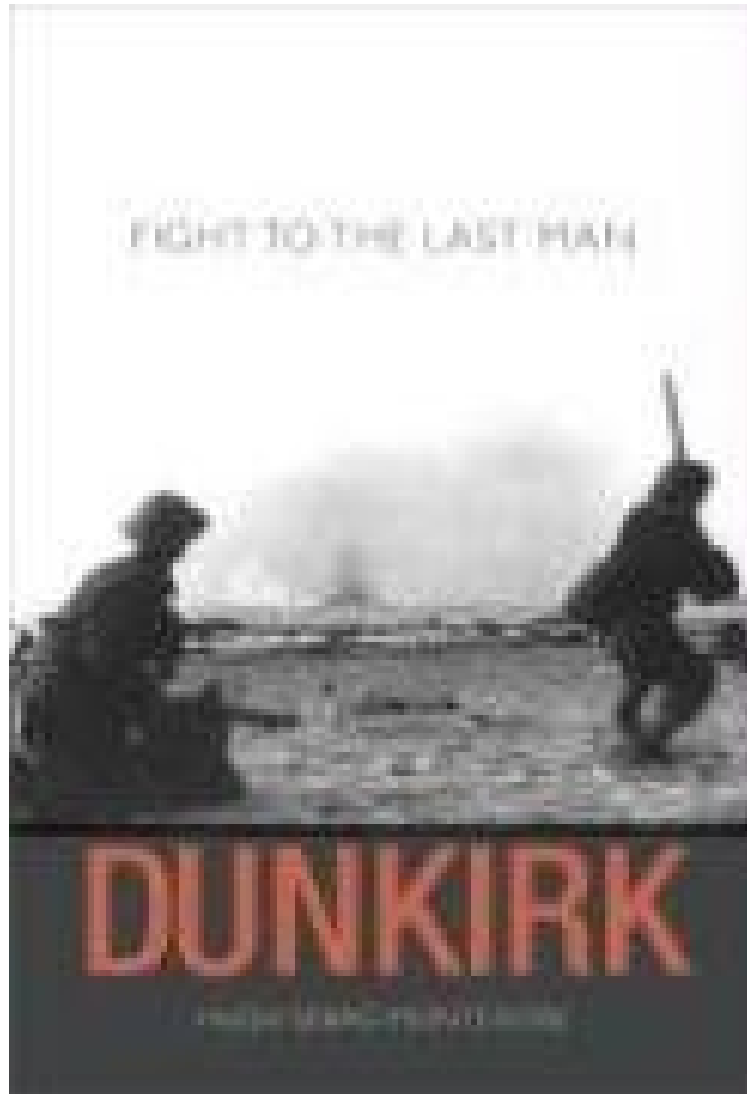


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Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man

Hugh Sebag-Montefiore

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Hugh Sebag-Montefiore : Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Dunkirk Fight to the Last Man By Christopher F. Nelson Great book on one of the critical battles in the early war. 3 of 4 people found the following review helpful. An illuminating and thought provoking read By David Sinclair I thoroughly enjoyed this book which blended history with many personal touches. However, I do not accept that it is an appropriate book for kindle because one cannot access the many notes and maps referred to at particular places in the book. This is a pity as these references do much to illuminate the text. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. To the Last Man By Gordon Jones Extremely complete and very well-

researched.

