

# Churchill the Warrior : Admiral of the Fleet : the Earl Mountbatten of Burma

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Churchill the Warrior

*Admiral of the Fleet*  
*The Earl Mountbatten of Burma*

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*4. Winston Churchill-Gedenkvorlesung, gehalten an der Universität Bern  
am 4. März 1970.*

# Churchill the Warrior

*Fourth Winston Churchill Memorial Lecture, given in the University of Berne,  
4th March 1970*

ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET  
THE EARL MOUNTBATTEN OF BURMA

In 1911 Winston Churchill became First Lord of the Admiralty. That is the title of the Minister in charge of the Navy in England. My father came the same year to the Admiralty as the Second Sea Lord, who is the head of the personnel. In 1912 Churchill invited my father to become First Sea Lord, that is the professional head of the Navy and Chief of Naval operations. I was a schoolboy then and I remember Winston Churchill coming to luncheon with my parents. I was present and very impressed with the fact that he spoke to me as though I was grown up and I appreciated that very much. After lunch, when he had gone, my father remarked what a fine young man he was (he was about 37 or 38), how much he liked working with him, how quick he was to understand naval problems and spoke of his immense drive and enthusiasm. My mother said: "That is what you think, I think he is unreliable." My father said: "In heaven's name why?" She replied: "I lent him a favourite book of mine, *La Psychologie des Foules* par Gustave le Bon, and he has not returned it. So I think he is unreliable." I was too young to realise that my mother was pulling my father's leg and teasing him, so I made a mental note: "Mr Churchill unreliable."

Next year, in May 1913 I joined the Royal Navy myself at the age of twelve and three quarters. Those were the years in which the Royal Navy took its officers very young, before they knew any better and we continued all our lives never knowing any better. Winston Churchill came to inspect us cadets at the Royal Naval College and in the evening he went round while we had supper. And as he looked at the hundreds of small boys he suddenly saw one he recognised, me, and he said: "Hello Dickie, enjoying your supper?" I replied: "Yes, sir." Then he made a fatal mistake, he uttered the traditional remark: "Any complaints?" I said: "Well, yes, sir. We only get two sardines for supper on Sunday, we would sooner have three." He called over the Naval Secretary. "Admiral", he said, "make a note. These young gentlemen want three sardines for supper on Sunday, not two." I was a great hero. All my companions thought I was wonderful and brave. I was going to get them three sardines for supper. We never got three sardines for supper. That convinced me that Mr Churchill was unreliable.



During my first holidays, although myself a very junior cadet, the lowest form of life in the Navy, I took advantage of my relationship with [the head of the Navy, my father, to ask him what his job was. He said: "My boy, my job is to keep the fleets of the Royal Navy at operational strength and at immediate readiness to be certain of defeating the next greatest power in the world in battle, and until quite recently we had to be able to defeat the combined might of the next two greatest powers." I said: "That's quite a job." He replied: "Yes, but what makes it easy is I have a splendid minister in Mr Winston Churchill who gives me all his support." So I made a mental note: „Mr Churchill perhaps, after all, reliable”.

Winston Churchill loved action and taking part in wars; it was his main interest in life. While he was still a cadet at Sandhurst he managed to get himself out to Cuba in 1895, when they had a rebellion, as the newspaper correspondent for the *Daily Graphic*. Here he acquired three tastes which stayed with him all his life; a taste for action, for siestas and for cigars.

In 1897 he joined the 4th Hussars in India in a very nice station at Bangalore where nothing much was going on. Action was taking place on the North-West Frontier, so he volunteered to go up and join the Malakand Field Force which was operating up the Khyber Pass, against rebellious tribes. At the end he wrote his own report and in it this young subaltern did not hesitate to criticise the administration, the organisation and even the operational command. One can imagine how popular that made him with all the generals!

In 1898 he realised that the place to see action would be in Egypt and in the Sudan. Unfortunately for him, General Kitchener, who was the Commander-in-Chief, had read this article by Churchill and said he would never have that impertinent young subaltern in his army. Yet Churchill wanted to go and join his army. This was a direct confrontation between the greatest general in the British Army and a junior subaltern. But the junior subaltern was Winston Churchill and so he got there! He arrived to join the 21st Lancers and bought a German automatic pistol, a Mauser, which was fairly new. He took part in the famous cavalry charge of the 21st Lancers at the Battle of Omdurman not with a lance, not with a sabre but with the automatic pistol. He shot dead each of the dervishes who tried to kill him, so he probably killed more of the enemy than those with lances.

