



MARTIN GILBERT

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

VOLUME V

Companion Part 2

Documents

The Wilderness Years

1929-1935

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WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

1874-1965

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Introduction

THIS VOLUME OF documents continues the publication of the Churchill papers, taking Churchill's story from 1929 to 1935. It also brings together letters and information from fifty other collections, both public and private, which contain material about Churchill's political and personal life during those six and a half years.

An important section of this volume is made up of Churchill's letters to his wife, which span every aspect of his career, and which trace his moods and feelings, including his sadness when she was away from him. This sadness was undisguised. On one such occasion, as she embarked on a lengthy cruise at the end of 1934, Churchill wrote to her (pages 977-78):

My darling one I felt so sad when I got home the other day after seeing the last wave of your dear white hand out of the carriage window. It will be four months before we meet again, and to see you vanishing away like that was a melancholy thing.

'I miss you very much', he added, 'and feel very unprotected.'

Published here in full are all the 'Chartwell bulletins' which Churchill sent his wife while she was away on that distant cruise; the first of these bulletins is dated 1 January 1935 (pages 979-83), the second, two and a half weeks later (pages 1031-4) and the third, four days after that (pages 1037-40). These give one of the fullest accounts ever penned of a great man's daily activities and thoughts; the twelfth and last was written on 13 April 1935 (pages 1139-41).

Emerging through much of the material in this volume is the sense of Churchill's charm, kindness and humour, his delight in friendship, and the ever-joyous response of his friends. 'What a magician you are,' one of them wrote (page 223); and this ability to give pleasure, a remarkable feature of his character, is seen at its most striking during these years of political struggle and isolation. Despite the sharp criticisms so often levelled against him, Churchill's supporters always retained their faith in him. It was not only what he said, but the characteristics which he displayed while saying it, that held their loyalty. In July 1934 a friend wrote (page 833): 'You fill

a place in many people's lives, and your own fortunes and happiness are the concern of more people than you can guess.' And in November 1934 a member of the Edinburgh Town Council wrote to him (pages 906-7): 'In these confused and confusing days I doubt if you know how frequently in ordinary experience men seem to turn half expectantly to you.'

A feature of this volume is the material about Churchill's literary work; how he wrote the books and articles by which he earned his living while out of office, and through which he reached a wide public. These six and a half years were dominated as far as writing was concerned by Churchill's *Marlborough* biography; in these pages the work done by his research assistants and advisers is made clear. So too is the relationship with his various publishers, and with the newspaper proprietors who commissioned his writings.

Churchill's pleasure in sending copies of his books to all his friends on publication day, and their pleasure in receiving them, form a charming feature of his correspondence; when he sent a copy of his memoirs to Ramsay MacDonald (page 200), MacDonald replied: 'there is no chance of mine ever coming unless some old fishwife turns biographer. You are an interesting cuss—I, a dull dog.'

Churchill's own transatlantic visits, in 1929 and 1931-2, and his New York accident in December 1931, are documented here, as is his sense of isolation following the accident; a mood described by Clementine Churchill in a letter to her son of 12 January 1932 (page 393). 'Last night he was very sad,' she wrote, 'and said that he had now in the last 2 years had 3 very heavy blows. First the loss of all that money in the crash, then the loss of his political position in the Conservative Party and now this terrible physical injury. He said he did not think he would ever recover completely from the three events.'

Several of the documents published here examine in detail Churchill's financial position during the 'wilderness years', and set out the scale of his literary earnings, which were substantial, and of his share dealings, which were considerable, and often extremely successful, but which temporarily came to grief at the time of the 'Great Crash'. Despite this, as Churchill's correspondence shows, his faith was strong that the United States would make a full economic recovery; and to this end he welcomed the election of President Roosevelt in 1932. 'In two or three years—perhaps sooner—everything will be booming again,' Churchill wrote to his American lecture agent in July 1932 (page 457). 'Of this I have no doubt.' And he added: 'The only thing that matters now is to survive. Those who have come through this pinch will reap the future.'

