Royal Air Force
Royal Canadian Air Force
C'wealth pilots (incl. Australia, NZ)
Foreign pilots

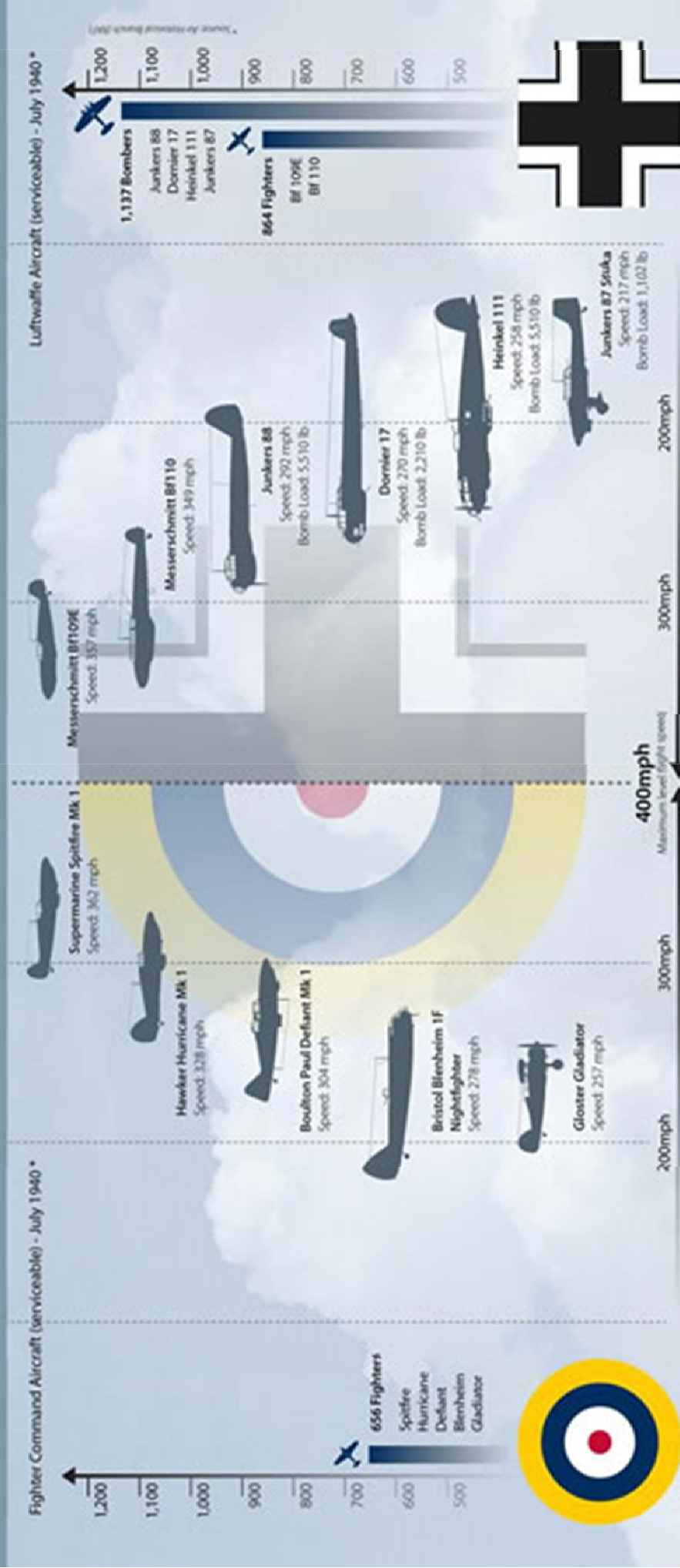
Luftwaffe
Corpo Aereo Italiano

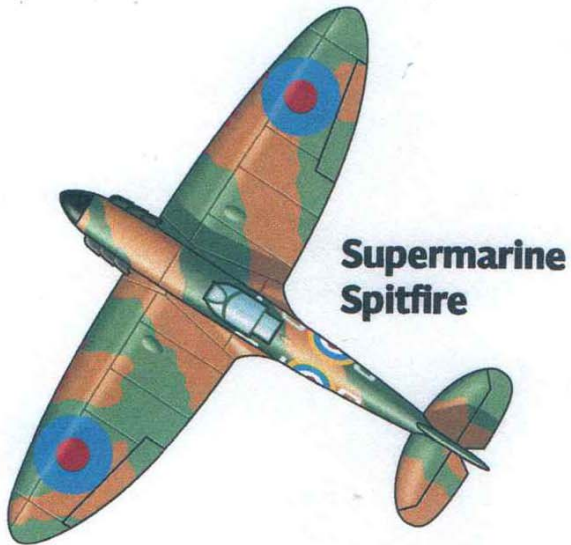
Strength

650 serviceable aircraft

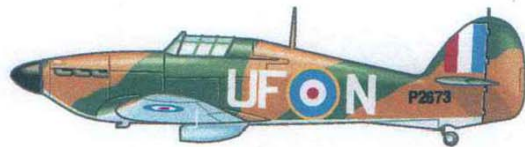
2,550 serviceable aircraft

Royal Air Force v The Luftwaffe



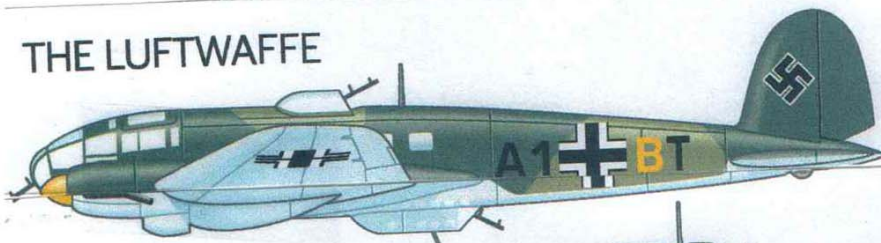


**Supermarine
Spitfire**



**Hawker
Hurricane**

THE LUFTWAFFE



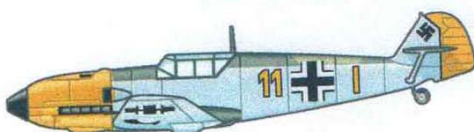
Heinkel He 111



Junkers Ju 87 Stuka



Junkers Ju 88



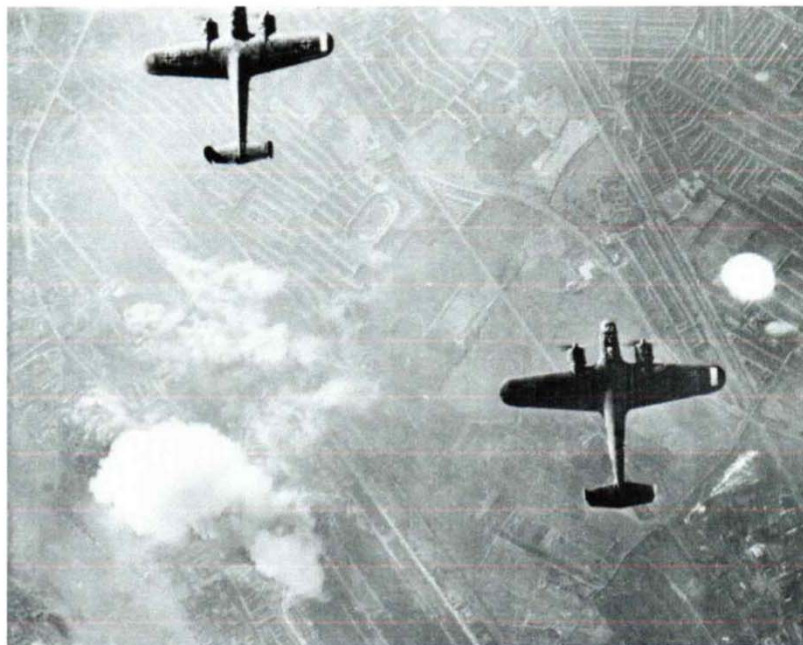
Messerschmitt Bf 109



A formation of Heinkel He 111 bombers.
GER 530