When the South African War started he could see no chance of taking part as a soldier, so he again got leave and volunteered to go to South Africa as the war correspondent for the *Morning Post*. He got himself captured, and he escaped. A notice was put out by the South African authorities offering a reward for his capture. It said: "£25 reward for the capture of Winston Churchill, Englishman, 26 years old, 5 ft 8 ins high, walks with a forward stoop, talks through his nose." They estimated his worth at £25 in 1899 –

has any stock appreciated quite so much in 40 years? What would Hitler have offered for his capture, dead or alive? 25 million pounds, 250 million pounds? Any price would have been cheap for Hitler, for with Churchill out of the way he might not have lost the war.

Churchill then went into politics, and held ministerial posts from 1904 up to the time he went to the Admiralty in 1911. At the beginning of the 1914 war a wave of hysteria against Germany swept over England. People kicked dachshunds in the streets because they were a German breed of dogs. They would not listen to Wagner being played by bands because he was a German composer. They pushed Lord Haldane out of office because he had been at a German university, though he had in fact reorganised the British Army. In due course there was a campaign against my father, who had to resign as First Sea Lord. Winston Churchill supported him to the end and when he did resign, wrote him a letter, which was published, saying: "The first steps which secured the timely concentration of the Fleet were taken by you." This was a generous acknowledgement that it was my father not Winston Churchill who had stood the Fleet fast at the end of the test mobilisation at the beginning of August 1914. When my father went to say goodbye to Winston he said: "I suppose now I have gone you will go ahead with the Dardanelles operation with the Fleet only." Winston replied: "Yes." My father went on: "I believe the Dardanelles is a fine concept, don't spoil it by alerting the land defences with the Fleet only. Wait until you can launch a combined operation with the Army!" But Churchill wouldn't wait. He couldn't get Kitchener to produce the soldiers, so he sent the Fleet by itself to bombard the forts. Attlee (Winston's deputy in the Second World War) has stated that the Dardanelles was the only imaginative concept of the First World War but it went wrong because the Fleet was used by itself. And yet it very nearly succeeded because on the 18th of March 1915, the day that the Allied Fleet made their last attack on the forts and then gave up, the Turkish forts had only got 27 rounds left that they could fire against armoured ships. If the Allied Fleet had gone on they might have got through and opened up communications with the Russians and turned the flank of the Central Powers, which would have altered the course of the war. What it did reveal was the complete lack of co-ordination of the war direction, because it was only after the naval bombardment had failed that Kitchener produced the troops. Meanwhile the German general, Liman von Sanders, and a young Turkish brigadier called Kemal (later the famous Attatürk) had prepared the defences so that we were defeated.

With this defeat Churchill lost his job, he quarrelled with the new First Sea Lord, old Lord Fisher, and went out into the wilderness. He had said he wanted to go and fight and asked for command of a battalion. They gave him command of the 6th Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers at Ploeg-

staert which the Tommies called: "Plugstreet." Until he came it was a quiet sector of the front.

The local farmers continued to live and work there. When he arrived he discovered he had two guns of a battery that he could give orders to. Every night he used to say: "Stir up the Huns, fire a few shots at the Germans", and the Germans would reply by firing a few shots back. Very soon it became impossible for the local inhabitants to continue living there and he gave them his battalion's transport to help them to move their belongings out of the zone. He went to see them off. As they left he said: "C'est la guerre, c'est la guerre;" they retorted: "Non, c'est le Churchill, c'est le Churchill." And they were quite right!

There is very little doubt that the man who reinvented the tank, the armoured fighting vehicles, was Churchill. He was not the first to think of it. It had been thought of 580 years previously in the year 1335 by Guido de Vigivano. However, while Churchill was still First Lord of the Admiralty he got the Director of Naval Construction to design a "land warship". He spent £70000 of the Navy's money to build 18 tanks and when he became Minister of Munitions he pushed on hard with their development and construction. They were first used at Thiepval in September 1916 but only 50, far too small a number to have any real effect. One year later 400 were used at Cambrai and this time had a far greater effect. With this innovation Churchill had altered the whole concept of land war; he had altered the tactics and with it the strategies. Without Churchill's invention of armoured fighting vehicles Hitler could not have had his Blitzkrieg and rushed through the countries in the way he did. So to Churchill must go the credit – or blame – for armoured land fighting.

