

# DEIGHTON

The True Story of the Battle of Britain

# FIGHTER

INTRODUCTION BY **A.J.P. TAYLOR** BIOGRAPHER OF LORD BEAVERBROOK  
MINISTER OF AIRCRAFT PRODUCTION



'Must surely rank as the most honest attempt yet to tell how the Battle of Britain really was'

**ANDREW WILSON**  
THE OBSERVER



# ***Fighter***

---

**The True Story of the Battle of Britain**

**LEN DEIGHTON**



# CONTENTS

---

Title Page

Cover Designer's Note

Illustrations

Preface to the 2014 Edition

Introduction by A. J. P. Taylor

PART ONE Strategy

PART TWO Air Chief Marshal Sir Hugh Dowding, Commander in Chief Fighter Command

PART THREE Weapons: The Metal Monoplane and Radar

PART FOUR Tactics

PART FIVE The Results

Acknowledgements

Selected Bibliography

Index

About the Author

Also By Len Deighton

Copyright

About the Publisher

## Cover Designer's Note

---

The story of the Second World War is one of tremendous technological change combined with great human emotion. When I set out to design the covers for this reissue of Len Deighton's trilogy of Second World War histories, *Fighter*, *Blitzkrieg* and *Blood, Tears and Folly*, I wanted to incorporate both of these elements into a unified design theme that could be used on all three books. The books were among the first to offer a balanced narrative of the war with both sides of the story being represented, and I felt it was essential that the cover designs were similarly complete.

To convey the concept of technological change and development I created illustrations that began as a set of plans on the back cover and continue across the spine to become a full-colour image of a fighting machine on the front. Many things we take for granted today, such as the mobile phone, microwave and air-traffic control, owe their development to the innovation that took place during the war.

The Second World War affected the lives of every man, woman and child living in Western Europe between 1939 and 1945. Television news has made us accustomed to watching remote piloted drones waging war from the safety of our living room sofas, uninvolved except for the opinions we choose to express. In contrast I felt it was important to remind readers of the direct participation and sacrifice made by everyone during the war, so I carefully chose photographs of women in a variety of roles.

One such woman was my grandmother, an audacious and inspirational person who left her job as a chef to become a skilled oxyacetylene welder making flame traps for night-fighters. Thousands of women like her, building airplanes, tanks and ships, were immortalized in America by the 'Rosie the Riveter' campaign. Britain's survival during the leanest days of the war owes a debt of gratitude to the Women's Land Army. These hard-working women succeeded in cultivating every available square foot of land and saved the country from starvation when the U-boat campaign was at its most successful.

The extraordinary women of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry created a secret unit that was dropped by parachute behind enemy lines to undertake espionage work for the Special Operations Executive. Bletchley Park's work in cracking the 'Enigma' codes is well known, and many of the brilliant code-breakers were women. The magnificent women ferry-pilots of the Air Transport Auxiliary flew everything from fast and nimble Spitfire fighters to large and powerful Lancaster heavy bombers, many with battle damage and in need of repair. The Royal Air Force and Royal Navy depended on an army of women radar controllers to manage their operations in the air and at sea.

The contribution to the war made by women was not limited to Britain. In America Jacqueline Cochran's famous Women's Airforce Service Pilots ferried military aircraft, while flight nurses – the unsung heroines of the US Army – provided critical medical attention to wounded soldiers, saving lives on both the European and Pacific fighting fronts. In Russia, too, all the Red Army's nurses were women. Those serving as front-line medics were also armed and expected to fight alongside their male comrades when not attending to the wounded. Their casualty rate was approximately equal to that of the Red Army infantry. These women demonstrated that they were every bit as willing to help win the war against an enemy that threatened the life they knew. Together they blazed a trail for equality and their lasting contribution to today's society deserves to be recognized.

*Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain* tells the story of Germany's attempt to gain control of the air above Britain in preparation for invasion. Technological advances in aircraft design, radar and planning played an important role in the Battle's final outcome. Although the Hawker Hurricane bore the brunt of the fighting, Mitchell's superb Spitfire was the more technically advanced aircraft with its all-metal construction and monocoque fuselage. The rapid pace of aircraft development at that time is represented by a Spitfire Mark IIA, serial number P7350. Beginning as a set of line-drawn plans on the back cover, it becomes a full-colour illustration on the front cover; its brown and green upper surfaces and pale underside having become an emblematic symbol of the Battle. Wearing the squadron codes UO-T, Spitfire P7350 was assigned to 603 Squadron based at RAF Hornchurch in October 1940. A genuine Battle of Britain participant, she survived the war and still flies today as part of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. The front-cover photograph is a period-correct image that immediately tells the story of the Battle through the eyes of the civilian population. The two schoolgirls sitting on the wing of a crashed Heinkel He 111 clearly convey the threat of German bombing with the everyday stoicism of the children who were innocent participants.

Antoni Deighton, 2013

# Illustrations

---

1. The Battlefield
2. June 1940 – Hitler Rules Europe
3. Ernst Udet
4. *Seelöwe* (Sea-lion)
5. The Secret of Flight
6. Power Units
7. Airframe Structure
8. Hawker Hurricane
9. Messerschmitt Bf 109E
10. Supermarine Spitfire F.7/30
11. Supermarine Spitfire
12. Turning Circles
13. Radar (RDF)
14. The System
15. Air Fleets (Luftflotten)
16. Inside a Heinkel He 111
17. Junkers Ju 88 Dive Bombers)
18. The Luftwaffe Chain of Command – from Hitler to Bomber Crew
19. A Detailed Look at Air Fleet 2: August 1940
20. Udet's Caricature of Milch
21. Sperrle and Kesselring
22. 20 July: Aircraft Strength in the Battle Area
23. The *Schwarm*
24. About 11 a.m., 24 July
25. Galland and Mölders
26. 8 August: Convoy CW9, 'Peewit'
27. 8 August (12 noon): 11 Group Resources
28. 12 August
29. 15 August
30. 24 August–6 September
31. German Beams
32. 7 and 9 September
33. German Aircraft Losses





# If the INVADER comes

## WHAT TO DO — AND HOW TO DO IT

**T**HE Germans threaten to invade Great Britain. If they do so they will be driven out by our Navy, our Army and our Air Force. Yet the ordinary men and women of the civilian population will also have their part to play. Hitler's invasions of Poland, Holland and Belgium were greatly helped by the fact that the civilian population was taken by surprise. They did not know what to do when the moment came. You must not be taken by surprise. This leaflet tells you what general line you should take. More detailed instructions will be given you when the danger comes nearer. Meanwhile, read these instructions carefully and be prepared to carry them out.

### I

When Holland and Belgium were invaded, the civilian population fled from their homes. They crowded on the roads, in cars, in carts, on bicycles and on foot, and so helped the enemy by preventing their own armies from advancing against the invaders. You must not allow that to happen here. Your first rule, therefore, is:—

- (1) IF THE GERMANS COME, BY PARACHUTE, AEROPLANE OR SHIP, YOU MUST REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE. THE ORDER IS "STAY PUT".

