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In 1963 he published The Destruction of Dresden. This became a best-seller in many countries. In 1996 he issued a revised edition, Apocalypse 1945, as well as his important biography, Goebbels. Mastermind of the Third Reich. The first volume of Churchill's War appeared in 1987.

David Irving

CHURCHILL'S WAR

II —*Triumph in Adversity*

'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

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FOCAL POINT

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Contents

Temporary contents of Part I only *v*

Introduction: Never Forget Your Trade Mark *vii*

1: A Very Big and Very Ugly War *3*

2: Prime Minister with Nothing to Hide *21*

3: The Charter that was Never Signed *37*

4: Shall We Dance? asks Mr Churchill *53*

5: 'We Did It Before – and We Can Do It Again!' *73*

6: Carry a Big Stick *89*

7: The 'Nigger in the Woodpile' *107*

8: Really Not Quite Normal *135*

9: Westward Look *157*

10: Gaps in the Archives *163*

11: A Sorry Pass *181*

12: Day of Perfidy *203*

INTRODUCTION:
Never Forget Your Trade Mark

YEARS AFTER THE Second World War, one of Winston Churchill's wisest advisers would ask, 'Why in 1939 was Churchill almost universally regarded as a gifted, if eccentric politician, lacking in judgement and better out of the government, whereas in 1945 he was regarded as a world statesman and the revered superman of the century?'[1] The possible answer – he won the war – is defeated by the equally possible observation: he forfeited Britain's empire.

He won the war, as we shall see in the final volume of this trilogy, in spite of himself. He had enraged every one of his military advisers on the way. He did not spare the cruel and crushing remarks about his own chiefs of staff: 'You may take,' he rasped, 'the most gallant sailor, the most intrepid airman, or the most audacious soldier, put them at a table together – what do you get? The sum total of their fears!'[2]

By Victory in Europe Day, in May 1945, the chiefs of staff would be so out of sympathy with their leader that when he sent for them on that day, and again when he said good-bye after losing the General Election in July, and had the whisky and soda brought in, they just sat ruminating. On both occasions the chiefs sat there 'like dummies' and did not even drink to his health.[3] After the war the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field-Marshal Lord Alanbrooke, was angered to find that Churchill had painted himself as a hero in his memoirs; the account which Alanbrooke, the former General Sir Alan Brooke, himself committed to posterity, in a leather-bound and padlocked diary, was less flattering.

'On the whole,' grumbled Churchill, reading the first volume, 'I think that I am against publishing day to day diaries written under the stress of events so soon afterwards.'[4] Had he seen, as we have, what Brooke omitted, he would have expressed himself rather more forcefully.

THE FIRST VOLUME of this trilogy appeared in 1987, thirty years after Churchill wrote those words.*

It is fitting to commence a second volume, appearing after such an interval, with a survey of what we achieved with the first. We saw how after a 'wilderness period' of ten years Winston S. Churchill, described by Harold Balfour as this 'singularly unlovable' man, came to power on May 10, 1940, to the alarm of his monarch and the dismay of at least three of his cabinet ministers (Lords Beaverbrook and Halifax, and Mr Neville Chamberlain); how, by playing on a non-existent threat of Nazi invasion he entrenched himself in office, and rebuffed the peace settlement which Adolf Hitler repeatedly and secretly offered, and which more than one of King George VI's ministers, his consort Queen Elizabeth, and (on certain dates in May and June 1940 even Churchill himself) seemed disposed to accept;[5] how having thus sabotaged the prospects of peace, he contrived to prolong the war and, cynics would observe, his own premiership, by propelling Britain and Germany into a campaign of mutual air bombardment. At a time when Hitler embargoed all raids on London, Churchill ordered a 100-bomber raid on Berlin on August 25, 1940, deliberately unleashing a bombing campaign which would reach a climax of barbarism only after the present volume comes to a close.† In his orgy of destructiveness, Churchill even issued orders – never carried out – a few days after the firestorm in Hamburg, for the ruthless saturation bombing of the Eternal City of Rome.

We have seen how as part of the price for his accession to office in May 1940 Churchill gave the 'kiss of life' to Britain's then moribund Labour Party, elevating several of its leaders to unhoped-for cabinet office and paving the way for the socialists' eventual return to power in 1945, a political upheaval which brought in its train the inevitable end of the empire built by three centuries of British endeavour.[6] The revisionist historians Maurice Cowling and John Charmley have endorsed our first volume's assessment of Churchill's responsibility for the war and his part in the resurgence of socialism in 1945 and Britain's international decline.[7] Churchill, the warlord, showed himself indifferent to post-war problems, and displayed no interest in the dangerous revival of socialism by labour minister Ernest Bevin and the trades unions.[8]

* David Irving, *Churchill's War*, vol. i: *The Struggle for Power* (Cranbrook, Western Australia, 1987; London, 1988; New York, 1991).

† Vol. i, pages 406–7.

A HISTORY OF Churchill's war years therefore inevitably remains a history of how he directed his war. We have seen how from the first moment he nourished the sinews of Britain's most secret agency, the codebreaking organisation at Bletchley Park, which we have called his 'Oracle,' and guarded that source not only from the enemy abroad but from his senior colleagues at home (while his cronies, often far less suitable, were privy to the secret and on occasion blurted out what they knew to even less suitable recipients).[9] Knowledge was power, and Churchill clutched ULTRA, the 'most secret sources,' BONIFACE, the 'BJs' and whatever else he called them, close to his watch-chained waistcoat, dealing these cards in the war game only rarely, to obviate, or sometimes, as some have suggested, even to engineer military misfortunes as and when his strategic poker made it necessary.

We have seen how Churchill worked for many months after his appointment to stifle every overture for peace.[10] In our first volume we portrayed the Duke of Windsor, the former king, as working from his overseas bases to end the war – a portrait which is now widely accepted, though embellished with the unwarranted epithet of traitor.[11]

There is much that cannot be fully explored even now. We shall see again how close were the secret ties that Churchill maintained, to the chagrin of the foreign office, with the collaborationist regime at Vichy, while still excoriating its leader Marshal Pétain in his public utterances. Aware of the opprobrium that this dual standard might invite, he took steps after the war to remove all trace of this from the files. The secret agreement which he reached with Pétain in October 1940 might never have existed – were it not for the writings of Professor Louis Rougier, the emissary who engineered it.* All relevant correspondence in the papers of Lord Halifax, then foreign secretary, and twenty-eight letters exchanged between him and Jacques Chevalier in 1948 and 1949 about the Rougier mission, are still withheld from public access; so are the letters sent to Pétain by Churchill through the American attaché in Vichy at the end of December 1940 and a month later through Admiral Leahy and Chevalier.[12] As Sir William Deakin, one of Churchill's ghost-writers, wrote after the war to Sir William Strang of the foreign office, the 'Pétainist legend' reflected poorly on Churchill and 'should be suppressed once and for all.'[13] Strang sealed his own file on Rougier with a cover note that it was not to be used without the consent of the foreign office. This theme, Churchill's ambivalence about Pétain and his unconcealed hostility toward Anthony Eden's *enfant gâté* General Charles

* Vol. i, pages 450–2, 474.

de Gaulle, surfaces again in the present volume; towards its end we produce the evidence, in his own handwriting, that it was Eden who engineered the assassination of Admiral Darlan to appease de Gaulle.

We have seen too in the first volume how Britain's unspoken war-aims, which were at first assumed to be 'to save Poland,' elided invisibly during 1940 to become instead 'the defence of the heart of the British empire against Nazi invasion' although in fact, as Churchill knew, such an invasion was never seriously threatened; how he nonetheless forged an alliance with the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, who harboured even less enthusiasm for the perpetuation of Britain's empire than Churchill did in truth himself; and how, when it became opportune to woo the United States, whose president had no love whatsoever for the empire, Churchill subtly shifted his stance and began perforce to portray his war-aim as being to destroy Hitler, the Devil incarnate, or 'anti-Christ.'[14] In fact he was ambivalent about why he was really fighting this ruinous war. At the same time as he was telling Lord Halifax that his intention was to fight Germany until Hitlerism was finally broken 'and the world relieved from the curse which a wicked man has brought upon it,'[15] and he was similarly telling his military guests at Chequers that there was only one aim, 'to destroy Hitler,'[16] he was assuring Edouard Beneš that Czechoslovakia's restoration was a war-aim, like that of Poland.[17] By January 1941 he was refusing all such pronouncements, explaining to his cabinet colleagues that to state his war-aims precisely would be compromising, while anything vaguer would disappoint.[18]

'Just shoot at two targets,' we shall hear him declaim in September 1943, and he defines these as 'Prussian militarism' and 'Nazi tyranny.' Nor does he want his people to bother explaining what those phrases mean. 'This will also have the advantage of not committing you to anything definite when Germany is beaten.'[19] For Winston Churchill, as for Adolf Hitler, making war was an aim in itself.[20]

In April 1943 a London agent of Roosevelt's overseas Intelligence service, the Office of Strategic Services, would report that watching Churchill he often reflected that, just as the Eighth Army owed a great deal to Rommel, so Churchill owed 'a hell of a lot' to Hitler: 'When he turns from Hitler to the home front, he becomes a smaller figure, the dextrous English politician, master of the telling phrase and the useful monetary compromise.' One could tell just when Churchill slipped from one role into the other, continued the agent, by the change in his practised oratorical tone. In domestic politics he revealed his less felicitous nature. 'War,' reported the

OSS agent, 'open or concealed, seems the only thing in which he is really interested.'[21]

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As the summer of 1941 began Churchill was already an old man. To a visiting general he remarked: 'A man's life is similar to a walk down a long passage, with closed windows to each side. As you reach each window an unseen hand opens it; but the light that it lets in only increases by contrast the darkness at the end.'[22]

Like Hitler he occupied himself with all the smallest details of military campaigns. Like Hitler too, he accepted little responsibility for their failures, dismissing those nominally in command when things went wrong.[23] He drove himself to the limits of endurance – and his colleagues to the end of their tether. He inflicted his merciless working hours on friends and allies. Despite advancing age, this nocturnal regime prevailed during the war's middle years. Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, would write to Admiral Sir Andrew B. Cunningham in May 1943: 'I hope your guest [Churchill] has been behaving well this time and that you did not forget to disconnect the telephone!' – *i.e.*, to stop Churchill from 'phoning in the middle of the night.[24] 'For goodness sake,' wrote Admiral Sir John Tovey to Cunningham, now Pound's successor, in October 1943, 'don't overwork, or let the P.M. persuade you to keep his own unnatural hours.'[25]

IT IS FLATTERING to find in the more recent biographies by Charmley, Clive Ponting, and others our first volume's quotations from hitherto unpublished documents (like Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy's wondering description of Churchill as 'a fine two-handed drinker') served up with all their archival footnote-finery as though the subsequent biographer has followed our footsteps into the dusty repositories where we first found these morsels.[26] While adopting (and crediting to Gilbert) our data on Churchill's enviable literary income in the 1920s and 1930s, Charmley has also taken over the data we retrieved from the university archives in Oregon on Winston's substantial pre-war earnings for 'retelling famous stories' from *Anna Karenina* to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; Mr Churchill was paid one thousand dollars apiece for boiling these tomes down into one page of newsprint for the Chicago Tribune syndicate – indeed, he was so preoccupied with rehashing one such masterpiece that he failed to notice Adolf Hitler's coming

to power in Berlin in January 1933. As Geoffrey Wheatcroft admits, even with Churchill's huge literary income he was often heavily in debt to 'one or another of his shady millionaire associates,' men whom the journalist Wheatcroft does not identify beyond quoting Evelyn Waugh's description of Churchill as 'a professional politician' and 'a Zionist.'

Churchill's finances have long attracted curiosity. We showed in our first volume how, although born of partly Jewish blood, although safely diluted, he turned his back after 1940 on the many friends who had succoured him in his financially barren years. Churchill's unholy involvement with the FOCUS, which we explored, a secret financial support group established in the last years of peace, is now confirmed by Charmley and documented by papers newly released in the Churchill archives. Maurice Cowling also agrees with our first volume's description of the FOCUS, writing of it as 'a broad range of conspirators some of whom were concerned primarily with Jewish persecution [and] one of whom [Wickham Steed] was in the pay of the Czech government.' [27]

Churchill owed such a debt to the Anglo-Jewish community from 1936 on that Sir Samuel Hoare would describe his 'pro-Zionist attitude' as a black mark against his possible premiership, and another acquaintance would tell Sir Martin Gilbert, the biographer, that 'Winston was too fond of Jews.' He shied away from them however as soon as he was in office in 1940, and this second volume again sees him turning a deaf and callous ear on both the Zionist cause and, it must be said, on the plight of the Jews themselves in Nazi-dominated Europe. He described himself as a Zionist, but only when it suited his purpose; he called himself an outsider in this respect. Defending Leo Amery, another Zionist, against demands that he resign, he would note with irony: 'It is quite true that he has my way of thinking on this point [Zionism], which is no doubt to be deplored.' [28] There was one other underreported bond between Churchill and Amery: each had a part-Jewish mother, and each had successfully contrived to conceal these origins. [29]

Our first volume argued that because he was half-American, again through his mother Jenny Jerome, he invariably put the interests of the United States, even when they were nominally neutral, above those of his own country and its empire. We have seen him establish the closest of contacts with the Americans' shrewd and courageous President Roosevelt even before coming to office as prime minister, and then conduct his communications directly with him, often to the exclusion of his own king, cabinet and foreign office, through secure telephone links and personal emissaries.

By 1941 Churchill was in frequent telegraphic and telephone contact with Roosevelt. They took many of the war's principal decisions in transatlantic telephone conversations, of which no transcripts have yet been made available. 'I am in almost daily touch with the P.M.,' Roosevelt would write privately in 1941.[30] They used both diplomatic channels and the secure radio links of the Secret Service and the F.B.I.; we now have the proof that they used the even more secure ULTRA-secret cypher channel established by 'C,' the head of the British Secret Service, via Bletchley Park, to Washington. Recently released files reveal that Bletchley Park was a vital link in this secret channel of communication: it by-passed the foreign office and cabinet channels, and many messages were forwarded by 'C' to Churchill from FDR himself which have not figured in the anthologies of their correspondence. We wonder how many more there are, yet to be revealed.

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It is true that, having been evacuated by his parents to Canada early in World War Two, Sir Martin Gilbert was not privileged to share the sirens, the V-weapons, the air-raid shelter experiences and the other adventures with those who survived the war years in England. It would be churlish however for any historian tilling these archival fields to deny his indebtedness to Gilbert for the chronicles on which he laboured from 1968. We have certainly given due credit to his volumes where they are our sole source of information.

This is not to say that we share his opinions, where any are expressed; nor his belief in the integrity of all the sources which he has used. It was plain to anybody familiar with secondary sources like *The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins*, published in 1949, that the controversial and colourful 'diary' which Churchill's physician Lord Moran published in 1966 was not a contemporary record, but written nearly twenty years later, and scandalously padded with material lifted from other post-war authors.[31] Moran wrote to one of Churchill's ministers years later: 'I have practically no letters or documents of any interest. . . I have just my own testimony undocumented by anything written by him.' He added, 'I found the war years the most difficult . . . I was just a hanger-on and not in on what was happening.'[32] Admiral Sir John Godfrey, the former director of naval Intelligence, challenged the diaries' authenticity.[33] Others proved less critical, finding the diaries a rich source of material.[34] Gilbert, who is also a leading

Holocaust historian, later conceded that it was only after he finished his work on the Churchill biography that he discovered that the published Moran diary on which he had relied was largely a fraud. In fact Moran's real notes consist of much thinner gruel. 'The mind boggles at how much misinformation may have crept into the history books, mine included, by such routes,' admitted the woebegone biographer.[35]

It was a belated confession, where perhaps others were also due: the same author occasionally quoted records as though he had researched the original collection – with all the breadth of research and the judgement that this implied – when he no more than leafed through pages published by some other author who had delved into those archives.[36] In other cases, regrettably, he quoted documents only to the extent that they were printed in Churchill's own volumes, enriching them only with the archival file number rather than the volume and page number of the published source.

Andrew Roberts, whom we assisted with core material for his biography of Lord Halifax, adopted in that work many of our canons about Churchill as a prime minister aimlessly blundering ('Keep buggering on'), writing of him as a Micawber-like figure whose strategy consisted of waiting for something to turn up. 'Britain finally won,' echoed Roberts, 'but at appalling cost, and ruin for her standing in the world.'[37] This too was what we had argued in our first volume, although it is fair to state that A.J.P. Taylor had argued much the same case over twenty years earlier, writing this criticism of Churchill's May 13, 1940 'victory at all costs' speech to the House of Commons: 'This was exactly what the opponents of Churchill had feared. . . Victory, even if this meant placing the British empire in pawn to the United States; victory, even if it meant Soviet domination of Europe.'[38]

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Churchill's fame derived from his role in saving Britain from Nazi Germany. That legend was often revived and polished to a fresh gleam, for example in the late Sir Isaiah Berlin's essay, 'Winston Churchill in 1940,' published in 1949.[39] Our first volume dented, if it did not destroy, the myth that Britain was seriously at risk of invasion in the summer of 1940: as the documents show, including the recently discovered 1940 private diaries of Dr Joseph Goebbels, at all material times Hitler was bluffing with SEA LION; it was always intended by him as a grand deception, to divert attention from BARBAROSSA, his coming attack on the 'judæo-bolshevik' Soviet Un-

ion. Hitler wanted nothing from Britain or her empire, and all the German records uncovered in the last fifty years have confirmed this grim conclusion. Others now echo our view that Churchill knew from codebreaking that Hitler was only bluffing; but for reasons of domestic politics Churchill fostered the fiction in his public speeches ('We shall fight them on the beaches'), and he did the same in his private telegrams to President Roosevelt.

This discovery has been adopted wholeheartedly by Charmley, now professor of modern history at the University of East Anglia, who published a 742-page biography *Churchill – The End of Glory* early in 1993.[40] He not only voiced doubts about Churchill's character – as had we – but raised the same all-important question – 'what was previously unquestioned' as Wheatcroft puts it – namely 'the wisdom of Churchill's conduct during the "finest hour" of his own phrase and of national myth.'

Was Churchill right to fight on at whatever cost, rather than to accept Hitler's peace offer in 1940? When we first aired this argument in 1987 it was regarded as an unspeakable heresy. Now others have added their voices to ours, and the late Alan Clark, himself an original and independent historian, adopted Charmley's arguments in a widely quoted article in *The Times*, in which he traced Charmley's views back to our own.[41] Clark too accepted that Churchill lost the empire by his failure to accept the peace offered by Hitler.

Now even mainstream academics, never noted for their heroism in print, are coming round to this view. There remain those like Paul Johnson, who stated, and most cogently, that no one ever succeeded in getting Hitler to keep his word.[42] This is true, and we have several times quoted Hitler's private admission stated in June 1941, justifying BARBAROSSA, that 'for myself I would never break a promise. For Germany's sake, one thousand times!'[43]

It is however equally true that Britain was the *one* country of which Hitler consistently spoke favourably. From 1918 to the day of his suicide in 1945 he avowed that his one ambition had been to work in unison, even in grand alliance, with the British empire. There is nothing to be found in the archives to contradict our view that he meant it. Britain, in short, surrendered her own empire to defeat a chimera conjured up by Winston Churchill, a putative danger from Nazi Germany – a threat which never existed except when Churchill needed to call upon it. He sacrificed the substance to defeat the myth.

Paul Johnson's attitude to the end of the empire is plain: 'The loss of the British empire,' he submitted, 'was neither here nor there, merely a matter of fashion.' This view would not have been shared by the millions who fought in Churchill's war, nor indeed by Churchill's leading ministers to whom the preservation of the empire meant very much indeed. Churchill's own position may have been much closer to Johnson's: he put his American heritage above his English; he dealt with American statesmen on terms of greater intimacy and awe than with any of his empire colleagues, whose irruptions and interferences he universally resented – with the curious exception of General Jan Smuts, prime minister of South Africa. In a later work, Charmley would adopt many of our views about the wartime transatlantic alliance too, in which a British prime minister allowed and encouraged a streetwise American president to exploit Britain's inventive genius, to plunder her imperial wealth, and thereby reap world-wide geopolitical rewards.[44]

Reviewers of these later works have, it is true, generously pointed to the seminal influence on them of our first volume. One writer, the Hungarian-born American John Lukács suggested that 'whitewash[ing] Hitler' had remained the work of 'fanatical amateur historians such as the English David Irving.'[45] Geoffrey Wheatcroft, writing in the *Atlantic Monthly*, led his attack on the revisionist biographers of Churchill with the mischievous assertion that there had been no 'concerted and scholarly' attempt to re-evaluate Churchill until recently. 'For one thing,' he believed, '"revisionism" was discredited by the work of writers including David Irving – unquestionably a clever and industrious researcher, but one whose undisguised fascist sympathies make it hard to take seriously his attacks on Churchill.'[46]

At least we wrote what we did in a spirit of independence. Wheatcroft and other critics might pertinently have commented that Sir Martin Gilbert's magisterial works were in part funded by the Chartwell Trust established by the Churchill dynasty. Had we been obliged to admit, in the Introduction to our Hermann Göring biography, or to HITLER'S WAR, that we were 'indebted for assistance to the Carinhall Foundation' or to the 'Adolf Hitler Memorial Trust' – but of course we were not – it is hard to believe that reviewers would not have mentioned this admission.

FOR A WHILE after the first volume of our CHURCHILL'S WAR appeared, its heresies and contentions were automatically challenged by reviewers.

To some it was unthinkable that Churchill had not himself spoken all his famous wartime radio broadcasts, and that some had been delivered by

Norman Shelley, a BBC Children's Hour actor and impersonator. A few years before his death Shelley had himself revealed this harmless deceit to us.* Sir Winston's grandson imputed insanity in us, while Sir Martin Gilbert declared the very idea preposterous. We researched in the BBC Sound Archive, and found the usual signed contracts for his other broadcasts – but not for those we reported as having been delivered by Shelley. Fortunately, a twelve-record set of the speeches had been issued by the English Decca company (now EMI) in 1968, labelled *The Voice of Winston Churchill*.[47] The voice patterns of twenty 'Churchill speeches' were subjected to computerised analysis by Sensimetrics, a speech research group based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, taking the five which had audience reactions as genuine, and thus as a basis for comparison. The findings were published in May 1991, four years after our first volume. Three of the remaining fifteen speech recordings showed voice patterns different from the genuine five – these were the three broadcast on May 13, 1940, when the prime minister promised 'blood, toil, tears and sweat;' on June 4, after Dunkirk ('we shall fight on the beaches'); and June 18, predicting 'their finest hour.'[48] Under pressure, the BBC Sound Archive confirmed that the June 4 speech was indeed recorded by Shelley at the old Transcription Service Studios near Regent's Park, though claiming this was for the British Council to send to America.[49]

THE QUESTION WHETHER the words were spoken by Winston or by Winnie the Pooh was not a mere biographical gewgaw. The underlying issue was, of course, whether the king's first minister was in a fit state to broadcast on those critical evenings of 1940. It is now known that many of the members of the cabinet took recourse to heavy drinking during those years. We were however the first to address, in our first volume, on the basis of *unsanitised* official papers and deeply hidden private records, including letters, transcripts, and diaries, the matter of Churchill's difficulties with drink. His alcohol intake was always rumoured to be excessive, but was smiled on indulgently by his peers; yet it and its consequences have seemingly been a taboo subject for historians. Perhaps tongue-in-cheek, Beaverbrook wrote once to a lady friend in Canada describing the P.M. as a hard working and austere man who drank but little, certainly less than he – 'Yet I am known,'

* Vol. i, page 313. Readers of this author's generation will imagine the thrill when our telephone rang, during our 1980s research for this biography, and the unmistakeable voice of 'Dennis the Dachshund' and of 'Winnie the Pooh' asked to speak with us.

he exclaimed piously, 'as an abstemious man.' 'I do not know a fault of his life,' he added, 'save only a too strong devotion to his friends.'[50]

The truth about both men is different. 'The Providence which is kind to drunken men, and fools, will in the end preserve us,' wrote Sir P. J. Grigg, roughly at the time our narrative resumes, 'but it [the war] is being so much more costly in every sense than it need.'[51] The prime minister's drinking remained a source of comment and concern to many, but like many of those thus afflicted he ascribed his health both to that and to his equally immodest consumption of cigars. When Amery, a teetotaller, asked for one week off, Churchill chaffed him: 'If only you had drunk and smoked like me you would be both better and happier!'[52] The issue is developed again in this volume and it will arise again in an even grimmer context in the third.

AT THE TIME our first volume ended, Churchill had finally reached the other side of the darkening abyss and earned for the empire its first victory – the sinking of Hitler's prized battleship *Bismarck* in May 1941. With the German attack on Russia in June, Britain now had an immensely powerful ally in the east. While public satisfaction with his government's conduct of the war was declining, his own personal popularity soared. In June 1941 it was only two points below the all-time peak it had reached in October 1940, at the time of the London Blitz: eighty-seven per cent still approved of Winston Churchill as P.M.[53] Neville Chamberlain had never scored more than sixty-eight, a figure which had sunk as low as thirty-two in April 1940, at the time of the military fiasco in Norway. Churchill's position seemed secure: there were no clear favourites to succeed him. Only thirty-seven per cent, questioned in July 1941, would have chosen Eden as a possible successor; only seven per cent Beaverbrook or Bevin, and only one per cent would have chosen Clement Attlee.[54]

It was the narcotic of his oratory that held the British people spellbound, and his mordant and often cruel wit as well. Of Lord Winterton he would declaim, from the sanctuary of the House, 'My noble friend is in danger of lapsing into senility before he is overtaken by old age.'

He was an actor too, from first to last. One Member of Parliament, entering a committee room, was about to open the door for the great man when Churchill stopped him. He fumbled in his pocket for his cigar case, took out a cigar and lit it. After a puff or two he solemnly advised: 'Never forget your trade mark.' The prime minister stepped into the committee room, and onto the stage, wrapped in a halo of blue smoke.[55]

Part 1: Triumph in Adversity

June — December 1941

1 : *A Very Big and Very Ugly War*

At the beginning of 1941 Mr Winston Churchill had lisped these words to Brigadier Stewart Menzies – otherwise known as 'C,' chief of M.I.6, the secret service: 'In 1941 we shall have a very big, and very ugly, war.'[1] June of this year had witnessed Hitler's long-prepared onslaught on the Soviet Union. The British empire no longer stood alone. The alliance which now emerged was the partnership toward which Churchill had been steering ever since, as an ordinary Member of Parliament, he had begun inviting the Soviet ambassador Ivan Maisky to clandestine meetings at Morpeth Mansions in a Westminster backstreet in 1938.

With more of an ear for the sound of the words than an eye for the changes in central and eastern Europe since the cynical Ribbentrop–Molotov agreement of 1939, he broadcast that Sunday night, June 22, that he saw the Russian soldiers standing 'on the threshold of their native land,' guarding the fields which their fathers had tilled from time immemorial, and the homes where mothers and wives prayed – 'Ah, yes, for there are times when all pray' – for the safety of their loved ones and the return of their family's champion and protector.

He saw, he said, the ten thousand humble villages where there were still primordial human joys, where maidens laughed and children played.

> I see advancing upon all this in hideous onslaught the Nazi war machine, with its clanking, heel-clicking, dandified Prussian officers, its crafty expert agents fresh from the cowing and tying down of a dozen countries. I see also the dull, drilled, docile, brutish masses of the Hun soldiery plodding on like a swarm of crawling locusts. I see the German bombers and fighters in the sky, still smarting from many a British whipping, delighted to find what they believe is an easier and safer prey.

By the time of this broadcast, Anthony Eden had arrived at Chequers – perhaps it was even the young foreign secretary's arrival which had unconsciously inspired in Winston that cruel word 'dandified.' Briefly, Eden's Tory conscience was disturbed by Churchill's easy jettisoning of their party's high principles. Half the country, he reasoned, would object to Churchill associating them with an empire no less evil than Nazi Germany.[2]

Churchill deployed naked emotions in his response. Innocent peasants were being slaughtered, he argued; therefore Britain should turn a blind eye on the Soviet history of repression and the revolutionary ambitions of the Comintern. Eden rapidly came into line.

Others took a little longer to make the change. When General Wladyslaw Sikorski, the stern, unbending prime minister of the Polish government-in-exile, dutifully submitted the declaration that he proposed to broadcast on this solemn occasion, Churchill and Eden jointly requested that he make one change – that he tone down his hostile references to Russia.[3]

THE GERMANS and their allies plunged into the Baltic states, driving out the Russian forces and their secret-police commissars who had moved in only twelve months before; seeming unstoppable, Hitler's tanks and infantry stormed into the Ukraine. The days of Stalin's reign of terror seemed numbered, but Churchill took no account of it. He made no plans for the eventuality that Hitler would smash the Red Army within weeks. Ever since Dunkirk, in May 1940, he had coarsely defined his forward policy as 'K.B.O.' – to 'keep buggering on.' Meeting with Fleet-street – the national newspaper editors – on the morning of June 26 he would claim to know no more about Hitler's progress than they did, but he did allow that his advisers were baffled that Stalin had had his main troops so far forward, instead of echelonned in depth, for defence.[4] The alternative rationale, that Stalin had evidently been caught wrong-footed, on the point of springing his own assault on the west, seems to have eluded him.

The prime minister contented himself with tracing the path of Hitler's onslaught through the window afforded him by the G.C. & C.S. (Government Code and Cypher School) in England, and by the F.E.C.B. (Far East Combined Bureau) at Singapore: their products were the cypher messages signalled by the German military and police forces and by Japanese diplomats in Berlin, Tokyo and Washington.[5] The codebreakers at Bletchley Park were reading other military and diplomatic cyphers, including those of the United States and Soviet Union. On June 24 'C' was already warning

Churchill and the chiefs of staff not to send uncamouflaged decrypts to the Soviets 'in view of the insecurity of their cyphers.'[6] The intercepts were prefixed 'BJ-' and referred to in some files as 'Black Jumbos.'[7]

By Saturday afternoon, June 28, when he drove down to Chequers again, the raw ULTRA intercepts which Churchill was receiving in special, buff-coloured locked boxes, indicated that Hitler was not having everything his own way.[8] The Wehrmacht was evidently dismayed by the sheer size and number of the Soviet tanks. 'It now appears on the highest authority,' Churchill informed Lord Beaverbrook, minister of supply, using one of his characteristic euphemisms for the decodes, 'that the Russians have produced a very large Tank, said to be over seventy tons, against which the German A/T [anti-tank] six-pounder has proved useless.'[9]

For a few days Churchill floundered. The British commanders-in-chief in the Far East and China asked how far Britain's co-operation with Moscow would extend. Churchill authorised his chiefs of staff to reply that it would *not* extend to a military alliance – Britain planned to assist indirectly, by heavy air raids on Germany. When Sir Stafford Cripps, his unhappy ambassador in Moscow, saw Stalin's foreign minister on the twenty-seventh, Vyacheslav Molotov inquired whether Britain was willing to sign a political agreement. Cripps replied that Britain contemplated no political agreement 'at this stage.' 'It is better to wait,' he advised Molotov, 'until we have learnt to trust each other.'

Churchill's first instinct was to strike somewhere, anywhere, on the Continent. One suggestion that he had dictated on the day after Hitler's invasion of Russia was for R.A.F. bombers to set the Black Forest on fire. The Soviet ambassador Maisky suggested that he raid the Pas de Calais, the part of the French coastline nearest to England, with thirty thousand troops made up of Commandos and a Canadian division. Churchill approved. 'Make hell while the sun shines,' he suggested, believing despite all the lessons of Gallipoli and Norway that troops needed only to be ferried to a hostile beach for them to fight their way triumphantly ashore.[10]

HE TRAVELLED up to Scotland on June 26 taking Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, Director of Combined Operations, with him. 'I can't tell you what we saw,' wrote his private secretary after their return to Chequers, 'except one picturesque incident when a pipe band led the P.M. through the streets of the town past the cheering populace.'[11] With Keyes, his World War One friend, now aged seventy, at his side, he watched improvised land-

ing exercises on Loch Fyne, and visited the Combined Operations training centre at Inverary. Keyes was however already the object of much rancour within the service ministries; besides, such raids would not be possible for a long time – Britain lacked the landing-craft, and this shortage would hamstring her grand strategy for over a year.

There was not much else that Churchill could do other than harry the war office to ship tanks out to Egypt throughout the summer. The ill-starred tank battle against General Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps at Sollum, codenamed BATTLEAXE, had cost two hundred British tanks; there were now only 160 Cruiser tanks in the Middle East, with fifty-six more under repair. At the defence committee meeting on June 25 Churchill had failed to persuade the chiefs of staff to ship one hundred tanks out with a new TIGER convoy to Malta. With the enemy air force now present in force in Crete, the navy refused to take the risk. On the twenty-sixth Churchill telegraphed to President Roosevelt a plea for tanks, and he spelt out Britain's urgent needs in a letter to Harry Hopkins, the president's special emissary, the same day: to ward off Rommel in Egypt and the Nazi threat to the oilfields of Iraq and Iran (Persia), Britain must lay claim to six or even nine months of the coming American tank production, he said.[12]

Several times that summer he reverted to his vision of fighting another TIGER convoy through to Malta. Twice General Sir John Dill, the solid, four-square Chief of the Imperial General Staff, threatened to resign on this issue. What he as C.I.G.S. still feared (unlike Churchill, who was reading the raw ULTRAS) was the early 'Nazi invasion of Britain' of which the prime minister made so much in his public utterances. Alone of the generals, Sir Henry Pownall, Dill's astute deputy, recognised that Winston did not really believe in any invasion, adding in his private diary on the last day of June, 'Of course he can't say that.' (Three weeks later Pownall indicated in the same diary that he failed to share Churchill's confidence that there would be no invasion. 'It will be difficult to prevent him stripping this country, especially in tanks, for the sake of the Middle East.')[13]

Churchill's ministers also hyped the threat of a 'Nazi invasion.' Eden's diary of July 3 records Beaverbrook telling the prime minister after one defence committee meeting that he was anxious that the enemy's 'invasion barges' should be emphasised 'to assist him in his drive.'

ONE OF THE ailments of Britain's military position in the Middle East was the same that Adolf Hitler would diagnose, too late, in 1944 in France: the corrupting effect on a general headquarters of the soft life in the great met-

ropolitan fleshpot capitals. (Launching the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 Hitler would wanly decree that 'next time' he would not allow any Wehrmacht officers into Paris). As with Paris, so it was with the streets of Cairo and Alexandria; they corrupted the British officers and gentry alike, grasping them in their perfumed embrace. Young Randolph Churchill, Winston's often underrated only son, who was now a Member of Parliament, was also an under-employed Commando officer. His father had sent him out to Cairo a few weeks before, and he spotted at once the debilitating influence of the great Arab metropolis. He recommended in a telegram to his father that the war cabinet station a British minister permanently in Cairo, to provide day to day political and strategic direction to the generals.[14] Gratified by the sudden maturity displayed by his wayward son, Churchill sent a civil reply thanking him for 'your helpful and well-conceived telegram,' and selected Captain Oliver Lyttelton for the job.

We shall often encounter the burly, dynamic businessman Lyttelton (later Lord Chandos) in the chapters that follow. The P.M. had long been wooing him. Weekends spent at Chequers and at Dytchley Park – a millionaire's estate in Oxfordshire where the P.M. took refuge whenever his Oracle foretold a Nazi air raid on London – were not without effect on Lyttelton. Still President of the Board of Trade, he dined at the Annex (Churchill's bunker apartment at No. 10 Downing-street) on June 25. He found a small table laid in the Annex, champagne on ice, and a siren-suited Winston pink and fresh from his pre-prandial bath (his 'siren-suit' was an air-force blue garment shaped like a boilerman's dungarees, with a full-length zip up the front, which his office staff disrespectfully called his rompers).

As the P.M. mapped out his Cairo duties to him, Lyttelton was initially uninspired. In December 1940 Churchill had held out to him the far more appetising prospect of succeeding the late Lord Lothian as ambassador in Washington; the post had gone however to Lord Halifax. Twice in recent months Churchill had dangled the post of Secretary for War before him. Now it was to be Cairo. Saturday June 27 found Lyttelton back, comfortably lunching with Churchill, being told that the cabinet had approved his appointment as 'Minister of State for the Middle East.' At Chequers the next day Winston handed to him a paper, specifying his precise functions in the new post. Instructing him to fly out immediately, he gave Captain and Mrs Lyttelton a farewell dinner, and put them both into a suitably heroic frame of mind by showing them, along with his chief of air staff Charles Portal, the Alexander Korda movie *Lady Hamilton*. Churchill had seen this

story of Admiral Lord Nelson's battles half a dozen times, but never tired of it.[15]

WHATEVER HIS private insights from the ULTRAS about the improbability of a Nazi invasion, Churchill refused to countenance any slackening in Britain's home defences.[16] While still weekending with the Lytteltons midst the baronial splendour and the suits of mediæval armour down at Chequers he again prophesied to the war office that as soon as Hitler had finished off the Soviet Union, which might be as early as September 1, he would hurl a quarter of a million paratroops at Britain. 'Everyone in uniform,' the P.M. decreed, 'and anyone else who likes, must fall upon these wherever they find them and attack them with utmost alacrity: "Let every one / Kill a Hun."' Every man, he dictated in this colourful message, must have a weapon, 'be it only a mace or pike.' He wielded that 'mace' again in a minute to Portal and Sir Archibald Sinclair, air minister, about drilling airmen for airfield defence, and he tested the readiness of those defences himself on his drive back into London that night, calling a sudden invasion alert at Northolt airfield and watching the airmen tumbling about – he found some of them still sitting with mugs of tea in the canteen half an hour later and sent them off 'with hives of bees in their bonnets,' as his new stenographer Elizabeth Layton wrote that night.

The Nazi air raids had ended. An uncanny, almost depressing silence now fell across the city each night, and Winston had no fears about remaining in London – he had known since May from the ULTRAS that Hitler's bomber squadrons had departed for the Russian front, and that the city could count on many months of respite.

Back at No. 10, he sat up late with his chief of staff, General Sir Hastings 'Pug' Ismay, dictating to Miss Layton. A quiet, romantic Canadian from the mountains of British Columbia, the girl sat mutely opposite him, her pencil poised, listening to the boom of Big Ben and the answering echo rolling back from the admiralty building on the far side of Horse Guards Parade.[17]

The memoranda which he dictated show the by now familiar Churchill, prodding and provoking. In one, he inquired of Ismay how many commanders-in-chief made use of the Secret Information Centre he had set up for them.[18] (He repeated the inquiry in October and the following February). In another, Churchill peremptorily demanded statistics on the length of the British army's 'tail' in the Middle East – the ratio of teeth to tail was to become an obsession with him.[19]

The war office hated his interference. Major-General Sir John Kennedy, the director of military operations, remarked to the American military attaché upon the autocratic way that Churchill ran the war. 'There is a good deal of uneasiness,' wrote the American in a private letter on July 4, 'over Churchill's one-man control of *everything*.'[20] All the world powers were now in the hands of single rulers – it was an age of Great Dictators.

The more firmly the P.M. gathered the reins the louder the criticism became. Former prime minister David Lloyd George lunched with him on the first day of July, then confided to a journalist that Churchill was wasting time 'looking down the barrels of guns.'[21] Lord Beaverbrook referred to him out of earshot as that 'old bottleneck' – with emphasis on the word *bottle*. Winston would sit up far into the night over flagons of liquor with his cronies. He made short work of anybody who stood in his way. General Sir Archibald Wavell's removal from the Middle East command,* announced on July 2, 1941, puzzled the Americans and aroused the ire of the House of Commons. Churchill did not deign to explain it, and was testy with the former war minister Leslie Hore-Belisha for even asking why.

Fleet-street read the auguries better: 'Lyttelton,' wrote one editor privately on the third, 'has been sent there [Cairo] as a not too independent-minded civilian to keep the generals and others where Churchill wants them.'[22]

IRRITATINGLY FOR Churchill, he had received no reply from Stalin to his bold broadcast offer of assistance. Brief extracts of the B.B.C. transmission had appeared in *Pravda*, the organ of the Soviet Communist Party, but to Churchill the silence that followed seemed almost insulting.[23]

While the Germans broadcast a string of communiqués announcing stupendous victories including the destruction of two thousand Soviet tanks, four thousand aeroplanes, and six hundred guns, Churchill cast about for ways of helping Moscow. He instructed the Ministry of Economic Warfare – the 'ministry of ungentlemanly warfare,' as Whitehall insiders termed it – to offer to Moscow their accumulated expertise in destroying oilfields, in case the German thrust approached the Caucasus, and he ordered Sir Maurice Hankey, whose XD-units had destroyed the Dutch, Belgian, and French oil installations in 1940, to draw up plans to do so whether the Russians liked it or not.[24]

* Vol. i, page 589.

The Russians wanted primarily material aid – and their wants were not modest. Eventually they asked for three thousand fighter and bomber planes, twenty thousand light anti-aircraft guns, and flame throwers; they also demanded Britain's latest airborne radar, and a night fighter prototype equipped with the latest airborne electronics.[25] Churchill sat up with Eden until two A.M. on the last day of June discussing ways of satisfying these demands. On July 8 a Soviet military mission arrived at Euston station in London, greeted by the deputy chiefs of staff, a large crowd of fist-clenching, banner-waving communists singing the *Internationale*, and glowing articles in *The Daily Worker*.[26] The prime minister made no attempt to see them. The head of the mission, Lieutenant-General Philip I. Golikov – later a Marshal of the Soviet Union – told Eden on the ninth that Stalin wanted Britain to invade northern Norway and France and to keep up the bombing of Germany. His meeting with Captain David Margesson, the secretary of state for war, established only that the war office disliked Russia and was reluctant to regard the Red Army as a worthwhile ally. Lunch with the three chiefs of staff was a strained affair, eliciting only a thin, unhelpful smile from General Dill, ill-tempered outbursts from Admiral Pound, and nothing at all from Air Chief-Marshal Portal.[27]

Passing through London again two weeks later, on his way to Washington, General Golikov repeated Stalin's requests to Eden on July 23; Eden responded with platitudes. Meetings scheduled with Sinclair and with Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's confidant, on the following day were cancelled.[28] In Washington, Golikov decided that General George C. Marshall, the U.S. army's chief of staff, was head and shoulders above General Dill; moreover he was readily able to confer with everybody who mattered right up to the president.[29] Of course the Americans were not yet at war, but the treatment endured in London left a lasting impression on the Russians.

Churchill saw few ways of assisting Stalin yet, other than by diverting still more R.A.F. bombing effort to Germany. He berated Portal for having twice in recent nights targeted Brest, the French naval base from which Hitler's submarines were now operating. 'The devastation of the German cities is urgently needed,' he lectured the chief of air staff, 'in order to take the weight off the Russians by bringing back aircraft.'[30] This, the R.A.F. bombing offensive, was to become a recurring theme in his messages to Stalin, and it formed the nucleus of his first-ever letter to the Soviet dictator that day, July 7, 1941. 'About 400 daylight sorties were made overseas yesterday,' he explained to Stalin. 'On Saturday night [July 4] over 200 heavy

bombers attacked German towns, some carrying three tons apiece, and last night nearly 250 heavy bombers were operating. This will go on. Thus we hope to force Hitler to bring back some of his air power to the West and gradually take some of the strain off you.'[31]

Sir Stafford Cripps, his ambassador in Moscow, personally handed the message to Stalin on the eighth. Churchill read the ambassador's report, though not yet a formal reply from Stalin, some time after midnight. When he reminded Stalin of the P.M.'s recent broadcast promising aid, said Cripps, the Russian leader had eagerly proposed a formal Anglo-Soviet agreement as well as a mutual pledge not to sign a separate peace with Germany.[32] At two A.M. Churchill telephoned Eden to ask him to come over and discuss a further telegram to Stalin. The foreign secretary was however in bed, said so, and sulkily remained there. Churchill drafted a reply alone, causing Eden to grouse to his private secretary that Winston liked to take all the decisions and get all the credit.[33] Perhaps because of this, Eden henceforth adopted a strongly different line on signing an Anglo-Soviet treaty. At that evening's cabinet, July 9, both he and his colleagues spoke strongly in favour, but Churchill and the rest of the cabinet balked at it. Churchill's new message outlining a looser agreement was approved. As Sir Alexander Cadogan, the austere, Eton-educated permanent head of the F.O. put it, in his often disrespectful diary, 'The sheep baa'ed in chorus,' and the telegram went off for Cripps to convey to Stalin.[34]

Broadly, the agreement bound Britain not to conclude a separate peace with Germany. It would be signed on July 12. Churchill suggested that from now on his secret service ought to furnish the Kremlin with the most important of the jealously guarded ULTRA intercepts, 'provided no risks are run.' Even though their actual origin would be completely masked, 'C' never felt comfortable about this. Occasionally he objected that Churchill was asking him to transmit Intelligence that could only have come from cryptanalysis. 'I am always embarrassed,' he minuted, 'at sending the Russians information obtainable from this source.' From the secret signals of the Communist International (Comintern), which Bletchley Park continued to decipher, 'C' was aware that the Kremlin had not abandoned its long-term aim of world revolution.

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A copy of a letter written in April 1941 by the imprisoned French prime minister Paul Reynaud to Marshal Pétain reached Churchill via Vichy and

Washington. It revealed that at one French council of ministers shortly before the collapse of France in 1940 General Maxime Weygand, the commander-in-chief, had predicted that within three weeks Britain would 'have her neck wrung like a chicken' by the Nazis. The phrase stuck in Churchill's memory. Talking about it late one night with Archie Sinclair, he went on to ruminate about what he proposed to do to his defeated enemies. Benito Mussolini, the Italian *Duce*, he hoped to see strangled like Vercingetorix in ancient Rome; toward Hitler he was more conciliatory, with mellow visions of a Napoleonic banishment to some distant isle.[35]

A few days later Churchill's costly military adventure in Syria came to an end. He had ordered British troops in, on a pretext, on June 8, to seize control from the Vichy French. On July 11 the opposing French commander, General H.-F. Dentz, asked for an armistice. Oliver Lyttelton sent two generals, Sir Henry Maitland ('Jumbo') Wilson and the Gaullist general Georges Catroux, to negotiate. Dentz however objected to the terms and Lyttelton summarily ordered 'Jumbo' Wilson to threaten to resume hostilities. Aghast at this prospect, Churchill sent an urgent message to Cairo – on no account was there to be any resumption of hostilities. Disenchanted at this meddling from Downing-street, Lyttelton ignored it. The armistice was signed on July 14.

That was by no means the end of the affair. To appease the Moslems, of whom there were many hundreds of millions, the British had promised that Syria, formerly a French protectorate, should have her independence when war ended. Charles de Gaulle, the French brigadier-general whom Churchill had hired to set up the 'Free French' forces, found that the armistice document made no mention of his troops – an omission which nurtured his suspicion that Britain, while talking of 'independence,' was perfidiously plotting to take over the entire Levant. De Gaulle threw a tantrum in Cairo which Lyttelton could only describe as 'womanly.'[36]

Churchill – by this time on the high seas – had no time for this jumped-up French general, whom he himself had created. He had no intention of permitting his hireling to spoil Britain's relations with the Arab world. 'Tell Anthony [Eden],' he radioed to his deputy, Clement Attlee, 'to be very stiff with de Gaulle, Catroux, and the Free French.' If need be, he ordered, 'Jumbo' Wilson was to use military force against de Gaulle's Free French – the very sanction he had forbidden Lyttelton to use against the Vichy forces. 'It is important to let them realise in good time that they will be made to obey,' said Churchill's uncompromising message.[37]

HE CAST a discreet veil over the final cost in human lives of Britain's five-week intervention in Syria. In a speech, he put the British casualties at between twelve and fifteen hundred killed and wounded. Robert Menzies, the Australian prime minister, shortly announced however that the Australian casualties alone had exceeded 1,250.[38]

This was not the only instance where Churchill observed economies with the truth. Broadcasting from County Hall on July 14 he was heard to claim: 'In the last few weeks alone we have thrown upon Germany about half the tonnage of bombs thrown by the Germans upon our cities during the whole course of the war.' The air ministry sent a secret circular round the newspaper editors suggesting that the P.M. must have 'misread his script' – his figures, the ministry continued, were a gross exaggeration.[39]

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He would go down to Chequers late that Friday, July 18, 1941, travelling in his customary three-car motorcade. Since three P.M. the large black cars had waited outside the gate in the wall behind No. 10 – the third car would carry two telephone operators and Churchill's little valet Frank Sawyers, who was almost toothless and bald, although still relatively young.

It was six or seven P.M. before the P.M. stepped out of the cabinet room and gave a nod to the secretary which told her that they were off. Then the little convoy raced away, past Hyde Park and along Notting Hill Gate, running the red stoplights with police bells shrilling imperiously, swaying round traffic islands on the wrong side, then on past the White City and through the towns of Buckinghamshire, while the prime minister dictated to the girl scribbling at his side.[40] He had been in a foul temper all that week – in large part because Stalin had still not replied. 'Every time I went to him,' his new secretary sorrowed in her diary, 'he used a new and worse swear word.' Then he softened however and rounded off one day by beaming upon her with such a sweetness that she found it hard to bear him malice.[41]

In the cabinet reshuffle to which he put the finishing touches this weekend he patronised and promoted friend and family with blithe disregard for rank and competence. He elevated 'the Prof.' – his eccentric but gifted personal boffin Professor Friedrich A. Lindemann – to the peerage; the new 'Baron Cherwell' would loftily initial memoranda 'C,' attracting from

Winston the friendly reproof: 'There is already a C in my circle,' namely the head of M.I.6. (The Prof. continued to sign as 'C.')[42]

Duff Cooper, later Lord Norwich, was another such questionable appointment. The Australian prime minister Robert Menzies had described him in his diary as a queer fellow with a dead face and, he added, 'I should think great gifts of indolence.'[43] He had seen Duff Cooper, the minister of information, unashamedly dozing at cabinet meetings. Churchill now gave this job to his friend, the redheaded *enfant terrible* Brendan Bracken; instead of retiring Duff Cooper he sent this foppish æsthete out to employ those 'great gifts of indolence' in the Far East. Appointed in this ministerial reshuffle to the post of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, an office richer in dignities than in real power, Duff Cooper's new job would be to co-ordinate the defence of Singapore, the bastion of Britain's empire. Hapless empire: it would be late October before his languid report on the 'fortress' Singapore, crucial for the defence of Australia, arrived in London.

As for Bracken, his appointment as the new minister of information rattled Fleet-street badly. Guy Bartholomew of the *Daily Mirror* put it about that the P.M. wanted to enforce a tighter control on propaganda and censorship. With Bracken, Winston's loyal henchman at Senate House (the ministry had taken over part of London university), he calculated that he could stifle all criticism while keeping the limelight playing steadily on himself.[44]

As a further Caligulan affront to informed opinion, Churchill appointed his young son-in-law Duncan Sandys to the Army Council. The red-tabbed generals spluttered, but confined their outrage to their illicit diaries. 'Everyone is talking about this,' commented the Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, 'and it isn't going down well at all. Almost it would seem that he acts with impish malevolence – e.g., making Lindemann a peer, sending young Duncan Sandys here as F.M. [Finance Member]!'[45]

NOT SATISFIED with embarking upon a personal correspondence with Stalin to the exclusion of the foreign office, Churchill had also begun direct communications with General Sir Claude Auchinleck, Wavell's successor in the Middle East, once again by-passing the war office.*

* He had communed in the same way with Lord Cork and Lord Gort during the Norwegian and French campaigns: vol. i, pages 243 and 284.

As summer turned to autumn he piled a nervous and unremitting pressure upon the British Army of the Nile to begin their offensive against Rommel; but he found that Auchinleck ('the Auk') was made of sterner stuff than he had imagined. On the first day of July the prime minister had sent to the general a broad directive, couched in what he thought to be impeccable language: 'After all the facts have been laid before you,' this said, 'it will be for you to decide whether to renew the offensive in the Western Desert, and, if so, when.'[46] Auchinleck responded that he needed more tanks first, and that they must also complete the occupation of Syria.[47]

This was not what the P.M. had wanted to hear. He instructed Auchinleck that, Syria notwithstanding, the fight against Rommel remained decisive: they must recapture the airfields in Cyrenaica. If the Soviet Union collapsed, Hitler could move reinforcements to Rommel, 'without diminishing,' as Churchill wrote, 'the menace of invasion [of Britain].'[48] On July 19 however, while at Chequers, Churchill received a warning from Auchinleck that if Rommel continued reinforcing at his present rate he might be able to 'undertake a major offensive in the Western Desert in September,' against which the British would not field even one complete armoured division.

Awed by the larger picture, the prospect that Hitler might send his armies through a defeated Russia and Turkey into the Middle East, Auchinleck became preoccupied with his northern flank and moved the British army's highly trained 50th division to Cyprus. Since this Mediterranean island seemed largely unimperilled, Churchill was uneasy that this would provide grist to the enemy propaganda mills about the English always sparing their own troops while fighting their battles like Tobruk with soldiers from the Dominions. Unimpressed by these arguments, the general responded: 'I hope you will leave me complete discretion concerning dispositions of this kind.' As for attacking in the Western Desert now, he rebuked the prime minister that it would not be a 'justifiable operation of war.'[49]

Thwarted and angry, Churchill told his cabinet on the twenty-fourth that these exchanges 'revealed a certain difference in outlook.' He decided to summon the new C.-in-C. Middle East home for consultations.[50]

EVENTUALLY STALIN did reply to Churchill, and by July 1945 they would have exchanged over five hundred messages. At tea-time on July 19, 1941 the Soviet ambassador Maisky brought down to Chequers Stalin's first such telegram.[51] Maisky's report on their conversation is in the Moscow archives. 'Churchill,' he cabled, 'was very satisfied . . . and made no secret of it. While

reading the message – which he did slowly and attentively – the prime minister kept turning to the map and searching for the place-names referred to.'[52] These 'place-names' were deployed with characteristic Russian cynicism. Stalin offered this justification for his 1939 pact with Hitler:

> It is easy to imagine that the position of the German forces would have been many times more favourable had the Soviet troops had to face the attack of the German forces not in the regions of Kishinev, Lvov, Brest, Bialystok, Kaunas, and Viborg, but in the region of Odessa, Kamieniets-Podolsk, Minsk, and the environs of Leningrad.

Hitler, of course, might have offered equal justification for his incursions into Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, France, the Low Countries, Norway, and the Balkans, not to mention the Soviet Union. Churchill however grinned and read the lines aloud. 'This is undoubtedly true,' he exclaimed approvingly to Maisky. 'I wholly understand the policies which the Soviet government was pursuing before and after the outbreak of the war.'

THE GIST of Stalin's immediate proposals was once again that Britain should establish theatres of operation in France and the Arctic. Churchill responded to this at length: the Soviet ambassador reported to Moscow that he 'wholly accepted the concept of a Northern theatre, and even agreed to it enthusiastically' – so much in fact that he sent for Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, the First Sea Lord, and dictated the orders to him there and then. He spoke of British warships appearing in northern waters later that month, and of a division of troops being sent to northern Norway later that year.

As for landing in France, he was less enthusiastic. He told Maisky that the Germans still had forty divisions there; the coast was fortified; there were only four or five hours of darkness; and not enough landing-craft. 'It would undoubtedly end in a disaster,' summarised Maisky. 'On the other hand Churchill does vest immense hopes in his ever increasing air raids on Germany. . . Nor is he affected by the loss of planes or personnel.'

Regardless of what Auchinleck had warned, he also hinted at an early offensive against Rommel in Libya, and emphasised the necessity of the Soviet Union doing all in her power to 'effect a joint occupation of Iran' – to secure the overland supply route to Southern Russia.

They turned to the supply of aircraft. Churchill described the Russian requirements as frankly 'unrealistic.' He had no desire, he said, to foster

false illusions. He admitted disarmingly that he had been expecting the German Wehrmacht to make short work of the Red Army, taking a million prisoners or more. 'So far,' he said, 'nothing like that has happened.' Loss of territory, he suggested, was of secondary importance – a remark which showed that Churchill already had a grasp of the fundamental Soviet defensive strategy.

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As their conversation ended, Maisky saw an emaciated, pale-faced American clutching a battered hat loping into Chequers. This was Harry L. Hopkins, Roosevelt's special emissary, who had left Washington six days earlier.

There were some who would later accuse him, when he could no longer answer, of having been a Soviet agent all along. Without going into the particularity of this allegation, all that need impress us here is that Hopkins enjoyed the unqualified confidence of both the president and the prime minister, and formed a vital secret link between them.

He was an anæmic, frail, and ailing politician. One British general referred to him disparagingly as 'that diseased prawn.'[53] Roosevelt had rightly formed the impression that Churchill had little interest in the post-war period, and he had told Hopkins to deal on this with Eden rather than with the P.M. Visiting Eden a few days later, the American lectured him that Britain was not to commit herself to *any* frontiers for any country before peace came. 'H. said,' the British foreign secretary afterwards noted in his handwritten diary, 'that U.S. would come into the war & did not want to find after the event that we had all kinds of engagements of which they had never been told.' The foreign secretary found himself chilled with 'Wilsonian memories' by the spectacle of an American president talking at large about the future frontiers of Europe.[54]

Hopkins's arrival in Britain was evidence of the deepening personal bonds between the two western leaders. Both Lord Halifax in Washington and John Gilbert Winant, Roosevelt's Lincolnesque and quiet-spoken ambassador in London, had already observed, to their dismay, posses of 'special emissaries' shuttling between their capitals on missions of which the professional diplomats were rarely informed. Averell Harriman, a handsome railroad millionaire and now Roosevelt's Lend–Lease negotiator, was one. Jock Whitney, one of the Lend–Lease staff, described Harriman's rôle as

more of a 'whispering job' between Churchill and Roosevelt, to circumvent Ambassador Winant, who was Cordell Hull's man, whenever necessary (Hull was Roosevelt's secretary of state).[55] And now Roosevelt had interpolated Hopkins, his extraordinary intimate, as another, evidently instructed to probe what was going on in Churchill's mind about the Middle East; to the suspicious American minds of 1941 that region was still synonymous with 'empire' rather than with oil, which would supplant 'empire' only in 1944.

President Roosevelt's adroit, urbane chief of staff, General George C. Marshall – a disliker of everything that was British – had 'lost no opportunity of impressing the president,' so Hopkins told the British chiefs of staff, that the British strategy of reinforcing the Middle East was governed by unhealthy considerations of imperial prestige, and was therefore 'fundamentally unsound.'[56] The Americans of course still believed what Churchill had told them about SEA LION – the alleged Nazi plan to invade Britain – and they failed to appreciate the risks that he was taking in sending scarce military resources out to Egypt. Informed of this by the American military attaché, Brigadier Raymond E. Lee, Churchill's private secretary told a story of a gentleman's club in Saint James's which, obliged to expel a member for cheating, recorded delicately in its archives: 'He could not bring himself to leave enough to chance.' The American officer laughed, but still felt that Winston was leaving *everything* to chance by continuing to ship forces to Egypt.[57] Thus Hopkins eyed Churchill, and the prime minister sized up Hopkins. Hopkins was no match for Churchill. During this July weekend at Chequers the wily P.M. even offered him the unique privilege of meeting Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, his personal prisoner – 'alone.' Hopkins declined, lest rumours spread that he was dealing with the Nazis.[58]

BACK IN London on Monday evening, July 21, Churchill resorted to what was one of Hitler's favourite devices too – a gala 'war conference' staged for the benefit of visiting foreign dignitaries. Hopkins was invited to sit in at the five o'clock cabinet, but only until Item 6. (Item 7 was a discussion of America and Japan, and not suitable for American ears at all). A bogus agenda was prepared on which Item 6 appeared to be the last. That point reached, Churchill rose and declared, 'Well, now we shall adjourn.' Amidst scraping of chairs and shuffling of papers, he ambled with his American guest to the famous front door – but only Hopkins found himself outside in Downing-street.[59]

After he had left, the English ministers turned to Item 7, Japan (a topic to be examined more fully in chapter 6*). 'A long cabinet & a long Defence Ctee after dinner,' wrote Eden irritably in his diary. 'Five to six hours in all, which might have been compressed into one. W. is becoming terribly discursive & verbose. Maybe fatigue makes it worse.'[60] 'Brendan there for the first time,' recorded Cadogan with amusement: 'This didn't stop Duff from sleeping.'[61] Tempers were evidently fraying.

CHURCHILL TOOK his naps where nobody could see him. Completely worn out after a further session with him on American aircraft deliveries, Hopkins pleaded with Brigadier Lee and Major-General James E. Chaney, the senior U.S. military observer in London, to find out the true facts about the Middle East. A joint meeting was set up on July 23.[62]

Winston, dewy fresh after his nap, eyed these new inquisitors as they trooped into his cabinet room that afternoon – Hopkins, Lee, Harriman, and several British generals. Margesson, his secretary for war, was ushered out and a butler cleared away the whisky decanter and glasses that had lubricated their deliberations. With his secretaries and General Sir Hastings ('Pug') Ismay, his personal chief of staff, to his right, and with Hopkins, Harriman, and Beaverbrook to his left Churchill comfortably ignited a cigar and let them all wrangle about American tank deliveries. The meeting broke up two hours later, at seven, with Churchill inviting them to a tank shoot two days hence. 'The only person I saw who did not seem to be fatigued at all,' dictated Lee, back at Grosvenor-square, 'was Churchill himself, whose mind was just as alert and whose curiosity was as pressing as it had been at five o'clock.'[63]

At Hopkins's request there was a further Anglo-American staff conference late on the twenty-fourth.[64] The Americans stumbled in wearily after dinner at ten P.M., determined to tackle the prime minister on Britain's 'indefensible' position in the Middle East, and to argue the priority of the Battle of the Atlantic. To Brigadier Lee, who arrived with Chaney's naval counterpart, Rear-Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, it seemed ominous that the dinner-jacketed trio Hopkins, Harriman, and Winston arrived together, laughing uproariously and looking 'quite comfortable.' Lee found himself facing the P.M. – 'this little man, with his round, fat bald head, thick short neck, pale skin, and bright blue eyes, who is single-handedly (much too

* Page 95 below.

single-handedly, in my opinion) steering England through its greatest crisis.' Churchill again lit up an eye-watering cigar and the conference began.

Hopkins made the point that most Americans had never even heard of Benghazi or Mersa Matruh or comprehended the inter-relationship of Egypt and India. 'The trouble is,' he said, 'we've gotten in America the notion that the whole Middle East is a rickety, shoestring affair.' He conceded that he now believed that 'a large percentage' of the American supply effort should go there; Churchill smiled broadly at him. The other Americans – Chaney, Lee, and Ghormley – disagreed vehemently with Hopkins, suggesting yet again that the defence of Britain and the Far East was more vital.

Churchill steered the debate well. He boasted that Britain had the 'measure of the Germans' in the Battle of the Atlantic but admitted, 'If the Japanese come into the war there is little we can do unless the United States follow suit.' Invited to explain the significance of the Middle East, General Dill, the C.I.G.S., argued that fighting there had the advantage of keeping the German army out of mischief closer to home. The arguments for Britain abandoning the Middle East had been stronger in 1940, but she had held on and was now much better off. 'The importance of prestige should not be discounted,' he lectured the Americans, but he also emphasised the material losses that would result from even a limited withdrawal from Egypt.

Churchill spoke the last word: 'The Middle East is the meeting point for the armies of the empire.' He carried the day. Hopkins summed up in a message to Roosevelt: 'They are determined to fight it out in that sector [the Middle East] and it seems to me they gave very convincing reasons.'[65]

AFTER THE staff conference with the Americans ended – it was by now around midnight on July 24/25 – Winston invited Hopkins to telephone from No. 10 Downing-street direct to the president. Hopkins spoke for a while, then handed the instrument to him.[66]

We have no record of precisely what was said, and until the British file of censorship transcripts is found and released, or a U.S. president unseals the records of the Bureau of Censorship, which contain the U.S Navy's transcripts of these vital telephone communications, historians will remain in the dark on this account. As will be seen, it is likely that it was on this occasion that each now encouraged the other to impose fierce economic sanctions on Japan, with their well-known fateful consequences. Churchill, his tongue loosened by the lateness of the hour, also allowed himself an incautious remark to the president about their 'coming rendezvous.'