Although my talk is about "Churchill the Warrior", as I see so many ladies present, I thought they might like to hear two of Winstons' famous repartees to the ladies. The first was to Lady Astor. She was an American married to an Englishman and was the first woman to enter British Parliament. She used to argue with Churchill the whole time. At a luncheon party at which they were both present she got so annoyed with him she said: "Winston, if you were married to me I would give you poison." Winston retorted: "Nancy, if I were married to you I would take it!" Then, after the war when he had lost the election and was out of office, he dined very well in the House of Commons dining room. As he walked out down the wide corridors of the House of Commons he zig-zagged a little. A well-known lady M.P., much beloved but not very beautiful, went up to him and said: "Winston, you are drunk". Pulling himself up he replied: "Bessie, my dear, do you know you are very ugly. Tomorrow I'll be sober and you will still be very ugly."

In 1928, when he was Chancellor of the Exchequer, he visited the Commander-in-Chief in Malta, Admiral Sir Roger Keyes. He spent a fortnight

there and then went to sea with the Fleet. I was a two-stripe lieutenant on the Commander-in-Chief's staff, as assistant fleet wireless officer, responsible for the wireless traffic of the Fleet. Winston wrote out a whole lot of thank-you letters in the form of radiotelegrams to all the people who had entertained him. They were sent to me to transmit back to Malta. I went to Churchill and said: "All your telegrams have gone, sir, and here is your bill: £9.17.6." "That's ridiculous", he said, "Malta is only six miles away". "That's what everyone has to pay", I replied, "6d a word." "But who settled that?" he asked. "The Chancellor of the Exchequer", I said. "What ought it to be?" he questioned. "Twopence", I replied. "Very well, make it twopence", he ended. And then I knew he really was reliable.

During the interwar years my wife, who had been a friend of his before me, and I kept up our friendship with him. We maintained our strong support for his attack on appeasement, on the failure to stand up to the Fascists and the Nazis. Winston spoke out very strongly. This is what he said in the House of Commons in 1938, two weeks after the annexation of Austria: "For five years I have talked to the House on these matters, not with very great success. I have watched this famous Island descending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on, there are only flag stones, a little farther on still, these flag stones break beneath your feet. If mortal catastrophe should overtake the British Nation, historians a thousand years hence will never understand how it was that the victorious nation suffered themselves to cast away all that they had gained by measureless sacrifice. Now the victors are vanquished and those who threw down their arms are striding on to world mastery."

It wasn't well received. It wasn't what they wanted to hear.

On his return from Munich, Chamberlain landed waving a bit of paper signed by Hitler and Mussolini, saying: "I bring you peace, peace in our time"; the whole country was thrilled. They thought that he had saved them from war. Not so Churchill. He stood up in the House of Commons and this is what he said:

"I do not grudge our loyal, brave people the spontaneous outburst of joy, but they should know the truth. They should know that we have sustained a defeat without war. And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning. The first sip, the first foretaste of the bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless, by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden times."

Did they cheer, no, they jeered; this was not what they wanted to hear. It went very badly. You may wonder why and I think the reason was that at that time Winston Churchill had no solid reputation. He had not done par-



ticularly well in the First World War, he had not made his name as Minister in the Home Office. His chief claim to fame had been that when some gangsters had barricaded themselves in a house in Sydney Street, he called out the army and went down himself in a top hat and directed the operation of the army against the gangsters. He wrote a number of papers when he was in the Home Office, not about home affairs but about the war he thought was coming in 1914. He wrote one paper called *The Military Aspects of the Continental Problem*. In this he said that if the main body of the French army could be kept in being, if they could retain their *masse de manoeuvre* for 40 days, then the Germans would be defeated. He was wrong but only by two days. The generals all said it was nonsense but he was right because on the 42nd day the Battle of the Marne, the turning point in the First World War, took place. But this did not give him the reputation he required in peace.

