

The turning point

When history comes to record the time and place at which the onward sweep of Nazi aggression was halted, and the tide of war turned, that place and time will be found, I believe, to be the English channel, during the months of August and September. Just as the evacuation of Dunkirk will remain a chapter unsurpassed in the history of British arms on land, on sea and in the air, so the indomitable resistance of Britain, the stout hearts of the people of London, the unflagging skill and daring of the young men in the air, and the unceasing vigilance of the navy will mark the supreme moment in the present world conflict when tyranny was halted in its threatening course, and despair was changed to hope.

There remains little doubt that when French resistance collapsed last June, the government of France and her military leaders believed that not only France but also Britain was doomed. In their despair, they thought that the Nazi onslaught was irresistible and that Britain, too, would crumble before the might of the German attack. The terms of the French surrender and much that has happened since can be understood only in the light of this conviction of Nazi invincibility.