



HOW TO INVADE EUROPE

The lessons of Dunkirk in reverse.

THREE hundred thousand British and other troops were evacuated from the beaches of Dunkirk almost two years ago. The flower of the German Army was after those troops. An overwhelming portion of the *Luftwaffe* was swarming over those beaches. The Allied troops had just come out of the greatest military disaster in modern times. The Allied front was strategically broken. France was tottering on its last legs. The Soviet Union and the United States were not in the war.

Today eighty percent of the German divisions are engaged on the Eastern Front. A bare fraction of the *Luftwaffe* is poised in western Europe, as may be judged by the feeble interference the great British raids are encountering. British troops have had almost two years to organize. The Soviet Union and the United States are in the war. Great Britain has come through its home ordeals with flying colors and its people have every reason to feel their oats.

In the days of Dunkirk, Europe was dazed by German invincibility. Today all Europe knows that the German Army can be beaten. The horrors of Nazi serfdom have been tasted by all, while two years ago many expected at least some crumbs of miserable well being from their new masters.

Two years ago the German Army had lost thousands of men. Today it has lost millions. Then it had just acquired the arsenals of Europe and had practically not spent its own. Today it has lost almost a score thousand of planes and tanks and a score-and-five thousand guns. Two years ago a disarmed army of gallant Britishers and a crumbling French Army was all that faced the legions of Hitler. Today the greatest military might in the world is pummeling the German Army on the plains of the Soviet Union.

Allied production had not even started. Now it goes full blast. And still, two years ago a motley conglomeration of bottoms took an army of 300,000 men across the Channel in a few hours while the embryo of the RAF gave them effective enough protection. This is why I am asking now: why not a Dunkirk in reverse? The other day I asked several people

that question. A bright youngster in his teens spoke up and said: "But at Dunkirk it was a question of *get out, or else*. . . . That's why it was done." My answer to this is: "Today it is a question of *get in, or else*." Therefore, the incentive being practically the same and the circumstances incomparably more favorable, it is my firm opinion that a Dunkirk in reverse is possible. More than that: it is necessary immediately—now, not next year.

THE planning of an invasion of western Europe in force is such a stupendous undertaking that no single man who is not an army, navy, and air force past master, all in one, can possibly tackle it. I am far from being not only all this in one, but even one of the three. Therefore, what follows should not be construed as advice to the Allied strategists, but something on the order of a word picture of what might happen. Far from daring to advise at what spot an allied invasion should be made, I simply take Dunkirk as a sort of symbol. Now, how could the whole thing start?

The tremendous offensive of the RAF now going on would, let us say, shift its aim to the railroad junctions of the French, Belgian, and Dutch coast, between Brest and Amsterdam. There are approximately two score such junctions, including the railheads. (I count only the junctions whose destruction would block the railroads leading to the coast or paralleling it, but disregard those of a secondary nature.) Other air squadrons would concentrate on the German airdromes. A third group would blast the naval bases on the French coast. About nineteen main railroads are concentrated in the area between Brest in Brittany and Helder in Holland.

This triple assault would last for, say, two weeks, as the Red Air Force assault on the Finnish communications lasted in January 1940. During this period the *Luftwaffe* would shift a goodly number of squadrons from the East to the threatened area. With these squadrons would come thousands of AA-guns, searchlights, and other paraphernalia of AA defense. Big air battles would ensue with the Germans outnumbered in the air, despite their efforts, because they would not be able to denude the Soviet Front of even half the planes engaged there with the Red Air Force holding the edge as it were. This phase of the assault would be followed by, let us say, fifty or 100 Commando raids on points on the coast, ranging from Trondheim to Bordeaux. The Commandos would try to do exactly what they did in Saint-Nazaire. The Germans would well understand that ninety-nine percent of these raids were of a diversionary character, with only one or two, maybe, directed at the spot where the big assault in tremendous force would come.

This is where the aerial assault would be suddenly shifted to, say, the Brest-Cherbourg-Nantes area, with a simultaneous demonstration by the British Navy in view of the coast of the Finistère. The German divisions available in France (some twenty or twenty-five) already would be rushing in to the westernmost peninsula of France. Divisions of German troops held in reserve behind the Eastern Front would begin to streak westward to meet the new menace. Here the RAF and the USAF would detail special bombers to strike at the bridges across the Rhine, paying especial attention to the *Hohenzollern Brücke* at Cologne. At the same time heavy bombing would be directed at the railroad junctions controlling the entrance to the Finistère and the Morbihan. The impression would be created that the blow would be struck in the western tip of France.

It may be reasonably assumed that the Commandos would

keep at least half a dozen German divisions busy all over the coast, while the demonstration would "hold" another three or four divisions. Thus half of the available German divisions in France would be engaged, with the other half immobilized by the French internal situation.