The He 111 was the most important of the Luftwaffe's early bombers, but was obsolescent in 1940. Its bomb load of 2,000 kg was insufficient for a strategic bombing campaign and it was slow and poorly armed. Measures to increase its defensive armament proved ineffective and the Heinkel, like other German bomber types, was acutely vulnerable to RAF fighter opposition. In its favour was a structural strength that could soak up punishment – many aircraft managed to return to base with hundreds of bullet holes in their fuselage and flying surfaces.

7. Dornier Do 17

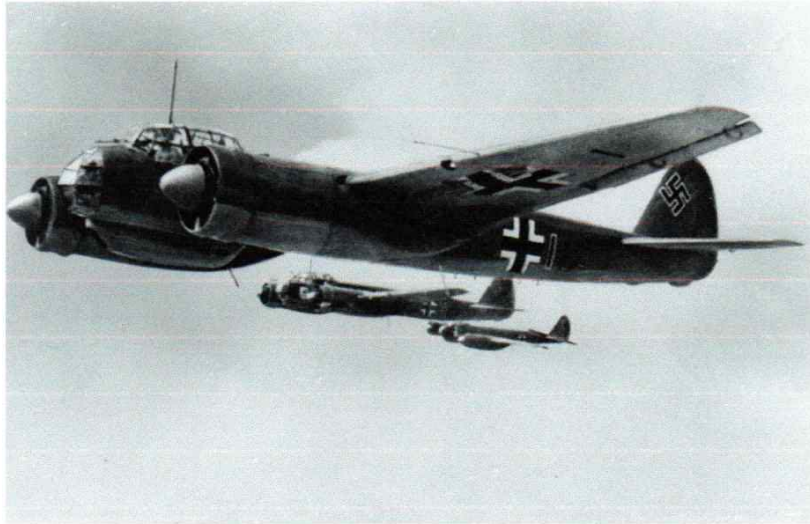


German Dornier Do 17 bombers over east London, 7 September 1940.

