

**David Irving**

# **Churchill's War**

**Volume One**



**The Struggle for Power.**

*David Irving*

# CHURCHILL'S WAR

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I – *The Struggle for Power*

**Part 1 of 4**  
*Introduction, Chapters 1–18*

‘Two books in English stand out from the vast literature of the Second World War: Chester Wilmot’s *The Struggle for Europe*, published in 1952, and David Irving’s *Hitler’s War*’

JOHN KEEGAN, *Times Literary Supplement*, 1980

**F**

FOCAL POINT

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## Introduction

WINSTON CHURCHILL trod carefully into the middle of the second floor clubroom and paused, deliberately surveying the dozen faces that had turned toward him.

As he stood there, short and squat, in a tuxedo that had seen long and honourable service, it occurred to him that he was probably a quarter century older than any of them.

Hosting this dinner at the Union Club in New York City was Henry R. Luce, publisher of the magazines *Time*, *Life* and *Fortune*. It was March 14, 1946: the uneasy interlude after the end of World War Two had ended, and everybody could sense it. Luce's fellow editors and executives scrutinised the famous Englishman as if taken aback to find him so small, in the way that movie fans are startled to find that their idols are less than the twenty-foot giants of the silver screen. In the words of a lucid and penetrating memorandum\* that Charles Murphy wrote for Luce's private files, there was just a dress-shirted cave where the chest should have been, and a swelling paunch that bore testimony to years of rich fare.

Henry Luce, who had brought him in, turned to greet his other guests. As Churchill swayed alone and splendidly in mid-room, the image struck Murphy of the Cunard Line's *Queen Mary* at the moment when she cast off her tugs in Southampton Water – heavy and loggy, drifting as the Solent's current pressed her hull until her screws bit water and she forged ahead again.

WITH SOFT rolls of flesh linking his head and body he looked to Murphy like a congenial, well-adjusted bullfrog. The frog's arms and legs were short and stubby, the hands small-boned and white. The complexion was pasty. Then Churchill's expressionless and bloodshot eyes fastened on a

\* The memorandum, sixty-three pages long, is now archived in *Life* executive C. D. Jackson's files in the Eisenhower Library at Abilene, Kansas. Among those present were John Billings, John Davenport, Allen Grover, Jackson, Henry R. Luce, Charles Murphy and Charles Wertenbaker.

portrait on the far wall. The liner's screws began to thump and churn, he swayed across the clubroom and challenged: 'Who's that blighter?'

Luce guessed from the portrait's dress that it was an eighteenth-century Englishman; with the smug certainty of Charles Lamb's 'wary connoisseur,' he confirmed it by a glance at the brass nameplate and pronounced: 'William the Fourth.'

That it was that blundering and inept monarch took Churchill by surprise. He harrumphed, and said: 'Looks more like Lord Rosebery to me. Same heavy jowls.'

Behind them was a brooding sculpture of a bald eagle, carved in clear ice some hours earlier by the Union Club's chefs. The wings of this symbol of American might were outstretched; its eyes glittered, and every crevice was heaped with black caviar. The club's heating had been turned up, and rivers of iced water dribbled down its chest. Churchill leered. 'The eagle,' he announced, 'seems to have caught a cold.'

He was hypnotised less by the sculptor's art than by the caviar. He waved aside the genteel slices of dry toast an editor handed him, exclaimed: 'This stuff needs no reinforcement,' and put words into action by shovelling a whopping helping onto a plate, and from there, with scarcely a perceptible interruption, straight and undiluted to his mouth – seemingly unabashed at the appreciative belches that shortly emerged from that orifice. 'I hope, gentlemen,' he apologised with little evidence of true contrition, 'I hope you don't find me too explosive an animal.'

Luce misinterpreted the remark. 'On the contrary, Sir,' he said, 'you were only putting into words what was gravely in the minds of many Americans.'



Just over a week earlier, on March 5, 1946, Churchill had delivered an astonishing speech at Fulton in Missouri, accusing the Soviet Union of having imposed an 'Iron Curtain' across Europe. On March 10 the entire Soviet press had fired a mighty broadside back, and even Joseph Stalin had joined in the assault, stating in the official Soviet newspaper *Pravda* that Churchill 'has now adopted the position of warmonger.'

