



The Second World War: Milestones to Disaster

Winston S. Churchill, Christian Rodska (Narrator)

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Churchill's history of World War II is, and will remain, the definitive work. This is Churchill's own abridgement of his original six-volume history.

The Second World War: Milestones to Disaster Details

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From Reader Review The Second World War: Milestones to Disaster for online ebook

Rich Hasler says

What an amazing account and such insights in the mind and character of a true statesman. The revisionists must be attacking this with a furor these days of petty and inept "leadership" or simply absent leadership. For me the story is chilling. we are seeing the world stagger towards global conflict and feel the distraction of its leaders by non issues. Yet, Churchill himself noted that no challenge is ever the same. WWI did not present the same challenges as WWII. It is just that there seems to be no one prepared to lead. We have a leadership vacuum that is abysmal and challenges like we have never seen.

Jeff Yoak says

I'm going to come back to this. It both requires more attention than my bits of time while commuting allow and could use some more background on the history of the war before I start. I love the writing style and the information is excellent, but I need an overview of the history before I can appreciate this first-hand account. It is too much written as commentary on what everyone must have known when it was written for me to be able to get all I should from it.

Gabriel C. says

Churchill is clearly, from his own vain recollections, a raging asshole, complete narcissist, utterly obstinate, and extremely full of himself. I suppose he would be a footnote, as an obstructionist paranoid, had he not been so completely vindicated by circumstances as the thirties ended. I don't know whether to think of this as wisdom and prescience or rather some sort of luck; whenever something surprising happens, someone has to be the "genius" who predicted it, and being really right once, albeit on a point of such importance, doesn't speak to any great powers of prediction. I suppose I should withhold judgement until I read the other volumes.

Not having done so, it is easy for me to imagine that the character traits I mention above are high-risk / high-reward in a war leader. I suppose I am supposed to think that one side of this coin is megalomania and delusion, while the other is hypercompetence and wide-ranging experience. I can buy that, although I still think that choosing MacArthur over Eisenhower is playing a dangerous game. And history, this history even more than most, is written by the victor.

This book has done one part of its job, though; I am forced to ask myself when and in what circumstances I would support interventionism, and further, whether my personal inclinations might not, in the presence of a nationalistic fervor, lead to the kind of tardy missteps outlined here. I know people, smart people, who believe that Crimea spontaneously arose to throw off the shackles of their vicious Ukrainian overlords. I know people who are excited to have a president who will "show the Muslims what it means to mess with America." Let's hope that these questions remain academic.

Maria says

Winston Churchill's history of the Second World War. Showing the British insider's perspective on the rise of Adolf Hitler, the steps of appeasement and then invasion of Poland and the declarations of war.

Why I started this book: The second book Their Finest Hour was on the Navy's Professional Reading list, but it seemed strange to just read one book in the series.

Why I finished it: Loved listening to the narrator's accent... and I have a growing urge to go watch all of Foyle's War again.

Side note: Churchill's history of the Second World War was originally published in six volumes:

1. The Gathering Storm
2. Their Finest Hour
3. The Grand Alliance
4. The Hinge of Fate
5. Closing the Ring
6. Triumph and Tragedy

Churchill then condensed these into four volumes, which have since been released as one, rather hefty, publication. The audio version of the unabridged recordings of Churchill's condensed volume, divided into four parts, as follows:

1. The Second World War: Milestones to Disaster
2. Alone: The Second World War (Condensed) Series, Book 2
3. The Grand Alliance
4. Triumph and Tragedy

Chris Walker says

Churchill's six volume history of the Second World War sat on my parents' bookshelves for decades and now sit on mine, unopened. I was therefore grateful to see that BBC Audio has produced Churchill's abridged history (four volumes rather than six) on CD, narrated by an actor with a passable imitation of Churchill's speaking style. Churchill himself said: "History will be kind to me for I intend to write it" and it is with this in mind that you need to approach these books. Nevertheless, it is an excellent introduction to the subject which can be supplemented by visits to the internet to get greater insight by viewing maps of territories and movements of troops mentioned and the various other viewpoints given on the battles, apart from Churchill's. I particularly enjoyed hearing the history of Chamberlain's "peace in our time", Quisling and the Molotov cocktail in this volume. Churchill's inclusions of details of his own personal life - bricklaying the kitchen in the days leading up to the declaration of war and his recommendations about the benefits of the nap add additional interest and humanity to these pages.

