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The Spirit of Normandy

The Battle of Britain was an air campaign launched by Germany July 10 1940. This event holds great significance to the Allies winning the war because of the realisation that Hitler could be defeated.

The battle commenced on July 10 and concluded on October 31 1940. The battle contained four main phases which are believed to have been; 10-11 August, 12-23 August, 24 August- 6 September.

In phase one, Hitler mainly targeted shipping convoys and shipping centres. He did this as an attempt to cut off Britain's food, equipment and other supplies as we depended heavily on supplies from North America and the British Empire. Another reason the Germans did this was to try and bombard the convoys, as the German U-boats were already attacking merchant ships, which was one of the reasons that the shipping convoys were created. Adding an attack from the sky would make it harder for Britain to get it’s supplies and keep morale up. One month after this, in phase two, Hitler shifted his focus onto the RAF airfields and the infrastructure. Hitler’s aim was to drive the RAF out of the sky so that they would have easier access to invade Britain from the sky. Another aim from these attacks was to be able to check for British Naval interference. In the third phrase, Hitler targeted the aircraft factories and ground infrastructure. This slowed the production of making more planes which led to a depleted force. The planes were getting shot down quicker then they could be repaired or replaced. In the fourth and final phase, Hitler focussed on towns and cities. This phase is more commonly called the Blitz as the two events overlap by a significant amount. Some of the town cities that affected the most include; Bristol, Cardiff, Swansea, Portsmouth, Coventry, Birmingham, London and Sheffield. This resulted in mass destruction, 40,000 British civilians perished, 139,000 were seriously injured and over two million houses, mainly located in London, were demolished.

Despite some of Hitler’s phases being partly successful, they were largely failures. Some of the successes were; in phase one, Hitler’s forces sank four ships and damaged three which forced the English channel to close to large merchant ships, causing strain on Britain’s resource supply. In phase two, Germany caused the plane production to slow down resulting in even fewer planes. In phase three, the RAF faced 248 losses, however the Luftwaffe lost 322. Finally, phase four saw thousands die, be injured and millions of homes destroyed. However, the failures far outweigh the victories. The RAF defeated Hitler despite being hugely outnumbered, Britain were able to survive through the lack of supplies because they rationed their food and necessities.

The reason Hitler started the air campaign was because he wanted to invade Britain. It was given the code name ‘Operation Sea Lion’. Hitler originally wanted to invade in June 1940, by landing 160,000 soldiers across a forty mile stretch on the South-East coast of England. However he postponed Operation Sea Lion after being convinced by his generals that the RAF was too powerful to stick to their original plan and timings. This is why the battle of Britain was started, Hitler wanted to destroy the RAF so that he could have easier access to invade Britain and Operation Sea Lion could take place. He bombed the locations, such as the shipping convoys and the RAF airfields, as an attempt to destroy Britain’s air defences. His overall aim was to gain air superiority over Britain so that they would follow France and fall. Operation Sea Lion never went ahead because Britain won the battle.

The battle of Britain held great significance in the allies winning the war. It was considered a turning point in the war because it marked Hitler’s first defeat. If the RAF had not been able to hold off the Luftwaffe, then Operation Sea Lion would have proceeded, this would have crushed Britain’s morale and caused thousands more to lose their lives. This also would have meant that Hitler gained more power as he took down two of the main three forces in the first world war that defeated Germany. Hitler was unable to commence Operation Sea Lion because of the RAF. The RAF prevented the German forces from controlling the English Channel, one thing which they needed for the operation to go ahead. This allowed Britain to show their air force’s strength and demonstrate courage and skill. This meant that Britain’s air force became more acknowledged for their skill and power. Britain was also seen as a stronger force after their win.

Another reason the Battle of Britain was significant was because it boosted Britain’s morale, knowing that they were able to beat Germany’s forces and stop an invasion. The victory over Germany in the battle of Britain also gave America a chance to join the war in 1941. This helped a lot when it came to D-Day, 1944. When America wanted to invade Normandy, they established a base of operations in England. They could only do this because Britain wasn’t occupied by the Nazis.

A final reason that the battle of Britain was significant was because it marked the first defeat of Hitler’s forces and it was the first campaign that was fought entirely by the air force, which allowed them to have practice and gain confidence for future battles. It was also the longest sustained aerial battle and bombing campaign that had happened to that date. This allowed Britain to become one of the strongholds of the allies.

Overall, the battle of Britain is very significant in the allies eventually winning the war. It was a major turning point as it prevented the Nazis from invading, something no country had done before. It marked Hitler’s first loss and inspired hope in their people and other countries that Hitler could be defeated.