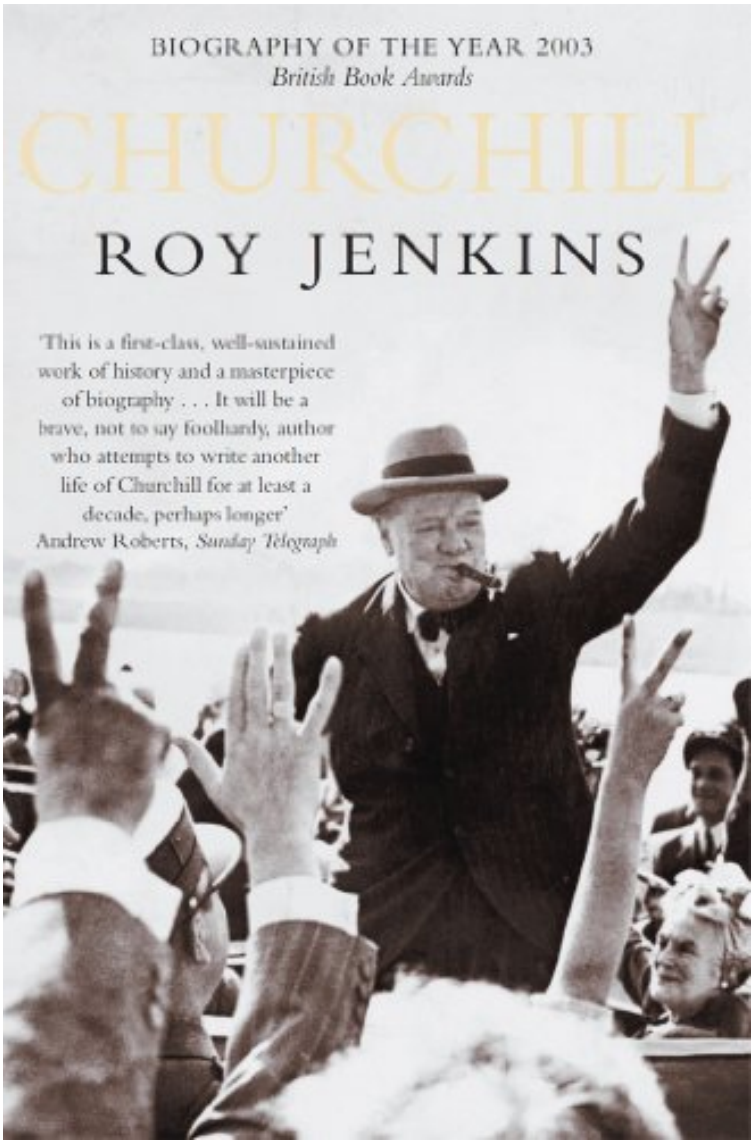
(Free read ebook) File size: 28.Mb

Churchill: A Biography (English Edition)



Download Read Online

Par Roy Jenkins
*audiobook | *ebooks | Download PDF | ePub | DOC*

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #97202 dans eBooksPubli le: 2012-12-13Sorti le: 2012-12-13Format: Ebook Kindle

(Free read ebook) Churchill: A Biography (English Edition)

Par Roy Jenkins : Churchill: A Biography (English Edition) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Churchill: A Biography (English Edition):

Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom the admiralty to the miner's strike, from the Battle of Britain to the Nobel Prize, Churchill oversaw some of the most important events the World has ever seen. Roy Jenkins faithfully presents these events, while also managing to convey the contradictions and quirks in Churchill's character. In depth analysis and brilliant historical research make this a magnificent one-volume biography of an extraordinary life. In some ways a companion piece to his excellent biography of Gladstone, Churchill is packed with insights that only a fellow politician could convey. "There is no doubt that he has surpassed himself. This is the biography of the year." Robert McCrum, Observer "This is a first class, well-sustained work of history and a masterpiece of biography " Andrew Roberts, Sunday Telegraph "Lord Jenkins of Hillhead is an outstanding biographer...it has the narrative power, sweep and sparkle of the author in his