Family letters from his wife, his son and his daughters give a picture of the lighter side of Churchill's life; and also of the storms which could blow up when, for example, his son decided to stand, twice, as an independent

candidate challenging the official Tory, or when Churchill was called upon to pay his son's substantial debts. 'I grieve more than is worth setting down,' Churchill wrote to his son on 3 November 1931 (page 369), 'to see you with so many gifts & so much good treatment from the world leading the life of a selfish exploiter, borrowing & spending every shilling you can lay yr hands upon, & ever-increasing the lavish folly of yr ways.'

Many of the letters published here show how Churchill assembled material for his speeches, and how, especially when speaking about defence, he gathered information from a wide range of sources, including the head of one of the Government's own intelligence services, Major Desmond Morton.

One of the features of this volume is the letters written by Churchill's critics about him; letters drawn from the archives of those who saw him as an enemy of their Party and a danger to public life. The extent of this hostility was nowhere more fully marked than in the Committee of Privileges episode, for which substantial evidence is assembled here (including pages 743-78, 781-4, 786-90, 799-814 and, for its aftermath, page 1212).

Churchill's ability to prevent the bitterness of party politics from affecting personal relations was severely tested during these years, and it succeeded where least expected, in his enduring personal friendship with Stanley Baldwin. This feeling of a friendship which could not be broken by controversy was, in Baldwin's case, reciprocated. 'Our friendship is now too deeply rooted,' Baldwin wrote in January 1931 (page 251), 'to be affected by differences of opinion whether temporary or permanent. We have fought together through testing times: we have learnt to appreciate each other's good qualities and to be kindly indulgent to qualities less good, if indeed they exist, though in many but diverse quarters we are endowed with a double dose of original sin.'

Churchill's area of interest broadened during the wilderness years into two new spheres, broadcasting and script writing. The text of four of Churchill's earliest broadcasts are given here in full, in the form in which he delivered them: his Christmas appeal for money to provide blind people with wireless sets (pages 119-24), his broadcast to the United States in May 1932 (pages 426-30), his broadcast on the world situation in January 1934 (pages 702-13)—'the finest wireless address I have ever heard'—one listener called it (page 714); and his broadcast on India in January 1935 (pages 1053-61).

Also published in full in this volume is the draft film script about the reign of King George V—including many of Churchill's personal recollections of the period—a script which he prepared for Alexander Korda in 1935 (pages 989-1031).

Among the more unusual episodes and documents published here are

Churchill's acrimonious exchange with Nancy Astor (pages 300-1); the suggestion that he write the Rockefeller biography (page 411); his protests about not being allowed to broadcast over the BBC (page 445-6, 535-6, 650-2); his visit to Marlborough's battlefields (pages 475-8); his dispute with an early Churchill biographer who accused him of stealing while at school (page 498); his exchange of letters with his life-long friend Lord Linlithgow about the philosophical aspects of the India controversy (pages 589-91, 592-3, 595-6, 602-3); Professor Namier's private critique of the first *Marlborough* volume (pages 720-2); Churchill's question and answer session at Oxford (pages 717 and 726-8); Bernard Shaw's letter about *Marlborough* (pages 784-6); Churchill's 'revolt' about the use of hyphens (page 814); his obituary notice of his cousin the 9th Duke of Marlborough, 'my oldest and dearest friend' (pages 819-22); his Open Letter to a Communist—'Freedom can be ruled by reason, but slaves must be kept in subjection by fear' (pages 858-61); his analysis of the British Cabinet system, written for his American friend Bernard Baruch (pages 886-8); Rudyard Kipling's letter about the second *Marlborough* volume (page 895), and 'Lawrence of Arabia's' comments on the same volume (pages 912-15); an appeal for help from Lawrence (pages 1120-1); a letter from Churchill's Bangalore barber of 1899 (pages 1145-6); the failure of the Cabinet office to retrieve Churchill's Cabinet papers (pages 1195-7 and 1198-9); and an unsent protest to *The Times* about what Churchill considered the misuse of the phrase 'Right-Wing Conservatives' (pages 1334-6).