The real invasion would have to deal principally with those troops which by this time would have been brought back from the Eastern Front. These troops, don't forget, have lost their cockiness and have had enough fighting. At this moment, and after a couple of diversionary parachute landings, say, in Rennes and in Caen, the real thing would be loosed somewhere in the Lille-Douai-Arras triangle, thus gumming up the communications between the interior and the coast between Calais and Dunkirk. After that—Dunkirk in reverse, but with this difference: real ships and invasion barges instead of the assorted pleasure yachts and dinghies which worked so heroically at Dunkirk two years ago. Fresh troops, trained for the offensive, instead of beaten troops. And above all, now—a sort of conveyor of planes overhead.

Assuming that the round trip of a plane across this part of the Channel is 100 miles, and the average speed is 200 miles per hour, a conveyor of 180 planes would make it possible for a plane to pass over a given target in the area every ten seconds. Four conveyors like that (some 800 planes) would cover a lane across the channel. Under this canopy of planes the invasion fleet would move to shore, just as it moved away from shore two years ago. It would be protected on both sides by "walls" of destroyers, trawlers, and submarines.

Just before the approach of the invasion fleet to the shores of France, a good portion of the Allied bombers would shift their fire to the German coastal batteries. A thousand bombers, dive bombers, and bombing fighters could make a shambles of the strip of land between Calais, Dunkirk, Etaples, and Hazebrook. This blanket bombing, it must be admitted, would

have to be kept up for about seventy-two hours to give the invading army a chance to unload at least its light equipment under very difficult conditions. Air transport would help by bringing baby tanks, motorcycles, and field guns.

With 3,000 Allied planes aiding and covering the operation, a second front could be established. The Red Army performed a similar feat on a smaller scale, but under just as difficult circumstances, in reentering the Crimea at the turn of the year. The Japanese did it in Java, for instance. The next thing would be to capture landing places equipped for the disembarking of heavy stuff. These places would be Dunkirk, Calais, and Abbeville. It is my firm belief that by that time an insurrection would be flaring up in the Paris area with the help of a new parachute landing by Free Frenchmen.

ALL this may sound like a fairy tale. It may be, as far as the blueprint sketched by an amateur in such things is concerned. It might have to be done in a different way and in a different place. If this writer thought he had a really operative plan, he would not disclose it in print. But, stubborn as old Cato with his "Carthage must be destroyed," I repeat again and again: a second front is absolutely essential to draw off two-score divisions from the Eastern Front, and such a venture as described above would have that effect. It would be costly, but much less costly than a five- or ten-year war. Three hundred thousand men got out at Dunkirk. Three hundred thousand men can get in at Dunkirk . . . or somewhere else. Two years ago 125 German divisions with twelve panzer divisions and an almost undisputed *Luftwaffe* were in and over Belgium and northern France. There are no more than twenty divisions with maybe one or two panzer divisions and a fraction of the *Luftwaffe* now. The invasion is feasible and a plan can and must be worked out, but by better men than I.

WESTERN FRONT NOW: An Editorial

MORE than a full month of the critical spring of 1942 has come and gone. The somber outlines of the world position, which we have been projecting for some months, are now becoming clearer to the whole country.

In the Far East the Japanese continue to press north of the oil regions in Burma toward the heights of Mandalay; attacks upon India are expected momentarily; the initiative remains with the enemy even though the picture is somewhat relieved by the effective Allied air defense north of Australia and the dramatic raids against the Philippines and Tokyo.

In Europe things are approaching the inexorable crisis. Soviet authorities express confidence and the Red Army pushes forward toward the bend of the Dnieper, toward Smolensk and east of Leningrad. But it is also noticeable that the Nazis have intensified their air activity; despite heavy losses they continue to feel out the strength of the Soviet lines where these lines are at all stable, and to resist fiercely the Soviet advance.

There is a certain dead balance in the war news: in the Pacific things still go against us; in Europe the question is whether the balance will be swung in our favor or in favor of the enemy. How to swing these things toward our side: that is the big issue of the next four months.

Thus far, nothing official has been published on Gen. George Marshall's visit to London, together with Harry Hopkins. The newspaper comment is not very revealing, but it also does not make for anything very definitive.

Nor was the President's remark, about a two- or three-year war conclusive one way or the other. Obviously a second front would not necessarily end the war this year, especially in the Pacific. But if it were launched, the crisis of the war which is coming this summer would have been met: the United Nations would have breast- ed the tide, and grasped the initiative.

Secretary of War Henry Stimson's statement that an offensive is near, was encouraging. But what is clearly needed is a widely amplified, popular

discussion of the issue, a realization among really wide circles of the great dangers that the war holds for us this year and the truly great opportunities that also exist to meet them.

Fortunately, and this is one of the truly significant developments of the past weeks, the Western Front issue is not being left to editorialists and columnists alone. The labor movement is taking up the cry, and something similar to the acute popular consciousness that exists in England on this issue is beginning to develop. Two weeks ago the state CIO council meeting in New Jersey projected a Western Front. In the past week CIO councils in Minnesota and New York took up the demand.

In countless union meetings throughout the land, the general conviction that "defense will not win the war" is being translated into concrete letters and resolutions to Congress and to the President favoring a Western Front. Much more has got to be done—and fast.