2 : *Prime Minister with Nothing to Hide*

That summer of 1941 Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt would meet – it was their first meeting, so far as the P.M. could remember, but his staff reminded him that he had supposedly met the great American leader once before at Gray's Inn in London, on July 29, 1918, when Roosevelt was visiting England as under-secretary of the navy. They urged him to abide by that version.[1]

The origins of this 1941 meeting, code-named RIVIERA, are obscure. We cannot credit Churchill's own version that it was only on July 17, when Hopkins 'sat in the garden' with him at No. 10, that the idea for a meeting 'in some lonely bay or other' was first mooted.[2] Churchill had already mentioned the project to the king in February, and to Sir Alexander Cadogan on July 16 at a garden party at Buckingham Palace, when he invited him to go too.[3] Eden on the other hand seems not to have learned until two weeks later. There may have been a 'telephone job'* between the two leaders several months before, in which each had wooed the other. Roosevelt had long favoured such a meeting, confiding to William Lyon Mackenzie King, the Liberal prime minister of Canada, on April 20: 'I am telling it to no one but yourself: I am in constant touch with him [Churchill]. What I feel strongly is that we should have a chance to talk together.'[4] First however the débâcle in Greece, then Crete, and more recently the disastrous BATTLEAXE tank battle at Sollum had tied Churchill to England.

The United States were still formally neutral. Concerned about the isolationist majority in the United States, Roosevelt had insisted on a rendezvous remote from prying journalists.[5] Bermuda, Britain's balmy mid-At-

* As Roosevelt's personal staff referred to their transatlantic radiotelephone conversations. See vol. i, page 550.

lantic colony, had been considered, but then Newfoundland, on Canada's eastern doorstep, was selected.

Here, at Argentia Harbour in Placentia Bay the American navy was commissioning one of the bases acquired in return for the fifty American destroyers traded to Britain twelve months earlier. At no time did either leader even inform Mackenzie King about their planned rendezvous, let alone invite his participation.

The British files make plain that Churchill took pains to ensure that neither the Canadian prime minister nor New Zealand's Peter Fraser, who was visiting a Scottish town at the very time the prime minister's train passed through, did not accidentally learn of RIVIERA. Nor would even the Governor of Newfoundland, Sir Humphrey Walwyn, learn of the conference until it was almost over. It was a further indication that empire sentiments did not swirl strongly in Winston's half-American blood.[6]

Before departing with a party of American 'observers' to inspect an armoured division at Tidworth on July 25, Churchill dutifully asked His Majesty for permission to leave the kingdom for the meeting. He reassured him that a flying-boat could bring him back in a few hours should emergency arise. He told His Majesty nothing at all of what he proposed to discuss with the president.[7] He sent the letter round to the palace in a sealed box.

There was little that King George VI could do but assent; he still spoke to Hopkins and other foreign visitors in terms of misgiving about this upstart prime minister who had in effect seized power in 1940.[8]

'I readily assent to your proposals,' he replied to the P.M., 'for I feel that circumstances are very different now from what they were when you first mentioned the idea to me at the end of February.'

The king ended on a note of unconvincing flattery. 'I confess that I shall breathe a sigh of relief when you are safely back home again!'

Churchill then confirmed it in writing to the president:

> Am arranging if convenient to you to sail August 4th, meeting you some time 8th–9th–10th. Actual secret rendezvous need not be settled till later. . . Am looking forward enormously to our talks which may be of service to the future.[9]

In a further telegram he proposed adding the 'Middle East' and 'Air' to the possible topics for discussion. 'Looking forward keenly,' he added, 'to this event.'[10]

Worried by the worsening war news from the Russian front, Hopkins suggested to Washington that he might usefully travel on from London to the Kremlin.

Everything should be done to keep the Soviet Union in the war. 'If Stalin,' he cabled to Roosevelt, 'could in any way be influenced at a critical time I think it would be worth doing by a direct communication from you through a personal envoy.'[11]

Roosevelt approved, and Churchill wrote a letter commending Hopkins to the Kremlin – there was, he encouraged Stalin, 'a flame in this man for democracy.'

> He is the nearest personal representative of the president. A little while ago when I asked him for a quarter of a million rifles they came at once. The president has now sent him full instructions and he leaves my house tonight to go to you.

He added what would soon become familiar words of promise: 'A terrible winter of bombing lies before Germany. No one has yet had what they are going to get.'[12] (In the second half of July the R.A.F. bombers attacked Hamburg twice, Hanover, Frankfurt, and Mannheim three times, as well as Berlin).

Of course, flowery words about Hopkins's 'flame for democracy' may have cut little ice with Stalin. Both Eden and Cripps fretted about the florid style of Churchill's burgeoning private correspondence with Stalin.[13] The austere ambassador felt that the P.M.'s style was becoming too sentimental, and from Moscow he pleaded with the foreign secretary to restrain him. 'We think,' concurred Eden's private secretary, 'it will have the worst effect on Stalin who will think guff no substitute for guns.'[14]

THE DISPENSING of glorious guff had always been Churchill's *forte*. Obliged to deliver a ninety-minute Production Speech to the House on July 29, he rampaged around Chequers, evoking from his bodyguard Commander C.R. 'Tommy' Thompson the one-word description in his notes, 'bedlam.'[15] The prime minister was now nearly sixty-eight, but the previous week had displayed his astounding hidden reserves of energy. 'He is just as amazing and *terrific* and full of character in his private life,' marvelled Miss Layton, 'as he is over the radio or in the H[ouse] of C[ommons]. He bullies his servants, but then completely makes up by giving a really charming smile.' More

than once he let fly some Technicolor swearwords at her when she did wrong; but then he would blurt out, 'Oh, don't mind me. It's only my way.'[16]

Few dared to take open offence – his gallant courtiers confined their indignation to private letters or to diaries padlocked with brass flaps like those kept by less-than-virtuous spinsters. The Vice C.I.G.S. left one clash on July 25 smarting with anger, went home and recorded: 'He is terribly apt to go off at a tangent.' 'He's a shocking bad *listener*,' General Pownall continued. 'I had to take him up yesterday on some rather unfair and stupid remark and he didn't like it one little bit – kept muttering to himself while I spoke.'[17]

The P.M. delivered the Production Speech on July 29. He dealt robustly with his critics.

> A handful of Members [he said] can fill a couple of days' debate with disparaging charges against our war effort, and every ardent or disaffected section of the press can take it up, and the whole can cry a dismal cacophonous chorus of stinking fish all round the world.

At the end, he turned to the larger issues. Warning yet again that Nazi invasion was still a danger, he called for 'a superb, intense, and prolonged effort.' Britain, he said, must still reckon with the 'gambler's desperation.'[18] As for the demand for the appointment of a Minister of Production, he met it with biting sarcasm: 'I have not been told,' he scoffed, 'who is to be this superman. . . When you have decided on the man, let me know his name. I should be very glad to serve under him – provided I was satisfied that he possessed all the Napoleonic and Christian qualities required.'

TO THOSE qualities he might well have added those of a Machiavelli: Churchill was still casting about for ways and means of enticing the North Americans eastwards, and into this European war. Months later, on February 15, 1942, after the United States had finally entered the war, Churchill would broadcast the triumphant admission that he had done everything possible to that end. 'When I survey and compute the power of the United States and its vast resources and feel that they are now in it with us... However long it lasts, till death or victory, I cannot believe that there is any other fact in the whole world which can compare with that.' He added with a candour that caused Lord Halifax and Anthony Eden to wince, *'This is what I have dreamed of, aimed at, and worked for. And now it has come to pass.'*

At the end of May 1941 he had made his first attempt, advising Roosevelt that if Hitler seized bases in southern Spain or North Africa to neutralise Britain's colonial fortress in Gibraltar, or even if the British were only 'sure' that Hitler was about to do so, Britain would send expeditions 'which we have long prepared and [which] are waiting beside their ships' to seize the Spanish and Portuguese islands in the Atlantic – the Canaries, Cape Verde, and the Azores. Like Spain, Portugal was a neutral, but he would invite Dr Salazar, the Portuguese dictator, to ask for British 'help' in protecting these islands. (General Francisco Franco, his Spanish counterpart, was unlikely to be offered this formal courtesy). Churchill suggested to Roosevelt, 'We should welcome collaboration with an American token force before, during, or after occupation of Atlantic Islands and if you wish would turn them over to you as a matter of mutual war convenience.'[19] On July 21 the defence committee discussed a plan to invade these islands in August.[20] Twenty thousand troops were earmarked for the job. The operation, code-named PUMA, would be on the agenda of Churchill's forthcoming rendezvous with Roosevelt.

As Churchill was aware from his codebreakers however, Hitler was determined to keep the United States *out*, at least until the Soviet Union was defeated. Learning that his submarine U-203 had even had the American battleship *Texas* briefly in its periscope sights, on June 21 Hitler signed secret orders to every U-boat commander – which were shortly on Churchill's desk – that 'during the coming weeks all incidents with United States are to be avoided. Act in this sense in all conceivable eventualities.'[21] Disappointed by this, Churchill was even more chagrined to find that one of his own officials had proposed that for strategic reasons American destroyers should be confined to the western Atlantic. He declared that the culprit had done Britain a 'great disservice,' and was to be removed from all American contacts forthwith. 'No question of naval strategy in the Atlantic,' the P.M. defined, 'is comparable with the importance of drawing the Americans to this side.'[22]

Using Sir William Stephenson – secret service code-number '48,000,' head of that service in North America, operating from a suite of offices in the Rockefeller Center in New York – Churchill masterminded a slew of 'dirty tricks' designed to help Roosevelt to stir up public feeling. Most of the British files on these are still sealed, but some episodes are known: The British secret service faked a letter from the Bolivian military attaché in Berlin indicating that he was in league with Nazis in La Paz planning a pro-

Hitler coup. Stephenson handed the letter to the U.S. state department, which turned it over to the Bolivian government on July 24. Though spluttering his innocence, Major Elias Belmonte, the attaché, was charged with treason and dismissed from the Bolivian army in disgrace.[23] Bolivia promptly declared war on Germany and interned her German population, and Roosevelt gained one more item to boost the fraudulent claim that the Nazis had designs on the Americas.

By August 1941 the (British-designated) head of Roosevelt's new secret service, Colonel William B. Donovan, was talking about infiltrating American guerrillas into South America.[24] Meanwhile, one of Stephenson's agents duped the Governor of Dutch Guyana into believing that a 'German raider' was busy in their waters: the governor appealed for American aid. On August 2 Stephenson's man in Bogotá asked the U.S. embassy there to collaborate in planting forged documents which would squarely place the responsibility for a riot on the German legation. In his most barefaced fraud yet, Stephenson then palmed off onto President Roosevelt a 'secret Nazi map' showing Hitler's ultimate designs on South America.[25] By that time a deciphered Japanese dispatch from Ankara suggested that the reverse was true: Hitler was not only restraining his over-eager forces from making war on the United States, but urging the Japanese not to attack them either. 'Germany,' Ambassador Franz von Papen was quoted as saying, 'is taking a very cautious attitude until she has defeated Russia. She is doing her utmost to avoid a clash between the American and German naval forces in the Atlantic.'[26]

CHURCHILL WAS aware of the need for stealth and concealment so as not to arouse American opinion against him. On July 8 he rebuked General Auchinleck for speaking publicly of the pressing need for American GIs to fight Germany: these remarks, Churchill cabled to him, would provide ammunition to the American isolationists. ('They are also contrary to what I have said about our not needing American Army this year, or next year, or any year that I could foresee.') American law made it illegal for Roosevelt to take warlike action without Congressional approval except in narrowly defined circumstances. American supplies could reach only 'nations whose security is essential to the defense of the United States.'

Despite formidable legal difficulties, Roosevelt had begun shipping four thousand U.S. Marines into Iceland, alongside the British contingent already there. 'The only thing that matters,' the prime minister wrote to

Admiral Pound, 'is that five or six thousand American troops should reach the Island in question.' What counted was what he called the moral effect.[27] Seven thousand U.S. engineers had also arrived aboard the seized French liner *Normandie* in Northern Ireland to start building American naval and air bases near Londonderry, including a graving dock for battleships. To Fleet-street the American bases sounded alarmingly permanent: 'It is one thing to get the Americans in,' prophesied newspaper editor Cecil King, 'and quite another to get them out again.'[28] Churchill took a more pragmatic view.

AS HE prepared to cross the Atlantic to meet the great American president, he was, in the vivid phrase of his young private secretary Jock Colville, as excited as a schoolboy on the last day of term. 'My master,' wrote his other secretary John Martin in his scrappy notes, 'was as excited as a boy planning all the details of the entertainment of the other fellow.'[29]

Churchill felt that he had grounds for optimism. The mere fact that President Roosevelt was half emerging from his shell of neutrality was a positive sign. The strategic balance was shifting in Britain's favour in the Middle East: in the summer of 1940 Churchill had had barely eighty thousand ill-trained troops there; denuding the British Isles he had now packed in nearly a quarter of a million soldiers, and British generals controlled Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Abyssinia, Eritrea, and both Somalilands. Stalin was confident, reported the British military attaché in Moscow, Lieutenant-General Sir Noel Mason-Macfarlane, that he could prevent further Nazi penetrations; and deciphered Luftwaffe signals showed that the German squadrons were encountering supply problems as the distances on the Russian front increased.[30]

Only the Battle of the Atlantic gave cause for concern. By July 1941 Churchill's secret insight into the enemy cyphers had expanded as enemy U-boats, weather ships, and patrol boats were captured and the code books and components for the different ENIGMA cypher machines were recovered: his codebreakers had by now 'unbuttoned' the Germans' main naval cypher, HYDRA, and were reading the U-boat operational codes as well; but this good fortune might not last for long.[31] The latest intercepts revealed that, just as the erstwhile Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess had emotionally warned Sir John Simon in June, Hitler had many more submarines already in service. Only recently the admiralty had appreciated that there were seventy-four; the new figure was already 125.[32] Churchill told Admiral Pound that he now felt 'very anxious indeed' – this unexpected increase showed

that Hess had not been bluffing. He demanded a full inquiry, and even threatened to send the Prof., his personal auditor, to go over the admiralty's figures.[33] Pound apologised that a considerable amount of the new Intelligence on submarine production came 'from a secret source of which you are aware.' One bleak fact could no longer be overlooked: the Germans were now producing submarines faster than the British were destroying them.[34]

Codebreaking also established however that Rommel, in North Africa, was encountering problems with his supplies. At the end of June, Bletchley Park's 'Hut 8' had broken a medium-grade Italian administrative cypher produced by the Swedish-built C38m code-machine, and from now on this betrayed to Churchill's experts the sailing dates, routes, and composition of all Rommel's supply convoys crossing the Mediterranean.[35] Sinkings increased. From reading Rommel's radio traffic with Rome and Berlin, it was obvious that the Afrika Korps was now seriously embarrassed. The prime minister hinted at this to his defence committee on Friday, August 1. 'All our information tends to show,' he said, 'that the Germans are having difficulty over supply.'

Summoned home from Cairo, General Auchinleck had arrived in England, and Churchill pleaded with him to mount an immediate offensive to recapture Benghazi. 'To do nothing for three months –,' Churchill had written on the day before, 'August, September, and October – except train and prepare the armies for the offensive, may well be to lose forever the golden opportunity.' He wanted Auchinleck to engage Rommel now, 'and thus force him to fire off his limited ammunition and burn up his exiguous supplies of petrol.' To sit quiet until November, as Auchinleck was planning, seemed 'incompatible with the cruel, relentless demands of war.'

Auchinleck cannot have enjoyed the rude taunt of 'sitting quiet.' A man of commanding countenance, with ice-blue eyes and a jutting chin, he combined wit, charm, and frankness. He needed all three qualities as the defence committee on this August 1 wasted five hours listening to the P.M. lecture him on strategy. Auchinleck still declined to launch an offensive immediately, quite simply because he had not enough tanks – he and Rommel each had about 230, he said, and he wanted a two-to-one superiority before attacking. At this Churchill became 'very rude' to the general, but Auchinleck remained implacable. The prime minister found it impossible to browbeat this tall, dignified army officer. The Auk had a far better grasp of the minutiæ of tank warfare, and each knew it.

DEFEATED, CHURCHILL invited him down to Chequers. 'Pug' Ismay briefed Auchinleck for the ordeal, asking him to dismiss the notion that the P.M. was 'rude, arrogant, and self-seeking.' From this country mansion the prime minister 'phoned Eden to come and join them for a further defence committee meeting. The foreign secretary reluctantly abandoned his own weekend at Frensham and drove over to Chequers at high speed; he arrived at six P.M. to find Winston relaxing in deck-chairs with Auchinleck, and showing no inclination to get down to business until later.

'Yes,' the P.M. apologised with an unconvincing show of penitence, 'I'm afraid sometimes I do talk rather a lot. I'm quite ashamed of myself!' He added nonchalantly, 'I'm afraid you will be very cross with me but I've put off the defence committee till after dinner, as I think I'll now go off and have a sleep!'[36]

Left to his own devices, Eden probed Auchinleck's intentions in the Western Desert; the general explained that he was not going to risk 'another fiasco' like BATTLEAXE. If an opportunity presented itself before the end of October he would seize it; but if not, he intended to muster all the tanks he needed to strike a really effective blow.[37]

After dinner Churchill at first announced: 'I don't want to do any more tonight.' He demanded to see the Nelson movie *Lady Hamilton* again. The projection staff had already set off back to London. He insisted upon their recall – if necessary cordons must be thrown across every main road to the capital. The men had got away however and there was no option but to work. He sat down with his yawning, heavy-lidded guests at midnight, and wrangled with them until two A.M. His heart was already on the high seas, and nothing more was accomplished that weekend.

THERE WAS one other matter raised at these committees. Stalin had suggested in mid-July that Britain and the Soviet Union should jointly occupy Iran on the pretext of the small number of Germans in the country. Churchill had told Maisky on the nineteenth that he agreed, and a provisional date in August was set for an invasion, particularly of the oilfields in the south, by one and a half British divisions; the chiefs of staff had decided on July 28 that if the Iranian government resisted they would 'threaten Teheran with bombardment from the air.' Perhaps Churchill hesitated to resort to methods for which he had so strongly criticised the Nazis: whatever the reason,

by the last day of July he was expressing misgivings, at least about going in simultaneously with the Russians who would, he wrote, be invading from the North 'with the customary Soviet methods and regime in conquered areas.' 'I cannot,' he continued, 'feel that this operation, involving war with Persia [Iran] in the event of non-compliance, has been studied with the attention which its far-reaching character requires.' He was primarily concerned with the safety of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and other British residents. 'Is there any danger of the oil-wells being destroyed?' he inquired, and he added the injunction: 'We must be very careful not to commit an atrocity by bombing Teheran.' It was all very awkward. He was still in favour of an invasion, as he wrote, but he wanted it properly surveyed first.[38]

❧

There was something often childlike about this statesman. Once Churchill cautioned Brigadier Menzies, chief of the secret service, and pointed to his Persian cat, Nelson, looking out of a window: 'He's in touch with the pelicans on the lake,' he said, 'and they're communicating our information to the German secret service!'[40] He often used schoolboy imagery. 'This is a half holiday,' he told his private secretary, after keeping him up until two A.M. with Hopkins on July 26. 'We must work tomorrow.'[39]

Flashes of mature insight were spoiled by patches of behaviour that witnesses could only describe as infantile. General Sir Alan Brooke, wearily watching yet another tantrum, remarked *sotto voce* to Hugh Dalton, minister of economic warfare: 'One feels that a nurse should come and fetch him away.'[41]

Some of his fetishes must have had their roots in his unsettled infancy. He had a whimsical habit of exposing himself, just like a naughty child, not only to his young male secretaries but to his elders and betters. Each thought he was being uniquely privileged, but this happened so frequently that it cannot have been fortuitous. No matter how high ranking the victim – with the exception, it seems, of His Majesty – he was likely to find himself received by Britain's prime minister in a state of total nudity on one pretext or another. He received his ministers or staff officers while sitting in or stepping out of the bath – these blessed folk being referred to afterwards as his 'Companions of the Bath.'[42] Wrapped in his silk dressing gown, a lavish green and gold affair emblazoned with red dragons, he resembled, in the words of Menzies, a 'nice pink pig.' 'Sometimes,' recalled 'C,' 'I had to talk

to the P.M. when he was undressed and once when in the bath he mentioned he had nothing to hide from me.'

Not even foreigners were spared this ordeal: in August 1941 he asked the butler at Chequers to bring Elliott Roosevelt to him. 'I knocked on his door,' wrote the president's son, 'and entered. Churchill was dictating to his male secretary with a large cigar in his mouth. . . He was absolutely starkers, marching up and down the room.'[43] Others were treated with scarcely greater mercy – he would wear 'his white linen undergarments' to receive the Canadian prime minister Mackenzie King in May 1943: 'He really was quite a picture but looked like a boy – cheeks quite pink and very fresh.'[44]

AS CHURCHILL now, on August 3, 1941, set out from Chequers for his transatlantic adventure he had three broad purposes – to make friends with the president; to lure the United States into the European war, and to extract a public declaration committing them to aid Britain against Japan. He was quite willing to offset these desiderata against theirs. When the chiefs of staff sent him an inquiry as to what was to be discussed, he scribbled in red ink in the margin only the most minor of issues – 'PUMA' (the plan to seize the Atlantic Islands), 'Persia,' and, oh yes, 'How to win the war.'[45] Replying to a letter from Her Majesty the Queen, wishing him Godspeed, he expressed optimism: 'I must say I do not think our friend [Roosevelt] would have asked me to go so far for what must be a meeting of world-wide notice, unless he had in mind some further forward step.'[46]

Seldom, in fact, can an international summit conference have been more casually prepared by either side than Operation RIVIERA, as Churchill's staff code-named this meeting at Placentia Bay. His critics would view it as one more example of his obeisance to Washington's interests. Roosevelt, for his part, concerned about repercussions from European immigrant minorities in his own polyglot nation, again asked Churchill to confirm that Britain had made no secret deals with the governments-in-exile based in London.[47] Into his luggage Churchill therefore packed all the agreements currently binding Britain, of which only one was secret – an oral promise made by his Minister in Belgrade just before the British-inspired coup d'état of March 1941, promising to return Istria to Yugoslavia after the war. (He made no attempt to include the secret annexe to the Anglo-Polish Treaty of August 1939, or a similarly secret protocol to the Syrian armistice recently signed by generals Wilson and Dentz).

Unwilling to be separated from his 'most secret sources' even for a few days, Churchill instructed his London staff just before his departure to ensure that the plane bringing Lord Beaverbrook out to the conference a week later carried not only the most important F.O. telegrams but also 'if possible an assortment of BONIFACE,' as he termed the ULTRA intercepts. These were to be carried in a weighted case which would sink with the plane if it and his Lordship should go down on the way over.[48] Two days later Leslie Rowan, newly attached to his private office, notified him that 'C' would make the BONIFACE selection, while Major Desmond Morton – Winston's bibulous pre-war crony who now liaised with the Intelligence services on his behalf – would sift and select the 'BJs,' the crucial diplomatic and Japanese intercepts emanating from Bletchley Park and its outstations in Singapore and Melbourne.[49]

The transatlantic crossing would be made aboard Britain's newest battleship, *Prince of Wales*. The prime minister left Chequers at midday on the third, and boarded a special train at Wendover wearing his grey-blue denim rompers. The whole party was in an exuberant mood. 'Rueful disappointment at lunch,' recorded John Martin, his young secretary, 'when [the] Prof. with the aid of the slide rule which always accompanied him calculated the volume of champagne consumed by the P.M. throughout his life and found it was less than that of our railway coach.'[50] Among his retinue were Cadogan of the F.O. and the chiefs of staff; Air Chief-Marshal Sir Wilfrid Freeman, the Vice-Chief of air staff, took the place of Portal who was being left behind with 'Pug' Ismay to mind the store in London.

They lunched on lashings of an excellent sirloin of beef. This voyage was to be as much a gourmand's vacation as a summit meeting. At one northern railroad station the train took on board a quantity of grouse – a delicacy not to everybody's taste, but the open season had been brought forward to enable them to bag several brace as a gift for the president.[51] Such were the hidden perquisites of absolute power. To assist the Americans in their deliberations, Churchill had also ordered *Prince of Wales* munitioned with several tons of delicacies provided by the government hospitality fund with the assistance of Messrs. Fortnum & Mason. He was taking otherwise as gifts only some illuminated cards of the inspiring verse of Arthur Hugh Clough ('But westward, look, the land is bright!') which he had had printed, and a number of signed photographs of himself.

Upon arrival in northern Scotland a car took him to Thurso harbour, a launch to a Royal Navy destroyer, and this out to the battleship which loomed

formidably out of the dull mist at Scapa Flow. She still bore the honourable scars of her duel with *Bismarck* in May.

Harry Hopkins met them on board. He was just back from Moscow by flying-boat, bringing several cases of vodka and caviar. He looked ill, and the captain sent him to bed. Suffering from pernicious anæmia, he needed regular transfusions of something more durable than Winston's champagne, but he had misplaced his medicine. He told Churchill he had had three conferences with Stalin, who had assured him the Soviet Union could hold on.[52] The Russians had told him they were manufacturing two thousand five hundred planes each month, and already had twenty-four thousand tanks. 'Harry,' the P.M. immediately cabled to the president, 'returned dead beat from Russia, but is lively again now. We shall get him in fine trim on the voyage. We are just off. It is twenty-seven years ago to-day,' he continued, 'that Huns began their last war. We must make a good job of it this time. Twice ought to be enough.'[53]

The battleship eased slowly out of the anchorage, picked up her destroyer escort and set sail for the bright land across the Atlantic, heading westwards into the setting sun.

CHURCHILL WAS not a seaman, for all his enthusiasm at being photographed in naval garb. Asked once by a Tory Member of Parliament, a former naval commander, what he thought of the sea, his one-word reply said it all: 'Detestable!' 'When I get inside a big ship for some days,' he added, 'I tend to get slightly headachy.'[54] Aboard *Prince of Wales*, Churchill and his valet coaxed his portly figure into a strange naval garb which enthralled the Royal Navy officers but which Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Jacob eventually identified as the mess dress of the Royal Yacht Squadron. One day he gatecrashed a session of the chiefs of staff, who had arrayed themselves around a polished, map-strewn mahogany dining table for the benefit of photographers; he turfed out Joe Hollis and Colonel Jacob, struck a pose in the centre of the group, and put on 'his special bulldog look' for the cameras.[55]

He was provided with roomy quarters over the battleship's screws, with a little mess to share with his party. He was photographed in a naval-style cap with his hands on the guard rail and one foot on the railing below, using it like a bar-room foot-rail. Any of the ship's company doing that would have been keelhauled by the captain. Hers was however a good, proud crew, and Colonel Jacob noted that same day their 'fine and jolly aspect,' adding:

'The *Prince of Wales* seems altogether to be a very happy ship.'[56] There are reasons why we speak well of this ship and her young and valiant crew.

That night, an ominous report was brought to Churchill: the German radio had announced at 8:15 P.M. that he was about to meet Roosevelt somewhere secret 'in the western hemisphere.'[57] Bracken was instructed to warn Fleet-street editors not to speculate. Photo-reconnaissance planes were sent out to locate Hitler's mighty new battleship *Tirpitz* – just in case. Since the German communiqué had mentioned a Washington announcement that Roosevelt was vacationing aboard the presidential yacht *Potomac* there was alarm in Pennsylvania-avenue, and some surprise as well since Roosevelt had not even informed Henry L. Stimson, his secretary of war, of the coming meeting.[58] Cordell Hull, secretary of state, wanted to put out a denial but, before departing, Roosevelt wrote dissuading him: 'My Dear Mr Secretary,' he advised, 'Any statement now is a direct invitation to the Germans to attack the prime minister and his party both going and returning. *When in doubt say nothing*!'[59]

An inquiry from the cabinet arrived in the battleship's radio room, proving that Churchill had made equally little attempt to notify the empire leaders of what he was up to. 'Should not the telegram to the three Dominion Premiers be sent now?' the radiogram inquired. The telegram remained unsent.

IF CHURCHILL'S staff had hoped that this August 1941 crossing would be a summer's cruise, they were disappointed. The North Atlantic seas crashed and foamed across the quarterdeck. There were reports of enemy submarines, causing the battleship to zigzag.[60] Their stomachs gyrated in the opposite direction. Unable to sleep in the quarters provided above the pounding screws, Churchill transferred to the quieter Admiral's sea cabin on the bridge. John Martin was sick for the first few days; Churchill ministered to him personally with Mothersill sea-sickness tablets. During the days of radio silence, he spent the hours of unaccustomed idleness reading C. S. Forester's *Captain Hornblower RN*, which Lyttelton had given him, or sparring with a now recovered Hopkins over a backgammon table – Hopkins taking him for several guineas each time.

When Winston retired to write state papers, the army stenographer proved unfamiliar with his florid style; there were difficulties when the P.M. dictated one rebuke to his ministers, about the shortcomings of aircraft-carriers, because when he launched into the dictation with a growled

preamble, '*This is a melancholy story* –' the sergeant gasped out loud, 'Oh dear, how unfortunate!'

A number of movie films had been brought aboard to be shown in the wardroom. The first was a film about Russian spies, *Pimpernel Smith*, which the more fastidious members of Churchill's staff enjoyed rather less than he, being unaware that even coarser fare awaited them – *Comrade 'X'* and *The Devil and Miss Jones*, for example, and Humphrey Bogart in *High Sierra* ('Awful bunk,' sniffed Cadogan like a governess in his diary. 'But the P.M. loves them, and they keep him quiet.')[61] On the eighth Churchill called yet again for *Lady Hamilton*. He knew its lines by heart, but he was still moved to tears: 'Gentlemen,' he declaimed, 'I thought this would be of particular interest to you, many of whom have recently been under the fire of the enemy's guns on an occasion of equal historical importance. Good night.'[62]

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Placentia Bay was a rocky inlet on the southern coast of Newfoundland. To the British it might have been a Hebridean loch; to the Americans it smacked more of Alaska. There were no towns here in August 1941, and even Placentia, a two-centuries-old fishing settlement, had barely five hundred inhabitants; but since the American base had arrived all the younger womenfolk were wearing silk stockings, while the local men were grumbling that it was the 150 American Marines who had bought them.[63] Battle-grimed and drab with her wartime camouflage paint and the already rusting scars, *Prince of Wales* stood slowly into this natural harbour on the ninth, while an American destroyer led her through the mineswept channel. There were the inevitable misunderstandings, without which no historic meeting seems to be complete. As the British battleship proudly swept in, with a Royal Marine band playing and a guard of honour with fixed bayonets standing at attention, stiff as a white picket-fence, on the quarterdeck, somebody realised that the Americans were keeping different time. The loudspeakers announced that all clocks were to be put back ninety minutes immediately; the ship put out to sea again, and repeated the performance at the properly appointed hour.

By nine A.M. they were anchored not far from the president's flagship, the cruiser *Augusta*, standing out in her peacetime paint with brass rails gleaming and colours fluttering brightly in the sun. Through glasses, Churchill could make out the figure of the president under an awning, waving his

hat to them. As the U.S. Marine band struck up *The Star Spangled Banner*, Churchill stood to attention, cap doffed at his side, his blue eyes surveying the bay and its surrounding terrain.

Roosevelt's naval aide came over to discuss arrangements, and left taking Hopkins with him.

Two hours later, at eleven A.M., the prime minister and the more privileged members of his staff crossed by barge to *Augusta*. John Martin carried a message which King George VI had penned to the president. It was couched in language which, it might be thought, displayed rather less than unalloyed enthusiasm for Churchill: 'I am sure,' the monarch had written, 'that you will agree that he is a very remarkable man.' As they covered the last few yards they could see the crippled president, leaning on the arm of one uniformed son and escorted by another; he was flanked by the American chiefs of staff, the Joint Chiefs, and by the state department's Sumner Welles, who had last seen Winston in a somewhat sorrier condition in the admiralty in March 1940.*

Here at Placentia Bay things were different. Indeed, as Colonel Jacob noted, all American warships were 'dry,' while the Royal Navy had written its history on a famous regime of 'rum, sodomy, and the lash.' 'The American Navy visits the British Navy in order to get a drink,' remarked one American officer in Jacob's hearing, 'and the British Navy visits the American Navy in order to get something to eat.'[64] That seemed to summarise the state of Anglo-American relations in the summer of 1941 quite nicely.

* See vol. i, page 225. Sumner Welles had reported that he found the prime minister in an incoherent and alcoholic haze. Roosevelt had for a while thereafter referred to the British prime minister as 'that drunken bum.' These lines were tactfully omitted from the published version of U.S. state department papers.

3: *The Charter that was Never Signed*

What transpired between August 9, 1941 when the two western leaders met, and August 12, when they parted? The material outcome was meagre. The real benefit was the personal friendship which the two men now cemented.[1] When he left however Churchill seemed little closer to drawing the United States into his war.

There is no direct record of what was said in the several confidential meetings between Churchill and Roosevelt.[2] The British and American chiefs of staff were aware that the real decisions were being taken by their two leaders. Noting in his diary the meals the two men took alone together, General H.H. 'Hap' Arnold, the thick-set, jovial commander-in-chief of the U.S. army air forces, would make the wan admission: 'What the president and the prime minister had to say when together – I know not.'[3]

At a lower level, the British chiefs of staff were as united in their approach to global strategy as their American colleagues, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, were not.

It is plain from the record of the latters' conference held aboard *Augusta* two days earlier, in preparation for this meeting, that Washington was indifferent to any Japanese advance into neutral Thailand, however direct the threat this must pose to British Malaya, at the southern end of the peninsula. After hearing Roosevelt stipulate this on August 7, Arnold had laconically summarised their formal position in his notes: 'Turn deaf ear if Japan goes into Thailand but not if it goes into Dutch East Indies' – because there was oil there, and Britain and the United States had just pronounced an embargo on oil supplies to Japan.

Ostensibly as a deterrent to Japanese expansion into the Dutch East Indies, Roosevelt had ordered the reinforcement of the Philippines with heavy bombers – 'So that there will be some "bite" to any ultimatum which

we may send to Japan,' recorded Arnold, 'in general B-17s [heavy bombers] and P-40s [pursuit planes], tanks and anti-aircraft guns.'[4]

At their first meeting on August 9 the two leaders went into an immediate huddle over lunch. 'At one of our first conversations,' recorded Churchill five days later, 'the President told me that he thought it would be good if we could draw up a joint declaration laying down certain broad principles which guide our policies along the same road.' To Churchill, Roosevelt seemed a sick man – he had suffered badly from the sweltering Washington summer, and the elderly naval physician tending him had little knowledge of modern medicines.[5] Churchill was not an uncritical admirer of the president. During the president's first term Winston had occasionally spoken harshly of him, for example to *Life* magazine editor Daniel Longwell.[6] Years later, however, after the president's death, he would mistily reminisce: 'I grew to love Franklin Roosevelt. I still love him.' That feeling became mutual; from the moment of this Atlantic meeting, Churchill captured the president's imagination, just as he had planned. Averell Harriman would shortly write to his daughter Kathleen: 'The P.M. has been in his best form,' and he would comment that Roosevelt was 'intrigued' by him.[7]

THE CONFERENCE would result in a wordy declaration known as the Atlantic Charter, and a joint communiqué uttering a mild reproof to Japan. More far-reaching were the products of those secret sessions. From the subsequent reports made by Roosevelt and Churchill in their respective capitals, it is possible to surmise accurately what was and what was not agreed.

First, Churchill uttered a veiled imprecation to the president: he thought it right, as he would boast to his cabinet colleagues upon his return to London, to warn that if the Soviet Union were compelled to ask Germany for an armistice, and if hope died in Britain that the United States would ever come into the war, then he 'would not answer for the consequence.' Roosevelt, he said, had taken this very well, and had promised to 'work for an incident' to justify opening hostilities.[8] 'Roosevelt,' Churchill informed his colleagues, according to the diary of the Vice C.I.G.S. who attended the cabinet, 'is *all* for coming into the war, and as soon as possible. . . But he said that he would never *declare* war, he wishes to provoke it.' The American plan was to 'create an incident that brings war about,' in order to gain the full support of the American people. 'As C.-in-C. of the armed forces Roosevelt can do what he likes with them and is, therefore, going to trail his coat until a *de facto* war occurs.'[9]

There is little doubt that Churchill did make this astounding claim about the president's secret intentions. He would say much the same to King George VI on the same day, namely that he had 'several talks with him alone' and had put Britain's position to him 'very bluntly.' Roosevelt had, he again maintained, assured him that he would seek an 'incident' which would justify him in opening hostilities, meaning against Germany; Roosevelt had made the distinction that he would not 'declare' war – he could not without Congressional consent – but he would 'wage' it, as witness his order that the U.S. navy now take over all convoy duties in the western Atlantic.[10] Weeks later, Churchill told the South African prime minister that at Placentia Bay he had said that he would rather have an American declaration of war on Germany now, and no supplies for six months; Roosevelt had called this 'a hard saying,' but had gone so far as to reveal, again according to Churchill's recollection: 'I shall never declare war – I shall *make* war. If I were to ask Congress to declare war they might argue about it for three months.'[11]

So much for Churchill's verbal account of his achievements. It is to be feared that he may have been reporting what he had *hoped* to hear the president say. Such, alas, is the dictate of human nature, as we have already observed in May, June, and July 1940 when he had wrongly predicted, after telephone conversations with Roosevelt, that an American entry into the war was imminent. Winston's account does not entirely mesh with what Roosevelt would tell his own cabinet colleagues afterwards. 'At no time,' wrote agriculture secretary Claude Wickard in his hand-written record of that reprise, 'did the president indicate that he was contemplating the sending of [an] expeditionary force to Europe, nor did he indicate that he thought it was admirable to declare war.' He did however indicate concern over 'American lethargy.'[12] That remained the root problem throughout 1941. American public opinion was still set against entering Churchill's war.

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What about the Far East? There are solid clues in contemporary private records that Churchill asked Roosevelt during their secret talks to join with Britain in a pre-emptive strike against Japan, but that the president's response was that the time was not yet ripe.[13] Cadogan suggested to Sumner Welles on August 9 that the P.M. believed that Japan was now willing to take on everybody – the Soviet Union, the Dutch East Indies, the British empire, and the United States.[14] An odd passage in Wickard's diary, never

printed before, quotes President Roosevelt as making plain to his cabinet weeks later that Churchill 'in their Atlantic meeting' had urged him to 'go in with England and the Dutch East Indies in an attack on Japan.' 'The president indicated,' continued the agriculture secretary, 'that he had refused because he wanted to delay such actions as long as possible.'[15] The same record adds that early in November 1941 Churchill mooted this idea to Roosevelt again. Cordell Hull also claimed to associates that Roosevelt had agreed to an unspecified, hasty proposal of military action against Japan but that he, Hull, had blocked it.[16]

All in all, the net outcome of the Atlantic meeting would be hard to define. 'I had,' Churchill wrote to his son Randolph – now attached to the British general headquarters in Cairo – 'a very interesting and by no means unfruitful meeting with the president . . . and in the three days when we were continually together I feel we made a deep and intimate contact of friendship. At the same time,' the prime minister continued, 'one is deeply perplexed to know how the deadlock is to be broken and the United States brought boldly and honourably into the war.'[17]

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In that strict sense the meeting was a failure. For the British guests there was compensation enough in the repast which from the first day took even the Prof.'s dietary fads into account. There were almonds, olives, broiled spring chicken, buttered sweet peas, omelettes, candied sweet potatoes, mushroom gravy, currant jelly, sliced tomatoes, chocolate ice cream, cookies, cup cakes, cigarettes, and cigars. On Roosevelt's instructions, two thousand Presidential gift boxes of cigarettes, fresh fruit, and cheeses were brought over by launch to the British sailors.

That evening, August 9, the P.M. returned to *Augusta* for a formal dinner with the president. The speech which he delivered here was not one of his best, according to Cadogan; the grim discovery that American ships were 'dry' disaffected Winston. It was however an improvement on the brief headings jotted aboard *Prince of Wales* a few days earlier ('How to win the war' was one). 'This is a mechanised war,' he said, according to Arnold's useful record. 'It is not a war of 1917-18 where doughboys in the mud and trenches fought it out to a conclusion.'[18] After speaking highly of the bomber as the means of bringing home to the Germans 'the horrors of war' he addressed the sceptics who questioned the British people's endeavours to

hold on to the Middle East, explaining that 'they would lose too much prestige if they gave up their present positions.' Britain, he continued, according to other notes taken by Lieutenant-Colonel C.W. Bundy, had too much invested out there to back out now. She could never evacuate the '600,000 men' and mountains of war material. In his further remarks, the P.M. dwelt rather more on Britain's bases in the Nile Valley and the Red Sea than had his chiefs of staff whose eyes slanted more to the east, toward Syria, Iraq, and Iran.[19] Churchill described the Atlantic as the war's crucial theatre. The prime minister hinted, according to Bundy, that he had 'positive knowledge that the Germans would not take any action which would bring us [the United States] into the war with Russia still active.' He demanded American aid in personnel, ships, tanks, and anti-aircraft guns. ('I found,' dictated Stimson after General Marshall briefed him on this conference, 'that [the British] have no idea at all of how the cupboard was bare so far as the United States was concerned.')

Churchill explained that with the limited British forces available his strategy would be to attack only at points where the enemy's lines of communication were longest. 'By constant hammering,' he suggested, 'it will be possible to prevent Germany from spreading and ultimately ought to aid in breaking her morale.'

Turning to the Far East, he stated this demand according to General Arnold: 'The United States, England, and Russia must send an ultimatum to Japan' (Bundy's note refers only to 'a firm warning') –

> this ultimatum to cover in general [a] statement that if Japan moves south in[to] the Malay Peninsula, or into the Dutch East Indies, it will be necessary for the United States, Britain, and Russia to use such means as are necessary to make them withdraw, and they will use force if it is required.

Finally, Churchill added a plea for some kind of post-war organisation to prevent wars like this from breaking out again. 'We must form a League of Nations, or some similar body for the purpose of maintaining order throughout the world, and preventing recurrences of any such terrible tragedies as we are now witnessing.' 'He indicated,' wrote Bundy, describing this fine peroration, 'the hope and belief that the British – and ourselves – were trying to create a condition in which there might be years of peace, a Golden Age in which all the peoples of Europe might live in Freedom.'

Churchill had expressed the belief that if there had been an effective League, with a 'constabulary' to enforce peace, the present situation might not have arisen.

During dinner Roosevelt had warily agreed that they might issue a joint declaration and a warning to the Japanese.[20]

THE NEXT day August 10 being Sunday, Churchill had organised a joint Anglo-American Divine Service aboard *Prince of Wales*, a ceremony to which he had given much thought. The evening before, Captain John Leach had broadcast instructions to the ship's company, calling on them to 'raise an extra head of steam' when they came to sing the hymns. The service was, Churchill decreed, to be fully choral and 'fully photographic.' Drying himself off after taking his bath that Sunday, he sent for young John Martin and had him read out loud the selected prayers. He himself had chosen the day's hymns – *O God Our Help in Ages Past*; *Onward Christian Soldiers*, and *Eternal Father Strong to Save*. If there was one device that he had learned from the former U.S. ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy it was that 'all that God-stuff' went down well with Americans.

Then he donned the Royal Yacht Squadron uniform, clambered up the ladders on to the bridge and instructed Cadogan, over breakfast, to prepare drafts of the two declarations.

At eleven A.M. an American destroyer arrived alongside *Prince of Wales*, bringing the president. He was hoisted aboard in his wheelchair. Two hundred and fifty American servicemen were mustered with the now battle-hardened British sailors in a hollow square on the quarterdeck. After the guard of honour had sloped arms, Roosevelt abandoned his chair, stood up, and inspected them, dragging each foot painfully past the other on the longest walk he had managed for many years. The word had gone out that the president was never to be photographed when walking or in his wheelchair but only when standing still or seated; it was nonetheless a field-day for the cameramen – the sort of thing, said one, which the average press photographer would dream of only 'after a good dose of hashish.'[21]

THE QUARTERDECK ceremony left an indelible impression on them all, as was Churchill's intent. John Martin felt that a man would have to be hard-boiled indeed not to be moved by the sight of these hundreds of stalwart young men sharing hymn sheets and singing lustily side by side, facing a pulpit draped with the flags of their two nations – 'It seemed a sort of

marriage service between the two navies,' wrote the normally unemotional Downing-street civil servant.

For lunch that day the British offered smoked salmon, caviar, vodka, mock turtle soup, roast grouse, potatoes, peas, rolls, ice cream with cherry sauce, and real coffee; since this was a Royal Navy ship there were champagne, port wine, and brandy as well.[22]

The Americans had brought with them stacks of American glossy magazines, which seemed to English eyes to be filled with articles on movies, baseball, and Bible prophecy. The writers had only wounding words for Britain and her generals. Wavell was described as having failed in Greece and Crete; Auchinleck was 'best known for his failure to hold Narvik.'[23] The war still seemed somewhat remote from the Americans. From Hollywood to Madison-avenue, theirs was still a nation on furlough. As the ships' companies parted, none could have foreseen that within four months nearly half of all these hundreds of British sailors present would perish horribly in a naval folly for which, once more, Churchill would not be wholly innocent of blame.

THE ATLANTIC Charter, that banal propaganda pamphlet, began to take shape.[24] An English typist hammered out the draft on crested Downing-street notepaper; Churchill gave Roosevelt this 'tentative outline' on the tenth, and it is now in the presidential files.

> The president of the U.S.A. and the prime minister, Churchill, representing H.M.G. [His Majesty's Government] in the U.K., being met together to resolve and concert the means of providing for the safety of their respective countries in face of Nazi and German aggression and of the dangers to all peoples arising therefrom, deem it right to make known certain principles which they both accept for guidance in the framing of their policy and on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.
>
> First, their countries seek no aggrandisement, territorial or other;
>
> Second, they desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned;
>
> Third, they respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live: they are only concerned to defend the rights of freedom of Speech and Thought without which such choice must be illusory;

This was changed in the final text to read: '. . . will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.'

> Fourth, they will strive to bring about a fair and equitable distribution of essential produce not only within their territorial boundaries but between the nations of the world.

This was also shortly changed to read rather less agreeably for the British, whose very empire was founded on trade preferences: 'Fourth, they will endeavor to further the enjoyment by all peoples of access, *without discrimination and* on equal terms, *to the markets and* to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.' Churchill recorded on the fourteenth: 'I pointed out that the words "without discrimination" might be held to call in question the Ottawa agreements.' He was, he said, in no position to accept them without consulting London and the Dominions. The offending words were accordingly soon excised.

> Fifth, they seek a peace which will not only cast down forever the Nazi tyranny but by effective international organization will afford to all States and Peoples the means of dwelling in security within their own bounds, and of traversing the seas and oceans without burdensome armaments.

Roosevelt would expand point 5 to create a sixth and seventh too: 'Fifth,' he dictated, 'they hope to see established a peace, after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in security within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance to all peoples that they may live out their lives in freedom from fear.'

> Sixth [*Roosevelt continued*] they desire such a peace to establish for all safety on the high seas and oceans.
>
> Seventh, they believe that all of the nations of the world must be guided in spirit* to the abandonment of the use of force. Because no future peace can be maintained if land, sea, or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, to use force out-

*The words 'must be guided in spirit' were changed in Roosevelt's hand-writing to read 'for realistic as well as spiritual reasons must come.'

side of their frontiers, they believe that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will further the adoption of all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.

Uppermost in Churchill's mind that Sunday, August 10, was the threat posed by Tokyo, who had now, under their shotgun agreement with Vichy, begun moving troops into the orphaned French territories of Indo-China. With Cadogan's help he had that morning drafted a savage warning for Roosevelt and himself to issue to Japan. It was very blunt, stating: 'Any further encroachment by Japan in the South-West Pacific would produce a situation in which the United States government would be compelled to take counter-measures, even though these might lead to war between the United States and Japan.'[25] Roosevelt agreed to append these phrases to a note he intended to hand to the Japanese ambassador in Washington. (Two days later, Churchill radioed to his cabinet in London the suggestion: 'We should try to get the Dutch to come in, in full agreement.' He added, though only as an afterthought, that the Dominions 'should also be told about it.')[26]

Churchill gave Roosevelt copies of the two documents before he returned to his flagship after the Divine Service. He impressed upon Sumner Welles that some such declaration with respect to Japan was of the highest importance. 'He did not think,' minuted the state department official, 'that there was [otherwise] much hope left . . . of preventing Japan from expanding further to the south, in which event the prevention of war between Great Britain and Japan appeared to be hopeless.' If such a war did break out Japan could immediately use her large number of cruisers to destroy all the British merchant shipping in the Indian Ocean and Pacific and to cut the lifelines between the British Dominions and the British Isles.[27]

His visitors gone, Churchill was in a genial mood that afternoon. He changed into his air-force blue angora wool 'rompers' and asked, 'Who would like to go ashore with me?' A crew of bluejackets pulled his party over to the beach in a whaler – Martin, Harriman, 'Tommy' Thompson, and the Prof., still rather comically clutching his bowler hat. Each one perhaps imagining himself a modern Pilgrim Father, they set foot on the deserted shingle of Newfoundland. Winston wandered about, collecting a fistful of the local flora – there was not another soul in sight. Once, he clambered up some boulders like an urchin and joyfully dislodged rocks from where they had rested for a hundred million years, and rolled them down the cliff.

A squall blew up, and he was soaked to the skin, but he had seldom enjoyed himself as much as that afternoon.

He dined with Roosevelt aboard *Augusta*. As the roast turkey and cranberry sauce were served to the two leaders – and to Roosevelt's loathsome dog 'Falla,' from whom he proved to be as inseparable as Churchill was from the Prof., or the Prof. from his bowler – their conversation roamed across the whole brutal enterprise of war. Roosevelt was still inclined to propose a period of standstill to Japan; Churchill knew this anyway from the 'BJ' intercepts, but he felt it unlikely that the Japanese would agree.[28] The president also informed him that the Portuguese prime minister had agreed to permit the British, or if they had their hands full elsewhere, the Americans, to occupy the Azores. He gave his blessing to PILGRIM too, Churchill's plan to seize the Spanish Canary Islands immediately after the mid-September full moon. Precisely why PILGRIM should ever have been contemplated is still shrouded in mystery, because Churchill himself conceded that it would oblige the enemy to seize Gibraltar, and this in turn would render the whole Middle East position untenable.[29]

BEFORE RETURNING for lunch in *Augusta* on August 11, Churchill reported all this to his chiefs of staff and to Attlee, deputising for him, in London.

To the former he explained that the American offer of 'protection' to the Azores would bring their troops and ships even closer to the eastern Atlantic. 'Any step in this direction is to the good,' he said. The only discordant note so far was that the Joint Chiefs had revealed that morning that in order to build up the American strength in the Pacific, they proposed to 'rearrange' Lend–Lease so that the B-17 heavy bombers earmarked for Britain would stream across to the Philippines instead.[30] To Attlee he reported that F.D.R. had agreed to append a 'very severe warning, which I drafted' to the end of a message that he was planning to hand to the Japanese.

The P.M. was piped aboard the American flagship at eleven A.M. Several shocks awaited the British party.

The first was a mild setback on Japan. The 'warning' was not going to go off as drafted, after all. Sumner Welles, like Roosevelt, preferred to string the Japanese along, playing for time. Discussing it with the president, Churchill saw clearly that he had decided that he could not promise to ask Congress for authority to 'give armed support.' Maintaining economic pressure was the most he could do. Roosevelt promised to hand a stiff messsage to the Japanese ambassador on his return to Washington. 'I later asked for a

copy of the message' wrote Churchill, 'but I was told, at the time of our departure, that it had not yet been drafted.' Roosevelt also undertook to include in it one phrase by which Churchill set great store, about Japan producing a situation which might lead to war with the U.S.; the prime minister decided that the president would surely not tone it down. 'We didn't get 100 per cent of what we wanted on F.E. [Far East],' noted Cadogan in his diary, 'but we must remember that it must be read in conjunction with the joint declaration [the Atlantic Charter] which will give the Japanese a jar.' On a personal level, as he cabled to Eden in London later that day, the two leaders appeared to have 'hit it off' very well – but there still remained 'a great many imponderables.'[31]

A more serious disappointment for the British followed. The press statement which Roosevelt had prepared on this Atlantic meeting was short and bland. It would merely announce that they had met at sea to discuss the workings of Lend–Lease, and that the accompanying naval and military discussions had in no way involved any future commitments other than as authorised by Act of Congress. Churchill was deeply shocked at this proof of how far Roosevelt was in fact shackled by Congress and the law. Roosevelt argued that it would take the wind out of the Isolationists' sails, but he allowed the prime minister to talk him out of it and the offending sentence about 'no commitments' having been made was dropped.

The third upset came when Sumner Welles handed to Winston the joint declaration, as redrafted overnight by the president. Point 4 now read:

> Fourth, they will endeavor to further the enjoyment by all peoples of access, without discrimination and on equal terms, to the markets and to the raw materials of the world, which are needed for their economic prosperity.

According to Roosevelt's own chuckling description a few days later, the P.M. went 'up in the air' at the new wording.[32] This wording would have spelt the end of imperial preference – the end, in short, of the British empire. President Roosevelt, we now know from the American state papers, was just trying it on. Unaware of this, Churchill was in a quandary. While he had always regarded himself as a free-trader, and he would confide to Mackenzie King two weeks later that he had no sympathy for the Conservative Party's position on tariffs, he was their leader and had the duty to stand up for them.[33] 'I myself,' he now conceded to Roosevelt and Sumner

Welles, aboard the Augusta, 'am heartily in accord with your proposal. . . I have always been, as is well known, emphatically opposed to the Ottawa Agreements.' It looked however very much as though this redrafted Point Four was intended to strike at the heart of those agreements.

'It is,' confirmed Sumner Welles. 'We in Washington have been trying for nine years to smash these artificial trade barriers.' Two years later Churchill would claim to have 'rebuked' Welles for announcing that he was 'out to smash Ottawa.'[34] He was certainly angry at this attempted fait accompli. He spoke with some heat about Britain's eighty-year battle for Free Trade in the face of steeply rising American tariffs. On his insistence the words 'without discrimination and' and 'to the markets and' were crossed out. The words would raise considerable difficulties, he said, especially in the Dominions – he would eventually have to refer it to them, and to his cabinet in London, and this would take at least a week.[35]

He offered an alternative phrasing:

> Fourth, they will endeavour with due respect for their existing obligations to further the enjoyment by all peoples of access on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.

Churchill later claimed that the president was 'obviously impressed' by his arguments and the forceful manner in which he set them out.[36] The U.S. state department's files show however that he was conceding far more than Roosevelt had dared to hope. The president congratulated Sumner Welles in secret after the P.M.'s party had left *Augusta*. The British approval of Point Four, even in its truncated form, was, he said, 'far broader and more satisfactory,' as Welles minuted, 'than the minimum which the president had instructed me, after our conference of the morning, to accept.[37] It is no surprise that Roosevelt boasted a month later that he thought he was doing a better job of 'handling the British' than President Wilson had done.[38]

Churchill wirelessed the draft declaration to London. Shortly after midnight, after dining with Roosevelt once more, the cabinet's considered reply arrived in *Prince of Wales*' radio room.[39] Colonel Hollis brought it to his cabin. 'Am I going to like it?' asked Winston, grimacing like a small boy at a spoon of medicine. It proved unobjectionable. Attlee's deliberations in London had resulted in a suggested variation to Point Four – which Churchill disregarded – and the inclusion of some platitudes about 'improved labour

standards, economic advancement and social security' after the war, to which President Roosevelt could hardly object.

FOR THE final morning of the conference, August 12, 1941, little remained except to celebrate new friendships and say farewells. 'Hap' Arnold came aboard at eleven A.M., and Winston beckoned him into his cabin for a glass of port wine. The prime minister installed him in the Admiral's cabin with Hopkins, Harriman, and Lord Beaverbrook who had just arrived from Gander Lake after flying over by seaplane from Scotland.[40] Something was evidently irking the prime minister, because he stepped outside once to ask if the chiefs of staff meeting had been arranged, and when Joe Hollis lazily replied that 'C.N.S.' – Pound, the chief of naval staff – had asked their American colleagues over, Churchill took him aside and spoke sharply to him for referring to the First Sea Lord as 'C.N.S.' The final chiefs of staff meeting began at eleven-thirty, presided over by Admiral Sir Dudley Pound – a 'Mr Magoo' character slowly fading away with a tumour on the brain. Flagons of sherry were passed around to lubricate their exchanges.

Churchill and Beaverbrook went over together to see the president at midday. They now proposed to title the joint declaration 'Atlantic Charter' – perhaps because anything even remotely sounding like a declaration of war grated horribly to Roosevelt's ears. It was only now that the Canadian-born Beaverbrook, a tenacious defender of the empire, saw the wording. He expressed loud dismay at Point Four. 'That wipes out imperial preference,' he said succinctly. Roosevelt was amused to see this Canadian putting up a belated, one-man defence of the empire against the Americans on the one hand and his own prime minister, Churchill, on the other. (The president would recall six months later, quite accurately, that 'so far as Churchill himself was concerned, he had no interest in the Ottawa agreement . . . but that other members of the [British] cabinet adhered to that agreement and could not be persuaded that it should be scrapped.')[41] Churchill recorded two days later that he was not willing to upset Roosevelt by pressing the point. He drew attention to the significance that the United States, though 'still technically neutral,' was joining with a belligerent Power in making such a declaration. Beaverbrook found himself alone. He would not forget Churchill's negligence here at Placentia Bay.[42]

The original intention had been for a formal signing of the Atlantic Charter.[43] In the event, neither Roosevelt nor Churchill did – they would both slink away from Newfoundland, leaving the document unsigned, with noth-

ing more than the character of a highfalutin communiqué. It remained a propaganda instrument.[44] In London Leo Amery sighed with relief when it was broadcast, finding the economic points to be in fact 'meaningless verbiage'; he hoped that the reference to 'having regard to existing obligations' might yet salvage something of the imperial dream. He did foresee, however, that Point Three, with its high-minded Churchillian guff about peoples choosing their own form of government, was likely to compound the empire's problems. 'We shall no doubt pay dearly in the end for all this fluffy flapdoodle,' wrote Amery in his private diary.[45]

THE ABSENCE of any signatures was not made public for several years, but word did leak out. In December 1944 Roosevelt was challenged about it at a press conference: 'Mr President,' asked a journalist, 'did Churchill ever sign the Atlantic Charter?'

Roosevelt leaned back in his chair, caught perhaps off guard. 'Nobody,' he drawled, 'ever signed the Atlantic Charter.'

He ducked and sidestepped, but the question kept coming up.

'It's one of the things that was agreed to on board ship, and there was no formal document.' Pressed harder, he recalled 'a scribbled thing,' partly in his and partly in Churchill's and partly in Cadogan's handwriting that was sent off as a press release. 'That,' he said, 'is the Atlantic Charter.'

He tried to pass on to an anecdote, but the journalist persisted. 'Mr President, that statement that was issued [after the Atlantic meeting] to the press said it was a statement 'signed by yourself and by the British prime minister…'

'It isn't a formal document,' replied Roosevelt airily, 'and I don't know where it is now.' 'I was just trying,' said the newspaperman, 'to clarify whether that document actually had signatures on the bottom of it?'

'Oh,' said the president breezily, 'I think it's probable, in time, they will find some documents and signatures.' At this there was a ripple of laughter.

'The *spirit* is still there, Sir?'

Roosevelt dodged the question. Another journalist, a Mr Godwin, tried to rescue him: 'You stood for it, and you stand for it now?'

Again Roosevelt did not reply.[46]

Four days later Churchill was asked by a Member of Parliament whether he would comment on Roosevelt's statements, which 'cast doubt on the genuineness of the Atlantic Charter.' He avoided direct answer. The *Daily Telegraph* summed it all up in one headline: 'THE ATLANTIC CHARTER WAS

NEVER SIGNED,' it said.[47] The document had become even more of an embarrassment to Churchill than to the president – he would tell Roosevelt's roving ambassador Patrick Hurley in April 1945 that Britain no longer stood by the charter's principles.[48]

DRAFTED FOUR months before Pearl Harbor, proclaimed before Hitler's crippling reverses at the gates of Moscow, the Atlantic Charter was neither fish nor fowl. It even squibbed in Fleet-street – 'The joint British-American peace aims,' chortled Cecil King, 'were so vague that they were even attacked by the *Daily Sketch*!'

Like many such hasty instruments, it caused more headaches than it cured. There were painful ambiguities, perhaps designed to help Churchill to obscure from the Czech, Polish, and even German peoples what lay in store for them.

Point Two stipulated that there should be no transfer of territory without the consent of the population – yet the Allies would soon be planning to evict the Germans from East Prussia 'where they have lived for 600 years,' as an internal U.S. embassy memorandum pointed out in 1942. As for Point Three, about the right of all peoples to choose their form of government, the same memorandum remarked that the Allies proposed to allow the Czechs to reassert their questionable rule on the German Sudeten regions. And suppose the natives of Nigeria or East Africa or India should take to heart the other sovereign rights there spoken of, like the right to self-government?[49]

Worse, suppose the Arabs believed that Churchill's Atlantic Charter entitled them to assert their lost sovereignty over Palestine? On August 20, 1941, the day after reporting to his cabinet on the Atlantic meeting, he was already worried enough by this latter thought to communicate it to the Zionist Leo Amery, the India Secretary; and one year later the fear still haunted him: 'Its proposed application to Asia and Africa requires much thought,' he would write to Roosevelt on August 9, 1942. 'Here,' he added, 'in the Middle East the Arabs might claim by majority they could expel the Jews from Palestine, or at any rate forbid all further immigration. I am wedded to the Zionist policy, of which I was one of the authors.'[50]

By early 1943, his ministers would have devised their own shifty solutions. Eden would communicate to Churchill's secretary that Point Two, which committed Britain to heeding the wishes of the population, was only '*one* factor' to be taken into account.[51] His mind was necessarily already

displaying some of the devious ways of Napoleon the Pig, the character in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

THE BRITISH military staffs left Placentia Bay with the clear and disturbing impression that their American friends were *not* eager to fight any war in Europe. Their eyes were trained on the Pacific.

This held true particularly for the U.S. navy who thought, as Colonel Ian Jacob of the Defence Staff surmised in his diary, that it would suffice for Britain not to lose the war at sea. As for the American army they were beset with equipment shortages. 'Not a single American officer has shown the slightest keenness to be in the war on our side,' he recorded on the eleventh. 'They are a charming lot of individuals, but they appear to be living in a different world from ourselves. The war certainly seems very remote over here.' A week later he described the American navy and army unflatteringly as being like reluctant bathers – with the U.S. navy standing on the brink, dipping one toe at a time into shark-infested waters. 'Their ideas, however, have not got beyond how to avoid being bitten; they have not yet reached out to thoughts of how to get rid of the sharks.'[52] In this respect he recognised that Roosevelt and his immediate entourage were far ahead of their military staffs – '[They] intend to keep pushing forward until the time comes when the Germans can no longer disregard American provocation.'

BY TWO-FIFTY P.M. on August 12, 1941 the whole event was over. Churchill took his staff onto *Augusta*'s quarterdeck to bid farewell to Roosevelt. A band played the British anthem as Churchill and his staff walked down the American line of officers shaking hands. The notes pencilled by air-force General 'Hap' Arnold describe the scene as the visit ended. 'Flags and pennants flying from the *Prince of Wales*. Low hanging clouds cutting off view of shore. Fog forming – the *Prince of Wales*, with decks lined with sailors, pulls up anchor. Band playing Star Spangled Banner. Winston Churchill, Pound, Dill, and Freeman standing on afterdeck. The *Prince of Wales* steams out of the harbor.'[53]

From the American ships floated once again the sweet brassy harmonies of the British anthem in reply. The ships slowly faded into the summer fog.