In September 1939 I had just been given command of a flotilla of 8 of our newest, biggest and best destroyers, of the K-class. My own ship was the *Kelly*. We were going to the Mediterranean and the ship was painted the lovely light grey colour of the Mediterranean Fleet. When war became obvious I ordered a quick evolution to paint the ship the war colour, dark grey. I was over the side on a stage wielding a paintbrush myself when my chief yeoman of signals came along and said: "War, sir, war telegram, commence hostilities against Germany." My heart sank, I had been through it all once before. It was dreadful to think we were at the very beginning of a second World War. 10 minutes later, the chief yeoman came back. He was waving a telegram and saying: "Telegram from the Admiralty, sir. Winston is back." Just that, "Winston is back". It had an electric effect throughout the Fleet. Everyone said: "Now, we are going to go places." In due course during the Norwegian campaign when things were going badly, Chamberlain was replaced as Prime Minister by Churchill. This took place on the 10th of May 1940. That evening he wrote in his diary: "As I went to bed about 3 a.m., I was conscious of a profound sense of relief. At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I was walking with destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial."

He recalled Parliament and on the 13th of May, 3 days later, he made a speech in Parliament, his first as Prime Minister. All of you will probably know the first sentence which is famous:

"I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat." But do you know how he went on? He said: "You ask, What is our policy? It is to wage war by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us: to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy. You ask,

What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory – victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror; victory however long and hard the road may be.” This is what leadership is made of, this is what we wanted to hear at that very difficult time.

In May 1941 I was sunk in the *Kelly* and was then sent to take over command of a new ship, the Aircraft Carrier *Illustrious*, which was being repaired in America. While I was at Pearl Harbour visiting the American Pacific Fleet, I got a telegram from Churchill relieving me of my command and recalling me to England. I was very upset. The last thing I wanted to do was to leave the war at sea and sit in Whitehall. When I got back I reported to him. He said: “Why have you taken so long to answer my summons?” I replied rather light-heartedly: “Well, sir, I was very nearly on the 180th meridian and I wasn’t sure which way round the world you wanted me to come back.” He quelled me with a look: “You know why you have come. I want you to relieve Admiral Keyes in charge of combined operations”. (Now the last time you heard of Admiral Keyes he was a full Admiral and I was a Lieutenant on his staff, now I was to take over from him.) “What have you got to say to that?” I said: “Sir, I would sooner be back at sea fighting with my friends rather than sitting on my backside in Whitehall”. “Have you no sense of glory?” Churchill retorted, “I offer you a chance to take part in the highest direction of the war and all you want to do is to go back to sea. What could you hope to achieve except to be sunk in a bigger and more expensive ship this time?”

He then went on: “You will carry on with the commando raids on the occupied coasts of Europe, not only to keep up our morale and to worry the Germans but because I want you to learn the technique of opposed landings, for you are to prepare for the invasion of Europe. We cannot win this war unless we land an army in France and defeat Hitler on land. You must arrange to collect soldiers, sailors and airmen, put them in training-bases, teach them to operate as one force. You must devise the new techniques, you must design new landing-craft, new landing-ships, the appurtenances and the appliances necessary for invasion. The whole of the South of England is a bastion of defence against Hitler’s invasion. You must turn that into a springboard for our own attack. Every other headquarters in England is thinking defensively, yours is to think only offensively.”

That was said on the 22nd of October 1941, after Hitler had overrun Europe. Practically every country was occupied. The Americans were not in the war. The Russians had just been attacked and looked like being defeated. At that moment this man’s one idea was to turn to the offensive and to defeat Hitler on land. I went away, feeling very enthusiastic and got on with the job as best I could.

A little later, in March 1942, he felt I hadn’t got enough power to get

things done, so he made me an acting Vice-Admiral (I was then 41 years old, younger than Nelson) and an honorary Lieutenant-General in the Army and Air Marshal in the Royal Air Force. He put me on the Chiefs of Staff Committee as the fourth member and so I was also on the combined Chiefs of Staff with the Americans. I remember the first time I came down to the Chiefs of Staff meeting with the Defence Committee of the Cabinet, feeling pretty nervous, General Ismay, who was Winston's own Chief of Staff, said to me: "Are you feeling nervous?" "Yes", I replied. "Don't", he said. "This happens every evening at ten o'clock and it's the best show in London. It is even better than the Palladium and the Crazy Gang." And so it certainly was, because Winston made it all so amusing. However serious the business, he had a lot of light-hearted remarks, such as the time when somebody said: "Prime Minister, the trouble with the Germans is that they are like a lot of sheep; they will follow anybody." "Oh, it is worse than that," said Churchill, "they are carnivorous sheep."