[C 5423](#)

The Dornier Do 17 - nicknamed the 'Flying Pencil' - was based on a pre-war design for a high speed mail plane, which was converted into a bomber by the Nazi air ministry. The Do 17Z became the main production version, equipping three Luftwaffe bomber wings at the height of the Battle of Britain. The aircraft was already virtually obsolete. It was nimble at low altitude but could only carry 1,000 kg of bombs and had a limited range. Like the Heinkel He 111, its defensive armament was weak and losses were severe. In a famous action on [18 August](#) eight Dorniers were shot down and nine damaged in attacks on RAF Kenley, to the south of London. Dornier Do 17 production was terminated in the summer of 1940.

8. Junkers Ju 88



A Junkers Ju 88A.

[MH 6115](#)

The Junkers Ju 88 was the most modern of Germany's bombers in 1940. It was designed as a fast medium bomber and first flew in December 1936. However, the promising new design was compromised by Ernst Udet, deputy to the Luftwaffe's Commander-in-Chief Hermann Göring. Udet demanded that the Ju 88 be capable of dive-bombing. The necessary structural changes increased the aircraft's weight, which reduced its performance and also delayed production. It proved just as vulnerable to RAF fighters as other Luftwaffe bombers during the Battle of Britain, but later matured into one of the most versatile and important of the Luftwaffe's aircraft.

9. Junkers Ju 87

11



A Junkers Ju 87B.

[MH 2469](#)

The infamous 'Stuka' achieved notoriety during the [Blitzkrieg](#) triumphs of 1939-1940. Its name derived from an abbreviation of the German term for dive bomber - *Sturzkampfflugzeug*. The Ju 87 was the chosen weapon of the Luftwaffe High Command, designed to deliver pin-point bombing attacks in a near vertical dive. It was effective during the campaigns in Poland and France, when German forces operated largely in an environment of air superiority. But in the skies over Britain the story was very different. After some initial successes by heavily escorted formations, the Stukas were slaughtered by RAF fighters. On their worst day, 18 August, 12 Ju 87s were shot down and many others damaged or written off in crashes on their return. Such losses meant the aircraft was gradually withdrawn from the battle.



Messerschmitt Bf 110C wearing the *Haifischmaul*, or 'shark's mouth', marking of the Luftwaffe's II Gruppe.

HU 108211

The two-seat Bf 110 was designed as a long-range heavy escort fighter or *Zerstörer* (destroyer). It was fast and well-armed, but lacked manoeuvrability. It was markedly inferior to the more nimble RAF fighters and became a liability when attempting to guard the bomber formations. The Germans were forced to use Bf 109s to escort the Bf 110s. However, the aircraft was more effective when used for low-level attacks against factories and RAF airfields. The Germans failed to see the potential of the Bf 110 in this fighter-bomber role and only one Luftwaffe unit was trained for such work.



• Messerschmitt Bf 109E-4 with the markings of the Gruppenkommandeur of I/JG 26 (I Gruppe Jagdgeschwader 26), France, August 1940.

HU 44150

The Bf 109 was arguably the best fighter in the world in 1940. It was faster than the Spitfire at high altitude, could dive more rapidly and carried a more effective armament of two cannon and two machine guns. Most Bf 109 pilots had more combat experience than their RAF counterparts, at least at first, which also conferred a major advantage. However, the Messerschmitt did not have the range to fly beyond London and carried only seven seconds worth of cannon ammunition, which limited its operational usefulness. The Luftwaffe started the Battle with about 1,100 Bf 109s and 906 pilots available. Some 650 aircraft were shot down.

Fuel injection

All metal construction,

Difficult to fly- extremely difficult to land



Supermarine Spitfire Mk I of No. 19 Squadron at Fowlmere in Cambridgeshire, 21 September 1940.

CH 1447

The Spitfire was the iconic aircraft of the Battle of Britain and became the symbol of British defiance in the air. Designed by Reginald Mitchell, it had an advanced all-metal airframe, making it light and strong. It took longer to build than the Hurricane and was less sturdy, but it was faster and had a responsiveness which impressed all who flew it. Crucially, it was a match for the Luftwaffe's Messerschmitt Bf 109 and was superior to it at lower altitudes. The Spitfire entered service with No. 19 Squadron at Duxford in August 1938. Production was slow at first, but by September 1940 it was in service with 18 RAF squadrons. Spitfires shot down a total of 529 enemy aircraft, for a loss of 230 of their own.