4: *Shall We Dance? asks Mr Churchill*

Churchill returned to London from the Atlantic Conference having failed in his primary aim – to secure a promise that Roosevelt would soon declare war on the Axis Powers. In return for empty assurances, he had compromised broad principles upon which the empire was founded, and his war was dragging Britain heavily into debt. Yet he refused to agree that these things were coming to pass. At one cabinet meeting in 1943 he would admit that he had spent forty years opposing imperial preference – 'It had done,' he maintained, 'nothing but harm.' He was indignant at those who wondered how Britain could survive. 'He was furious with O. L. [Oliver Lyttelton],' wrote one minister after that cabinet session, 'who said that we were no longer a creditor-, but a debtor-nation. The P.M. vehemently denied that we should owe anybody anything at the end of the war. On the contrary, we should send in a bill to the whole world for having defended them.'[1]

The Americans had already disclosed a predatory interest in Britain's imperial possessions in 1937, when Roosevelt had ordered U.S. Marines to seize the mid-Pacific islands of Canton and Enderbury, in the Carolines; Pan American Airways needed a staging post, and the British had refused to oblige.[2] The British file on this incident was only recently unsealed.[3]

Churchill however made things easy for his American cousins. Scarcely had he become prime minister when he allowed Roosevelt ('in a single gulp,' as Adolph Berle of the state department disarmingly put it*) to establish bases throughout Britain's western Atlantic possessions – bases for which the United States had no real need in history, as events (and the captured Nazi archives) subsequently showed. Churchill would propose al-

* See vol. i, page 400.

lowing Dublin, as a reward for coming into the war against Germany, to annex Ulster. At Placentia Bay he had conceded far more than even Roosevelt had expected on imperial preference.[4]

It was in his affronts to the Dominions that his scorn for the empire was most manifest. Constitutionally, their prime ministers were his equal in the eyes of their king and emperor. Yet he would keep them in ignorance of his plans, while using their troops and paraphernalia to advance them. He had informed only Jan Smuts in advance of de Gaulle's ill-fated attempted seizure of Dakar in 1940 – 'It is not necessary to tell all the others,' Churchill had notified 'Pug' Ismay. 'We cannot carry on the war if every secret operation has to be proclaimed to every Dominion.' The Australian prime minister Robert Menzies first learned of Dakar from the newspapers, and protested at this 'humiliating' treatment.[5] Churchill held out strongly against Lord Cranborne's advice in January 1941 that the Dominions be represented in his cabinet: 'It would certainly not be possible,' he argued, 'to consult the Dominions . . . about any direct military operation, even where their own troops were liable to be engaged.'

Canada felt the humiliation even more deeply than Australia. Mackenzie King referred in his diary to Canadian government anger that Churchill and Roosevelt had 'decided to plan the war themselves' and ignore them.[6] All this contrasted vividly with Churchill's childlike openness toward the American President, to whom he had already *deferred* in strategic matters like WILFRED, his 1940 plan to lay mines in Norwegian waters.

In England the Atlantic Charter had now been broadcast by Attlee. Eden described it contemptuously to his staff as a terribly woolly document, full of all the old clichés of the League of Nations period. The king was apprehensive, and wrote to his mother, Queen Mary, that he was uneasy at the parallels between this new document and the ill-famed Fourteen Points of President Wilson; to Margesson, the secretary for war, the king remarked on August 18 that the Americans had deserted Britain after the first World War, and might do so again if they did not come in now and 'feel the effects of war.'[7] In short he too felt that Winston had conceded much at Placentia Bay, and received little or nothing in return.

CHURCHILL WAS back on the high seas, making his way back to England. One evening *Prince of Wales* passed at twenty-three knots through the centre of an England-bound convoy plodding eastwards from Halifax; to these seventy-two elderly, grey-painted tramps and freighters the prime minister

had a signal hoisted reading, 'Pleasant voyage, Churchill.' After a day spent being greeted by a cheering throng in Iceland – occupied by British troops in 1940, and now garrisoned by Americans as well – his party reached Thurso on August 18, 1941. His wife Clementine was waiting there, with members of his personal staff including Major Morton and Jock Colville.

Colville brought word of mounting impatience in Parliament with the P.M.'s methods. Harold Balfour would tell Halifax months later that Winston was 'a singularly unlovable man.' Churchill was uncomfortably aware from the Gallup polls that his only real power base was his exceptional popularity in the country, but that this was hardly reflected in Parliament. On that same day Beaverbrook was telling Lord Halifax in Washington: 'If anything were to happen to Winston, which heaven forbid, there might well be a great difference of opinion between the House of Commons and the country.' And Colville, while still aboard the train down from Thurso, would record that it was unfortunate that Winston was in danger of losing friends because of his impatient manner.[8]

Churchill tucked into lamb cutlets and bacon for breakfast before the train hauled into London through its grimy, impoverished northern suburbs the next day. At King's Cross the entire cabinet had assembled on the platform, though not entirely by choice – cabinet secretary Sir Edward Bridges had circulated a memorandum 'suggesting' that they greet their prime minister upon his arrival at eight-fifty A.M.[9] The reception party had expected his coach to be near the engine, but it was not. As the Churchill coach, at the rear of the train, pulled up, the waiting journalists, cameramen, politicians, and diplomatists scrambled down the platform looking for the man to be greeted. 'Winston & party all looking very well & in great form,' rejoiced the loyal foreign secretary; he kept to himself how Chaplinesque the farcical scene had been.[10]

TOWARD MIDDAY the prime minister reported formally to his cabinet on the Placentia Bay meeting. He voiced his pleasure about the intimate contact which he had established with the president. 'On *his* showing at any rate,' wrote General Pownall, 'they had had most friendly talks.'

As for the high principles espoused in the charter, these were but short-lived. At this same cabinet Churchill formally approved the plans laid by Eden and Amery for the invasion of Iran, to secure the oilfields and the supply route to Russia, under the pretext of expelling the few hundred German 'technicians' there.[11] Talking it over with Eden that evening, Church-

ill expressed impatience with the 'slowness' of the generals in preparing this invasion: 'Winston anxious we should go in at once,' noted Eden, 'but I told him we must keep step with the Bear, whose strength will anyway be greater.'[12] 'The Bear' was Stalin, whose troops would invade Iran simultaneously from the north. It all smacked of the 1939 German-Soviet invasion of Poland – and Anthony Eden's staff cynically dubbed it their first act of 'naked aggression.' 'A. E. rather ashamed of himself,' wrote his secretary. 'So too is P.M.'[13] Using words of unaccustomed directness, Churchill would write to his son admitting that the operation rather took 'a leaf out of the German book.' His excuse was no less lame for being couched in Latin – *inter arma silent leges* (once the guns speak, lawyers hold their tongue).[14]

After reporting to his cabinet on August 19, Churchill lunched at Buckingham Palace and gave the king a 'very full account' of his confabulations with the president. 'W. was greatly taken by him,' recorded the monarch, '& has come back feeling that he knows him. He had several talks with him alone, when W. put our position to him very bluntly: if by the Spring, Russia was down & out, & Germany was renewing her blitzkrieg [bombing] here, all our hopes of victory & help from U.S.A. would be dashed if America had not by then sent us masses of planes, etc., or had not entered the war. F.D.R. has got £3,000m to spend on us here.'[15] As for the general situation, Churchill assured the king that the Battle of the Atlantic was 'much better,' and he predicted that Japan would remain quiet in the Far East.

NOT EVERYBODY was as contented as he. From Moscow came sounds of displeasure that the Atlantic Charter had been drafted without consulting the Soviet Government. Molotov would telegraph to Maisky about the growing feeling in the Kremlin that the two western leaders were using the Red Army as cannon-fodder.[16]

The Australians and the Canadians felt the same way about their own bruised contingents. Robert Menzies, the Australian prime minister, began agitating for an imperial cabinet, and he seemed bent on returning to London to convene it. South Africa opposed this as impracticable, but Smuts still sent a courtesy copy of his telegram to Ottawa for Mackenzie King.[17]

The Canadian prime minister was particularly offended. Although Churchill had eventually invited the Governor of Newfoundland to lunch in *Prince of Wales*, he had not extended an equal courtesy to the Dominion of Canada. Ottawa had learned of the meeting only fortuitously, on August 8, when intercepted messages indicated that Churchill and Roosevelt were

coming together the next day. 'It is all a very strange business,' recorded Mackenzie King, and he expressed his chagrin to both the Governor-General and the British High Commissioner. The Canadian prime minister was too well-mannered to make difficulties, but he took note that this latest episode was 'on all fours with what has thus far been done between Britain and the United States,' and it was moreover precisely what Adolf Hitler had warned him of when they had met in Berlin in June 1937.[18]

To soothe his ruffled feelings, an invitation went to him to visit England immediately. Mackenzie King made such prompt plans that Lord Beaverbrook had to 'phone him to persuade him not to arrive in Britain before Churchill did – because that would look as though he were slipping in 'through the back door.'[19] Before leaving for England and Chequers the Canadian prime minister – surely one of the most enlightened characters in this darkening canvas of war – resolved to forswear all alcohol for the duration of this war. He took this stern resolve, he wrote a few weeks later, 'knowing how much sherry & wine was consumed there [at Chequers], and that Churchill would want me to drink with him, as he did.' He later told Roosevelt that Churchill indeed kept pressing him, again and again, to take a drink. It was amazing, agreed Roosevelt, rolling his eyes to the sky, what Churchill got away with.[20]

CHURCHILL HAD returned invigorated from his Atlantic cruise, but back in England the old faces and routines and criticisms cast him down.[21] The news from the Russian front was uninspiring. On August 21 the cabinet discussed the plans Lord Hankey had now laid for the destruction of Stalin's Caucasus oil wells before the Nazis overran them. Britain would have to compensate the Soviets, it was felt; but Churchill, informed that Soviet agriculture was wholly dependent on the oil of Baku, was loath to press Stalin. He told Ambassador Winant that he felt that Stalin himself must decide whether to destroy Baku. 'It would be a grim decision.'[22]

Mackenzie King had now arrived in Britain, crossing the North Atlantic in a bomber aircraft. Churchill invited him to attend the next day's cabinet and take lunch with him afterwards.[23] There was still little joyous to report. From ULTRA it was clear that Rommel was packing reinforcements into Cyrenaica, yet General Auchinleck was refusing to bring forward CRUSADER, his November offensive. When Eden 'phoned, Churchill expressed himself very perturbed at that.[24] Eden told him that the Soviet ambassador had confirmed the date for invading Iran as the twenty-fifth. The wily President

Roosevelt now disowned all knowledge of the operation, although he had been informed in secret. Churchill again remarked uneasily to Eden that they were behaving just like Nazi Germany in 1940. Taken aback, since Winston had only just exhorted him to 'get on with it,' the foreign secretary retorted that how the world viewed their invasion of Iran would depend on how well they did the job, and 'that we knew [the] Shah was hand in glove with [the] Germans & now taking his orders from them, etc.' An hour later the prime minister 'phoned him again, and blurted out: 'You spoke very well this morning about Persia.' As though this made any difference, Eden confessed to his private diary that he hated the whole business – but they could hardly hold back until Hitler reached the Caucasus.[25]

❧

Before leaving on the afternoon of Friday August 22 for Chequers, where he intended to work on a broadcast to the nation, Churchill invited the newspaper editors to No. 10 Downing-street for one of his regular war briefings. He remarked on how impressed he had been with the way that President Roosevelt had triumphed over the paralysis which had wasted the whole of his body below his shoulders. On a larger scale, the Soviet resistance had also amazed him. He dropped a hint about the coming Anglo-Soviet invasion of Iran, but warned the newspapermen that for Britain to land troops anywhere in northern France would 'inevitably lead to a minor Dunkirk.' He was 'very anxious' that the United States should declare war, for its psychological effect – 'He would rather have America in [the war] and no American supplies for six months,' he reiterated, 'than double the present level . . . [with the United States] as a neutral.' He had concluded, he said, that this was 'a psychological war,' a race between the Germans persuading the Europeans to submit to their New Order, and the British convincing them of their ability to set them free.

While not revealing his source, the prime minister disclosed that Germany currently had thirty-nine submarines at sea – 'And,' he boasted, 'we know where each one is.' (The true figure, he had been told on July 2, was 125). 'I assume,' he continued, 'that Hitler does not want to risk a clash with Roosevelt until the Russians are out of the way.' As for the Japanese, he now ventured the prophecy, just as he had to the king, that they would bully and bluster, but not otherwise move. (Colonel Ian Jacob would note in December that the prime minister had not believed that the Japanese

intended to come into the war and therefore did not see the point of Roosevelt keeping large forces in the Pacific.[26])

'Asked how he proposed to win the war,' recorded editor Cecil King, 'C. said he had no more idea than he had after two years of the last war.'[27]

MACKENZIE KING was the honoured guest at Chequers that weekend.[28] By now one-fifth of the troops in the United Kingdom were Canadians, so it was important to humour him and repair damage done to feelings by the Roosevelt meeting. 'We had been writing each other love-letters for some time,' WSC apologised to Mackenzie King, explaining his furtive dealings with the president. 'It was of the utmost importance that we should talk.'

Mackenzie King was different from any other statesman Churchill had met. Only a year younger, he had already served for sixteen years as his country's prime minister. A quiet, unassuming figure, he was a Scriptures-toting, Bible-quoting, superstitious, and abstemious statesman, proud of Canada and fiercely protective of her constitutional rights.[29] When Churchill twice chose Québec for summit conferences, it would irk Mackenzie King to see him putting on airs as though he were 'more honourable or worthy than those born in Canada itself.'[30] He was however easily reached by Churchill's courtly manner – when Winston murmured 'My dear old friend,' Mackenzie King would blush furiously and dictate the words into his diary.

That diary record has only partially been published. The original record, partly transcribed by a secretary from daily dictation, partly written in a fine, cramped hand, reveals that this Canadian visitor was a mystic and a believer in the occult. He was careful to keep these proclivities to himself and to others of like disposition, notably Sir John Dill and Sir Hugh Dowding. He had frequent conversations with his dead wife Joan through a medium. Weird dreams and intricate visions troubled him. A few days before arriving at Chequers he had dictated: 'Before waking had a curious vision of seeing a motor car driven I thought by Joan with a cord trailing behind and my hat at the end of the cord. Later when I was looking to see where it was I found it was on my head.'[31] He could subsequently remember these visions with a rare clarity – like the wartime dreams in which he found himself telephoning Hitler for advice.[32] Before reaching cabinet decisions he took counsel not only from the Holy Scriptures and what he called his 'little books,' evidently almanacs of mystic sayings, but from his mother and his dog as well, who were both dead; throughout his working day he ran

diagnostic checks on his decisions by glancing surreptitiously at any convenient clock: if the hands were open and in a straight line, that was a good omen; but if the big hand obscured the little, it was the reverse.*

'There were three times today,' this great and kindly Canadian would inscribe in his diary, visiting Churchill again in 1944, 'when I have looked at the clock and the hands have been in a straight line. This is a comfort in the midst of the confusion which surrounds one here.'[33]

CHURCHILL WAS planning to broadcast from Chequers that Sunday, August 24. The blank pages of the unfinished radio script hung over his weekend. He intended it to be part report on Placentia Bay, part warning to Japan – the warning that Roosevelt had declined to utter. Talking with Mackenzie King he had tried out one motif. Britain had suffered one hundred thousand casualties, he said, and he did not want to 'place a greater burden on John Bull.' 'Without the United States,' he wanted to say, 'we cannot win this war. I would rather have the United States make a declaration of war tomorrow . . . than to have the declaration delayed and to continue to receive the assistance we are getting.'[34] The Canadian reassured him that Roosevelt and his colleagues, Stimson, Hull, and the secretary of the navy Colonel Frank Knox, all wanted war, but that Congress would surely stand in their way. The isolationist broadcasts of the hero-aviator Charles Lindbergh had not been without effect. Churchill admitted, perhaps a trifle enviously, that Lindbergh was a popular idol with a great following.

Churchill also outlined the use that he envisaged for the Canadian troops: to send them to the heat of the Middle East would be wrong, he suggested; so he was thinking of a raid on Norway to encourage the Russians. 'We may begin,' he said, unfurling a chart of Scandinavia, 'to roll down the map from the top. I feel we should give the Norwegians encouragement.' He warned however that it would be 1943 before they could attempt a proper invasion of Europe. 'Until the people themselves begin to rise,' he explained, 'it would be running far too great a risk.'

Later that day, surrounded by his friends, he mellowed, and talked expansively of politics and power. 'I am a Tory,' he insisted to the Canadian.

'I always thought you were rather Liberal minded,' replied the latter, mildly surprised.

* See vol. iii, in which we shall see Mackenzie King baffle Mr Churchill by refusing his plea for several thousand cases of Canadian whisky at Québec in August 1943, because it was 7:35 P.M.

'Certainly Liberal minded, but Tory as regards Crown and Parliament. . . I hate autocracy. I am a servant of the people. There can be no prouder privilege than to be a servant of Parliament.'

Mackenzie King saw him that evening still labouring on the radio script. 'I don't believe,' Winston remarked, looking up at one stage, 'that the Japanese will fight the United States and Great Britain.'

Fountain pen clutched in one fist, he kept changing the wording but nothing looked right. He considered saying that if Japan attacked America, she would have war with Britain too. Australia, he explained to Mackenzie King, had approved this line – would Canada agree? The Canadian felt a pang of disquiet, said half-heartedly that he would concur, but pressed Winston whether this was what President Roosevelt really wanted them to say? The script still unfinished, Churchill invited his house guests to watch the newsreels of Placentia Bay – 'A terrible exhibition of egotism,' he confessed, seeing how large he bulked in the newsreel.

As he retired to bed Mackenzie King heard a distant gramophone wheezing *The Sailor's Wife*, and a live and raucous chorus joining in below. Before he turned out the lights he glanced at the time: 1:33 A.M. The hands of the clock were wide open, in a straight line, which was a good thing.

AT CRACK of dawn on Sunday August 24, Churchill resumed his tinkering with the script. Here he replaced the bland particle 'one' with a hint of the God-stuff that he knew his American listeners would like, 'Him'; there he elided the emotive word 'war.' If Japan now attacked the U.S.A., he proposed to say, they would find 'Britain ranged at the side of the United States.'

Telegrams arrived from Washington reporting Roosevelt's rather mild reproofs to the Japanese ambassador.[35] Mackenzie King had awakened with a start – it was a quarter to nine, and both clock hands were sinisterly entwined. He sat facing the empty fireplace in the Hawthy room, reading the revised script which Churchill had sent down to him. It was less belligerent, and he welcomed that. When Churchill appeared later that morning the Canadian advised him to omit one ponderous attempt at levity – he said that Placentia Bay had reminded him of Scotland, or of Iceland, but 'not of Ireland.' The Canadian reminded him of the risk of offending Irish opinion in North America. Still brooding on the Far East, Churchill assured him: 'We shall soon have four more powerful ships out there.'

The ancient and inconvenient country mansion filled with guests for Sunday lunch – Lady Horatia Seymour; the Lords and Ladies Cranborne and Bessborough; a Rothschild and his wife; and an R.A.F. officer – these were among those who gathered at the well-endowed lunch table. Their conversation roamed around the world and its leaders – including Robert Menzies, about whom Churchill had little generous to say, and Charles de Gaulle, whom Lord Bessborough called a 'male Joan of Arc.' 'He had better be careful,' said someone, 'not to be burned by the British.'

Mackenzie King did not join the guffaws. As brandies and liqueurs were served, he retired to his room, and found himself brooding that evening upon Churchill, and upon his own resolution not to touch alcohol.* As he had these thoughts the hands of his watch seemed to be applauding him – it was ten past eight, they were in a straight line.

TWENTY MINUTES later Winston Churchill delivered his broadcast, seated before a B.B.C. microphone installed in his upstairs study at Chequers. Mackenzie King joined the other guests to listen to it on the radio in the library downstairs, seated on sofas or perched on the arms of chairs in front of the crackling log fire (necessary in this bleak mansion even in summer). Beaverbrook had also arrived, looking crumpled after a bomber-ride back from Washington. Mackenzie King was particularly struck by Mary Churchill, 'an exceedingly pretty girl with lovely sweet manners,' kneeling on a cushion beside the radio. Unlike her siblings, she had been brought up by a

* They consumed on this weekend two bottles of champagne, one of port, a half bottle of brandy, one of white wine, one of sherry, and two of whisky. In file PREM.4/69/1 at the Public Record Office is a table of alcohol consumption at Chequers during 1941, from which this is an informative extract:

	Principal Guests	*Champagne*	*Port*	*Brandy*	*White wine*	*Sherry*	*Whisky*
Jul 18	Mr Hopkins & US party	3	2	1	2	2	2
Jul 27	Mr Winant & US party	2	1	½	1	1	1
Aug 22	Mr Mackenzie King, Capt Elliott Roosevelt	2	1	½	1	1	2
Sep 26	Mr Winant, Mr Hanson & party		½	½		½	½
Oct 11	Mr Harriman & party	1	½	½		½	1
Oct 17	Burmese PM		¼	¼	1	¼	
Total consumption since July 7, 1940:		*47*	*27*	*18*	*41*	*23*	*35*

governess. Still a teenager, she spent her evenings in a helmet with London's anti-aircraft guns; but the enemy bombers now rarely ever appeared.

In his broadcast, Churchill spoke of the Americans, interspersing frequent references to the Scriptures, and he lauded the Red Army.

> The Russian armies and all the peoples of the Russian Republic [he said] have rallied to the defence of their hearths and homes. For the first time Nazi blood has flowed in a fearful torrent. Certainly 1,500,000, perhaps two million of Nazi cannon-fodder have bit the dust on the endless plains of Russia.* The tremendous battle rages along nearly two thousand miles of front. The aggressor is startled, staggered. For the first time in his experience mass murder has become unprofitable.
>
> He retaliates by the most frightful cruelties. As his armies advance, whole districts are being exterminated. Scores of thousands – literally scores of thousands – of executions in cold blood are being perpetrated by the German troops upon the Russian patriots who defend their native soil. . . And this is but beginning. Famine and pestilence have yet to follow in the bloody ruts of Hitler's tanks.

CHURCHILL HAD just been shown a summary by 'C,' relating the murderous activities of Heinrich Himmler, the Reichsführer of the S.S., and his police units operating in the rear of the German armies.[36] According to this report by the codebreakers Himmler was 'taking an extremely active part in the campaign,' and had attached a special police force commanded by an S.S. lieutenant-general (*Gruppenführer*) to each sector of the front – Hans-Adolf Prützmann in the north, at Riga; Erich von dem Bach-Zelewski in the centre, and a third, as yet unidentified, at Łvov (Lemberg) in the south.

It was astonishing how much detail the British secret service had already garnered about these murderous activities – and no less remarkable, the ravenous interest that Churchill secretly took in the raw, unedited intercepts. The 'cleansing' operations had begun on July 14 with Bach-Zelewski's

* This was evidently Churchillian hyperbole. On August 16, 1941 Dr Goebbels privately recorded, 'I have now obtained more accurate [casualty] statistics. We had about 60,000 fatalities in the first six weeks.' (Two days later Hitler estimated to him that the Soviet killed totalled three million). On October 8 German records would show 564,727 killed and injured out of the 3,400,000 fighting men in Hitler's eastern armies (Joseph Goebbels diary, National Archives film T84, roll 267).

move into his forward headquarters at Baranowice. His signals to his units spoke of the 'special tasks' [*besondere Aufgaben*] ahead of them. 'This phrase,' recalled the experts at Bletchley Park grimly, 'last appeared in our decodes after the cleaning-up in Poland, when participants were told that they were strictly to hold their tongues as to what the *besondere Aufgaben* had been.' (One message intercepted on July 4, addressed to the authorities in Bialystok, Baranowicze, and Minsk had asked for the provision of movie-projectors, as these were needed to help the troops in view of their *besondere Aufgaben*).

By the time of Churchill's broadcast, the scope of these 'tasks' had become clear. On July 18 Bach-Zelewski's headquarters signalled that 1,153 'Jewish plunderers' had been shot at Slonim that day. On July 27 there had been a meeting at Łvov of the commanders of German police battalions, at which S.S. *Obergruppenführer* Friedrich Krüger ('who played a prominent part,' as Churchill's experts noted, 'in the cleaning-up operations after the Polish campaign') was present. On August 4 Bach-Zelewski informed Berlin that the S.S. *Reitbrigade* (Cavalry) had 'liquidated 3,274 partisans and Jewish Bolsheviks' near Lake Sporowskie. The commander of Police Battalion No. 316 reported that since the villagers of Pazyc had fired upon the returning battalion's first company, 'I ordered the entire male population of the place to be evacuated by this company.' There was no need to decode the euphemism. 'The operations of the S.S. *Reitbrigade* continue,' Bach-Zelewski was heard reporting on August 7. 'Up to today midday a further 3,600 have been executed, so that the total of executions carried out by the *Reitbrigade* up to now amounts to 7,819.' This brought total executions in his area to over 'the 30,000 mark,' he bragged.

'The tone of this message,' commented the experts, 'suggests that the word has gone out that a definite decrease in the total population of Russia would be welcomed in high quarters and that the leaders of the three sectors stand somewhat in competition with each other as to their "scores".'[37]

These intercepts were all the product of their special German police section – codebreakers working exclusively on the S.S. and police cyphers. It is an unsung tale of British expertise and we make no apologies for singing it loudly here. Long before the war London's Metropolitan Police had quietly established the nucleus of this unit. It had spent the war's first months in France and lost its entire files in Hitler's invasion, but easily resumed operations in England in August 1940, since the German police had not changed their cyphers. Its experts had initially benefited from security lapses – for example, the telegrams were slavishly prefaced with the same ad-

dresses, e.g. '*An den Befehlshaber der Ordnungspolizei in Frankfurt am Main*,' and there were other easy 'cribs' like the daily reports on the rise and fall of the Elbe, which in the words of the codebreakers' secret history 'made the cryptographer's life a happy one.' Eventually Berlin did crack down on the clumsier breaches of security, like messages which exceeded the 180-character maximum, and for Hitler's operation BARBAROSSA, his invasion of Russia in June 1941, they had introduced a separate key and new frequencies; in August they introduced two sets of keys for each day, but nothing could deter the British codebreakers, and they were currently turning out between thirty and one hundred decodes every day.

Two days after Churchill's broadcast a further German police report, this time from the Berdichev–Korosten area, was shown to Churchill, which mentioned that the Russians were still retiring and burning the villages. 'Prisoners taken number forty-seven, Jews shot 1,246, losses nil.' Churchill, who had like Hitler a voracious appetite for statistics, ringed that figure '1,246' in his trademark red ink.[38] The next day S.S. *Gruppenführer* Friedrich Jeckeln, commanding in the Ukraine, signalled that his task force attached to Police Battalion No. 320 had shot 4,200 Jews near the town of Kamieniets-Podolsk; four days later he announced the shooting of 2,200 more. On September 12, Churchill read these statistics too. The scale of these executions was, suggested Bletchley Park's historian later, 'a clear indication of the utter ruthlessness of the Germans in Russia.'[39]

CHURCHILL'S ANGRY revelation of this slaughter, in his radio broadcast from Chequers, had one immediate consequence. On September 13 the radio monitors heard S.S. *Obergruppenführer* Kurt Daluege, Hitler's top police general ('alarmed perhaps by our evident awareness of the unspeakable activities of his police in Russia'[40]) signalling this warning to the three *Höhere SS- und Polizeiführer* commanding police forces on the Northern, Central, and Southern Russian fronts: 'The danger of decipherment by the enemy of wireless messages is great,' this stated. 'For this reason only such matters are to be transmitted by wireless as can be considered open.' In future, information classified CONFIDENTIAL or SECRET could still go by radio, but 'not information which, as containing State secrets, calls for especially secret treatment.' 'Into this category,' ruled Daluege, 'fall exact figures of executions.' These execution-figures were to be sent by courier.[41]

Since it was the prime minister's broadcast which had evidently resulted in this Nazi security clampdown, 'C' sent him a summary of this message

too. 'On September 13,' the Bletchley Park paraphrase read, 'the three officers were reminded that the danger of their messages being decoded was great. Among other secret matters that should not be sent by wireless was the number of executions carried out.'[42] Churchill, unabashed by the consequence of his own security lapse, sidelined each sentence in red ink.

From now on the intercepted messages contained euphemisms like 'action according to the usage of war' under the heading which had formerly contained the figures for executions. Inevitably, the 'frontline' S.S. commanders still committed *bêtises*: on September 11, the S.S. police commander South reported that in an 'action according to the usage of war . . . Police-Regt. South liquidates 1,548 Jews.'[43] As Churchill's codebreakers reported, 'A touch of somewhat macabre humour emerges from the warning recently issued to Senior Officers that executions were not to be reported by W/T. The order has been variously interpreted – some report "Action according to the usages or war", while others report that so many partisans are "dead" – as distinct from "shot".'[44]

BLETCHLEY PARK'S cryptanalysts were in little doubt as to the damage done by Churchill's *faux pas*. 'The anxiety [of Daluege],' their historian wrote, 'may have been increased by a speech by the prime minister drawing the attention of the world to this carnage.' The result, that summer of 1941, was that the German authorities had instituted a complete change of their police cypher: in mid-September they dropped the existing double-transposition code, a straightforward system which Bletchley Park had found relatively simple to break, and replaced it with one known to cognoscenti as a 'Double-Playfair,' completing the changeover by November 1.[45]

The result was not what the Nazis had intended. If their police cryptographers had only retained double-transposition, coupled with still further splitting-up of keys, said the experts, they would 'soon have put B.P. out of business.' As it was, Double-Playfair proved to be a readily breakable cypher, and scarcely a day passed when the British failed to do so. Whereas prior to the change only three of the 'Russian' police keys had been broken, subsequently only one had not. *Le mieux est souvent l'ennemi du bien*, as the experts commented with a chuckle: *better* is often the enemy of *good*.[46]

Throughout the winter this police and S.S. radio traffic was one of the few sources of reliable Intelligence that Churchill had about the eastern front. For a while the Russians joined in, and from the spring of 1942 they provided high quality raw intercepts of the German police messages; in

return the British supplied decrypts and daily keys. This co-operation continued until the end of 1942 when relations finally broke down. In November 1942 the German police made another cypher change. By February 1943 however the British were again achieving four or five hundred German police-signal decodes a week, with five hundred experts working on them, including those at the 'Y' (radio monitoring) stations dedicated to this traffic. The task became easier in July 1944 when the German police flying squadron in Poland started sending in a standard daily report, providing another regular 'crib.' There were setbacks, like when the Germans introduced their new RASHER cypher on September 1, 1944; it was the best hand-cypher they ever devised – the time-lag before translation would then increase from twenty-four hours to a week or more, but still the keys were eventually broken by the unassuming wizards at Bletchley Park.

'The content of the messages was, naturally, of increasing interest,' their own unpublished secret history tells, 'and provides as a whole a singular picture of the last days of the Nazi regime and of its individual leaders.' For this reason they continued their decoding work long after victory in Europe.[47] We have however been lured far ahead of our own narrative, to which we now return.

Once or twice, delivering that broadcast from Chequers in August 1941, the P.M. had seemed to cough or choke. 'When the speech was over,' wrote Mackenzie King that night, 'no one said a word for some little time. We waited for Mr Churchill to speak. There seemed to be unanimity of feeling that it was the best broadcast he had made.' There was a ripple of applause as Churchill came downstairs. Mackenzie King stepped forward to congratulate him on the broadcast – particularly the bit about the hymn-singing on the quarterdeck. The prime minister replied that he knew the religious angle was one which particularly appealed to Americans. The Canadian took him literally. 'Churchill's nature,' he wrote in his diary, 'is deeply religious. It would be strange if it were not, with his love of truth, love, and justice, and his profound hatred of cruelty, barbarity, and wrong.' Over Sunday dinner Clementine remarked upon Winston's coughing during the broadcast, and predicted that the morning's post would bring bottles of syrup. To Mackenzie King the P.M. seemed 'like a boy out of school,' relieved that he had the dreaded broadcast behind him. 'Everyone at dinner seemed to be feeling deeply concerned about what he said over the radio. It seemed to bring home the awfulness of the war. There were several moments when there was a complete silence at the table.'

Now the radio was tuned to dance music; Winston began to perform a solo jig, and finally, enlivened by the spirits, he invited his Canadian guest to waltz around on tiptoe with him.[48] 'Whereupon,' wrote Mackenzie King, 'I joined him and the two of us took each other by the arm and performed a sort of dance together.' Everybody went into hysterics of laughter, except for Clementine, who shortly made her excuses and retired for the night.

By one A.M. Winston had also disappeared, without having said Goodnight to anyone.

How to inveigle the United States into his war? This was the question which kept him awake now. On Saturday evening Mackenzie King had asked him innocently about the future.

'I have no ambition,' growled the British P.M. in reply, 'beyond getting us through this mess. There is nothing that anyone could give me or that I could wish for. They cannot take away what I have done. As soon as the war is over I shall get out of public life.'

'You should write the story of the war,' volunteered his artless guest.

BRITISH EMPIRE and Soviet troops were invading Iran that Monday, August 25, 1941 as Churchill and his guests were chauffeured back to London.

He had arranged an afternoon cabinet, and expanded there on the prospects of luring the Americans further into the shark-infested oceans of war. The cabinet minutes of course survive, but they were no longer necessarily an accurate record of what had been said. 'I have repeatedly told you,' Churchill had written to Sir Edward Bridges, the cabinet's secretary, 'your records are far too lengthy.' Charging that they were 'a most imperfect and misleading record,' he had forbidden Bridges to furnish extracts to Menzies, the Australian prime minister. When Bridges, the perfect civil servant, proposed to print Churchill's comment too in the cabinet minutes, but worried lest this 'induce in future readers of these Minutes a greater degree of distrust than you would probably wish to convey – with resulting confusion in the minds of historians,' Churchill firmly instructed: 'Keep unprinted.'[49]

Fortunately, Mackenzie King was a guest at the cabinet; his diary and those of Amery, Eden, Dalton, and many others provide important supplements to the often suspect cabinet minutes.[50]

Beaverbrook warned his colleagues that the Americans were 'getting wobbly,' and he was quite outspoken on the need for Britain to take 'some dramatic action' to bring them in immediately; Churchill ought to address the recalcitrant Congress himself. That fired Churchill's imagination, and

he remarked that the American public was suffering all the inconveniences of war, the taxation and the shortages, without what he called its 'commanding stimuli.'[51] It is worth noting that the prime minister argued, on this afternoon, that the best solution would be 'through an attack by Hitler on American ships.'

Mackenzie King remained sceptical. Neither Hitler nor the Americans wanted war with each other; Roosevelt had fought and won the 1940 election campaign on the assurance that he would keep out of the war. 'I do not think that the British should bank on the Americans coming in too quickly,' he observed. As for the Far East the Americans would be quite happy to see Britain start the fighting there – and it would still take some time there before the Americans would come in.

Later in this cabinet meeting, echoing his Sunday broadcast, Churchill remarked upon the brutality of the Germans, who were murdering tens of thousands of Russians behind their advancing armies. He declared himself pleased with the casualties they were taking. 'The P.M.,' wrote Hugh Dalton, 'thinks that the Russians are doing very well indeed, and jeers at all the experts who [said] it would all be over in a few days or weeks.'

On August 28 retreating Soviet troops would blow up the hydroelectric dam on the River Dniepr at Zaporozh'ye. Churchill cabled his admiration to Stalin about his 'splendid resistance,' and promised that forty Hurricane fighter planes were on route to Murmansk, in northern Russia, with the prospect of four hundred to follow. 'Hitler,' he furthermore promised, 'will not have a pleasant winter under our ever-increasing bombardment.'[52]

The Führer however hardly noticed the current R.A.F. bombing operations. He told Goebbels that they 'did not particularly bother him.'

CHURCHILL NOW received from the Prof. a short letter which told him that if a particular scientific gamble came off, Britain would possess a weapon that would enable her to change history – the atomic bomb.

'I have frequently spoken to you,' Professor Lindemann wrote on August 27, 1941, 'about a super explosive making use of energy in the nucleus of the atom which is something like a million times greater, weight for weight, than the chemical energy used in ordinary explosives.' Britain, the United States – and, he warned, 'probably' Germany – had been working on this uranium explosive, and it looked as though such bombs might be produced within two years. 'If all goes well,' continued the Prof., 'it should be possible for one aeroplane to carry a somewhat elaborate bomb weigh-

ing about one ton which would explode with a violence equal to about 2,000 tons of T.N.T.' The Germans, he feared, had sufficient uranium in Czechoslovakia, and this was why Lord Cherwell felt that Britain too must proceed: 'It would be unforgivable,' he suggested, 'if we let the Germans develop a process ahead of us by means of which they could defeat us in war or reverse the verdict after they had been defeated.'[53]

Churchill read the letter at Chequers, and replied: 'Although personally I am quite content with the existing explosives, I feel we must not stand in the path of improvement.'[54]

Normally the chiefs of staff were slow to take up outlandish propositions, but on this occasion they swiftly wrote to the prime minister asking to speak with him about this most secret weapon ('as they think that the less put on paper . . . the better'). Meeting with him on September 3 they urged that no time, labour, material, nor money should be spared in pushing forward the bomb's development, and 'in this country and not abroad.' The necessary trials of this colossal bomb could be carried out on 'some lonely, uninhabited island' when the time came. Churchill asked Sir John Anderson, the highly capable Lord President of the Council, to take charge.[55] Although the Prof. put the odds on ultimate success as about ten to one, this was the kind of longshot that inspired the gambler in Winston.

The American scientists had begun a parallel effort under the overall direction of Dr Vannevar Bush of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. On October 11 Roosevelt would write to Churchill suggesting that they co-ordinate their two countries' efforts, and identifying a Mr Hovde in London who was empowered to answer all the British questions about the American effort.[56]

This was the beginning of an important area of scientific co-operation and, later, of the bitterest of disputes between Britain and the United States.

THE DILATORY American attitude toward entering his war depressed Churchill. He had summoned Lord Halifax back from Washington for consultations about getting supplies from America; dining with him in the Edens' apartment at the foreign office, Halifax found Winston 'in very conversational shape.'

'He is,' he mused in his diary, 'the strangest creature I have ever met.'

Churchill discussed with him the recent pronouncements by Roosevelt designed to reassure his public that the U.S.A. was no closer to war. Through the American embassy he sent a worried telegram to Hopkins. 'I ought to

tell you,' this read, 'that there has been a wave of depression through cabinet and other informed circles here about [the] President's many assurances about no commitments and no closer to war, etc. . . If 1942 opens with Russia knocked out and Britain left again alone, all kinds of dangers may arise. I do not think Hitler will help in any way,' he continued, referring to the hope that the Germans might sink American warships. 'Tonight he has thirty U-boats in line from the eastern part of Iceland to northern tip of Ireland. We have lost 25,000 tons yesterday (27th) and to-day (28th) but he keeps clear of 26th Meridian. You will know best whether anything more can be done,' the P.M. concluded, perhaps even darkly hinting that the time had come to stage a *Lusitania*-type incident. 'Should be grateful if you could give me any sort of hope.'[57]

Even though they displayed no perceptible readiness to enter the war, the Americans were already upping the political ante. Cordell Hull now wanted to issue a 'Declaration about Meaning of the Fourth Point of the Charter,' in which the two governments would make a 'forthright declaration' of their intention of reducing trade barriers and eliminating all 'preferences and discriminations.' Churchill himself did not care, but he asked the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Kingsley Wood, to arrange a meeting with Eden and other ministers to consider 'the political issues involved.' 'My own view is,' he minuted, 'that there can be no great future for the world without a vast breaking down of tariffs and other barriers.'[58] Gil Winant, the American ambassador, would bring the document down to Chequers that Sunday. Churchill asked only that the words 'preferences and discriminations' be altered to 'vexatious discriminations as part of a general scheme'; Winant then substituted 'harmful' for 'vexatious.'[59]

Before leaving for the country that Friday, August 29, Churchill lunched alone at the Soviet embassy; Maisky inquired about Randolph and asked to be remembered to him – a wistful echo of their clandestine pre-war meetings.* Randolph Churchill however was out at Cairo, where he had transferred from the Commandos to the Information and Propaganda staff at Auchinleck's army headquarters. Winston wrote to him privately that day, mentioning Maisky's good wishes. There was much bad blood between father and son, and Randolph's domestic and gambling debts were still substantial, although Winston was chivalrous enough never to mention them to Pamela, Randolph's young wife.[60]

* See vol. i, pages 51 and 92.

CLEMENTINE WAS missing from Chequers that weekend. The worry of her husband's transatlantic voyage had beset her so much that she retired to a local home to recuperate.

'We motored over to Chequers,' wrote Lord Halifax in his confidential diary on the thirtieth, 'for a late tea, and had some talk over it [Point Four] with Winston, who developed his views about the post-war Parliament and [the] problems of post-war Election. He discussed very freely the pros and cons of trying to get a common programme with Labour.'[61] Seated over their tea cups in the Long Gallery, the aristocratic, lanky Lord Halifax spoke highly of the boys of Britain's lower-class secondary schools who now formed the backbone of the R.A.F. 'They have saved this country,' agreed Winston. 'They have the right to rule it.'

He was skewed much further to the left than History might now believe. He remarked 'with evident sincerity,' as Halifax recorded, that when the war ended he would be in a much stronger position than Lloyd George had been in 1918 – 'Older; able to make as much money as he might need by writing; and, after pulling the country through, with a very powerful position. But above all,' he concluded triumphantly, 'quite independent of popular favour or disfavour.'

After dinner, over several brandies, Churchill delivered yet another appeal to the American ambassador to realise how much hung upon his country's entering the war immediately. 'The P.M.,' recorded Jock Colville, 'said that after the joint declaration [the Atlantic Charter] America could not honourably stay out. She could not fight with mercenaries' – a reference to the number of American volunteers now serving with the British armed forces. If Roosevelt declared war now, Churchill continued, they might see victory as early as 1943; but if he did not, the war might drag on for years, leaving Britain undefeated but civilisation in ruins.[62]

Winant had heard it all before, and knew he would hear it again.

5: *'We Did It Before – and We Can Do It Again!'*

On several occasions when Churchill had found himself momentarily cut off by the rising tide of military events – at the time of Dunkirk; when the Blitz began; and again when the empire's troops were being hounded out of Greece – his friends in the world Zionist movement had spoken to him. On their behalf, their leader Dr Chaim Weizmann had publicly declared war on Germany on the day that Hitler invaded Poland, and in 1942 he would announce that Jews through occupied Europe were the 'Trojan Horse' that would defeat the enemy.*

The Zionist desiderata, at this stage, were two: to persuade Britain, who had the thankless task of exercising the League of Nations mandate in Palestine, to allow more Jewish immigrants into that territory and to allow those immigrants to form a Jewish Fighting Force. This demand was stubbornly refused by Churchill – though less from any concern for the rights of the wretched, disenfranchised Palestinians than from a desire not to anger the empire's hundreds of millions of Moslem believers.

There were, as shown in our first volume, many honourable English men and women who supported the Zionists in their historic cause. What was remarkable was the zeal with which they continued to pursue this narrow aim at a time when the world as a whole was girding itself for war against the Axis powers. Until the spring of 1941 the alternatives which the Zionists had offered to Churchill had been more stick than carrot – for example the threat that they could foment further unrest throughout the Middle East. In September 1941 however they began to sing a more alluring melody, promising to use their influence in Washington to bring the United States into the war.

* We are indebted to the Weizmann Archives for providing copies of his papers.

'We did it before,' they said to Churchill. 'We can do it again.'

The British prime minister, to their enduring anger, continued however to dandle them along. He had no real alternative; he was beholden to public opinion, and nobody in authority could overlook the rising anti-Jewish sentiment in wartime England. There were few officers of his government who did not display in private some strains of this fashionable trait. The stereotype of the lazy, artful, racketeering Jew is to be found in many of their confidential writings, particularly those of Beaverbrook, Halifax, and Eden.[1] In part it was a cross-fertilisation from the Nazis' pernicious propaganda; but in part it was the independent perception of the native English, who had seen the penniless refugees arrive, with their cunning eastern European ways, and rise rapidly to affluence.

'The growth of antisemitism in Britain is partly . . . the result of Jewish refugees,' Robert Bruce Lockhart, the shrewd director of Britain's psychological warfare apparatus, would note, commenting on public reports of black-marketeering cases; and he would remark in one wartime diary entry on the large numbers of taxis 'filled with Jews' making for the horse races at Ascot.[2] In March 1941 it struck him that Lord Beaverbrook had inquired whether Air Vice-Marshal John Slessor was 'a Jew' or 'a defeatist.' In July Eden's secretary observed: 'The war hasn't made people more pro-Jew,' to which he added three weeks later: 'The Jews are their own worst enemy by their conduct in cornering foodstuffs and evacuating themselves to the best billets.'[3] Newspaper proprietor Cecil King described finding himself sharing a first class rail-compartment from Euston in September 1941 ('in the third year of a war against Germany') with a German Jewess whose baggage tags showed her to be a Mrs Schumann, thus evidently married to 'one of her own kind.' 'She divided her attention between a couple of thrillers and a longhaired dachshund which she fed on chocolate.'[4]

The insidious trickling feed of this anti-Jewish sentiment had not escaped Churchill. It was regularly reported on by his Intelligence authorities, who carried out systematic checks on the mails to determine what His Majesty's subjects, and Churchill's electors, were thinking; this postal-censorship revealed much bitterness toward the Jews, on whom the public willingly blamed their material sufferings. 'Publish the names of the racketeers,' demanded one letter-writer. 'Only the Jews' shops have them,' cursed another, complaining of the shortage of one particular item, 'and, damn 'em, they will not serve anybody but their own people.' Such remarks proliferated in the letters. 'It's time they rationed the Jews, we could do with

less of them.' 'Our friend Churchill spoke well,' wrote one Londoner to Dublin after the prime minister's June 22 broadcast, 'but I wonder how the cash boys will react.' 'The curse of the country is the Yiddish control of finance,' wrote another Londoner. 'They exercise the control and unfortunately have no social responsibilities. Money first, and everything else also-ran.' True, the British people condemned Hitler for driving the Jews out, but only because 'they came here and damn them they control every jolly thing.'[5] A year later the Home Office would comment that the growth of anti-Semitism was being reported from all over the country. 'One thing Hitler has done,' was one typical reported comment, 'is to put those damned Jews in their places.'[6]

THOSE ENGLISHMEN familiar with the Arabs, like Lyttelton in Cairo, were much impressed by the dignified bearing they maintained while Europe's warring tribes trampled across their soil. Churchill would have nothing of it; he seemed to have drawn his knowledge of Arabia from his friendship with the eccentric 'Aircraftman Shaw' – T. E. Lawrence – and he remained fatally prejudiced against them. The prime minister, Lyttelton would recall in his memoirs, 'with his strong Zionist inclinations,' felt that every British officer in the Middle East 'ended up being partisans of the Arabs.'

This did not make it easy for Churchill when the Zionists resumed their pressure on him early in 1941. He had recently appointed his wealthy friend Lord Moyne – one of his pre-war benefactors, and a member of the ill-starred Guinness brewery family – as colonial secretary. The Jewish Agency seized on this momentary hiatus to write on February 7 to the British prime minister direct. After apologising that it distressed him to 'have to add to your burdens at this moment,' a recurring theme in his letters to Churchill, Dr Weizmann appealed for immigration certificates for Palestine to be allocated to Jews who were in danger of being massacred in Romania. 'Even if the policy of the White Paper, 1939, is to be strictly adhered to,' he pleaded, 'there are still almost 40,000 certificates available.' He temptingly promised that many of these Romanians would enlist in the planned Jewish Fighting Force – which might in itself have seemed sufficient explanation for the Romanian fascists to want to eliminate them – but he also added an unmistakable threat. Britain faced two alternatives: either the stream of Jewish refugees could be peacefully canalised and allowed by the British into Palestine – or every boat-load would 'become a problem giving rise to painful incidents which we would all wish to avoid.'[7]

Nervous about making any negative response himself, Churchill detailed one of his secretaries to reply. Unable to make headway against the anti-Zionist sympathies at the Colonial and India Offices, on March 10 he privately advised Lord Moyne, 'I have always been most strongly in favour of making sure that the Jews have proper means of self-defence for their Colonies in Palestine. The more you can get done in this line,' he added vaguely, 'the safer we shall be.'[8] Meanwhile he gave the Jewish Agency a humiliating run-around. When Weizmann appeared at No. 10 two days later Churchill told his secretary to say he could only spare a few minutes, and then fobbed off the world Zionist leader with unctuous platitudes.[9] 'The prime minister said,' wrote Weizmann in a third-person memoir for his own files,

> that there was no need for him to have a long conversation with Dr Weizmann: their thoughts were ninety-nine per cent the same. He was constantly thinking of them [the Zionists], and whenever he saw Dr Weizmann it gave him a twist in his heart. As regards the Jewish Force, he had had to postpone it, as he had had to postpone many things. He would however not let Dr Weizmann down; he would see the thing through.

Off the record, Churchill told him he was thinking of a settlement between Zionist and Arab leaders after the war. 'The man with whom you should come to an agreement,' he advised, 'is Ibn Saud' – the king of Saudi Arabia, felt Churchill, should be made lord of all the Arab countries. 'But he will have to agree with Weizmann with regards to Palestine.'[10]

Weizmann left later that March for an extended stay in the United States, where he spent four months. Upon his return he had listened to Churchill's broadcast from Chequers at the end of August, and was dismayed to hear no reference whatsoever to the Jews. 'Even the Luxembourgers were mentioned!' he protested, outraged, over lunch with Eden's secretary.[11] It was now that he hinted for the first time at the leverage that the American Jewish community could exert on President Roosevelt: the Jews were an influential lobby in Washington, he said; the secretary of the treasury, Henry H. Morgenthau Jr, was particularly keen for Britain to allow more Jews to settle in Palestine. '[The] President's entourage is very Jewish,' agreed Oliver Harvey. However, the Zionist leader could not get near Churchill; no appointment was listed on the P.M.'s engagement card for several weeks.

On September 10, 1941 Weizmann therefore wrote an outspoken letter to the prime minister in which he recalled how the Jews of the United

States had pulled their country into war before; he promised that they could do it again – provided that Britain toed the line over Palestine. Two years had passed since the Jewish Agency had offered the support of the Jews throughout the world – the Jewish 'declaration of war' on Germany; a whole year had passed, he added, since the P.M. had personally approved his offer to recruit Jews in Palestine for service in the Middle East or elsewhere.

For two years the Agency had met only humiliation. Ten thousand Palestinian Jews had fought in Libya, Abyssinia, Greece, Crete, and Syria, he claimed, but this was never mentioned. 'Tortured by Hitler as no nation has ever been in modern times,' Weizmann continued, 'and advertised by him as his foremost enemy, we are refused by those who fight him the chance of seeing our name and our flag appear among those arrayed against him.' Artfully associating anti-Zionists with the other enemies populating Churchill's mind, Weizmann assured him that he knew this was not of his doing – it was the work of those responsible for Munich and the 1939 White Paper on Palestine. 'We were sacrificed, in order to win over the Mufti of Jerusalem and his friends who were serving Hitler in the Middle East.'

Then Weizmann came to his real sales-pitch: 'There is only one big ethnic group [in the USA] which is willing to stand, to a man, for Great Britain, and a policy of "all-out aid" for her: the five million Jews. From Secretary Morgenthau, Governor [of New York State] Lehmann, Justice [Felix] Frankfurter, down to the simplest Jewish workman or trader, they are conscious of all that this struggle against Hitler implies.' British statesmen, he reminded Churchill, had often acknowledged that it was these Jews who had brought the United States into the war in 1917. 'They are keen to do it – and may do it – again.'[12] All that he and the Jews of the United States were asking for, therefore, was the formation now of a Jewish Fighting Force.

Two days after writing this letter, Weizmann and his friend David Ben-Gurion buttonholed Leopold Amery, the secretary of state for India (and a covert fellow-Jew). Amery, a half-Jew, was sympathetic to their cause, but advised that only the prime minister could help them. Winston would not help, retorted Weizmann: he had a bad conscience.[13] He had a long talk that day with Eden too, who wrote afterwards in his diary the unfeeling reflection that there was 'nothing new' in this tale of woe – 'it is indeed two thousand years old.' Weizmann accused the foreign office of 'appeasing' the Arabs. He argued that the Jews made great fighters, why not recruit them instead of the Australians? Eden however noted laconically that the war office took a different view of their fighting qualities.[14]

CHURCHILL'S PRIMARY concern at this moment in September 1941 suddenly became not so much to entice Roosevelt into his war as to keep Stalin from dropping out; the Australian government was also proving awkward.

A late summer heatwave had begun, and his ministers had abandoned London for their country cottages. In Iran the Anglo-Soviet invasion had passed off smoothly, but there was still a German Legation in Teheran, causing Cadogan to write resignedly after attending the first defence committee meeting of the month that it was now 'quite plain that the prime minister was 'planning grandiose warfare' in Iran, and would even threaten to occupy their capital. Iran was soon solidly in British and Russian hands, and on the third Churchill spent several hours examining with his advisers ways of increasing the capacity of the country's railroads.[15]

That day, Cadogan found Churchill with Beaverbrook basking in the sunshine behind No. 10, wearing his rompers. He had decided to send Lord Beaverbrook out with Harriman later that month to see Stalin, to discuss aid and co-operation with the Soviets. To tickle Stalin's curiosity, Churchill asked Beaverbrook to pay a visit to his prisoner, Rudolf Hess, and talk to him about Hitler's further proposals for a separate peace and an Anglo-German alliance against Bolshevism; that would give Beaverbrook something to 'hold over the head of' the Russians.

Stalin however suddenly revealed that he was quite capable of making a separate peace with Hitler.[16] Late on September 4, Maisky appeared unexpectedly at the foreign office and demanded to see Churchill at once for a formal meeting, with or without the foreign secretary present.[17] Eden was summoned by 'phone from his cottage at Frensham. By ten P.M. they were all assembled at No. 10, and the Soviet ambassador handed over a long, angry telegram from Stalin. Throughout the ninety minutes that this disagreeable meeting lasted, Eden did not speak: he had conducted a bland, inconclusive conversation with Maisky a week earlier which may explain Stalin's surly tone.[18] The telegram amounted to blackmail. Stalin warned of 'serious changes,' since the situation in the Ukraine had deteriorated. He had now lost the iron ore of Krivoi Rog and the aluminium plants on the Dniepr river and at Tikhvin; German armies were battering at the gates of Leningrad, birthplace of the Marxist revolution. Hitler had transferred thirty-four fresh divisions to his eastern front, recognising that the threat of British invasion in the west was only what Stalin called a 'bluff.'

The Soviet dictator demanded an immediate Second Front in the Balkans or in France, capable of drawing thirty or forty German divisions off the eastern front. He also asked for thirty thousand tons of aluminium and a monthly supply of four hundred planes and five hundred tanks from Allied factories. 'At this point [it is] permissible,' Stalin wrote, 'to raise the question, what is the way out of this highly critical situation?' The Soviet Union might have to give up the fight against Hitlerism. 'Experience,' he ended, 'has taught me to face realities however unpleasant they may be . . .'[19]

Tears welled up in Churchill's eyes as the little Soviet diplomat added terse verbal comments underlining the blackmail character of Stalin's telegram. 'This message,' Maisky described in a dispatch to Stalin, 'had visibly a strong, indeed emotional effect on the prime minister.' He rubbed it in: for eleven weeks Mother Russia had borne the brunt of three hundred enemy divisions. Hitler would triumph and the British empire would be doomed, because who could then stop the Wehrmacht from steamrollering on into Egypt and India? It was an unusual display of concern by the Soviets for the welfare of the empire.

'I said I was not one for high-sounding language,' continued Maisky in his dispatch, 'but I thought I had the right to say that this meeting with Churchill . . . might mark a turning-point in world history.'[20] The significance of the phrase *turning point* was not lost on Churchill, Eden, or Cadogan. All regarded it as an explicit Soviet threat to conclude a separate peace with Hitler (as Eden confirmed in cabinet the next day).[21]

IN HIS memoirs, Churchill would claim to have reminded Maisky that barely four months earlier it had seemed that Russia might fight against Britain on Hitler's side. 'Whatever happens,' he had said, 'and whatever you do, you of all people have no right to make reproaches to us.'[22] This sturdy note is not evident from the Russian record. 'He swore,' reported Maisky, 'that he was prepared to sacrifice fifty thousand British lives if he could draw at least twenty divisions off our front.' This more than generous offer is also mentioned in Eden's report to Cripps. The prime minister reiterated however that his chiefs of staff were unanimous that to attempt a cross-Channel attack on France now would be suicidal. As for the Balkans, the British had neither the forces nor the weapons – it had taken them seven weeks to disembark three to five divisions in Greece in the spring, he pointed out.

Maisky's argument was one of despair. 'I retorted,' he wrote, 'that in 1914 [General Aleksandr Vasilievich] Samsonov's army was not prepared to

attack East Prussia. But attack he did: he suffered a defeat, but he saved Paris, and the war. In war,' Maisky argued, 'one cannot always make cool calculations like an accountant.'

As for supplies to Russia, Churchill could offer equally little cheer. 'I do not want to mislead you,' he said, echoing his words of July. 'We cannot offer you any real help before winter.' 'I hate to say it,' he added. 'But there is at the moment unfortunately nothing else I can say.'

Afterwards Churchill discussed the situation with Eden and with Dill, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. 'I argued all I could,' recorded Eden, 'for landing in France. The case against it is very strong, above all German air strength if Portal has it estimated right, but I thought one could not accept [a] negative answer just now without every examination, amateur as well as professional.' Churchill agreed with him, and ordered a further examination of such an operation at a defence committee meeting. 'I have not much hope we shall find anything,' wrote Eden, 'but we three agreed real help in supplies must be sent.'[23]

ON THE next morning, September 5, Churchill had planned to set off early to inspect the fortifications at Dover with Mackenzie King, but the undertones in Maisky's voice had shocked him; he ducked out of the outing and invited Maisky to state his case to the chiefs of staff instead. 'Neither side shaken in their positions,' wrote Eden after the meeting, 'tho' I think Maisky has clearer perception of our weakness & limitations at finish.'[24] Churchill repeated Stalin's telegram in a dispatch to Roosevelt, warning here too: 'We could not exclude the impression that they [the Soviets] might be thinking of separate terms.'[25] He had matured since the frantic French spring of 1940, when similar appeals from Paul Reynaud had persuaded him to make promises of aid he could not fulfil. Cadogan privately considered that Stalin was laying it on 'a bit thick,' since Britain's secret sources provided no real evidence of any imminent Soviet collapse. The cabinet easily decided that Britain could not mount a diversionary cross-Channel assault. As for supplying aid, Beaverbrook felt that the foreign secretary should travel to Moscow at once. Eden – by nature a wandering diplomat – was eager to depart, but on balance his colleagues decided that he should stay.

Returning from Dover that evening, Mackenzie King found Eden sitting with Winston in the garden of No. 10, balloons of brandy at hand, hazily deliberating on what to do.[26] Churchill had planned to weekend at Dytchley Park in Oxfordshire, but fresh telegrams arrived from Moscow that Friday

evening. One reported, to Churchill's vexation, that Ambassador Cripps was packing his bags and planning to return home at once.[27] Churchill ordered him to stay put, however close the Germans were to Moscow, and began drafting honeyed words to soothe the Soviet leader. While he snoozed, Beaverbrook and Dill hacked away at his draft, then deputed Eden to see him with their suggestions. 'He had only just finished his sleep,' Eden found, '& was explosive about them at first.' Summoning Maisky, the prime minister first spoke to him bluntly about the problems being caused by the increasing Soviet agitation in Britain for a Second Front. He now knew from his 'secret sources' that the Comintern had issued orders to its underground followers in Britain to foment discontent over her inadequate support for the Soviet Union in order, he suspected, to overthrow his government when the time came.[28]

Maisky looked pleased with the draft response.[29] In this telegram, which would be dispatched to Moscow at midnight, Churchill insisted that the information at his disposal (he was not, of course, more specific) persuaded him that the 'culminating violence' of Hitler's onslaught was over, and that winter would bring the Soviet armies a respite. He undertook to supply one half of the tanks and planes demanded by Stalin – Roosevelt would have to make up the balance. 'Meanwhile,' he added, 'We shall continue to batter Germany from the air with increasing severity and to keep the seas open and ourselves alive.'[30] Telegraphing separately to Cripps, Churchill repeated his own willingness to raid France, 'even at the heaviest cost.' He added however: 'All our generals are convinced that a bloody repulse is all that would be sustained.'[31]

Relieved at having got these messages off, the prime minister invited Beaverbrook and Eden to the Ritz. They dined on oysters and partridge, with the P.M. at the top of his form, and revelling in talk about events long past.

> Winston said [recorded Eden in his handwritten diary] that he would like best to have F. E. [Smith, later Lord Birkenhead] back to help him. Not F. E. of last sodden years, but F. E. of about '14 or '15. Next he would like A. J. B. [Balfour]. Max [Beaverbrook] told Winston that if he had played his cards well when he was at Admiralty early in last war, especially with Tory party, he could have been P.M. instead of George. Winston agreed. He described as toughest moment of his life when he learnt that George did not propose even to include him in his cabinet.

Beaverbrook added that by the same token Eden could have replaced Chamberlain as prime minister in 1938. 'I thought,' noted Eden, 'as I listened to Max & Winston revelling at every move in these old games and even Winston, for all his greatness, so regarding it all, that I truly hate the "game" of politics – not because I am better than these, God forbid, but because I lack the "spunk".' He enjoyed his evening thoroughly all the same, despite the lowering clouds of war.[32]

They worked until nearly three A.M. 'I feel the world vibrant again,' Churchill said to John Martin, his secretary.[33]

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On the drive over to Oxfordshire the next morning – Saturday, September 6, 1941 – Churchill called in at Bletchley Park to see the codebreakers at work.[34] Under conditions of maximum security, two thousand specialists were now staffing this extraordinary institution and enjoying dramatic successes despite shortages of clerical labour and equipment.[35] Churchill must also have called at Lavendon Manor nearby, where the Diplomatic Section was working on American, Hebrew, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Vichy-French, German, Japanese, and other diplomatic cyphers, because Cadogan's diary refers to Churchill and Eden 'both happen[ing] to see an intercept which makes it look as if we might get [the] Germans out of Afghanistan.'[36] One section was even working on American cypher messages, and Commander Alastair Denniston, their chief, would recommend that ('in view of ultimate peace negotiations') they keep abreast of Washington's code changes, despite the current superficially 'intimate' relations.[37]

On Churchill's insistence, 'C' was forwarding this Oracle's whisperings to Stalin, though in a heavily disguised form, through their military mission in Moscow. In June the experts at Bletchley had begun sporadically breaking a cypher which they called VULTURE, used between the German Army High Command (O.K.H). and its field commands.[38] On August 26 this revealed that Hitler was about to turn his armies against Kiev; the Russians were warned, but all the Intelligence in the world could not help them avoid disaster. On September 9 the codebreakers sent to Churchill the outline of Hitler's plan to destroy three Soviet armies on the central eastern front. On the twentieth Bletchley Park would provide warning that the Germans' offensive against Moscow was to begin on October 2. Worried perhaps by his recent assurances to Stalin that the 'culminating violence' of

Hitler's eastern offensive was over, Churchill would instruct 'C': 'Show me the last five messages you have sent out to our missions on the subject.' Colonel Menzies had sent nine such messages between September 20 and 24, but Churchill still pressed him: 'Has any of this been passed to Joe?'[39]

At that time, with Churchill's encouragement, G.C. & C.S. was the leading codebreaking organisation in the world, mounting a far more serious attack than the United States, where General Marshall had so far assigned less than two hundred men to the task. The codebreakers of Bletchley Park knew that they could count on Churchill however. Late in October he received a letter from four of them, who had decided, at a secret meeting at a local public house, that only he could provide them with urgently needed clerical manpower. 'Dear prime minister,' their appeal began,

> some weeks ago you paid us the honour of a visit, and we believe that you regard our work as important. You will have seen that, thanks largely to the energy and foresight of Commander [Edward] Travis [their station chief] we have been well supplied with the '*bombes*' [special mechanical computing machines] for the breaking of the German ENIGMA codes. We think, however, that you ought to know that all this work is being held up, and in some cases is not being done at all, principally because we cannot get sufficient staff to deal with it. . . We despair of any early improvement without your intervention.[40]

Stewart Milner-Barry, one of their number, brought the letter up to Downing-street in person. He found his path blocked by George Harvie-Watt, Winston's new parliamentary private secretary, who undertook to hand the letter to the P.M. unopened. Churchill responded vigorously. On the twenty-second he sent one of his familiar squares of notepaper, with a menacing blood-red ACTION THIS DAY label gummed onto it, winging through 'Pug' Ismay's office to 'C': 'Make sure,' this said, 'they have all they want on extreme priority and report to me that this has been done.'

