

"GENTLEMEN, THE INVASION"

(By W. FORREST in "London Calling")

The drama has been announced to all the world. The stage is set. The actors, rehearsed in all their parts, are ready. But—will the curtain ever go up?

ONLY three times in its two thousand years of history has this island of Britain been successfully invaded. Julius Caesar; Hengist and Horsa; William the Conqueror—55 B.C., A.D. 449, 1066. In this year of destiny, 1941, will it be the lot of Adolf Hitler to make his name a legend for all time; to succeed where Napoleon failed?

His people have been promised the performance. It was promised for last September; and the overture was actually begun. But then something went wrong, and the grand drama was postponed. Postponed, mark you, not cancelled.

The stage is still set. From Norway to Brittany the invasion forces are assembled. A vast army, comprising more than 200 divisions, with a record of staggering victories behind it, and with only one front to fight on. Supporting it, an aerial armada of 18,000 'planes and a quarter of a million men, with reserves one hundred per cent strong.

When will the blow be delivered by this immense force? Where will it be delivered? And how? For us in Great Britain these are questions of life and death. You can well understand how eagerly we examine every sign and portent for the answers.

Time And Tide

Take the time factor first. Dominating this is the influence of America's help to Britain. If he is to win the war, Hitler must get in his knock-out blow before the flow of American guns and tanks and

'planes, coupled with our own increasing war output, weighs the scales decisively in our favour. That means before the end of this summer.

Also bearing on the time factor is the weather. The invasion host requires a long, dark night for the Channel crossing. And already the nights are getting shorter. That is why the prophets of invasion predict an early bid at the conquest . . .

But where will the enemy's blow fall? A direct assault on this island? A sudden descent on Ireland? An attack on our Mediterranean life-line?

What Invasion Would Entail

If our island citadel falls, Hitler has won the war. But it is a gamble fraught with the gravest perils for the enemy.

Consider only two of the many forms which a direct assault might take. First, a frontal drive against Dover. To have any hope of success in such an attack, the invading forces would have to be assured of a superiority of more than three to one in fire-power. Now we could oppose the attack with, at the very minimum, a mechanised force of 250,000 men. So that the enemy would have to land 750,000 men with anything from 10,000 to 15,000 tanks and 70,000 motor vehicles, requiring for one week's operations about 4,000,000 gallons of petrol. For the transport of all this force, with the necessary rations and ammunition, it is calculated that 15,000 barges would be required.

Now picture this vast and clumsy armada setting out from the invasion

ports of Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk to essay the passage of the Straits of Dover. The Germans don't command the Straits; the British Navy is still supreme at sea. But let us assume that they succeed in neutralising our sea supremacy by laying thick minefields across the Channel, leaving a lane for the passage of their barges. They cannot, however, lay minefields against the R.A.F. And what a target those barges would offer to the R.A.F.

value to the enemy, for, with the Irish bases in his hands, he would command the two channels, north and south of Ireland, through which most of our sea-borne trade now passes.

But though Ireland herself, with her puny fighting forces, could offer little resistance to the invaders, would it be so very easy for them to land there? To land some troops, yes, but not to keep up the necessary flow of reinforcements and supplies. For here again, the prime factor is the command of the sea, which is ours, and the command of the air, which at least we can dispute with the



HERE is a memory of Napoleon's invasion threat: an early Cruickshank cartoon, dated 1803, and entitled "How to Stop an Invader"

Ireland in Danger

The Germans know well that the R.A.F. must first be crippled before their men can land on our shores. They tried to cripple it last autumn, and failed disastrously. They will find it yet more difficult this spring.

Instead of a concentrated drive across the channel, aiming at one fell swoop on Dover, the enemy might attempt simultaneous landings at widely separated points around our coast, combined with landings of troops by air.

That would have been easy last summer, when vast stretches of our coast were undefended and unfortified, when our Army was still in the throes of reorganisation after the disaster of Flanders and France, and when the Home Guard was armed for the most part with nothing more formidable than sticks and ancient shot-guns. No wonder Lord Halifax told the Americans that Hitler lost his chance of winning the war when he failed to attack our shores in June. For how different is the scene to-day; our coast bristling with defences, our Army, 4,000,000 strong, trained and equipped as never before, and strong, keen, alert units of the Home Guard in every town and village throughout the land. Not long ago, what seemed at first sight to be a much more tempting field for the invader is offered by a neutral Ireland, and it is here that many of our prophets predict the first German landing. She would be, moreover, a prize of immense

enemy. And then there is Ulster, which is not neutral, where we have already a foothold, and a strong one, too, in the Green Isle.

We come, then, to the last of the three possibilities I mentioned—namely, an attack on our Mediterranean life-line. That, of course, would not be invasion, but if successful, it would bring Hitler a step nearer to his goal—the subjugation of this island . . .

We can take it, however, that Hitler has his doubts.

Not a Dog's Chance

An American observer the other day said: "If Hitler invades England, he'll be chased back so fast he won't know what hit him." And when I was down at Dover the other day, I met an old man who summed up the invasion outlook in half a dozen words. Jerking his head in the direction of the French coast, the old man said: "e don't stand a dog's chance!"

But will he come? Winston Churchill has never ceased from reiterating his view that the invasion attempt will be made. He has said so again to Harry Hopkins, President Roosevelt's special envoy. And most of the men in authority whom I have questioned, take the same view. Not all of them are as cocksure about the result as the old man at Dover, but I think most of them would say that, provided we remain as vigilant as now, and keep our heads cool, then—"e don't stand a dog's chance!"



HEAVY GUNS of a coastal battery engaging in a practice shoot somewhere on the east coast of Britain. Fortifications such as these are included in the Home-land's first lines of defence against attempted invasion