Another mighty belch was Churchill's response to Luce's compliment. Dismissing it with a slice of one hand, he said: 'The explosions I had in mind were those given off by my internal pleasure.'

He gazed mistily at the spoonful of caviar poised in his hand. Times were when Stalin used to send him a lot of this delicacy. 'I don't suppose I'll ever be getting any more,' he said.

DINNER WAS not yet served. For a few minutes he quietly contemplated the others. Then he began to speak, with a purposeful tone that in Murphy's description cut like a buzzsaw across the grain of idle conversation. Luce signalled with his arm that the others should stop.

They led the Elder Statesman into dinner after that, and Luce seated him at the place of honour on his right.

Clear turtle soup was served, and he gobbled it down. It was followed by terrapin: lowering his head so as to be nearer to his prey, he skillfully forked the delicacy from plate to mouth with swift grabbing movements which reminded one onlooker of a steamshovel's grab-bucket at work.

Words and oratory cascaded from him, his tongue now loosened by rare champagne; true, he appeared to be taking only delicate sips, but from the number of refills it was clear that he had imbibed a considerable volume – editor Allen Grover assayed his intake on this evening as one martini, two sherries, four or five glasses of champagne and a formidable balloon of brandy.

Once, he recalled, Stalin had debated with him the real meaning of democracy. Britain, said Stalin, was really a dictatorship because one party – the party that happened to be in power – controlled everything. Churchill remained a skeptic, committed to parliamentarianism. He told Luce's dinner guests how, at Potsdam in 1945, he had warned Stalin that he might well find himself replaced as prime minister at the General Election whose results were even then being awaited; Stalin had solemnly commented, 'My kind of election is better.'

Several remarks showed Churchill's warm regard for Stalin. 'Stalin is the one human being in Russia,' he said, 'I'm sure he doesn't believe any of those awful things he said about me.' Later he said, 'Stalin always kept his word' – and gave as an example how the Kremlin had adhered to the Soviet–German agreement of August 1939 right up to Hitler's attack two years later. Who actually controlled Russia? Churchill pondered the question, then said: 'While Stalin appears to make policy in a sort of vacuum, I doubt very much that he is really free to do what he wants to do.'

There was no gainsaying his admiration of the Soviet Communist Party's role in the war. 'The party members are highly disciplined, very brave men,' he reflected with unashamed reverence. 'They died in very large numbers in the first great battles.' But shortly he qualified this attitude. 'I have always been for the Russian people; it is communism that I oppose.'

Just as in Europe's feudal past so in the Soviet system the party officials got the best wages, food, shopping discounts, and accommodation in trains and hotels. As a system of power, the caste structure was hard to

defeat, he admitted. 'Take your own United States,' he said casting a mischievous hand around the tuxedo'd table. 'Suppose by some mischance that in this marvellous country three of four millions of people emerged as a self-appointed, highly disciplined elite with all the political and economic controls in their possession. Suppose they had all the privileges – the first-class railroad carriages, the best food, the best food for their children. You would have quite a time, I dare say, trying to shake them loose.'

Churchill raised laughter with Vyacheslav Molotov's description of his November 1940 meeting with Hitler in Berlin. Molotov had once asked Churchill if he recalled sending Royal Air Force bombers to Berlin one night in November 1940. Churchill replied that he had a vague recollection of something of the kind.\* 'Well – Molotov went on – while I was talking to Hitler and other German officials an alert sounded and we all hurried down into an air-raid shelter, a most comfortable place, and I found myself alone with von Ribbentrop. As soon as the door behind us closed, von Ribbentrop turned to me and said, *Let's start dividing up the world*. I replied, But what will England say to that? Von Ribbentrop said, *England is finished, we can forget England*. But I said, if England is finished, why are we here in this shelter. And wherefrom come those bombs which fall?'

From the depths of his fathomless memories he retrieved glittering episodes – his direction of the White armies of Kolchak and Denikin against the Bolsheviks in 1919; the great community of purpose that had grown up between Britain and the United States. To Murphy his rhetoric seemed like the display put on by a blast-furnace – the incandescent phrases were flung out like pieces of molten metal. 'The impression of them lingers dimly and tantalisingly in memory,' wrote Murphy, frustrated afterward, 'but somehow the words are gone, like sparks that burned out on the blast-furnace floor.'