Carburettor

All metal construction, 15,000 hours to build
Very easy to fly-difficult to land



Hawker Hurricane Mk I of No. 85 Squadron, October 1940.
CH 1501

The Hurricane was the most numerous of RAF Fighter Command's aircraft during the Battle of Britain, equipping 33 squadrons by September 1940. Its traditional design - a wood and metal framework covered in fabric - was derived from earlier biplane fighters and was essentially out of date despite later improvements. However, it was a stable and rugged aircraft that could be maintained and repaired more easily than the Spitfire. Its limitations meant that, where possible, Hurricane squadrons were directed against enemy bombers while the superior Spitfires dealt with the fighter escorts. Despite its shortcomings, the Hurricane accounted for 656 German aircraft during the Battle of Britain - more than the Spitfire. Between 30 July and 16 September, 404 Hurricanes were destroyed.

Carburettor

Metal wood and fabric construction 10,000 hours to build
Easy to fly- easy to land

3. Boulton Paul Defiant



Three Boulton Paul Defiants of No. 264 Squadron fly in a 'vic' formation, August 1940.

CH 885

The Defiant was a two-seat fighter with a four-gun power-operated turret. It had no forward firing armament, which meant it could not shoot down enemy aircraft from behind. It was intended primarily as a bomber interceptor, but the turret fighter concept was outmoded and the extra weight made the aircraft sluggish in combat. In early battles over Dunkirk, Defiants had proved very vulnerable to conventional enemy fighters. RAF Fighter Command rashly sent its two Defiant squadrons - Nos. 141 and 264 - into action in July and August, which resulted in two separate massacres at the hands of the Luftwaffe. As a consequence the aircraft played no further part as a day fighter in the Battle.

THE BATTLE

The battle of Britain is generally accepted by Britain as lasting three and a half months from 10 July until 31 October 1940 overlapping the large night attacks of the blitz. German historians consider the battle lasting from 10 July 1940 until May 1941.

Initially, the advantage seemed to be in favour of the Germans who were attacking coastal shipping, ports and infrastructure and then radar installations. The RAF was rapidly running out of pilots. On 8 August the Germans switched their attack to destroy the British air fields but in late August they accidentally bombed civilian areas in London,

At the end of August the British launched a retaliatory air raid against Berlin. The German high command had claimed that Britain would never be able to bomb Berlin. Hitler was enraged and Germany began the massive bombing attacks on London. Hitler gave a directive to erase British cities from the map hoping the British would finally surrender.

The first great German day light raid on 7 September 1940 was quite successful with night raids then continuing on for 57 consecutive nights. However, the second great day light raid on 15 September failed with heavy German losses and a collapse of morale among German bomber crews because British fighters shot down so many bombers. (Total of 56-60 German aircraft destroyed.) [newspapers claimed 185].

The blitz bombing of London and other cities killed approximately 40,000 civilians and destroyed extensive numbers of buildings. However, this change in German tactics allowed the RAF to repair air fields and aircraft and to regroup to eventually win the battle.

The Germans realised after the 15 September raid that they could not achieve air superiority and the large daylight bombing raids were stopped this being a virtual admission of defeat. As a result Hitler postponed operation Sea Lion on 12 October 1940.

Small German day light raids continued until the end of October 1940 with night raids continuing until May 1941.

The British had shot down German aircraft at a ratio of approximately 2:1. During and after the war the number of German aircraft destroyed was greatly exaggerated but more accurate aircraft loss figures were determined from records in the years after the war. Approximately 2900 pilots flew in Battle of Britain of whom approx. 650 were foreigners from South Africa, Australia, (30) New Zealand, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Pilots average age was in the early twenties with many only 19 years old.

Churchill **"Never in the realms of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few."**

The Battle of Britain



PHASE **ONE**

26 June – 16 July

The Channel Battles. Scattered and limited day and night attacks and mine-laying sorties, directed mainly against ports and shipping and towns with aircraft factories.



PHASE **TWO**

17 July – 12 August

The Eagle Attack. Increasing and larger daylight attacks against shipping, ports, and coastal airfields, with increased night attacks against RAF facilities and the aircraft industry.



PHASE **THREE**

13 August – 6 September

The Attack on Airfields Large-scale daylight attacks against RAF airfields in South-East England, in order to exhaust the RAF's ability to provide a defence. Night attacks continued.



PHASE **FOUR**

7 September – 2 October

The Blitz (from *blitzkrieg*). Large scale day and night attacks against London, Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, Hull, Liverpool, Manchester, Plymouth, Portsmouth, and Southampton.



PHASE **FIVE**

3 October – 31 October

The Blitz. Smaller scale daylight fighter-bombers attacks while large-scale night attacks continued mainly against London.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN - POLISH PILOTS

In June 1940, the darkest days of the Second World War, France had fallen, bringing 30,000 Polish military personnel across the English Channel, including 8,500 pilots. Having fought the German juggernaut unsuccessfully in Poland and France, these desperate exiles christened Great Britain "Last Hope Island."

Despite the Polish pilots' extensive combat experience in Poland and in France, the British, like the French before them tended to credit German propaganda which boasted that the Polish Air Force had been destroyed in three days because of the lack of training and ineptitude of its pilots. In fact, this quick victory was achieved because the German aircraft were vastly superior in performance than those of Poland.