In May of 1940, the armies of Nazi Germany were marching through France. In the face of this devastating advance, one of World War II's greatest acts of heroism would be a retreat: the evacuation of the British Army from Dunkirk. In *Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man*, we are given an unprecedented vision of these harrowing days. Hugh Sebag-Montefiore has created a bold and powerful account of the small group of men who fended off the German army so that hundreds of thousands of their comrades could exit this doomed land. These brave troops, members of the British Expeditionary Forces and the French army, held a series of strong points inland, allowing the rest of the battered battalions to escape to the coast. Those that remained were ordered to fight to the last man. Much has been written about the efforts of the Royal Navy in shuttling soldiers to safety, but here we are given an unparalleled look inside this massive operation and the invaluable role played by the BEF. Without the ferocity and bravery of the officers and ordinary soldiers on the ground, the German army would likely have encircled nearly half a million Allied soldiers. The loss of these battalions, Sebag-Montefiore argues, could have dramatically changed the direction of the war, and enabled Hitler to invade a weakened Britain. This is military history at its best: a judicious analysis of the movement of the war, and a vivid feel of what it was like to be on the front line. Sebag-Montefiore brings these men—the forgotten heroes of Dunkirk—to life, and it is their valiant exploits and devotion to their brethren that form the heart of this important book.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . Sebag-Montefiore (*Enigma: The Battle for the Code*) exploits a gap in the voluminous Dunkirk historiography for this first-rate account of the British troops that stayed behind to protect one of history's most dramatic and timely rescues. The German blitzkrieg that swept into Western Europe in May 1940 trapped the main body of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) in Belgium and scattered the demoralized French army. Cut off and with their backs to the sea, the BEF miraculously slipped the German noose and made it to Dunkirk where they were evacuated. Eschewing the traditional focus on the Royal Navy and the flotilla of private vessels that rescued the BEF, the author tells the story of "the forgotten heroes" who fought "until their ammunition ran out" to cover their comrades' retreat. Against daunting odds, they undertook countless "suicide missions... to keep the corridor to Dunkirk open." And, while "[h]ardly any... made it back to the beaches," their sacrifice saved the BEF. By the time the last ship left Dunkirk on June 2, 288,000 soldiers—including 193,000 from the BEF—had been evacuated. Drawing upon exhaustive research, the author portrays rescue in vivid, often harrowing, terms. 40 halftones, 21 maps not seen by PW. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist This history of a crucial campaign of World War II commences with the German offensive of May 1940. Sebag-Montefiore's contribution to this intensively studied operation resides in tactical scrutiny, frequently at platoon-level detail. At this magnification, combat soldiers and their firefights assume critical importance in the strategic narrative of French defeat. While the author recurs to the progressive desperation in the Allied high command as the Germans broke through, he centers attention squarely on Allied soldiers ordered to do or die. As many went down fighting, some in Nazi massacres, the documentary traces are inevitably fragmentary. The author's recovery of some coherence to the story is a research achievement, made dramatically arresting by his excerpts of survivors' testimonies about the graphic violence of their individual experiences. Many were of the last-stand variety, which Sebag-Montefiore believes have been overshadowed in Dunkirk historiography by the desperate improvisation of the sea evacuation. Fortified with maps and photographs, this is a complex yet accomplished military history of the WWII battle symbolic of British pluck. Gilbert Taylor Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved. Sebag-Montefiore's book is a narrative triumph. I have not read a better account of many modest actions—today forgotten, as all defeats are—in which British soldiers fought painfully and hard, to check the German tide. The author has brought together scores of personal accounts to impressive, moving effect. (Max Hastings *The Sunday Telegraph* 2006-05-21) The greatest achievement of Hugh Sebag-Montefiore's *Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man* is the masterly way he brings a wealth of fresh revelation and detail to this most familiar tale, and tells a searing story. It is both meticulous military history and a deeply moving testimony to the extraordinary personal bravery of individual soldiers. By the time he is done, the evacuation of Dunkirk seems more miraculous still... Montefiore's account moves seamlessly from the growing crisis of confidence and eventual cold hostility between the French and British High Command, as the British observed the sobbing generals and disintegration of French morale, to the decisions taken in isolation by soldiers and pilots who recognised from the moment that battle was joined that their tanks and bombers were not adequate to confront the German panzers. Montefiore successfully holds together the geography of the battle, but he is most effective when he evokes the small-scale horror of the fighting, blockhouse by blockhouse, bridge by bridge, village by village and farm by farm. (Tim Gardam *The Times* 2006-05-27) [Full of] exemplary research and clear-eyed analysis. (Jonathan Bouquet *The Observer* 2006-05-21) In the chaos and horror that was Dunkirk, there are, of course, any number of compelling human stories, and Montefiore has skilfully interwoven individual tales of heroism and occasional cowardice into his narrative... Several fine books have been written about it, but none better than this. (Andrew Roberts *Mail on Sunday* 2006-06-11) Sebag-Montefiore tells [the story of Dunkirk] with gusto, a remarkable