Churchill's language captivated his listeners. Several of them urged him to drive home a point that he had made about nuclear power policy in the farewell speech he was due to deliver on the next evening at the Waldorf Astoria.

Churchill feigned surprise and asked: 'Exactly what did I say? I have already forgotten.'

ONLY THIS morning, March 14, 1946, he had propped himself up in bed in the Waldorf Astoria and read an editorial in the *New York Times* which catalogued the territories in Europe that had now come under Soviet con-

\* In fact, knowing from British codebreaking operations that Molotov was visiting Hitler that night, Churchill ordered the air raid in an attempt to inconvenience them both.

trol. There was Finland, in Russia's sway right up to the tip. There were the Balkans, where Josef Tito was supposedly independent but itching to grab Trieste at Stalin's bidding. In the Far East the Russians had also been given the Kuriles, at Japan's expense. 'In short,' admitted Churchill, 'they have regained in one war everything they ever lost.' At every summit conference, he had allowed Stalin to jolly him along with alcohol and frivolity, while the Red Army methodically rolled up the map of Europe.

The United States had done nothing to prevent it. The fruitful association that had joined Britain and the United States in a common cause had withered since the war's end, and Churchill regretted it. As his remarks roamed into this sensitive arena, his bantering tone dropped away. He talked bitterly of the American public's seeming hostility toward Britain's policy in the Far East – what he called 'the whole awkward problem of the colonial peoples who inhabit these vast oceanic regions.'

He groped also toward the rawest topic of all, first saying with a half-smile something about British 'tyranny in India,' and then adding with his customary courtliness, 'it is natural that you should wish to hear my views on India' – only to have this topic snatched away from him by Henry Luce, who deftly shut off that debate and lured Churchill back onto more congenial avenues.

There was emotion in his voice when he touched on the adventures that Franklin Roosevelt and he had shared. He had loved 'Franklin,' as he called the president, like no other. 'It's too bad that things were not left to Franklin and myself to handle,' he ruminated. 'I don't mean the Roosevelt at Yalta. Then he was ethereal. His face was transparent. He was obviously a man preparing to depart.'

True, the United States were still powerful, but surely they still needed the British, with their knowledge of the seas, of world trade, and strategy. He talked of the possibility of war with Russia – pointing out that Britain was demobilising more slowly in Europe than the United States, and adding that the R.A.F. was capable of carrying out any task assigned to it. The Americans must assert their leadership, using the tremendous temporary leverage granted by the atomic bomb. 'If Russia had the bomb,' he pointed out, 'and you didn't, I don't think we'd be feeling so comfortable here tonight.'

He lit a long cigar and puffed at it.

John Davenport, an editor, asked Churchill pointblank about Yalta. 'How did it happen, Mr Churchill,' Davenport challenged, as he applied a match to the end of his own cigar, 'that you and Mr Roosevelt were so misled at Yalta as to offer such a high price to the Russians in order to lure them into the Pacific war – a war which was already won?'

There was a pained hush. Many people had nursed the same unspoken question: why had the west, though armed with the atomic bomb, and comforted by the secret knowledge that Japan was already attempting to surrender, fawned on Moscow to such an extent? Henry Luce flushed, and sternly announced: 'Mr Churchill, it is hardly necessary to answer that question. Foremost among the subjects on which Mr Davenport certainly is not an expert are the Far East and the Japanese War.'

Churchill scowled, ungrateful for Luce's defence. He offered the standard excuse: at Yalta the main thought was to end the fighting. The Rundstedt offensive had destroyed their hopes of an early victory over Germany. And then the fighting at Iwo Jima and Okinawa showed that the losses the Americans might expect if they had to invade the Japanese home islands – probably half a million American casualties or more, and eighteen months more fighting after VE day. 'The shadows of the dead,' he argued, 'were already lengthening at an alarming rate over American homes. Who could wish this to go on an instant longer than was absolutely necessary?'

