


 CHAPTER
32

HISTORYMAKERS

Winston Churchill

English Bulldog

Section 1

"In 1940 Churchill became the hero that he had always dreamed of being. . . . In that dark time, what England needed was not a shrewd, equable, balanced leader. She needed a prophet, a heroic visionary, a man who could dream dreams of victory when all seemed lost. Winston Churchill was such a man. . . ."—
Historian Anthony Storr

One of Winston Churchill's ancestors was the duke of Marlborough, a hero of the wars against Louis XIV of France in the early 18th century. Churchill, between 1939 and 1945, defiantly led his nation against another European leader bent on conquest.

The son of a British lord and an American heiress, Churchill had a privileged but unhappy childhood. He was a poor student and took the entrance exam for Britain's military academy three times before he passed. He eventually graduated in 1895. He worked as a soldier and a journalist in Cuba, India, and Egypt. He also won fame for escaping an enemy prison camp in South Africa during the Boer War.

In the early 1900s, Churchill won election to Parliament. He left the conservative Tory party and joined the Liberal party. He was branded a traitor to his class for pushing social reforms. In 1911, he was given charge of the Royal Navy. He developed a strategy for sending the fleet to Russia past Constantinople. However, during World War I his plan failed, and he was discredited. In another post, he moved to speed the development of the tank.

Churchill lost office in 1922, when new elections defeated the government he served. In the next two decades, he suffered political isolation. His views did not fit either the Liberals or the Tories. He supported himself by writing history.

During the 1930s, Churchill was back in Parliament. He often spoke out about the threat raised by Adolf Hitler. He developed a network of academics who provided him with inside intelligence. When Neville Chamberlain allowed Germany to take Czechoslovakia, Churchill was outraged. He called it "a total and unmitigated defeat."

When Britain declared war on Germany, Churchill was put in charge of the navy again. However, Chamberlain resigned as prime minister soon after, and the 65-year-old Churchill was everyone's choice to lead the new government. He named himself minister of defense as well. His first

speech to Parliament was grim but determined: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat," he began. He concluded by stating the government's war goal: "It is victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror: victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory, there can be no survival."

In the early months of the war, Churchill carried on a correspondence with U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, hoping to bring the United States into the war. At first, all he could win was American aid. When Hitler launched his ill-advised attack on the Soviet Union in 1941, Churchill, who was a foe of communism, quickly promised help. "The Russian danger," he said, "is our danger." Still, for years Churchill resisted Soviet urgings to open a second front against Germany. This led to difficulties between the allies.

Churchill participated in several wartime conferences with Roosevelt, which often included Soviet leader Joseph Stalin. Churchill had to leave the last "Big Three" meeting in July 1945 before it was finished. While there, his government had been voted out of office.

After the war, Churchill spoke against the growing power of the Soviet Union. He coined the phrase "Iron Curtain" to describe the control that the Soviets exercised over the countries of Eastern Europe. He served once again as prime minister from 1951 to 1955, but ill health forced him to retire. He died in 1965 and was given a funeral that was attended by officials from around the world.

Questions

1. **Comparing** Write a paragraph comparing Charles de Gaulle and Churchill.
2. **Clarifying** How did Churchill use his eloquence to lead his country?
3. **Making Inferences** Why would the British vote down Churchill's government in 1945?