

# **THE TRIBUTE**

**Written by Winston Churchill**

We need to pay our tribute of respect and admiration to the officers and men who fought and died in this fearful battle of the air, the likes of which had never before been known, or even with any precision imagined. The moral test to which the crew of a bomber was subjected reached the limits of human valour and sacrifice. Here chance was carried to its most extreme and violent degree above all else. There was a rule that no one should go on more than thirty raids without a break. But many who entered on their last dozen wild adventures felt that the odds against them were increasing. How can one be lucky thirty times running in a world of averages and machinery?

Detective-Constable McSweeney, one of the Scotland Yard officers who looked after me in the early days of the war, was determined to fight in a bomber. I saw him several times during his training and his fighting. One day, gay and jaunty as ever but with a thoughtful look, he said, "My next will be my twenty-ninth." It was his last. Not only our hearts and admiration, but our minds in strong comprehension of those ordeals must go out to these heroic men whose duty to their country and their cause sustained them in superhuman trials.

I have mentioned facts like, "the Americans had 60 of their large Fortress aircraft destroyed out of 291," and on another occasion "out of 795 aircraft dispatched by British Bomber Command against Nuremberg, 94 did not return."

The American Fortresses carried a crew of ten men, and the British night bombers seven. Here we have each time six or seven hundred of these skilled, highly trained warriors lost in an hour. This was indeed ordeal by fire. In the British and American bombing of Germany and Italy during the war, the casualties were over a hundred and forty thousand. In the period with which this chapter deals there were more British and American aircrew casualties than there were killed and wounded in the great operation of crossing the Channel. These heroes never flinched or failed. It is to their devotion that in no small measure we owe our victory. Let us give them our salute.

Winston Churchill

- - - - -

**THE ABOVE STORY IS THE PROPERTY OF THE AUTHOR AND MAY NOT BE REPRODUCED WITHOUT THE AUTHOR'S CONSENT**

**[www.91stbombgroup.com](http://www.91stbombgroup.com)**