If the Commander in Chief decides that the place where you live must be evacuated, he will tell you when and how to leave. Until you

receive such orders you must remain where you are. If you run away, you will be exposed to far greater danger because you will be machine-gunned from the air as were civilians in Holland and Belgium, and you will also block the roads by which our own armies will advance to turn the Germans out.

### II

There is another method which the Germans adopt in their invasion. They make use of the civilian population in order to create confusion and panic. They spread false rumours and issue false instructions. In order to prevent this, you should obey the second rule, which is as follows:—

- (2) DO NOT BELIEVE RUMOURS AND DO NOT SPREAD THEM. WHEN YOU RECEIVE AN ORDER, MAKE QUITE SURE THAT IT IS A TRUE ORDER AND NOT A FAKE/D ORDER. MOST OF YOU KNOW YOUR POLICEMEN AND YOUR A.R.P. WARDENS BY SIGHT, YOU CAN TRUST THEM. IF YOU KEEP YOUR HEADS, YOU CAN ALSO TELL WHETHER A MILITARY OFFICER IS REALLY BRITISH OR ONLY PRETENDING TO BE SO. IF IN DOUBT ASK THE POLICEMAN OR THE A.R.P. WARDEN. USE YOUR COMMON SENSE.

If Air Force officers to help you may come when you block a road order you Then you can help by blocking the roads with

THE MILITARY IN DT BLOCK ROADS DO SO BY THE PRIORITIES.

or other work, make sure that has been to play in it. When it is over they can only make certain

and, who are to be

- (3) IN FACTORIES AND SHOPS, ALL MANAGERS AND WORKMEN SHOULD ORGANISE SOME SYSTEM NOW BY WHICH A SUDDEN ATTACK CAN BE RESISTED.

### VII

The six rules which you have now read give you a general idea of what to do in the event of invasion. More detailed instructions may, when the time comes, be given you by the Military and Police Authorities and by the Local Defence Volunteers; they will NOT be given over the wireless so that might convey information to the enemy. These instructions must be obeyed at once.

Remember always that the best defence of Great Britain is the courage of her men and women. Here is your seventh rule:—

- (7) THINK BEFORE YOU ACT. BUT THINK ALWAYS OF YOUR COUNTRY BEFORE YOU THINK OF YOURSELF.

Approved with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office

(4) DO NOT GIVE ANY GERMAN ANYTHING. DO NOT TELL HIM ANYTHING. HIDE YOUR FOOD AND YOUR BICYCLES. HIDE NO PETROL. SEE THAT THE ENEMY GETS MOTOR BICYCLE. IF YOU HAVE A CAR OR WHEN NOT IN USE IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO REMOVE THE IGNITION KEY; YOU MUST MAKE IT USELESS TO ANYONE EXCEPT YOURSELF.

IF YOU ARE A GARAGE PROPRIETOR, YOU MUST WORK OUT A PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR STOCK OF PETROL AND YOUR CUSTOMERS' CARS. REMEMBER THAT INVADER'S MAIN DIFFICULTIES. MAKE SURE THAT NO INVADER WILL BE ABLE TO GET HOLD OF YOUR CARS, PETROL, MAPS OR BICYCLES.

*Taedet caeli convexa tueri*

---

(It becomes dispiriting constantly to watch the arch of heaven)

VIRGIL, *AENEID*, Book IV



## Preface to the 2014 Edition

---

I remember the daylight raids in the summer of 1940. Sometimes whole formations of German bombers slipped between the radar beams and evaded the RAF fighter squadrons. One such daytime air raid remains a vivid memory. There must have been fifty bombers and they were flying in a box formation. I was in Marylebone Road (my father was in charge of an air-raid medical post situated temporarily in the Western Ophthalmic Hospital). Everyone was looking up at the planes and much of the motor traffic had stopped. No one ran for cover but that may have been due to the shock of seeing the enemy so near, so resolute, so seemingly fearless. Their formation so perfect, like the ones my father had taken me to see at the Hendon air displays before the war.

Steadily the formation passed over to bomb north London. The motor traffic around me started up again, and life continued as if on a normal peacetime day. That's how the war was during those early days after Hitler's armies had smashed their way through Allied defences to occupy Belgium, France and Holland. Our morale was high. Winston Churchill was in Downing Street and there was a consensus that it was better to be without Continental obligations.

The daylight air battles of 1940 ended when September arrived. As the days shortened the German bomber fleets attacked at night. At daybreak each morning we emerged from the air-raid shelter and walked home past shattered buildings. On one such dreadful morning in Crawford Street, Marylebone, Mr Stabler's newsagents corner shop from which I did my paper-round was just a tall pile of broken bricks. Mr Stabler was under them and dead. There would be no paper-round that morning or for many mornings to come. My parents hurried me along lest I was late for school. The night bombers came again and again; they came every night for three months. And for civilians in England the war had only just begun.

The Battle of Britain was undeniably a turning point in world history. I say 'undeniably', but there are quite a number of people who continue to debate that fact. Simplistic reasoning encourages such people to say that in the summer of 1940 the German Navy was in no shape to support an invasion and that in any case the Germans had none of the specialist landing craft and weaponry that proved vital for the Anglo-American armies landing in Normandy four years later.

All that is true; but if the Germans had defeated Fighter Command the German Luftwaffe would have ranged over England with impunity. With command of the air the Germans could have come across the English Channel without hindrance. Britain's army, shattered after the Dunkirk evacuation, bereft of its heavy equipment and still re-forming its regiments, would have been no match for the battle-hardened German armies that were now brimming with the self-confidence of victory after victory and raring to complete their conquest of Europe. As the old saying goes: 'Without Trafalgar there would have been no Waterloo.' The Battle of Britain was Trafalgar.

Writing this book was a project very dear to my heart. There was a time when I believed that history is self-rectifying. I believed that, no matter how distorted the accounts of news and current events, in the course of time a more truthful and useful consensus would emerge. Now I know better. In fact it is the myths and fabrications that endure and become each nation's historical reference. With this in mind I was determined to write an account of the Battle that was as accurate as I could make it.

I had served in the RAF and, as a photographer, flown in Lancaster bombers and Mosquito fighters. Many of my friends were RAF men. I had written *Bomber*, a fictional but realistic account

an RAF air raid on Germany. During the research for *Bomber* the Royal Netherlands Air Force has most kindly let me spend time on their airfield at Deelen, which was little changed from when the Luftwaffe was there. By the kindness of good friends I was able to be one of the crew of a Heinkel He 111 that was flown to Germany. The gleaming black bomber was due to go into a museum and, for that reason, special permission had been granted for it to keep its Luftwaffe livery, even including the *strenglich verboten* swastika on the tail fin.

There were few pilots qualified and checked-out to fly an ancient Heinkel bomber from England to Germany. Our pilot let no one think that this task gave him any pleasure. Along with me the third member of the crew was a cheerful American. After a brief hello we climbed aboard to start our flight to Siegen, a tiny hill-top airfield about 50 miles east of Cologne. We were airborne, heading east at about 4,000 feet (no pressurized cabin so this was high enough), when the pilot asked if anyone had brought a map. Luckily I had a couple of maps that were given free to customers at Esso petrol stations. Dedicated to the needs of motorists, they were updated frequently. This was a time when in Belgium the autoroutes were still being built, starting with the clover-leaf interchanges. It was the bright concrete patterns that made it reasonably easy to see where we were. To do this comfortably I spread myself out in the bomb-aimer's position. It was soon after settling in there that I heard the pilot call to the American and say that we were running out of fuel and would have to land somewhere soon. From my map reading I could see we were now nearing Antwerp, and any remaining doubts were removed as we approached the airport and saw ANTWERP painted in giant letters across the roof of the hanger.