Also published here for the first time are the full texts of Churchill's messages to Gandhi, and his conversations with Gandhi's friends; conversations which indicate Churchill's desire to be on amicable terms with the Indian leader, and to support the well-being of the Indian masses. These emerge in Mira Slade's account of her interview in November 1934 (pages 918-19), and G. D. Birla's letter to Gandhi describing a visit to Chartwell in August 1935 (pages 1243-5).

Churchill's political correspondence between 1929 and 1935 traces his breach with the official policy of the Conservative Party, his opposition to the National Government over its India policy, and his growing concern over British defence weakness, especially in the air. Published here in full for the first time is the text, found after the Second World War in the captured German archives, of Churchill's talks with a senior German Embassy official in October 1930 (pages 196-9), in which Churchill said that although Hitler had declared that he had no intention of waging war, 'he, Churchill, however was convinced that Hitler or his followers would seize the first available opportunity to resort to armed force'. This was more than two years before Hitler came to power.

Germany, Nazism and Hitler became a dominant feature of Churchill's concern after 1933: a concern traced here in his private letters, his speeches, his memoranda on air strength, and his articles. Among Churchill's friendships which grew during this period was that with Professor Lindemann, who acted both as a practical guide, and as a source of personal encouragement. Another friendship was with Brendan Bracken. 'I am quite giving up my vendetta against him,' Clementine Churchill wrote to her son early in 1931 (page 248), 'and shall probably end by quite liking him. I'm not sure if this is broadmindedness or old age with its tolerances creeping on.' Bracken's help in securing lucrative literary contracts for Churchill can be seen in his letter of 22 August 1931 (page 350).

Another new friendship which evolves in these pages, and which gave Churchill access to material on air defence and foreign policy, was with Ralph Wigram, head of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, whose material, passed on to Churchill at Chartwell, enabled Churchill to confront the Government with many of its own most secret facts.

The climax of Churchill's first six and a half years out of office was a series of memoranda on Britain's air weakness, and Germany's growing air strength. In this volume one can follow how he prepared these, and read in full the memoranda themselves, including those of 29 April 1935 (pages 1156-61), 23 July 1935 (pages 1215-24), 30 September 1935 (pages 1275-8) and 9 December 1935 (pages 1345-8). Also published here are a number of documents in which Churchill set out his views on the needs for air defence research and expansion (pages 1234-8) and the question of the nationalization of armaments production (pages 1283-6).

This volume ends with the Hoare-Laval crisis, which found Churchill first in Spain and then in Morocco. I have published in full the letters he received, from his son, from Brendan Bracken, and from Desmond Morton, informing him of political developments at home (pages 1348-51, 1353-5 and 1357-60). Reflecting on the crisis, and on his own earlier warnings, especially about Britain's weakness in the air, Churchill wrote to his wife on 26 December 1935 (pages 1363-4): 'The more I think over the European affair, the more I fear for our future—feebly armed and in the heart of every quarrel!' Four days later he wrote again (pages 1365-7): 'We are getting into the most terrible position involved definitely by honour & by contract in almost every quarrel that can break out in Europe, our defences neglected, our Government less capable a machine for conducting affairs than I have ever seen.' Churchill added: 'The Baldwin-MacDonald regime has hit our country very hard indeed, and may well be the end of its glories.'

More than a hundred previously unpublished letters of interest from the

years 1929 to 1935 became available only after this volume was ready to be printed. These will be published in full at the beginning of the next—and final—volume of this series of Companion documents to Main Volume 5, entitled 'The Coming of War', together with a number of other letters dating back to the beginning of the century which reached me only after the relevant volumes of documents had already been published.

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