The language gap made the RAF even more sceptical of the "newcomers" combat potential and teaching them "British tactics became a top priority. Consequently, The Poles had to be taught everything from scratch, including how to measure speed in miles instead of kilometres, fuel in gallons instead of litres and how to operate a retractable undercarriage. The two Polish Squadrons No.302 and No.303 were ordered to ride tricycles equipped with radios speedometers and compasses around airfields for practice formations. The battle-hardened Poles did not take kindly to this treatment but they did not have to wait long to prove their mettle.

On August 30 Squadron No.303 was carrying out training manoeuvres over Hertfordshire when Flying Officer Ludwik Paszkiewicz spotted a large formation of German bombers and fighters. Paszkiewicz radioed to his Squadron Leader Kellet and when he received no reply he broke formation and proceeded to shoot down a Messerschmitt 110.

On his return to base Ludwik Paszkiewicz was severely reprimanded for ill discipline and then congratulated for making the Squadron's first kill.

Later that evening Squadron Leader Kellet put a call through to Fighter Command declaring "Under the circumstances sir, I do think we might call them operational." Considering the RAF had lost nearly 100 pilots the week before Fighter Command was in no mood to argue. The RAF was so short of pilots that specialised combat training time before pilots were allowed in to battle had been reduced from six months to two weeks.

The two fighter squadrons No.302 and No.303 went into action in August, with 89 Polish pilots. Another 50 Poles took part in the battle, in other RAF squadrons. During some the most desperate points of the battle, the RAF had only 350 pilots to scramble, of which 100 were Poles. **THE FEW.**

Polish pilots were among the most experienced in the battle as most had hundreds of hours of pre-war flying experience and had fought in the 1939 Defensive War and/or Battle of France. The Polish pilots had been well trained in formation flying and had learned from combat experience to fire from close range. By comparison, one Polish pilot referred to the close formation flying and set-piece attached practiced in the RAF as "simply suicidal".

The 147 Polish pilots claimed 201 aircraft shot down. No.303 Squadron claimed the highest number of kills (126) of all Allied squadrons engaged in the Battle of Britain. With their combat experience, Polish pilots would have known that the quickest and most

efficient way to destroy an enemy aircraft was to fire from close range, which often surprised their British counterparts.

For instance:

“After firing a brief opening burst at 150 to 200 yards, just to get on the enemy’s nerves, the Poles would close to almost point-blank range. (the British pilots were instructed to fire at a distance of 150 yards) That was where they did their real work. “When they go tearing into enemy bombers and fighters they get so close you would think they were going to collide,” wrote one British pilot. This caused the enemy to panic and scatter into individual targets then to be picked off one by one or to head back to base.

The close range tactics used by the Poles led to suggestions of recklessness, but there is little evidence for this view. For example, the death rate in No.303 Squadron was lower than the average rate for other RAF squadrons, despite the squadron having been the highest-scoring Allied squadron during the battle. One British pilot was killed for every 4.9 enemy planes downed where as the Poles notched up 10.5 enemy planes downed per Polish pilot’s death.

Commander-in-Chief of Fighter Command, Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, who once was so reluctant to allow Polish pilots into battle, summarised their contribution in probably the most telling way; “Had it not been for the magnificent work of the Polish squadrons and their unsurpassed gallantry, I hesitate to say that the outcome of the Battle would have been the same”

POST WAR- GREAT BRITAIN’S SHAME

After the war Churchill was no longer Prime Minister and Poland was occupied by the communist Soviet Union.

The Polish pilots from being indispensable suddenly became redundant. The risks they took and the sacrifices they made were never fully understood, let alone appreciated.

The British public, eager to support the post war peace settlement in Europe and not yet aware of the horrors Stalinism really entailed, turned against the thousands of migrants who chose to stay rather than go home to live under communist rule.

Labour MPs whinged about the cost of resettling the Poles in Britain. Trade unions ganged up on them for taking “British” jobs even though there was a shortage of labour. “Poles go home” and “England for the English” were slogans painted on walls near Polish Air force bases. More than half the British asked in an opinion poll wanted the Poles deported.

Labour Prime Minister Atlee, for fear of upsetting Stalin, banned Polish units from the official victory parade of Allied servicemen marching through the streets of London in 1946. One forlorn Polish pilot stood in the crowd on the pavement weeping as the RAF contingent marched past.

After the end of the war, No 303 Squadron morale decreased due to treatment of Poland by the Allies Western betrayal, and the squadron eventually disbanded in 1946. Eventually, the Poles were honoured by the erection of the Polish war memorial in west London, listing the names of all Polish pilots who served in the RAF.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN FIGHTER COMPARISON

Messerschmitt Bf 109E

In combat

Probably technically the best fighter during the Battle of Britain. It had the superior firepower and was faster in a dive than the British fighters.