I have no idea what flight plan had been prepared, but subsequent events showed clearly that the Belgians in the air-traffic control tower at Antwerp were unprepared for a Luftwaffe bomber complete with sinister black crosses and a large swastika, circling the airfield and descending low with each circuit. We landed without permission. They were, we gathered, angry. But the men on the petrol bowser were keen to do business and as soon as they understood our need for fuel they were climbing over the wings with nozzle in hand. It wasn't as easy as it looked. Whatever kind of cap device the Luftwaffe had on their petrol tanks it did not reconcile readily with Belgian nozzles. But eventually the petrol flowed and one of the tanks was filled. I won't describe the scene that followed as the Belgian bowser men demanded cash payment. Our pilot shrugged, the American said he had no money, and when it seemed that we were all going to be interned or imprisoned or merely beat about the head, I offered them my American Express card. In the absence of any alternative, and the petrol already aboard, they took it. It was only after we were back in the air that the American discovered that we had never been short of petrol. There was a switch above the pilot's head which, when one tank was empty, transferred fuel to the other tank.

This unscheduled landing had delayed our arrival at Siegen by over two hours but I was amazed to see at least a thousand spectators still waiting there in the drizzling rain to greet us. As we stepped from the bomber one-time 'General of Fighters' Adolf Galland, the most famous of all German ace pilots, together with a group of veteran flyers, greeted us with gratitude; as if we were personally donating the Heinkel to them.

While we warmed up over coffee with the flyers in a tiny airport restaurant Galland said to me, 'Is there anything we can do for you?'

It was a once-in-a-lifetime offer. I said, 'I am trying to find a night-fighter veteran who flew Junkers Ju 88s against the RAF night bombers.'

'Easy,' said Galland and within thirty minutes I was in a light plane heading to Düsseldorf and an evening talking with 'Fips' Radusch, a famous Luftwaffe night-fighter ace.

I was lucky over the years to meet and correspond with combatants of all ranks on both sides of the war. As I talked to these men – aided immensely by my wife Ysabele's linguistic skills, which enabled me to pass through doors that would otherwise have remained shut – it became clear even then that the egos of the victors had started to obscure historical fact. It was time to untwist the record. I was determined to write a history book unlike all the history books I had read – and I had read many – a book that dealt more in facts than in opinions.

So you will see I have given prime importance to the men and their machines. For example, it was Britain's remarkable good fortune that Rolls-Royce had produced the Merlin engine. Fitted into Supermarine's Spitfire airframe it became a weapon that was in every way the equal of the Messerschmitt Bf 109 that opposed it. The performance of the two aircraft was remarkably similar in range, horsepower, speed, ceiling and manoeuvrability. But while the Daimler Benz engine in the Messerschmitt was of 33.93-litres the superb Merlin had a capacity of only 26 litres. There were many elements at play in the Battle, but the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine was an incomparable masterpiece of engineering and a war-winner. Fitted into the Hawker Hurricane – a more primitive airframe but far more numerous in the Battle – it made a formidable fighter. Squadron fitters and riggers could often mend shot-up Hurricane airframes without sending them to the few overworked specialists who repaired the Spitfires. But there were other factors that can't be ignored. In the crucial month of June 1940, while the British factories produced 446 fighters, the Messerschmitt factory at Augsburg produced 140.

It was while comparing this Daimler-Benz engine with the Rolls-Royce Merlin that I became interested in aero-engines and saw for the first time their prime importance in the entire history of aviation. From the Wright brothers right up to the present day, airframe designers have to wait upon engine manufacturers before completing their work on the drawing boards. I found it compelling from many points of view. The personal vendettas, stupidity, treachery and corruption in the contracts, the determination of governments and businessmen to distort progress made for a fascinating social history as well as a military one. It was a neglected aspect of aviation and I embarked upon a history of aero-engines; perhaps one day I will publish it.

Meanwhile, here is the story of the Battle of Britain – our Trafalgar – and I have told it with an overriding determination to stick to the truth. If it shatters some myths and flag-waving nonsense it is only to reveal a more inspiring truth of which we can be proud and grateful.

Len Deighton, 2001

# Introduction

---

by A. J. P. Taylor

Bismarck once asked Count Helmuth von Moltke whether he could guarantee victory in the coming war against Austria. Moltke replied, 'Nothing is certain in war.' War is indeed full of surprises and the Second World War had many, from the German breakthrough at Sedan in May 1940 to the dropping of the two American bombs on Japanese towns in August 1945. No action, however, was as surprising and unexpected as the aerial combats between the Royal Air Force and the Luftwaffe in the summer of 1940. Imaginative novelists, and particularly H. G. Wells, had described future engagements between vast armadas of the air. Few of those who determined air strategy in practice believed that such forecasts had any reality.

The key to the story is that the air commanders before the Second World War had very little previous experience to draw on. The materials and methods of war are of course constantly changing. Generals acquire rifles, machine guns and tanks. Admirals acquire bigger battleships and submarines. But they have some idea from earlier wars of the problems that are likely to face them. The air commanders had no such resource. The war in the air of the First World War had been largely a matter of dog-fights between individual aircraft. The few bombing raids had caused terror and little effective damage. Those who determined air strategy after the war had to proceed by dogma alone, a dogma that was little more than guesswork.

The dogma was simple: 'The bomber will always get through.' General Giulio Douhet said this in Italy; Billy Mitchell said it in the United States. Both were detached theorists. It was more important that Lord Trenchard said it in England, for Trenchard was Chief of Air Staff for ten years, from 1919 to 1929. Trenchard was determined to have an independent air force, and the only way for it to be more than an auxiliary of the army and navy was to have a strategy of its own. This strategy was independent bombing. The air commanders practised this strategy successfully. The British bombed defenceless villages in Iraq; the Italians bombed defenceless villages in Abyssinia; the Germans bombed defenceless villages in Spain; the Japanese bombed defenceless cities in China.

But was there no defence? The air chiefs answered unanimously: none. The only answer was to possess an even stronger bomber force than the enemy with which to destroy his bases and his industrial resources. The British, thanks to Trenchard, accepted this doctrine wholeheartedly. They calculated the strength of the largest air force in Europe and made this their yardstick, just as British Admirals had made the German navy their yardstick before the First World War. In the early days the French air force provided the yardstick, though it is difficult to believe that there was ever a serious chance of a war between France and Great Britain. In the 1930s the German Luftwaffe became the obvious rival. The British Air Staff clamoured for more bombers and, when the RAF slipped behind, declared that Great Britain was in imminent danger. Everything, it seemed, turned on the bomber race.