AFTER THAT VISIT to his secret Oracle on Saturday, September 6, Churchill spent the weekend at Dytchley Park with the film actor David Niven – to whom, like Leslie Howard (born László Horváth), a minor rôle had been given in Britain's espionage services – among the house-guests. Since the chief of air staff and Niven both had their young and attractive wives with them, Churchill returned to London invigorated on Monday.[41]

He found a woeful telegram from Cripps. The ambassador had gone over to the Kremlin late on Saturday with Churchill's reply. He had found Stalin depressed and tired. 'There was some return to the old attitude of suspicion and distrust.' Asked if Russia could hold on until the spring, if given the supplies, the Soviet leader had responded with evasions: 'One cannot see what the Germans will do, as they are acting entirely without . . . regard for the West.' If Russia now lost the Donetz industrial basin, he warned, and the Germans captured Moscow and Leningrad – 'And,' Stalin warned, 'this might happen' – the Soviet Union would then have to withdraw its forces behind a defensive line along the River Volga.[42]

ON THE GREAT island-continent of Australia all faith in Britain's war leadership had collapsed. Robert Menzies had resigned as prime minister on August 28. Churchill was crushed by the step which the incoming prime minister Arthur Fadden now took, uneasy about the wastage of Australian troops in North Africa. Fadden asked for the Australian division to be returned home – it was to be pulled out of the Libyan coastal fortress of Tobruk, beleaguered since April by Rommel's Afrika Korps. For two weeks Churchill tried to persuade the Australians not to 'quit the line,' as he put it. On Saturday September 6 he sent Auchinleck this telegram from Chequers:

> I am pretty sure the Australians will play the game if the facts are put before them squarely. . . Australia would not tolerate anything shabby.[43]

He set before Fadden the grave consequences of insisting on pulling the Australian contingent out. Auchinleck, he said, even had plans for the Australians to make another 'sortie' from the fortress. Fadden was unimpressed. Forced to comply, Churchill growled angrily that he found himself 'at war with almost every country, including Australia.'[44] 'I have long feared,' he wrote in a hectoring telegram to Auchinleck, 'the dangerous reactions on Australian and world opinion of our seeming to fight all battles in the Middle East only with Dominion troops.'[45]

It knocked all the weekend joy out of Churchill. Delivering his war review to Parliament on Tuesday he stood there, as one member described, stroking the palms of his hands down across his stout, black frame – 'beginning by patting his chest, then smoothing his stomach, and ending down at the groin.' He did not venture any oratory of his own, but recited lines by Rudyard Kipling with such emotion that he choked and could not go on.[46]

He was an accomplished actor, and knew the knack of winning any audience. During one otherwise uneventful cabinet meeting two days later, Lord Woolton outlined his ministry's scheme to ration all tinned foods. The assembled ministers, more than one of them accustomed to oysters and partridge at the Ritz, uttered the appropriate lamentations; the prime minister however rose above their hypocrisy, murmuring more than once during the rest of the deliberations: 'I shall never see another sardine!'

THAT SAME day there was one small glimmer of hope from the west. President Roosevelt announced that any German or Italian warships venturing into waters deemed necessary for America's defence would 'do so at their own peril' – he had ordered his forces to 'shoot first.' Churchill gleefully informed the war cabinet that the U.S. navy would take over active convoy escort duties west of the 26° Meridian. 'The president's disposition,' he remarked, 'will almost certainly lead to a conflict with German U-boats and result in a rise in tempers!'[47] 'Hitler will have to choose,' he triumphed to Smuts three days later, 'between losing the Battle of the Atlantic or coming into frequent collision with United States ships and warships. . . The American public,' he continued, clearly approving of Roosevelt's deceit, 'have accepted the "shoot at sight" declaration without knowing the vast area to which it is to be applied.'[48]

On September 15 there was better news from Stalin. Maisky asked if he could bring the telegram round to No. 10. Churchill fixed an appointment at six-thirty P.M., and agreed to let Eden attend, then mischievously brought the interview forward to four-thirty, no doubt to prevent Eden getting there in time.[49] In the telegram Stalin made the extraordinary suggestion that the British inject twenty-five divisions into the southern Russian front via Archangel (in the far north) or via Iran. It was patently absurd – Britain could neither have raised nor spared nor transported such an expedition. Maisky's avowed purpose however was to get Britain to commit a token force to Russia, just as to France in 1914. 'I recollect,' boasted Maisky to Stalin, 'Lloyd-George once telling me that before the 1914 war the French ambassador to London, Monsieur Cambon, had urged that in the event of war between France and Germany the British move at least a small armed unit to the Continent: . . . "A few squadrons will inevitably draw regiments, divisions, and corps after them."'"And do you know what?" concluded Lloyd-George. "This is just what happened. . . We ended up with seventy divisions or more under arms [in France]."'

Unwilling to give Stalin any excuse to make peace with Germany, Churchill cordially agreed – in principle. 'He even considers,' Maisky reported to Moscow that night, 'that it would be an honour for Britain.'

The P.M. did mention that he would of course have to consult the chiefs of staff, and this was a ploy, Maisky admitted, which did 'sow doubts in my mind'; he feared that the chiefs of staff would quash the proposal – 'The mountain will bring forth a molehill.'[50] His proposal was that Churchill divert forces from the Middle East and Britain to Russia.

The P.M. explained that he was planning an offensive in Libya, and he would also have to consult the Dominions – as though this consideration had weighed with him before. He also pondered whether British troops, who would be better suited to fight in the temperate Ukraine and Caucasus, would actually be able to get down there from the North Russian ports. 'Churchill suddenly remembered Norway,' reported Maisky. 'Perhaps it might be better for the British to strike jointly with us in that direction?'[51] The prime minister promised to put these projects to his war cabinet, but advised Maisky not to raise Moscow's hopes. 'Sad though it is to admit,' said Churchill, 'in the next six weeks – which will probably be difficult weeks for you – we shall be unable to assist you in any practical way.' He did however offer to the Soviet Union any German warships surviving at the end of the war. 'He is also partly prepared,' reported Maisky, 'to compensate for our naval losses with *British* warships.' 'I believe in Comrade Stalin,' Churchill had assured him. 'Firstly, because our interests coincide. . . Secondly, because the Soviet Union has always kept its word.'

AVERELL HARRIMAN, who was to head the American half of Beaverbrook's supply mission to Moscow, arrived at Hendon airfield on September 15. Churchill sent Beaverbrook to meet him and invited Harriman round for dinner that evening. He was once again impressed by this tall, angular, fifty-year-old American millionaire and his diplomatic and strategic ability.[52]

The talks in London revealed the extent to which any aid for Russia would be delivered at Britain's expense. Because of this, and Washington's recent decision to strengthen American aircraft strength in the Pacific, Britain would by the middle of 1942 receive 1,800 fewer American aeroplanes than expected, quite apart from the 1,800 British fighter planes which Churchill had undertaken to send to Russia. The chiefs of staff begged Beaverbrook to draw this shortfall to the P.M.'s attention – the effect on the strategic air offensive against Germany would be 'particularly grave.'[53]

Churchill's attitude was however that any sacrifice was worthwhile if it helped to keep Russia in the war.[54]

On September 19 Churchill hosted a luncheon at No. 10 for the Soviet embassy to meet the Beaverbrook–Harriman mission. They ate in a big upstairs room with empty walls and broken window frames. Facing him, the American military attaché Brigadier Lee was impressed once again by Churchill's pink, rubicund features. 'He rose,' recorded Lee, 'and with his immense command of the appropriate word made a very moving speech.' He compared their supply mission to Moscow with a lifeboat bringing succour to the Russians. He offered a toast to 'The Common Cause,' and when he looked around the table his bright blue eyes were brimming with tears.[55]

The notion of sacrificing Britain's tanks and planes, not to mention American Lend–Lease supplies, to a possibly already mortally injured Soviet Union met with strong opposition. At six P.M. the defence committee examined the question. Only Churchill, Beaverbrook, and Eden argued in favour. The chiefs of staff felt that Britain's own needs must be paramount.

IN THE past, Beaverbrook had often found it advanced his own cause to disagree with Churchill's policies. An awkward and uncompromising minister, still instinctively seeking ways of toppling Churchill while proclaiming to others that they were old friends, Beaverbrook now argued before the defence committee that the Soviets had earned the moral right to annex the Baltic States and Finland permanently. (Churchill had often spoken warmly of the latter country: 'Only Finland,' he had said in January 1940 after the Russians attacked her, 'superb – nay, sublime – in the jaws of peril, shows what free men can do.') Lord Beaverbrook had also circulated a report on his talk with Harriman; Beaverbrook was scathing about the production methods he had just witnessed in the United States and spoke about the 'failure' of their programme. Churchill snarled at him for using disparaging language, and ordered the word amended to 'retardation.' Roosevelt, he said, had just telegraphed to him that he hoped to increase American tank output to fourteen hundred a month by May 1942.

Since many of these would now go to Russia, the British army would still be receiving sixteen hundred fewer than expected between now and June 1942.

The defence committee elaborated a 'directive' to guide Beaverbrook for his Moscow talks. This empowered him to hold out to Moscow a 'justifiable hope' that Britain would be able to supply more war goods in future.

Britain had however no intention, Churchill instructed him to make plain, of landing in France in 1942, let alone with twenty or thirty divisions.

In vain Beaverbrook tried to obtain agreement on what specific supplies he might offer to the Russians; unless he could name binding and indeed colossal figures, he believed that the Russians would give up the struggle. 'We can greatly increase our present production if we try,' he insisted.

Churchill disagreed. 'It would be unwise to be too specific, knowing as we do that the war may easily swing back in our direction at any time.'

EVEN SO, a heated argument raged. Harold Balfour, one of the ministers present, described how by seven-thirty the atmosphere of reason and logic had been replaced by assertion, denial, and exhortation. 'Churchill's shoulders became more hunched,' recalled Balfour. 'A scowl on his brow deepened. His interjections were more frequent and impatient.' Finally he adopted the tactics of the Papal Conclave. He rubbed out the last appointment on his desk calendar and announced that they would stay there all night if need be until they agreed (meaning, of course, with him).[56]

They adjourned for dinner. When they reassembled wearily at ten-thirty he was beaming, and had changed into his blue rompers, his 'siren suit.' He led Balfour into the anteroom where a new imitation Queen Anne cabinet still stood, inscribed, 'A Tribute of Admiration from the President and People of Cuba.' The Cuban envoy had brought it as a gift for him that same afternoon – packed with bundles of long Havana cigars. Churchill extracted a bundle of the cigars, and offered them around the table. 'It may well be,' he announced, enjoying each word he spoke, 'that these each contain some deadly poison. It may well be that within days I shall follow sadly the long line of your coffins up the aisle of Westminster Abbey – reviled by the populace as the man who has out-borgia'd Borgia!'

The stated perils were willingly ignored, because – for his guests and the general public at least – such cigars were a rarity in 1941. Within half an hour they had all reached agreement.

A few days later the Prof. told Winston that there was a large Nazi contingent in Cuba; the Prof. arranged for one cigar from each bundle to be sent to Lord Rothschild, of the secret service, for forensic analysis; or so he said. Sir William Stephenson's little 'sideshows' had their uses.

6: *Carry a Big Stick*

With only the most superficial knowledge of Japan and the Japanese, which he had derived from newspapers, caricatures, and occasional meetings with Oriental personalities, Churchill saw them in simple stereotypes.[1] In the nineteenth century, he learned, the Japanese army had been instructed by the Germans, and the Japanese navy by the British, to which he attributed the inevitable consequences that the former was arrogant, nationalist, adventurous, and predatory, while the latter was cautious, moderate, far-seeing, conservative, and restraining.

Since 1931 Japan had been at war, one way and another, with China. While harbouring nothing of the sentimental attachment to the Chinese that pervaded the United States, Churchill still inclined toward them on the principle that they were the enemies of the enemies of his friends. Japan pursued a more active diplomacy, having joined the anti-Comintern pact with Germany in 1936. After France's collapse, Japan had prevailed upon Marshal Pétain's government to allow her the trusteeship of the French colonies in the Far East until the war was over. Thus the orphaned Dutch colonies of the East Indies – oil-rich Borneo and rubber-fertile Java – came under Japan's hostile glare as well. Weak though Britain was in 1940, Japan had however made no move against her imperial possessions. Her prime minister was the moderate aristocrat Prince Fumimaro Konoye, and under his stewardship, the fiercer hotheads of the Japanese military were restrained. Even after Japan signed the Tripartite Alliance with Nazi Germany in September 1940 Konoye had opened negotiations with the United States in the spring of 1941 in an attempt to resolve outstanding differences.

Preoccupied elsewhere, Churchill attended to all this with only half an ear. 'I confess,' he would later write, 'that in my mind the whole Japanese menace lay in a sinister twilight, compared with our other needs.'[2]

THUS INITIALLY he had discounted the threat to British imperial possessions in the Far East like Malaya and to Australia, and he continued to do so far into 1941. 'The N.I.D. [Naval Intelligence Division],' he admonished A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, in September 1940, 'are very much inclined to exaggerate the Japanese strength and efficiency.'[3] He explained to the chiefs of staff that he was unwilling to allow the 7th Australian Division to go to Malaya: he did not share their fears for the safety of the empire's great base at Singapore. 'The Japanese,' the minutes recorded his opinion, 'were unlikely to attack Singapore which was 2,000 miles from [their] home, with the fear of the American fleet on one flank, and of being cut off by the arrival of the British fleet before they could reduce the fortress.'[4]

At the time of the Japanese 'war scare' in February 1941* the foreign office had furnished to Churchill a sheaf of intercepted 'Japanese conversations on the present situation' – probably conversations conducted within the Japanese embassy – and he felt that both these and an earlier such sheaf had the 'air of being true' and suggested to him that the danger had passed. 'Altogether I must feel considerably reassured,' he had written at that time to Cadogan. 'I have always been doubtful they [the Japanese] would face it.' For a while there was a sudden hiatus in these intercepted Japanese 'conversations,' but Churchill had sent a telegram to Roosevelt reassuring him that he did not think the Japanese navy likely to send the 'large military expedition necessary to lay siege to Singapore.'[5] Consequently, when the American codebreakers advised at the end of March 1941 that both Grand Admiral Erich Raeder and Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring, the commanders-in-chief of Hitler's navy and air force, were urging the Japanese to strike at Singapore, little was done to reinforce the naval base there.[6]

Churchill's information on Japan's intentions came not only from electronic Intelligence but from Britain's diplomatic agencies. Britain was represented in Tokyo by Sir Robert Craigie – a gifted, realistic, and patient negotiator, but also a wounding and well-informed critic of Churchill's strategies. His final report on his four years in Tokyo would be circulated in 1943, after his return from Japanese internment, only against the most trenchant opposition of Churchill, since it portrayed the Japanese government as the virtually innocent victims of an American imperialism to which the prime minister had granted a free hand in the hope of inveigling the United States into a war with Japan.[7] Craigie felt throughout the suspense-

* See vol. i, page 511.

ful months of 1941 that Downing-street lacked the necessary finesse, the 'Fabian tactics' as he called them, the 'flexibility' to avoid war; he even charged that Churchill had encouraged Roosevelt to paint the Japanese (by declaring an all-out embargo in July) into the corner which ultimately resulted in war. Whatever the truth in these charges, it is surely not by peradventure that some of Churchill's cabinet records on Anglo-Japanese relations have remained sealed for over half a century.[8]

❧

It was codebreaking which provided Churchill with his sureness of touch as he manœuvred the Americans. The admiralty had shown an interest in Japanese naval signals since the early 1920s. At first, they were intercepted by Britain's China Squadron and brought by bag to London. In the 1930s the admiralty had sent out a Commander Tait, of naval Intelligence, to the Far East, and he set up a small unit under a Captain Shaw in Hongkong to work on the cyphers; after war broke out in September 1939 this unit moved to Singapore, by which time, according to a wartime memoir by the head of Bletchley Park, they had gained 'full control' of Japanese diplomatic and attaché traffic, were reasonably fluent in the main naval cyphers, and 'knew quite a lot' about those Japanese army cyphers used in China.[9]

The Americans had made only a hobbling start in the breaking of Japanese codes, with barely 180 men working on this in their Signals Intelligence Service even in 1941. The Japanese diplomatic cypher dubbed PURPLE had long defeated both them and Bletchley Park, but in the summer of 1940 the Americans had reconstructed a cypher machine known as MAGIC, which replicated the Japanese machines; in February 1941 Washington supplied two such machines to the British government. Bletchley Park sent one out to their unit working on Japanese cyphers at the Far East Combined Bureau in Singapore, and retained the other at Bletchley Park.[10] The idea was that the British would watch Tokyo's communications with the Japanese embassies in London, Rome, and Berlin, while the Americans covered the Pacific networks. The result was that from the spring of 1941, 'C' was able to supply Churchill with intercepts of Japanese diplomatic telegrams. These 'BJs' – blue-jackets, also Black Jumbos* – were typed in the large typeface favoured by the prime minister on foolscap-sized, flimsy paper, each headed

* We reproduce important examples on page 205 and among the illustrations.

with a security-warning printed in red. Serial numbers of scattered 'BJs' suggest that the wizards at Bletchley deciphered 916 Tokyo messages in the 24 days up to May 3; 272 more in the week to May 10; and 827 more in the following three weeks.[11] 'C' furnished him with one carbon copy, while others were sent in sealed boxes to a very limited circulation – typically, in November 1941, three each going to 'C,' the foreign office, the admiralty, and the war office, while two went to the India office and single copies went to the Political Intelligence Department, the colonial office and the Dominions office, the air ministry, M.I.5, and Sir Edward Bridges, secretary of the cabinet.

BRITISH AND American relations with Japan had steadily deteriorated during 1941. As a precaution after the 'February scare' Britain began obstructing communications between Japan and her missions in outposts of the British empire, forbidding the use of codes and imposing visa restrictions. At first Tokyo tried to appease Britain, but in May the Japanese government recalled Ambassador Mamoru Shigemitsu from London; during June the Japanese noticed that Britain had begun moving Indian troops up the Malay peninsula to the borders of neutral Thailand (Siam).[12]

Eden made it plain that Britain did not care whether she offended Japan.[13] Sir Robert Craigie, the British ambassador in Tokyo, was less sanguine and on June 13 he cautioned the Japanese government that while Britain appreciated Japan's dependence on rubber and tin imports from the Dutch East Indies, she must not take them by force. 'We British,' he continued, 'can see no reason why you Japanese should not get some rubber and tin provided that you do not transship them to Germany.'[14]

Pressed for Japan's position after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, on July 4 the new Japanese foreign minister Admiral Tejeiro Toyoda assured Craigie that Japan was not obliged to follow suit, and that Hitler had not asked her to do so. The Soviet Union's predicament did mean however that Japan felt free to expand in other directions, and the MAGIC intercepts seemed to bear this out. On July 7 Eden informed the war cabinet that while he had 'sure information' that Japan did not intend to invade the Soviet Union 'in the immediate future,' she had decided to acquire '*points d'appui*' in Indo-China using force if necessary; Britain must stop Japan 'gaining, unhampered, one position after another' which would eventually threaten Malaya and Britain's sea routes to Australia and New Zealand.[15]

The Americans felt the same way. The U.S. navy assessed that Japan was about to make her move. In which direction however? Secretary of War Henry Stimson had long argued that the U.S. fleet should move from its Pacific base, at Pearl in the Hawaiian islands, to the Atlantic; now, according to Stimson's diary, the MAGIC machine unscrambled a Tokyo comment encyphered in PURPLE gloating on how they were fooling Washington into keeping this fleet in the Pacific. President Roosevelt agreed with him that this ought to signalise the 'end of our efforts of appeasement in the Pacific.'[16]

THERE WAS however an element of Oriental inscrutability in all this. Some months earlier, MAGIC had also intercepted clear signs that Tokyo was *aware* that the Americans were reading PURPLE.[17] Cordell Hull persuaded the president not to move the Pacific fleet away from Hawaii. On July 7 a radio signal went from Washington advising the American general commanding at Hawaii of possible Japanese aggressive action; Tokyo, the message added, had secretly ordered all Japanese ships to be on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal by the end of the month.

It was a worrying picture. Shown the MAGIC file by Sumner Welles on July 10 Lord Halifax, though sceptical, recorded that it contained 'a lot of fairly definite stuff suggesting that the Japs had made up their mind to have a go.'[18] They had. On the twelfth the Japanese ambassador at Vichy tendered a secret ultimatum giving the Pétain government eight days to permit Japanese forces to occupy bases in Indo-China.[19] Two days later the British government received intercepts revealing this.[20] Referring specifically to these, General Pownall wrote in his diary on the fifteenth: 'From "BJ" sources we know that she [Japan] is going for anchorages and aerodromes in Indo-China on or very soon after [the] 20th of this month.' Pownall drew a worrying conclusion: 'Indo-China is still a longish way from Singapore, but it is a distinct step in that direction.'[21]

At Downing-street that afternoon Churchill conferred with 'C' and his advisers on how to deter Tokyo from making this move into Indo-China. Their planning experts had decided that the Japanese were unlikely to be deterred by threats of economic action, and rather feebly concluded: 'We are left with the weapon of publicity.' They would tell the world of Japan's ultimatum, which Tokyo had hoped to keep secret. If the Japanese did move troops into French Indo-China, then would be the time for a 'tightening of the economic screw.' This raised the question of concealing the actual source

of their intelligence, namely MAGIC. Admiral Pound suggested that they hint that 'Japanese sources opposed to Axis machinations' had secretly tipped them off. Everybody was agreed that nothing must compromise the famous 'secret sources.' On July 16 the Diplomatic Correspondent of *The Times* planted the news in next day's edition, and other papers raised a hue-and-cry.[22] The Japanese, a people who would display unexampled courage on the battlefield, were unimpressed by Fleet-street's barrage of printer's ink.

ON JULY 16 Churchill repeated to the chiefs of staff committee his oft-stated conviction that Japan would not declare war upon the British empire, adding now however the words, 'at the present juncture.' As for Britain declaring war on Japan, he agreed with the chiefs of staff, as he minuted to Ismay, that 'we are in no position to declare war' without the United States fighting on Britain's side. 'Therefore,' he repeated, 'I do not consider that a war between Britain and Japan is likely at the present time.' If Japan did nevertheless strike at the British empire, he believed that the United States would be bound to enter the war. As the threatened Japanese moves into Indo-China were 'of serious menace,' he ordered that further precautions be taken in the Far East 'so far as they are possible without condemning us to misfortune in other theatres.' He sent these rather woolly thoughts as an ACTION THIS DAY minute to Ismay for the chiefs of staff on July 16.[23]

That day the MAGIC machines decrypted instructions from Tokyo to the Japanese Legations at Hanoi and Saigon, in French Indo-China, to burn their codebooks. 'Japan,' the dispatch added, 'intends to carry out plans by force if opposed or if British or United States intervenes.'

Roosevelt had no intention of opposing the imminent Japanese move, which he revealed to his cabinet on the eighteenth. He said that Japan could move 'one, two, or three ways' after occupying Indo-China. Evidently he believed in appeasement at this stage. 'He also indicated,' wrote one of his colleagues after this cabinet meeting, 'that the U.S. would continue to furnish some oil at least to Japan to keep her from moving into the Dutch [East] Indies for oil.'[24] Over the next few days Roosevelt reiterated that any embargo on Japanese imports would *not* include oil supplies; this point is to be noted.

On July 20 the American codebreakers intercepted a Japanese message revealing that their army had 'decided to advance on 24th regardless of whether demands accepted or not.'[25]

HARRY HOPKINS had just arrived in London for secret talks with Churchill. Significantly, Lord Halifax wrote in his diary a few days earlier, 'With their desire to keep things off the record the principal purpose of Harry Hopkins's visit to London was to tell Winston orally what the president had in mind.'[26] The Japanese economy was heavily dependent on American and British empire supplies of raw materials. On July 20 Eden circulated a memorandum pointing out that a rigorous embargo would face the Japanese with the choice of abandoning their pro-Axis policy or proceeding southward to the point of war with Britain and the Dutch. Should Britain therefore back the Americans to the hilt, or restrain them?

The chiefs of staff warned that if Britain found herself at war with the Japanese the United States would not help. Eden disagreed. He wanted to force the issue, rather than wait for the Japanese to move. On July 21 Churchill's ministers debated, first in cabinet, as Item 7 – after Hopkins had been ushered out – and then in the more august defence committee, for seven tedious hours the question of what to do if Japan, after swallowing French Indo-China, went on to invade the oil-rich Dutch East Indies. All except Churchill agreed that Britain must help the Dutch. The prime minister made his curious dislike of the Dutch felt. 'Several of our capital ships are being repaired,' he reminded his colleagues, 'and will not be ready for about three months.'[27] Britain was in no position to send an adequate fleet to the Far East. 'P.M. digs his toes in against an assurance to the Dutch,' summarised Cadogan in his pen-and-ink diary afterwards. In an aside, he speculated that Winston was actually 'frightened of nothing but Japan.'[28]

Eden tried to fight him, but found no backing and remarked petulantly in his own diary that they could have boiled the seven-hour discussion down to one hour, 'the rest being interminable speeches by P.M.'[29]

Eden eventually persuaded the war cabinet that they should not restrain Washington. Somebody however also encouraged the American president that the all-out embargo to be applied on exports to Japan should *include* oil. How this came about was symptomatic of the slither into war in the Far East. Britain had expected Japan to be allowed a certain amount of latitude in the use of her assets, but by mid-September it was clear that Washington intended to allow Japan no licence whatsoever.

What had started merely as a warning, a token freezing of Japanese assets, thus quietly, and in the most puzzling and unexplained manner, assumed the character of a complete embargo, as an internal foreign office history would note.[30] On the last day of September 1941 Eden found it necessary

to remind the war cabinet that such an embargo must inevitably force the Japanese to decide between *entente* and war. 'The U.S., the Dutch and the British Empire had nailed their colours to the mast,' he adjudged in this monograph, 'and could not lower them even an inch without tearing them.'[31]

As anticipated, the Japanese move into French Indo-China began on July 24. In Washington that afternoon Roosevelt's cabinet again discussed the sanctions issue: again he declared that he proposed to continue to furnish some oil to Japan, to keep her from attacking the Dutch East Indies. The United States policy might, he allowed, shift to one of 'strangulation' as time went on.[32] At midnight first Hopkins, then Churchill, telephoned Roosevelt from No. 10 Downing-street (as we have seen*).[33] The next day Hopkins cabled from London to Roosevelt, in a clear reference to their MAGIC intercepts, 'There is no news here about Russia or Japan that you do not already have. Prime minister does not believe Japan wants war.'[34]

This is all the information we have. The mystery remains unsolved. On the same day, July 25, Roosevelt announced a freeze on all Japanese assets (around $130,000,000) in the United States unless Japan withdrew her troops from Indo-China; but the total embargo which he also announced on the export of raw materials to Japan now *included oil*. Britain followed suit that same day, freezing all Japanese assets, and she repudiated all the commercial treaties and agreements between them the next day.

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This decision was what led to war in the Far East. The Japanese were left with three months' supply of oil. The original intention had been merely to discourage Japan, and Roosevelt at first believed that their action had halted her. 'All well here,' he replied to Hopkins, still at Chequers, on July 26. 'Tell Former Naval Person,' as he endearingly referred to Winston, 'our concurrent action in regard to Japan is, I think, bearing fruit. I hear their government [is] much upset and no conclusive future policy has been determined on. Tell him also in confidence I have suggested to [Japanese Ambassador Kichisaburo] Nomura that Indo-China be neutralised by British, Dutch, Chinese, Japan, and ourselves, placing Indo-China somewhat in status of Switzerland. Japan to get rice and fertiliser, but all on condition that Japan withdraws armed forces from Indo-China in toto.'

* Page 20.

Sir Robert Craigie tried to reassure Toyoda on July 25 that despite all the appearances to the contrary this was not an economic encirclement. Toyoda replied that his country's troop movements were defensive; three days later Nomura was heard reporting from Washington to Tokyo on a further meeting with Roosevelt, where he too had set out the reasons why they were occupying French Indo-China (they needed the food, he said).[35]

ON JULY 27, 1941 the chiefs of staff submitted their views on the prospects of defending Britain's possessions in the Far East. They felt that only the certainty of American intervention would deter the Japanese. Meanwhile they recommended establishing positions in the Kra Isthmus, to forestall any Japanese invasion of Malaya and Singapore through Thailand.[36] This would involve violating Thai neutrality – a particularly unfortunate departure from international law, given that in the winter of 1939–40 the British minister Sir Josiah Crosby had signed with Thailand the only bilateral non-aggression pact to which the United Kingdom ever affixed her signature.[37]

The Japanese now faced a brutal choice between a war with the British empire and the United States or a humiliating climbdown. This was not at first recognised in either capital. Only at the end of the year was it accepted at the foreign office that the mysterious oil embargo, pronounced by Churchill and Roosevelt without any cabinet discussion in London or Washington, had marked the watershed between peace and war in the Far East.[38]

On the last day of July 1941, war in the Far East became a certainty as the Japanese navy, aware that it was now burning its final oil reserves, threw its weight behind the army in demanding action against the United States and Britain, seeing this as the only honourable course remaining if Japan were not to forfeit all that four years of hard fighting had won her in China. On the same last day of July, Tokyo was heard transmitting a cypher telegram to her ambassador in Berlin which was no less menacing for being quaintly phrased: 'To save its very life [Japan] must take immediate steps to break asunder this ever strengthening chain of encirclement which is being woven under the guidance and with the participation of England and the United States, acting like a cunning dragon, seemingly asleep.'[39]

Tokyo at first concealed the stiffening of her resolve; on August 1 Roosevelt suggested to his cabinet that the Japanese had been 'surprisingly apologetic.'[40] After the war, Churchill would even try to shift the blame for the Pacific war onto the late president's shoulders. 'As time passed,' he would write in his memoirs – sadder, and perhaps better informed if not

actually wiser – 'and I realised the formidable effect of the embargoes which the president had declared on July 26, and in which we and the Dutch had joined, I became increasingly anxious to confront Japan with the greatest possible display of naval forces in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.'[41]

In the summer of 1941 however it became more urgent to persuade the Americans to show their colours, a struggle which continued for the next four months. Hoping to secure an indication that, 'in the last resort' the United States would be at Britain's side, Eden gave Halifax guidelines for obtaining from Washington an assurance of 'active armed support.' He should remind Roosevelt of the value for the 'general war effort' of the rubber production in Malaya and the Dutch East Indies and also suggest that it was only fair to protect these territories given their importance to Australia and New Zealand, whose own soldiers were away fighting in the Middle East. Having set out these guidelines however Eden told Halifax not to make any approach until he received further instructions.[42]

AT THE beginning of August 1941, Churchill had left for his Atlantic meeting with President Roosevelt. In his absence, reports multiplied of imminent Japanese moves. The Joint Intelligence Committee appreciated on the second that a 'sudden invasion' of the Kra Isthmus was likely.

On the fifth the chiefs of staff remaining behind in London proposed once again that Britain should move troops into Thailand first, and the defence committee looked at this project that evening. On the following day the Commander-in-Chief Far East, Air Chief-Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham, telegraphed that it would be unwise to do so unless the Japanese had already marshalled their invasion force for Thailand and unless the United States, British, and Dutch governments had jointly warned Japan that a violation of Thailand would be regarded as a *casus belli*.

The defence committee on the seventh decided to send a message to Churchill, still crossing the Atlantic aboard the *Prince of Wales*, urging the need for such a warning.[43]

In Washington, the Japanese still seemed anxious to negotiate. On August 6 their emissary, Admiral Nomura, handed to Cordell Hull two documents in which they offered to undertake not to move more troops into the disputed region, and to withdraw those in Indo-China – but only on condition that Roosevelt abandon the trade embargo and agree to make further concessions. These included, as Churchill would put it on the eleventh, an opportunity to 'strangle the Chinese government.'

From the MAGICS it was clear to the Americans that the Japanese were now heading for a military 'showdown.'[44] The evidence of this was accumulating in Washington. On August 8 Henry Stimson noted after a talk with Cordell Hull: 'He has made up his mind that we have reached the end of any possible appeasement with Japan and that there is nothing further that can be done except by a firm policy and that he expected force itself. I had brought with me,' dictated Stimson, 'the last MAGICS that I had received which gave a very recent example of Japan's duplicity.' The next day Stimson received from Major-General Sherman Miles, chief of military Intelligence, a MAGIC revealing 'further duplicity' by the Japanese, who were trying to arrange a conference between their prime minister and President Roosevelt, while (as Stimson afterwards dictated) 'at the same time they are carrying on negotiations with their ambassadors throughout the world showing that on its face this is a pure blind and that they have already made up their minds to a policy of going south through Indo-China and Thailand.'[45]

Duplicity was not a Japanese monopoly. Both Roosevelt and Sumner Welles, Hull's deputy, felt that the best course would be to humour the Japanese to gain time. The U.S. navy needed time to build up their defences in the Philippines, as Admiral Harold R. ('Betty') Stark, the little white-haired, hook-nosed, chief of naval operations, made plain to the British chiefs of staff.[46] Talking with Churchill at Placentia Bay on August 10 the president indicated that when he got back to Washington he would send for Nomura and feign acceptance of the Japanese proposals. 'Leave it to me. I think I can baby them [the Japanese] along for three months.'[47]

Sir Alexander Cadogan shared Churchill's uneasiness that Roosevelt might be proposing to buy time at the expense of the hard-pressed Chinese. 'If we are to allow the Americans to proceed on that line,' the foreign office man assessed, reporting to Eden, 'we must at least insist that the time isn't gained at China's or any one else's expense, and that meanwhile the economic measures are kept up.'[48] (This tends to confirm the suspicion that it was the British who had provided the inspiration for the embargo on exports to Japan). Roosevelt outlined this policy, of 'babying the Japanese along,' upon his return to Washington when he lunched with Frank Knox, the secretary of the navy. 'We are going to do some plain talking to Japan,' wrote Knox to his wife that day. ' – Not an ultimatum, but something that very closely approximates that and can easily lead to it later if the Japanese do not accept our demands. This will be a joint affair with Great Britain.'[49]

'LEAVE IT to me,' Roosevelt had said. The disadvantage of this was that although vital British empire interests were at stake, Churchill had thus relinquished to Washington control of the conduct of the negotiations with the Japanese; from now on, unless the Americans kept him closely informed – and they did not – he could follow these negotiations only through the uncertain window provided by the MAGICS. On August 16 Nomura duly showed up at the state department with a formal invitation for Roosevelt to meet the Japanese prime minister somewhere in mid-Pacific. Roosevelt, now back in Washington from the Atlantic meeting, sent for the Japanese emissary the next day and (on Hull's advice) refused the invitation.

The warning which Roosevelt handed to Nomura on this occasion was more mildly worded than Churchill hoped: 'The U.S. government,' it ran,

> now finds it necessary to say to the government of Japan that if she takes further steps in pursuance of a policy of force towards neighboring countries, the U.S. government will be compelled to take all necessary steps towards safeguarding rights and interests of U.S. nationals and U.S. security.[50]

It was Hull who had toned down the original wording. Finding, as he told Vice-president Wallace later, that Churchill had 'sold the president' on the idea of taking decisive action against Japan, Hull had pointed out that Britain had no military strength in the Pacific.[51] Nonetheless, on the eighteenth Roosevelt sent a less than frank message to Churchill outlining his interview with Nomura. He had, he assured him, made a statement 'along the lines of the proposed statement such as you and I had discussed;' it was, he claimed, 'no less vigorous and . . . substantially similar to the statement we had discussed.'[52]

This was not true and Churchill, who was reading Nomura's dispatches, knew it. The statement fell far short of what he thought they had agreed at Placentia Bay.* He had evidently received the intercept by August 23, because on Sunday the twenty-fourth he showed the Roosevelt statement to Mackenzie King – having evidently just read it – and the Canadian premier agreed that it said nothing about any response by the United States if their interests were *not* directly violated.[53]

* Page 46. This had warned of the United States taking counter-measures, 'even though these might lead to war between the United States and Japan.'

This was why, broadcasting that Sunday evening from Chequers, Churchill deliberately went further, stating that if the United States were involved in war with Japan then Britain would go in wholeheartedly with her.

> For five long years [said Churchill] Japanese military factions, seeking to emulate the style of Hitler and Mussolini . . . have been harrying and invading the 500 million inhabitants of China. The Japanese armies have been wandering about the vast land disrupting and intimidating, carrying with them carnage, ruin, and corruption, and calling it 'the Chinese incident.' Now they stretch a grasping hand into the southern seas of China: they snatch Indo-China from the wretched Vichy French; they menace by their movements Siam [Thailand], they menace Singapore, the British link with Australia, and they menace the Philippine Islands under the protection of the United States.

Churchill added the admonition: 'It is decided that this has got to stop.'

The broadcast caused an uproar in Japan, as he had intended. Hugh Dalton, the minister of economic warfare, noted with approval: 'He has been very rude to the Japs in his broadcast on Sunday – "All this has got to stop" – and he thinks this will have the effect of checking them.' Roosevelt hoped, Dalton also learned, to spin out the talks with Tokyo for three months. 'Long before then *we* shall be able to put a really strong fleet in the Indian Ocean without denuding the Mediterranean.'[54]

In Tokyo however Sir Robert Craigie expressed dismay at this sabre-rattling. His embassy published Churchill's broadcast omitting the belligerent passages, but the Japanese government still affected strong indignation.[55] The Tokyo newspapers accused Churchill of threats and deceit: his declaration that he was striving for a peaceful adjustment was meaningless, they said, so long as he and Roosevelt had violated their commercial treaties, frozen Japanese assets, and begun the encirclement of Japan.

The *Yomiuri Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun* editorialised that Churchill obviously hoped to goad the United States into taking action in the Far East; *Miyako* voiced the suspicion that Roosevelt and Churchill were hoping to isolate Japan until 1943 when their own preparations would be complete for a strike against Japan. 'One hundred million Japanese,' this newspaper editorialised, 'will never flinch in defence of their faith.' All this struck, as Craigie's American colleague Joseph Grew pointed out, an ominous note in Tokyo.[56]

Churchill did not detect it. Briefing his junior ministers on August 26 about the Placentia Bay meeting he said yet again that he did not expect Japan to pick a fight with Britain now, and he reported that Roosevelt had issued a serious warning to the Japanese and was gaining time by 'rather humbugging' negotiations with the Japanese about the neutrality of Indo-China and Thailand – Roosevelt hoped, he said, to spin these talks out for three months, by which time Britain would have a powerful fleet in the Far East.[57] In private however Churchill was uncomfortably aware that Roosevelt had once more wriggled out of making any commitment to war; the Englishman had given himself to his intimate friend, but the latter still refused to name the day. Lord Halifax – who was in London for consultations – agonised over whether he could have done more in Washington to embroil the United States in war – it was so frustrating, he said, trying to pin the Americans down, rather like 'a disorderly day's rabbit shooting.'[58]

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During the remaining months of 1941, Japan's relations with Britain slowly froze over. The signs were slender but unmistakable. Churchill learned from MAGIC that the Japanese were quietly reducing their more exposed diplomatic outposts – those in Hongkong, Johore (in Malaya), and London.[59] On August 20 the Japanese ambassador Shigemitsu who had returned to London was heard inquiring of Tokyo whether he ought to send home his assistant military and naval attachés.[60]

Later in August Tokyo formally asked for assurances that Japanese nationals would be allowed to leave India, Kenya, and South Africa; Sir Robert Craigie requested the same facilities for British residents in Japan and China.[61] On September 10 the Japanese foreign minister Toyoda was heard notifying his consul at Singapore that the freighter *Fuso Maru* would berth there and embark Japanese evacuees.[62] Underlying many of these intercepts even now there was a perceptible anxiety to avoid provoking incidents with the British.

At the same time Churchill learned from his codebreakers that there would be an added bonus if he could lure the United States into war with Japan. On August 24, 'C' showed him a significant Japanese intercept. Hitler's press chief Otto Dietrich, gossiping with General Oshima in Berlin on the ninth, the day after he returned from Hitler's field headquarters, had quoted the Führer as declaring that 'in the event of a collision between

Japan and the United States, Germany would at once open hostilities with America.'[63] That was just what Churchill wanted.

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We must now examine the naval dispositions which Churchill was making. 'We shall have four more powerful ships there soon,' Churchill had told Mackenzie King on August 23, referring to the Far East.[64]

By this time in 1941 the naval staff was already in a state of ferment over a rude letter from the prime minister insisting on sending a force of destroyers and cruisers from Malta to attack General Rommel's supply traffic to Tripoli. The Navy had about 180 destroyers in home waters, but three quarters of these were designed only for escort or other non-'fighting' duties.

Shown Churchill's letter on August 24 Captain Ralph Edwards, director of naval operations, found it 'quite insufferable.' 'He obviously has not the faintest idea of our fighting destroyer strength,' Edwards wrote in his diary, 'nor of our cruisers available.' His staff consumed a whole day providing Admiral Pound with the data needed to reply to the P.M. 'If only the Honourable Gentleman,' Edwards continued, with withering sarcasm, 'were to confine himself to statesmanship and politics and leave naval strategy to those properly concerned, the chances of winning the war would be greatly enhanced. He is without doubt one of history's worse strategists.'[65]

The next day provided the angry naval staff with further proof of this. Two weeks previously the Australian prime minister had sent a telegram pleading with Churchill to send five battleships to the Far East as a deterrent to Japan.[66] On August 25 Churchill sent two notes over to Admiral Pound – one 'praying for' (to use his terminology) a list of Japan's warships, and the other demanding the formation of an Eastern Fleet to counter them.[67] 'It should be possible in the near future to place a deterrent Squadron in the Indian Ocean,' he wrote. 'Such a force,' he added, 'should consist of the smallest number of the best ships.' He predicted it would exert 'a paralysing effect' on Japanese naval action. He was thinking of at least two battleships and an aircraft-carrier. In justification, he pointed to the nuisance caused by Germany's one well-placed battleship *Tirpitz*.[68]

The Naval Staff were dismayed. 'Another Prayer from the prime minister,' wrote Edwards sarcastically that day, 'who wishes to form a squadron of "fast, powerful modern ships – only the best to be used" – in the Indian

Ocean. This, he avers, will have a paralysing effect on the Japanese – why it should, the Lord alone knows.' Examining Churchill's proposed list of ships more closely Edwards noticed that most of them were either still incomplete or 'falling in pieces.' Powerful and modern, yes; but hardly of the best. 'This, mind you,' the admiral lamented in his diary, 'at the same time as he wishes to form a force at Malta, reinforce the Mediterranean Fleet, help Russia, and be ready to meet a break-out by the *Tirpitz*. The amount of unnecessary work which that man throws on the Naval Staff would, if removed, get us all a month's leave.'

On August 27 the admiralty prepared an answer to Winston's 'prayer': the best they could offer was to place a couple of *Nelson*-class battleships in Ceylon by early 1942, and three of the elderly R-class battleships some time before the end of 1941, to be followed by a fourth in January. Admiral Pound now had to explain that the *King George V*-class battleships were still crewed by youngsters and novices; it might, he suggested, be found more desirable to send *Nelson*, *Rodney*, and *Renown* to Singapore 'in the first instance,' as a deterrent; but their deterrent effect was only notional, because he warned that if war broke out with Japan these ships would have to retire to Trincomalee in Ceylon.[69]

Churchill now made a different proposal – to position a 'formidable, fast, high class squadron' of modern *King George V*-class battleships in the triangle Aden–Simonstown–Singapore purely as a deterrent: '*Tirpitz* is doing to us exactly what a *K. G. V.* in the Indian Ocean would do to the Japanese Navy. It exercises a vague general fear and menaces all points at once.'[70]

Not wanting to see their valuable new battleships committed to such indeterminate and distant missions, far from the Atlantic battleground, Pound and the Vice-Chief of naval staff Rear-Admiral Tom Phillips felt that both *Prince of Wales* and her sister ship *King George V*, each armed with ten 14-inch guns and capable of over twenty-eight knots, should be held back for specific, well-defined operations.

There the matter rested for six weeks. Churchill was satisfied that they still had time. 'I cannot feel,' he once again assured Pound on August 29, 'that Japan will face the combination now forming against her of the United States, Great Britain, and Russia, while already preoccupied in China. It is very likely she will negotiate with the United States for at least three months without making any further aggressive move or joining the Axis actively.'[71]

This was to prove a fateful misjudgement. The foreign secretary however echoed this complacency. He lunched alone with Winston on September

12. The two men read the latest telegrams and talked about the Far East. 'Winston,' recorded Eden in his diary,

> insisted that we could now put pressure on Japs. I agree in the sense that they are beginning to understand their isolation, but process must take a little longer. Nothing could help it more than arrival of modern battleship or two at Singapore. We agreed that 'R' ships such as admiralty propose is a weak compromise. I told him that politically I had rather not have them. Modern battleship, Carrier & Battle Cruiser or nothing, we agreed.[72]

Writing to Churchill that Friday September 12, Eden thought it unlikely that Japan, 'this probably over-valued military power,' would be prepared to challenge Russia, the United States, China and the British empire. 'Our right policy is, therefore, clearly to keep up the pressure.' (Churchill jotted '*Yes*,' in the margin). 'So far as trade measures are concerned,' admitted Eden, 'the freezing action is being more strictly applied than was at first contemplated.' (This was probably a reference to the originally unintended oil embargo, but Churchill again wrote, '*Good*.') 'We want to make the Japanese feel that we are now in a position to play our hand from strength,' proposed Eden, and the prime minister liked that too: '*Good*.' Eden felt therefore the British naval squadron would best make itself felt if dispatched in the next few weeks. Churchill, better aware of the practicalities, suggested '*months*' instead, and sent the document to the naval staff.[73]

DURING THE three months' respite which both Roosevelt and Churchill believed they had won, the U.S. Army Air Force had begun warlike preparations in the South-West Pacific to which historians have paid only scanty attention. A significant proportion of the B-17 heavy bombers – the famous Flying Fortresses – which Roosevelt had originally allocated to Britain was now being ferried over to the Philippines instead, preparing for operations against Japan. The first nine arrived there on August 26. These bombers could fly two thousand miles; if they shuttled on to Vladivostok, in the Soviet Union, they would have Japan within range.

Remarking upon this prospect on September 12, Henry L. Stimson recorded: 'We have been busy for the last few weeks in reinforcing the Philippines.' On the twenty-fifth he confidentially briefed Dr T. V. Soong, the Chinese foreign minister resident in Washington, on this; and on the

last day of the month he, Hull, Knox, and Stark attended 'a fine disquisition' by General Marshall on these preparations in the Philippines.[74] On October 10 the president revealed the secret of these bombers to the British ambassador. 'He had a great deal to say,' wrote Lord Halifax, 'about the great effect that their planting some heavy bombers at the Philippines was expected to have upon the Japs.'[75]

In a personal letter to Churchill, Halifax described their interview: 'The president spoke to me today about what he termed a great change in the United States staff thought. It had formerly been pretty well accepted that if they were at war with Japan, they would have to give up the Philippines. Now they had all, as he put it, made a new discovery with which they were as pleased as a child with a new toy. This was the air, and they had recently been sending some heavy bombers and fighters to the Philippines, and were going to send more. . . From various points in the Islands it was now possible respectively to reach the whole of Japan, the China coast, and Indo-China, and almost down to Singapore. They were not intending to make any public reference to what they had done, as they thought an attitude of secrecy would be more effective with the Japanese, who would certainly get to know about it.' Following that, Stimson gave Halifax an after-dinner briefing with the aid of 'various maps and circles that they had prepared, illustrating the extent to which bombers based on the Philippines could get at the Japs.' Stimson believed that this move had already greatly affected the Japanese in their judgement.[76]

Ten days later some three dozen B-17s had reached the Philippines, presenting what Stimson called in a letter to the president 'a strategic opportunity' of the utmost importance. Suddenly, he said, they had the ability to mount a strategic bombing offensive against Japan.[77] Roosevelt, nonplussed, sent this document to Hopkins on October 25, asking him, 'Please read and speak to me about this. I am a bit bewildered. – FDR.'[78]

Three days later Cordell Hull asked Stimson an extraordinary question – whether he favoured an 'immediate declaration of war' against Japan. Stimson replied that he did not – he still wanted to use the remaining months to strengthen the Philippines, since the four-engined bombers would in his view deter Japan from going for Singapore – indeed, they might even 'shake the Japanese out of the Axis.' The Japanese were puzzled, he said, as he knew from MAGIC, about the American secretiveness in the Philippines.[79]

'Speak softly, but carry a big stick.' That had been Teddy Roosevelt's policy, and it was Stimson's too.

7: *The 'Nigger in the Woodpile'*

Once or twice in September 1941 Churchill's private secretary, the twenty-five-year-old Jock Colville, heard him admit that critics were beginning to ask how Britain was going to win the war. 'It is difficult to answer,' he said.[1] If his brain formed the initials K.B.O. his lips did not show it.

An uneasiness pervaded the British press. Churchill predicted to Eden that however magnificent the British public might be in time of crisis, when their hour of triumph came they would prove intolerable.[2] True, the German air raids on London had ceased. Hitler's air force was in Russia; London's sirens had sounded only once in July, and not at all in August. The War Room log of R.A.F. Fighter Command shows that thanks to his codebreaking Oracle and keeping track of the Nazi blind-bombing beams he had long known in advance, on perhaps eighty per cent of the nights, what the Luftwaffe's most likely target was to be.[3] Partly inspired by communist agitation, by late September 1941 there was a mood of resentment in Britain about the failure to aid the Russians. The foreign secretary found the P.M. in a state of depression, embittered by nagging newspaper editorials. Most of the bickering came from the Beaverbrook press, and Eden came over to No. 10 to complain about their fellow-minister's unruly behaviour.

It was with relief that Churchill had dispatched Beaverbrook on his dangerous mission to Moscow on the twenty-first. While neither Beaverbrook nor Harriman was empowered to engage in military discussions, General Ismay would accompany them to answer queries. Beaverbrook was carrying a manuscript letter from Churchill promising Stalin that Britain, small though she was, was doing all she could for the Soviet Union.[4]

Still hoping to contribute an expeditionary force to the Russian front, Churchill dictated an afterthought by scrambler-telephone to await

Beaverbrook's arrival at Scapa Flow; this suggested that the Russian-speaking General Wavell might command such a force. Before the mission sailed aboard the cruiser *London* on September 22, Churchill sent up yet another message to Lord Beaverbrook directing him to answer, if the Russians should ask, that awkward question: how Britain proposed to win the war: 'By going on fighting till the Nazi system breaks up as the Kaiser's system broke up last time.' For this purpose, said Churchill, Britain would fight wherever she could on favourable terms – using propaganda warfare, blockade, and the ruthless bombing of the German homeland.[5]

Eden dined that evening with the Churchills, with Oliver Lyttelton, just back from Cairo, making a fourth. 'Winston,' wrote the foreign secretary afterwards, 'was depressed at [the] outset, said he felt that we had harsh times ahead.' Once again, he blamed this on the press.[6]

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One formidable source of his *ennui* was Charles de Gaulle. The prime minister's dislike for the French general had burgeoned into loathing. We shall find in this and later chapters evidence of their relationship developing in so extraordinary a fashion that the files in British archives remained closed for over half a century (and some are still sealed); we shall witness at least one attempt to eliminate the fractious general by force in April 1943, and a strong hint by Churchill (overheard by the Americans) that his underlings should try again.*

Travelling slowly around the Middle East, de Gaulle had left a slime-trail of anti-British remarks which were at best troubling indiscretions and at worst violations of the agreement which the two men had signed in August 1940. The current reason for de Gaulle's behaviour was that Britain had dealt leniently with the Vichy officers in Syria on the conclusion of the campaign there on July 14. His methods were ill-chosen, indeed akin to blackmail. He threatened to withdraw French troops from the war altogether and to close 'his' territories to the passage of British aircraft.

Churchill's erstwhile hireling spoke so rudely to Lyttelton in Cairo that the British government ordered the French general back to London forthwith. De Gaulle chose to return in his own good time, travelling via Brazzaville in Africa; from that 'Free French' town on August 26, he gave an

* See pages 728 and 781 below.

astonishing interview to the local reporter of the Chicago *Daily News*. Asked why Britain did not finally close the door on Vichy by recognising his government, de Gaulle had responded that l'Angleterre was afraid of the French fleet – namely the formidable units still held, if not controlled, by Vichy admirals at Toulon, Mers el-Kébir, and Alexandria. 'What, in effect, England is carrying on,' sneered de Gaulle, 'is a wartime deal with Hitler in which Vichy serves as go-between.'[7]

This Brazzaville impertinence was the last straw for Churchill. 'The P.M. is sick to death of him,' Colville observed at the end of August.[8] Winston was within one step of breaking off relations with the general altogether.

Major Morton, the prime minister's liaison to the Free French, listed several ways of harassing de Gaulle to bring him into line. Churchill liked them, and noted: 'As proposed. 31.viii.'[9]

Among the proposals was that no one was to have any contact with de Gaulle or his staff on their return to London: 'If occasion demands,' directed Morton, 'it may be conveyed to him that a most serious situation has arisen with which the prime minister is dealing in person.' De Gaulle was to stew in his own juice, 'for a week if necessary.'[10]

The foreign secretary did not like this at all. When he telephoned these Chequers proposals to his office on the last morning in August, his minions protested that they had much day-to-day business to transact with de Gaulle's subordinates; they urged the foreign secretary, before 'breaking with de Gaulle,' to bear in mind the general's great symbolic value.[11]

Eden therefore wrote to Churchill in an attempt at conciliation: 'It may well be that we shall find that de Gaulle is crazy; if so, he will have to be dealt with accordingly. If, however, he shows indications of repentance, I hope that you will not underestimate your power to complete the cure. He has a real and deep respect for you which he does not extend to any of our military commanders.'[12]

Unwilling to yield to flattery, Churchill repeated on September 1 his order

> that these matters be allowed to rest in deadlock, and that generally a chilling and dilatory attitude should be adopted towards all requests made by the Free French. No notice will be taken of General de Gaulle's arrival, and it will be left to him to make any overtures. Should he desire an interview, he will be asked for explanations of his unfriendly conduct and absurd statements.[13]

On September 2 Morton personally conveyed to de Gaulle the P.M.'s displeasure. He reported back to Winston afterwards – the general, he found, was a clever man, a politician but no diplomat, 'but there lies a calculating brain behind that curious countenance and though absolutely sincere and honest he is undoubtedly swayed by deep prejudice. He is also a sentimentalist.' He was neither penitent, in Morton's view, nor mad. 'If he raves like a lunatic at one man and attempts to charm another by quiet reasonableness, it is because he thinks that such an attitude is the more likely to gain his ends with the person in question.'[14]

Since de Gaulle did not write, after a few days the prime minister sent him a letter in a wounded tone, saying that in view of his unfriendly remarks and actions, and in the absence of any satisfactory explanations, he was unable to judge whether a meeting would serve any useful purpose.[15] The general replied in no less injured French, complaining about General Sir Louis Spears – Winston's political general in the Levant – and about Oliver Lyttelton.[16] Unmoved by this, Churchill directed Morton to prevent de Gaulle from slipping out of Britain by air or Free French warship without his consent; similarly, M.I.5 was ordered to mount a watch on the general's telephone.[17]

THE CLAMPDOWN on Britain's turbulent ally began at once. When de Gaulle asked for facilities to broadcast on the night of Monday, September 8, Churchill denied them. De Gaulle then threatened to withdraw all Free French staff from the B.B.C.[18] More examples of de Gaulle's confused loyalties came to Churchill's ears. Lord Gort reported that passing through Gibraltar de Gaulle had told the senior Free French officer in that colony that it was his duty to observe and report on the British there '*parcequ'on ne sait jamais ce que l'avenir nous réserve*' (because one never knew what the future held in store for us).[19] He told a French editor in Britain on September 9 that he was considering returning to Brazzaville and explaining why in a broadcast from there; he would break with the British, play along the Americans, and offer his services to the Russians. He would 'pretend to accept the present situation,' he had said, 'but await the first occasion to turn on the British.'[20] These were, if truly reported, extraordinary remarks.

At noon on September 12 Churchill had a frigid session with the general, alone but for an interpreter called in to lend formality to their meeting. He told him to watch his tongue in future, and explained that he recognised neither de Gaulle nor Vichy as representing France. He sug-

gested that de Gaulle set up a formal council to shape Free French policy. He brought their interview to a gracious end by declaring that he would be willing to receive the general again.[21]

De Gaulle drafted his own record, reporting four of the five issues between them with great accuracy (considering that he took no notes) but adding a fifth paragraph according to which Churchill had conceded that de Gaulle personified the leadership of Free France, given the leading rôle he played in French public opinion. Morton commented that this allowed only one conclusion, 'that the general is frankly somewhat unstable in mind upon this particular point. . . No sane man could have produced this fake and thereafter sent it for the inspection of the other party to the meeting.'[22]

A few days later the prime minister learned – because the staff of Vice-Admiral E. H. D. Muselier, the French naval C.-in-C., so informed Major Morton – that de Gaulle was telling his people that nothing would induce him to take Churchill's advice about setting up a council.[23] The general, as Morton briefed the prime minister on September 23, was now hoping to set up a committee of his own 'yes-men,' which would be useless from the British point of view. He was hell-bent on securing unfettered personal power, warned Morton. He had created his own secret service, 'a sort of Gestapo,' to keep an eye on his followers; its chief was a young man in his twenties known as Passy. Passy – his real name was André Dewavrin – was notorious for his right-wing views and fascist methods.[24]

Churchill now (September 23) spent half an hour trying to heal the rift developing between the prickly general and Admiral Muselier, who also wanted to see the general's powers curtailed. Muselier was even claiming to preside over the new committee. De Gaulle told Churchill he was contemplating dismissing the admiral altogether. Horrified at this new scandal, Churchill told the general he would consult his advisers and see him again the next day. 'The P.M., who is heartily sick of the Free French, ended by handing the whole matter over to the reluctant Eden,' recorded Colville.[25]

Despite a conciliatory message from Muselier, drafted in conjunction with A. V. Alexander, First Lord of the Admiralty, de Gaulle refused to work with the French admiral and now threatened to have him 'put out of harm's way,' whatever that might mean. On the twenty-fourth Morton told de Gaulle that Churchill wanted him to see Eden that evening, and meanwhile to say nothing in public about the crisis and do nothing to Muselier.[26] 'This is very unpleasant,' Winston agreed in a weary message to Eden. 'Our intention was to compel de Gaulle to accept a suitable Council. All we have

done is to compel Muselier & Co. to submit themselves to de Gaulle.' This would need the closest watching, he added: 'Our weight in the immediate future must be thrown more heavily against de Gaulle than I had hoped would be necessary.' He renewed his order that General de Gaulle was to be prevented from leaving British soil.[27]

ON SEPTEMBER 23 Churchill had a farewell interview with Lord Halifax before he returned to Washington. He showed to Halifax a good letter which had arrived from General Auchinleck, giving an optimistic prognosis for CRUSADER, their coming offensive against Rommel. The Churchills dined with the Halifaxes at the Dorchester. 'Winston at his best,' recorded Halifax, 'and full of fight; very entertaining about his appointments of bishops and selections for peers.' Churchill revealed that he insisted on seeing photographs of those he was considering for bishops; if he explained what features he was searching for – whether sexual inclination, subservience, or firmness of jaw, Lord Halifax did not confide it to his diary.[28]

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Winston Churchill was the Pickwickian prime minister of an almost archaic country. Among the styles and dignities which somehow now accrued to him was the ancient title of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports. It provided a useful naval uniform, and more: on September 25 he set off in his new and well-appointed railway coach to Kent, to run his eye over Walmer Castle which thus came within his fief.[29] The expenses seemed to outweigh the prerogatives: he found that he was entitled to all and any whales that washed ashore, but he would have to bury the bulky mammals at his own expense. The castle would need fourteen servants and half a dozen gardeners to render it habitable, and it was too close to Hitler's coastal artillery to be a desirable residence right now.

That night his train rested outside Coventry. Huge crowds mustered everywhere he went over the next two days. 'The P.M.,' wrote Colville in distress, '*will* give the V sign with two fingers in spite of representations repeatedly made to him that this gesture has quite another significance.'[30] At Armstrong Siddeley's aircraft and torpedo factory, the workers clanged their hammers, which he took to be a traditional chorus of welcome, as he walked through. Even at the Whitley bomber factory, a real communist hotbed, the personnel were not put out by the sight of his cigar and semi-

top hat. Before lunch, he visited the mass grave of the four hundred citizens killed in the appalling November 1940 fire raid, of which he had perhaps suppressed his own awkward memories.* Over at Birmingham after lunch he inspected a tank factory and watched a display by Hurricane and Spitfire fighter planes. 'The drive back to the station,' wrote Colville, who was shortly to join the R.A.F. himself, 'was a triumphant procession. The crowds stood on the pavements, as thick as for the opening of Parliament in London, for miles and miles along the route. They waved, they cheered, they shouted: every face seemed happy and excited.' The one storm cloud that briefly appeared aboard the train that evening, Colville's diary further relates, without explaining what it was, was readily dispelled with the advent of 'lots of champagne.'

Before setting off for Chequers, he drove over to Liverpool to inspect the new aircraft-carrier *Indomitable*. He clattered up and down her companionways, wearing a naval uniform. He delivered to the assembled company a speech constructed with his usual flair – speaking in allegory of the aircraft-carrier as the capital ship's 'wife' who sallied forth to find, and even cook, the 'meal' so that the man-o'-war might 'eat it': thus battleship and aircraft-carrier had together done for *Bismarck*, he said, and so too they might yet deal with *Tirpitz*.

HIS TOUR OF the blitzed Midlands cities had left Churchill pondering one obvious and most disagreeable paradox: morale appeared to be higher than ever despite – or was it even because of? – the enemy's bombing raids. For a few weeks he now wavered about Britain's own night bombing offensive against Hitler's Reich.

Upon his return from Liverpool to Chequers on September 27, 1941 he expressed these doubts in a remarkable letter to Sir Charles Portal, the chief of air staff. 'It is very disputable whether bombing by itself will be a decisive factor in the present war,' he wrote. 'On the contrary, all that we

* Vol. i, pages 459–465. Believing on the authority of his 'most secret sources' that Central London was to be the Luftwaffe's target for a three-day blitz beginning on the night of November 14, 1940, Churchill had cancelled all his engagements for those days and made preparations to flee to the safety of Dytchley in Oxfordshire; he was being driven out of London with John Martin at five P.M. when an air ministry dispatch-rider caught up with him, with word that the 'beams,' just located, showed the target to be Coventry instead. He returned to No. 10, professing that he had decided to 'share London's ordeal.'[31]

have learnt since the war began shows that its effects, both physical and moral, are greatly exaggerated. There is no doubt that the British people have been stimulated and strengthened by the attack made upon them so far.' R.A.F. Bomber Command's offensive would probably be no more than 'a seriously increasing annoyance' to Germany.[32]

Portal had until one year before himself been commander-in-chief of R.A.F. Bomber Command. He was, it is fair to say, one of the cruellest and most morally unprincipled directors of British war strategy. He was dismayed to find his prime minister losing faith like this. In his reply he pointed out that Churchill's letter appeared to challenge the most fundamental tenets of British strategy, which vested all hope of a final victory in the expansion of the bomber arm to the exclusion of all rivals like Coastal Command. The chiefs of staff had recently stated – and Churchill had approved – this strategy in these words: 'It is in bombing on a scale undreamed of in the last war that we find the new weapon on which we must principally depend for the destruction of economic life and morale.' It was too late to have second thoughts now.[33]

With so much of Britain's industrial capacity geared to sustaining it, Churchill's bombing campaign had gained its own momentum. It was a juggernaut still gathering speed. On October 3 the R.A.F. attacked Rotterdam. The Dutch minister complained at the resulting horrendous casualties in the port – far more than the Nazis' infamous raid of 1940. In cabinet Sinclair ventured that perhaps the bombers had plastered the town in mistake for the harbour. Portal stoutly denied that the bombing had been indiscriminate.[34] Concern about the R.A.F.'s bombing accuracy leaked out. The press found out that even the air ministry agreed that they were doing little damage to enemy targets. 'It comes as a great shock to the government,' wrote Cecil King, 'who find that, after all, our bombing will not win the war.'[35] Churchill had sources of information which Portal did not – diplomatic telegrams (particularly those of American officials, who were still relatively free to roam about Hitler's Reich), codebreaking (especially of German municipal police messages), and agents' reports.