Of course Iwo Jima and Okinawa were after Yalta, so his argument was artificial. But when this was pointed out, Churchill still refused to abandon his line that the price offered to Russia was reasonable. He just shook his head and mumbled 'Oh, no, no, no, there was never any question as to what was the right course.'

AT ONE point that evening, Churchill just settled back and let his thoughts ramble – over Eisenhower, whom he always called 'Ike'; over that vanishing breed, horses; over Drew Pearson and American journalism. Then he eagerly described a new American gadget, the Dictaphone: 'Think of being able to talk for twenty minutes into a little green disc that only costs a dime,' he said. 'But that is not the end of the marvellous accomplishments of this machine. If you wish to ponder what you have said, it is only necessary to flick a switch and it will play your words right back.' This invention would spell the end of that dreary business of putting down 'one miserable little letter after the other.' The Dictaphone company had given him two such machines, complete with a lapel microphone which would enable him to dictate as he paced up and down. He had instantly plugged one in and dictated a less than grammatical message of thanks to the company's workers in Connecticut. 'This is me, Winston Churchill,' he began, sending a small seismic shock-wave into that corner of the English-speaking world.

Would he ever write a history of this last war? somebody asked. 'Quite positively no,' he answered. 'I am old and, I suppose, in retirement. It would be too much for me to attempt.'

The journalists present that evening would probably never forget their encounter with Winston Churchill. With fire in his eyes, he talked wistfully of the panoply of battle, and he said challengingly: 'War is the greatest of all stimulants.'

'At moments,' wrote one, 'the light seemed to pour out of him. One could sense the power in him to summon men, at an hour of universal sinking, to live beyond themselves.'

Henry Luce proposed a toast in words which everybody felt exactly right: 'We are accustomed,' announced Luce, 'to drink toasts to people. I propose a toast to Civilisation. But Civilisation is embodied in people. So, to Winston Churchill, the First Citizen of Western Civilisation, Defender of the Faith.'



They were sorry to see him leave. Churchill pulled himself to his feet, politely repeated the name of each person as he shook hands with him, and peered intently into that man's face as though fixing it hard upon his memory. He was no longer prime minister, but in opposition. A spent force? 'The fire has unmistakably burned low,' wrote one observer.

If there was one passage that had fixed itself on their minds, it was when Churchill warmed to the theme of Fulton and the furore that his 'Iron Curtain' speech had caused. He dismissed the Soviet reaction as ill-tempered, crude and a typically communist trick. In fact – and his cheeks positively glowed as he said it – Stalin had used almost the same terms to attack him as had Hitler in his time. 'Warmonger, inciter of ears, imperialist, reactionary has-been – why, it is beginning to sound like old times,' scoffed Churchill.

Stalin's attack was clumsy and heavy-handed, but he was flattered all the same. A sudden idea struck him, and a broad grin creased his pink, baby-soft complexion.

'You know,' he said, 'If I had been turned loose on Winston Churchill, I would have done a much better job of denunciation.'

WHAT SORT of book would Winston Churchill, the author of *My Early Life*, have written if he had set out to denounce Winston Churchill, the statesman?

It is hard for other mortals to write about him, but the millions of casualties of World War Two demand that his leadership be soberly re-

searched and told. Few families were left untouched by Churchill's Wars. They robbed families of fathers, husbands – and wives, mothers and children too. I had spent twelve years researching the life of Hitler. How often Hitler had berated and scorned Churchill! What more natural than that I turn to Hitler's adversary, the free world's hero, over roughly the same period of time?

This is not a hostile biography. How could it be? Any writer immersing himself in a subject as lively and human as Winston Churchill is bound to find himself charmed by what he finds within the first few weeks. It is revealing to see from the diaries of the staff at No. 10 Downing-street like John Colville and John Martin the transition which they underwent in May 1940, from distraught horror on learning that this 'adventurer' was to succeed Neville Chamberlain to grudging acceptance of Churchill for his buccaneering verve and drive, and then outright admiration of his steadfastness. In part this was due to his leadership qualities, in part to his fluent and rapid wit.

Often he told jokes at his own expense. Once he exclaimed, 'The world is seething with lies about me – and the damnable thing is that most of them are true!'