In December 1937 there was a revolution in British air policy. It was sensational though little regarded. The year before, Sir Thomas Inskip had been made Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence. He was an unimpressive figure whose appointment had been dismissed as the most surprising since Caligula made his horse a consul. But Inskip had a clear lawyer's mind. He recognised that the British were losing the bomber race with Germany. Then he proceeded to the

striking conclusion that it was not necessary for them to win it. For while the Germans aimed at a short war and therefore wanted a knock-out blow, the British merely needed to survive until blockade and perhaps the aid of allies brought victory in a long war. In his own words, 'The *role* of our Air Force is not an early knock-out blow ... but to prevent the Germans from knocking us out.'

Inskip had also a practical argument. Previously it had been plausible and perhaps even reasonable to claim that there was no defence against bombers and that they would always get through. Now there were new assets on the British side. Their new fighters, especially the Spitfire, were faster and more formidable than any that had gone before and could challenge the German bombers. Radar was being developed by British scientists and with it the British fighters would know when the bombers were coming. Defence was possible after all. Of course this, too, was a dogma, not based on experience. Inskip's view it was worth trying.

He had a still more practical argument. Fighters cost less than bombers to build. Therefore more could be produced for the same money and the great British public, who understood nothing of the difference between fighters and bombers, would be the more impressed. This argument was decisive with the Cabinet, which accepted Inskip's recommendation on 22 December 1937. The Air Marshal Trenchard raged and Trenchard declared in the House of Lords that the decision 'might well lose us the war'. But the revolution in British air policy had begun. Some of Inskip's arguments, such as his reliance on blockade, were mistaken. But he deserves some credit as the man who made British victory in the Battle of Britain possible.

The second man who exercised decisive influence also arrived at his position in an almost accidental way. Sir Hugh Dowding was the senior member of the Air Council. He had every claim to become Chief of Air Staff in 1937. But he was a quiet, reserved man, obstinate in pressing his views and not a good mixer. He was pushed off to become head of Fighter Command, then regarded by the other Air Marshals as a second-rate post. Dowding considered the problem of fighter strategy in a cool, rational way. Far from him was any romantic idea of vast armadas contending in the skies or dog-fights such as there had been in the First World War. The sole task of Fighter Command, as Dowding saw it, was the defence of Great Britain and this could be accomplished by defeating the German bombers. Without them the German fighters would be harmless. Dowding planned an economical campaign to husband his fighter force at all costs.

Dowding's single-minded concentration on the defence of Great Britain often brought trouble for him after the war started. When the Germans broke through in Flanders the French pleaded for more British fighter squadrons. Churchill acquiesced. Dowding resisted this emotional decision and got his way after the Chief of Air Staff appealed to the Cabinet on his behalf. In July, when the Germans began to attack British shipping in the Channel, Dowding again refused to involve his fighters in that to him irrelevant conflict. Dowding also had trouble within his own force. Some of the air commanders resented Dowding's cautious policy and clamoured for the tactic of the 'big wing'. As a result Dowding suffered from disloyalty as well as from lack of understanding.

There was a third decisive figure in the Battle of Britain. In May 1940 Churchill made Lord Beaverbrook Minister of Aircraft Production. Beaverbrook's task was to produce aircraft as quickly as possible without regard to established procedure. He discharged this task successfully and to the great annoyance of the Air Marshals. Beaverbrook was an isolationist who had little interest in the continental war. He came alive only when the defence of Great Britain was in question. He formed a close alliance with Dowding, who shared his outlook. Beaverbrook turned out fighters where the Air Marshals called for bombers. He sent new fighters direct to the squadrons. He trampled over all bureaucratic obstacles. Dowding paid him this tribute: 'The country owes as much to Lord

Beaverbrook for the Battle of Britain as it does to me. Without his drive behind me I could not have carried on during the battle.' Thanks to Beaverbrook, Fighter Command possessed more aircraft at the end of the Battle than it had possessed at the beginning. But as Len Deighton shows, not even Beaverbrook could remedy the wastage of pilots.

The decisive difference between the British and the Germans is that the British, directed by Dowding, knew what they were doing and the Germans did not. Though the Germans constantly boasted of their overwhelming might in the air, they had never contemplated the problems involved. Like the British Air Marshals they simply clung to the dogma that the bomber would always get through. A full-scale attack on Great Britain had never entered into their plans. Indeed they had never considered a direct attack on Great Britain. All of them from Hitler downwards assumed that Great Britain would make peace once France was defeated, and even the defeat of France came much sooner than they had expected.

The armistice between Germany and France was signed on 22 June. Hitler said to General Alfred Jodl, 'The British have lost the war, but they don't know it; one must give them time, and they will come round.' Hitler gave the British a month. Then on 19 July he addressed the Reichstag. After appealing to 'reason and common sense', he threatened the British with 'unending suffering and misery' unless they made peace. Lord Halifax, though himself inclining towards a compromise peace, was given the task of brushing Hitler's peace offer aside on the radio. Hitler's bluff had been called. He had now to make good his threats. On 21 July 'Sea-lion', the invasion of Great Britain, was decided on in principle. Ten days later the date for invasion was provisionally fixed for 15 September. Hitler was sceptical from the start and doubted whether the invasion was 'technically feasible'. In other campaigns, such as in France and later in Russia, he had gone to the front himself and taken command. With the preparations for Sea-lion, he retired to the Berghof and watched the proceedings with detached curiosity.

Sea-lion has attracted a great deal of attention. As a practical operation it never existed. The army chiefs accumulated a considerable force with which they would overrun England once others had arranged the landings for them. They themselves made no contribution to the problem. Erich Raeder, the Grand Admiral who commanded an almost non-existent German fleet, regarded any invasion as impossible unless the British had already surrendered. He went through the motions of assembling river barges and coastal steamers in order to please the Generals and to avoid annoying Hitler. But he never took the talk of invasion seriously.

The Luftwaffe was therefore on its own. Göring was delighted to undertake the task. Like other army chiefs he believed that the bomber would always get through. 'Eagle Attack', the Luftwaffe offensive, and Sea-lion had no connexion. Hitler's instruction was 'to establish conditions favourable to the conquest of Britain'. But the Luftwaffe simply assumed that fleets of bombers, escorted by fighters, would sail over England and pulverise the British into surrender – Guernica on a larger scale. The Luftwaffe did not co-ordinate its acts with the needs of the other services. It made few attacks on British warships and often bombed harbours and airfields that the army would need if it ever landed. Luftwaffe strategy was in fact a supreme assertion of the theory favoured by the Air Marshals that bombing unsupported by land and sea forces could win a war.

The Luftwaffe's attempt to reduce Great Britain by bombing failed, perhaps by a narrow margin. It also suffered from the German failure to consider its problems in advance. The attempt was a rushed affair where no German had time to stop and think, and in any case Göring rarely thought. Raeder was hypnotised by the prospect of the Royal Navy. No German remarked how British ships had been driven back by air attack during the Norwegian campaign. Again no one in Germany seems to have



considered independent landings by paratroopers. Many people in England expected them to do so. ~~All~~ all events during my service in the Home Guard in the summer of 1940 I spent my time patrolling the Oxford gas works (with an unloaded rifle) in the firm belief that the entire weight of the German paratroop force would be directed against them.