Writing to the chief of air staff on October 7, he explicitly deprecated placing 'unbounded confidence' in the bombing offensive, 'and still more expressing that confidence in terms of arithmetic.'

> It is the most potent method of impairing the enemy's morale we can use at the present time [he agreed]. . . [But] even if all the towns of Ger-

many were rendered largely uninhabitable, it does not follow that the military control would be weakened or even that war industry could not be carried on.

What had gravely misled the government, he charged, were the pictures painted by the air staff before the war of the destruction that German air raids would wreak on London. 'But all things are always on the move simultaneously,' he added, 'and it is quite possible that the Nazi war-making power in 1943 will be so widely spread throughout Europe as to be to a large extent independent of the actual buildings in the homeland.' 'He is an unwise man who thinks there is any certain method of winning this war,' he concluded.[36]

Taut and angry at this belittling of the effort of his brave aircrews, Portal personally saw the prime minister and defended the bombing offensive.[37] The evidence against it continued to accumulate however. From the British Legation in Berne came a dispatch reporting that neutral observers had seen little evidence of bomb damage in Berlin. 'Bomb damage is still a novelty,' this telegram read, 'Thousands of spectators are attracted to these spots.' Churchill sent a copy to the chief of air staff. Portal resisted any reduction in their bombing effort, writing to Churchill on October 13: 'I am now completely reassured that you accept the primary importance of our bomber operations and of building up the bomber force on the largest possible scale.'[38] The next day he wrote again, this time specifically about the raids on Berlin. 'The aiming points now given,' he stated frankly, 'are invariably in the most heavily built up areas in the centre of the city, mainly to the south and east of the Tiergarten.' So far, he regretted, all their attempts to ignite major conflagrations had been thwarted by weather and technical problems.[39]

It was at about this time that Churchill gave express instructions for the office accommodation installed 'under the slab' in the Cabinet War Room to be made, as far as humanly possible, one-hundred per cent bomb proof.[40]

THE ABRASIVE correspondence with Air Chief-marshal Portal came at a time when he was already contemplating resignation over the prime minister's treatment of Sir Arthur Tedder, commander of the desert air force. Tedder had warned as recently as October 8 of the growing air strength confronting his own squadrons. 'The conclusions were,' he reminded Portal on October 13, 'that we shall be definitely superior in mechanised forces but

numerically inferior in the air.'[41] This resulted in a double-barrelled blast from Portal on the fourteenth, which Tedder privately, and no doubt rightly, described as being in fact 'pure and unadulterated Winston.'[42]

Portal explained the background: given that New Zealand's soldiers were involved, Peter Fraser, the prime minister of that country, had just required from Churchill an assurance that Britain would have air superiority before launching CRUSADER. Air Marshal Tedder's report – although he had carefully spoken of 'numerical superiority,' which was very different from 'air superiority' – had made it impossible for Churchill to give such an assurance, short of lying. Since it was Tedder's figures which were the stumbling-block, Churchill began to question his judgement. He instructed Portal to send out his deputy, the Vice-Chief of Air Staff Sir Wilfrid Freeman, to Cairo to investigate – and, no doubt, to generate more politically acceptable figures. As Churchill informed General Auchinleck, using language of no uncertain colour, 'Tedder's estimate of strength, actual and relative, is so misleading and militarily untrue that I found it necessary at once to send Air Chief-marshal Freeman to Cairo.'[43]

At the defence committee meeting on the fifteenth, the prime minister would admit to having received Fraser's request for assurances; he had also received a signal from Auchinleck, providing figures which 'seemed to show that we should be inferior to the German and Italian Air forces' there. He therefore intended, he announced, to send out Freeman 'to clear up the facts.'[44] 'Greatly regret this intrusion,' Portal apologised to Tedder, as a postscript, '. . . but you can picture situation here and understand my difficulties.'[45]

In Churchill's defence it must be said that he had all the ULTRAS at his fingertips, which gave him an edge on his officers in Cairo. Since mid-September Bletchley Park had been solving the German army ENIGMA keys used both for communications within Rommel's Panzer army and those between him, Rome, and Berlin; until the end of November this would give Churchill a remarkable insight into the enemy's morale, condition, and movements. Bletchley Park was also routinely reading signals between Rommel's *Fliegerführer Afrika* and Tenth Air Corps headquarters in Italy.[46]

As so often before, it was a clash of personalities which underlay the row about Tedder. The Paymaster General and *éminence grise* Lord Hankey heard about this simmering row on October 15 from Freeman himself, as he was about to leave for Cairo. 'There is going to be a battle,' recorded Hankey with evident satisfaction. Churchill had 'taken a dislike' to Air Mar-

shal Tedder and had asked Portal to suspend him; Portal had refused and said that in that case Winston would have to accept his resignation too. Sinclair, added Hankey, supported Portal, 'though he is [crossed out: *a feeble*] not a strong man, and a strong personal friend of Churchill's.' Freeman asked Hankey whether his chief would be justified in resigning. Hankey replied to Freeman that 'another chief of staff' had asked him the same question – a month or two previously General Sir John Dill had asked him whether he ought to have resigned over Churchill's harsh treatment of Wavell. As for Portal's query, Hankey hedged – it all depended on Churchill's constitutional position as minister of defence, a post which Winston had created for himself on becoming prime minister. Freeman said that if his chief resigned, then he would too. 'He said he had no use for Churchill at all,' recorded Lord Hankey – who was himself one of the P.M.'s most informed and influential critics. [47]

Seeing Sir Wilfrid Freeman before his departure to Cairo on the following day, October 16, Churchill attempted familiar tactics to dispose of a dangerous critic – bribery and banishment: he offered Tedder's Cairo job to Freeman; he gave him a letter to hand to General Auchinleck immediately, which made plain that he had lost confidence in Tedder.[48] The letter hinted that Auchinleck should replace Tedder with Freeman. 'Do not let any thought of Tedder's personal feelings influence you,' wrote Churchill.[49]

Tedder and Auchinleck, both receiving selected ULTRA decrypts direct from Bletchley Park, had however now both concluded that the German air force facing them was stronger than Churchill admitted. Auchinleck would not hear of replacing his desert air force commander.[50] As for Churchill's letter, Auchinleck's heart must have sunk as he read the closing paragraphs – Churchill wrote about an expedition he was contemplating to Norway with three divisions and one armoured division.

LORD HANKEY soon had further good reason to detest Churchill. Since Lord Beaverbrook had achieved a great propaganda triumph with his mission to Moscow, Hankey would shortly find himself unceremoniously divested of his own Committee on Allied Supplies. Beaverbrook revelled in the publicity. With Hitler's armies only an hour's drive from Moscow, the world spotlight had lingered on his mission ('which, as I know from my sources,' recorded Cadogan, 'was a complete newspaper stunt. He *is* a scamp!')[51] The chiefs of staff shared his unease. 'This is typical of a totally unscrupulous cad of the Yellow Press,' recorded General Pownall.[52]

Beaverbrook had certainly offered Moscow more than just fair words. Despite Britain's own overseas commitments he and Harriman had jointly made formidable promises of succour to the Soviets – including British Hurricanes, American fighter-planes and bombers, Asdic submarine detection gear, and naval artillery; they offered a thousand tanks and two thousand armoured cars per month, as well as shiploads of steel, diamonds, machine tools, rubber, army boots, telephone cable, explosives, and medical supplies.[53] The prime minister called upon everybody to ensure that the shipments to Archangel began at once – the first of the famous 'PQ' convoys.* He cabled to Roosevelt: 'Max and Averell seem to have had a great success at Moscow, and now the vital thing is to act up to our bargain in early deliveries. Hitler evidently feels the draught.'[54] He informed Stalin that he hoped to sail one PQ convoy to Russia every ten days. The first would arrive at Archangel, he said, on October 12: twenty tanks and 193 fighter planes, followed by a convoy with 140 more tanks and one hundred Hurricanes, and a third PQ convoy, laden with two hundred fighters and one hundred tanks. To the Soviet dictator he quoted a Latin tag meaning 'He who gives quickly gives twofold.'[55]

On Friday October 10 the news from the Russian front was bad. Exhausted and asthmatic, Beaverbrook returned that morning to the U.K. with Harriman and rendered to Churchill and Eden a 'very lively & entertaining' account of their mission. They had been received bleakly and with little hospitality by the Russians, but Beaverbrook was totally enamoured of Joseph Stalin. 'He believes that Stalin will fight on,' wrote Eden, 'come what may, & that he hates Hitler (which he certainly did *not* in 1935) with cold fury.'[56] 'Stalin and Max,' scoffed one journalist, Vernon Bartlett, 'did everything two lovers can do except sleep together, and that only because they were too busy.'[57]

CHURCHILL INVITED Eden to motor down to Chequers for a night with Beaverbrook and Harriman. 'Winston arrived,' recorded Eden, 'while I was working in Hawtrey Room.' The prime minister insisted on escorting him upstairs to his draughty bedroom and lighting the fire. 'I know no-one with such perfect manners as a host,' noted the young minister, with the dour addition, '– especially when he feels like it.' Harriman confided to him that

* Named after the British admiralty officer P.Q. Roberts, who organised these convoys to North Russia. See our *The Destruction of Convoy PQ17* (London & New York, 1967).

Marshal Stalin was still speaking of a post-war alliance; the Kremlin would be offended if Britain did not respond. After an interlude for late movies, Eden cornered Beaverbrook and reproached him that his newspapers were sometimes 'pretty vindictive' toward him, a point which Winston had already raised at dinner. 'Max pleaded bewilderment,' recorded Eden. 'Said he had entered cabinet not expecting that he would agree with me & had thought my advice always well informed & wise etc., etc. He said he would deal with his press tomorrow. We shall see!'

Over dinner, Beaverbrook brought the talk around to the question of who should take over if anything befell Winston. Many would want Eden, he said; Churchill agreed. As for David Margesson (the secretary for war), the prime minister remarked that he had neither the brain nor any of the other qualifications. Churchill himself mentioned the name of the unquestionably well-qualified Sir John Anderson, and Eden politely offered that of Beaverbrook. All agreed however that the newspaper proprietor's difficulty would lie with the anti-Beaverbrook section of the Conservative Party. 'The rest would have you happily enough,' consoled Winston. When Churchill mused out loud that perhaps he ought to identify a successor in a political testament lest he did himself 'meet a bomb,' Eden superstitiously interjected that that would be to court misfortune. 'You needn't worry that it would do you any harm,' was Churchill's interesting response. 'Winston still in the kindliest of moods,' Eden wrote, still glowing. 'I don't think I have ever known him more warm-hearted in his friendliness. And so to bed, at length, at 3 A.M.!'

THE PROTOCOL which Lord Beaverbrook had signed in Moscow evinced outspoken horror in Whitehall; the air ministry wanted to furnish only their most inferior fighter planes to the Russians, while the war office was reluctant to release scarce spares with the tanks. Churchill overruled them. At midday on October 15, he called Attlee, Eden, and Beaverbrook to No. 10, and appointed Beaverbrook as overlord for the supplies to Russia. Lord Hankey's diary shows the suppressed rage that this provoked: 'Today,' he wrote, 'I have been deprived of my Committee on Allied Supplies.'

> I have no grievances [he continued] in view of the fact that Beaverbrook, a first rate muddler, has been to Russia & is justified in taking over the execution of the agreement he has made. But the fact remains that Winston loses no opportunity to humiliate me. He first left me out of his govern-

ment and only gave me a second-rate £2,000-a-year post when the chiefs of staff said I was doing indispensable work. Even that post he took away from me, disrating me to Paymaster General.

'Whenever I get something good going,' continued this very disgruntled senior civil servant, 'he turns it down. He did his best to turn down the Oil anti-tank weapon. . . Again and again he has prevented the execution of my Committee's plans for attacking German oil installations, which might have prevented the attack on Russia. . . And now that, by the sweat of the brow, I have created a really effective machine for supplies to Allies, including Russia, he smashes it.' He identified 'the nigger in the woodpile' as Beaverbrook.

On October 9, as soon as he had received Beaverbrook's telegram from Moscow reporting his agreement with Stalin, Hankey had his Committee convened and overhauled the arrangements for rushing the first instalment by convoy to Archangel as soon as possible. He had sent full particulars of these to both Beaverbrook and the P.M. 'On Monday last [October 13] I was summoned at short notice to the war cabinet, when they approved Beaverbrook's report. I then asked if I was to continue my work.'

Beaverbrook then said, in very surly tones, that he was going to speak to Sir Edward Bridges about it that night.[58] Churchill then said that the conditions had changed since my Committee was set up. Many Allies had disappeared. He thought that some new organisation was required.

I replied that some Allies had disappeared, but others had come to the front. Turkey was now much more important; Egypt, Cyprus, Palestine, Syria, Iran, China, had now to be catered for. I might have added Dutch East Indies, Portugal, and the Belgian Congo.

He said, 'We will have a talk about it.'

I knew, however, from the demeanour of Beaverbrook, who could not meet my eye, that the thing had been settled behind my back.

'If Sinclair & Portal resign,' Hankey concluded in his eloquent diary entry, 'I am tempted to go as a point of principle. . . The whole atmosphere of the war cabinet hit me in the eyes. No feeling of a happy team of comrades, such as I have been accustomed to. A crowd of silent men, and the usual monologue by Churchill.'[59]

THERE WERE barely perceptible signs of a growing debility in Churchill which only those who had known him for many years could detect. At this time, the permanent under-secretary at the war office, who had been Churchill's private secretary for five years in the Twenties, reported confidentially to his father a growing 'conviction that Winston is showing signs of becoming ga-ga.'[60]

Churchill was not happy with the war office; he compared it unfavourably with the German Army's High Command, which seemed the acme of ruthless professionalism. Dressing for dinner at Chequers one night at the end of September, he had confided to young Colville that it was the C.I.G.S. who had swept aside his misgivings about the wisdom of sending British empire troops into Greece in the spring – the result had been another Churchill Balkans fiasco.* As he straightened his black tie, he added that he was thinking of sacking Sir John Dill. 'We cannot afford military failures,' he said.[61]

Casting around for a new C.I.G.S., he contemplated appointing General Sir Alan Brooke, currently the C.-in-C. Home Forces, and even the venerable Lord Gort. Lyttelton, asked informally for his views about the latter, encouraged the idea. 'Above all,' wrote Lyttelton, 'he is always thinking of soldiering and getting at the enemy.' This was not the view that the Germans had gained of Lord Gort in the days before Dunkirk.[62]

Eden reproached Churchill for underestimating Dill's talents: he knew the army well, and had made some excellent appointments. 'Winston was critical of Dill,' he wrote after one dinner with the prime minister now. 'I replied that I was sure he could not do better. I admired Brooke but he was probably better where he was.'[63]

BOTH DILL and David Margesson, the secretary of state for war, were dismayed when Churchill now decided to revive his 1940 idea of a frontal assault on Trondheim in Norway.[64] It would be a sop to Stalin, but these critics felt that it had little else to commend it and the chiefs of staff had already turned it down. 'There he is,' wrote Dill's deputy on October 2,

*This was a terrible calumny: Churchill and Eden were the joint godfathers of the sentimental military extravaganza in Greece, which cost the lives of thousands of empire servicemen. Eden knew it. He continued to fret about it and often canvassed others for their support, including Wavell (Eden diary, September 18, 1941); Dill and Lyttelton (*ibid.*, August 30, 1942); and 'Jumbo' Wilson (*ibid.*, October 13, 1943).

'off on this wild hare and the [chiefs of staff] are going to have the devil of a time getting the bone out of his mouth. Winston's day-to-day strategy is simply appalling and if he were allowed a free rein in such things he would get himself into a series of disasters sufficient to lose us the war. And he is so impatient, both of opposition and in matters of *time*.'

Faced with a united war office front Winston toyed with the idea of having Eden himself develop the Trondheim operation, code-named AJAX. Even Eden however saw it as an unnecessary hazard. 'He feels, as I do,' noted his secretary, 'that so many of W.'s gorgeous schemes have ended in failure. The war is now going fairly well for us – but a false step, a faulty short-cut, would set us back years.'[65] Not easily thwarted, Churchill instructed General Brooke to prepare a plan of operation and appoint a task-force commander himself.[66] He called his cabinet colleagues down to Chequers to discuss AJAX on Friday the third. Pound, Portal, and deputy P.M. Attlee arrived first, while the recalcitrant General Dill brought Brooke down from London later that evening.[67] Churchill launched into one of his midnight monologues. 'We sat up till 2:15 A.M. discussing the problem,' recorded Brooke, to whom all this was still new, in his private diary, 'and I did my best to put the P.M. off attempting the plan. Air support cannot be adequately supplied, and we shall fall into the same pitfall as we did before.' When Dill returned to London he told Pownall that Winston had shown signs of being shaken by the opposition.[68] Brooke too thought the P.M. was weakening, but when Churchill returned to London visions of AJAX still danced in his head.[69]

ONE SIDE-RESULT of these Chequers talks was that Admiral Pound persuaded Churchill to dictate an immediate letter ending the appointment of the aged Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes as Director of Combined Operations.[70] Pound told friends that Keyes had intrigued his way into the job; the naval staff had despaired of ever getting rid of this septuagenarian crony and confidant of the P.M.'s. 'It is really a terrible business . . ,' he had written privately in January: 'I am sorry to say it, but I firmly believe that the only thing he cares for is the glorification of Roger Keyes.'[71]

Pulling rank, Keyes had constantly interfered with the planning of operations like PILGRIM (the seizure of the Spanish Canary Islands) for which General Sir Harold Alexander and Rear-Admiral Sir Louis 'Turtle' Hamilton had been given responsibility. 'Winston put him in,' General Pownall had recorded as recently as September, 'and it's the devil of a job to get him

out. Not that Winston has any real faith in him, I'm sure. But his nominees, good or bad, remain.'[72] Director of Combined Operations was not the proper title for the job anyway, and the chiefs of staff had drawn up a new directive, renaming Keyes' office as 'Adviser on Combined Operations.' Believing himself indispensable, Keyes had refused to go along with this. It came as a shock to be told now that in that case he would have to go. He complained to General Ismay that he had had a very raw deal from Winston. To add insult to injury, the P.M. would give to Mountbatten, the new D.C.O. – for the old title was retained after all – all the powers that he had allowed the chiefs of staff to remove from Keyes.[73] 'Roger Keyes is making himself very unpleasant,' described Pound, delighted at his coup. 'He never had much brain,' he wrote unkindly to another admiral, 'and what he has got left is quite addled.' This, coming from Pound, was censure indeed.[74]

Six days after Keyes' dismissal, after a luncheon with H.M. the King, Churchill announced that the Combined Operations job should go to the blue-blooded Lord Louis Mountbatten, a young officer possessed of unquestioned drive and originality. He ordered a signal made to Mountbatten at Norfolk, Virginia, where he was just taking over command of the aircraft-carrier *Illustrious*. 'We want you home here at once,' this signal read, 'for something which you will find of the highest interest.'[75]

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On Churchill's arrival back at No. 10 Downing-street on Monday October 6, 1941, he seemed depressed. 'Long known to us,' as Sir Alexander Cadogan wrote that day, TYPHOON, Hitler's big push against Moscow, had begun on the second. The auguries for the Russian defenders were not good. Hearing Berlin's taunting, if premature, claims of final victory, Cadogan suspected that the Bolsheviks were in for a thin time – 'And so,' he speculated in his diary, 'are we all, probably.'[76]

It was the dreadful news from Kuibyshev, whither the Soviet government had retired as Hitler's tanks approached the capital, that so oppressed Winston. One evening when Eden came to dinner he told the youthful foreign secretary, with tears of affection clouding his eyes: 'I regard you as my son. I do not get in your way, nor you in mine.'[77] He vested his hopes now in CRUSADER, General Auchinleck's coming offensive in North Africa – the newly created Eighth Army would have over six hundred tanks and six hundred aeroplanes, which he said vastly outnumbered Rommel's forces –

and he was impatient for the battle to begin. He said with a sigh that he often wished that Eden was still political master of the war office instead of Margesson.

Over at the war office General Brooke spent the coming week humouring what he privately called the P.M.'s 'mad Norwegian plans.' He concluded that Britain lacked sufficient aircraft-carriers, and that Trondheim fjord would be impossible to penetrate anyway. By the eighth many people in Whitehall were using that word, madness.

At the end of the week Churchill retired to Chequers, with Beaverbrook among the guests. Hitler's TYPHOON had already made obsolete much of what Beaverbrook had to report from Moscow. The mood was grim. Called in to take dictation on Sunday morning, October 12, the P.M.'s prim and proper shorthand secretary Miss Layton, whom Churchill's rakish daughter Sarah compared with a head girl in a convent school, found him barely suppressing a foul temper. 'Now, Miss Layton, just stop playing the bloody ass,' he shouted after one typing mistake. When she typed 'Somehow I think it right – ,' the P.M. snapped that he had dictated what she now thought was 'the time is right;' the page was retyped, but flung back at her again with a roar: 'God's teeth, girl! Can't you even do it right the second time? I said *ripe*, *ripe*, *ripe*! P – P – P!'[78] The masseuse Miss Roper was hurried in that afternoon, to restore mental equilibrium in the prime minister.[79]

The word from the Russian front was so grim that he telegraphed to Stalin an offer to take over the protection of the supply route in northern Iran too, which would release the half-dozen Soviet divisions stationed there. 'I pledge the faith of Britain,' his telegram continued, 'that we will not seek any advantage for ourselves at the expense of any rightful Russian interest during the war or at the end.'[80] He was verging on his familiar notion that to assist Stalin it would be better to undertake anything and fail, rather than to succeed merely in doi§§§§§ng nothing: AJAX, the frontal assault on Trondheim, would perfectly fit that bill. He instructed Brooke to have his plans ready at No. 10 by that evening. General Pownall, standing in for Dill – who was on leave, having just taken a wife – wrote that day, referring to AJAX: 'It is a pet project of Winston's, and I do not doubt that when they meet this evening there'll be a very stormy scene.'[81]

The P.M. returned from Chequers to Downing-street at six-thirty for the meeting. Seeing him glowering, General Brooke already knew they were all in for the 'hell of a storm.' At one side of the cabinet table Churchill had grouped his more servile 'colleagues' – General Brooke recognised Eden,

Attlee, and war transport minister Lord Leathers among them. Brooke faced them with General Sir Bernard Paget, whom he had reluctantly nominated to act as the task-force commander. He had developed four possible plans for executing AJAX and – more importantly – the overwhelming arguments militating against those plans, in particular the total absence of air cover.

The storm broke at once. 'I had instructed you,' Churchill thundered, 'to prepare a detailed plan for the capture of Trondheim with a commander appointed and ready in every detail. What have you done? You have instead submitted a masterly treatise on all the reasons why this operation should *not* be carried out!' For two hours he cross-examined the generals; he demanded to know the precise source of each statement about frost and thaw, and just why the troops anticipated taking twenty-four hours to cover one stretch of ground. He kept up a withering crossfire of sarcasm, but by eight-thirty it was plain that AJAX was dead or dying. 'The P.M.,' Pownall would write the next day, 'is covering his retreat by a smoke screen.'

Churchill made a further run at it on October 15, holding an endless defence committee meeting after dinner to re-examine the objections. Eden was no keener on AJAX than the chiefs of staff; the risks were obvious. He much preferred a counter-project called WHIPCORD, an invasion of Sicily, after the conclusion of CRUSADER. Attlee supported him, while Beaverbrook kept his own counsels. 'Max thundered at our failure to help Russia,' recorded Eden, 'without backing any particular project and it was eventually agreed that projects on lines I had suggested should be examined. Dill was clearly anxious to do so.' Churchill predicted that the chiefs of staff would gun down WHIPCORD like everything else.

They reminisced about the 1938 Men of Munich, one of their favourite topics, before retiring to bed at two A.M.[82] Two days later the defence committee decided that WHIPCORD should replace AJAX. 'I am immensely relieved,' penned Eden in his diary, 'for now I truly think that we are on the right lines. Winston too seems well content, for all his earlier enthusiasm for AJAX. It now remains for CRUSADER to do battle well. These days of waiting impose an agonising strain.'

THE GHOST of AJAX continued to clank around the battlements of Churchill's brain. Not long afterwards he invited a Canadian military dignitary to weekend at Chequers with him – Brooke recalled it was General A. G. L. McNaughton, commander of the Canadian forces in Britain, but the Chequers guest book records only Colonel James Ralston, the Canadian de-

fence minister, who visited on the twenty-fourth; Brooke briefed him first on AJAX, and warned him of Winston's methods. He suspected that the P.M. was now planning to stage the operation independently, with Canadian troops – and with good grounds for those suspicions, because the Canadian stumbled into Brooke's room looking limp on Monday, and 'literally poured himself' into the general's armchair. 'He informed me,' wrote Brooke, 'that he had had a ghastly weekend – he had been kept up till all hours of the morning until he did not know which way he was facing.'

The Canadian confessed that he had agreed to examine AJAX – but he had also telegraphed secretly to Mackenzie King, pleading with him not to sanction the use of any Canadian troops in Norway.[83]

CRUSADER was not due to start until November 1. The prime minister hoped that this mighty British tank assault on General Rommel's positions in Libya would inspire Stalin, allure Turkey, worry Spain, and even encourage the Vichy French general Maxime Weygand to invite the British to enter North-West Africa at Casablanca. Everything hinged on CRUSADER.

Throughout October 1941 Churchill badgered General Auchinleck by letter, telegram, and personal messenger to bring the date forward. In mid-month however the general asked permission to delay CRUSADER until November 18: he was now encountering major – indeed, scandalous – problems with the axles of his main battle tanks. Churchill sent an angry riposte on October 18 reminding Auchinleck that the defence committee had only reluctantly accepted the original postponement. 'It is impossible,' he complained, 'to explain to Parliament and the nation how it is our Middle East armies have had to stand for four and a half months without engaging the enemy while all the time Russia is being battered to pieces. I have hitherto managed to prevent public discussion, but at any time it may break out.'[84]

The delay was all the more sickening because, hoping to stimulate Roosevelt to action, he had telegraphed ahead to the president that he was sending him a secret letter by the hand of Clement Attlee, who was shortly travelling to Washington on Labour Party business. The letter was for F.D.R.'s eyes only, to be burned after reading.

'In the moonlight of early November,' Churchill's current draft of this letter dramatically began, 'General Auchinleck will attack the German and Italian armies in Cyrenaica with his utmost available power.' He had already invited Attlee to lunch at No. 10 Downing-street on the day of his departure to hand him the letter.[85]

That morning, October 20, however, he had to advise the defence committee that CRUSADER was delayed. 'I feared this might happen,' recorded Eden, 'but hoped against hope.'[86]

Because of Auchinleck's prevarication, the final letter to Roosevelt was revised to begin with the considerably less precise words 'some time this Fall.' (In a fit of humility Churchill even eschewed the English word *autumn*.*) Even this letter was then withheld. The only epistle which Attlee finally carried to the White House was an extract from a recent dispatch in which General Auchinleck described a morning in the desert outside Cairo watching the 4th Armoured Brigade training in their new American-built tanks; even these tanks, Auchinleck mentioned, required modifications like the fitting of radio sets and tanks for drinking-water.

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The Germans seemed poised on the brink of victory at Moscow. As each day passed, Lord Beaverbrook stepped up his attack on the government in general and on Sir John Dill in particular for the failure to aid Russia. At the after-dinner defence committee meeting held on October 15 Beaverbrook (having 'apparently become imbued with the Russian point of view,' as one history of the chiefs of staff dryly noted) talked of the services' 'procrastination and idleness.'[88] Circulating a document entitled 'We Must Help Russia' (in fact, a leader from his own *Daily Express*) four days later he demanded a Second Front. 'We must strike,' this memorandum pointed out, 'before it is too late.' Even as Churchill met his cabinet on the twentieth to consider this, the Beaverbrook newspapers were printing another violent criticism of the chiefs of staff. At this meeting, according to Cadogan, Beaverbrook flapped his arms and snapped that he 'disagreed fundamentally' with the government, and generally 'put the wind up Winston.' 'What a monkey,' wrote Cadogan, in a tone of detached amusement.[89]

Simultaneously Beaverbrook sired an intrigue to replace Dill with his own nominee, the anti-aircraft general Sir Frederick Pile.[90] He had proposed this to 'Pug' Ismay during their return voyage from Russia, and undoubtedly put it to Churchill too. Churchill certainly saw a lot of Pile in the weeks that followed. General Sir Alan Brooke jealously dismissed Pile as a

*The envelope is in Roosevelt's files. It is marked, 'The Lord Privy Seal,' *i.e.* Attlee, but it is endorsed: 'Handed to the president by Winston Churchill, Jan. 2nd. or 3rd., 1942.'[87]

'climber,' but understood Churchill's lack of harmony with Dill. 'Dill,' he wrote, 'was the essence of straightforwardness, blessed with the highest of principles and an unassailable integrity of character.' None of these qualities appealed to the P.M., he added, given his own 'shortcomings.'

It seemed to Churchill that Beaverbrook was again growing too big for his boots – that he had political ambitions, and was conspiring on many levels to unhorse him as P.M. Challenged privately as to his intentions, Beaverbrook at first cut up rough and, pleading asthma, drafted on the weekend of October 25 yet another letter of resignation from his office as minister of supply; like the others, it was not sent. Over dinner at No. 10 on the twenty-seventh, Churchill read him the Riot Act. Beaverbrook claimed that everybody was against him. 'Why don't you send me to Moscow,' he exclaimed, according to one version of their argument. 'I'll keep them in the war!'[91] Afterwards Churchill wrote a telling letter to his son in Cairo about how hard things were becoming in England 'now that the asthma season has come on,' and what with Beaverbrook fighting everybody and resigning 'every day.' After lunching with Winston at the end of October, Beaverbrook grudgingly knuckled under and promised he 'would serve under the prime minister in any capacity.'

Churchill was reluctant to lose Beaverbrook. He would tell W. P. Crozier, editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, a month later: 'When he is alright he can take on anything. But when he has asthma he is miserable and he wants to get out of things – and mind you, I need him; I need him. He is stimulating and, believe me, he is a big man.'[92] These were important virtues, and Churchill was prepared to overlook the minister's rampaging in order to retain them.

SINCE NOTHING would persuade General Auchinleck to bring forward the date of CRUSADER, Churchill had yielded, writing to him on October 21, 1941, 'We have no choice but to accept your proposal. I will not therefore waste further words on it.'[93] A few days later he received a private note from Randolph expressing admiration for the general's qualities. 'He strikes me,' the P.M.'s son had written from Cairo, 'as being a really first class and intelligent human being. I trust that results will vindicate your choice.'[94]

Churchill saw no reason why CRUSADER should fail: the balance was slowly tilting against Rommel's army – now called the 'Panzergruppe Afrika,' as the ULTRA intercepts showed. Auchinleck would be pitting 658 tanks against Rommel's 168, and 660 aeroplanes against 642; it all depended on

whether Rommel could be forced to accept battle. On October 24 Churchill approved the new date, November 18: 'Enemy is now ripe for [the] sickle,' he telegraphed to Auchinleck. 'This is the moment to strike hard. I have every confidence you will do so. Throw in all, and count on me.'[95]

The Germans were already claiming to be only thirty-eight miles from Moscow, but there were signs from the Oracle that Hitler's offensive was in difficulties: unseasonably early autumn rains were turning the Russian highways and battlefields into quagmires. ('Rather a good report from Russia, from a good source,' recorded Cadogan, referring to a decoded signal).

How impatiently Churchill awaited the credit that a victorious CRUSADER would bring! In his mind's eye he saw Auchinleck's troops storming into Tripoli, capital of Libya, then invading Sicily and leaping across to Italy; he saw R.A.F. bombers lifting from airfields in Libya, Sicily, Malta, and Sardinia to devastate the Italian mainland; he glimpsed troops arriving on Libya's frontiers with French Tunisia, and General Weygand drawing the appropriate conclusions in Britain's favour; he saw Spain, occupied briefly by Hitler but rising against her invaders. He saw too, as he wrote to Oliver Lyttelton on October 25, 'the continuance of the murders and reprisals, slaughter of hostages etc. which is now going on in so many countries.'[96]*

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In the private message which he had drafted to Roosevelt on October 20 he had made much of his fear that after stabilising the Russian front Hitler might invade Britain with 'perhaps fifty or sixty divisions;' he even mentioned reports of eight hundred tank-landing-craft which the Nazis were amassing, reports which he himself later dismissed as untrustworthy.[98] In

* Encouraged by the S.O.E., French assassins had murdered a German army colonel at Nantes on October 20, 1941, with the desired result: the Germans shot fifty French hostages. Even de Gaulle balked at this cynical shedding of his countrymen's blood, and Maurice Schumann broadcast instructions over the B.B.C.'s French service not to assassinate any more Germans; de Gaulle repeated this advice on the twenty-third. The Polish leader General Wladyslaw Sikorski, lunching that day with Churchill, drew his attention to these broadcasts and accused de Gaulle of 'Pétainism.' Churchill protested to the B.B.C., and asked Bracken: 'Is it true that the B.B.C. deprecated killing by Frenchmen of Germans? Let me see what was said.' At his instance, that night the war cabinet decided not to dissuade individual Frenchmen from killing 'their German oppressors.' Hundreds of French hostages would pay for this policy with their lives.[97]

1939, so Churchill wrote, trying to alarm the president, Hitler had attacked Poland; in 1940, France; in 1941, Russia. Would it be Britain's turn in 1942 – and who would be his victim, he asked portentously, in 1943? In this message, Churchill also revealed the political anxieties that underlay his plea to Stalin to withdraw Soviet troops from North Iran. 'The Russians,' he lamented, 'much disturb Persia by their presence, their theories, and their behaviour.' He feared what he called 'the outbreak of disorder.'[99] It is not easy to reconcile these lines to Roosevelt with his pledge to Stalin only one week earlier that Britain would 'not seek any advantage' in Iran at Moscow's expense.

He allowed the cabinet a glimpse of his submerged hostility toward the Soviet Union on October 23. Of course, he said, he was glad to assist the Russians in killing Germans – but with weapons, not with troops. Sending 'bodies' to Russia, he said, would be like sending coals to Newcastle. Had not the Russians double-crossed Britain by signing their treaty with Nazi Germany in August 1939? For two years Stalin had aided Hitler while himself annexing eastern Poland and the Baltic states and attacking Finland. Pownall, encouraged by this frankness, echoed several colleagues' private feelings when he now wrote, 'Would that the two loathsome monsters, Germany and Russia, drown together in a death grip in the winter mud.'[100] To Churchill too, the defeat of the Soviets seemed imminent, and he began talking of them as a liability.

Eden told his secretary on October 27 he was worried by this change.[101] The next day Ambassador Cripps cabled from Kuibyshev a renewed plea to come home. In a savage retort, Churchill rehearsed all the old complaints – how Stalin had signed that pact with Hitler, and only had himself to blame now; and how the Russians had allowed France to die in 1940; * and how the Soviet Union had not entered into consultations with Britain until Hitler attacked them in June 1941. 'We were left alone for a whole year,' Churchill lectured his far-Left ambassador, 'while every communist in England, under orders from Moscow, did his best to hamper our war effort.'

> That a government with this record should accuse us of trying to make conquests in Africa or gain advantages in Persia at their expense . . . leaves me quite cold.

* German records show that Stalin and Molotov actually congratulated Hitler on each of his 1940 victories over Norway, the Low Countries, and France.

To allow two or three British empire divisions to be sent into the heart of Russia as Cripps wanted, 'to be surrounded and cut to pieces as a symbolic sacrifice,' would be silly. 'I hope,' he added, 'that I shall never be called upon to argue the case in public.'[102]

THEIR INDIGNATION roused by the Fleet-street press, the British public, and especially the working classes, stood solidly behind the Russian armies, and the apparent indolence of their own government attracted biting criticism in the House before it rose on October 23, 1941. The Welsh firebrand M.P. Aneurin Bevan, the Labour Party's most compelling orator, told the government to govern or to go. That afternoon, Labour's bibulous deputy leader Arthur Greenwood ('more sober and more confiding than usual') told an editor that Winston was aware that his popularity was slipping.[103] Churchill's parliamentary private secretary Colonel George Harvie-Watt came to Chequers that Monday morning to discuss Bevan's dangerous campaign. 'The Communists,' Winston described afterwards to Randolph, 'are posing as the only patriots in the country. The Admirals, Generals, and Air Marshals chant their stately hymn of Safety First. . . In the midst of this I have to restrain my natural pugnacity by sitting on my own head. How bloody!'[104]

The anxious and chanting gentlemen to whom he was referring were undoubtedly General Sir Harold Alexander, Air Vice Marshal Sir Donald Stevenson, and Admiral Sir James Somerville, all of whom he had invited down to Chequers for the night on Friday October 24, to discuss WHIPCORD, an invasion of Sicily. Somerville, Flag Officer commanding Force 'H' at Gibraltar, had flown in four days previously 'in order,' as he put it privately afterwards, 'to try & dispose of some of the wet ideas . . . in active circulation & emanating chiefly from Chequers.' He and Alexander drove down together to Chequers, where they arrived at six P.M. After dinner, noted the admiral in his tiny pocket diary, they had a 'tremendous argument over WHIPCORD. P.M. getting very angry at objections and difficulties. However we put all the cards on the table.' As was his inhospitable way Winston did not allow his guests to retire for the night until three A.M.

Saturday October 25 dawned dull, rainy and overcast. 'Saw the P.M. again at ten in bed,' jotted Somerville, '& talked for about 40 [minutes]. Very angry at first but mollified later & very flattering finally.'[105] 'Winston,' he wrote in a private letter, 'handed out butter with both hands, but as he treated us to a version of the war in the Western Med., which lasted till

3:00 [A.M.], I was able to give him my views on Oran [Mers el-Kébir] & Dakar* including the passage of the cruisers. I realise now I fell into a trap because he obviously wanted the other side of the picture in order to dispose of it in the *Second World Crisis* which is passing through his head in draft.' Fortunately for Somerville, the First Sea Lord ('not so tired as I expected') had tipped him off in advance about the wildcat schemes that Winston was likely to broach at Chequers – 'which,' described Somerville, 'he did.' He expressed 'profound surprise & concern' when they came out.[106] He was aghast about the new project for a rapid invasion of Sicily, WHIPCORD. Even as they were talking, at about one A.M. a telegram arrived from Auchinleck and Tedder in Cairo; both of these commanders also flatly opposed WHIPCORD. 'They did not consider Sicily either practicable or necessary,' Churchill later recalled. Somerville would describe the scene in another private letter: 'I was down at Chequers when the remarks of the C.-in-C.s, Middle East, arrived –,' he wrote:

> The P.M. gave an angry snort, thrust it into my hand & said, 'Read that, Admiral, & tell me what you think of it.' [I] read it & said, 'There's a lot of sound horse-sense in this & facts are being faced.' As it bore out nearly all the arguments I had been putting forward, I was naturally in agreement.

Since both of the other guests, Alexander and Stevenson, had their minds focused on what they would do when they got to Sicily, or what the admiral sardonically called 'the promised land,' they were indignant at his criticism. The rest of the time was spent deliberating on what he would generalise, perhaps unfairly, as 'important decisions . . . relegated to the middle watch [two to six A.M.] amidst the aromas of very old brandy and expensive cigars.' ('I speak with some acidity,' he apologised in this letter to Admiral Cunningham, 'because I've seen it all happening.')[107]

AFTER THESE visitors – Somerville, Alexander, and Stevenson – had left on Sunday Miss Roper came in as usual to massage Winston. General Brooke and the Prof. came down for dinner: it was again eleven P.M. by the time they had disposed of the port, the brandy, the snuff, and all the other post-

* Two particularly unhappy naval controversies of the second half of 1940, in which orders given by Churchill were open to dispute. Vol. i, 348 *et seq.*, 386 *et seq.*

prandial perquisites of prime-ministerial power. 'After dinner,' recorded Brooke, 'the P.M. sent for his dressing gown to put over his "siren suit."' Thus silkily attired, covered with gold, red, and green dragons, he led his guests upstairs to watch the latest Soviet and German newsreel films. At midnight he sent the Prof. away, as he wanted to be alone with Brooke to discuss CRUSADER and WHIPCORD and the high hopes he persisted in vesting in them.

They made an odd couple, the elderly prime minister and the perky, alert general who would soon become the British empire's chief of general staff, a man of lightning-swift speech, his tongue seldom moving slower than his brain, and for ever licking suddenly around his lips like a chameleon.[108]

Brooke did not tolerate fools lightly and he was often more abrupt with the prime minister in public than was seemly. He was abstemious, quick, tidy, and exact; the P.M. was just the opposite. He had an ill-concealed contempt, said Ismay, for the P.M.'s ignorance of fighting machines.[109] Inevitably, as the war progressed the general would become more and more impatient with his master. He hated Churchill's pathological unfairness toward generals like John Dill and Alan Cunningham, and was alienated by his monumental egoism, particularly as displayed in his post-war writings.[110]

By contrast, the prime minister was lisping and ponderous, but even at two-fifteen his flow of thought and oratory did not stop – he now suggested that they have some sandwiches sent into the hall. Like Mackenzie King two months before, Brooke watched bemused as his prime minister cranked up the gramophone and trotted around the room in his flowing and florid dressing gown, a half-munched sandwich in one hand, giving occasional skips in time with the tune. On each dance lap he stopped near the fireplace where the general was sitting close to the glowing embers, and unburdened himself of a fresh thought or quotation. Given the P.M.'s worries, Brooke found his lightness of heart truly astonishing.[111]

The next day, October 27, this brief euphoria evaporated. The P.M. returned to London late to avoid a crowd of demonstrators outside No. 10 Downing-street. He found that the chiefs of staff had now recommended unanimously that WHIPCORD too should be abandoned – the operation against Sicily would be not only unnecessary, but fraught with risk; a flop now would set them back by years. At that evening's defence committee meeting Dudley Pound made a statement so clearly opposed to the operation that Churchill threw up his hands and said, 'Well, that settles it.'

'But,' [he] added with a rasp [*reported Somerville in a letter*], 'Mind you, I didn't prepare it – it was the chiefs of staff who prepared it, not me.'

This was perfectly true.[112] 'Poor Winston very depressed,' wrote Cadogan, adding with relief: 'Got away by midnight.' Somerville's diary concurs. 'Went to Defence meeting where chief of naval staff [Pound] gave very clear picture. PM said WHIPCORD was off & [curse]d everyone soundly especially [the] chiefs of staff who had put it up.' 'A sad affair,' he echoed in a private letter, '& a wicked waste of effort & time which could have been spent more profitably.'[113]

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On that day, October 27, 1941, Roosevelt broadcast in his regular 'fireside chat' series a statement which showed that he had – apparently – fallen for the 'Nazi documents' which the British secret service had planted on his government.[114] It was Navy Day, and the president talked first about the recent German operations in the Atlantic – one American destroyer attacked on September 4, another on October 17 with the loss of eleven sailors. 'We have wished to avoid shooting,' he intoned emotionally. 'But the shooting has started. In the long run all that will matter is who fired the last shot.'

Then he played the trump card. 'Hitler,' he declaimed into the microphone, 'has often protested that his plans for conquest do not extend across the Atlantic Ocean. His submarines and raiders prove otherwise. So does the entire design of his new world order. For example, I have in my possession a secret map made in Germany by Hitler's government, by the planners of the new world order. It is a map of South America and part of Central America as Hitler proposes to organise it. To-day in this area there are fourteen separate countries. The geographical experts of Berlin, however, have ruthlessly obliterated all existing boundary lines and have divided South America into five vassal states bringing the whole continent under their domination. . . This map makes clear the Nazi design not only against South America, but against the United States itself.'[115]

8: *Really Not Quite Normal*

Traditionally, as the foreign office only now objected, Britain had always retained the right of independent negotiation with Japan. In the summer of 1941 however, as we have remarked,* Churchill was content to leave the handling of the dispute with this formidable Far East naval power in American hands. His ambassador in Tokyo, Sir Robert Craigie, expressed profound dismay that such matters of vital concern to the British empire should be under discussion between Washington and Tokyo, 'without our being given anything but the barest outline of what was happening.' Craigie warned on November 1 of crises within the Dominions, and especially in Australia, if Britain continued to absent herself from these crucial discussions. 'What we really want,' wrote Craigie, 'is the United States in the war on our side, and Japan really neutral – and it is premature to abandon hope as yet of bringing this off.' Making little attempt to conceal the object of his derision, he added: 'If Hitler's motto is "one by one," the motto of those who take too lightly the prospect of Japan's entry into the war appears to be "the more the merrier".'[1]

Only a few days previously, Churchill had again made plain that he believed Tokyo to be bluffing, assuring his cabinet that he was 'still inclined to think' that Japan would not 'run into war with the A.B.C.D. [American, British, Chinese, Dutch] powers' unless the USSR had first been 'broken.'[2]

President Roosevelt's actions since the meeting at Placentia Bay were chosen with equally little thought for their likely consequences. More than a hint of misplaced recrimination would creep into Churchill's subsequent memoirs, *The Second World War*, about the pass to which he claimed his late friend had brought their relations with Japan in 1941 – first by 'his' oil

* Pages 99–100.

embargo which had fatefully driven her into a corner; then by his refusal to meet the moderate Japanese prime minister Prince Konoye, of which London learned only through MAGIC; and finally by Roosevelt's about-face on the *modus vivendi*, or means of co-existing, which was originally drafted to be offered to the Japanese as late as November 1941 and which might have prevented war with Japan altogether. This document would be replaced by brusque demands of which Washington gave Whitehall no word, and which indeed (as Churchill would querulously write after the war) 'went beyond anything for which we had ventured to ask.'[3]

Roosevelt was buffeted, however, no less than Prince Konoye in Tokyo, by the dictates of a belligerent 'war council,' as he called it, in Washington: Stimson, Ickes, Marshall, Knox, and Hull all believed in nudging Japan to the brink, while the American forces prepared to do battle with her. For this readiness they had asked three months in August; but, such often being the ways of military planners, they persisted in asking for 'three months' in August, in September, in October, and even as late as November 1941.[4]

Stimson was particularly opposed to anything smacking of appeasement. On October 6, he had recommended to Hull that they demand that Japan evacuate her troops from China, and promise not to attack the Soviet Union; meanwhile the United States should string Japan along for 'three months,' but these talks 'should not be allowed to ripen into a personal conference' between Roosevelt and Konoye – this would only lead to concessions at China's expense.

Having failed to persuade Roosevelt to meet him at Honolulu to dispose of their grievances, Konoye resigned on October 16; the unmistakably belligerent General Hideki Tojo replaced him. Roosevelt called a two-hour meeting with Hull, Stimson, Marshall, and Knox that day. 'The Japanese Navy is beginning to talk almost as radically as the Japanese Army,' Stimson dictated after the meeting, in one of his more significant diary entries, 'and so we face the delicate question of the diplomatic fencing to be done so as to be sure that Japan was put into the wrong and made the first bad move, uh, overt move.' The U.S. chief of naval operations, Admiral Stark, advised Admiral Husband E. Kimmel, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Pacific fleet based on the Hawaiian islands, of the 'grave situation' that Konoye's resignation had created, and he spoke of the 'strong possibility' that Japan would now attack *Russia*.[5] Underscoring this, on the seventeenth Stark wrote to Kimmel: 'Personally I do not believe the Japs are going to sail into us and the message I sent you merely stated the possibility.'

What Kimmel was *not* told was of the thickening harvest of MAGIC intercepts that seemed, certainly in retrospect, to display an ominous Japanese interest in Pearl Harbor itself, his own fleet base in Hawaii. In one secret message transmitted fifteen days before, and duly intercepted by Washington, Tokyo had instructed its consul in Honolulu to spy on the American fleet anchored at Pearl; he was asked to plot a grid-map of the harbour and 'make mention of where there are two or more vessels alongside the same wharf.'[6] Rear-Admiral Kelly Turner, chief of the U.S. navy's war plans division, overruled the naval Intelligence specialists who wanted this worrying intercept relayed across the Pacific to Kimmel.[7] Not until December 3 did the luckless Admiral Kimmel get his first hint of the existence of MAGIC.[8] In the first week of December U.S. army codebreakers deciphered further instructions from Tokyo to an agent in Honolulu to ascertain 'with great secrecy' which of Kimmel's warships were currently anchored there.[9]

It is important to remark that these clues were not swamped by similar intercepts about other targets: those referring to Pearl Harbor easily topped the list numerically. In mid-October 1941, however, as the Soviet Union's days seemed numbered, all the experts expected Japan to jump on the Soviet Union, not the United States or the British empire. At Churchill's cabinet on October 16 Eden discussed what to do if Moscow fell. 'Ought we not,' he asked, 'to consult the United States about what action should be taken if Japan went to war with Russia?' Churchill ruled that Britain must not commit herself to war with Japan unless Japan went to war with the United States.[10]

Even now, while preparing for war, Tokyo maintained its efforts to reach a peaceful agreement. Lord Halifax recorded what he called a 'mysterious' visit by the Japanese ambassador to him in Washington on the sixteenth: 'He hadn't a great deal to say,' he entered in his diary, 'but did not suggest that they were near a breaking point. He seemed desperately anxious to find what he called a "*modus vivendi*".'

CHURCHILL WAS on the verge of taking a decision in the naval war which, more than any other would result in the destruction of British prestige throughout the Far East and, in the long run, contribute to the loss of the British empire – the decision, against all the expert advice of the admiralty, to send two of Britain's fastest and newest capital ships out to the Far East where, operating without air cover, they would be at the mercy of any determined enemy.[11]

It is fair to remind the reader that Churchill took this naval decision against the background of mid-October, not December 1941. He expected Japan to attack a crippled Soviet Union or perhaps the frail Dutch East Indies, but not the British empire or the United States. The extremists were however at that very moment gaining the upper hand in Tokyo. Reporting the appointment of the anti-British, anti-American General Tojo as the new Japanese prime minister, in a paper circulated on October 17, Eden reminded the defence committee of the admiralty's August 1941 proposal to send out to the Far East half a dozen of Britain's older capital ships.

The admiralty had, only the week before, signalled to Admiral Cunningham about sending four 'R'-class battleships (*Royal Sovereign*, *Revenge*, *Resolution*, and *Ramilles*) out to the Indian Ocean 'and possibly further East,' followed by the battleship *Nelson* as soon as she had been repaired. Learning of this signal, Churchill had at once directed Admiral Pound to cancel this fleet movement as it had not been approved by the defence committee – as though this formality had impeded him in the past.[12]

When the defence committee discussed it that afternoon, October 17, Churchill proposed the same master plan as in August – to send out Britain's two finest and fastest capital ships as a deterrent. The battle-cruiser *Repulse* was already at Singapore; he suggested they dispatch the mighty new battleship *Prince of Wales* to join her. The complaisant Admiral Pound was however away that evening – and the Vice-Chief of Naval Staff, Rear-Admiral Tom Phillips, an implacable critic of Winston, was sitting in for him.

Phillips, wrote an American admiral, was barely five-foot-two but decidedly the intellectual type – 'good stuff, all right, and has a first rate brain.'[13] He was not the type to compromise on matters of strategy; he strongly disagreed with Churchill's bombing strategy. Pound, Churchill could handle; but Phillips, this 'pocket Napoleon,' he could not. Phillips had proved right too often: he had opposed the P.M.'s diversion of British empire troops from Libya to Greece in March 1941, and the P.M. had denounced him as a 'defeatist' – 'he was lucky not to be called a coward,' commented Admiral Godfrey, 'but people who disagreed with the prime minister had to expect abuse.' Soured by the fact that Phillips was now proving right over the failure of the bombing offensive as well, Churchill had broken off all personal relations, and spoke with him only when government protocol required. The argument in this defence committee was accordingly acrimonious and lengthy. Phillips described it in a letter to Pound afterwards.

> The prime minister [he wrote] at once raised the old question of sending out the *Prince of Wales* and gave the defence committee all the arguments that he has used before. He was also most scathing in his comments on the admiralty attitude to this matter.[14]

Churchill overruled him, drawing broad support from the usual *claqueurs* among his cabinet colleagues. He referred once again to the example set by Hitler's formidable battleship *Tirpitz* in Norway, which was compelling Britain to keep on guard a force 'three times her weight.' Eden followed boldly where his master had trod. 'If the *Prince of Wales* were to call at Capetown on her way to the Far East,' he chimed in, 'news of her movements would quickly reach Japan, and the deterrent effect would begin from that date.' Attlee then lined up behind these two, Eden and Churchill, to ba-aa against the admiralty's A. V. Alexander and Phillips; Churchill recommended that they send out one battleship with one aircraft-carrier to join *Repulse* at Singapore. The final decision was deferred until October 20, when Admiral Pound himself could attend.[15]

Before then he received two pieces of relevant information. On the eighteenth Lord Halifax reported from Washington on a proposal by Cordell Hull that by allowing a small, isolated barter deal with Tokyo (cotton for silk) they might strengthen the peace party there.[16] Churchill scrawled in the margin, 'This is the thin end of the appeasement wedge,' but he urged Roosevelt a few days later to 'stronger . . . action' in the cause of peace; it seemed that Washington still hoped, or needed, to postpone confrontation.[17] On the same day Tokyo had cabled to Admiral Nomura, their ambassador in Washington, this reassuring message in the PURPLE code: 'Regardless of the make-up of the new cabinet, negotiations with the United States shall be continued.'[18]

AT NOON-THIRTY on Monday, October 20, the defence committee examined Churchill's proposal to send *Prince of Wales* out to join the battle-cruiser *Repulse*. Admiral Pound strongly opposed the move. The presence of one fast battleship would not, he stated, deter the Japanese from sending invasion convoys to Malaya. Churchill interjected dismissively that he did not foresee any Japanese attack in force on Malaya – what he feared was raids on the empire's seaborne trade by Japanese battle-cruisers or cruisers. '[Churchill] did not,' the record once more shows, 'believe that the Japanese would go to war with the United States and ourselves.'

Somehow he prevailed – or partly so. Pound suggested that the battleship *Prince of Wales* should go to Capetown 'forthwith,' placing her on the cusp between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans; they could always decide on her subsequent movements after she got there.[19] Churchill agreed to this. A few days later he ruled that there was no need for several days to tell either Roosevelt or Mackenzie King about the battleship's movements. 'Now that WHIPCORD is defunct,' he pointed out, 'it seems very likely she will go the whole way.' There was no need to make up their minds about this yet.[20]

Determined to get his own way, Churchill used his favourite weapon to split the opposition – banishment. He announced that he was sending Admiral Phillips, one of the most implacable of his foes, out with the battleship to take command of this new Eastern Fleet.

The appointment aroused the ire of the entire navy: Phillips was a desk-officer, totally lacking in seagoing experience. Churchill did not care: the admiral's task in the Far East would be to deter, he was sure, not actually to fight. No record survives of their last meeting, which took place at 12:15 P.M. on the twenty-third in his room at the House.[21] The next day the little rear-admiral hoisted his flag in *Prince of Wales*, and sailed from Greenock for the Far East, never to return.

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Thus another weekend arrived – and with it another houseful of guests at Chequers. Some of these we have already met, high-ranking officers pleading with Churchill to abandon his wildcat schemes to invade Sicily and Norway. Late on Saturday, October 25, a slim, aristocratic, and rather effete ex-destroyer captain arrived for dinner. This was the forty-year-old Lord Louis Mountbatten, an officer related in the perverse way that royal blood contrives, to a legion of modern English princes, both noble and ignoble, and of German gauleiters and S.S. *Obergruppenführer*s. Until a few days earlier, 'Dickie' Mountbatten had been in mid-Pacific, looking over the imposing battleships of Roosevelt's Pacific Fleet in Hawaii. He had taken rather longer to comply with his recall to England than Churchill had expected – 'More than 12 days have been wasted,' the latter huffed in one missive: 'He should come at once.'[22] Mountbatten brought with him a hand-written message from Roosevelt. 'Mountbatten,' this read, 'has been really useful to our Navy people and he will tell you of his visit to the Fleet at Hawaii. The Jap situation is definitely worse and I think they are head[ed] North

[i.e., against the Soviet Union] – however in spite of this you and I have two months of respite in the Far East.'[23]

Before the young naval officer departed on Sunday, Churchill briefed him on the mysterious job 'of the highest interest' of which he had made mention: Mountbatten was to succeed Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes as Director of Combined Operations. The officer jotted in his diary: 'P.M. gave me staggering orders on my new job.' Churchill brushed aside his pleas to be allowed to return to the aircraft-carrier H.M.S. *Illustrious*, jesting, 'The best thing you can hope to do there is to repeat your last achievement, and get yourself sunk.' Mountbatten's task would be to train forces for amphibious assaults on the enemy coast. 'Your whole attention,' his written orders would specify, 'is to be concentrated on the offensive.' 'Anyway,' Mountbatten wrote to his wife, 'it is all very thrilling and exciting.'[24]

HITLER'S OFFENSIVE on the Moscow front had unexpectedly stalled, as torrential rains choked the battlefield in an impassable quagmire. On October 24, 1941 Churchill voiced to the Director of Military Intelligence his impression that the fighting there had diminished; he asked when the Russian winter would set in, and the chances of Moscow falling before then. 'I should be inclined,' he said, 'to put it even.' The D.M.I. replied that supply difficulties were bedevilling the German advance. The roads were impassable. Frosts would normally begin on the first day of December, and permanent snow from the middle of that month. As for whether the Germans would take Moscow before then, the D.M.I. put the odds at '5 to 4 on its capture.'[25]

As though slightly shifting the burden of responsibility for his resolve to dispatch *Prince of Wales*, on October 27 Churchill informed his cabinet that John Curtin, the new prime minister of Australia, had asked Britain to send out a 'first class battleship' to the Pacific. Churchill's further remarks on this occasion show that, since failure of the Nazi offensive against Moscow, he considered that there was now less risk of any hostilities from Japan until the spring of 1942. He hoped, he said, to station the new battleship permanently in the Far East, but her future would be reviewed, he promised, when she arrived at Capetown: because there was always the danger of *Tirpitz* breaking out into the Atlantic. Both Admiral Pound and the First Lord of the Admiralty stayed on in the cabinet room afterward, no doubt to argue the toss once more with Churchill.[26]

The intention was for the new aircraft-carrier *Indomitable* to join the outbound battleship at Capetown. At present the carrier was working up in

the Caribbean. They might then sail on in consort to join the battle-cruiser *Repulse*. On October 30, the chiefs of staff had signalled to the C.-in-C., Far East: 'It is of first importance to avoid war with Japan at this stage.' Japan must be made to realise that from now on she would meet with united opposition; she must be induced to reverse her misguided policies and either 'abandon [the] Axis or at least remain neutral.'[27]

'This,' observed Lord Halifax in his diary, 'will no doubt heat up the Japanese when the news is known. . . I still don't think that the Japs will jump over the fence, and it is interesting to reflect that many people were certain that they were going to do so last February.'[28]*

There was evidently no more talk of reviewing this ship's future after Capetown. Churchill had already cast his mind far beyond Table Mountain; beyond, indeed, even the Indian Ocean. On October 20 he had dictated in a copious letter to President Roosevelt, a grand *tour d'horizon*, a promise that if the United States should 'become at war' with Japan, then Britain would declare war 'within the hour' – an unconditional guarantee which he was to reiterate many times over the next six weeks, and one which invites comparison with Neville Chamberlain's fateful March 1939 promise to Poland. Churchill boasted that before Christmas 1941 Britain would provide a 'considerable battle squadron' for the Indian and Pacific Oceans. He told John Curtin the same on the last day of October – *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* would meet in the Indian Ocean 'in order further to deter Japan.' Perhaps significantly, Churchill's appointment diary shows 'D.P.' first pencilled, then inked in, that day: Admiral Sir Dudley Pound, still distressed at what Churchill was doing. Churchill repeated the boast to Roosevelt the next day, bragging: 'There is nothing like having something that can catch and kill anything.' 'The firmer your attitude and ours,' he chided the president, 'the less chance of their taking the plunge.'[29] He also kept Jan Smuts abreast of the battleship's movements, referring to Admiral Phillips, employing the kind of courteous white lie that seems to characterise the English Parliamentarian, as 'a great friend of mine.'[30]

On November 3 a millennia-old Bermuda reef, a rock of ages, disabled *Indomitable*, the navy's newest aircraft-carrier. Churchill appeared unaffected. The fleet's eastward movement had become one of those dangerous obsessions on which other historians have remarked in him. 'With the object of keeping Japan quiet,' he informed Stalin, 'we are sending our latest battle-

* Vol. i, page 511.

ship, *Prince of Wales*, which can catch and kill any Japanese ship, into the Indian Ocean.'[31] Informed opinion in London now held that the British empire was less at risk of early Japanese attack than the Dutch; on November 4, Sir Robert Craigie forwarded from Tokyo a medium-grade Intelligence report to this effect. Commenting on this, the C.-in-C. Far East and C.-in-C. China expressed their view as being that the Japanese were more likely to step up their action against China than to contemplate any attack on the British in Malaya or Burma.[32]

Somebody had meanwhile quietly taken the decision that *Prince of Wales* should continue relentlessly onward from Capetown to Singapore. The surviving records are silent, but it must have been Churchill. Writing about it privately years later the official naval historian Captain Stephen Roskill would find himself, as he put it, 'in deep trouble' with Churchill who was by then – in 1953 – prime minister once again. In one letter Roskill wrote that Churchill would not 'come clean' about his responsibility for issuing the order 'against D.P.'s reiterated opposition to the move.'[33] 'Pound,' he wrote privately, 'was absolutely right on that issue & only yielded under very heavy pressure; but it is mighty hard to be allowed to tell the truth.' In even deeper 'trouble' months later, the historian related in another private letter: 'A b.f. of a civil servant in this office, without my knowledge, sent a proof copy [of the official history *The War at Sea*] to the Secretary of the Cabinet, who gave it to the P.M. [Churchill] with those passages sidelined. Then the balloon went up.' Rather than alter his considered conclusions, the historian threatened to resign.[34] 'It is futile for me to try & continue my history,' he wrote in a subsequent private letter, 'until that issue is resolved. . . Churchill is really the nigger in our wood pile. . . He doesn't understand the sea.'[35]

Writing about this controversial decision himself, Churchill took refuge in the passive voice, that 'Dytchley' of the English tongue, stating merely that 'it was decided.'[36] In a letter in March 1942, Pound would loyally accept the responsibility; probably he had bowed to Churchill's will at a private meeting.[37] Lord Winster told Hugh Dalton afterwards that the P.M. had summoned Pound to Chequers and inundated him with political arguments, 'as a result of which,' noted Dalton, 'the lame, deaf, sleepy old gentleman returned to London prepared to say that the ships should go.' This was what was called 'getting the approval of the admiralty.'[38] The register shows that Admiral Pound certainly did take lunch at Chequers on Sunday, November 9.[39] On the following day Churchill spoke at the Mansion House. 'I am able to announce to you,' he said, 'that we now feel ourselves strong

enough to provide a powerful naval force of heavy ships, with its necessary ancillary vessels, for service if needed in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.'

