
The threat of a German invasion

❶ Churchill's broadcast speech on 11 September 1940¹.

Whenever the weather is favourable, waves of German bombers, protected by fighters, often three or four hundred at a time, surge over this Island, especially the promontory of Kent, in the hope of attacking military and other objectives by daylight. However, they are met by our fighter squadrons and nearly always broken up, and their losses average three
5 to one in machines and six to one in pilots. This effort of the Germans to secure daylight mastery of the air over England is of course the crux of the whole war. So far it has failed conspicuously. [...]

On the other hand, for him to try to invade this country without having secured mastery in the air would be a very hazardous undertaking. Nevertheless, all his preparations for
10 invasion on a great scale are steadily going forward. [...]

We cannot tell when they will try to come; we cannot be sure that in fact they will try at all; but no-one should blind himself to the fact that a heavy full-scale invasion of this Island is being prepared with all the usual German thoroughness and method, and that it may be
15 launched now [...]

Therefore we must regard the next week or so as a very important period in our history. 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. We have read all about this in the history books; but what is happening
20 now is on a far greater scale and of far more consequence to the life and future of the world and its civilisation than those brave old days.

❷ A letter written by Maria Blewitt, a WAAF, to her mother on 11 September 1940.

<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/how-winston-churchill-helped-maria-blewitt-keep-calm-and-carry-on-during-the-battle-of-britain>

RAF Duxford, Wednesday

Darling Ma,

I got your letter this afternoon. My news is about the same as yours. Nil. I have just been listening to Winston, brilliant, inspiring, but a tiddly bit frightening. He seems quite sure
5 invasion will come within the next week or so. If not, I shall be home on 17th for 48 hours or so. I shall arrive about 11:30 and have to leave on 6 a.m on the morning of 19th. So, unless invasion begins, expect me then. Our bag² the other day was 22, yesterday 19 and today 10 down, 10 badly damaged and 7 more probably down. Nice work.

Must end now. Sorry not more.

Best love,

10 Maria

➤ Using the documents and your knowledge, present the context and discuss the influence of Churchill's speeches in the outcome of the Battle of Britain.

¹11 September 1940 was a bleak day for the RAF, which lost more aircraft than the Luftwaffe.

²Bag: here in the sense of killing an animal, a tally. It refers to the German planes shot down.