The Battle of Britain was a fairly small affair. Hitler called off Sea-lion on 17 September and there was never any attempt to repeat it. Hitler was not seriously troubled by this set-back. Sea-lion was a botched plan, rushed up in a hurry and without importance in German strategy. Hitler's mind was already set on the invasion of Russia and he did not fear that Great Britain, though unsubdued, could do him any real harm. The British on the other hand were invigorated. They believed that they had won a great victory or rather that the pilots of Fighter Command had won a great victory for them. And so they had. The British were a maritime people. They had learned from previous wars that the task was to survive, and victory in the Battle of Britain enabled them to do so. To some extent the confidence was misplaced. Great Britain came nearer to defeat in the prolonged Battle of the Atlantic against the U-boats than she did in the Battle of Britain. But psychologically the Battle of Britain was the more decisive.

The Battle of Britain had an unforeseen consequence, unpleasant to all concerned. Almost unintentionally the Germans turned from daylight to night bombing while the Battle was still on. They continued this campaign throughout the winter, as many British cities bore witness. The British attempted to counter this campaign by night bombing of their own. It seemed that the bomber would always get through after all. This expectation again proved wrong. No decisive results were achieved. The Germans virtually broke off their campaign in May 1941, perhaps because the Luftwaffe was needed in Russia and the Mediterranean. The British continued their campaign throughout the war again indecisively. Bombing was not effective until long-range fighters could accompany the bombers, and this had to wait until 1944. Yet this had already been demonstrated in the summer of 1940.

The Battle of Britain had a more profound result. It put Great Britain back in the war. After the fall of France it seemed that Great Britain could make no stroke against Germany except such marginal acts as the attack on the French fleet at Oran. Hitler himself, to adopt MacArthur's phrase, was content when he left Great Britain 'to wither on the vine'. Suddenly the British showed that they were still in the war and still fighting. The Battle of Britain, though a defensive battle, was at any rate a battle. Thanks to it, Great Britain was still taken seriously as a combatant Great Power, particularly in the United States. As an uncovenanted blessing, Italy gave the British further opportunities for victory in the winter of 1940. These victories may have been irrelevant to the defeat of Germany but they showed that the British were in action all the same.

It would be agreeable to record that the victors were duly honoured as Nelson had been posthumously after the Battle of Trafalgar. Some of them were. Churchill honoured the fighter pilots with the immortal phrase, 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.' One man was passed over. The Air Marshals were angry that their dogmatic faith in independent bombing had been disproved. The advocates of the 'big wing' received official approval after the Battle was over, as Len Deighton describes. On 25 November Dowding was relieved of his command and passed into oblivion. Yet 'he was the only man who ever won a major fighter battle or ever won one.'

Such were the strategical ideas and lack of them that lay behind the Battle of Britain. There were more practical considerations. In the last resort battles are decided by the men and machines that take part in them. I am afraid that many of us who write about war neglect this side of it and write in gre

sweeping terms. Len Deighton does not. After all, if the aeroplane had not been invented, the Battle of Britain could not have been fought, and quality of aircraft is the central feature of Len Deighton's book. His brilliant analysis makes clear the technical problems of aircraft design in the interwar years. The Germans talked big and almost gave the impression that with such ingenuity and drive they ought to have won. I suspect that Erhard Milch is by way of being Len Deighton's hero.

Yet, however ingenious the Germans were in design, and however forceful in production, they lost the Battle of Britain, or to be more precise did not win it, which comes to the same thing. Dowding's superior strategy counted for much but each individual combat in the skies counted also. Here, too, Len Deighton provides a detailed account, fuller than any previously written, of how the British and Polish pilots prevailed. Indeed, in one way or another, he explains everything that happened in those days, now distant, of August and September 1940.

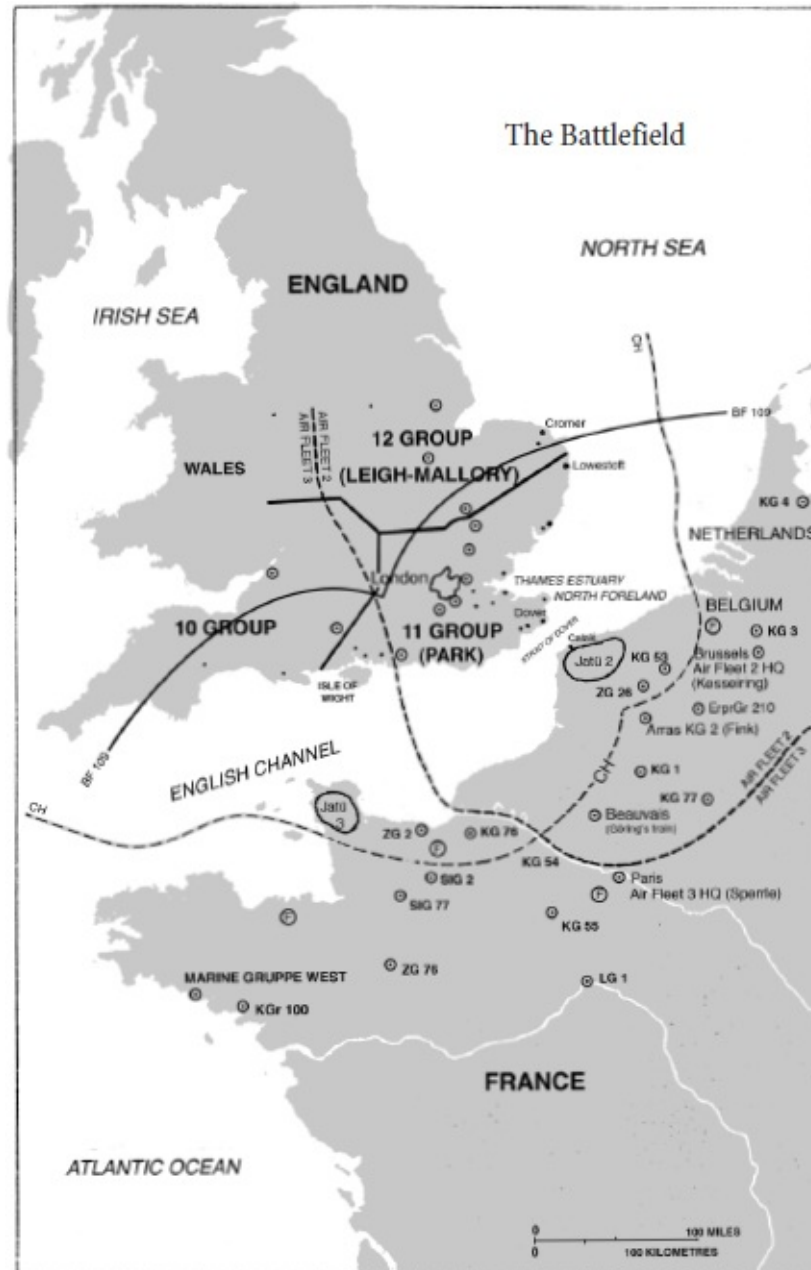


FIGURE 1. The Battlefield

The two German Air Fleets had a boundary line (black broken line) that extended over England. The German single-seat fighters (Bf 109s) were concentrated at Cherbourg and the Pas de Calais under the command of *Jagdfliegerführer – Jafü* – of Air Fleets 2 and 3 respectively. The black line (marked BF 109) shows the extreme range of the Messerschmitts, but combat would make this much shorter, as the pilots used full throttle and more fuel.