prime. " John Grigg, TimesExtraitChapter OneA Doubtful Provenance* * *Churchill's provenance was aristocratic, indeed ducal, and some have seen this as the most important key to his whole career. That is unconvincing. Churchill was far too many faceted, idiosyncratic and unpredictable a character to allow himself to be imprisoned by the circumstances of his birth. His devotion to his career and his conviction that he was a man of destiny were far stronger than any class or tribal loyalty. There have been politicians of high duty and honour Edward Halifax and Alec Douglas-Home immediately spring to mind who did see life through spectacles much bounded by their landed background. But Churchill was emphatically not among them. Apart from anything else, he never had any land beyond his shaky ownership (and later only occupation) of the 300 acres surrounding Chartwell, the West Kent house only twenty-four miles from London which he bought in 1922 and just managed, with financial subventions from friends, to cling on to for the remaining four decades of his life. The second reason was that the Marlborough heritage was not one which stood very high in esteem, record of public service or secure affluence. The family had a memorable swashbuckling founder in John Churchill, the victor in the first decade of the eighteenth century of the battles of Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenaarde and Malplaquet, who acquired a fine mansion among other rewards. But even this first Duke, although he inspired Winston Churchill to write four resonant volumes of praise (and of refutation of the historian Thomas Babington Macaulay's criticism) just over 200 years after his death, was as famous for ruthless self-advancement as he was for martial prowess; and the house, as its name of Blenheim Palace implies and as its size-enhancing Vanburgh architecture was dedicated to achieving, was showy even by the standards of the time. Subsequent holders of the dukedom contributed little distinction and much profligacy. In 1882, when the seventh in the line had been reached, Gladstone, who in general had an excessive respect for dukes, claimed that none of the Marlboroughs had shown either morals or principles. Certainly no lustre to the family name was added by the second, third or fourth Dukes. The fifth was a talented gardener, but he seriously dissipated the Marlborough fortune and had to abandon the fine subsidiary estate (now the site of Reading University) where he had exercised his botanical skills. The sixth was almost equally extravagant. The seventh, who was the father of Lord Randolph and hence the grandfather of Winston Churchill, made the nearest approach to respectability and a record of public service. He was an MP for ten years, Lord President of the Council under both Derby and Disraeli in 1867-8, and Lord Lieutenant of Ireland for the last four years of Disraeli's second government. As a father this seventh Duke's record was at once more dramatic and more mixed. On the one hand he produced a two-generation dynasty which made the name of Churchill resound throughout Britain's national life in a way that it had not done since the death of the first Duke in 1722. On the other, the resonance, in the case of Lord Randolph, had a distinctly meretricious note to it. And Lord Randolph's elder brother was, in the words of an eminent modern historian, one of the most disreputable men ever to have debased the highest rank in the British peerage. He appropriately bore the name of Blandford, the title of the Marlborough heir, for most of his relatively short life, during which he was expelled from Eton, got caught up in two sexual scandals, one of which involved him in a violent quarrel with the Prince of Wales (in which quarrel the fault may not have been unilateral), and sold off, as a short-term staunching operation, the formidable Marlborough picture collection. About his only constructive act was to install electric light and a rudimentary form of central heating at Blenheim. That was paid for by his second wife, who as a rich American provided sustaining dollars and began a strong Churchill family tradition of looking matrimonially westward. This example was followed by both his son, the ninth Duke, Winston Churchill's cousin and near contemporary, who married two transatlantic heiresses, and by his younger brother (Lord Randolph Churchill), who married one (Winston Churchill's mother). The fortune of the father of Lady Randolph was however a little precarious. Furthermore he was unwilling to contribute much of it to the sustenance of the Churchill family. Since the eighth Duke there have been another three Marlboroughs. Of these subsequent three, while they rose somewhat above the level of the eighth Duke, it is difficult to find much that is positive to say. Winston Churchill's family background, while nominally of the highest aristocracy, was subtly inferior to that of a Cavendish, a Russell, a Cecil or a Stanley. He was born on 30 November 1874 and, mainly by accident, at the very core of this slightly doubtful purple in Blenheim Palace, although in a singularly bleak-looking bedroom. The accident arose out of his being two months premature. He should have been born in January in the small but fashionable house in Charles Street, Mayfair which his father had rented to receive him, or more purposefully perhaps to use as a base for the somewhat rackety metropolitan life of which Lord Randolph and his bride of only seven and a half months' standing were equally fond. This house not being ready, they had taken autumn refuge in Blenheim, and, as Lord Randolph put it in a letter to his mother-in-