spdeveer says

Leading up to what Churchill would eventually call the unnecessary war there were countless times when the allies could have thwarted the rising Third Reich. The first book of this multipart series focuses on events at the end of the first world war, up to the beginning of Hitler's aggression. Great record of facts leading up

Paul says

This is the first of a set of four books Winston Churchill wrote, documenting WWII and his involvement. It is a fantastic read from a historical sense, but even more amazing is the perspective he provides on the political disaster that precipitated WWII. A dry historical textbook on the same accounts would not have nearly the drama and feeling that comes through from his own accounts of political figures, generals, English leaders and evil powers. I can't wait to read the second volume.

PJ Wenzel says

His writing is superb and his perspective unrivaled (as he reminds you along the way). If you've never taken the time to read the larger volumes of literature from either Mansfield or Shirer, then this will suit you just as well. The problem will be, as is with all of the literature surrounding these momentous events, that there is so much to say and take in, and it can be a bit overwhelming. What I like about Churchill's narrative is how he seeks to summarize again and again what was going on at different points in the narrative.

There may not have been a man more gifted in his generation with the use of the English language. The man was brilliant, powerful and eloquent in his writing. I will just note that you'd need to know a little something about the history of the situation and some world events to really grasp some of the assumptions in his narrative style.

NOTE: This edition - the first volume - of Churchill's recollections on the lead up and start of WWII covers mostly volume one of his 6 volume WWII narrative. Overall the 6 were condensed/abridged by him and put into 4 volumes and this is the first of those volumes, though not much seems to be missing whatsoever (I followed along in the hard cover edition).

Gregg Hlavacek says

He really belabored the point of the German aggression and armament while Europe sat idly by over and over again to the point of being annoying to the reader. I get it. War prep wasn't what it should be. Hitler could have been stopped at multiple junctures. But this book could have been half as long as more effective.

Kate says

I have very strong memories of my deceased father reading this series by Churchill. I bought this book out of

curiosity and found it oddly comforting. Churchill's prose is extraordinary and the topic interesting. Note: I am not endorsing his more problematic views and actions, simply commenting on this book.

Leah says

Theatrical, informative, glorious, compelling, with glowing coals of humour as well as the occasional Hemingway-esque aside that caught me completely by surprise. I have never found anyone who used the word 'good' with such considered intention until listening to this, and it has made me think quite differently about the meanings of words we take for granted. A complete masterpiece.

JP Jennings says

As an historian, I was impressed by the intricate details often left out of history due to their "boring" nature. However, Churchill related this through his eyes and included details that were not only historically important but allowed for a "fleshing out" of why the Second World War had to occur. I am looking forward to the second volume.

Ross says

This is the horrible story of the events leading to the start of the war.

Reread some 50 years later, still 4 stars. Riveting history by the most important figure in the war. I am going through this series again to revisit the evils and follies of nations. The errors of judgement by the European politicians and military were both unspeakable and unbelievable. On the side of evil on the one hand and blind pacifism on the other.

Churchill does attach more share of the blame to the U.S. than can really be justified, considering just 20 years earlier we had to rescue Europe from their own stupidity. We obviously wanted no more of that and understandably did not pay enough attention to the fact that the Europeans were actually stupid enough to let it happen again. Unbelievably, the Europeans still today do not understand that if you want peace, you must prepare for war.

Tom Edwards says

Interesting read however slightly difficult to follow as it references political figures who as of today are mostly unknowns, but non the less insightful.

Ender says

Just to say, I can't imagine this read by any other than Christian Rodska. It's like listening to Christian Baskous reading Charles Bukowski. In my head, their voices are coming out of the mouths of Churchill and Bukowski themselves.