The most important bomber units – *Kampfgeschwader 1* (KG 1), etc. – are shown as at the airfield of *Geschwader* sta *Kampfgruppe 100* (KGr 100), shown as the most westerly Luftwaffe unit, was the German pathfinder force.

From *Marine Gruppe West* four-engined Focke-Wulf FW 200s were sent out into the Atlantic – sometimes flying all the way round to Stavanger, Norway – and provided the weather reports that the Air Fleets needed to plan their attacks.

The vitally important RAF sector airfields, where the Operations Rooms were situated, are ringed; other fighter airfields are shown as dots. Bawdsey was the home of British radar development. The extent of the normal 10-metre Chain Home radar coverage, for aircraft up to 15,000 feet, is shown as a broken line (marked CH). It includes inland areas where the German aircraft formed up, but at this range it was little more than what the operators called ‘mush’.

Göring’s private train went back to Germany, and then to the Pas de Calais. It is shown at Beauvais, its original site, which was also the HQ of *Fliegerkorps I*. Other *Fliegerkorps* HQ are shown as F. These, like the Air Fleet HQs, had advanced HQs nearer the coast.

Lowestoft marks the place where Peter Townsend went after the Dornier Do 17, and Cromer is where Douglas Bader also found a Dornier. (See text for 11 July, beginning on p. 144.)

**Strategy**

History is swamped by patriotic myths about the summer of 1940. Many of these were generated by the shame of that portion of the British public who – after the fall of France – declared that it was time to negotiate terms with Hitler’s Germany. It was a view shared by men of the Left and of the Right. The former believing that the Hitler-Stalin peace pact would last, and the latter hoping that it would not.

The Swedish ambassador in London reported back to his Ministry in Stockholm that he had spoken with people, including Members of Parliament, who wanted to seek terms with Hitler. He reported to a senior member of the British government as saying common sense not bravado would govern British policy. From Washington, the British ambassador was prepared to seek out contacts for such a move. In Lisbon Sir Samuel Hoare and in Berne David Kelly made contact with possible intermediaries to get German viewpoints.

Lloyd George, the ‘Churchill’ of the First World War, wanted peace with Hitler, had wanted it for some time, and seemed not to mind who heard him say so. In Berlin his name had already been mentioned as a possible leader of a puppet regime. Even in the tiny, five-man War Cabinet that Churchill had formed, there was not unanimous determination to go on fighting. Lord Halifax, the Foreign Minister (who had only narrowly missed becoming Prime Minister instead of Churchill), suggested that they prepare a reply to Germany, to have ready if Hitler offered peace on reasonable terms. Chamberlain, now in Churchill’s War Cabinet as Lord President, supported the idea of compromise.

Sardonic then was Churchill’s choice of Halifax to go on the BBC and reject unequivocally Hitler’s peace offer. For Churchill there would be no talk of peace terms. Already 65 years old, long derided as a warmonger, he declared his intention to fight, ‘however long and hard the road may be’. Significantly perhaps, Churchill went to great trouble to get an important member of the Royal Family to the far side of the Atlantic where the Duke of Windsor became Governor of the Bahamas.

Churchill called himself Minister of Defence, artfully ‘careful not to define my rights and duties’. Daily meetings with the Chiefs of Staff gave Churchill tight control of the progress of the war. The three service ministers were brushed aside and not even invited into the War Cabinet.

Churchill had his priorities right; Fighter Command’s men and machines would decide whether or not Hitler came to London. Churchill, the first British Prime Minister to wear a uniform while in office (even Wellington did not do so), chose the uniform of the RAF. His only major change in the system, or the men who ran it, was to create a Ministry of Aircraft Production and give it to a newspaper tycoon to run.

But not until the Battle of Britain was won did Churchill gain the wholehearted support of the British public. No wonder then that he devoted so much of his time and energy, to say nothing of rhetoric, to convincing the British that they had won a mighty victory.

Broadcasting over the BBC on 11 September 1940, Churchill said, ‘It ranks with the days when the Spanish Armada was approaching the Channel, and Drake was finishing his game of bowls; or when Nelson stood between us and Napoleon’s Grand Army at Boulogne.’ Later he was to point out that the great air battles of 15 September took place, like Waterloo, on a Sunday.

The Battle won, men forgot their ideas about a compromise peace with Hitler. Wartime propaganda, much of it primarily intended for American newspaper and radio correspondents, provided material from which a David and Goliath myth was engineered. It suited all concerned except the Germans, who still today insist that there was no such event as the Battle of Britain.

The Battle of Britain, although small in scale compared with the later fighting, was nevertheless one of the decisive battles of the Second World War. It converted American opinion to a belief that the British, given help, might win. This belief fed anti-German feeling. Until now dislike of Nazis had been repressed, because Americans felt that they couldn't do much about it. In 1940 they began to believe they could do something about it, and Britain provided a focal point for many disparate anti-Nazi elements, from émigrés to labour unions.

In military terms, the Battle proved that Britain was a secure base, from which the USA could fight Germany. More importantly, but less accurately, it convinced America that air-power was the decisive weapon with which to do it.

In June 1940 the French signed an armistice with the Germans. The British had been killed, captured, or had departed. The refugees turned round and began the walk home. Hitler took two of his comrades on a tour of the 1914–1918 battlefields, where he had served as a corporal.

Hitler now ruled a vast proportion of Europe: from the Arctic Ocean to the Bay of Biscay. Stalin, his new friend, was supplying oil, cattle, grain and coal. Rumania, Hungary and the Balkans were anxious to do business with their rich and powerful neighbour, as teams of German technicians investigated the resources of the conquered lands.

The German victories had been a direct result of brilliant generalship and highly skilled, well-equipped armies with good morale. Yet by the spring of 1940 – in spite of months of war with Britain – the Wehrmacht had made no preparations whatsoever for any direct assault upon a hostile shoreline.



FIGURE 2. June 1940 – Hitler Rules Europe

By the summer of 1940 Hitler had created a centralised Europe ruled from Berlin. The USSR had invaded Poland and split it down the middle with Germany. That part of France not occupied by the German forces was little more than a satellite. The German mark was pegged artificially high in respect to other currencies so that wealth moved back into Germany without the victims realising what was happening. Anxious to be in at the kill, Italy declared war in the final hours of France's agony and nibbled pieces of territory. The Balkan countries, given the choice of co-operating fully or being taken over, co-operated.



Unlike the Anglo-American armies later in the war, the Germans had no landing craft – for tank trucks, or men – no artificial breakwaters, no trained beach-masters, or any system of sea-route marking. In fact, the only army with any experience, or adequate equipment, was the Japanese army which operated its own sea transport. It had made amphibious landings on the banks of the Yangtze river in 1938. At the time there had been a flutter of interest from military commentators but, apart from some experiments by the United States Marine Corps, no high commands envisaged a need for such techniques.