Perhaps you would like to hear about the sort of routine that we used to have at Chequers, the official country residence of the Prime Minister. Churchill went there every week-end and he would then send for the Chiefs of Staff or other people. About half past five or six would come the message: "The Prime Minister wants you to come to Chequers for the night." I had a board with six bell-pushes on it. I used to turn it over – press on it and bells rang on every floor in my headquarters. People used to run up and down, saying "Chequers, Chequers, Chequers" and everybody came in with all the files and papers dealing with every operation, every plan we had on hand. I filled a large suitcase with these and went down to Chequers, not knowing what he wanted to talk about, but wishing to have all my facts with me. One used to drive down in the blackout and arrive at Chequers at about eight o'clock to join the party which might include other Chiefs of Staff or Ministers or visitors and Lady Churchill and one of his daughters. At 8.30 p.m. the company assembled for drinks and then at about 9 we went in to dinner and a very good dinner it used to be. It went on a long while and then at about ten or 10.15 the ladies left the room and Winston held forth over brandy and a good cigar. It was most entertaining and amusing. At about 10.40 or so we'd get up and join the ladies and we all went up and saw a film. He had a cinema projector at Chequers and always had a film over the weekends. When the film was over, which would be perhaps about 12.30 a.m., we had a nightcap with the ladies, and at about 1 o'clock we'd start work going through all things he wanted to discuss until 2, 3 or 3.30 a.m. On one occasion General Marshall, the Chief of the United States Army, was in the party. We went through this process and at 12.30, when the ladies went to bed, he got up to go. We all said: "You can't go now; it hasn't started yet!"

But Churchill was beaten at this game once – the only time I have ever

seen him defeated. General Smuts, his great South African friend, was among the party and at about 1 o'clock Winston said: "Well, now we will start work." "No", said Smuts, "I am not going to start work. I am not going to be a party to your murdering the British Chiefs of Staff. Here they are, they have to be back in the office by 9 o'clock in the morning, ready for meetings at 9.30; you will still be lying in bed with a fat cigar, dictating to your Secretary. They have to work all morning and all afternoon; in the afternoon you have a siesta. You bring them down here and make them work all night as well; you will kill them and I am not going to be a party to that." He then got up and went to bed. There was absolute silence for a minute or two – nobody spoke. Suddenly Winston got up and said: "Well, perhaps we'd better go to bed." It was the only time we were let off.

In June 1942 he sent me over to see President Roosevelt. I flew to Washington with a young American officer called Eisenhower whom I had rather taken to. I was going rather like John the Baptist to clear the way for Winston Churchill. I had to break the bad news to the Americans that we could not hope to have an invasion in 1942. In 1943 we might be able to have invasions on the soft underbelly in Africa and Italy but the main invasion in Normandy could probably not be until 1944. That was very unwelcome news, but they took it. When I had done my stuff, Churchill came out to discuss the rest of the business. Now I only mention this because of a delightful incident about which I was told. Roosevelt and Churchill were tremendous personal friends. They were very fond of each other. They liked pulling each other's leg and teasing each other. I saw the preparation of a marvellous practical joke on Winston Churchill. The President had found one of these American middle-aged crusading women. This woman's crusade was that the British should quit India and give her independence. Roosevelt knew that this was the very last thing Churchill wanted. He had been brought up on Rudyard Kipling, playing polo and so forth in India, and the last thing he wanted was the Indians to get independence. They had luncheon in the small room at the White House with perhaps eight or ten people. The Prime Minister sat next to the President and then came the crusading woman. All the others there knew what was going to happen except Winston. The crusading woman could hardly contain herself and at the first possible opportunity she said: "Mr Prime Minister, what do you intend to do about those wretched Indians?" Winston drew himself up and replied: "Madam, to which Indians do you refer? Do you by chance refer to the second greatest nation on earth which under benign and beneficent British rule has multiplied and prospered exceedingly or do you mean those unfortunate Indians of the North American continent which under your administration are practically extinct!"