attention to detail and an inexhaustible appetite for tracking down the evidence. The result can sometimes read like one damn thing after another, but the sense of confusion, anxiety, uncertainty and intrepid courage which characterised this disastrous campaign is captured more successfully than in any other existing account. The strength of Sebag-Montefiore's book rests on the accounts of those who fought. These are poignant in the extreme. There was no shortage of suicidal bravery. Troops at Arras were ordered to "fight to the last man and the last round," and in many cases they did so. (Richard Overy Daily Telegraph 2006-05-27)The evacuation of more than 300,000 troops in one week in May and June 1940 has moved into the realms of myth: "little ships" and the "Dunkirk spirit" have come to stand for the British capacity to turn a disaster into a triumph. Hugh Sebag-Montefiore returns Dunkirk to history, taking in the grand sweep of strategy and numerous examples of individual heroism as entire divisions were sacrificed so that the road to Dunkirk could be kept open as an escape route...Sebag-Montefiore's level of detail, knowledge and compassion [provides] for readable wartime history. (Campbell Stevenson The Observer 2006-07-16)Sebag-Montefiore's book reads like a thriller. With the aid of new material from British and Continental archives, and interviews with the last survivors, he zeroes in on critical moments in the opening battles in northwestern France and the people who planned and executed them...This book is a tour de force. (Christopher Hudson Daily Mail 2006-07-21)Hugh Sebag-Montefiore reveals how the events which have become synonymous with the name of that small French seaside town were not only about the brilliant rescue of the British Army by the Royal Navy and an armada of "little boats." He shows that the evacuation would not have been possible without the amazing tenacity of the British soldiers who remained behind to fight as their comrades retreated to eventual safety. (Paul Callan The Express 2006-05-20)Sebag-Montefiore exploits a gap in the voluminous Dunkirk historiography for this first-rate account of the British troops that stayed behind to protect one of history's most dramatic and timely rescues...Drawing upon exhaustive research, the author portrays rescue in vivid, often harrowing, terms. (starred review) (Publishers Weekly 2006-09-25)Few accounts [of the Battle of Dunkirk] supply details of the determined defense of the corridor through which the trapped army retreated. Journalist Sebag-Montefiore's book falls into that category and therefore fills an important gap. The author uses a wide variety of new or little-used primary sources, including personal interviews, official reports, and soldiers' unpublished accounts. He ably marshals these sources to create a vivid and gripping description of engagements in which British units, against overwhelming odds, held their positions for precious hours so their comrades could be brought to safety. (Richard Fraser Library Journal 2006-11-01)While the author recurs to the progressive desperation in the Allied high command as the Germans broke through, he centers attention squarely on Allied soldiers ordered to do or die. As many went down fighting, some in Nazi massacres, the documentary traces are inevitably fragmentary. The author's recovery of some coherence to the story is a research achievement, made dramatically arresting by his excerpts of survivors' testimonies about the graphic violence of their individual experiences. Many were of the last-stand variety, which Sebag-Montefiore believes have been overshadowed in Dunkirk historiography by the desperate improvisation of the sea evacuation. Fortified with maps and photographs, this is a complex yet accomplished military history of the WWII battle symbolic of British pluck. (Gilbert Taylor Booklist 2006-11-15)Few readers could fail to be gripped by Dunkirk's combination of enthralling narrative and firsthand testimony. Indeed, the greatest strength of this book--greater even than its excellent maps and detail-rich notes--is the extent to which the author allows the diaries, letters, and memoirs of contemporaries to speak for themselves. (Niall Ferguson New York of Books 2006-11-30)Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, a British journalist and, together with his brother Simon, one-half of a family duo of excellent historians, has written a fascinating and finely detailed account of these momentous weeks. Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man draws heavily on archival sources and interviews with the few remaining survivors and their families. Without ever losing sight of how the struggle would affect the fates of England and France, Dunkirk recounts many examples of personal heroism that put a human face on the fighting. Sebag-Montefiore conveys the desperate, cornered-animal atmosphere that descended over the troops and never shirks from war's gruesome realities...Discussions of the events at Dunkirk have usually focused on the action on the beaches and the little ships that ferried men out to the larger vessels offshore. Sebag-Montefiore shifts the angle, choosing to highlight the heroics of the men ordered to hold the line against the Germans and keep the pocket around Dunkirk from collapsing. (Douglas Smith Seattle Times)Hugh Sebag-Montefiore's book, Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man is well-judged and fascinating, providing the right background for the disastrous campaign...This book provides convincing answers to all the important questions raised by the Allied debacle. Mr. Sebag-Montefiore gives a narrative account of the whole period from May 10, 1940, a fortnight before the evacuation from Dunkirk began, until June 18, 1940, nearly a fortnight after it had ended...Mr. Sebag-Montefiore has expertly interwoven individual tales of heroism and occasional cowardice. (Andrew Roberts New York Sun)[A] first-rate panoramic history, and highly affecting worm's-eye account, of Britain's absolutely all-time favorite disaster...The particular brilliance of this book lies in the manner in which Sebag-Montefiore interleaves the military with the political. (Christopher Hitchens New York Times Book 2007-02-28)It is odd that amid the mountains of historical reconstructions of World II there has been no large-scale study of Dunkirk until now...This is a large, successful reconstruction, full of details, properly larded with multiple reminiscences of men who were there. Many people ought to read Dunkirk beyond those interested in the military history of World War II--for whom it is a must. (John Lukacs Philadelphia Inquirer 2007-01-11)[Sebag-