It was not until 12 July 1940 that the OKW – the High Command of the Wehrmacht – prepared a memorandum about invading England. Even then General Alfred Jodl, its author, described it as being ‘in the form of a river crossing on a broad front’. He called it operation *Löwe* (Lion). Hitler took the memo and used it as a basis for his Directive No. 16, ‘on preparations for a landing operation against England’. He changed the name to *Seelöwe* (Sea-lion).

Hitler’s Directive No. 16, a top-secret document of which only seven copies were made, asked the army and navy chiefs for more proposals. But the Luftwaffe had a specific task: it must reduce the RAF morally and physically to a state where it could not deliver any significant attack upon the invasion units. To Göring that seemed possible.

In the heady days of that summer anything seemed possible. In Berlin representatives from the Welsh Nationalist movement were already talking of their coming role. So was a senior official of the IRA, which had been exploding bombs in England for several months before the war. The Welshman made no progress with the Germans; the Irishman was sent home in a U-boat in August 1940, but died en route and was buried at sea, his body shrouded in a German naval ensign.

In France the German army was devoting some of its finest units to preparations for a great victory parade through Paris. *Generaloberst* Heinz Guderian, architect of the blitzkrieg, was in the capital along with many other senior members of the army and air force. *Feldmarschall* Hugo Sperrle, commander of Air Fleet 3, had made it his headquarters.

Units rehearsed for the victory procession included massed motorcycles and tanks. German flags were prepared for all the façades in the Place de la Concorde, and blue hortensias for the Étoile. Preparations of the event were prepared but not yet dated. The only cloud on the horizon was a growing feeling that the widespread publicity would invite a decidedly unfriendly flypast by the RAF. On 20 July caution prevailed; the whole scheme was abandoned and the men went back to their units.

By that time, Berlin had enjoyed a victory parade. It was a modest affair. Local conscripts of the 218th Infantry Division marched through the Brandenburg Gate. Joseph Goebbels, Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda, took the salute. Hitler was not present. He was saving himself for the following evening, when the whole Reichstag and an astounding array of Generals had been summoned to hear his speech. Appropriately this glittering event took place in the Kroll Opera House. Hitler’s speech was a long one and he used it to claim personal credit for the victories of 1940. ‘I advised the German forces of the possibility of such a development and gave them the necessary detailed orders,’ said the ex-Corporal to one of the most dazzling arrays of military brains ever gathered under one roof. ‘I planned to aim for the Seine and Loire rivers, and also get a position on the Somme and the Aisne from which the third attack could be made.’

One eye-witness was William Shirer, who later described Hitler as an actor who this day mixed the confidence of the conqueror with a humility that always goes down well when a man is on top. Almost in passing, Hitler offered Churchill a chance to make peace. It was ‘an appeal to reason’, said Hitler. Whether he hoped that his appeal would bring peace is still argued. Some say it was no more than a way of ‘proving’ to the German public that it was the British – and more specifically Churchill – who

wanted the war. We shall never know. It was in Hitler's nature to seek opportunities and pursue those that seemed most promising. 'So oder so,' he would repeatedly tell the men around him: achieve either this way or that way.

When the applause of that multitude of generals, politicians and foreign dignitaries died away Hitler began to distribute the honours. He created no less than twenty-seven new generals. Mostly they were men who had commanded armies or panzer groups to win for him the great victories in Poland, Norway and the west. But artfully Hitler arranged that yes-men such as Alfred Jodl and Wilhelm Keitel – who had told Hitler, 'my Führer, you are the greatest military commander of history' – got double promotions and seniority. While Gustav von Wietersheim – whose motorised infantry corps had consolidated the panzer thrust by which Guderian skewered France – was passed over because he had argued with the Führer in 1938. The lesson was learned by some.

So many new promotions were announced that there was not time for the Generals to receive Hitler's personal congratulations. As each name was called, a General stood up and gave the Nazi salute. There was then a brief pause while other officers leaned across to shake hands and, according to Shirer, slap the back of the officer honoured.

By the time that Hitler had finished creating Generals, and no less than a dozen Field Marshals, there could have been few men in the opera house who did not understand that this was a cunning piece of megalomania that, while thoroughly debasing the coinage of high rank, defined Hitler as the man who owned the mint.

It was an unprecedented step. The Kaiser made only five Field Marshals in the whole of the First World War. Even General Erich Ludendorff had failed to find a baton in his knapsack. Now Hitler made twelve after less than a year of war, and the fighting had covered only a few weeks. But the new *Generalfeldmarschälle* were delighted. In Germany such exalted rank, from which the holder could neither be retired nor demoted (or even promoted), brought the provision of an office, a secretary, staff officer, motor vehicles and horses, and full pay and privileges. And all this for life – or until defeat. A Field Marshal ranked above Reich Chancellor in the protocol lists but not above Führer, which was a new post invented by Hitler for himself.

In order to rescue Göring from the new squalor of Field Marshal rank, Hitler invented a new post for him too. Göring received an extra-large baton. Hitler passed it to where Göring was sitting alone at the Speaker's Chair, and the *Reichsmarschall* could not resist opening the box to get a glimpse of it. And for Göring an old medal, the *Grosskreuz*, was revived. From this date onwards Göring can be seen in photographs wearing his special uniform with the huge cross dangling at his neck.

Three of Göring's Luftwaffe Generals became Field Marshals at the Kroll Opera House ceremony. One was the dapper little Erhard Milch, senior man at the Air Ministry, as well as Inspector General of the Luftwaffe. The other two were Albert Kesselring, commander of Air Fleet 2, and Hugo Sperrle of Air Fleet 3. Both men were double-jumped in promotion from *General der Flieger* to Field Marshal. Was this an idea of Göring's, to lessen Milch's power? Until this day he had been the Luftwaffe's only *Generaloberst*. If so, this divide-and-conquer policy was something Göring had learned from Hitler. To be an arbitrator between rival subordinates is a well-established device of the tyrant. It consolidates power. But in July, as the first skirmishes of the Battle of Britain were taking place, Göring and his three Field Marshals were about to learn that it was no way to win a battle.

## **Hermann Göring**

Hermann Göring grew up in the gothic shadows of a castle at Veldenstein near Nuremberg. His father was a retired government official, once senior officer in German South-West Africa and Consul

General in Haiti. Göring's godfather – a wealthy bachelor named Epenstein – was a friend of his family. He owned the castle, lived in stylish quarters on the top floor, and shared his bed with Göring's mother. Her husband tolerated this arrangement.

While still a small child, Hermann went to boarding school. He grew up to be an ill-disciplined boy, so bold that he seemed incapable of recognising physical danger. This seemed exactly the right qualification for military college, and so it proved. By the time war began, in the summer of 1914, Göring was a promising young infantry officer, although not promising enough to be accepted for flying training. So, without him, his closest friend, Bruno Loerzer, went off to get his wings.

As Loerzer finished pilot training, Hermann Göring was nearby, hospitalised by arthritis, after considerable front-line service. Göring could hardly walk, and there was no question of his returning to the trenches. Defying all military regulations, Loerzer put his friend into the back seat of his aeroplane, and they reported for duty, with Field Aviation Unit No. 25, as pilot and observer.