With its fuel injection the Me 109 was able to use a quick bank and turn to evade attack from the British fighters as their Rolls Royce merlins with carburettors stalled if their aircraft gave chase and performed this manoeuvre.

The majority of the German pilots were more experienced than their counterparts flying the spitfires and hurricanes.

The Me109 was at a huge disadvantage as its fuel limitations allowed only 15 minutes of flying time over the United Kingdom where the air battles took place. Its manoeuvrability at high speeds was seriously curtailed by the heaviness of the controls while its high wing loading caused it to stall readily under high normal acceleration and resulted in a poor turning circle. It could easily be out turned by both spitfires and hurricanes.

General

Willi Messerschmitt in designing the Me109 took construction procedures into account making it the cheapest and quickest to build of the three fighters.

The Me109 was difficult to take off, to land and to fly. A high percentage of its pilots were killed in take off or landing crashes.

Supermarine Spitfire

In combat

The spitfire did not have the firepower of the Me109 but was flying over friendly territory with out time restrictions regarding fuel capacity.

It had the disadvantage of the engine stalling in a quick bank and turn because of its carburettor. This problem was solved by carburettor modifications in early 1941 but not during the battle.

The great advantage of the spitfire was its ease of flying and manoeuvrability. Its ease of flying meant that the majority of British pilots could handle their aircraft better than the German pilots (except for the top aces), could handle theirs.

General

Reginald Mitchell designed the spitfire with performance his top priority resulting in a very difficult to build aircraft. The spitfire was the most expensive of three fighters and required the longest construction time.

Its rather complex all metal construction and elliptical wings meant that a damaged spitfire could not be quickly repaired.

The aircraft was difficult to take off and land but in both these operations much less dangerous than the Me109.

The turn around time (re-arm and refuel) for a spitfire was 26 minutes

Hawker Hurricane

In combat

The hurricane had a better rate of climb than the spitfire so in an emergency scramble it could reach the height of the German attackers very quickly.

The hurricane had the same advantages as the spitfire in flying over friendly territory without time restrictions regarding fuel but shared the carburettor problem.

Although slower, and not as manoeuvrable as the spitfire the hurricane was more manoeuvrable and much easier to fly than the Me109 with a tighter turning circle than both the spitfire and Me 109. The hurricane was more stable as a gun platform than both the spitfire and the Me 109. As with the spitfire, its ease of flying meant that the majority of British pilots could handle their aircraft better than the German pilots (except for the top aces), could handle theirs.

General

This hurricane was half a generation behind the spitfire and Me 109 in design and construction. Its designer Sidney Camm refined many construction techniques that had been used in his bi planes of the 1920's.

This simple construction featuring timber framing and fabric covering in many areas allowed the hurricane to absorb a great deal of punishment and to still fly. This meant that if a damaged hurricane could limp back to base it could often be repaired with in days and returned to service.

The turn around time (re-arm and refuel) for a hurricane was only nine minutes

Although regarded as marginally inferior to both the Me109 and spitfire in performance, the hurricane was the war horse that won the battle of Britain. It was deployed in greater numbers than was the spitfire and shot down so many of the Luftwaffe bombers that the Germans realised they could not continue the fight. The British strategy was for spitfires to tackle the Me109's and for hurricanes to engage the German bombers. Of course, in the heat of battle this was not always the case. The hurricane could out perform any of the German bombers and as the fighter providing the most stable gun platform was probably just as effective if not more effective against the bombers than was the spitfire.

Spitfire verses Me109

These two fighters both had advantages and disadvantages when compared, but were basically evenly matched. In battle, the out come of an engagement between a spitfire and an Me109 depended on the ability of the respective pilots, which fighter had a height advantage and which pilot saw the opposing aircraft first.

MYTH- AN IMAGE OF PLUCKY LITTLE BRITAIN IN A DAVID AND THE GOLIATH BATTLE WITH NAZI GERMANY.

With out underestimating the courage and bravery of the British pilots, the British are often portrayed as backs to the wall amateurs with those gallant Few as the last line of defence other than the home guard holding out against the mighty Nazis.

FACT

Germany was not equipped or prepared for an invasion by sea and the British Navy was far stronger than that of Germany.

Britain was ready and prepared to fight with the world's first and only fully coordinated air defence system. The British aircraft industry was out producing German fighters at a ratio of 2:1.

MYTH- SPITFIRES WON THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN**FACT**

The hawker hurricanes out numbered the spitfires by approximately 2:1 and bore the brunt of fighting in the battle not the spitfire.

MYTH- BRITISH BOMBERS HAD LITTLE TO DO WITH THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN.**FACT**

British bombers contributed significantly to the victory in the Battle of Britain. Their accidental bombing of Berlin resulted in Hitler redirecting his air attack away from the British airfields and to the blitz bombing of London. This change in area of attack allowed the British time to repair their airfields and to repair and regroup their fighters.

British bombers caused considerable damage to the German barges and ships that were preparing for operation Sea Lion. The Germans were given a demonstration of what would happen if their barges and ships tried to cross the English Channel without German air superiority.