His energy was prodigious, indeed startling in a man of his age. He inspected troops, flew in converted bombers, tramped around dockyards, toured bomb-blitzed towns, clambered over coastal defences. He wanted to hit the Normandy beaches together with General Dwight D. Eisenhower's armies on D-Day, 1944.



What scheme have I followed in writing this biography?

Firstly, I have been mindful of Sir Winston's own advice to writers, to heed the dictates of chronology. To his dear friend Mrs Consuelo Balsan, who had drafted rather untidy memoirs, he once wrote:

If you get someone to put the dates in the margin opposite each event, you could then see where the pack might be shuffled with advantage. Chronology is not a rigid rule and there are many occasions when a departure from it is a good thing. Nevertheless, I think it true to say that chronology is the secret of narrative.\*

\* The letter, dated June 27, 1952, is in the Daniel Longwell collection at the Columbia University library, New York.

Secondly, I attach proper importance to the role of Britain's code-breaking in Churchill's War. He was not allowed to mention it in his own memoirs, nor would it have enhanced his fame if he had. Remarkably, the official historians prior to Professor F. Hinsley were not privy to the existence of this special Intelligence, let alone allowed to refer to it; this surely renders their expensive volumes of questionable value. The background of their ignorance was a July 1945 decision by the Joint Intelligence Committee. Worried by the avalanche of captured German documents reaching Britain, the J.I.C. recognised one danger: that the sheer alacrity of Britain's counter-measures to some operations signalled in cypher by the Germans must betray the secret to any alert researcher or official historian. 'Obvious instances,' the J.I.C. figured, 'are the rerouting of our convoys to avoid submarine attacks by orders issued immediately after the issue of German orders to their U-boats; the counter-measures to meet the G.A.F. [German airforce] attacks on this country, and the routing of our deep penetration raids into Germany; the employment of our forces in the field in face of German dispositions.'

Thus the British chiefs of staff circularised all government agencies forbidding their historians to mention or inquire into special Intelligence.\* National security was placed before historical truth. Those who learned of it – as I did by chance in 1963, by precisely the kind of analysis feared by the J.I.C., of British and German documents on V-weapons – were forbidden to divulge the ULTRA secret.

The present volume squarely addresses the question why Winston Churchill was so widely mistrusted before his illustrious appointment in May 1940. It is an area about which we have hitherto had little information.

The Churchill family cannot help us, because by the stipulations of the family trust the Churchill papers are to remain closed until ten years after Dr Martin Gilbert has hewn the final volume of his monumental official biography to which we all owe a genuine debt. What is perhaps more remarkable is that important collections of official documents outside Churchill's archives have been effectively sealed: for example, the letters that passed between Churchill as prime minister and His Majesty King George VI, surely the most official of records, are being held at Windsor Castle at

\* J.I.C.(45)223(O) dated July 20; and C.O.S. 187th meeting, July 31, 1945; in CAB.79/37. See David Stafford's paper in *Military Affairs*, vol. 42 (Feb. 1978), page 29ff. The result was a General Directive for Safeguarding Intelligence Sources in Compiling Official Histories. 'It is imperative,' this laid down, 'that the fact that such intelligence was available should NEVER be disclosed.' Official historians were forbidden to probe into 'apparently unaccountable operational orders.' The Pentagon endorsed the decision.

the exclusive disposition of Dr Gilbert. In consequence, researchers acting without the warrant of the Churchill family are obliged to carry their inquiries into the four corners of the world.

But this has been a rewarding search. We can screen collections of papers held at the Hoover Library in California, the National Archives in Washington, the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa, the presidential libraries of Roosevelt, Truman and Eisenhower and Kennedy, the tomes of the Archives Nationales in Paris, the records of the National Library of Australia in Canberra, the French, Czech and Germany foreign ministries. We can trawl through private collections of important individuals in Churchill's life, like those of Henry Stimson and Tyler Kent at Yale University, of Winthrop Aldrich at Harvard, and the *non-Churchill* papers housed at Churchill College, Cambridge (to whose archivist, Dr Correlli Barnett, I am of course indebted).

