

# The battle of dunkirk



- Rami Redha

The Battle of Dunkirk lasted from around May 25 to June 3, 1940. After the Phony War, the Battle of France began on 10 May, 1940. German armour burst through the Ardennes region and advanced rapidly driving north in the so-called " sickle cut". To the east the Germans invaded and subdued the Netherlands and advanced rapidly through Belgium.

The combined British, French and Belgian forces were split around Armentières. The German forces then swept north to capture Calais, holding a large body of Allied soldiers trapped against the coast on the Franco-Belgian border. It became clear to the British that the battle was lost and the question was now how many Allied soldiers could be removed to the relative safety of England before their resistance was crushed. From May 22 preparations for the evacuation began, codenamed Operation Dynamo, commanded from Dover by Vice-Admiral Bertram Ramsay. He called for as many naval vessels as possible as well as every ship capable of carrying 1,000 men within reach. It initially was intended to recover around 45,000 men of the British Expeditionary Force over two days, this was soon stretched to 120,000 men over five days. On May 27 a request was placed to civilians to provide all shallow draught vessels of 30 to 100 feet for the operation, that night was the first rescue attempt. A large number of craft including fishing boats and recreational vessels, together with Merchant Marine and Royal Navy vessels, were gathered and sent to Dunkirk and the surrounding beaches to recover Allied troops. Due to heavy German fire only 8,000 soldiers were recovered.

Another ten destroyers were recalled for May 28 and attempted rescue operations in the early morning but were unable to closely approach the beaches although several thousand were rescued. It was decided that smaller vessels would be more useful. The Allied held area was reduced to a 30 sq km by May 28. Operations over the rest of May 28 were more successful, with a further 16, 000 men recovered but German air operations increased and many vessels were sunk or badly damaged, including nine destroyers.

On May 29, the German armour stopped its advance on Dunkirk leaving the operation to the slower infantry, and the Luftwaffe (Hermann Göring, then in great favour with Adolf Hitler, had promised air power alone could win the battle) but due to problems only 14, 000 men were evacuated that day. On the evening of May 30 another major group of smaller vessels was dispatched and returned with around 30, 000 men. By May 31 the Allied forces were compressed into a 5 km deep strip from La Panne, through Bray-Dunes to Dunkirk, but on that day over 68, 000 troops were evacuated with another 10, 000 or so overnight. On June 1 another 65, 000 were rescued and the operations continued until June 4, evacuating a total of 338, 226 troops aboard around 700 different vessels.

Source 8 was an artist's of the Dunkirk evacuation by Charles Cundall, an official war artist. In the painting you can clearly see the smoke from the bombed out harbour there is enough evidence in source 8 to support the interpretation: "Dunkirk was a great deliverance and a great Defeat".

Source 8 shows how it was deliverance and how it was a Defeat. The source is a painting by Charles Condell he shows lots of ships and people getting to

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these ships but also show a lot of explosions and mayhem. The deliverance in this painting would be the fact that so many troops are boarding the ships and getting home alive. The disaster in this painting is the fact there are so many dead on the beaches and there are ships on fire. This source cannot however be completely reliable because the painter could not have been on the beach painting this picture so he was either far away or this painting is an image he had remembered from the day. He was also an official war artist so this painting could have been used by the government as propaganda to show the British people that despite the bombing and strafing of the beaches the British people never gave up in saving the B. E. F.

Source 19 is an account by an RAF pilot of what he saw when he reached the beaches. He mentioned the air attacks on the beaches and said things like