It says much for Göring's famous charm that the crippled young officer escaped a court-martial and was allowed to become an aviator. For the Air Service it proved a wise decision. This lame subaltern became one of Germany's most famous fighter pilots. He won the coveted *Orden Pour le Mérite* – the Blue Max – and succeeded von Richthofen to command *Jagdgeschwader 1*, the legendary 'flying circus'.

For Loerzer it was also a wise decision. Göring never forgot his friend's loyalty, and on 19 July 1940 at the Kroll Opera House he became a full Luftwaffe General.

In the final hours of the First World War, as communists fought to seize power throughout Germany, Göring came into conflict with a 'soldiers' soviet' in Darmstadt. Göring came off best, and he did later when faced with a mob intent on roughing up any officer in uniform, on the grounds that such men were responsible for the war which Germany had lost. But doubtless these events played a part in Göring's acceptance of the Nazi creed. And the Nazis' pathological hatred and fear of Jews went unchallenged by a man who had seen his father humiliated by his mother's Jewish lover.

In 1922 Hermann Göring joined the Nazi Party. The presence of this ex-officer war hero was very reassuring to the middle classes whose support the Nazis badly needed.

Göring was always the Nazi candidate for political office. He was used to show the voter how responsible the party could be when in power and how willing it was to conform to parliamentary democracy. And so it was Göring who became the President of the Reichstag and the Prime Minister of Prussia.

Hitler appreciated the importance of Göring. When the Nazis got power, Hitler gave him an authority second only to his own. Göring organised storm troopers, took over the Prussian Ministry of the Interior, formed the Gestapo, set up the first concentration camps, and took charge of the economy for the Nazi 'Four Year Plan'.

A fine horseman and a crack shot, Göring was able to combine his enthusiasm for hunting with a sincere concern for wildlife, and opposition to vivisection. In his youth he had been something of a womaniser but two contented marriages provided him with a stability that many of the other top Nazis did not have. He met his first wife, a countess, after flying through a snowstorm and landing on a frozen-over lake in Sweden. His passenger – a wellknown explorer who'd engaged Göring to fly him home – offered him hospitality in his castle. It was there that Göring met his future wife.

For pleasure Göring read detective stories, his favourite authors being Agatha Christie and Dashiell Hammett, but he could talk with some authority on subjects as varied as mountaineering and the Italian Renaissance. And he could do so in Italian if need be.

Göring's rise to power gave him a life-style rarely equalled in the twentieth century. He had

castles, several hunting estates with grand lodges, and town houses too. The most remarkable of all was Karinhall – named in memory of Göring's first wife – built between two lakes, with formal gardens, fountains and bronze statues, as well as a large section of private countryside. His servants were dressed in comic-opera outfits: knee-length coats with rich facings, high white gaiters, and silver-buckled shoes. There was a swimming pool, a vast library, gymnasium, art gallery, and one of the world's most elaborate model-railway layouts. His study was larger than most houses, and in its ante-room there was a wall covered with photographs inscribed with varying degrees of enthusiasm: Boris, King of Bulgaria, 'to the great marshal', Prince Paul, Regent of Yugoslavia, 'with thanks', Hindenburg, 'to Göring'.

The pink, girlish complexion, overweight body and many childish indulgences masked a personality capable of superhuman self-control. Göring, wounded during the 1923 putsch, became a morphine addict as a result of his treatment. He eventually cured himself of this addiction by willpower alone.

Five feet nine inches tall, Göring was dynamic – a fluent and persuasive enthusiast with a powerful handshake and clear blue eyes – and many of his antagonists fell prey to his charm.

Göring's civil power as Air Minister, his military rank as Commander in Chief of the Luftwaffe and his political status made him incomparably more powerful than any other military leader in Germany. To retain his advantage, Göring was quick to point out to Hitler any failing of his rivals: the army Generals. The power and prestige of pre-war Germany had been largely due to the show of air power that Göring's Luftwaffe had staged. Hitler responded by treating the Luftwaffe as a privileged 'Nazi' service, while describing his army and navy as 'Imperial' legacies of the old regime.

As a confidant of Hitler, and by 1940 named as Hitler's successor, Göring had personal access to the supreme command. As a 'General' who gave the army the closest possible co-operation, Göring was important to the men of the General Staff. As the air ace who inherited von Richthofen's command, Göring had an unassailable authority among his own flyers.

In 1940 the victories in the west gave the 47-year-old Göring new power, and new tastes of luxury. He went shopping for diamonds in Amsterdam, and took a suite at the Ritz Hotel in Paris. Göring liked Paris so much that he decided to move into a fine house on the Rue du Faubourg St Honoré. This was the British Embassy – now unoccupied except for one caretaker – made it no less attractive.

Göring took the German ambassador with him to inspect the property but when they explained the purpose of their visit, the custodian said, 'Over my dead body, your Excellency', and closed the door in their faces.

As far back as 1933, Hitler had authorised Göring to start a national art collection which would remain in Göring's hands for his lifetime but then become a public collection. The conquests of 1940 and the way in which the European currencies were all pegged artificially lower than the German mark, gave new impetus to this collection. Many art treasures were simply seized: 'ownerless' Jewish collections and 'enemy possessions' were taken into new custody. To obtain paintings from unconquered countries, Göring simply swapped his surplus. A dealer in Lucerne, Switzerland, received 25 French Impressionist paintings in exchange for 5 Cranachs and 2 German Primitives.

The regal splendour of Göring's life-style was completed by his train. Code-named 'Asia', its vanguard was a pilot train which accommodated the staff – civilian and military – in comfort that extended to bathing facilities. There were also low-loaders for cars, and freight wagons for Göring's shopping.

The train in which Göring travelled, and sometimes lived, was specially weighted to provide a smooth ride. This luxury meant two of Germany's heaviest locomotives were needed to move it. Or

---

sample content of Fighter: The True Story of the Battle of Britain

- [read online \*Beyond, Serenity, Endurance \(The Afterlife series Box Set, Books 1-3\) online\*](#)
- [download \*Legend of the Lancasters: The Bomber War from England 1942-45\*](#)
- [\*Learn Small Business Accounting in 7 Days pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub, doc, mobi\*](#)
- [read \*Dark Corners\*](#)
- [download \*The 24-Hour Wine Expert\*](#)
- [\*What She Wants \(Life in Icicle Falls, Book 3\) pdf\*](#)
  
- <http://pittiger.com/lib/Randomized-Algorithms.pdf>
- <http://ramazotti.ru/library/Legend-of-the-Lancasters--The-Bomber-War-from-England-1942-45.pdf>
- <http://damianfoster.com/books/Properties.pdf>
- <http://ramazotti.ru/library/ Twice-a-Stranger--The-Mass-Expulsions-that-Forged-Modern-Greece-and-Turkey.pdf>
- <http://pittiger.com/lib/To-Build-a-Fire-and-Other-Stories--Bantam-Classics-.pdf>
- <http://www.1973vision.com/?library/Nights-in-the-Gardens-of-Brooklyn.pdf>