By August of 1943 I had completed my part in the plans for the Invasion and hoped to go back to sea. I accompanied Churchill on his visit to Canada



for the Quebec Conference, and whilst there he sent for me to come to the Citadel. As we walked up and down the battleworks he said to me: "Are you quite well again – have you recovered from overworking yourself?" (I had been laid up for two or three weeks.) "Yes", I replied. "I'm all right again." "What do you think about the situation in South East Asia"? he asked. "It stinks, doesn't it", I said. "What do you mean"? he enquired. "Everything is wrong", I replied, "they've lost their morale, got no priorities – they've been defeated on land, at sea and in the air continuously. It's pretty hopeless." "Do you think you can put it right?" asked Winston. Of course I thought that he meant I should go out on a fact-finding mission and write a report. "I'm much too busy", I replied. "You don't understand", Winston snapped. "The President and I want you to go out and set up a Supreme Allied Command and then run it." "Can I have 24 hours to think it over?" I asked. "Why?" he retorted. "Don't you think you could do the job?" "Not at all", I said. "I have a congenital weakness for thinking I can do anything, but I want to be quite certain that all the Chiefs of Staff and the President think the same as you and want me to take the job, otherwise it is no good." "Very well", he said, "you can go and see them". I did, and found they thought the same way as Winston Churchill so I had no choice and went out to the South East Asia Command. Winston gave me the most terrific support all the way through – at a time when we had no priorities the main hope we got was from Winston.

I was summoned to come back to the Potsdam Conference and here I was let into the greatest secret of the war. General Marshall told me about the American atomic bomb, which I didn't know anything about. This was the end of July and it was to be dropped in August. Then I saw President Truman. And he shut all the doors and told me about the atomic bomb. Then I saw Churchill and he told me the same thing. He said: "When the bomb is dropped they will surrender and when they surrender you must take over immediately. What are your plans for doing this?" – "Good Lord", I gasped, "you've only just told me – how can I have a plan?" "You must make immediate plans", he said. When I told him I had a big invasion-plan for Malaya – with about a quarter of a million soldiers and a big fleet with which I proposed to land in Malaysia about the beginning of September, he replied: "Too late, too late. You must load at once and be ready to go and to expect no opposition." He then told me to send a telegram to General Wheeler, my American Deputy telling him to do this. "But you must not tell him why", he said. "It's much too secret." I said: "General Wheeler will think I'm mad, if I tell him to load the ships a fortnight earlier and to send them out on the assumption that the Japanese won't resist." "Discipline, discipline" he said, "they mustn't question your authority. They must do what you tell them." Of course, General Wheeler did think I was mad and he went to my British

Chief of Staff, General Browning, who also thought I was mad – but nevertheless they made preparations and had the forces ready to sail as soon as I gave the word after the bomb dropped.

Then the election took place and Churchill was out of office. I waited just long enough to report to Mr Attlee, the new Prime Minister, before going back. On my last day in London Dr Wellington Koo, the Chinese Ambassador, gave a big luncheon for me to celebrate the victory of the First and Sixth Chinese Armies who had been fighting under my command in Burma. The bomb was dropped that morning. At lunch the butler came and told me there was a gentleman on the telephone who wanted to speak to me. “I can’t talk on the telephone during an official lunch”, I said. “He is very insistent, sir”, the butler replied. “What is his name?” I asked. “It is a Mr Churchill, sir.” “I don’t know a Mr Churchill”, I said and the butler went on: “He said, you must come – it is very urgent.” So I went to the telephone and said: “Yes, who is that”? A voice replied: “Is that you, Dickie? It’s Winston here. Now, we must be quick, I’m calling you from a public telephone box. You’ve heard the bomb has dropped?” “Yes, I’ve heard” I said. “Have you given the order, have you told your fleet to sail?” he asked. “No, sir”, I replied. “Why not?” he snapped. “I’m waiting to confirm the order with my new boss”, I explained. “And who is your new boss?” he asked and I answered: “It is Mr Attlee.” “Good God”, he retorted, “you’re not going to wait for him, are you!”

In 1946 he made two famous speeches. The second of these was made at Fulton, Missouri at the invitation of President Truman. There he invented and coined a phrase which was to become internationally used. What he said was:

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. All the ancient capitals of Eastern Europe are on the other side of the iron curtain under Russian influence.”

This went very badly and I was told by someone who dined with Winston in New York just after he had made the speech that crowds were demonstrating against him outside his hotel. And yet what he said was so prophetically right. Fulton became very proud of the fact that he had made this speech there and they acquired a Christopher Wren church from a site in London which had been badly damaged during the war. They transported it across the Atlantic, stone by stone, and had it re-erected in Fulton, Missouri as a Memorial to Winston Churchill. I was invited to go out in May last year and give the Dedication Address. It was a very moving ceremony and underlined the great regard the people in America have for the great man.