Learning that the current timetable called for the new battleship and *Repulse* to meet at Singapore on about the first day of December, Churchill cautioned Pound on November 11: 'I do not quite see what all this haste is to arrive at Singapore for a pow-wow. This is one of those cases where I am for Safety First.'[40]

Shortly Pound replied that the battleship would now reach Singapore on December 6; Churchill inked the word 'Good' on this reply.

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During the last week of October 1941 Churchill had been occupied with more than merely the future of one battleship. He had prodded and peered at maps of India, the Western Desert, the North Atlantic, and the Eastern Front. A gallery of names and faces from the past and present had paraded through No. 10 Downing-street – the king of Greece, the importunate Polish General Wladyslaw Sikorski and his ambassador Count Edward Raczynski, and Air Chief-Marshal Sir Hugh 'Stuffy' Dowding, pestering him for permission to publish his memoirs; the Burmese prime minister U Saw had hovered through both Chequers and No. 10, pressing his country's claim for Dominion status.[41] There had been no less important committee meetings on Britain's night air defence and on bomber production too.*

On October 29 Churchill had visited Harrow, his old school, with his old schoolchum Leo Amery, another Old Harrovian. After listening once again and moist-eyed to the new verse to the school anthem which had been composed in his honour, he delivered a short speech, telling the youngsters never, never, to give in to mere force however overwhelming.[42] The next afternoon Winston and Clementine spent at Claridge's, feasting at the

*There is in file PREM.4/69/1 at the Public Record Office a table of 1941 meetings held up to November 10, 1941, showing those over which Churchill presided:

Committee	*No of meetings*	*Those with P.M. in chair*
War cabinet	111	97
Battle of the Atlantic	16	15
defence committee (Operations)	69	60
defence committee (Supply)	13	12
Chiefs of staff committee	391	23
Tank Parliament	4	4
Night Air Defence	5	3

invitation of Sir Henry Strakosch, the financier whose loan of some £20,000 in February 1938, still unrepaid, had rescued Churchill from the brink of bankruptcy and summary expulsion from political life.[43]*

On the last day of this month a German submarine torpedoed a destroyer escorting an Atlantic convoy. The ship, which went down with 115 men, turned out to be the American *Reuben James*. The P.M. conveyed carefully enunciated grief to the president by telegram.[44] It cannot have escaped his attention that even this humiliation was not enough to elicit a declaration of war by the United States on Germany.

ALTHOUGH – OR perhaps even because – the Nazi bombing had ended six months before, the mood in London was becoming more overcast with each month that passed. Morale was disintegrating; the people were frustrated and unhappy. The bombed-out basements of fashionable Bond-street stores had been flooded to provide water reserves for fighting future fires. Stripped of its elegant iron railings Eaton-square had become squalidly suburban. Whisky was virtually unobtainable to the common man: Scotch was now produced for export only and the Canadian distilleries were producing more conventional chemicals of war. [45]

Fortunately Churchill had liquor stocks that would last him for some time to come. Weekending at Dytchley, his Oxfordshire hideaway, with Anthony Eden and Sam Hoare on the first two days of November 1941, he remarked to visiting American author John Gunther ('after he had a few drinks inside of him') that he was not going to be pushed into a Second Front prematurely.[46]

His imagination cruised over to the Far East, catching up on the way with his warships even now ploughing through the South Atlantic to Capetown; he chafed at the slow seventeen knots that *Prince of Wales* was making, detained by her accompanying destroyers. In his mind's eye, he already saw his powerful new squadron lurking in the Indian Ocean, a menace to all Japan's evil intentions. 'Fix up the best plan meanwhile,' he dictated to Admiral Pound, and instructed him to consider widening the publicity accompanying this new force – for example, securing the 'Thanks of Australasia' to Britain for the formation of this eastern Battle Fleet.[47]

* Vol. i, page 104. Strakosch had made similar 'loans' to two other cabinet ministers as became apparent when his Will – formally expunging the debts – was published, as was mandatory, in *The Times* on February 6, 1944.

After meeting the chiefs of staff at ten P.M. on the fourth – with 'Dickie' Mountbatten putting in his first formal appearance as Director of Combined Operations – for a discussion on the Far East and Russia, Churchill told the foreign secretary that he was going away for a few days, inspecting war factories at Sheffield; would Eden mind the shop and convene the chiefs of staff if need arose? Eden preened himself at this further proof that he was heir-apparent. But when later still they talked, over whiskies in the P.M.'s room, of a projected visit by generals Wavell and Paget to Moscow, and Eden, smitten by wanderlust, suggested that 'it might be useful' if he too went along, the prime minister would not hear of it. Such a visit, they agreed, would sit better after the results of CRUSADER were visible. How much depended on Auchinleck and his desert offensive![48]

CRUSADER WAS now only two weeks away. The tanks, the guns, the ammunition, the fuel were all out there, and it was high time too. Churchill had told nobody – not even Roosevelt – about this project. 'I cannot tell you,' he comforted Stalin that same day, 'about our immediate military plans any more than you can tell me about yours, but rest assured we are not going to be idle.'[49]

Hitler's armies were still plodding into Russia, but making progress only in the south where the weather was still dry and the oil of the Caucasus provided a magnet of attraction. Stalin was in a churlish mood. He declined to hold joint staff consultations, and now insisted that Britain declare war forthwith on Finland, Hungary, and Romania; these countries had joined in Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union. Churchill squirmed at the prospect. Britain had many friends in all three countries. In his message to Stalin he rather lamely excused their attack by describing them as Hitler's 'catspaws.' 'A British declaration of war,' he argued, 'would only freeze them all and make it look as if Hitler were the head of a grand European alliance solid against us.'

Generals Dill and Pownall were anxious to move two British divisions and seven R.A.F. squadrons into the Caucasus.[50] Writing to the chiefs of staff on November 5 the P.M. accepted that the Germans would probably reach that region, but he estimated that neither of the two British divisions concerned, the 18th and the 50th, could arrive there in time. He attributed this frustrating impotence to the repeated postponements of CRUSADER, and added gloomily: 'I cannot feel any confidence that the Germans will be prevented from occupying the Baku oilfields, or that the Russians will effec-

tively destroy these fields. The Russians tell us nothing, and view with great suspicion any inquiries we make on this subject.' Britain's only realistic contribution would be to base four or five bomber squadrons in North Iran, from where they could help to defend the Caucasus or, failing that, bomb the immense Soviet oilfield at Baku and 'try to set the ground alight' – a nostalgic whiff of the odd obsession with 'palls of smoke' that lingered about Churchill's memoranda of mid-1940.[51]

The burden of the delay to CRUSADER was telling on him. Photographs taken as he toured Sheffield showed him old and bent. On Saturday November 8 he arrived, exhausted, at Chequers. Here he learned that the navy's Malta-based Force 'K' – the cruisers *Aurora* and *Penelope* and two destroyers, tipped off by the codebreakers of the sailing of the latest two Italian supply convoys vital to Rommel's army in Libya – had almost totally destroyed both convoys, sinking ten merchant ships and two destroyers without loss to themselves. ('C' hastened to reassure Winston that a dummy aeroplane reconnaissance had been flown just before the naval operation, to camouflage the true source of the deadly Intelligence).[52]

On the previous night however, when R.A.F. Bomber Command had attempted to raid Cologne, Mannheim, and Berlin in foul weather, the bombers had largely missed their targets and one in ten of the five hundred planes had been shot down. That meant the certain death of over three hundred of their finest young airmen.

Churchill expressed anger at these needless casualties at his next cabinet meeting, at five o'clock on November 11: Cadogan ascribed the bomber catastrophe to 'hopeless ignorance about weather conditions & rather too much enthusiasm on [the] part of Peirse' – Air Chief-Marshal Sir Richard Peirse, the commander-in-chief of Bomber Command. 'P.M. angry,' he continued in his diary, '& sad his instructions had been ignored. *Bombing does not affect German morale*: let's get that into our heads, & not waste our bombers on these raids.'[53] This outburst was clearly not just Cadogan's private view: Churchill fired off one of his feared ACTION THIS DAY minutes to Sinclair and Portal, rebuking them for forcing the night bombing of Germany without regard to weather. 'We cannot afford losses on that scale,' he dictated, 'in view of the failure of the American bomber programme.' 'It is now the duty,' he laid down, 'of both Fighter and Bomber Command to regather their strength for the spring.'[54]

Three days later he was still snarling that such raids should only be carried out in favourable weather. 'The losses lately have been too heavy.'[55]

Portal had to assure him that the rest of the month's bombing programme would not be carried out unless the weather conditions were 'reasonable.'[56]

THAT SATURDAY evening, as the P.M. and his family gathered at Chequers, Adolf Hitler was in Munich broadcasting a long, taunting speech against him. His own troops were now less than seven miles from Leningrad, he claimed; he mocked Churchill's habitual 'drunkenness,' and boasted that he was longing for the British to invade Norway, France, or even Germany itself. Nazi Germany, as Hitler pointed out, now had three-hundred and fifty million people working for her.

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Much of what Hitler said in Munich was uncomfortably true.

The British empire might outnumber the Reich in sheer millions, but three-quarters of its area, and six-sevenths of its population, were in the Indian and Pacific regions. In the Indian empire, difficulties were arising over the continued internment of Pandit Nehru's followers for civil disobedience.

On November 8 the secretary of state for India, Leo Amery, received a recommendation from Lord Linlithgow, the viceroy, that they release all these prisoners except for known communists and revolutionaries.[57]

Amery privately held to the view that having momentarily won the political battle in India, Britain could afford what he called a 'measure of contemptuous clemency.' It would be a 'very serious thing,' he felt, to overrule the viceroy and his new, and predominantly Indian, Executive. Churchill, to whom the mere word India was like a red rag to a bull, automatically disagreed, and for the remainder of November he fought bitterly over this issue.[58]

> As you know [he cabled to the viceroy on November 12] I have always felt that a man like Nehru should be treated as a political *détenu* and not as a criminal, and have welcomed every mitigation of his lot. But my general impression of this wholesale release is one of a surrender at the moment of success. Undoubtedly the release of these prisoners as an act of clemency will be proclaimed as a victory for Gandhi's party. Nehru and others will commit fresh offences, requiring the whole process of trial and conviction to be gone through again.[59]

'Winston and the cabinet frighten me badly,' Amery wrote five days later, 'and they are completely out of touch on this question with the mass even of Conservative opinion. I felt very inclined to tell him that he had better release me instead of the prisoners.' 'He was smoking a cigar an inch thick and about nine inches long,' he wrote after that night's defence committee, 'a fearsome looking object, and was a little after-dinnerish. A strange combination of great and small qualities.'[60] When the prime minister finally suggested, later in the month, a quiet release of the prisoners with no public announcement at all, the viceroy, in a further telegram, emphatically rejected the idea as incompatible with the prestige of the government of India.[61] 'Winston will have to give way,' recorded Amery, not without satisfaction, after a furious cabinet wrangle on the twenty-fourth, 'but he is really not quite normal on the subject of India.'[62]

'WITH ALL his merits,' this minister recorded after one cabinet meeting dragged on for nearly three hours, 'Winston is not a good chairman and the discussion does tend to wander rather aimlessly all over the place.' 'A dreadful waste of time,' he found, writing a few days later.[63] As Robert Menzies had discovered it was through his oratory that Churchill directed his war.

On Monday November 10 he delivered the traditional speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet. Elizabeth Layton, his secretary, who accompanied him on the drive up to London that morning, saw how earnestly he prepared the drafts of these great speeches. 'It was difficult at first,' she wrote admiringly in her diary, 'trying to write in the joggling car, and several times I almost landed on top of him with a bump. However he was quite oblivious to any kind of interruption.' With his right hand he gesticulated just as he would during the delivery of the actual speech; he gently lisped, or rasped, according to the mood of each dictated sentence. 'I don't think anyone,' Miss Layton concluded, 'after hearing Churchill composing a speech, could possibly doubt his utter single-mindedness and nobility of purpose.'

It was midday when they arrived at No. 10 Downing-street and he was due to speak at one-fifteen, 'Now run inside and type like Hell,' he commanded her. He called in Eden and sent for Miss Layton too: 'I want the foreign secretary to hear that bit about "this time last year" – just read it.'[64]

We shall examine his remarks about Japan – the passage on which he wished to hear Eden's views – in its proper context later. Elsewhere in the speech he also claimed to have an air force equal in size to Hitler's Luftwaffe.

At these words even Sir Archibald Sinclair winced. Churchill's claim was true, the secretary of state for air told one editor, only if they included all the R.A.F.'s training machines; as for their raid on Berlin before the weekend, Sinclair admitted that they had suffered far more than the mere thirty-seven losses announced in the press; the average bombing error had moreover been seven miles, nor was accuracy improving.[65]

Churchill displayed a comparable lack of candour about the submarine war. On average, Germany was manufacturing twenty U-boats a month, while Britain was sinking only two.[66] He now knew from codebreaking that the enemy had ordered twenty-five submarines from the Atlantic into the Mediterranean. Their first victim was the aircraft-carrier *Ark Royal*, torpedoed on November 12. He sent for Eden and told him the sad news.[67]

IN HIS telegram of the fourth of November 1941 to Stalin the prime minister had asked whether, 'in order to clear things up,' he might send his generals Wavell and Paget to visit him – the latter having been secretly designated C.-in-C., Far East: 'Do you want them?' he asked.

Stalin did not. He replied with unusual speed that he was not interested in meeting the generals 'whom you mention,' unless they could conclude far-reaching agreements on war aims, 'mutual military assistance against Hitler' in Europe – a reference to a Second Front – and the post-war peace.[68] Ambassador Ivan Maisky handed over this response in Churchill's room at the House at midday on the eleventh. Churchill found its tone chilling and evasive. Eden, who witnessed the confrontation, described his master in his diary as being 'excusably very angry & pretty rough with Maisky.'

He suggested to the prime minister afterwards that the telegram's bark was worse than its bite: it scolded Churchill for his reluctance to declare war on Finland, and the British for not properly crating the aircraft sent to Archangel – they were arriving 'broken.'[69] At that evening's cabinet, Churchill admitted there had been 'some frank speaking' with the Soviet ambassador. Beaverbrook charitably suggested that Stalin's difficulties were no doubt shaping his current mood. Churchill decided not to dignify the Russian telegram with any response.[70]

Over dinner that night he suddenly blurted out that if anything should happen to him then Eden would take over. This was the first time he had made this explicit. The foreign secretary murmured unconvincingly that he had no ambitions that way ('tho' it is flattering to be thought worthy!' he conceded to his diary). Bracken, the only other dinner guest, nodded his

approval. Churchill repeated his decision that Eden should succeed him when they were joined by the Chief Whip and P. J. Grigg at one A.M.[71]

There were now grounds for complacency. On the one hand CRUSADER was to begin in five days' time. On the other, the codebreaking source MAGIC was generating a flood of Japanese intercepts that revealed a steady diminution of America's prospects of staying out of the war.

PARLIAMENT HAD begun a new session and he had had a difficult morning there, with fifteen Questions to answer and a slew of supplementaries, which he always resented.[72] He delivered a surly address to the House on November 13; he refused to review the war as a whole, and his remarks went down badly. He did not care. The Oracle showed that Rommel was still unaware of CRUSADER; meanwhile the German and Italian forces in Cyrenaica were taking a hammering from Tedder's desert air force. The other comforting burden of the ultra-secret intercepts was that Hitler's armies investing Moscow were running into increasing difficulties.

Churchill's mighty battleship *Prince of Wales* – fast enough to 'catch and kill' any Japanese warship – was now at Capetown; the director of naval Intelligence was carefully watching the telegrams of the Japanese Consul-General for word of *Prince of Wales*' arrival. 'He has no doubt that it will be reported,' Admiral Pound assured the prime minister, 'and expects that we shall know of this report from two to three days after it is made.' Coupled with Churchill's fiery language at the Guildhall, the First Sea Lord predicted, the battleship's arrival would leave neither the Japanese authorities 'nor our press' in any doubt as to her eventual destination. Churchill wrote 'good' on this information.[73]

Things seemed to be shaping up very nicely in the Indian Ocean after all. There was one voice raised in criticism. When the new Eastern Fleet's commander, Tom Phillips, flew up to Pretoria to meet Jan Smuts, the tiny rear-admiral evidently expressed misgivings: the South African premier telegraphed a warning, a prophetic warning, to Churchill: 'If the Japanese are really nippy there is an opening here for a first class disaster.'[74]

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Churchill had dined amply on Friday, November 14, 1941 with his old cronies of the Other Club. In a comfortable haze, he predicted to Tory newspaper owner Lord Camrose, sitting next to him, that it would not be

many days now before the United States finally entered the war.[75] Word shortly reached the dining room of the day's vote on the Neutrality Act in Washington. The House of Representatives had voted to allow the arming of American merchant ships. It was by the narrowest of margins. 'The thing is,' triumphed Churchill to Lord Camrose, 'that the president now has the power to act, and the size of the majority will soon be forgotten.'

'Stuffy' Dowding came to stay the night at Chequers that Friday. After dinner, Churchill had the whole house-party watch a Soviet-made film – 'Everybody raved, but I thought it crude,' wrote the air chief-marshal afterwards. Later, he broached the subject of his memoirs. Churchill had now read the draft, but strongly disapproved of the passage concerning Britain's traditional foreign policy of preserving the balance of power, saying that it would be quoted by their enemies. Still in the toils of the Indian-prisoner crisis, he added that he himself found it hard to believe in either world harmony or the deliberate mixing of the races – now known more fashionably as 'multi-culturalism'; he compared the latter with the result of 'mixing together the paints in a child's paintbox,' as Dowding recorded. The book's publication was disallowed.[76]

THAT WEEKEND Churchill also faced up to the problem of what to do with Sir John Dill, the C.I.G.S. A few days earlier, when a Tory member had asked inconvenient questions about the alien birth of Lord Cherwell, Churchill had hissed to his parliamentary private secretary George Harvie-Watt, livid with rage: 'Love me – love my dog!'[77] He expected a canine devotion from those he appointed.

Like Dowding, Dill might be mildly eccentric, but he had a mind of his own, and Churchill frowned on that. Day and night he wrestled with the problem. Half-dressed and still shaving, he had told Leo Amery on Thursday November 13 that he had decided to retire Dill 'as a little tired and not quite enough of the tiger,' and to appoint him Governor of Bombay, which once again shows how little store he set by the empire. Eden was unhappy at the news, feeling that the prime minister had underrated his friend Dill; besides, the P.M. had not consulted him. Churchill merely responded that he had made up his mind. 'I know that you will not agree.'[78]

Who should replace Dill? Winston preferred a little known lieutenant-general, Sir Archibald Nye, who was only forty-five, and he invited Nye and Sir P. J. Grigg, permanent under-secretary at the war ministry, down to Chequers for Saturday night. When Margesson, the secretary for war, in-

sisted that General Alan Brooke be the new C.I.G.S., Churchill offered Nye the Vice-Chief's job instead. Grigg pointed out that that job was already taken by Pownall; the P.M. declared that he would send Pownall out to replace Air Chief-Marshal Brooke-Popham as commander-in-chief Far East at Singapore.[79] Winston invited Alan Brooke down on Sunday and offered him the job. 'We have,' he lisped, 'so far got on so well together.'

Brooke accepted. A long palaver ensued, and they went to bed at two A.M.

Churchill followed Brooke up to his bedroom, took his hand and said, gazing into the general's eyes with a kindly look, 'I wish you the very best of luck.' Churchill only now informed Dill that he was to retire soon and charged him meanwhile not to breathe a word to General Pownall.[80] On Monday November 17 Churchill favoured his cabinet with word of these changes.[81] When General Dill privately complained to Lord Hankey about this shabby treatment of himself and Pownall two days later – the same day that the astonished Army Council learned of the top-level changes from their morning newspapers – Hankey suggested that the prime minister had acted unconstitutionally too; but Dill pointed out that Churchill had acted as minister of defence, not prime minister, so they could not touch him.[82]

It seemed maladroit to make such changes on the eve of CRUSADER. As the towering storm clouds of war gathered on the horizons of the Pacific, however, Churchill may have had some other reason for wanting to see both Dill and Pownall posted far away from London. Both generals had been 'indoctrinated' in MAGIC – let into the formidable secret of the British and American intercepts of Tokyo's cypher messages. Dill moreover was an opponent of Churchill's war; he had already indicated in 1940 that he suspected the P.M. of 'cashing in' on it, politically speaking.*

FOR A TIME, in the absence of British military assistance, Anglo–Soviet relations froze over. Sir Stafford Cripps pleaded yet again to return to London. Eden thought that Cripps would do better to stay in Moscow for the time being. Churchill expressed himself more pungently, telling the foreign secretary on November 14 that he wanted Cripps home at once, to 'put my fist into his face.' Beaverbrook, summoned to No. 10 at the same time as Eden, shared the general antipathy toward Cripps. He proposed that Cripps be empowered to negotiate in the Kremlin about a post-war settlement: this would keep him quiet, said Beaverbrook, and nothing would come of it

* See vol. i, page 374.

anyway as he happened to know that Stalin thought little of the ambassador. When Eden suggested it was time he himself went to Moscow to keep Cripps quiet, Churchill would not hear of it. 'Winston,' recorded Eden, 'is impressed with the strength of our hand in dealing with Stalin. His need of us is greater than our need of him.' Eden, ruled the prime minister, would not go unless Moscow gave him the full red-carpet treatment. 'It will not be long before you are in control,' he placated his protégé on this occasion. 'Then you can do as you like about relations with [the] Soviet [Union].' So long as he was around however, he added, they would be fighting strictly on the basis that he laid down.

Eden recognised that there were really two underlying problems – namely 'Winston's instinctive hatred of Red Russia and his deep reluctance to consider post-war problems at all.'[83]

In a cunningly phrased telegram he advised Sir Stafford Cripps not to return to London yet. 'The Soviet government,' he dictated, 'as you must see upon reflection, could never support you in an agitation against us because that would mean that we should be forced to vindicate our action in public, which would necessarily be detrimental to Soviet interests and to the common cause.'[84] After all, he continued, Britain had 'wrecked' her own tank and air force expansion programmes for Stalin's sake, and she had already lost twice as many planes and aircrew in operations designed to detain the Luftwaffe in the west as in the whole Battle of Britain in 1940.

Stalin kept up his rude campaign, badgering Britain at least to declare war on Finland. On November 21 Churchill reluctantly agreed to do so, but only if Finland did not stop fighting in the next two weeks – and only provided that Stalin still wished it. He offered to send Eden out to Moscow, but deftly sidestepped Stalin's demand that he set out Britain's war aims, apart from a vague reference to preventing Germany 'and particularly Prussia' breaking out for a third time. On the question of the post-war peace he assured Stalin that Britain, America, and the Soviet Union would all meet at the council table of the victors – a statement which betrayed his certainty that the United States would soon be formally at war.[85]

Visiting him that afternoon, Eden was annoyed to find that the prime minister had drafted this message to Stalin. 'He is obsessed that [a] personal telegram is [the] way to do business,' recorded Eden afterwards, 'despite [the] mess into which [his] last effort had landed us.' He lectured the P.M. that he preferred the diplomatic approach, and that he was not keen to go out to Moscow unless the political groundwork had been properly laid. He

secured some modifications to the message before it went off, but even then the foreign office did not like it.[86]

The Soviet leader sent a more measured response.[87] The element of blind hysteria was now vanishing from Stalin's messages. Churchill was currently laying odds of six to four that the Germans would *not* capture Moscow (his chiefs of staff put the odds no better than fifty-fifty). Churchill, observed Sir Alexander Cadogan, was still in an 'anti-Russian, defeatist' frame of mind. He had meanwhile spent two weeks unenthusiastically drafting a private appeal to Marshal Gustav Mannerheim, president of Finland: 'I am deeply grieved at what I see coming,' he wrote, 'namely that we shall be forced in a few days out of loyalty to our Ally Russia to declare war upon Finland.' He urged the Finns simply to halt where they were and cease fighting – to 'make a *de facto* exit from the war.'

> My recollections of our pleasant talks and correspondence about the last war lead me to send this purely personal and private message for your consideration before it is too late.[88]

The British government reluctantly issued to Finland, Romania, and Hungary an ultimatum ordering them to cease fighting by December 5 (Eden had wanted December 3: Churchill insisted on the later deadline). The P.M. was genuinely loath to rush ahead: Mannerheim must have time to reply. 'I don't want to be pinched for time,' he minuted Eden on November 29.[89] The foreign secretary, anxious to carry some tangible *bonne bouche* to the Kremlin, replied that it would make 'the most deplorable impression' on Stalin if he were to receive from the prime minister yet another message inquiring whether he really meant what he said in his telegram of November 23. 'I believe the declaration of war by Great Britain will be reasonable and necessary,' Eden lectured Winston. 'I do not see how my mission to Moscow could have any chance of success if I have to start with this question still unsettled. Maisky has already told me [*changed to*: us] that this is the question between us and Stalin over which Stalin feels most hurt.'[90]

Churchill was distracted by other problems, however, and by other deadlines of global importance. On December 3 he warned Eden, 'We must not let ourselves be hustled.'[91] Lord Cranborne, secretary for the Dominions, feared that these would react unfavourably if Britain declared war on Finland. The defence committee decided that there was now little merit in sending two British divisions to Russia merely for psychological effect;

Brooke, present as C.I.G.S. for the first time, Pound, and Portal were 'strongly in favour of keeping everything for the Libyan battle.'[92] Eden was instructed to fly to Moscow in a few days' time, to explain this to Stalin and to offer him tanks and aircraft instead of troops. On the fourth Churchill explained this to an anxious and impatient cabinet. 'The talk rambled along discursively,' wrote Amery afterwards, 'finishing and then starting off again with some remark of Winston's for an hour or more. I am afraid he is really a very bad chairman.'[93] Eden was terrified of going to the Kremlin empty-handed. Later that night, after further argument at what Churchill called a 'staff conference,' he insisted that Britain must send ten fully-equipped R.A.F. squadrons to Stalin's hard-pressed Rostov front, in the south-east.

At 7:10 P.M. that evening, December 4, Finland's reply had arrived in London, routed through Washington. Mannerheim courteously but firmly refused to stop fighting the Russians.[94] Receiving a note from Eden the next day, pointing out with evident relief that war with Finland seemed inevitable, Churchill scribbled, 'Speak to me about this when you come here at 5:30.'[95] Their ultimatum to Finland would expire at midnight.

The prime minister left for what was to prove one of his most memorable weekends at Chequers. A message arrived from Lord Halifax – Finland had made one last plea, via Washington, that her operations were 'defensive warfare.' The prime minister telephoned the foreign office just after midnight to agree that it did not justify any further delay. 'Therefore,' as John Martin noted his words, 'declaration of war on the three countries should follow now.'[96] Churchill seems by this time to have become certain that something else was about to happen – something which would sweep this pathetic episode off the front pages of the newspapers.

9: *Westward Look*

'But westward look – the land is bright!' Churchill could not put those words of Arthur Hugh Clough out of his mind. He prayed for whatever episode would catapult the United States into the war at Britain's side. Meanwhile he consulted with Roosevelt by letter, by telegram, by telephone, by courier and through his own secret M.I.6 cypher channel at each fresh juncture in the unrolling of history.

IN OCTOBER 1941 he had begun a long letter to F.D.R. with the encouraging promise that 'some time this Fall' General Auchinleck would attack Rommel's armies in North Africa. At midnight on November 18 he sent a message round to Grosvenor-square for the U.S. embassy to rush across to the president. 'Words in my letter "some time during the Fall" mean now.'[1]

After five months of waiting and preparation CRUSADER had begun. In pouring rain, the Eighth Army under General Alan Cunningham – brother of the admiral – rolled westward into the Cyrenaican desert from the Sollum–Jarabub line which it had held since June.

The auguries were excellent. From his 'most secret sources' Churchill knew that General Rommel, famed commander of the enemy *Panzergruppe Afrika*, was worried about his dwindling tank forces and depleted fuel supplies.

The British knew not only which supply ships were sailing, but precisely when and whence. Of sixty thousand tons of war supplies promised to him, a baffled Rommel complained in one intercepted telegram, only eight thousand tons had arrived.[2]

The latest intercepts showed that he had flown away to Rome a few days before, awarding himself a few weeks' leave, oblivious of the imminent British offensive.[3]

At first the reports reaching Churchill on CRUSADER were only sparse. John Martin, his private secretary, wrote in his diary: 'P.M. very impatient at absence of news of its progress.' Chauffeured over to the Palace for his regular Tuesday luncheon with the king, Winston still had nothing to report.[4] At ten-thirty P.M. a radio message arrived from Auchinleck informing Churchill that since his field commanders were observing radio silence and blinding rain was drenching the battlefield, he had no firm information either. Dining privately with Lord Hankey in London the next evening, the embittered General Dill was already expressing anxiety about the heavy rains, since these might well bog down the tanks.[5]

This silence from the desert was all very hard for Churchill to bear. He had looked forward to intervening from on high. He confirmed to Cairo on the nineteenth, 'I have forbidden all mention in press of big offensive, but . . . we are puzzled at hearing nothing from you.'[6]

During the day, General Cunningham's troops had in fact captured the important desert strongpoint at Sidi Rezegh and had advanced to within ten miles of the German troops besieging the port of Tobruk, still held by a British empire garrison. On November 19 a message came from Auchinleck and Tedder expressing the hope that the rains were affecting Rommel's forces more than theirs. There had been no enemy air activity. 'It still seems as if Rommel may not yet have appreciated scale of our operations in the air and on the land. For this reason we are *most* anxious *not* to disclose this in our communiqués or by any other means for the present.'[7]

The buff boxes brought over to Churchill by the secret service contained the latest ULTRA intercepts. Those of November 19 showed that Rommel had now returned, but was still oddly unaware that a British offensive had even started. This was not encouraging. Even more oddly, Auchinleck's headquarters now issued a communiqué on the offensive – one is entitled to wonder at whose behest? – praising the skill and deception employed. The B.B.C. broadcast the news, and the London morning newspapers splashed CRUSADER across their headlines. Later on the twentieth Churchill made a flamboyant speech in Parliament about this second Battle of Blenheim, this new Waterloo, although, as Hankey angrily reflected, the enemy had merely fallen back and the real fighting still had to begin. 'It may turn out all right,' he wrote, 'but it was a foolish thing to start boasting so soon. He always does it'[8] – 'he' being the prime minister. Rommel's diary shows that it was all this publicity that finally dispelled his last doubts.

AT FIRST, it is true, there seemed good cause for Churchill to rejoice. On November 21, the third day, Auchinleck signalled that the hounds were 'in full cry.' He claimed that Tedder had gained air supremacy over the desert battlefield; the enemy had lost many tanks, and the Tobruk garrison was sallying forth toward the relieving Thirty Corps.[9] Encouraged, Churchill signalled: 'The moment we can really claim a victory I propose to address the president about an offer to Vichy. . . Everything seems to have gone splendidly so far.'

The night of November 22 however saw an ominous setback. Rommel's troops recaptured Sidi Rezegh; suddenly Thirty Corps had lost two-thirds of its armour and was retreating, leaving the Tobruk garrison with a huge new salient to defend. It now became plain that Auchinleck's initial reports had exaggerated Rommel's tank losses: he had more tanks – and better – and the battlefield remained in enemy hands. Churchill thought it prudent to remind Auchinleck to ensure that no ULTRA-secret material was ever carried into the battle zone.[10]

There was good cause for disquiet about security, as the enemy was now rampaging across the battle lines, harassing, killing, and capturing without regard for rank or seniority. On November 23 the signals from Cairo were perceptibly more sombre as Rommel rushed on toward the Egyptian frontier. 'The main body of English 7th Armoured Division is probably surrounded,' read the German intercept which 'C' brought round to No. 10. 'Numerous prisoners, among whom is a general.'[11] It was a bold military fling, typical of this German commander, and it rattled the Eighth Army commander General Alan Cunningham badly.

On that day the codebreakers at Bletchley Park read a signal describing the sailing to Libya of two Italian oil tankers, *Procida* and *Maritza*, as being of 'crucial importance' to Rommel. Having watched his commanders miss so many opportunities before, Churchill seized the reins and emphasised to Admiral Pound the need to destroy these tankers. 'Request has been made by enemy,' Churchill signalled to Admiral Cunningham, 'for air protection.' 'The stopping of these ships,' he added, 'may save thousands of lives, apart from aiding a victory of cardinal importance.'[12] He told the secret service to stress this latest intercept to Cairo. To camouflage the true source, it was forwarded to Cairo with the mischievous preamble, 'Following three documents [were] seen at Admiralty Rome on November 24...'

Armed with this information Cunningham's Force 'K' sailed from Malta and sank both tankers. Cadogan recorded tersely, 'Battle not going so well,

but we've sunk the two vital supply ships.' On the twenty-fifth 'C' brought over nineteen more intercepts to No. 10, one of which, from Rommel's quartermaster, began with the words: '*Procida* and *Maritza* attacked by enemy surface naval craft about 1300, Nov. 24. Total loss to be reckoned with. Cargo: 2,300 cubic metres of B4 [roughly half a million gallons of aviation fuel], and 104 vehicles.'[13] With a laconic red-ink tick, Churchill acknowledged the success of the operation.

If only things in the desert went so smoothly. General Cunningham was showing signs of nervous strain. Auchinleck and Tedder flew to his forward headquarters, and Churchill shortly received a message from Auchinleck describing Cunningham as 'perturbated' at the very few tanks left running, and fearful that if CRUSADER continued they might well lose the rest, and Egypt too.[14] Oliver Lyttelton, Minister of State in Cairo, reported separately to the P.M. that Cunningham appeared 'shaken' and was even thinking in terms of withdrawal from Libya into Egypt. Auchinleck had ordered him to press on with the offensive.[15] This telegram arrived while Churchill was dining with the Edens, the Sinclairs, and the Nyes. Lyttelton had added that Auchinleck wanted to replace Cunningham with Major-General Neil Ritchie. 'We agreed this must be done if A. thought it right,' noted Eden. Ritchie, he commented, was one of their best young generals – he had himself sent the general out to Egypt while at the war office.

Churchill drafted an answer to Lyttelton. It was cruel and abrasive, and his ministers had to persuade him to take out one phrase about showing 'no mercy to weaklings.'

It hinted however that the C.-in-C. should indeed make the change – 'General Auchinleck's authority over all commanders is supreme and all his decisions during the battle will be confirmed by us.'[16] 'I cordially endorse your view and intentions,' he signalled in a separate message to General Auchinleck, 'and His Majesty's government wish to share your responsibility for fighting it out to the last inch, whatever may be the result. It is all or nothing, but I am sure you are stronger and will win.'[17] Placed on the sick list, General Cunningham was retired to a hospital at Alexandria suffering from nervous exhaustion. Ritchie took over the Eighth Army, with orders to resume CRUSADER.

SIMULTANEOUSLY WITH this most unwelcome crisis in the desert – which could not have come at a worse time – Churchill was grappling with the continuing problem of India. The cabinet had agreed to the release of the

internees, spread over several weeks; but the viceroy had declared it essential to announce the release publicly, and Churchill was refusing to take this jump. The tedious, time-wasting row boiled over in cabinet at five-thirty P.M. on November 24. Amery was surprised to find Churchill, 'possibly aggravated by the uncertainty of the Libyan battle,' in one of his very worst moods. 'He held forth interminably and quite irrelevantly about the whole ignominious surrender.' The secretary for India stood up to him robustly. 'I don't suppose,' he boasted in his diary that evening,

> Winston has been so vigorously answered in cabinet since he has been in office, and I think most of the members got a good deal of quiet fun out of it. I am afraid I was pretty angry at the end and as the cabinet broke up I went up to Winston and told him that his behaviour was intolerable and I didn't think I could stand it much longer. He growled back that I had no right to make such a remark to him in the cabinet room and that I could come and see him any time I liked.[18]

Churchill sent a personal telegram to India rebuking the viceroy. By November 28 he had received a firm reply, insisting that a public announcement must be made. On the first day of December 1941, which was to become a momentous month in the empire's history, the cabinet would discuss Libya, Russia, the Far East – and then India: 'Winston looked round the room,' recorded Amery in his diary, 'and said: "I give in," adding *sotto voce*: "When you lose India don't blame me."'[19]

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For two weeks or more the outcome of CRUSADER was uncertain as the surviving German, Italian, and British tanks milled around between the Egyptian frontier and the besieged port of Tobruk. The tide of battle ripped across limitless oceans of sand, explored the desert and escarpment, favouring now Rommel's forces, now those of Cunningham. 'Rommel is not done yet,' signalled Auchinleck on November 26, 'but we have regained the initiative, I feel.'

In dogged gunnery duels the British eliminated one-third of Rommel's tanks. A buff box from the 'usual source,' as the P.M. informed Auchinleck, brought news that Rommel had ordered elements of his elite 21st Panzer division, which had been raiding Sidi Omar, to fall back toward Tobruk.[20]

'C.I.G.S. and I both wonder,' Churchill signalled Auchinleck on the evening of the twenty-seventh, 'whether, as you saved the battle once, you should not go up again and win it now. . . However this of course is entirely for you to judge.'[21]

Auchinleck refused to be tempted, having just appointed Ritchie to command the Eighth Army. Not easily dissuaded, the P.M. wired him again, two days later: 'C.I.G.S. and I do not intend to suggest that you should in any way supersede Ritchie. What we still think would be wise is for you to visit the battlefield should a new impulse be clearly needed.'[22] Auchinleck bowed to Winston's whim, and duly went forward on December 1, to remain at Ritchie's advanced headquarters for the next ten days.

Late on November 30 one of Rommel's top generals, the commander of the 21st Panzer division, fell into Eighth Army hands, and the British Thirteen Corps punched its way through to the beleaguered Tobruk. The raising of the seven-month long siege was a fine sixty-seventh birthday gift for the prime minister. 'Tobruk,' the corps commander signalled to him, 'is as relieved as I am.'[23]

ONE CLOUD lifted from Churchill's brow, but the brooding thunderclouds of uncertainty elsewhere remained. Lunching the next day, Monday December 1, with Bracken and the new editor of *The Times* – Robin Barrington-Ward, who was no admirer – Churchill seemed spry and different from the bloated politician whom the journalist had last set eyes on in 1939. 'His cheerful, challenging – not to say truculent – look is good to see just now,' wrote Barrington-Ward in a diary afterwards. 'But it covers up a great deal of caution, even vacillation at times.'[24]

The prime minister's mind may have been far away.

That day the MAGIC intercepts had begun casting frightening shadows. They revealed Tokyo secretly instructing Japanese embassy staff in London and elsewhere to destroy their code machines.

10: *Gaps in the Archives*

Until december 1941 no possibility had caused greater anxiety to Churchill than that Japan might strike against Britain's possessions in the Far East and that the United States might nonetheless stay out. Even as this likelihood receded, there remained a residual possibility – that Japan, starved of petroleum since July, might choose instead to strike at the Dutch East Indies. All Churchill's endeavours were devoted therefore to ensuring that when the time came the American people were faced with no choice other than to declare war on Japan. 'The suspicion must arise,' one British historian has stated, 'that Churchill deliberately courted war in the Far East in order to bring America in.'[1]

Whatever connivings and concealments were afoot between prime minister and president in November and December 1941, history does not yet know. Despite a thirty-year effort by us, the transcripts of their secret telephone conversations have not come to light; and the messages now known to have been exchanged through secret-service channels still have to be released.* After the Japanese weighed in with their own pre-emptive strike, officials in the United States spent the next four years purging their files of all evidence that might lead to an impeachment of the president or the disgrace of his military advisers. Telephoned one evening in November 1944 by Roosevelt's secretary of the treasury, the secretary of war Henry L. Stimson would snap that he was tired out 'from working the last two weeks on [the] Pearl Harbor report to keep out anything that might hurt the Pres[ident].'[2]

In Britain there was no such bungling and incompetence to conceal from post-war investigators, but the files on Japan were doctored before their

* See Appendix I.

release to the public, or destroyed. No indisputable proof has been found that Churchill had deduced Tokyo's precise intentions in enough time and detail to alert Washington, but we shall find that many indications point that way.[3]

Fortunately it does not come within the purview of a biography to open yet another inquiry into the machinery of government in Washington in those dark days. Suffice it to remark that American historians have signally failed to spot the evidence of high-level falsification in their own archives. As he had hinted to Henry R Morgenthau Jr., Stimson tampered with the evidence, removing scores of pages from his diary entries of September, October, November, and December 1941 and having them retyped. The cleansing of his diaries was done perhaps too thoroughly, so that the retyped version not only omits all further reference to the American plans to strike first at Japan, and to the MAGICS which he was still receiving; between November 9 and 25, 1941, the diary is innocent of any reference to the Far East at all. The most obviously sanitised pages ('obviously,' because the pages are shortened and typed by a different hand), include all Stimson's dictation for December 3 and 4, and page three of the entry for December 7 – the point at which the president has just phoned to Stimson the grim news of the disaster about which we are shortly to learn.[4]

Similarly, the key Japanese intercept which we shall meet on the way, known to historians as the 'WINDS–EXECUTE' signal, has disappeared from all wartime American files, thereby relieving certain generals (including George C. Marshall, Leonard T. Gerow, and Walter Bedell Smith) of the need to explain why nobody at the highest levels had paid heed to it. Harry Hopkins, whose papers were normally as dishevelled as their author, produced a well-groomed narrative of his president's actions on the 'day of infamy' itself which also bears all the imprints of having been retyped at a later date.[5]

IT IS many years since the United States government released to its national archives 130,000 pages of its MAGIC intercepts. Some of these in fact clearly originated from Bletchley Park. It is however the manner in which the British archives were purged and cleansed that provides the most compelling evidence of guilty consciences. Until 1993 the British government released only the German ENIGMA intercepts.[6] For forty-five years they refused to release even the MAGICS long before released by the American authorities in Washington let alone their own Japanese and other diplomatic intercepts

(the 'BJs').[7] For forty-five years London did not even concede that Britain had been reading the wartime Japanese cyphers. Were it not for explicit references to 'Black Jumbos' in diaries like the one kept by General Pownall, there would have been no hard evidence for forty-five years to the contrary.[8] The files on Anglo-Japanese relations for September and October 1941 are still closed.[9] The prime minister's 'Japan' files for December 1941, and for January and February 1942, are missing, as is the entire 'Japan' file from Eden's papers.[10]

In November 1993 the British government placed in the public domain 1,273 codebreaking files which included for the first time some scattered Japanese materials. 'None of the intercepts,' commented the government archives in a public release at the time, 'obviously indicate [*sic*] the British sources were aware in advance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour although it was clear that Japan was about to enter the war.'[11]

This view was willingly endorsed by other writers. The internal history of Britain's Naval Intelligence Division, written in 1945 and released at the same time, had also stated, 'We had not penetrated the Japanese plan to attack Pearl Harbor.' If Naval Intelligence did not know, historians argued, Churchill, although prime minister, could not have either.[12]

FOR MANY years the prime minister's November 1941 file of cables and messages to President Roosevelt was also closed. Even now there are gaps: there are indications that Churchill sent one or even two as yet unreleased messages to Washington after one that we shall meet later as his 'thin diet' telegram of November 26. That date was unquestionably a turning point in the crisis.[13] A passage relating to that very date even seems to have been trimmed from the printed official Gilbert biography of Churchill.[14] The P.M. received seven 'BJs' on November 21; on November 26 he called for one of them (intercept No. 097,983) a second time, but it is now missing from the files. There is no indication of what it was.[15]

These MAGIC intercepts are not all that is wanting. As with the American official archives, all trace of Tokyo's crucial 'WINDS–EXECUTE' broadcast has been stripped from British archives too, although monitoring stations throughout the empire were combing the radio æther listening for it from November 25 onwards, and although it was certainly picked up in Hongkong early on Sunday December 7, 1941, as we shall see.[16]*

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* See page 237.

BY LATE November 1941 there was palpable unrest in Washington about Britain's unwillingness to exchange codebreaking materials with the Americans. It is necessary to review the history of this exchange since early 1940 to understand the underlying reasons – an unusual amalgam of jealousy, national pride, anti-Semitism, and strategic necessity. The British led in deciphering the European codes; the Americans in the Japanese.

The British had concentrated their interception of Japanese military and air signals in the Far East at the Combined Bureau, recently evacuated from Hongkong to Singapore. The F.E.C.B. operated on slack reins; Bletchley Park had no overview of the Japanese messages intercepted or decoded. The bureau had read the main Japanese army cypher partially until May 1940; it read Japanese army air and transport codes, until late 1940.[17]

The British had known in the summer of 1940 that the Americans were working on Japanese cyphers with, as they then believed, little success. Bletchley Park had long believed that the Americans were not even currently reading the Japanese diplomatic machine code known as PURPLE, or the military attaché cyphers.[18] In about November the Americans had suggested a frank interchange of cryptographic material. 'C' had refused, and forbade his colleagues to divulge what they knew on the German and Italian codes.[19]

This principle – that Washington was not to be indoctrinated in the success in breaking ENIGMA – prevailed right through to 1942. In December 1940 the admiralty advised Flag officers that U.S. navy observers in British warships were not to be given intelligence gleaned from the 'most secret sources.'[20] The admiralty repeated this in January 1942.[21] As late as June 1942, 'C' would state in a letter that only one person in the entire United States was privy to this secret, and that was General Marshall himself.[22]

Certain American experts were however taken into Bletchley Park's confidence, on the understanding that they were not allowed to discuss it with their own government. This exchange of confidences had begun at the end of 1940. On December 18 the foreign office was informed that three U.S. codebreaking experts, a 'Lieutenant-Colonel Freeman' (in fact a civilian, the famous William F. Friedman, whose place was shortly taken by Captain Abraham Sinkov), a Lieutenant L. Rosen of the U.S. army and a Lieutenant Currier of the U.S. naval reserve (a fluent Japanese speaker) would bring about a ton of the latest code-machine equipment by British warship to the British Isles. This expert delegation would be in a position 'to discuss [the] diplomatic side' in addition to basic cypher matters.[23]

They arrived at Bletchley Park in the first week of February 1941, becoming known there by the inconspicuous sobriquet of 'our friends.' The records confirm that they arrived with a 'very valuable contribution to our Japanese work' – it was in fact two of the precious MAGIC machines. As Commander Denniston, head of Bletchley Park, later emphasised, 'In February 1941 *they* put us in the Jap picture firmly.' He suggested that it was from that date that Britain's collaboration with the Americans began on the German cyphers.[24] In fact it was only a very limited collaboration. The Americans had seen examples of the German naval ENIGMA, but they were ignorant of the Luftwaffe and army ENIGMA traffic. After a few days, Denniston, keen to exploit American know-how on the use of Hollerith punched-card computers for codebreaking, asked his superiors for permission to be frank with their guests on every subject, on the understanding that they would not reveal what they knew to anybody other than their immediate chiefs.[25]

This was the origin of the extraordinary working-level transatlantic exchange of information. These American visitors agreed to secrecy. Lieutenant Robert H. Weeks of the U.S. navy signed for a hand-written undertaking, dated March 3, that he would inform only the head of their section, known as Op–20–G, in Washington – that was Commander Laurance F. Safford – and then only by word of mouth. An unsigned memorandum confirms that 'our American colleagues have been informed of the progress made on the ENIGMA machine.'[26] Sixteen days later Weeks signed a receipt for British materials received from Denniston, which included Russian naval, Italian attaché and consular, and German naval codes, French materials, 'material' from the mathematician Alan Turing, and the German naval map-grid.

At this, of all times, a devastating rivalry broke out between the British and American codebreaking services at top level, in which each side accused the other of selling them short, and each began trying to blackmail the other into greater openness – an openness which the British were not, at this stage in the war, willing to manifest toward their still untested cousins. The British alone had broken the German ENIGMA machine, using the fabled *bombe* – a whirring marvel of calculating-machine cog-wheels and second-hand telephone-exchange relays which electromechanically tried every possible solution for a code until each day's keys were broken. Perhaps innocently primed by one of 'our friends,' the American higher-ups suspected that this was so; the British refused to part with the *bombe*. The U.S. navy department, which had made the greatest inroads into PURPLE,

now began, as an element of their blackmail, not turning these over by secret cable to Bletchley Park, but holding them back for several days, despite their urgency. The British retaliated in kind.

IT WAS that summer of 1941 that the Americans sent a letter to Bletchley Park blandly asking outright for 'a cypher-solving machine,' in other words the *bombe* – the heart of the British codebreaking endeavour. Denniston was aghast, as nothing was ever put on paper about 'E' – the ENIGMA secret. With a degree of frostiness in his reply, he reminded the Americans that while ENIGMA was of academic interest to them, it was a matter of life and death for the British. As for providing a *bombe* machine, it would be many months before they had one to spare, and 'we have six out of the thirty-six which we require.' For reasons of security Bletchley Park would never permit anybody else – and that included the U.S. government – to construct the *bombe*; each one was being hand-built by a firm under British government control, the British Tabulating Machine Company.

'German signal security never stands still,' he decided he must remind these Washington upstarts when he went over there in August 1941. 'They [the Germans] are constantly tightening up their [cypher] discipline and evolving new methods.' Britain's codebreakers felt they were teetering 'on the edge of a precipice,' he wrote – they might be struck blind at any moment by a sudden German innovation.[27]

The Washington talks would tackle the most sensitive subject, namely the further exchange of codebreaking materials. 'At present,' Denniston noted, 'this exchange is working very well, but only on Japanese' – a reference to the MAGICS. Britain could not transfer the ENIGMA secrets to Washington; at most they might ship raw ENIGMA intercepts to the Americans and invite them to try their hand at solving them. He hoped to set up a triangular liaison, Bletchley Park – Washington – Ottawa.

He visited Washington on about August 12, and would then visit Ottawa ('if this can be arranged without any chance of meeting Yardley').[28]

There were problems in each capital. Canada's chief codebreaker Herbert Yardley was considered a security risk. As for Washington, the relationship between J. Edgar Hoover's F.B.I. and 'our friends' – the American codebreakers – was not known. The F.B.I. already liaised closely with 'C,' noted Denniston.[29]

Denniston was shaken by what he found in Washington. He visited the U.S. navy's radio monitoring station at Cheltenham, thirty miles from Wash-

ington, but the country had nothing like Britain's own empire-wide 'Y' (radio-monitoring) service. Worse, the navy and army were at each other's throats: they ran independent cryptographic sections. (Lieutenant-Colonel J. H. Tiltman, visiting them in early April 1942, confirmed that one reason was anti-Semitism, 'the dislike of Jews prevalent in the U.S. navy,' since, as he explained, 'nearly all the leading Army cryptographers are Jews.'[30] This was true: the best codebreakers were Friedman, Sinkov, Solomon Kullback, and Wallace Winkler). There was bitter enmity between the services and their sections: the army attacked the Japanese diplomatic code PURPLE on even days, the navy's section Op–20–G on odd. It seemed incredible, but this, reported a baffled Denniston, was what the powerful 'vested interests' involved had decreed. Dissemination was equally harebrained: the U.S. war department circulated codebreaking summaries one month, the navy did so the next. The navy had but a hundred codebreaking staff. Their main effort was on PURPLE, in which they enjoyed great success, and these had prior claim to the Hollerith machine room; Denniston warned, 'I feel they have really neglected the [Japanese] naval work.' As a result of his visit, the U.S. navy codebreakers had only now undertaken to begin collaborating with Bletchley Park and the F.E.C.B. in Singapore in investigating Japanese naval cyphers, 'and they now regard this, as we do, as one of their most important research jobs.'[31]

At a conference in Washington August 15 it was agreed that the telegraphic communications between Op–20–G and Bletchley Park were already highly satisfactory. Mail communications would go through the British Intelligence agent Captain Edward G. Hastings, RN, who was billeted at the city's Hay Adams Hotel. Denniston reported that they might now set up a small research section in Melbourne, Australia, 'where Commander Nave was now working' (Eric Nave, an Australian, was one of the wartime experts on the Japanese cyphers; but he was unable to live in the Tropics).[32]

WHILE HE believed that he had established rapport with the Americans, and had agreed with them the proper apportionment of their joint codebreaking effort, Commander Denniston carried back to his team at Bletchley Park in England the gloomiest impressions of the broader political situation. He had seen for himself that the average American had less intention of joining the war now than ever – now that Russia was doing all the fighting in the east, and Japan had got cold feet and was seeking accommodation. 'F.D.R. told the Mountbattens,' noted Denniston, summarising his impressions,

'[that] he had done all that one man could to get them in – the inference being that he could and would do no more and is now concentrating on getting production for themselves up to par.'[33]

The American codebreakers, he repeated, lagged behind the British in everything except PURPLE. 'Japanese naval and Japanese military [cyphers] are still behind.' He proposed that Washington work on the eastern, *i.e.*, Japanese, cyphers, and Britain on the European.[34] He appears to have succeeded, because on October 9 he wrote to Hastings that everybody was glad that Washington would now concentrate on those two big eastern cypher problems (naval and military).[35] As for the Japanese diplomatic telegrams, previously Lord Halifax had sent a minion to the navy and war departments to copy them and wire them back to London; but now the material would be exchanged direct (to the ambassador's distress, as he had enjoyed and learned much from these decoded Japanese telegrams).[36]

WITH THE easing of archival restrictions begun by John Major's government in the 1990s, it is now clear that during the crucial weeks of November 1941 the British and American codebreakers had begun spitefully withholding data from each other, in a welter of accusations of bad faith and short-changing.

The Americans made the running. By late October they were making no secret of their resentment that the British were holding back certain European cyphers and keys. Admiral Harold Stark, the chief of naval operations, and Admiral Leigh Noyes, his chief of naval communications, complained about this at several levels – first to 'C's' liaison officer Captain 'Eddy' Hastings and then to Brigadier Menzies himself. Churchill's naval representative in Washington, Admiral Sir Charles 'Tiny' Little, wired to the admiralty that the U.S. navy department had 'got it into their heads' that the British were not playing fair.

> Their contention is [reported Admiral Little] that whereas they have exchanged all the information they have regarding Japanese codes with us, we have not done the same in regard to our cryptographic work in the case of the German codes.[37]

Noyes had put this forcefully to Hastings, claiming that his department had given to 'C' their knowledge only on condition that there was a free exchange of all Axis intelligence; the British military and naval attachés had

agreed to this, he claimed, and Bletchley Park's Denniston had confirmed it during his August visit to the United States. The Americans now felt cheated.

In retrospect, the last week in November 1941 was not the most propitious moment for such a dispute. As Noyes suggested to Hastings on November 26, with the Far East situation deteriorating hourly, any delay in exploiting an operational message might 'be serious.' There was a hint of blackmail in the words – a threat to start holding back Japanese PURPLE intercepts deliberately from the British codebreakers. This threat became explicit later that day, when Noyes secured the moral support of General Miles, his counterpart at the U.S. War Department. Hastings advised 'C' in a lengthy telegram that the Americans were expressing 'grave unrest and dissatisfaction.' 'Noyes,' he added, 'is in a mood to withhold further information unless he receives full reciprocal information on European work.' Noyes had rejected his argument, which was that Britain understood that European cyphers should be handled only in London. 'You will appreciate the importance of this matter,' Hastings suggested to his chief, 'as United States [codebreakers] are developing rapidly.' There must be a rapid settlement, if relations between the two countries' codebreakers were not to break down.[38]

'C' had no intention of weakening Britain's monopoly on ENIGMA. Currently there was a complete interchange on PURPLE, since each side possessed the MAGIC machine: each was supposed to supplement the other's traffic. Both sides were also co-operating on developing the decoding of Japanese naval and military traffic, and neither side had as yet had much luck with the German diplomatic codes, he suggested to Captain Hastings. As for the German naval codes, 'C' remained evasive: 'If and when we have any results which can affect U.S.A., the admiralty are passing them to the Navy Department.' He reiterated that the British would not release German military or air decoding results to the Americans, as they affected areas in which Washington, not being at war, had only an academic interest. 'What more does Admiral Noyes want?,' exclaimed 'C.' He concluded by instructing Hastings, who was about to return from Washington: 'Put nothing in writing, and burn this before you leave.'[39]

Hastings feared that Admiral Noyes would not be fobbed off so lightly. The United States had after all provided to Britain those two MAGIC machines in February, and the fruits of their research on PURPLE; Noyes, advised Hastings, knew damn' well that the British had captured certain German code books and keys. Unless the British came clean, he repeated, 'our mu-

tual relations will deteriorate.'[40] Admiral Little echoed these words – since Stark had now complained directly to him, just as Noyes had to Hastings. 'The Navy Department,' he wrote to Pound on December 2, 'have got it into their heads that we are not playing quite square in regard to the exchange of information regarding special intelligence.' Stark too was complaining that Britain had not reciprocated for MAGIC with the German secrets – with ENIGMA.[41]

ALTHOUGH BRIGADIER Menzies had suggested differently, the British had almost certainly made some inroads into the important Japanese naval cypher JN.25, a new five-figure additive code introduced in June 1939. Commander Denniston wrote in a wartime manuscript that early in 1939 their naval section and its 'Japanese' section, still then in Hongkong, had 'full control' of Japanese diplomatic and attaché traffic, were 'reasonably fluent' in all the main Japanese naval cyphers, and 'knew quite a lot about' the Japanese Army cyphers being used in China.[42] It is a sensitive subject still. As late as 1989 the British government stopped publication of the memoirs of Commander Eric Nave, the codebreaker concerned.[43]

When 'our friends' had visited Bletchley Park in February 1941 they had also offered some partly reconstructed JN.25 code books.* Bletchley Park histories confirm that the British gave the Americans what they described as the products of their own work on JN.25.[44] The Americans remained convinced that their British cousins had made no further progress with JN.25.[45] Nave would allege that this was not true. The best available estimate is that by November 1941 the Americans were reading ten or fifteen per cent of JN.25 – and the British perhaps more. 'One thing is certain,' Nave claimed. 'Had Britain shared with the Americans its full knowledge of the work against Japanese naval codes . . . [Japanese Admiral Isoroku] Yamamoto's task force [in the Pacific] would have been decimated in a well-laid trap.' At that time, said Nave, he had assumed that Britain was sharing all such information with the Americans.[46]

The pains taken by Britain to conceal whatever were her actual successes against the naval cypher JN.25 are evident from one incident in 1942. On May 10 of that year the German raider *Thor* captured from the British steamer *Nankin* secret weekly British Intelligence reports to the commander-in-chief of Churchill's new Eastern Fleet; from these the Germans realised

* See vol. i, page 343.

the extent to which JN.25 had been penetrated.[47] In August Berlin authorised Admiral Paul Wenneker, their naval attaché in Tokyo, to show the captured *Nankin* documents to the Japanese. The British never revealed their loss even after the war. When Whitehall restored captured naval records to Germany in 1958, German historians noted that pages of *Thor*'s log had been retyped with all reference to the *Nankin* documents deleted. The official study on the *Nankin* affair, written in August 1945 by the admiralty's codebreaking expert, the late Commander M. G. Saunders, is missing from the files released to the British Public Record Office and the Naval Historical Library. There may of course be innocent civil service explanations for all these coincidences.

THE AMERICAN codebreakers remained disgruntled to the very eve of war in December 1941. Bletchley Park still refused to release its ENIGMA secrets to Washington. On December 5, the archives show, Commander Denniston nevertheless cabled to Captain Hastings in Washington: 'I still cannot understand what Noyes wants.' With regard to PURPLE, he grumbled, the British had given the American army codebreakers all they asked for, thus enabling them 'to read all that we can read.' Noyes was wrong, he protested, in thinking that the British were still withholding Japanese or German codebreaking materials. 'The main means of communication is the ENIGMA,' added Denniston. 'Twice, February and July 1941, we captured keys for the month which we sent to Washington.' He refused however to send over an ENIGMA machine itself to Washington – deeming that Britain just did not have one to spare.[48]

The Americans did not believe him, and continued to obstruct.

❧

Slowly choking under the oil embargo which Roosevelt and Churchill had proclaimed in July 1941, Japan's military leaders had decided early in November to resort to war if negotiations failed to lift the embargo.[49] From Japanese records discovered in the mid-1960s it is now clear that on November 2, 1941 there was a seventeen-hour session in Tokyo which ended with a decision to declare war on December 1 in that event. Four days later this secret decision was ratified by an imperial conference, attended by the president of the Privy Council and Emperor Hirohito himself. Only the outer shell of these events was perceived by the British and American

codebreakers. On November 2 Tokyo cabled to Washington advising Ambassador Nomura that the cabinet would meet on the fifth and instruct him to resume negotiations. 'This will be our government's last effort to improve diplomatic relations,' it read. 'The situation is very grave.'[50] The Americans translated this message on the third. On November 4 the Americans intercepted a further message from Tokyo to Washington: 'Well,' this confirmed, 'relations between Japan and the United States have reached the edge.' The cabinet had decided to have a last stab at persuading Washington. If this failed, the message added, 'I am sorry to say the talks will certainly be ruptured.' To add weight to the talks, an experienced former ambassador, Saburo Kurusu, would leave for Washington immediately.[51]

On November 5 Tokyo transmitted detailed bargaining instructions, which again the Americans read. Ambassador Nomura was to commence by presenting 'at earliest possible moment' proposal 'A': under it, Japan would offer minimal concessions, but would still refuse to renege on her treaty obligations to Germany and Italy, or to withdraw her troops from Indo-China or China for twenty-five years. If this hard-line proposal was flatly rejected, Nomura was to offer a milder proposal, 'B,' but this really was the very last offer. It was vital, he was told, for 'all arrangements for the signing of this agreement [to] be completed by the 25th of this month.'[52]

To the codebreakers it was clear that in Tokyo an ominous timeclock had begun to tick. (November 25 was in fact the day that Admiral Yamamoto's fleet was scheduled to sail into the darkness of radio silence).

Churchill, as we know, also followed these MAGICS and with a morbid fascination. He would write disingenuously in his memoirs, 'The MAGICS were repeated to us, but there was an inevitable delay – sometimes of two or three days – before we got them. We did not know therefore at any given moment all that the president or Mr Hull knew. I make no complaint of this.'[53]

This was a perhaps necessary deceit. Churchill was receiving largely the same MAGICS as those two gentlemen. He had however reposed the conduct of Far East policy in their hands. 'Roosevelt promised Winston at the Atlantic meeting,' recorded General Pownall in his diary, '. . . that he would keep the Japanese in play, and he has succeeded in doing so far longer than the one month he originally estimated. We have passed the buck of handling Japan on to the Americans, merely promising that we will follow their lead and go to war if they do.'[54]

The Chinese, facing the most critical phase in their long war with Japan, provided the third variable in the already complicated Far East equation. The Americans alerted them to the rumours of Japanese plans to attack Yunnan from their new bases in Indo-China, beginning on November 2; the loss of Kunming would cut the Burma Road on which China's supplies depended.[55] Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist Chinese leader, appealed to both Roosevelt and Churchill to provide air support against Japan's forces, arguing: 'Once she is rid of [us] she will attack you as and when it suits her.'[56]

This Japanese offensive did not materialise, but the rumours caused Churchill to discuss the generalissimo's telegram at his midday cabinet on November 5, suggesting that the Japanese seemed to have taken no final decision and that their Emperor Hirohito was exercising restraint.[57] He drafted a telegram – which the cabinet now approved – to Roosevelt proposing a warning to the Japanese not to launch such an attack. Referring, in this draft, to the Japanese danger to Singapore, he admitted that this great British base was already short of air strength, but he would be prepared to send out pilots 'and even some planes.' 'When we talked about this at Placentia,' he wrote, reminding the president of their August meeting, 'you spoke of gaining time, and this policy has been brilliantly successful so far. But our joint embargo is steadily forcing the Japanese to decisions for peace or war.' If Chiang Kai-shek's resistance were to collapse, the Japanese would have the forces with which to attack north (Russia) or south (the Dutch East Indies). 'I hope you might think fit to remind them that such an attack . . . would be in open disregard of the clearly indicated attitude of the United States government.' Britain, he promised, would do likewise. 'I myself,' he concluded, 'think that Japan is more likely to drift into war than plunge in.'[58]

Speaking monotonously, and almost inaudibly, at this cabinet meeting Sir Earle Page expressed Australia's misgivings about Churchill's attitude of 'insisting that the United States should take the lead.' He pressed the prime minister not to turn his back on Australia, and pleaded for Britain to send planes to Singapore. The P.M. explained that he was now committed to supplying two hundred planes per month to the Soviet Union; and lest that fail to impress the Australians, he mentioned the old bogey of a possible Nazi invasion of Britain. 'The one situation he was anxious to avoid,' Churchill stressed to his cabinet colleagues, 'was a war with Japan without American help.'