A full list of archival sources will be published in volume two of this biography, but I should like to mention here Madame Reynaud, widow of France's wartime premier, who kindly gave me access to her husband's files in Paris which throw new light on the Dunkirk disaster (particularly useful since Lord Gort 'lost all his papers' in the retreat). Among them are some exchanges evidently missing from Churchill's files, for example, a telegram on May 24, 1940 which is also among the files captured by the Nazis along with the French accounts of conversations with Mr Churchill.\*

I am also indebted to the Soviet authorities for supplying to me copies of all the Russian embassy telegrams from London relating to Churchill, and of his conferences with Stalin, and to Mrs Neham Chalom of the Weizmann Institute of Science at Rehovot, Israel, for allowing me access to the entire file of confidential correspondence between Churchill and Professor Chaim Weizmann, the Zionist *éminence grise*.

What we find in rare sources such as these both offsets and enhances the picture presented by Churchill's own narrower archives, as reflected in Gilbert's writings. Perhaps this is small wonder: we should *expect* to find for example, in the private files of the exiled Polish prime ministers Wladislaw Sikorski in London and Stanislas Mikolajczyk at Stanford, California, and of their foreign minister Tadeusz Romer in Ottawa, rich documents on Churchill's dealings with the Poles. But what European historian could have hoped to uncover in the confidential papers of the Canadian premier and mysticist, William Mackenzie King, the kind of astonishing tableaux that will be found in this biography?

\* Microfilmed by the U.S. National Archives: T120, rolls 115 and 127.

Readers may be alarmed at some elements in these pages. Few of the visiting statesmen failed to comment in their private papers on Churchill's consumption of alcohol, occasionally coupling their remarks with the puzzled observation that even the hardest liquor appeared to leave him unimpaired. In official American publications, documents have been doctored to omit such passages. There is evidence that on occasions Churchill's temporary incapacitation resulted in political or military decisions that damaged British prestige, and even caused casualties among the soldiers and sailors concerned.

He was at his happiest in war, and said so.

He was rarely a creator, always a destroyer – of cities, of monuments and works of art, of populations, of frontiers, of monarchies, and finally his own country's empire.

His bombing policy led to the slaying of a million civilians in Holland, France, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Scandinavia; it seems not to have dismayed him. On the contrary, when I toured his underground war headquarters near Parliament-square twenty-five years ago, I found on permanent proud display, as they had been for his wartime visitors, the stereoscopic photographs of the destruction of Dresden. It is as though Hitler had pinned up colour photographs of Auschwitz or Buchenwald for visiting celebrities.

His indifference to public suffering was documented again and again. In 1944 crowds jeered him when he appeared in dazzling R.A.F. uniform in a newly blitzed suburb of London and declared 'This is the thing! It is just like being back in the best days of the Blitz again.' While postwar Britain starved he sheltered the flow of tens of thousands of dollars from New York publishers against the depredations of the Inland Revenue while he vacationed with his retinue in North Africa and on the French Riviera. It would be unfeeling to criticise him for an excessive mercenary zeal. What writers are not at times beholden to financial problems? But this book's early chapters are overhung by the enormity of his financial deficit during his years in the political wilderness, a cash crisis illuminated by the papers of his literary agent now on deposit in the University of Oregon at Eugene.

This financial quandary might seem of only vestigial importance, but in following chapters comes the suggestion that he proceeded to sell his soul to a syndicate of politicians and financiers called the Focus, a group which continued to fêted and finance him until the outbreak of war.

THE MATERIALS on this episode are perhaps typical of the sources which I have developed for this biography.

One was a diary of a member of the Focus made available to me by Dr Howard Gottlieb, director of the Mugar Memorial Library at Boston University. This shows that at the time of Munich the Czechs were paying Focus members £2,000 per annum. The papers of the former Czech minister in Paris, Stefan Osusky, at the Hoover Library, Czech documents now in Prague F.O. archives, and captured Nazi intercepts of Beneš's secret telephone conversations with Osusky and Jan Masaryk confirm that senior British politicians were being paid by the Czechs in return for a promise to topple Neville Chamberlain's government.