SIGNIFIGANCE OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

The Battle of Britain did not win world war two. Some historians argue that Britain did not lose the battle and that Germany did not win it.

THE MORALE BOOST FOR BRITAIN WAS INCALCUABLE AS WAS THE PROPAGANDA VALUE OF BRITAIN'S SUCCESS IN THE BATTLE

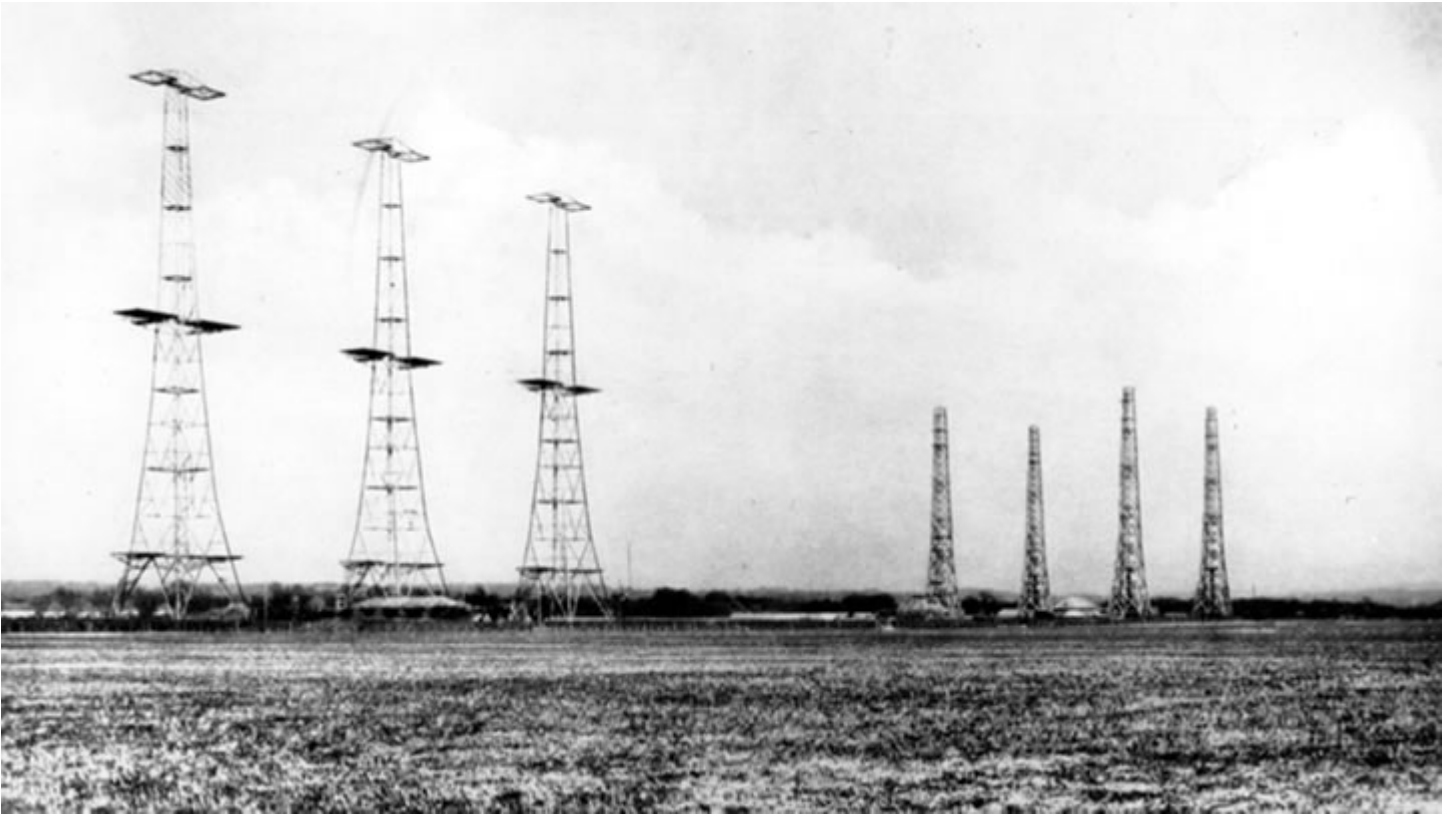
First German defeat.

Churchill's position as Prime minister was not secure until during and after the battle when his role as a leader whom the English people would support was confirmed.

The fighting and winning the Battle of Britain helped convince the United States of America that Britain had the courage and determination to keep fighting. Before the Battle of Britain President Roosevelt had doubts about Churchill and did not know whether to trust him. He sent friends to England to assess Churchill's suitability as a leader.

At the time there was a very strong isolationist position held by many in the United States who did not wish to be involved in another European war.