That evening, it seems, Churchill telephoned the president to hint at making a pre-emptive strike against Japan.

The evidence that there was such a 'telephone job' is from Roosevelt's cabinet meeting two days later.[59] After recalling that at Placentia Bay Churchill had urged him to 'go in with England and the Dutch East Indies in an attack on Japan,' the president related to his cabinet that he had on that occasion turned the idea down, as he wanted to play for time. 'The president,' recorded one cabinet member, 'said that he had conversed with Churchill a day or so ago on the matter, and that Churchill was convinced now that it was wise to delay three months ago, but urged firmness now.'[60]

The prime minister would soon have his big gunboats out there, of course, and the president was already bringing up his B-17 bombers within striking range.* Roosevelt evidently reminded Churchill however that only the Congress could declare war. It would moreover be a folly to act in advance of American public opinion.[61]

After revealing what he called this 'conversation,' Roosevelt polled each member of his cabinet in turn around the table with the question: What would be the American public's reaction in case 'we get into shooting with Japan.' (Stimson eerily recorded the president's words as: '*In case we struck at Japan down there*.'[62])

From Stimson's diary note it is plain that Roosevelt was contemplating using the B-17 bombers now assembling in the Philippine islands for fire raids against Tokyo and other cities. The army air force was recommending general incendiary attacks to set the wood-and-paper structures of the densely populated Japanese cities on fire.[63] General Marshall warned the president however in a memorandum that the bomber force would not be fully capable even of a deterrent role until mid-December; the advice of both Marshall and Stark was to avoid provoking Japan for the time being.[64]

Roosevelt therefore signed a discouraging reply to Churchill's telegram, which he dispatched on November 9, stating that the United States felt that their own efforts in the Philippines, coupled with the British (naval) effort in Singapore, would tend to increase Japan's hesitation – 'whereas in Ja-

* Churchill showed no reluctance to fire-bomb the Japanese cities, and later suggested they quote the Ladybird song to 'the Japs': 'Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home. Your house is on fire, and your children at home.'[47]

pan's present mood,' the telegram admonished, 'new formalised verbal warning or remonstrances might have, with at least even chance, opposite effect.'[65] What he was trying to educate his English friends about was the imponderable *quantité* known as 'face,' the preservation of which plays such a part in oriental society.[66]

THE PRIME MINISTER disregarded Japanese 'face' to an extent which could scarcely have been greater had he wanted to goad the Japanese into attacking. Speaking at the Mansion House luncheon on November 10 in London, he addressed words of calculated insult to the Japanese. He unabashedly printed the entire passage in his memoirs.[68] The abuse was deliberate, for he consulted Anthony Eden first, as we have seen. (This was why he had commanded his new Canadian secretary Elizabeth Layton as they drove back to No. 10, 'Now run inside and type like Hell'*).

While he had always been a sentimental old well-wisher to the Japanese, he said in this speech, nevertheless

> I should view with keen sorrow the opening of a conflict between Japan and the English-speaking world. The United States' time-honoured interests in the Far East are well known. They are doing their utmost to find a way of preserving peace in the Pacific. We do not know whether their efforts will be successful, but if they fail I take this occasion to say – and it is my duty to say it – that should the United States become involved in war with Japan the British declaration will follow within the hour.
>
> Viewing the vast, sombre scene as dispassionately as possible, it would seem a very hazardous adventure for the Japanese people to plunge quite needlessly into a world struggle in which they may well find themselves opposed in the Pacific by States whose populations comprise nearly three-quarters of the human race.
>
> If steel is the basic foundation of modern war, it would be rather dangerous for a Power like Japan, whose steel production is only about seven million tons a year, to provoke quite gratuitously a struggle with the United States, whose steel production is now about ninety millions; and this would take no account of the powerful contribution which the British empire can make.

* Page 149

'Every preparation,' he declared, 'to defend British interests in the Far East, and to defend the common cause now at stake, has been and is being made.' He referred portentously to the mighty British warships which were even now on their majestic way out to the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

THE JAPANESE were not a people easily cowed, and their leaders were steeped in traditions similar to the lesson he had commended so recently at Harrow – never, never, to give in to mere force, however overwhelming. The tone of his speech was a mistake. The Japanese took it as a calculated insult. 'In view of the way it fits in with the conditions obtaining at the moment,' reported the Japanese ambassador in London, 'it is impossible to think that he was bluffing.' He added that Churchill evidently 'had no intention of seeing a rapprochement made [by the United States] with Japan at the expense of Chiang.'[69] This was not quite true: he felt nothing for the Chinese, but he did want to see the United States at war.[70]

The new Japanese foreign minister, Shigenori Togo, a career diplomat with a German wife, protested to British ambassador Sir Robert Craigie about the speech. Craigie responded amiably at first, presuming that the Japanese talks in Washington were only preliminary.

'On the contrary,' replied Togo. 'The imperial government has submitted its final proposals, and has made this fact absolutely clear to the United States.' Referring to Churchill's admission, in his speech, that he did not know what was going on in the U.S.–Japanese negotiations, Togo challenged: 'Would it not be more pertinent if, instead of making threats without knowing what he's talking about, he were to try to understand the issues more clearly and to co-operate in an effort to resolve them?' The foreign minister concluded that he fully expected Washington to sign their final proposal within ten days. 'Domestic considerations,' he said, 'brook no further delay.'

Craigie betrayed evident astonishment, according to the Japanese PURPLE dispatch reporting their interview, and indicated that he had not realised how critical the situation was.[71]

AMBASSADOR NOMURA had arrived at the state department early on November 7 to present the first of the two proposals, the hard-line proposal 'A.'[72] Churchill devoted the rest of November to torpedoing the negotiations. It was not easy, as Washington was telling him nothing. He was dependent on the MAGICS. (This diplomatic estrangement between the British

and Americans at this crucial hour may well be the real reason why the 'Japan' and several 'North America' files of late 1941 are still sealed).

Since Tokyo had obligingly briefed Ambassador Nomura in full on 'B,' Hull found it relatively easy to reject 'A.' The real crisis, from Churchill's point of view, would come when the Japanese showed up with the more attractive offer, under which the Japanese would offer to withdraw their troops from southern Indo-China if the United States resumed oil supplies.

❧

It is likely in retrospect that if 'B' had gone through, war in the Far East would have been avoided. British Intelligence now knew that the Japanese in Indo-China were constructing twelve airfields within range of Malaya; but evacuating Indo-China would make a Japanese attack on Malaya and Singapore impossible.[73]

By sabotaging the negotiations, Churchill took a calculated risk, choosing to set the Far East on fire – plunging it into the war which would eventually spell the ruin of his country's empire.

Sir Robert Craigie certainly held this view, and made no bones about it on his repatriation from Japanese internment in 1942.

'He's going to be a curse,' wrote Eden's permanent under-secretary Sir Alexander Cadogan in October 1942 after Craigie's return to London. 'During his captivity he has rehearsed all the events leading up to war – and all his grievances. He's got it all pat.'

In his final report Craigie voiced powerful disagreement with Churchill's policy of leaving Washington to handle their Far Eastern affairs. 'Judging from telegrams received by me during October and November [1941],' he wrote to Eden, with unmistakable undertones of reproof, 'you were disposed to consider that the warnings reaching me from Japanese sources were part of the Japanese "war of nerves."' Not surprisingly Cadogan read into this 'vast argumentation' a savage indictment of Britain's entire foreign policy leading up to the outbreak of war in the Pacific. 'Shall do very best simply to squash it,' he noted. 'On reading some of it, I find I disagree with almost every word.'[74]

He wrote a wounding attack on this ambassador on the last day of October 1942 and took extraordinary steps to prevent the wider circulation of Craigie's report, fearing disastrous consequences within the Dominions. Craigie had however managed to take away the original typescript, which

was rather more trenchant than the amended one that remains in the official archives. 'I consider,' stated Craigie even in this toned-down version,

> that had it been possible to reach a compromise with Japan in December 1941 involving the withdrawal of Japanese troops from Indo-China, war with Japan would not have been inevitable.[75]

The trouble with heresies is that on occasion they turn out to be true. The row over Craigie's beliefs simmered throughout 1942 and much of 1943. On November 9, 1942 Eden assured Churchill that he would not circulate the document at all until his Far Eastern department could append a proper riposte to it. Craigie flatly refused to withdraw any of 'the more controversial parts' of his own report, and remained adamant in placing on record, in paragraph 19, his view that 'war with Japan could have been postponed and perhaps averted'; Eden ordered the document's circulation restricted to the king and war cabinet.

The riposte was not ready until May 1943; in its conclusions, which Eden ordered deleted, even his own Far East department indulged in lugubrious speculation about post-war Russian and American expansionism in Asia.[76]

Churchill did not read either document until after Italy's capitulation. He was dismayed even by the amended version of the Craigie report – writing to Eden that it was 'a very strange document' and to be kept most scrupulously secret. 'A more one-sided and pro-Japanese account of what occurred I have hardly ever read.'

Craigie, he scoffed, wrote of the breach with Japan as if it were an unmitigated disaster. 'Greater good fortune has rarely happened to the British Empire than this event which has revealed our friends and foes in their true light, and may lead, through the merciless crushing of Japan, to a new relationship of immense benefit to the English-speaking countries and to the whole world.'

He directed the foreign office however: 'There should be no question of circulating this dispatch to anyone.'[77] Eden ordered '*all* copies' to be recalled.

To Churchill only one thing mattered in November 1941 – bringing the United States in.

11: *A Sorry Pass*

Roosevelt's new chief of Intelligence, Colonel William B. Donovan, had sent over a Major William Dwight Whitney to represent him in Whitehall. But for his American birth, Whitney could almost have been English – he had studied at Oxford, been called to the Bar, taken an English wife, and even held a commission in the Guards. He had arrived in the British capital late on November 3, 1941 and wrote to the prime minister asking for an early interview.[1]

Churchill received Whitney a week later at Chequers. The major brought letters of introduction from both Donovan and Roosevelt, who informed him that Donovan, his new 'Co-ordinator of Information,' was setting up 'a small staff' in London.

At Chequers and during the drive up to London the next morning, Churchill had a long talk with Whitney about the war and the future.[2] He dismissed the renewed Russian demands for a Second Front and spoke of the losses of R.A.F. Bomber Command. He was optimistic about the Russian front. Only recently he had laid odds of five to four that Hitler would take the Soviet capital; now he reversed those odds.

'His intuition tells him,' Major Whitney summarised afterwards, 'that there is [a] real chance that the Nazis are stopped before Moscow.'

Showing some military insight, Churchill also predicted that the Germans would find the mountains between Batum and Baku a formidable obstacle.

Asked about the post-war period, he expressed the hope that the British people would put up with the current national government for some years to come to lay a 'solid basis for reconstruction.'[3] From the U.S. embassy, Whitney cabled to his masters a listing of Winston's order of priorities: he would prefer, said Whitney, to have Japan stay out of the war; failing that, to

have *both* the United States and Japan in. The possibility that Japan might come in while the United States stayed out was, he growled, 'unthinkable.'[4]

ASSIGNED A room in the war cabinet offices next to General Ismay, Whitney defined his task as being to deflect any unjust criticism of British activities by the Americans. To 'Pug' Ismay it seemed rather nebulous. He warned the prime minister that there were 'obvious dangers' in having an American agent planted so close to the centre of British power.

Right away Whitney asked to be supplied with Britain's regular operational summaries, censorship analyses, and secret service reports. 'I submit,' Ismay advised Churchill, 'that Mr Whitney should have a watch-dog, not only on the military but also on the civil side of his work.' Churchill approved, writing: 'Yes, but watch it vigilantly.'[5] With the prime minister's backing, Ismay directed his colleagues to show Whitney nothing – he emphasised *nothing* – relating to future operations or derived from codebreaking.[6]

They never felt at ease with this American spy in their midst. When Whitney fell ill in January 1942, Donovan tried to replace him with a Mr Percy Winner; the British declined to grant him the same privileges.

A FEW DAYS after Whitney's visit to Chequers, Churchill received 'C' at Downing-street. Everybody was now trying to divine what was in the Japanese mind. The Americans believed the Japanese could not undertake any operations in Indo-China for some time, but the British Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee appreciated that the oil embargo was forcing a drastic choice on Japan – either to wind up the 'China Incident' or to risk war.

In which case, which way would Japan strike first? At Russia (principally toward Vladivostok)? Japan was not strong enough. At Thailand, and then Malaya? This would bring in Britain, but not necessarily the United States. At the Dutch East Indies? This must logically bring in Britain too, although Churchill had muttered to his cabinet on several recent occasions that since the Dutch had done little for Britain until Hitler invaded them in 1940 they could not claim a firm promise of help from Britain now.[7] 'From the Japanese viewpoint,' the J.I.C. concluded, 'her best move, the one with least chance of bringing on a general war, would probably be the occupation of Thailand.' From bases here she could later attack Malaya and the Dutch East Indies.[8] As for the possibility of Japan attacking the United States of America, the Joint Intelligence Committee did not consider it.

The MAGICS provided to Churchill a disturbing picture of how close Washington was to cutting a deal with Tokyo. He knew that Tokyo had set a firm deadline of November 25.[9] He knew too that Ambassador Nomura had handed the tough initial proposal ('A') to Cordell Hull on the seventh; in this, Tokyo insisted that the United States cease providing aid to China. A few days later – deliberately taking his time – Hull replied that they would have to secure Chiang Kai-shek's approval before China could be discussed.

Nomura reported this unsatisfactory interim outcome to Tokyo on the thirteenth.[10] Two days later Hull put to Nomura the not entirely unacceptable condition that Japan abandon her pact with Germany and Italy.[11]

The talks dragged on, and Tokyo several times reminded Ambassador Nomura of the approaching deadline. 'The fate of our empire hangs by a slender thread of a few days,' they signalled to him in PURPLE on the fifteenth, 'so please fight harder than you did before.'[12] On the same day a message to Kurusu, who had arrived in Washington to back up Nomura, warned that 'the crisis [is] fast approaching.'[13]

Kurusu made his first appearance with Nomura at the state department on November 17. Roosevelt was present too. Kurusu warned Hull and the president of the possibility of an 'imminent explosion' unless they reached agreement. 'There is no last word between friends,' Roosevelt amiably chimed in.[14] The Japanese had still not played their last card, proposal 'B'; instead the emissaries radioed to Tokyo that 'it seems very clear that they [the Americans] are of a mind to bring about a compromise after making sure of our peaceful intentions.' Kurusu had on his own initiative left the Americans this suggestion for a temporary agreement: 'If the Japanese were now to withdraw their troops from Indo-China, could the United States ease their oil and economic pressure to the point of sending small quantities of oil?'[15]

This was the first time the Japanese had played their card of withdrawing from Indo-China, which would remove the spectre of war. Hull saw in it a gleam of hope, and told Halifax that evening that the idea was 'attractive enough to warrant its being tried at least.'[16] On the following day he said as much to Nomura; according to the cable which the ambassador sent to Tokyo, Hull had proposed nothing less than a return to the status quo before Britain and the United States had imposed the July embargo:

> I mean [Hull had said, according to the MAGIC] Japan should evacuate southern French Indo-China, and in return the United States should re-

> scind the freezing order. If the atmosphere remains calm in this manner, there will be no need of [the British] sending warships to Singapore or [the Americans] strengthening military facilities in the Philippines. Then we should continue talks.[17]

A further Japanese signal from Washington to Tokyo on the nineteenth suggested that agreement was imminent on the terms proposed.[18] As for the troublesome Tripartite Pact with Germany, on the same day Tokyo was heard assuring Ambassador Nomura that he need not worry about that: 'You may point out that the [Japanese] empire can decide independently. . .'[19] Nothing was fixed however even now, and the two emissaries radioed a suggestion that they try for 'a practical settlement' even before putting forward the more amicable proposal 'B.'[20] At this, a frantic note entered the responses intercepted from Tokyo. Time was running out: with only six days to go to the 'November 25' deadline, the Japanese government instructed Nomura to go the whole hog and put forward 'B' immediately – and to make 'no further concessions.'[21] If Washington refused to accept, 'the negotiations will have to be broken off.'[22] Nomura protested that this would charge the situation with dynamite: nevertheless he had to visit Hull on the morning of November 20.

Receiving the proposal 'B' – of which he had known for some time – Hull made clear that the United States would not give up its aid to China; he first promised to think it over 'fully and sympathetically,'[23] then postponed a final decision, explaining that he must first consult with the British, Dutch, and Chinese. Tokyo may have begun to smell a rat, but Kurusu still radioed that he anticipated agreement by the weekend. Tokyo grudgingly agreed to extend the deadline by four days. 'It is awfully hard for us to consider changing the date,' added Tokyo, explaining: 'There are reasons beyond your ability to guess why we wanted to settle the Japanese–American relations by the twenty-fifth.' 'This time we mean business,' the message continued, with emphasis – 'that the deadline absolutely cannot be changed. *After that things are automatically going to happen.*'[24]

This MAGIC intercept – translated on November 22 – produced in Washington a war scare without parallel since Orson Welles' broadcast in 1938 that Martians were invading. Other MAGICS showed that Japan was not bluffing. Tokyo's cypher messages on the twentieth showed her evacuating her nationals from Singapore before hostilities began, and grooming agents to operate behind the lines in this British territory.[25] Two Tokyo messages in

the middle of the month had instructed the Japanese embassy in Washington on emergency procedures for destroying its code machines, and this embassy was heard preparing to evacuate its staff by sea.[26] Some or all of these PURPLE despatches were forwarded to or read independently by the British. The Japanese may even have wanted them to be read, as an element in a war of nerves.

ON SATURDAY November 22, 1941, therefore, Washington knew that Tokyo's new secret deadline was set to expire just one week later on the twenty-ninth. Cordell Hull hoped however to have struck a deal, a *modus vivendi*, with the Japanese before then.[27]

After seeing him on Saturday the twenty-second Lord Halifax typed into his secret diary the observation that Hull evidently thought that he might 'find himself at war with Japan at any time without much notice.'[28] Chinese foreign minister T. V. Soong, who learned about this interview, told others that Lord Halifax was upset to hear about the *modus vivendi* now proposed by the Americans and had told Hull that he would have to consult London; Cordell Hull, said Soong, had retorted that the British would have to like it or lump it.[29]

Over the weekend the state department staff hammered out a counter-proposal which would meet the Japanese demands without, Cordell Hull felt, betraying the Chinese. The United States would allow Japan enough oil for civilian use, as well as food products, pharmaceuticals, raw cotton, and raw silk; in return Japan must pull her forces out of southern China, station no more than twenty-five thousand troops in Indo-China, and stay put for the next three months. There should thereupon be a final settlement, which would be agreed on later.[30]

Informed of this counter-proposal, the secretary of war, Henry Stimson, was worried that even these terms would be 'too drastic' for the Japanese emissaries to accept; Stimson would record in his diary Roosevelt's gloomy prediction that the Japanese might even attack on the coming Monday, the first day of December. 'The Japanese,' reflected the president at a midday conference on November 25, 'are notorious for making an attack without warning.'[31]

Hull had the same nightmare. This alarm was a clear by-product of the MAGICS. He now had his heart in the deal. Above all it would give the American armed forces the three months' respite that they still desired.

Winston Churchill had spent a mellow weekend at Chequers preoccupied, most probably, with the troubling news of the CRUSADER battle in Libya. The police log shows that he arrived with bodyguard 'Tommy' Thompson and private secretary Francis Brown at midday on Saturday the twenty-second, joined during the afternoon by Clemmie, Mary, and their friends the Montagu women – mother Venetia and teenage daughter Judy.

The only other callers of note aside from the regular Sunday afternoon masseuse were the P.M.'s doctor, the Prof., and a 'Major Winter.'

This latter was undoubtedly Major Whitney, who had probably brought word from Washington – perhaps even a clandestine message which seems to have come from the president himself.[32] It made clear that Hull was asking Britain's approval to relax the embargo on Japan.

Churchill made no official reply to Washington at first. Instead, he dictated on November 23 a minute to the foreign secretary discussing Hull's proposal, a document whose full text makes plain that for a moment Churchill too was inclined to appease Japan, or at least hesitated to throw down the gauntlet to her.[33]

> My own feeling is that we might give Hull the latitude he asks.*
>
> Our major interest is: no further encroachments and no war, as we already have enough of this latter. The United States will not throw over the Chinese cause, and we may safely follow them in this part of the subject. We could not of course agree to an arrangement whereby Japan was free to attack Russia in Siberia. I doubt myself whether this is likely at the present time. . . The formal denunciation of the Axis Pact by Japan is not in my opinion necessary. Their stopping out of the war is in itself a great disappointment and injury to the Germans. We ought not to agree to any [Japanese] veto on American or British help to China. . .
>
> Subject to the above, it would be worthwhile to ease up upon Japan economically sufficiently for them to live from hand to mouth – even if we only got another three months. These however are only first impressions. I must say I should feel pleased if I read that an American–Japanese agreement had been made by which we were to be no worse off three months hence in the Far East than we are now.

* Quoting his own minute in *The Second World War*, vol. iii: *The Grand Alliance* (London 1950), page 526, Churchill omitted this telling sentence.

Oliver Harvey's diary shows that his master, Eden, and Churchill did confer on Hull's proposal: the prime minister rather liked it, repeating that he did not want anything to worsen the Far East situation yet. Eden however saw Hull's proposal only as the thin end of the appeasement wedge. The United States must stand firm, he said. In his simplistic view this would force Japan to yield still further, rather than fight.[34]

Unless Churchill replied by his direct M.I.6 secret channel to the president, he made no formal response on Monday the twenty-fourth either. He still had manifold other preoccupations as we have seen. This was the day when Leo Amery found him in 'one of his very worst moods' in cabinet.[35] The P.M. was learning of General Cunningham's nervous breakdown in CRUSADER; India was bothering him, and so were his teeth – he would visit the dentist's chair several times over the next two weeks.[36]

Thus London had made no response for Lord Halifax to use by the time that Hull disclosed the formal details of the proposed American–Japanese deal to the Australian, British, Chinese, and Dutch ambassadors in Washington that Monday evening, November 24.

As he described it, the United States would be allowing to Japan a tiny amount of 'more or less inferior' oil, against a ninety-day respite. When Lord Halifax admitted that he had still not heard from Churchill agreeing to this, Hull was most displeased, describing the situation as a crisis and the silence from London as most embarrassing.[37]

In the absence of firm support from London, the Americans found themselves isolated: their proposal attracted shrill telegrams (which Hull would term 'hysterical'[38]) from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and his supporters in Chungking, his capital, addressed to powerful citizens in Washington and London. The Chinese protested that the Americans were preparing to sell them out to Tokyo. Chiang Kai-shek evidently communicated with both Churchill and Roosevelt, demanding that Hull delay further action until Churchill had ruled on his 'appeasement' proposal.

Hull decided however that he would hand the *modus vivendi* to the Japanese on Wednesday, November 26.

NOVEMBER 25, 1941 is a difficult day to reconstruct in the unfolding of the Pacific drama, because important documents are missing or have been subtly changed in official publications. We do however have a word picture of Churchill on this day, as he received a tedious U.S. Congressman, J. Buell Snyder, at No. 10 Downing-street. The prime minister had to humour

Snyder, a rotund Democrat from Pennsylvania, as he was chairman of the military sub-committee of the Appropriations Committee. General Raymond Lee, the U.S. military attaché, describes the P.M. sitting this day at the cabinet table, with a thick gold watch-chain draped across his paunch, puffing at a cigar and talking about CRUSADER, the battle of attrition just beginning in the Libyan desert. 'For the first time,' he said, 'the Germans are getting a taste of their own bitter medicine.'[39] Japan, he added, was probably waiting to see how CRUSADER went before making her own move. As he rambled on about the unity of the British and about the working-class support for this war, Lee found himself studying that famous face again: 'He is a short, fat, round-headed, cherub-faced little man,' he wrote, 'whose eyes are his best feature. They are blue and fierce. It seemed to me that his face is somewhat more worn and the veins on his temples seem to stand out more than I have ever noticed before.'

The Congressman plagued the P.M. to stand next to him for a snapshot – 'just for Mrs Snyder.' Winston obliged; he seized upon the opportunity to lead the importunate politician outside the famous front door for this purpose, ignored the American arm stretched around his shoulder as the shutter clicked, and left Mr Snyder there.

During the day a telegram came from President Roosevelt, explaining and justifying the offer which Cordell Hull proposed to make to the Japanese on the twenty-sixth. The telegram had been drafted by Hull, except for a postscript which Roosevelt had in fact added in his own hand.[40] This read,

> This seems to me a fair proposition for the Japanese but its acceptance or rejection is really a matter of internal Japanese politics. I am not very hopeful and we must all be prepared for real trouble, possibly soon. ROOSEVELT.

EVIDENTLY FUELLED by breezy, confident reports from Lord Halifax, Eden had, as we have observed, taken the view that Japan was bluffing. (Churchill too would later once again admit that he himself had never really expected Japan to strike at the United States or the British empire).[41] Messages meanwhile arrived from the (increasingly agitated) Chinese, Dutch, and Australians, objecting to Hull's proposed offer. Eden argued against Churchill that to appease Japan now would be a betrayal of the Chinese: stand firm, said Eden, and the Japanese would climb down. He sent a telegram, or

telegrams, to Lord Halifax in this vein (which still have not been released), instructing him to invite Hull to beef up his proposal to the Japanese.

Churchill went along with this more confrontational line, though perhaps for other reasons: the first 'WINDS' message had come into view. This startling piece of Intelligence reached him – but not yet the Americans – from his codebreakers during the evening of November 25. Six days earlier, this revealed, Japan had secretly circulated to her embassies in London and elsewhere, using PURPLE, details of a system of messages which they would conceal in the daily weather reports on short-wave radio broadcasts from Tokyo; from them, her envoys would know – even after they had destroyed their PURPLE machines – whether war was imminent and, almost literally, which way the wind was blowing:

> The international situation is tense and we cannot tell when the worst may happen. In such an event, communications between the [Japanese] empire and the enemy countries will immediately cease. Therefore when our diplomatic relations are on the point of being severed, we shall broadcast, as the weather report, the following phrases in the middle and at the end of the news in Japanese in our overseas broadcast service –

The three Japanese phrases, each to be broadcast twice 'in a resolute voice,' then followed: *Higashi no kaze ame* ('easterly wind, rain') if relations with America were 'in question'; *Kita no kaze kumori* ('northerly wind, cloudy') if Japan and the Soviet Union were concerned; *Nishi no kaze hare* ('westerly wind, fine') in the case of Britain including specifically Thailand and 'an attack on Malaya.' Upon hearing these code phrases the Japanese embassy was to destroy its cyphers and secret documents.[42]

'C's' codebreakers deciphered this week-old PURPLE on November 25. The Americans deciphered it for themselves three days later, on November 28; it was only then that American radio stations were instructed to mount an immediate listening watch for the coded 'weather reports' that the WINDS message set up.[43] This is the clearest proof that Churchill's codebreakers, for whatever reason, had kept it to themselves; Washington's investigators did not retrieve the corresponding British MAGIC from Bletchley Park's secret archives until 1945. Churchill thus had a head start on Washington. Around the world on November 25 British empire radio monitors began listening for the 'WINDS–EXECUTE' signal, the cryptic 'weather forecast.' On the same day, we now know, Tokyo secretly signalled orders to Vice

Admiral Chuichi Nagumo's task force, using the Japanese naval cypher JN.25, to put to sea the next day and sail to the first rendezvous point. The Americans did not even intercept the signal; there is no evidence whether the British did, let alone decipher it.[44]

THAT DAY too, November 25, 1941, 'C' sent a noteworthy message to his principal agent in the Pacific, Gerald Wilkinson. Wilkinson was an old friend of Winston's, based in Manila as the local sugar-broker for a large Hawaiian sugar trading corporation, Theo H. Davies & Co. In fact he had married one of Davies' daughters; to the irritation of U.S. army Intelligence in Manila, which suspected M.I.6 of 'duplicity, evasion, bargaining, horse-trading of information and . . . international intrigue,' Wilkinson never registered as a foreign agent, contrary to United States law.[45] 'C's' message to him now, on November 25, stated that a 'usually reliable' secret source had reported that Japan was planning a seaborne invasion of the Kra Isthmus of Thailand on the first day of December 'without any ultimatum or declaration of break.'

His source was evidently the British consul-general at Saigon.[46] Since this isthmus was the narrow strip of land that widens into the Malay peninsula in the south, this revealed a very real danger to Singapore, Britain's naval base at its southernmost point. The invasion forces, 'C' had learned, would embark at Hainan and Formosa, and land mainly at Songkhla (Singora). He passed this warning on to the American naval and military Intelligence authorities in Washington too.[47] Wilkinson received this warning on the twenty-sixth and forwarded it to Harry Dawson, his M.I.6 subordinate (and British vice-consul) in Hawaii; the next day the G-2 (U.S. army Intelligence) in Honolulu passed it to the local army commander and FBI headquarters, and the Fourteenth Naval District (Hawaii) sent it to the chief of naval operations in Washington on the twenty-eighth.[48]

WHATEVER THE cause, and whatever its content, the foreign office urgently communicated around midnight on November 25 to Lord Halifax, who wrote it in his secret diary, that 'a message' was on its way from the prime minister to President Roosevelt, and that Cordell Hull must not show his proposal to the Japanese yet.[49]

The state department in Washington was already nervous about the long silence from Churchill. Lord Halifax would summarise in his diary, 'Endless talks these last two days with Hull about the question of a temporary and limited agreement with the Japs.'

The message which now arrived from London dismayed Cordell Hull: Eden refused to go along with appeasing the Japanese. As Lord Halifax observed, continuing his diary entry: 'London is inclined to be stiffer than Hull wants to be, but I think it is very difficult for them [London], having left the whole business to Hull. We have always told them that this did mean in effect that we were handing over our diplomacy pretty completely, however unavoidable it may have been to do so.' Then Halifax recorded: 'I got a message in the evening to ask Hull to hold his hand until Winston has sent a message to the president. I don't know what this may be, but I hope it won't be a case of our grumbling and giving way, which does no good at all.'[50]

After midnight, Eden came over to No. 10 Downing-street bringing an item that had, he said, just come in from Washington. He told Winston that J. C. Sterndale Bennett, the head of his Far Eastern department, felt that the Americans were treating their ally Chiang Kai-shek rather shoddily; Eden too felt that Cordell Hull was 'giving away too much.'

His diary shows that he and the prime minister together mapped out a warning telegram to Roosevelt 'about Chinese reactions.'[51]

'Your message about Japan received tonight,' Churchill's message – the famous 'thin diet' telegram – began.*

> Also full accounts from Lord Halifax of discussions and your counter-project to Japan on which the foreign secretary has sent some comments. Of course, it is for you to handle this business and we certainly do not want an additional war. There is only one point that disquiets us. What about Chiang Kai-shek? Is he not having a very thin diet? Our anxiety is about China. If they collapse our joint dangers would enormously increase. We are sure that the regard of the United States for the Chinese will govern your action.

'We feel,' Churchill concluded, making the point he had laboured more than once before, 'that the Japanese are most unsure of themselves.'[52]

* The word 'tonight' is puzzling, unless it alludes merely to Eden's having brought the file round so late. The foreign office had received at 1:10 P.M. on November 25 a short telegram from President Roosevelt ('On November 20th the Japanese Ambassador. . .'). There may have been a later item, still omitted from the files. It is noteworthy that nowhere in the public files of their exchanges (PRO file FO.371/27913) is there any reference to the Japanese 'November 29' deadline.

At 3:20 A.M. the prime minister's private secretary Anthony Bevir sent this text round by hand to the U.S. embassy for telegraphing 'as soon as possible' to Washington.[53] The embassy transmitted it to Washington as telegram No. 5670 at six A.M. Since Cordell Hull would later blame the British, under Chinese pressure, for causing him to break off the negotiations with the Japanese, it is worth recording that Sterndale Bennett would four years later place it on record that what became known to historians as Churchill's 'thin gruel' [*sic*] telegram had been sent 'off his [Churchill's] own bat, without any prompting from the Chinese.'[54] It was the only telegram that the F.O.'s North American department were not able to see before it went off.[55] It would cause the United States to break off their talks with Japan. It was this telegram which helped to cast the die for war.

❧

Barely perceptible from London, the pendulum in Washington finally tilted toward war that day, November 26, 1941. Churchill's overnight 'thin diet' telegram had arrived at the state department. For Cordell Hull it was the last straw. As Stimson narrated to his diary, Hull 'phoned him around nine A.M. that he was about ready 'to kick the whole thing over.' Hull's memoirs place the blame for his change of mind squarely on the telegram. Henry Morgenthau Jr. was visiting Roosevelt's bedside at breakfast time when – according to his diary, a forkful of kippered herring was poised halfway to the presidential lips – Hull had 'phoned there too. 'He had not touched his coffee,' dictated Morgenthau that same day. 'He was talking to Hull and trying to eat his food at the same time. By the time he finished his conversation his food was cold, and he didn't touch it.'[56]

According to the later investigation Stimson also 'phoned, with word now of a sighting of up to thirty Japanese ships carrying perhaps fifty thousand troops, south of Formosa; Roosevelt allegedly 'blew up,' and described it as evidence of Japan's bad faith.[57] There is some doubt about the authenticity of this episode, since the convoy movement had been foreshadowed six weeks before in the MAGICS, and on the previous day, in a letter to the president which he later concealed, Stimson had quoted his Military Intelligence division as describing it as 'more or less a normal' troop movement into Indo-China; he enclosed for the president a British intelligence report, dated November 21, predicting that 'Japan will make a last effort at agreement with U.S.A.,' failing which she might order troops into Thailand.[58]

General Marshall called an emergency conference in his office at ten-forty A.M., and revealed that Roosevelt and Hull believed that the Japanese would soon 'cut loose' with 'an assault upon the Philippines.' 'We know a great deal that the Japanese are not aware we know,' he added, 'and we are familiar with their plans to a certain extent.' They decided that the navy's two aircraft-carriers based on Hawaii should at once ferry fighter planes from there to Wake and Midway islands in the Pacific, to provide proper escort cover for the forty-eight B-17 bombers.[59] This would halve the fighter strength left in Hawaii, but Washington had evidently seen no grounds yet to indicate that this base was endangered.

Visited by Hull at 3:50 P.M. to discuss what to tell the Japanese emissaries when he saw them at five, Roosevelt instructed him to abandon the *modus vivendi* proposal, and serve up instead Ten Points that both men knew would be totally unacceptable. He may have asked Hull to bring with him all the arguments that spoke in favour of such a course of action, because there is such a memo in Hull's papers.[60] The Chinese ambassador Hu-Shih had also taken a 'very stiff' message from their leader, Chiang Kai-shek, to Roosevelt, who had dismissed it as 'alarmist.'[61]

Late that day Churchill received from Roosevelt a secret message, evidently in response to some equally secret epistle which he had sent through the direct M.I.6 link: 'Negotiations off,' reported the president. 'Services expect action within two weeks.'[62]

That the negotiations were off, he may shortly have learned from his codebreakers anyway. According to the despatch which Nomura radioed to Tokyo, Hull had rejected the proposals which they had presented on the twentieth, saying: 'I am sorry to tell you that we cannot agree to it.' He therefore proposed a mutual non-aggression treaty between Tokyo, Washington, Moscow, the Netherlands, Chungking, and Bangkok (London was not mentioned or even shown a copy of this document); further, an agreement on the inviolability of French Indo-China, and the evacuation of *all* Japanese troops from both China and French Indo-China. The emissaries had immediately dismissed this as unacceptable. 'In view of our negotiations all along,' reported Nomura in PURPLE to Tokyo, 'we were both dumbfounded, and said we could not even co-operate to the extent of reporting this back to Tokyo.' The two Japanese both argued 'furiously,' but Hull had remained adamant. 'Why,' speculated the Japanese ambassador, 'did the United States have to propose such hard terms as these? Well, England, the Netherlands, and China doubtless put her up to it.'[63]

It seems remarkable that Cordell Hull had fought to preserve his deal until this day, only to wilt under the combined onslaught of Churchill's secret messages to Roosevelt and the 'violent telegrams' from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek which had rained down on official Washington the day before.

The British ambassador gathered that 'the Chinks' had kicked up a row, whereupon Hull had 'apparently' abandoned his deal for the time being, handing to 'the Japs' a general statement, an essay on high principles, instead.[64]

For a few days there were those in the U.S. state department who prided themselves that they had thereby called the Japanese 'bluff.' Dr Stanley K. Hornbeck, the anti-Japanese head of the Far East desk there, now wrote to Hull laying odds of five to one against Japan going to war. 'In days to come you will look upon the decision which was made, and the action you took yesterday, with great satisfaction.' (The letter was later removed from state department records and destroyed, as an embarrassment to all concerned; but a private copy had by then illicitly been made).[65]

Reminiscing about Washington diplomacy as seen from the British embassy, Sir William Hayter would write to the foreign office in 1943, 'We only learnt of the decision to drop the *modus vivendi* and present the November 26th memorandum (a snap decision if ever there was one) when Hornbeck telephoned to me on the evening of the 26th, in his most professorial manner ("Now mind you get this straight") to tell me that it had already been done. And as you know it was not until several days later that we were allowed to see the text of the memorandum.'[66]

Cordell Hull did not share Hornbeck's complacency. Halifax and other non-American sources portray his fury at having seen his peace plan squelched by interfering outsiders – primarily Churchill and the Chinese. 'He opened up,' recorded Lord Halifax in his secret diary after visiting the secretary of state, 'on the way in which his careful efforts to postpone the row had been blown out of the water by the intervention of many people who didn't understand how delicate the balance was.' Hull also blamed Stimson and other members of Roosevelt's cabinet for this. 'Hardly veiling his language,' continued Halifax, Hull criticised the president's habit of taking diplomatic advice from outside the state department.

This had perhaps a familiar ring to the ambassador; had he not endured much the same improprieties as foreign secretary to Churchill? He commiserated with Hull. 'But,' continued Lord Halifax, a trifle naïvely, 'I told

him that I did not think he had any complaint against the matter of Winston's messages to the president, because he always knew what those were. . . '[67]

IN LONDON on this disastrous day, November 26, Major Desmond Morton came round to No. 10 and reminded Winston that he would be sixty-seven in four days' time. 'I forgot my birthday last year,' reminisced Winston. 'At that time we had won the war in the air, although we did not know it. This year, we have won the war on the sea. Next year,' he predicted, 'we shall have won the war on the land. And then I shall retire and amuse myself by watching the people who are trying to win the peace.'[68]

His teeth were enraging him: an early dental appointment was fixed. Perhaps until then he adopted the 'old fashioned treatment' of which his daughter Sarah would describe as one of which her Papa approved: 'Holding neat whisky in my mouth. Oh, delicious anæsthesia! Local, then total!'[69]

❧

What was in the 'general statement,' 'the memorandum,' the 'document' which Hull had handed to the two Japanese ambassadors? Halifax did not know. Nobody in London knew officially either, and for the next week the Americans refused to say. It marked an extraordinary *baisse* in Anglo-American relations. Halifax told the F.O. that he felt that Cordell Hull had 'behaved badly,' as it was 'an important document that we have never seen.'[70] This American discourtesy invited equal slights in reprisal. Explaining the delicate Japanese–American negotiations to the chiefs of staff two days later, the F.O.'s Sterndale Bennett had to admit that Washington was keeping them totally in the dark – 'It appeared,' the record relates, reflecting a tone of wan realisation, 'that there was some danger that the Americans and ourselves might not keep in step with regard to measures to be taken in the Far East.'[71]

Newspapers, evidently inspired by the Chinese, freely spoke of the talks having finally broken down.[72] Recriminations flew. It was plain to the seasoned diplomats in Whitehall that the Japanese would have been offended by the American procedure – what on earth had induced Hull, asked one, to put his 'general statement' to the Japanese, 'unsweetened by any concrete offer.'[73] The Americans blamed the British. Sumner Welles confirmed to Halifax that in view of Churchill's 'thin diet' message and the 'little support' which Hull had received from London the *modus vivendi* was dead.[74]

Hull said the same to the Australian envoy.[75] The foreign office gathered from Halifax that Hull, having nearly succeeded in reaching a settlement with the Japanese, however much it might smack of Munich, was sore that the Chinese and British had stayed his hand at the last moment. That was bound to rankle.[76]

In Washington, Roosevelt snatched the reins of events away from his elderly secretary of state. On the morning of November 27 he authorised the immediate issue of formal 'war warnings' to American outposts in the Pacific, and the notification of Britain to this effect through their naval liaison office in London. He himself signed the warning signal issued to Francis B. Sayre, his High Commissioner in the Philippines, that afternoon.

> Preparations are becoming apparent . . . for an early aggressive movement of some character, although as yet there are no clear indications as to its strength or whether it will be directed against the Burma Road, Thailand, Malay peninsula, Dutch East Indies, or the Philippines. Advance against Thailand seems most probable.
>
> I consider it possible that this next Japanese aggression might cause an outbreak of hostilities between the U.S. and Japan.[77]

Francis Sayre was instructed to call Admiral Thomas B. Hart, the commander-in-chief of the U.S. Asiatic Fleet, and General Douglas MacArthur, the local army commander, into a conference. At two P.M. Admiral Stark, chief of naval operations, sent an explicit war warning not only to Hart in Manila but to Admiral Husband F. Kimmel, commanding the Pacific Fleet based on Hawaii, and (as instructed) to the American admiral in London.

> This despatch is to be considered a war warning [the signal read]. Negotiations with Japan looking toward stabilization of conditions in the Pacific have ceased and an aggressive move by Japan is expected within the next few days. The number and equipment of Japanese troops and the organization of naval task forces indicates an amphibious expedition against either the Philippines, Thai or Kra peninsula or possibly Borneo. Execute an appropriate defensive deployment preparatory to carrying out the tasks assigned in WPL46. Inform District and Army authorities.
>
> A similar warning is being sent by war department. SpeNavO [Admiral Robert L. Ghormley, U.S. Special Naval Observer in London] inform British. . .[78]

A more Delphic signal went out at five P.M., transmitted over Marshall's name to General Walter C. Short, commanding general in Hawaii. It was the literary product of an *ad hoc* committee consisting of Stimson, Stark, and General Leonard T. Gerow. 'Negotiations with Japan appear to be terminated to all practical purposes with only the barest possibilities that the Japanese government might come back and offer to continue. Japanese action unpredictable but hostile action possible any moment. . . The United States desires that Japan commit the first overt act.'[79] The rest was so choked in double-negatives and caveats as to be incomprehensible except to those who had drafted it, but that need not concern us here.

At two P.M. Roosevelt had had the Japanese ambassador Nomura in to see him with Cordell Hull. Nomura reported to Tokyo that he expressed to the tired-looking president Japan's disappointment about the 'general statement.'

'To tell you the truth,' the president had countered, 'I too am very disappointed that the situation has developed in the manner that it has.'

He talked of the cold douche that the Japanese occupation of southern French Indo-China had been for American public opinion in July. 'According to recent intelligence,' he continued, 'there are fears that a second cold-water douche may become an actuality.'

During all these months of talking, he said, he had seen no concrete proof of any peaceful intentions of the Japanese leaders. Twice since last weekend he had postponed going out of town. 'I am leaving tomorrow afternoon, Friday, for the country,' Roosevelt continued, 'for a rest.'

He hoped that when he returned on Wednesday they could discover some basis for a settlement.[80]

Nomura reported all this at once to Tokyo, using the PURPLE code.

AS FOR the precise content of that 'general statement,' the British still had no official notion. Hull had quickly read it out to Lord Halifax, rather as Hitler's foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop had once famously gabbled his 'reasonable terms' to the Polish ambassador on the eve of war in 1939. Halifax had to transmit its substance to London from memory. The British ambassador's telegram arrived in Whitehall around breakfast-time on November 28.[81] But neither Hull nor Roosevelt ever formally informed Churchill about their momentous interviews with the Japanese. Unless this was sheer oversight, this was, with great empires and the lives of millions at stake, bizarre behaviour indeed.

ON THE morning of November 28 the admiralty received instead, by courier from the American embassy, a message informing Admiral Pound that a full 'war warning' had arrived as a priority despatch from the U.S. chief of naval operations addressed to his fleet commanders. As we have seen, this signal began, 'Negotiations with Japan regarding conditions in the Pacific have broken down.'[82] This was a stunning shock to Whitehall. Admiral Pound broke it to the British chiefs of staff that evening. The British consul-general in Saigon was, he said, also predicting a Japanese attack on the Kra Isthmus in Thailand in the near future.* He told his colleagues that he had asked the Commander-in-Chief, Far East, Air Chief-Marshal Brooke-Popham in Singapore, for his opinion.[83]

The foreign office, represented at this meeting by Sterndale Bennett, was perplexed at this turn of events. He revealed that he had yet to receive anything from the state department which would confirm Stark's message. Everybody agreed that the foreign office would do well to ask what on earth was going on. As a pale echo of Churchill's earlier optimism, there was still disbelief expressed here that Japan would actually risk taking on the world's two greatest maritime powers. In their tight-lipped conclusions, the chiefs of staff

> invited the foreign office to maintain the closest contact with the United States Government during the present emergency.[84]

It was indeed a sorry pass in the relations of these two great powers – as the last days of peace in the Pacific slipped away.

A few minutes after midnight – it was now November 29 – the admiralty passed on the text of the American 'war warning' in a HUSH MOST SECRET signal to its commanders-in-chief China and East Indies, adding this gloomy rider: 'Enquiries in U.S.A. have failed to get any corroboration that negotiations have broken down.' The admiralty accordingly reminded these commanders that this British signal was *not* to be taken as a warning telegram.[85]

At six-thirty P.M. the war office sent a further signal to the C-in-C Far East. This said that while hitherto it had not been clear that Operation MATA-

* See page 190.

DOR would lead to war – MATADOR was a planned rapid pre-emptive move by British troops from Malaya into neutral southern Thailand to hold the line across the Kra Isthmus near Singora – the situation had now changed: the indications of an imminent Japanese attack on Thailand 'would make MATADOR certain to lead to war with Japan which it is still our policy to avoid as long as possible.'[86] Unless therefore Britain could obtain an advance assurance of American support, there could be *no* move into Thailand.

At eleven P.M. a third message went from London to Brooke-Popham, stating that the U.S. War Plans Division had now informed the R.A.F. delegation in Washington that they had briefed American army commanders in the Far East that offensive action by Japan against Thailand, the Dutch East Indies, or the Philippines was to be expected at any time.

This message also contained the, for Churchill, painful revelation: 'U.S.A. commanders have been instructed to await initial offensive move by Japanese and carefully to avoid overt action on their own part.'[87]

THE DIPLOMATIC darkness deepened. The British government was still demanding to be shown the 'general statement' which Hull had handed to the Japanese. These were however the very days in which the U.S. navy department was blackmailing, or at least arm-twisting, the British secret service to provide access to its holiest codebreaking secrets – including ULTRA – and hinting at retaliating by a policy of non-cooperation.

The foreign office suspected that Hull was 'sulking' and intended the British to learn the document's text only through the newspapers, a procedure which Eden's mandarins called 'most unsatisfactory.'

Lord Halifax was instructed again to demand sight of the document.[88]

The telegram which arrived from the ambassador on Saturday November 29 threw little fresh light on the situation in Washington. He had visited Sumner Welles, Hull's under-secretary, the day before. Welles had now shown him the note taken by Cordell Hull of the interview between the Japanese and President Roosevelt, who had that day left Washington for a short break in Warm Springs, his winter estate in Georgia. The Japanese tone had been one of regret; the president's, one of obstinacy. For all practical purposes, the negotiations were dead.

'From intercept telephone conversations,' Halifax's report continued, possibly referring to MAGIC, 'United States Government understood that there was an internal crisis going on in Japan and that communication by cable from Japan had been suspended for some hours to-day between 10:30

A.M. and 3:30 P.M.' The Japanese were now presumably awaiting instructions.[89]

WITH ROOSEVELT away from Washington, London could no longer expect early decisions from him on MATADOR. Sterndale Bennett read out the ambassador's despatch to the chiefs of staff at a meeting called that day to discuss this planned pre-emptive invasion of Thailand. Everybody now had the jitters. The chiefs of staff stressed the need not to fall out of step with the United States. 'Unless our vital interests were directly threatened,' the record showed them agreeing, 'we should avoid taking any action which would involve us in war with Japan, unless we were certain that America would join us.'[90] They accordingly drafted a telegram disclosing to Washington that Britain was preparing to launch MATADOR to forestall the Japanese – 'provided that we could be sure that the United States would immediately join us should this move lead to war with Japan.' Time was of the essence.

> It seems almost certain [the draft concluded] that this move would involve us in war with Japan, and we cannot therefore afford to undertake it unless we can be certain that the United States would immediately join us in the fight.[91]

'Pug' Ismay sent the draft to the P.M. and Eden.[92] Churchill felt that this final paragraph would fail to elicit the requisite assurance from Roosevelt. Eden had gone home for the weekend, but discussing it on the 'phone with the prime minister he agreed.[93] Churchill changed the text to read:

> To allow the Japanese to establish themselves so near the Malay frontier would be an obvious threat to Singapore, even though at present season it might not develop at once. We have also to bear in mind the encouragement which Japanese success would give to their extremists. Japanese appetite would inevitably grow and other Far Eastern people would be correspondingly depressed. It looks therefore as though, to ensure the defence of Singapore and for wider reasons, we might have to take proposed action to forestall the Japanese.[94]

Before Roosevelt returned to the White House several days might elapse. Until then, Brooke-Popham would have to hold back on MATADOR.

WASHINGTON STILL resisted British efforts to learn officially the contents of Hull's 'general statement' to the Japanese emissaries; so Britain's officers in the Far East were informed.[95]

Lord Halifax went to see Hull on the morning of the twenty-ninth. His despatch on this interview arrived in Whitehall at 9:40 P.M. Hull had made clear his belief that 'it was pretty well inevitable' that the Japanese would strike soon. He had advised the U.S. armed forces to prepare for war. Reviewing the events of the last few days, he spoke with bitterness about the part played by the Chinese foreign minister T. V. Soong in bringing Stimson round to a harder line; he also believed that Chiang Kai-shek had somehow applied pressure to the British government.

As Halifax reminded the foreign office, the 'plain answer to all this' was that Hull had failed to consult with the British. He assured Hull, somewhat improbably, that Eden had been fully prepared to go along with the earlier proposed settlement with the Japanese; but Hull replied that Chiang Kai-shek's intervention and Churchill's 'message of sympathy' with the Chinese had convinced him that that was no longer possible.

The Chinese had always wanted to see Britain embroiled with Japan, and now Chiang 'looked like being successful,' sniffed Hull.

Challenged yet again for a copy of the hard-line 'general statement' handed to the Japanese, Hull rummaged in a pile of papers on his table, but apologised that he could not lay his hands on it.

Halifax wearily promised London to try again – 'if I can get it without pressing in such a fashion that he might resent.'

Asked outright what the United States would do if and when the Japanese now attacked Thailand, Hull said in effect that, since Stimson had wrecked his diplomacy, that was now his pigeon. He made a parting remark about the folly of allowing China to dictate their foreign policy for them.

'While he showed no signs of appreciating [it], and what in the circumstances would have been unprofitable to rub in to him, is that a good deal of this might have been avoided if he had been willing to give us longer opportunity of discussion in advance,' concluded Halifax.[96]

There remains little surprise that these British telegrams from Washington were concealed from the public gaze in the Public Records office for fifty years.

EDEN FOUND himself on the telephone all that day, November 29, 'mostly about Far East but also about Russia.' He spoke several times with Churchill, Sterndale Bennett, and the chiefs of staff.[97]

In Washington, Halifax went over to the state department again, seeking the desired assurances on MATADOR. 'Have seen Hull,' he cabled to London, 'who left me in no doubt as to his own personal opinion, which would be to do immediately what we want.'

Hull promised to telephone Roosevelt at Hyde Park; he advised that meanwhile Britain's Admiral Little should prevail upon Admiral Stark to call on the President. Advance copies of this telegram from Halifax were sent in the early hours of the thirtieth to the prime minister.[98]

Within the foreign office anger at Washington's behaviour grew; several more items in the British files are blanked out to this day. The Americans still refused to come clean about their 'general statement.'

On December 1 even the mild-mannered Cadogan felt that the Americans ought 'in all courtesy' to provide a copy of the document.[99] Halifax tackled Sumner Welles again about it, even if it was now 'somewhat academic.'[100]

Not until the evening of the second – already December 3 in London – did Welles provide copies. He pleaded with the British ambassador not to publicise the note which Hull had handed to the Japanese; it was obviously unacceptable and had been intended to be so.[101]

It was finally received at the foreign office in Britain, principal ally of the United States, at around nine A.M. on the third, eight days after it had been handed to the Japanese, their common enemies.[102]

12: *Day of Perfidy*

THE FIRST that Churchill knew of Roosevelt's war warning was on Friday, November 28, 1941 when Admiral Ghormley of the U.S. Navy passed it on to him.[1] That day too the Americans finally decoded the original 'WINDS message' which Tokyo had broadcast on the nineteenth (and which Bletchley Park had decoded three days earlier).[2]

The British codebreakers in Singapore now sent their own decrypt of this to the U.S. naval commander Admiral Thomas B. Hart in Manila.[3] That day Tokyo was heard radioing to Japanese embassies around the world, again in the PURPLE code, a precise schedule of times and frequencies – perhaps to help them to listen for the ominous 'weather reports.'[4] Later that day the U.S. government ordered its listening posts to watch for the reports.

That these might be heard at any time, with all that this implied, became evident from instructions radioed by the Japanese foreign minister to his emissaries in Washington, instructing them that Tokyo would shortly break off the talks. 'However,' Togo instructed, 'I do not wish you to give the impression that the negotiations are broken off. Merely say to them [the Americans] that you are awaiting instructions.'[5] Tokyo was stalling for time.

In Tokyo the 'liaison conference' of military and political leaders had been in almost permanent session since the report of Cordell Hull's rebuff had arrived. On Saturday November 29 they finally decided on war.[6] London, still formally in the dark about the outcome of the American–Japanese talks, instructed Lord Halifax to make further inquiries in Washington.

THAT SATURDAY morning Churchill summoned his car and left for the English countryside. The morrow would bring his sixty-seventh birthday, and he wanted to spend it with his family at Chequers.[7] Sarah was already out there; Clementine arrived soon after. An ample luncheon followed, with

the wealthy Ronald Trees and representatives from the U.S. Congress. With the arrival that evening of his brother Major John Churchill, Randolph's universally attractive young wife Pamela, and Diana with her husband Duncan Sandys, the whole Churchill brood was there.

Worries about the Far East and Libya, where CRUSADER was in the balance, overshadowed the weekend. A messenger brought a new telegram from Lord Halifax. At nine-thirty that morning Cordell Hull had confirmed to him that the Japanese threat was now hanging 'just over our heads.'

> The diplomatic part in our relations with Japan [the ambassador reported] is now virtually over. The matter will now go to the officials of the Army and Navy, with whom I have talked. . . Japan may move suddenly and with every possible element of surprise.

Hull was blaming Churchill for this. 'When Churchill received Chiang's loud protest about the *modus vivendi*,' Hull chided Lord Halifax, referring to the events of the twenty-fifth, 'it would have been better if he had sent Chiang a strong cable to brace up and fight with the same zeal as the Japanese and Americans were displaying.'

Instead, the prime minister had passed the Chinese protest on to Washington, without raising any objection on Britain's part.[8]

LATER THAT Saturday a call came from Eden reporting what steps the chiefs of staff, meeting in London, felt they could take against Japan's reported designs on Thailand. If Britain launched her proposed operation MATADOR, the pre-emptive move into neutral Thailand, she might find herself at war with Japan alone, without the backing of the United States.

The chiefs of staff were flatly against taking any action unless Britain's 'vital interests' were affected and unless the United States would definitely join in. They did support the idea of occupying the Kra Isthmus *after* Japan invaded Thailand, in the hope of preventing a further southward advance on Malaya.[9] Eden and Churchill felt however that they would have to put even this modest plan to Washington for approval. For what it was worth, Churchill said that he also intended to urge Roosevelt to issue a warning to the Japanese.[10] Thus indecision was compounded by vacillation and lack of resolution.

The silence from Roosevelt, who was now weekending at Warm Springs in Georgia, was unhelpful. A telegram went to Lord Halifax, instructing

[Facsimile of magic intercept]

him to draw the president's attention to the threat to Singapore and to ask for an 'urgent expression' of the United States' views.[11]

In the early hours of Sunday Churchill sent out telegrams polling the prime ministers of the Dominions about MATADOR. 'There are important indications,' he explained, 'that Japan is about to attack Thailand and that this attack will include a sea-borne expedition to seize strategical points in the Kra Isthmus.' He reported the chiefs of staffs' arguments, and warned that for the well-known constitutional reasons it was unlikely that Roosevelt could give a 'prior guarantee' of support. He asked their individual views.[12]

During the course of that Sunday their answers arrived, from around the world, and revealed an empire in disarray. The soldier Jan Smuts thought that they should take the risk and act to forestall any Japanese invasion of Kra, arguing that Roosevelt was bound to help if Britain got involved in war with Japan. New Zealand said the same, but added the forlorn suggestion that they might approach Bangkok and ask the Thais for the now fashionable 'invitation-to-invade'; the danger was however that the Thai prime minister would at once pass this on to the Japanese: General Pibul Songgram (Luang Phibunsongkhram) was known to be pro-Japanese. The Australian view was somewhat incoherent. If Japan did invade Thailand, said Canberra, Britain should 'at once take warlike measures.' This might, or might not, have meant going to war; the Australians kept their own counsel on the meaning of those words.[13]

Mackenzie King, Canada's elder statesman, rendered the most thoughtful reply. He warned strongly against getting into any conflict with Japan until such time as Washington provided firm assurances of support. The U.S. Congress would see little reason to come in if it was merely to help Britain preserve her empire in the Far East. He predicted that the United States would not lift a finger to help, and would leave Britain 'holding the baby.'[14] To his private diary, the Canadian prime minister observed that since they would not be ready for four or five more months the Americans would have no choice but to prevaricate. 'However when men get war-minded, their reason begins to desert them. Their attitude becomes one of fight and die, if necessary, let the consequences be what they may.'[15]

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Despairing of extracting an honest declaration of intent from the United States, Churchill tried another approach, perhaps influenced by the Prof.

who arrived at Chequers that last day in November 1941. The foreign secretary certainly had a hand in it too, for he noted that Winston had rung up that morning to thank the Edens for their birthday message, after which 'we discussed a possible message from himself to Roosevelt about Thailand.' Eden encouraged Churchill to send it, noting: 'I think that we should get a line-up with the U.S. next week about Thailand, but I am most anxious that [the] Japs move first.' So far, he complained, he could not get the chiefs of staff to contemplate making any move without the Americans.[16]

At three P.M. Churchill sent the message up to Grosvenor-square and asked Ambassador Winant to transmit it to his president: in it, the prime minister suggested that despite the constitutional difficulties, the president should try one important means of averting war between Japan and 'our two countries,' namely 'a plain declaration, secret or public, as may be thought best, that any further act of aggression by Japan will lead immediately to the gravest consequences.' Winston concluded this rambling message with the words, 'Forgive me, my dear friend, for presuming to press such a course upon you, but I am convinced that it might make all the difference and prevent a melancholy extension of the war.'[17]

When President Roosevelt returned to his capital he would pay scant attention to the P.M.'s suggestion.[18]

AT CHEQUERS, the prime minister's Sunday afternoon masseuse came and went. It was time now for the empire to flex its muscles. In England, a message from the India Office reached Leo Amery during lunch at his home, reporting that it had issued the preparatory warning for war with Japan.[19] The empire's far-flung outposts were formally notified of the looming danger. Malaya Command ordered a permanent guard posted on all vulnerable military points, anti-sabotage measures, and all troops alerted to stand-by in barracks and under arms; beach defences and operations rooms were manned, anti-aircraft and fixed gun defences deployed, booms put out across rivers, and the country's northern frontier facing the Kra Isthmus secured by the Third Indian Corps.[20]

Eden advised Lord Halifax by telegram that evening that it now looked as if the Japanese would open any hostilities with an attack on British or Dutch interests, rather than American. 'Should however the United States or Japan declare war on each other before any such attack, it is essential that we should be in a position to fulfil the pledge given in the Prime Minister's Mansion House speech of 10th November that [the] British declaration

would follow "within the hour."' In that event Halifax was to telephone Eden immediately, and cable a pre-arranged code word to him.[21] That Sunday, the Japanese did ask to speak with the British ambassador in Washington; reluctant to risk splitting the Anglo-American front, Halifax made his excuses, and Eden subsequently approved.[22]

Churchill drove back to London early on Monday, December 1. A few hours later, Roosevelt arrived back in Washington, and the final week of peace in the Far East began.

ONE CURIOUS entr'acte, as this dramatic week began, needs relating if only to illustrate the unaccustomed twinges of anti-American feeling that were now afflicting Churchill. Nevile Butler, head of the foreign office's American department, pointed out to Eden that both Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles were reproaching Whitehall for backing the Chinese misgivings rather than following the American lead. Before the Japanese 'took the plunge,' suggested Butler, the prime minister might like to send to Roosevelt a brief note of appreciation of American 'negotiating skills;' he prepared a fulsome draft for the prime minister's signature. Despite Eden's encouragement, Churchill doggedly refused: 'I am not very keen on this at the moment,' he wrote on December 3, adding: 'How much do you want it?'

Eden panicked: 'Not strongly. If you feel against it, let it be.'[23]

Prime Minister Churchill did so feel. While Washington was blaming him, Britain, he reflected, had Washington's 'negotiating skills' to thank for the fine mess she was about to find herself in.

SUMMONING WHAT he now called a 'staff conference' at midday on Monday, December 1, he found it wise to steer an even more cautious course than the chiefs had adopted before the weekend: he even defined that for the Japanese to invade and occupy the Kra Isthmus, despite the proximity to Singapore, would not *ipso facto* threaten Britain's 'vital interests.'[24] Later, Eden, the Dominions Secretary Lord Cranborne, and the Australian representatives were called in to this meeting. When Sir Earle Page lamented that although the crisis was almost on top of them they had still taken no firm decisions, Churchill had to spell it out that Britain should neither resist nor attempt to forestall a Japanese attack on the isthmus unless she had the advance assurance of American support. There were, he said, still many Americans longing to raise an outcry about the United States 'again being dragged into a British war.'[25] 'The same,' Churchill added, enlarging on his

own wider apprehensions, 'would apply with even more force in the event of a Japanese attack on Russia, or aggression in the Netherlands East Indies.' Stanley Melbourne Bruce, the Australian high commissioner, adopted an uglier tone, stating that if Britain chickened out over Thailand now, or failed to assist the Dutch, it 'would create an atmosphere in Australia which might lead to a request for the withdrawal of Australian troops from the Middle East, and to the despatch of Australian naval forces to escort them back.' Churchill choked on those words, and talked of such a withdrawal taking 'several months.' He referred to the useful support that had come from Ottawa – the fear that the Americans might leave Britain to 'hold the baby.' Eden expressed himself 'far from happy' at Churchill's reluctance to take a firm stand, and reminded the prime minister that the Dutch were co-operating loyally with the British empire. '[They] would certainly look to us,' he said, 'if they were attacked.'[26]

Churchill was however in an odd, ill-humoured mood. Peering over his half-lensed eye-glasses, he saw confronting him a sheer rockface of uncertainties beyond which his vision could not penetrate. It seemed that in Libya Rommel might thwart CRUSADER after all: Hitler was about to hurl a mighty winter offensive at Moscow: India was struggling to break free. The ambitious sequence of victories to which Churchill had aspired since September – Tripoli, Tunis, Sicily, Italy – was receding into the future, and Eden had begun nagging him about what 'hamper' of offers he could take to Moscow.