The rarest items come from the most distant sources. From Finnish archives, a telegram from Paris to Helsinki dated March 30, 1940, reporting Churchill's discussions with French premier Paul Reynaud: intercepted by the Nazis, it triggered Hitler's invasion of Norway a week later. From Stockholm archives come the telegrams revealing the extraordinary efforts by Churchill's opponents in the war cabinet to make peace behind his back in June 1940.

Some material I obtained as gifts – one lady entrusted to me the diary kept by her late husband, Churchill's personal bodyguard, from 1942 to 1945. Churchill's private secretary allowed me to copy his wartime diaries. A stranger telephoned with the text of the cabinet's message empowering Lord Gort to accept whatever surrender terms at Dunkirk the Germans would offer (the stolen document was in his possession).

Other documents I have had to purchase or even rent – like the daily appointments record kept by Churchill and his staff throughout the war.

Several years ago I was able to photocopy large tracts of the files of the late Lord Cherwell which have since been sealed. These relate to Churchill's role in the allied dealings on the atomic bomb, the Morgenthau Plan, and postwar policy in Germany.

Not all my researches were successful.

In Nazi files I found evidence that the German post office had listened in on Churchill's telephone conversations with Roosevelt and recorded them on discs. I found Nazi transcripts of only two of them, however; the rest were evidently destroyed at the war's end.

My search for the corresponding U.S. Navy recordings and transcripts made for the American Bureau of Censorship lasted ten years and has narrowed their probable location to the National Security Agency, but the N.S.A. rarely opens its files. Future historians *must* continue the search; the telegrams that F.D.R. and Churchill exchanged were often drafted by committees, and obviously of less importance than their private conversations, as my chapter 'A Telephone Job' in this volume shows.

WHEN SIR Winston Churchill died in 1965, modern Britain lost her most fabled son. His place in the world's immediate history was assured. Subsequent decades have already seen the accents change, but it remains true that he towered over his own times.

His spirit was magnificent, his energy prodigious.

What forces of locomotion impelled him in those dark years of the war? Was it the unswerving faith in the rightness of his cause?

He remained unerringly convinced that he was protecting his country and its empire from its greatest enemy. Yet in reality he had allied himself with that empire's profoundest enemies, and presided over its dissolution.

Churchill came to be remembered as a champion of peace and freedom and human dignity. In the closing days of his life he murmured to his old friend Sir Robert Boothby, 'The journey has been well worth making — once.'

Boothby asked, 'And then?'

'A long sleep, I expect: I deserve it.'

## I : *Faithless but Fortunate*

THE ANCIENT Greeks prescribed that a man of virtue must possess twelve qualities – ambition, gentleness, generosity, truthfulness, magnificence, magnanimity, reverence, justice, prudence, wit, courage, and a degree of charm.

Stealing a march into the world on November 30, 1874 after only seven months in the womb of a noted American beauty, Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill proved as years passed to be deficient in prudence, but possessed of other qualities not listed by the Greeks, and that is what this book shall be about.

He learned that he was the first son of the Right Honourable Lord Randolph Churchill, perhaps not the most desirable of fathers.

He learned too that he had English and American blood in equal measure, like many others we shall be meeting in these pages, his mother Jeanette being daughter of one Leonard Jerome, editor and occasional majority stockholder of the *New York Times*. He had no doubt inherited some of the recklessness and most of the enterprise of this grandfather, if little of his material fortune.<sup>1</sup>

He learned that Leonard Jerome had made and squandered four fortunes during his lifetime. 'It would have been a fine thing,' Winston's younger brother Jack used to commiserate with him, 'if Grandfather Jerome had held on to at least one of his fortunes.'

His learning continued until Lord Randolph entered him at age thirteen into Harrow, one of England's more fashionable schools. Here it virtually stopped. Years later, when Winston's friend Lord Melchett boasted over luncheon that his son was stroke of the Oxford boat, Churchill crushed him with the retort that athletic or academic achievers were to be distrusted. 'I did nothing at Harrow,' he reminisced, 'but I regard my time there as very well spent.' He had whiled away his hours eating ice-cream and candy, he said, and that was the important thing when growing up – to 'learn to be an omnivore.' His theory was that the energy squandered on academic or athletic pursuits was not available for more vital purposes in adult life.