Montefiore's] readers are off on an adventure that is not only gripping, but richly detailed. Anyone who loves World War II history is in for a rare treat. (Jack Lessenberry Toledo Blade 2007-06-10) Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man is a book worth reading. It is as important for the new perspective it provides as it is for the new information it presents, and is both a good story and a valuable addition to the literature of World War II. (Robert S. Bolia Naval History 2007-06-01) The Traditional View of Dunkirk is of a crushing defeat that, thanks to the indomitably bulldog spirit of the British, was turned into something approaching a victory; of a flotilla of small boats braving great danger to bring the boys back home to fight another day; of the senior service bailing out a less-than-competent army, made possible by the colossal blunders made by Adolf Hitler and Gerd von Rundstedt, while the British air force dominated the skies shooting down three Germans for every loss of their own. Hugh Sebag-Montefiore will have nothing to do with what might be described as the 'Mrs Miniver' approach. In his robustly revisionist account, he...show[s] that the escape from Dunkirk was due almost entirely to the courage and determination of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) that, in the heroic defence of a series of strong points, enabled the bulk of the army to escape. (Martin Kitchen International History 2007-09-01) Through extensive research [Sebag-Montefiore] confidently addresses French errors and their failure to adjust the Allied defensive strategy to the realities on the ground. All of which led to the Allied collapse in the second half of May 1940. Yet as valuable as this review and understanding of the big picture is, it is merely a prelude to his central theme of dissecting the close combat action of the tactical fights around Dunkirk. This analysis combined with the author's lavish use of firsthand accounts illustrates the experience of the frontline soldier struggling against overwhelming odds. This insight is what sets this book apart and makes it memorable...Sebag- Montefiore offers fresh insight into an oft-studied topic...Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man is a welcome addition to the study of the early campaigns of WWII. (James R. Oman Parameters 2008-04-01)