The United States ambassador to the United Kingdom Joe Kennedy (JFK's father) was making comments such as "England will soon have its neck wrung like a chicken"













Royal Air Force
Benevolent Fund

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

10 JULY – 31 OCTOBER 1940



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Those who stood with us

A total of **2937** aircrew took part:

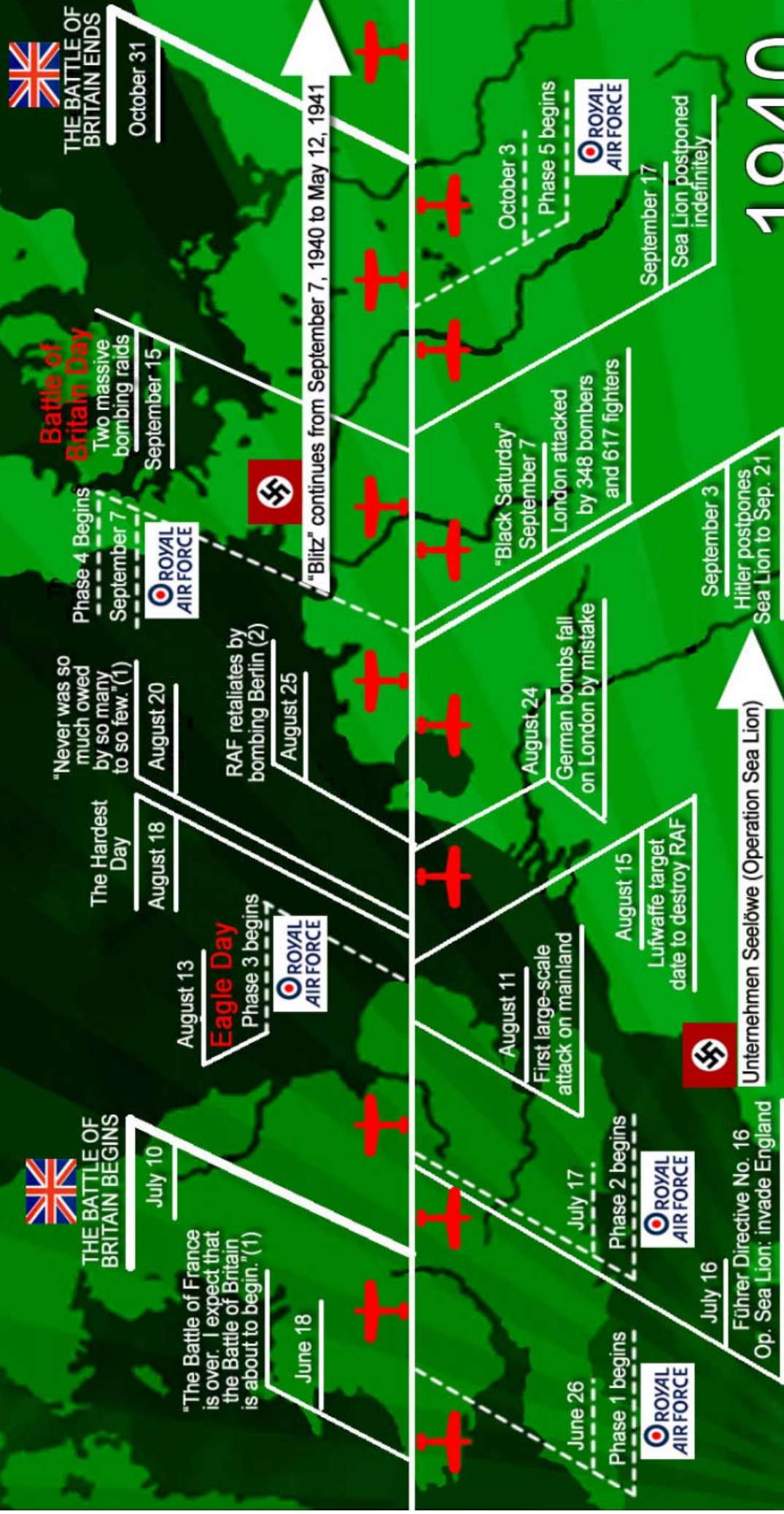




TEN OF MY RULES FOR AIR FIGHTING

1. Wait until you see the whites of his eyes
Fire short bursts of 1 to 2 seconds and only when your
Sights are definitely 'ON'.
2. Whilst shooting think of nothing else, brace the whole of the
body; have both hands on the stick, concentrate on your
ring sight.
3. Always keep a sharp lookout. "Keep your finger out"!
4. Height gives You the initiative.
5. Always turn and face the attack.
6. Make your decisions promptly. It is better to act quickly
even though your tactics are not the best.
7. Never fly straight and level for more than 30 seconds in
the combat area.
8. When diving to attack always leave a proportion of your
formation above to act as top guard.
9. INITIATIVE, ^GAGRESSION, AIR DISCIPLINE, and TEAM WORK are
words that MEAN something in Air Fighting.
10. Go in quickly - Punch hard - Get out!

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1940

NOTES: 1. Winston Churchill speech.
2. Hitler is furious.