After he had given the Fulton address he came to Zurich, where he gave a speech calling for European unity. This morning I saw the memorial which has been erected to Winston Churchill on Lake Thun. It made me very proud

and happy to realise that here in Switzerland what he has done is appreciated and his memory is also honoured by the Swiss Churchill Foundation which organises these lectures.

In 1953 the Queen's Coronation took place and there was a great Naval Review – a vast review of the British Fleet and indeed ships of other Nations. I was Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean and also Commander-in-Chief of the NATO Fleet in that area at the time and brought back 20 of my ships from the British Mediterranean Fleet to take part in the Review. As soon as Winston saw me he told me I must make an appointment as he wanted to talk to me. The last thing I wanted to do was to worry him at a time when he was heavily involved with representatives from every nation in the world who were attending the Coronation; so I kept clear. He did not forget and I was summoned to No. 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official residence in London. By that time he had become very deaf and in the middle of the cabinet table he had a large hearing-aid with an amplifier. As I entered the room he held up his hand as a signal to me not to speak. He picked up the headphones, put them on, switched on the amplifier, tapped it and then said: "I'll tell you what you ought to do about the Dardanelles." After he had held forth for about ten minutes he took off the headphones, switched off the hearing-aid and then turned to me and said: "Now, what have you to say to that!"

As he got old his memory started to fail. I asked him one day if he still showed films at home and he said he did. I then said: "You should run the film of the Battle of the River Plate. Have you seen it?" "No", he replied. "You must see it", I said, "it was a great naval victory and you were First Lord of the Admiralty at the time." "Oh yes", he said, "I remember very well; it was a very great victory. I was First Lord – but I can't remember, which war was it in, the first or second?"

The last time I saw Winston was at lunch in his London house. Harold Macmillan was then Prime Minister. We were the only two guests at lunch. Winston was getting pretty old and sat there, a shrunken figure, not talking. When the champagne was served he picked up his glass, held it up and I held up mine. We touched glasses and then both drank in silence. He then said: "I remember very well, Dickie, when they came and told me you had been sunk in the *Kelly*. They said that the Fleet had retired and there was no other ship within 500 miles of you, and there was no hope of your being recovered: I was very very sad. A few hours later they came with the news of a miracle. One of your three ships had survived, had picked you up and you were being brought in. I was so pleased and cancelled my engagements to come down and meet you. I remember your coming ashore, covered with oil, your eyes all red – I was so glad to see you. Do you remember?"

"Yes", I replied, "I remember." In fact I was picked up and taken to

Alexandria and he was in London but by this time he was incapable of disassociating what had actually happened from what he had heard. It made me very sad.

I was staying with the Queen at Sandringham when he finally went into a coma. Her Majesty was very anxious to know how long he was likely to live and the Duty Private Secretary, Sir Martin Charteris, rang up Jock Colville, who had been Winston's Private Secretary and was a great friend – this was on about 10th January. "How long will Winston live?" asked Martin. "A day or so?" "Oh no", replied Jock. "He is not going to die until the 24th January. He told me once that Lord Randolph Churchill, his father, had died on 24th January 1895 and that he would die on the same day when the time came." He did. He lasted another fortnight and died on 24th January 1965, exactly 70 years after his father, and at the same hour! If that isn't a case of a powerful mind over matter, I don't know what is.

I should like to end by quoting from two of the speeches Winston Churchill gave during the greatest period of his life, when he was defying Hitler and rallying the morale of the British people. The first was made a week after the evacuation of Dunkirk. This was a great withdrawal; 225,000 British soldiers and airmen, which represented two thirds of the British forces in France, were taken off the beaches of Dunkirk. The country was wildly excited and treated it almost as a victory. Winston Churchill put them right. He said in the House of Commons:

"We must be very careful not to assign to this deliverance the attributes of a victory. . . .", he then went on to talk about the invasion of England which everybody felt that Hitler meant to carry out during that summer:

"We shall not flag or fail. – We shall go on to the end . . . we shall fight on the seas and oceans . . . , we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender."

The second speech was made on 18th June 1940, after the fall of France when he said:

"The Battle of France is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this Battle depends the survival of Christian civilization . . . The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world . . . will sink into the abyss of a new dark age . . . Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: This was their finest hour!"