No doubt at his dictation, Pound signalled to Tom Phillips, aboard *Prince of Wales*, 'It is possible . . . that during the present period of uncertainty whilst conferences are in progress you might consider it desirable to send *Prince of Wales* and/or *Repulse* away from Singapore in order that the uncertainty of their whereabouts would disconcert the Japanese.'[27]

The uneasy, defeatist mood persisted at the cabinet that followed. Once again Churchill came out against taking any pre-emptive action in Thailand – Britain could not assume that the United States would automatically enter into a war between Britain and Japan. Up for discussion at that cabinet was, of all topics, the proposed publication of the 1939 documents on the origins of the war. But who remembered Poland now? Eden was in favour of publication, but Churchill was not and said so.[28]

His teeth were plaguing him, and he knew only one remedy. (On the previous day General Marshall had reminisced to Lord Halifax in Washington on how he and a glowering Winston Churchill had followed General John J. Pershing at a victory review of American troops. It was the era of

Prohibition. 'What a magnificent body of men,' Churchill had lisped sympathetically, suddenly breaking his silence. 'And never to look forward to another drink!'[29])

A fifteen-minute visit from the dentist was slotted into the P.M.'s appointment card at three P.M.[30]

THIS THEN was the situation of which the admiralty apprised Brooke-Popham, Layton, and Phillips on Monday, December 1: the American–Japanese talks in Washington had broken down but were 'apparently' not yet finally broken off. The Japanese ambassador Kurusu had not left Washington; Roosevelt had handed him a vague note, reiterating the American stand on, *inter alia*, the integrity of China and the need for Japan to abandon the Tripartite Pact. The Americans, the summary continued, had abandoned the *modus vivendi* described in 'my' earlier signal of the twenty-ninth – the use of the first person might imply that, although signed by Pound, the signal was drafted by Churchill – 'largely because of hostility to it shown by Chiang Kai-shek,' and on the twenty-eighth Washington had placed its forces in 'the first state of readiness.'

Mr Hull had meanwhile told Lord Halifax on the twenty-ninth that he felt 'pretty sure' that Japan would take some early action under pressure from extremists.

His Majesty's government had informed President Roosevelt that it might be necessary for the British to take action to forestall a Japanese landing on Kra Isthmus and they asked whether they could expect American support in that event; the president's reply was not likely to be received before later this day, Monday, December the first. 'Mr Kurusu is seeing Mr Hull at 10:00 today Monday, but nothing is known about subject to be discussed.'[31]

Several people noticed how irritable the prime minister was this day – his flights of oratory were devoid of their usual colour; Eden thought the fight had gone out of him.

His mind was elsewhere. His teeth were probably murdering his sleep. He knew he was on a threshold, leading the empire out of a door that would in a matter of days be closed for ever.

WITHIN THE next twelve hours a dramatic change came over him, and we now know why. It was not just a despatch which he received from Lord Halifax, reporting his visit to the White House, where Roosevelt had now

returned, it was the locked buff dispatch-box which brought a sheaf of Black Jumbos from his own private Oracle.

In the former Halifax reported that President Roosevelt had received him with Harry Hopkins, his intimate adviser, at lunchtime on Monday December 1. He said that he had considered uttering a warning to Japan, but now thought it wiser to phrase the message as a 'friendly' inquiry, inviting the Emperor to explain what his forces were up to. 'It [is] plain,' Halifax reported him as saying, 'that if the Japanese [do] in fact send reinforcements to Indo-China, they [are] not going there for their health.' Meanwhile the R.A.F. and American units should continue their air reconnaissance patrols off Malaya and the Philippines. Roosevelt mentioned that he had issued orders for three American submarines to watch the most likely waters and 'act if attacked.' He did not however reveal to Halifax that he had also ordered Admiral Hart to charter three schooners in Manila immediately, manned by Filipino crews but flying the Stars and Stripes, to 'observe' any Japanese movements in the West China Sea and the Gulf of Siam. The schooners were to have a 'minimum number' of American naval ratings. The American intention was to trail their coats in the hope of provoking the Japanese into sinking one or more boats wearing U.S. colours.[32] The Japanese would shortly do just that, though the boats would be larger.

'*At one point*,' the ambassador continued, '*he* [Roosevelt] *threw in an aside that in the case of any direct attack on ourselves or the Dutch*, *we should obviously all be together*.' Churchill sidelined these promising words on his copy. Suddenly things were looking up. On MATADOR, Brooke-Popham's proposed invasion of the Kra Isthmus, the president had been less helpful – it would be nice, he had suggested, if Thailand invited the British empire troops in, otherwise Britain 'must clearly do what strategic necessity dictated.'[33]

At five-thirty P.M. the chiefs of staff chewed over this Washington telegram with Eden and Cadogan; then they all adjourned to No. 10 Downing-street, where Churchill presided over another 'staff conference.' As Eden too pointed out, Roosevelt had clearly had a change of heart, speaking about all being 'in it together'; that he had made his observation as 'an aside' was less promising. Now Britain must try to pin him down. Churchill stressed the importance of letting Washington take the lead in any action, but Eden murmured that this might lead to an awkward hiatus after any Japanese attack on, for instance, Dutch territory, while each great power waited for the other to respond first.

To this Churchill responded that 'he did not think that a Japanese move was immediately imminent,' and he wanted to think it over before sending further instructions to Lord Halifax.[34]

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Society itself was undergoing a change in England. In a dull, flat speech to the House on Tuesday December 2, 1941 the P.M. proposed a motion to conscript women for war labour – the young ones as army drivers, and the older married women to man the factory benches. 'There was no indication,' wrote editor Cecil King, 'of what is to be done about all the children.' Churchill appeared oblivious of the wider ramifications: of how the new measures would impact upon English family life.[35] He moved in lofty circles; he was as remote from the factory floor as were his desk and his War Room from the Japanese task forces now ploughing in total radio silence across the South Pacific and the China Seas.

Early on Tuesday December 2, Whitehall learned that Sumner Welles, speaking off the record the day before to senior American journalists, had concluded his remarks by saying, 'The British cannot allow the Japanese to occupy Thailand. It is too close to Singapore, Burma and India. The British will fight and we will move in behind.'[36] But why would Roosevelt not say so openly? Churchill lunched that Tuesday, as usual, with His Majesty. He told him nothing of all this.

WASHINGTON BELIEVED that war might even now have been averted. On December 1 however the U.S. army's codebreakers had found the imperial Japanese government confidentially advising its ambassadors on the previous day that it could no longer continue negotiations with Washington.[37] Hull's document of the twenty-sixth, said another intercepted message, which was translated in Washington on the first and at Bletchley Park six days later, had contained an 'insulting clause' and was clearly a trick.[38] The American codebreakers found Tokyo confiding to ambassadors Nomura and Kurusu in Washington that 'to prevent the United States from becoming unduly suspicious' they had been advising people that the negotiations were continuing.[39]

These messages showed that some kind of mischief was afoot; several were not deciphered by the British for several days, but Washington does not seem to have shared them.

The American anger at the British refusal to share their German ULTRA secrets was unabated. Reflecting this mood, and seeking to explain the Intelligence stand-off, Admiral Little reported from Washington on December 2: 'The atmosphere is very tense here owing to the present Pacific situation, but I am still of the personal opinion that war in that area will be avoided by the Japanese.'[40] The British secret service was less complacent. On Tuesday December 2 they signalled Gerald Wilkinson, their man in Manila, that Japan was accelerating airfield and railroad construction in Indo-China, and that 100,000 troops had arrived there since November 10 with multitudes of planes, tanks, and 75-millimetre guns. On the basis, as 'C' later explicitly clarified, of the latest MAGICS, he told Wilkinson: 'Our considered opinion concludes that Japan envisages early hostilities with Britain and U.S. Japan does *not* intend to attack Russia at present but will act in South.' Wilkinson circulated this to S.I.S. agents across the Pacific including his own head office in Honolulu.[41] The firm's president at once telephoned his office in San Francisco to cancel all shipments across the Pacific to the Philippines.[42]

Learning from the MAGICS that Japanese embassies and consulates around the world had been ordered to destroy their files, at ten A.M. on December 3 Captain Irving H. Mayfield, the Fourteenth Naval District's Intelligence officer at Honolulu, asked the F.B.I. to check. Two hours later F.B.I. wiretappers in Hawaii heard the consulate's cook telling a friend that the consul-general was burning all his important papers.[43] The local American authorities, to whom all this was told, still took things less seriously.

CHURCHILL TOO knew what was coming. A locked buff box had brought a fresh sheaf of Black Jumbos to his desk at No. 10 – the PURPLE messages that his own codebreakers had deciphered. Like a salvo of lightning flashes in a darkening storm these suddenly revealed to him not only that the Japanese sword arm was already raised and about to descend: but that it was about to fall on Britain *and* the United States equally, and that Hitler was certain to declare war on Roosevelt in consequence. The mighty burden of uncertainty was lifting from Churchill's shoulders.

One such MAGIC which Churchill had read on December 1 was a message which Togo had sent to the Japanese ambassadors in Berlin and Rome, a week earlier, on November 24, putting them on notice that they might have to seek audiences with Hitler and Mussolini shortly: with war looming now between Japan and the United States and Britain, this message

said, it was time to overhaul the obligations imposed by the Axis alliance; but the ambassadors were to say absolutely nothing until then.[44] Another MAGIC read on this day by Churchill and initialled in his red ink showed that that time had now come: the document briefly illuminated the Japanese foreign minister Togo in Tokyo as he instructed his ambassador in Berlin two days earlier to brief Hitler and Ribbentrop on the breakdown of the Washington talks and on the plans of Britain and the United States to move troops into East Asia. 'You should therefore see Führer Hitler and Foreign Minister Ribbentrop at once,' ordered Tokyo. 'It is greatly to be feared that an armed collision will occur and we shall find ourselves in a state of war with Britain and America. You should add that this may happen sooner than is expected.' In the same red ink, the British prime minister sidelined Tokyo's statement that Japan would not fight Russia unless attacked – 'that it is on the South however that we lay most emphasis,' meaning Malaya and the Philippines, 'and that we propose to refrain from deliberately taking positive action in the North,' against the Soviet Union.[45]

On December 2 Bletchley Park translated a second highly significant Japanese telegram, from Bangkok to Tokyo, which reported that in order to 'set up' Britain as the aggressor against Thailand, elements in the Thai cabinet were suggesting that Japanese forces should land at Kota Bharu, obliging the British forces in Malaya to invade from Padang Besar, whereupon Thailand would declare war on Britain.

Washington had once again initially withheld both this and the sinister Tokyo-to-Berlin intercept ('this may happen sooner than is expected') from the British; at Eden's request Commander Denniston sent a MOST IMMEDIATE telegram, using Bletchley Park's secret link, directing 'C's' man in Washington to 'ask our friends' whether, to save time, they would make available these two intercepts to the ambassador, Lord Halifax. At the same time the war office notified Brooke-Popham in Singapore and the British commander-in-chief in India about the worrisome Bangkok intercept.[46]

THERE WERE several important messages which may, or may not, have independently come to British ears. On December 2, at eight-thirty A.M. (London time), the British empire's radio monitors picked up Tokyo's 'operational directive No. 6,' encyphered in JN.25, radioed on four powerful transmitters to the Japanese fleet. It was a four-word order to 'climb Mount Niitaka,' highest mountain in the Japanese empire, on December 8.[47] Did the British decipher this? The Russians, it later transpired, had already de-

tected the Japanese fleet suddenly changing all its radio call-signs on December 1.[48] A December 4 Japanese fleet signal, again encyphered in JN.25, contained sufficient clues to deduce the date and target of attack: the Americans deciphered it only four years later.[49] But the British? Again history cannot yet say. We are left with conjecture, spiced with tantalising glimpses of the unrevealed. On December 17, ten days after the Japanese attack that brought Japan into the war, newspaper proprietor Cecil King learned over a Fleet-street luncheon with another prowler in the corridors of Whitehall a 'sensational item' which he confided only to his hand-written diaries – that Britain had had 'five days warning' of the attack.[50]

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On December 3, 1941, Churchill's own codebreakers certainly deciphered the telegram sent by Togo two days earlier to the Japanese embassy in London, instructing: 'Please take steps for the immediate disuse of the cypher machine at your Embassy.' Essential parts were to be dismantled and destroyed, and the code books burned.[51] The embassy was to transmit to Tokyo, *en clair*, the words RECEIVED and DISPATCHED, confirming that the instructions had arrived and been executed respectively. 'C' told Churchill these two words had been duly monitored on December 2.[52] So that was that. Without a code machine the embassy, like the British government, was now reliant on hearing the WINDS-EXECUTE message for further information.

There were now reports that Japanese submarines were moving southwards from Saigon. The prime minister sent this directive to Eden about their Far East policy:[53]

> Our settled policy . . . is not to take forward action in advance of the United States. Except in the case of a Japanese attempt to seize the Kra Isthmus (which is unlikely)* there will be time for the United States to be squarely confronted with a new act of Japanese aggression. If they move, we will move immediately in support. If they do not move, we must consider our position afresh.

* Not surprisingly, Mr Churchill omitted both the three words in parenthesis and the second paragraph from *The Second World War*, vol. iii: *The Grand Alliance* (London 1950), page 534. The Japanese invaded the Kra Isthmus on the first day.

2. An attack on the Kra Isthmus would not be helpful to Japan for several months.

Churchill then considered the marginal case: what should Britain do if Japan attacked only the Dutch possessions? Here too he proposed that Britain at first do nothing, so that the United States were affronted by the full impact of this new Japanese aggression.

'If the United States declares war on Japan,' he announced once more, 'we follow within the hour.' If however Washington proved incapable of decisive action, Churchill felt that Britain should act alone to help the Dutch. 'Having regard to the supreme importance of the United States being foremost, we must be the sole judge of timing the actual moment.'

The foreign secretary was dismayed by this policy of 'wait-and-see;' to Eden it smacked of a 'lack of fire.' He wanted a clear-cut telegram sent to Roosevelt announcing that Britain intended both to occupy the Kra Isthmus and to aid the Dutch if attacked, and that she presumed the United States would support her. 'But P.M. is defeatist,' recorded Eden's equally baffled private secretary that day, 'and appeasing where Far East is concerned.'[54]

GENERAL POWNALL, the former Vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, came in that evening to say farewell before sailing to take over, some weeks hence, from Brooke-Popham in Singapore, which might well soon become a battleground. He sat in on Winston's 'staff conference' and heard Eden plead yet again for something more concrete to offer Stalin in Moscow.

The meeting finished so late that the P.M. invited Pownall to dine with him, Clemmie, and his physician. Churchill drank to Pownall's success in Singapore, and confessed that he had only evicted Pownall from the war office to make room for his new friend General Nye. 'Not that it is any reflection on you,' he murmured, 'my dear general.'

Pownall found himself wondering how David had laughed it off with Uriah the Hittite when sending him into the forefront of the battle because his master had fallen in love with somebody else.

Churchill consoled him with word of the capital ships he had sent out: the mighty *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* would soon both be at Singapore.

'I had to overcome a lot of admiralty resistance,' he boasted, 'before I could get it done.'[55]

Tempers in London were brittle. Hearing that Australia's new left-wing foreign minister Dr Herbert Vere Evatt was publicly criticising Britain's reluctance to declare war on Finland, Hungary, and Romania as Stalin was demanding, Churchill sent a wounded telegram to Canberra justifying the delay and inviting the Australians to refrain from further criticism.

'We have never said a word in public,' he admonished Evatt, 'about [the] Australian government's insistence upon the withdrawal of all troops from Tobruk, which cost us life and ships, and added appreciably to General Auchinleck's difficulties in preparing his offensive; and no one here, or I presume in Australia, outside the circles of Government has the slightest inkling of the distress which we felt.'

As proof of Britain's continued commitment to Australia, he pointed to the arrival of *Prince of Wales* in Far Eastern waters; he offered Britain's condolences on the recent loss of the Australian navy's cruiser *Sydney*, and revealed Britain's own loss of *Barham*, torpedoed by an enemy submarine with the loss of seven hundred lives in the Mediterranean: 'This is being kept strictly secret at present,' he advised, 'as the enemy do not seem to know and the event would only encourage Japan.'[56]

The torpedoing of *Barham* was a cruel blow. 'She blundered straight onto the submarine,' confessed Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham in a letter – an escorting destroyer had picked up the enemy's Asdic echo, but dismissed it as non-submarine in origin. 'It was a most daring and brilliant performance on the part of the submarine,' he added with a chivalry that was characteristic of this fine officer, 'who fired from a position about 200 yards ahead of *Valiant*.'[57]

EDEN WOULD be leaving London for Moscow on the coming weekend together with Sir Alexander Cadogan, permanent head of the foreign office. With what suppressed relish the prime minister must have listened at the intervening meetings to his young foreign secretary's self-important prattle about his mission!

Mr Eden believed that he would be the centre of attention, a Saint-Bernard scaling the Kremlin's snowy heights, bearing slung around his neck a barrelful of succour for the embattled Soviet leaders.

Churchill calculated otherwise: around the same time, the Japanese would be scaling a mountain of their own. This was evidently in his mind when he suddenly remarked to Eden on December 3 that he wanted to see a Japanese–American war start – which Britain would immediately enter; rather

than a Japanese–British war, which the Americans might, or again, might not.[58]

What however should Eden actually offer to Joseph Stalin? Churchill sent to the chiefs of staff a message showing he had not abandoned the plan to send British empire troops to Russia. 'There is,' he wrote, 'therefore no reason to withdraw from our project of placing the 50th and 18th Divisions plus an Indian Division upon the Russian Southern flank wherever it may rest . . . provided always that Stalin prefers troops to supplies.'[59]

Ismay put this to the chiefs of staff on December 3.[60] General Sir Alan Brooke, attending for the first time as C.I.G.S., was aghast; this would mean shutting down CRUSADER, the battle for Libya. Britain's policy, he insisted, must be to clear the enemy out of North Africa before anything else.[61] The bickering spilled over into the midday cabinet. Frantic to take something of substance to Stalin, Eden nagged his colleagues about speeding up their declaration of war on Finland, Romania, and Hungary. Churchill grumbled about this empty gesture, and called it an 'historic mistake.' He instructed that the cabinet minutes should record his distaste: this declaration of war would neither assist Britain's cause nor aid the Russians. The minutes duly quoted him as saying: 'The sole justification for it was that it was necessary in order to satisfy the Russians.'[62] His jaw was hurting, and at three P.M. he was back in the dentist's chair.[63]

Later, at five-thirty, the defence committee pondered the same issues. After two hours, they all – Beaverbrook, Margesson, Amery, Eden, Sinclair, Attlee, and the rest – hoped that they had ridden him off his 'two divisions' gift to Stalin.[64] Amery observed in his diary that he himself had urged that CRUSADER 'should not rest till we have cleared the whole of North Africa.' Brooke took the same line.[65] 'I tried to begin to make him realise,' wrote the general in his own record, 'that we must have one definite policy for the conduct of the war.' Churchill however was wedded to his proposed expedition to the Caucasus, having already hinted at it in messages to Stalin – a 'reckless' promise, Beaverbrook termed it. Eden recorded afterwards: 'We all agreed that it would be wrong to send a small land force to South Russia as things are at present.' Beaverbrook suggested offering five hundred tanks and five hundred aircraft instead, alleging that Stalin would much prefer these.[66] The defence committee ruled that Eden could offer equipment, but not troops; apart from anything else, supplying Churchill's proposed expedition would choke the single railroad line carrying Lend–Lease supplies through Iran to the Soviet Union.

Yet the row dragged on into Thursday the fourth, when the full cabinet met at six P.M. to examine what Eden sardonically called 'my hamper for Russia' once again. While everybody now agreed it would be unwise to send the two divisions, the chiefs of staff were equally unwilling to 'put up' tanks or aeroplanes. The mood was 'Libya first.'

Eden found those cabinet members who had not been at the previous day's defence committee singularly unhelpful – 'All maintaining that I needed nothing, and ignoring that Stalin had been told I was bringing armies!' His one reliable ally on this, Lord Beaverbrook, was away. Herbert Morrison, the home secretary, stung Eden by expressing the hope that the foreign secretary would 'not be unmindful' of his own country's interests while in Moscow. Eden retorted acidly that this was not his first such trip. 'He & K-W. [Kingsley-Wood],' recorded Eden afterwards, 'are terrified of allowing anything to leave these shores and I had to remind them that, if we had followed their line last year, we should have lost Egypt long since.'[67]

❧

'We had already discussed that on the defence committee before,' recorded Amery, exasperated, 'but Anthony was very sticky about facing Stalin with what he thinks will be a disappointment.'[68] A tedious, rambling, revolving discussion followed. 'Debate became interminable,' wrote Brooke that night in his leather-bound, padlocked diary, 'Anthony Eden rather like a peevish child grumbling because he was being sent to see Uncle Stalin without suitable gifts, while Granny Churchill was comforting him and explaining to him all the pretty speeches he might make instead!'

They decided that Eden should offer 300 tanks and 300 planes. 'Self interests,' remarked Brooke with distaste in the same diary, 'seemed to predominate.'[69]

There was however now a good message from Roosevelt about the Far East, and Eden induced the prime minister to issue a full assurance to the Dutch government-in-exile on the strength of it. 'Admiralty still inclined to wriggle,' he observed, 'but Winston took my view. It is an immense relief to have cleared up all this false position.' Thailand, he added, remained the principal cause for anxiety.[70]

It was now Thursday December 4. During the day, a buff box brought several MAGICS from Bletchley Park. The first revealed General Oshima reporting to Tokyo on a meeting suddenly requested by Hitler's foreign

minister Ribbentrop late on November 28 (once again Washington had translated this several days earlier but not passed it to London). Explaining that Göring and other Nazi top brass had just been meeting at the Führer's residence to discuss the coming year's campaign, Ribbentrop had urged Japan to enter the war. In reply to his question, Oshima reported that he had told Ribbentrop that he had not yet received any official news about the Japanese–American negotiations. Ribbentrop said that there had never been a time when close co-operation between the Axis partners was more imperative. 'If Japan determined on war against Britain and America, not only would this be to the common advantage of Japan and Germany but, he believed, it would be to Japan's advantage also.' Asked whether Ribbentrop really expected war between Germany and America, the foreign minister remarked evasively 'that Roosevelt was diseased, and there was no knowing what he would do.'

Churchill lined the next paragraph of General Oshima's dispatch in red ink:

> I [Oshima] asked if they intended to carry on without attacking the British Isles. Ribbentrop said that Germany was of course making preparations for this; but according to reports reaching Germany the internal situation in Britain was not any too good. For instance the split in the Conservative Party, the lack of confidence in Churchill and the revolutionary ideas of Bevin, the Labour leader, were making internal conditions quite difficult. There were of course some people who did not believe this; but the Führer believed that conditions in Britain were bad and thought that as the result of Germany's future operations, even, it might be, without an invasion, Britain would be beaten.

Oshima then added this important information for Tokyo. 'Should Japan become engaged in a war against the United States,' Ribbentrop had said, by way of encouragement, 'Germany would, of course, join in immediately.' He concluded by asking Oshima to keep all this under his hat.[71]

So Churchill knew that his gamble had come off. Berlin would definitely declare war on Washington. But if he chuckled at Oshima's concluding words, other intercepts which he received by landline from Bletchley Park or by box from 'C' on this Thursday provided less cause for amusement.

They included ominous, no-nonsense messages transmitted in cypher by Japan over the last three days to her embassies, legations, and consulates

overseas. On Monday the foreign minister Togo had been heard briefing his embassy in Hanoi: 'Instructions have been sent to London, Hongkong, Singapore, and Manila to discard the cypher machine, and Batavia's machine has been returned to Japan.' The Washington embassy would however retain one cypher machine and cypher.[72] Another Black Jumbo read by Churchill that Thursday showed Tokyo instructing Admiral Nomura in Washington as recently as Tuesday to burn all cyphers except for one copy each of the current cyphers designated 'O' and 'L.' 'You are also to discard one complete cypher machine,' – while no doubt also retaining at least one. 'As soon as this is done you should telegraph the one word HARUNA.' The embassy was also to destroy its files of secret documents.[73]

There had probably been identical instructions to the Japanese embassy in London. On Tuesday too, Togo had informed his envoy in Rome that he had sent instructions to burn all cyphers (except 'OITE' and 'L') to all Japanese missions in North America ('including Honolulu'), Canada, Panama, the south seas, and Singora (Songhkla, a coastal port on the Kra Isthmus); the same instructions, he said, had gone to the Japanese embassies in London and Dutch possessions.[74]

All these messages Churchill read on Thursday the fourth (again, the Americans had translated them days earlier, but had not told him). From now on these British empire outposts would have to rely on picking up the 'WINDS–EXECUTE' message.

Almost at once that Thursday, at one-thirty P.M. (GMT), Tokyo's powerful overseas broadcasting station J.A.P. was heard by the Americans transmitting, on its 'European Schedule' intended primarily for London, the 'WINDS–EXECUTE' message – and the cryptic phrases concealed in the weather forecast corresponded to the imminent outbreak of war against Britain, the Dutch East Indies, and the United States, but not against Russia.[75] The Americans heard it, but in the ensuing military muddle they fumbled the ball and the vital Intelligence got nowhere; there is no evidence that the British empire's operators also heard it as early as this, on Thursday December 4.

A message went however from London to the British minister in Bangkok advising him confidentially of the planned operation MATADOR. 'It is important that [this] operation should not meet with Thai resistance,' advised the foreign office, 'and that if possible it should be carried out with their co-operation.'[76]

THE STRAIN of this final week was ripping at Churchill's nerves. Late on this Thursday he called a ten P.M. 'staff conference' in the underground Cabinet War Rooms – adding Eden, Attlee, and even young Mountbatten to the spectacle.[77] During the dinner-and-drinks interval between the cabinet and this staff conference, he swung right round again on the sore subject of aid for Stalin. There was a full-blown row with his chiefs of staff. Eden found himself on what he called a 'battlefield.' The P.M. abandoned the idea of giving any military hardware at all to Moscow, in favour of ten R.A.F. squadrons to be sent to Russia when CRUSADER was over. His toady, Portal, agreed but thought that the offer was too numerically definite. 'This,' recorded Brooke, 'produced the most awful outburst of temper. We were told that we did nothing but obstruct his intentions, we had no ideas of our own, and whenever he produced ideas we produced nothing but objections.' Eden heard Churchill complain that his chiefs of staff never proposed anything, that they only turned everything down (could Churchill but have known it, Adolf Hitler was wont to say the same about the German general staff). First Attlee, then Eden placated the prime minister, but to no avail. 'Finally,' wrote Brooke, 'he looked at his papers for some five minutes, then slammed them together, closed the meeting, and walked out of the room!'

Eden records the same lengthy pause – the prime minister silent and glowering, his ministers hushed like recently chastised schoolchildren. Eden hurried upstairs behind the departing prime minister, and helped him to calm down. Distressed that the P.M. had not even bidden them good night, Brooke ascribed the tantrum to overwork. 'God knows,' he wrote in this unpublished fragment of his diary, 'where we should be without him, but God knows where we shall go with him!'[78]

ALTOGETHER ON Thursday, December 4, he had already had eight 'BJs' to read including a PURPLE telegram from the Japanese consul-general in Capetown to his foreign ministry in Tokyo, transmitted six days before, reporting on the camouflage of a certain British warship, no doubt *Prince of Wales* as she passed through; the diplomat had speculated that Britain's object in publicising the visit was, 'in a word, a warning from the democracies.'[79] That night there was a fresh MAGIC to consider. The teleprinter printout with the advance draft reached the prime minister around midnight from Bletchley Park. This time it was the translation of instructions from Tokyo to the Japanese consul in Mombasa in British Kenya, to burn immediately and 'as inconspicuously as possible' all cyphers except 'O' and 'L,' and then

to telegraph the one word HARUNA *en clair* to Tokyo.[80] The Japanese were dotting every 'i' and crossing every 't' before striking.

The empire's monitors had however still not heard the cryptic Japanese 'WINDS–EXECUTE' message.

Privately still wondering whether or not Japan was about to attack the United States too, Churchill was chauffeured down to Chequers on Friday the fifth, taking a detective and John Martin with him.[81] The foreign secretary left London for Binderton, his country estate, to prepare for his sea journey to Russia. Eden's diary for the fifth contains only scattered trivia; it seems evident that Churchill was keeping the MAGICS about Tokyo's dramatic orders to destroy the code-machines to himself. In his formal instructions to Eden he had conceded that the two divisions of troops were no longer available to Russia; and he continued to pursue his plan to send ten R.A.F. squadrons.[82] What could the British empire yet do with ten such squadrons! He did not allow the thought to cross his mind.

He had imparted to the Soviet ambassador before leaving for Chequers advance details of this offer. 'He thought,' Ivan Maisky reported, 'that Stalin would derive greater political advantage from a large and highly visible British air contingent.' For a while the P.M. talked about post-war frontiers. When Maisky asked about a reply to Stalin's telegram of November 23 about Finland, Churchill first ducked, then wove, then caved in. 'Very well,' he declared ungraciously, 'if Comrade Stalin so desires, we'll declare war on Finland, Romania, and Hungary.' 'He told me,' Maisky also told Stalin, 'that Britain and Japan are clearly on the brink of war and that Hongkong is liable to a sudden attack which the British could hardly resist.'

Winston had confided to Maisky that he had now received word from Lord Halifax that the United States would 'support' Britain.[83]

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Support? What kind of support? Lord Halifax was now seeing the president almost daily, and found him a willing listener, but an evasive talker. When Henry Morgenthau had visited Roosevelt at two-thirty P.M. on December 3, 1941 the president told him with a chuckle that he was 'talking with the English about war plans as to when and where the U.S.A. and Great Britain should strike.'[84] So Churchill's old idea, of launching a preemptive attack, had somehow surfaced again. The foreign office asked Lord Halifax to clarify what precisely Roosevelt would *do*. 'We note particu-

MOST SECRET.

TO BE KEPT UNDER LOCK AND KEY: NEVER TO BE REMOVED FROM THE OFFICE.

Togo to Japanese ambassador, Washington, Dec 2, 1941, No. 867, secret ['Dept note: compare to our 098509']

Of the telegraphic cyphers with which your embassy is provided you are to burn all (including the cyphers of other Ministries in your charge) except one copy each of the machine cypher now in use, cypher 'O' and cypher 'L.'

2. You are also to discard* one complete cypher machine.

3. As soon as this is done you should telegraph the one word 'HARUNO.'

4. You should deal with files of in and out telegrams and other secret documents in an appropriate and suitable manner at your discretion,.

5. The cyphers brought by Cypher officer KOSAKA [? should all be burnt]. (Consequently the need to get in touch with MEXICO referred to in my telegram No. 860 [not received] [last word].

[Dept. Note: *The word used, 'haiki,' can mean 'cease to use,' 'abolish,' 'discard.' It is not the normal word for 'destroy.']

British codebreaking *Japanese Intercept No. 098,540 (also BJ/87), translated on December 4, 1941, forwarded by 'C' with a covering letter C/8244, and initialled 'WSC, 4 XII.'*

larly,' the F.O. telegram had said, 'President's statement that in case of any direct attack on ourselves or the Dutch we should obviously all be together.'[85] Late on the third Sumner Welles had taken the British ambassador straight over to the White House to get Roosevelt's response. The president had certified that by 'support' he really did mean 'armed support.'[86] Halifax had reported this to London.

Churchill decided to put to the Americans a *fait accompli*. On his instructions the chiefs of staff sent this bold signal early on Friday December 5 to Brooke-Popham in Singapore, announcing that the British government had now received 'an assurance of American armed support' in the following three contingencies:

> (*a*) If we undertake MATADOR either to forestall a Japanese landing in the Kra Isthmus or as a reply to a Japanese violation of any other part of Thailand.
>
> (*b*) If the Japanese attack the Dutch East Indies and we go at once to their support.
>
> (*c*) If the Japanese attack us.

Accordingly Brooke-Popham was directed to launch MATADOR without further reference to London, if either he had good information that a Japanese expedition was bearing down on the Kra Isthmus, or if the Japanese violated any other part of Thailand. Similarly, in the event of a Japanese attack on the Dutch East Indies, Brooke-Popham would now have authority immediately to put into operation the plans he had agreed with the Dutch.[87] Brooke-Popham copied this signal to Admiral Hart, the American C.-in-C. in Manila, that same afternoon.[88]

Hart was baffled at the reference to American 'armed support.'[89] This went far beyond the 'exchange [of] full military information' he had been authorised to conduct. He signalled Washington: '[I] learn from Singapore we have assured British [of] armed support under three or four eventualities. Have received no corresponding instructions from you.'[90] Events however allowed too little time for a reply.

ORAL ASSURANCES from Roosevelt were all very well, but the foreign office still felt that ink on paper would be nicer. Another lengthy telegram went to Lord Halifax, reaching him after dinner on the fourth. He went straight down to see the president at the White House toward midnight. 'Had a

very useful talk with him,' recorded Halifax, 'until half past twelve.'[91] He sent a dispatch to Whitehall on this, which arrived just after three P.M. the next day, December 5. While Roosevelt was refusing to include a Japanese attack on the Burma Road as being a *casus belli*, as it was not sufficiently 'defensive' to satisfy the Congress, he privately agreed that Britain, the United States and the Dutch government in exile should all issue similar warnings to Tokyo within the space of a few hours, covering any attack by Japan on Thailand, Malaya, or the Dutch East Indies. He would prefer, added Halifax, that the United States get her warning in first.[92] The ambassador reminded London that it was important that Washington 'not appear to follow ourselves.'[93]

How could they get Roosevelt to take the fateful first step however? He was boxing very cunning. Roosevelt would go no further than confirming orally that he would also give 'armed support' to a British pre-emptive strike designed to prevent the Japanese invading Thailand; he still stopped short of saying this to his own public – or even to his own commanders. Even so, Cadogan thought it a good message, and he 'phoned it down to Chequers on Saturday morning, December 6.[94]

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Upon all this flurry of telegrams between his foreign office and Washington the prime minister had confidently turned his back that rainy weekend. Preoccupied with his forthcoming Moscow adventure, Eden wrote only three lines in his diary as he worked in bed all morning – noting 'numerous telephone calls' from Cadogan, Churchill, Portal, Beaverbrook, and the American ambassador.[95]

Public or private – oral or in writing: it probably all made no difference to the P.M. He now knew that the United States would be in the war by Sunday night whether they liked it or not. By this Saturday a sheaf of intercepts proved that Tokyo was methodically racking Berlin and Rome into a firm commitment of war against the United States before Japan's historic 'mountain climb' began.[96] Oshima was told to arrange an interview with the Führer. Hitler however was unavailable, and genuinely so. He was visiting the eastern front – he had a growing crisis on his hands there, and he was quite unaware of what was brewing in the Pacific.

Nor was there much doubt as to the imminence of war: on this very Saturday the sixth, the Americans heard Tokyo transmitting in PURPLE an

immediate order to the four top Intelligence officials of Japan's Washington embassy to fly out 'within the next couple of days.'[97] Later that day the same embassy – which still had one PURPLE machine undestroyed – was told that after profound deliberation Tokyo was about to transmit a very long message in fourteen parts to them: they were to phrase it properly for presentation to the U.S. government at a time to be notified later – that time, H-hour, of course, would give the game away.[98] The embassy was told to be 'absolutely sure' not to use a typist.[99] The sword, it seemed, was about to fall.

CHEQUERS HAD begun to fill that Saturday morning, December 6, with Churchill family and weekend guests. Sarah looked in, then Clementine, coming to stay the night. Perhaps it was conscious stage-setting by Winston that provided that so many of this weekend's guests would be Americans: Roosevelt's special ambassador W. Averell Harriman arrived on Saturday, bringing his daughter Kathleen to spend her birthday here with her close friend Pamela, Randolph Churchill's young wife. The main event would be Sunday dinner, and the P.M. had asked Ambassador John Winant over.[100]

We must marvel at the insouciance with which Churchill had left his military and diplomatic staffs to their own devices, given what he had now deduced about events in store. All the puzzle's pieces were fitting into place: the only perplexity must have been that the Intelligence picture now revealed only Japanese movements towards Malaya and Thailand, with no sign of the move toward U.S. possessions that he knew to be imminent; and where were the Japanese aircraft-carriers?

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For a while this Saturday he turned his back on these mysteries. He buried himself in the latest report on home opinion prepared by the Intelligence authorities from their surveillance of thousands of letters posted from the U.K. These bore witness to a festering hatred of Nazi Germany – what one writer conceded was 'the primitive instinct of revenge.' 'Surely our people will avenge the atrocities that have been committed in France and Russia,' wrote one Londoner, 'and exterminate the whole race of Germans, otherwise there will never be peace.' 'The quicker they exterminate the whole race,' echoed another letter, written by an Inverness man, 'the better for everyone concerned.'[101]

A dispatch rider brought to Churchill the 'most secret' translations, achieved only with considerable delay, of several more Japanese cypher telegrams: to his embassies in London and elsewhere, Togo had nine days earlier radioed a list of sixty more 'hidden-code' words which were to be worked into harmless-sounding plain-language messages in a crisis: thus HATTORI would signify the phrase 'relations between Japan and [ ] are extremely critical;' the word KOYANAGI would fill that gap with Great Britain; MINAMI, with the United States; NANGO, with Britain *and* America, and TEIGI, with the Dutch East Indies; there were also code words for years, months, days and figures.[102] In the same batch there was a message from Togo to his consuls-general in Singapore and elsewhere, transmitted as recently as Wednesday, repeating the other secret words that were to be looked for in Japanese weather reports: 'Duplicates of secret code words (including those for use in broadcasting) are to be kept until the last moment. If anyone has already burnt them he should inform me by telegram and they will be telegraphed again. Togo.'[103]

Among these intercepts read and initialled by Churchill on this Saturday was a secret message radioed by Tokyo to the Japanese ambassador in London a week earlier: this provided fifteen more general code words for use after hostilities broke out.[104] On Tuesday the second, as anticipated, Tokyo had radioed to the same ambassador orders to burn all telegraphic codes secretly at once, and to transmit the word HARUNA to Tokyo when the deed was done; he was also to burn all confidential documents without arousing 'outside suspicion,' while Japanese embassy staff maintained their accustomed inscrutability.[105] Soon after, the London embassy was heard transmitting that word HARUNA to Foreign Minister Togo, so it had burned its codes and secret files.[106]

AS HE READ these intercepts, the horizon of Churchill's Saturday afternoon slowly clouded over. Ominous tidings came in over the air waves from the far side of the empire. A Royal Australian Air Force reconnaissance plane from Kota Bahru, patrolling the seas between Malaya and Indo-China, had sighted two sizeable convoys of Japanese merchant ships during Friday afternoon. A signal reporting this came from Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, commanding China Station, to Whitehall, arriving there just after one P.M. on Saturday: One of the convoys, of twenty-five ships escorted by six cruisers and ten destroyers, had been sighted at eight degrees North, 106 degrees eight minutes East at 3:16 GMT that morning; the second convoy, of ten

ships escorted by two cruisers and ten destroyers, had been located at seven degrees 40 minutes North, 106 degrees twenty minutes East some two hours later. Both formations were steering due west.[107] The British planes flashed these sightings to Singapore; Layton passed them on to Admiral Hart and via him to the U.S. navy department in Washington; from Singapore the American military attaché Lieutenant-Colonel F. G. Brink radioed them independently to Washington, where the war department received them at four-thirty P.M.[108] There were altogether 'upwards of fifty ships,' as Admiral Hart wrote in his diary, 'no doubt stuffed full of little brown brothers and their equipment, in waters off southern Indo-China.'[109] Were they merely headed around Cambodia Point, to land somewhere on the west coast of Indo-China; or would they steer straight across the gulf to Malaya and Thailand, perhaps twenty-four hours away?

Copies of the signal arrived at the foreign office.[110] Cadogan broke into the Saturday morning chiefs of staff meeting, but these officers 'didn't seem to know quite where they were,' as he scoffed in his diary. He tipped off the American and Dutch ambassadors.[111] Winant telegraphed the state department in Washington.[112] The news, half expected though it was but alarming nonetheless, rolled on around the globe. The naval staff's Captain Ralph Edwards, stopping over at Gibraltar on his way out to join the new Far Eastern fleet, commented: 'It looks as if they're going into Thailand.'[113] 'All may be in the melting pot,' reflected Cadogan in his diary, packing to leave with Eden for Moscow the next morning, 'if the monkeys are going for [the] Kra Isthmus.'[114]

THERE WAS still no proof of any intent to attack the United States. At six-fifteen P.M. the chiefs of staff dictated a three-page appreciation on the Japanese convoys over the scrambler telephone to Chequers. 'It appears,' they told the prime minister, 'that they might be proceeding either to the Kra Isthmus or to Bangkok.' Clearly, Britain was now facing a crucial decision. 'From the military point of view,' the chiefs advised, 'it would pay us to attack these convoys at sea, but our present political instructions prevent us from doing so. Unless we are absolutely assured that an attack delivered in these circumstances would have the armed support of the United States,' they added, 'we ought not to make the first move.'

For a moment, it seemed as if all Churchill's indecision and vacillation had dissolved. His instinct, unquestionably the right one, was to strike at the Japanese convoys on the high seas. Taking his pen, he wrote in the mar-

gin: 'If it is physically possible, the political issue does not arise. WSC, 6.xii.'[115] But even now he did not want to be seen to act before the United States, and Roosevelt was still not eager to take the lead. As in Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome*, when Horatius held the Bridge, 'those behind cried "Forward!" / And those before cried "Back!"'

Thus the hours were frittered away. Churchill talked it over with his house-guest Averell Harriman, and the latter fired off a telegram to Harry Hopkins, asking him to tell the president that Winston's policy would be to postpone any British empire action, even if Japan attacked first, and even though that might result in casualties, because the Americans *must* make the first move. When they did, promised Harriman, Churchill would act 'not within the hour but within minutes.'[116]

After a while, Churchill telephoned the First Sea Lord, but by now all sight of the Japanese convoys had been lost.[117] At five-fifteen P.M. Whitehall received this message from C.-in-C. China: 'No further information, and aircraft *not* now in touch.' The search for the convoys was continuing.[118] There was even some wishful thinking that they had merely gone round into the west coast of Indo-China. 'This may give us more time,' hoped Cadogan, as he continued packing. He then locked his diary away, as it would be too risky to carry it to Moscow – an important detail, as we shall see.

CHURCHILL KNEW from the MAGICS that the Japanese ambassador in Bangkok had been instructed to negotiate with the pro-Japanese government of General Pibul. An intercept reaching Churchill on December 6 showed Tokyo telling their envoy in Bangkok on November 27 that they should 'do nothing now' in their secret negotiations with Pibul (Churchill ringed the words in red ink).[119] The ambassador had radioed back to Togo the next day reporting Pibul's caustic comments about British propaganda activity in Thailand and Britain's secret funding of Thai factions. The Thai prime minister, he reported, was planning to broadcast to his people that their policy was one of strict neutrality. He himself, said Pibul, had hoped that the Japanese army would occupy southern French Indo-China; this showed where his sympathies lay.[120]

Churchill stayed up far into the early hours of Sunday morning, telephoning frequently with Eden and Cadogan, and drafting a formal British empire warning to Japan, to be issued simultaneously with Roosevelt's. He adopted the dangerous formula that Thailand was as much 'an important British interest' as Malaya.[121] Copies were sent to the Dominion prime

ministers for comment. He planned that they should warn Japan that they found Tokyo's response to Roosevelt's recent inquiry 'extremely disquieting.'

> They feel bound therefore to warn the Japanese government in the most solemn manner that if Japan attempts to establish her influence in Thailand by force or threat of force she will do so at her peril, and His Majesty's governments will at once take all appropriate measures.

The responsibility for hostilities, this legalistic document concluded, would rest with Japan. Churchill had this draft cabled immediately to Washington to obtain President Roosevelt's comments.[122] After that, he wrote out a telegram to Pibul alerting him to what was bearing down on his neutral shores: 'There is,' dictated Churchill, 'a possibility of imminent Japanese invasion of your country. If you are attacked, defend yourself. The preservation of the full independence and sovereignty of Siam is a British interest and we shall regard an attack on you as an attack upon ourselves.' This went off at one-forty A.M. on December 7.[123]

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At last President Roosevelt bestirred himself.

During the wee small hours of Sunday, two more telegrams had come from Lord Halifax. The first reported that the president had sent for him during the previous afternoon and shown him a query that had arrived from Pibul – asking what Washington would do if Japan began by invading the neighbouring territory of Malaya, just next to the Kra Isthmus; Roosevelt had drawled that he would cross that bridge when they came to it. He told the Englishman that he did not intend even sending the planned 'warning' to Tokyo until Tuesday (December 9) at the earliest. He could step up the pace if the Japanese were to move faster. 'The President does not think they will,' commented Halifax, reporting this to Whitehall, 'but Hull does.'[124]

Roosevelt had also shown him Tokyo's response to his 'inquiry' about the Japanese reinforcements pouring into southern Indo-China – Tokyo had tried to laugh them off. Lord Halifax asked him to agree at least to a pre-emptive British naval strike against the suspect convoys. 'If we saw,' responded Roosevelt, 'Japanese transports steaming west or south west across the Gulf of Thailand we should *obviously attack them* since they must

be going for Thailand or Malaya.'[125] He revealed that he had ordered maximum publicity about the Japanese convoys and troopships 'in order to prepare [the] public mind for possible developments,' and he now asked that London do the same.[126] (Churchill at once ordered the British press to conform.[127])

READING THESE two telegrams from Lord Halifax, numbers 5653 and 5654, in his morning box on Sunday, December 7, Churchill was particularly struck by the president's words 'obviously attack them,' and he underlined them. The log-jam was broken. He dictated a message to Ismay just before noon, in which he described Roosevelt's answers as 'very satisfactory.'

'This,' he explained, 'removes all political difficulty for initiating Naval or Air action and I agree with [the] President that we "should obviously attack Japanese transports."' He carefully used the same words. He ordered a signal made to Admiral Tom Phillips, apprising him of the two Washington telegrams – the admiral should now sally forth with *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*, and attack the Japanese wherever he might find them.[128]

Sensing no doubt that he, Winston Churchill, had thus ignited the powder-keg in the Far East, he rather unusually *timed* his initials on this message, 'WSC 7.12. noon.' John Martin dictated it over the scrambler 'phone from Chequers to the war cabinet office ten minutes later.

❧

In England it was now Sunday lunch time, December 7, but the principal guest still had to arrive – Churchill had invited the American ambassador over to Chequers for his *pièce de résistance*, dinner at 9 P.M. The other guests were family – the Duchess of Marlborough (Lady Mary Cadogan), Lord Blandford, and a Miss Seymour.

The P.M., already hollow-eyed from lack of sleep, prowled up and down outside the front door with his stomach muttering its reproaches until John Gilbert Winant's car arrived. 'Gil' Winant had had to come over from the Eden estate, where he had spent the night.

'Do you think there's going to be war with Japan?' Churchill asked, almost before the American ambassador had stepped out. 'Because if they declare war on you,' he exclaimed vehemently, without waiting for a response, 'we shall declare war on them within the hour.'

Winant politely observed that Churchill had always made this plain.

'If they declare war on us,' persisted the P.M., 'will you declare war on them?'

'Only the Congress has the right to declare war,' his guest said.

'We're late, you know,' said Churchill, taking him by the arm. 'You get washed, and we shall go in to lunch together.'[129]

For his guests, it was a quiet afternoon. Winant went off for a walk with Harriman and his comely daughter, while Churchill retired to his rooms, apologising to the ambassador that he had been up most of the night. Around three P.M., a message arrived from London. The chiefs of staff, meeting in London until two-fifteen, had taken fright at Churchill's intention to sink the Japanese convoys, and urgently recommended that – if Britain did now fire the first shot – some way be found of preventing the Isolationist lobby in the United States from representing it as a trick by Churchill to drag them in.[130]

CHURCHILL DICTATED a draft telegram to Lord Halifax, badgering him to bludgeon Roosevelt into approving Admiral Phillips' forthcoming sortie in still more explicit terms:

> 1. From your recent telegrams we understand we can rely on armed support of United States if we become involved in hostilities with Japan in the following circumstances:–
>
> (*a*) Japanese invasion of Malaya or Netherlands East Indies.
>
> (*b*) Action on our part in the Kra Isthmus to forestall or repel Japanese landing in that Isthmus.
>
> (*c*) Action on our part in Kra Isthmus in event of Japanese encroachment on Thailand...
>
> 2. We read your Telegram . . . as meaning that in President Roosevelt's view we should be justified in attacking at sea any Japanese expedition sailing in direction of Thailand or Malaya (and presumably East Indies). We ourselves should desire to have this latitude.[131]

Churchill ordered this telegram to Halifax typed, but he held it back from transmission – probably because advance word had reached him that the codebreakers had just begun reading the final Japanese response to Washington.[132] This rigmarole was being transmitted from Tokyo in fourteen parts. The first part had been intercepted soon after midnight, London time: twelve more parts had followed during the early hours of Sunday.[133]

It was, in the view of one American government official, a coarse and gratuitously insulting message.[134] Just after nine A.M. London time, Tokyo had transmitted the fourteenth and final part. More ominously, a terse message followed at 10:37 A.M. (in London time) instructing Ambassador Nomura to submit the rigmarole, if possible to Cordell Hull in person, 'at one P.M. on the seventh, your time.'[135]

This in turn was followed by a message thanking Nomura and Kurusu for their efforts.[136] A final telegram directed the Washington embassy to destroy its remaining PURPLE machine and secret documents immediately.[137]

The Americans translated all these messages this same day. We do not know what teletypes Bletchley Park sent to Churchill this Sunday afternoon; all that day's rushes (*i.e.*, raw drafts of intercepts) are missing from the public files.

On Monday the eighth he received via this teleprinter link intercepts from Bletchley Park of Japanese PURPLE messages originating in Berlin and Tokyo that same day.* If he did receive advance intercepts of these telegrams – and analysis of these files in their totality allows us to surmise that he *did* – he will have retired upstairs for his siesta in a happier frame of mind, satisfied that, like it or not, President Roosevelt would be in the war by midnight.

Nor did it take much intellect to calculate that when it was 'one P.M.' in Washington it would still be dead of night in the Philippines as well as in all other regions within reach of Japanese forces – except for Hawaii, the home base of the American Pacific Fleet, where it would be dawn. Dawn at Hawaii – one P.M. in Washington – would be seven P.M. here in the heart of the English countryside.

❧

One uncertainty remains. Did any British authorities receive, sufficiently early on this fateful Sunday, the 'WINDS–EXECUTE' message broadcast by Japan to give her ambassadors the hidden warning that war was imminent and against whom?

The answer is that we have found evidence that both Churchill and his foreign office received the message. Retrospectively writing up his diary of this day, December 7, 1941, upon his return from Moscow three weeks

* See *Notes and Sources*, chap. 13, note 3, pages 911-12.

later, Sir Alexander Cadogan actually began the entry for this historic Sunday with the words: 'A lovely morning, but an ominously strong NW Wind.'†

Tokyo Radio had broadcast its hidden war-alert messages.

Only one intercept is to be found now in the British archives – a 'hidden-word' message from Tokyo to several overseas embassies, including that in London, transmitted at eleven-fifty GMT this Sunday morning (it was already evening in Tokyo). The British radio monitors heard it – a harmless-sounding message transmitted *en clair* in which were hidden the prearranged codewords of which Bletchley Park was already aware from its intercept No. 098,127, of a Japanese cypher message transmitted a few days earlier.[138] This Sunday morning telegram read: '*Urgent 92494* KOYANAGI *rijiyori seirinotugoo arunituki* HATTORI MINAMI *kinenbunko seturitu kikino kyokaingaku sikyuu denpoo aritass stop – Togo*.'

The word *stop*, instead of the usual *end*, was to tip-off recipients that this was a code message. This telegram now had a deeply sinister portent:

> Relations between JAPAN and [GREAT BRITAIN] and [THE UNITED STATES] are extremely critical. Japanese foreign minister.[139]

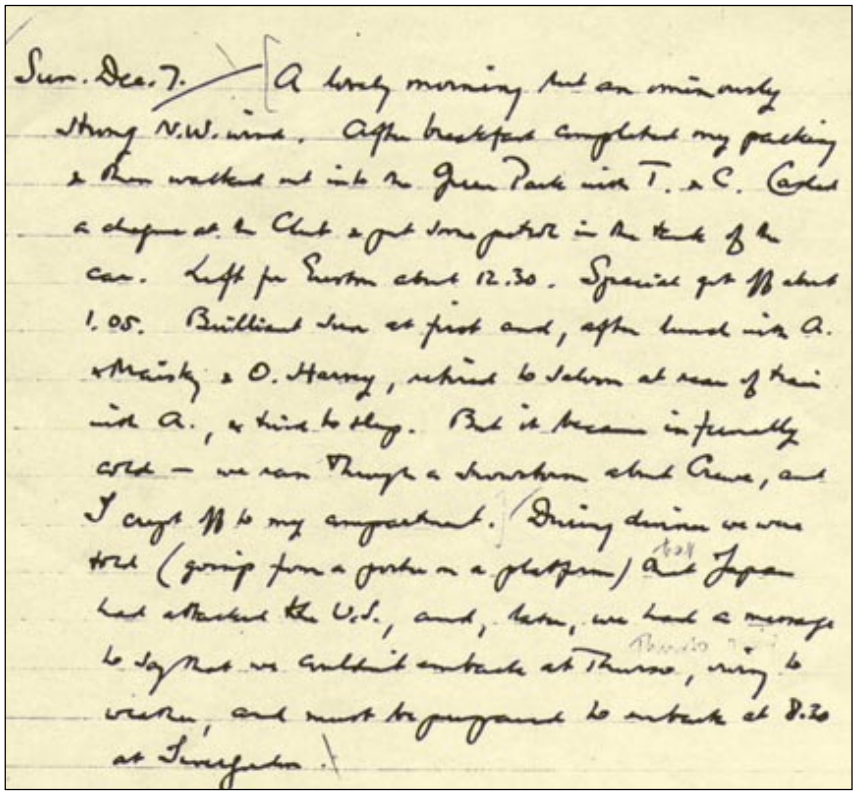
This was the first intercept to spell out explicitly that Japan was about to go to war with the United States.

Despite its content, the British said nothing of it (or, for that matter, of the preparatory cypher message, Black Jumbo No. 098,127) to the United States.†

In Washington, the U.S. navy deciphered it independently and circulated to government officials a bowdlerised version, omitting the crucial words 'and the United States,' toward midday, and interpreting the last words, 'are extremely critical,' as 'are not in accordance with expectation.'

* Facsimile on following page. The tell-tale adverb *ominously* suggests the hidden burden of this entry, which we found in the hand-written diary in Cadogan's papers at Churchill College, Cambridge. Professor David Dilks, editing *The Cadogan Diaries* (London, 1971), omitted the sentence. The London Weather Centre's records show that there was a north-westerly wind that day. Its strength was '3 to 4.' A gentle breeze would not normally stand out in a diarist's memory, returning from Moscow three weeks later.

† Because this British intercept was retrieved only during the visit to Bletchley Park by Lieutenant-Colonel Clausen, of the U.S. army, in the summer of 1945, after Mr Churchill's retirement. Clausen took it back to Washington as one of the forty-one 'Clausen' exhibits for the Congressional Inquiry.



Sun. Dec. 7. A lovely morning but an ominously strong N.W. wind. After breakfast completed my packing & then walked out into the Green Park with T. & C. Cadogan & Chance at the Club & got some petrol in the tank of the car. Left for Euston about 12.30. Special got off about 1.05. Brilliant sun at first and, after lunch in a. whisky & O. Henry, inclined to relax at sight of rain in a., & tried to sleep. But it became intensely cold – we ran through a snowstorm about Crewe, and I crept up to my compartment. During dinner we were told (going from a garden to a platform) that Japan had attacked the U.S., and, later, we had a message to say that we could embark at Thurso, only to wait, and must be prepared to embark at 8.30 at Invergordon.

Sir Alexander Cadogan papers, Churchill College, Cambridge

Ominously strong *The page from the diary of Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under-Secretary at the British foreign office, recording the day of Pearl Harbor, 1941, but in fact written up three weeks later on his return from Moscow. The first thing he notes is, 'A lovely morning but an ominously strong N.W. wind.'*

If Bletchley Park followed their standard practice they sent an advance translation to Churchill as a MOST IMMEDIATE teletype message, via the air ministry teleprinter (followed the next day, Monday the eighth, by a properly typed confirmation delivered by dispatch rider to Whitehall). British files today contain only the latter document – initialled 'WSC, 8.xii' when it was already yesterday's news – but not Sunday's advance teletype.

Nor was this the only such warning received. An urgent cypher telegram reached the colonial office from the British governor of Hongkong. He reported that the Japanese had been heard broadcasting a message at three-thirty on Saturday afternoon, London time, indicating that war with Britain was 'inevitable,' with the possibility of the invasion of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies and the occupation of Thailand.[140]

That this was indeed one 'WINDS–EXECUTE' message that had been heard – in fact *Nishi no kaze hare* ('west wind, fine') – is casually confirmed by the secret typescript history of Bletchley Park: 'On Sunday, 7th December 1941,' this informs us, 'the broadcast messages mentioning "the East and West Winds"* were intercepted by Hongkong.'[141]

This fact too was kept from the Americans until after the war. Asked to research the matter by persistent U.S. Congressional investigators, Sir John Sterndale Bennett of the F.O. would inform them in December 1945, after several reminders from the Washington end, that 'the results so far are negative.' No such message, the F.O. assured the Americans, had been heard '*in this country*' until the day after disaster struck the American fleet in the Pacific.[142] A British researcher, working in 1987, located the only known copy of the actual 'WINDS–EXECUTE' signal, filed in an Australian archive; the file was subsequently re-sealed, perhaps for quite proper reasons, at the request of the British government.[143]

CHURCHILL MADE no further attempt to discuss the Far East with Eden. The foreign secretary's heart and mind were already in Moscow, for which distant capital he had set out with Cadogan from London's Euston station at one-fifteen P.M. that Sunday. Eden wrote in his diary merely that it was a lovely afternoon – saying nothing about any 'strong wind;' about which he, unlike Cadogan, was perhaps being kept in the dark.

* The Bletchley Park monograph's footnote explains: 'Known from decrypts to be the warning of war sent to the Japanese diplomatic and consular officers.'

When Churchill joined his guests at Chequers, reappearing downstairs at about eight o'clock on Sunday evening, there was still nothing to report from Washington – or from the Pacific.

He was mystified. Even by eight-thirty, the 'phone had not rung: John Martin, his private secretary, brought in the telegram to Lord Halifax for signature. Unwilling to wait any longer for word of the Japanese attack, the P.M. approved its dispatch. In the event, it never went off.[144]

THREE THOUSAND six hundred miles away, half-way between Chequers and Honolulu, the telephone had rung in Britain's Washington embassy fifteen minutes earlier. It was the White House, asking urgently for a line to the British ambassador. 'The president rang me up from the White House,' recorded Halifax, 'to say that the Japanese were bombing Hawai[i] and asked me to pass it on as quickly as I could to London.' Apparently, Roosevelt had played down the effects of the attack. 'Most of the fleet was at sea already,' noted Halifax, 'and none of their newer ships in harbour.'[145]

There is no reason to suppose that Lord Halifax would have been prevented from telephoning England immediately. Such were his instructions.[146] By the time that Churchill went in to dinner with his American guests just before nine P.M., he already knew therefore of the bloody events at Pearl Harbor.

DINNER THAT evening was of almost funereal quiet. Ambassadors Winant and Harriman dined alone with him; Clementine had sent her apologies – she was indisposed. To Harriman, Winston seemed depressed. He rested his chin on his hands, sunk in a morose silence. Shortly, glancing at the clock, he asked Sawyers the valet to bring in the radio set. It was time for the Nine O'Clock News.

The fifteen-dollar battery-portable that Hopkins had sent him a few months ago was placed in centre-table, and the P.M. raised the lid to switch it on. The valve-filaments took however a few moments to warm up.[147] They missed the first fifteen seconds.[148] When the familiar voice of Alvar Lidell, the B.B.C.'s newsreader, came through, all that Winston heard was about a tank battle in Libya ('Richard Dimbleby has sent a dispatch on the fighting'), Russian resistance on the Moscow front, and R.A.F. attacks in the west. As the voice from the loudspeaker concluded, 'Tonight's Postscript will be by Vernon Bartlett,' Churchill swallowed his frustration. To have listened longer would have seemed a rudeness, so he closed the lid.

After a while Sawyers sidled in again. The radio news bulletin, he exclaimed, had begun with a brief announcement of Japanese air attacks on American bases in Hawaii. 'We heard it ourselves outside,' the valet insisted. 'The Japanese have attacked the Americans.'

That was more like it. The prime minister sprang to his feet and shouted, 'We shall declare war on Japan!'

As he padded across the hall toward his study, where John Martin was still on duty, Winant flung down his napkin and started after him; he ingenuously remarked to him how extraordinary it was that the B.B.C. had learned of the attack before Churchill or the Intelligence services.

He found the prime minister demanding to be put straight through to the White House. 'Good God,' Winant exclaimed. 'You can't declare war on a radio announcement!'

'What shall I do?'

'I shall call up the president,' said the ambassador, 'and ask him what the facts are.'

'I'll talk with him too.'

The telephone link was established at nine-forty P.M. 'That's fine, Mr President. That's fine,' the P.M. heard Winant say.

The ambassador added that he had a friend with him – 'You'll know who it is as soon as you hear his voice.'

Churchill took the receiver. 'It's quite true,' he heard Roosevelt declaim. 'They've attacked us at Pearl Harbor. We're all in the same boat now.'

He said he would invite Congress to declare war on Japan the next day.

'We shall follow within the hour,' promised Churchill.[149]

A FEELING of relief overwhelmed him – he later admitted it. Before the dinner débris were cleared away, word came in from the admiralty of Japanese troops assaulting His Majesty's Far Eastern empire. An hour and a half before the attack on Roosevelt's Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, units of the Japanese Eighteenth Army had swarmed ashore at Sabak beach, at Kota Bharu in Malaya.[150] Troops had also landed at Songkhla and Patani on Thailand's Kra Isthmus.[151] Japanese air attacks were being launched on Shanghai and Singapore even as this dinner at Chequers had begun.[152] Other Japanese planes were raiding Manila, capital of the Philippines. Although given eight hours' forewarning, General Douglas B. MacArthur's entire striking force of B-17 bombers was caught on the ground and destroyed; and then it was the turn of little Hongkong. Of course London knew none of this.

Over brandy and cigars Churchill decided to go to Washington at once. A call-back message went to Eden, to 'phone him on reaching Invergordon in the far north of Scotland.

Eden, who had been afflicted by gastro-intestinal troubles as his train headed north from Euston, learned of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor only about midnight.[153] He reached Invergordon at eight A.M. on Monday the eighth.

Roaring with laughter, Winston broke it to his ailing young protégé that he was off to the White House.

'When?' shrieked the foreign secretary.

'Next Thursday,' said the prime minister.

Eden begged him to wait until his return; Churchill ignored him, as he ignored the later attempts by Cadogan and Lyttelton, who were accompanying Eden, to dissuade him.[154]

He felt immortal now. 'Being saturated and satiated with emotion and sensation,' he would dictate for his memoirs in 1950, 'I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful.'[155]

THE NEXT morning the naval task force that he had only just assembled at Singapore – *Prince of Wales*, wearing the flag of Tom Phillips, and *Repulse* – sailed northwards to intercept the Japanese convoys heading for Malaya. With these great British warships already on the scene, and with the United States at his side, Churchill now felt invincible.

At a staff conference a few days later, a general spoke of the United States in the same hushed tones of cautious diplomacy that they had used before Pearl Harbor.

'Oh!' cried Churchill – and General Brooke, his new C.I.G.S., caught the wicked leer in his eye. 'That's the way we talked to her while we were wooing her. Now that she is in the harem we talk to her quite differently!'[156]

David Irving

CHURCHILL'S WAR

VOLUME II: TRIUMPH IN ADVERSITY

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