law in Paris, She [Lady Randolph] had a fall on Tuesday walking with the shooters, and a rather imprudent and rough drive in a pony carriage brought on the pains on Saturday night. We tried to stop them, but it was no use. Neither the London obstetrician nor his Oxford auxiliary could arrive in time, although it was over twenty-four hours to the birth from the onset of the labour pains, and the baby was born very early on the Monday morning with the assistance only of the Woodstock country doctor. Both mother and baby survived this paucity of attention perfectly healthily as did the local doctor, who whether as a result or not was able himself to migrate to a London practice a decade or so later. Everything to do with Winston Churchill's arrival in the world was done in a hurry. Perhaps Lord Randolph's most remembered phrase (and phrases were his strongest suit) was his description of Gladstone as an old man in a hurry. His own style was at least equally that of a young man in a hurry, almost in a constant frenzy of impatience, and perhaps rationally so, for, although thirty-nine years his junior, he predeceased Gladstone by three years. The hurry was pre-eminently true of his courtship of Miss Jennie Jerome. They first met at a Cowes regatta shipboard party on 12 August 1873 and became engaged to be married three days later. There then intervened the only period of semi-stasis in the saga. The Jerome family were in fact a very suitable American family for a Marlborough alliance. Leonard Jerome was a New York financial buccaneer. Winston Churchill, in his still highly readable although hagiographic 1905 biography of his father, was to describe Jerome as having founded and edited the New York Times. This owed more to family piety than to truth. Jerome had briefly in the course of some financial deals been a part proprietor of the Times. But what he was strong in was not newspaper publishing but horse racing, having founded both the Jerome Park track and the Coney Island Jockey Club. There was a touch of Joseph P. Kennedy about him. There was even a suggestion that he named his second daughter after Jenny Lind, the Swedish nightingale (although the spelling was different), who was his current principal inamorata. He was pleased at the idea of this second daughter marrying an English duke's son (even if he was not the heir), but not to the extent of being willing, in the joke which John F. Kennedy was to make about his father's financing of the 1960 Presidential campaign, to pay for a landslide. The seventh Duke was at first opposed to the whole idea of the union, being unimpressed by the uncontrolled precipitateness of his son's passion, and believing moreover that this Mr J. seems to be a sporting, and I should think vulgar kind of man, who was evidently of the class of speculators; he has been bankrupt twice; and may be so again. Over the autumn the Duke was brought reluctantly to overcome these objections of principle by his son's determination. He was the first but by no means the last of the Marlboroughs to have to deal with the fathers of American heiresses and he set a pattern of believing that the least consuegros could do for the honour of such a noble alliance was generously to finance it. There were however two difficulties. First, Leonard Jerome, true to the Duke's descriptions of the hazards of his occupation, was in a speculative downturn. He had been badly mauled by the plunge of the New York stock exchange of that year (1873). Second, he claimed to hold advanced New World ideas about the financial rights of married women. (This was before the British Married Women's Property Act of I882 gave women any property rights against their husbands.) The Duke assumed that whatever settlement could be obtained would be under the exclusive control of his son. Jerome thought it should be settled on his daughter. This led to a good deal of haggling which went on into the spring of 1874. Eventually a compromise was reached, by which Jerome settled a sum of 50,000 (approximately 2.5 million at present values), producing an income of 2,000 a year, with a half of both capital and income belonging to the husband and a half to the wife. The Duke settled another 1,100 a year for life on Randolph which gave the couple the equivalent of a present-day income of a little more than 150,000 a year, a sum which guaranteed that they would live constantly above their income and be always in debt. As soon as this settlement was reached they were married, on 15 April 1874. It cannot be said that the wedding took place en beaut. It was not at Woodstock, or in a suitable London church, or a Fifth Avenue equivalent. It was in the British Embassy in Paris. The Jeromes attended and were among the very few witnesses, but neither Marlborough parent did; Blandford represented the family. However there was no ostracism at home. The couple were welcomed at Blenheim and in May were given a public reception in Woodstock, for which small family borough Lord Randolph had been first and fairly narrowly elected a member of Parliament at the general election of February 1874. He was twenty-five years of age at the time both of his election and of the birth of Winston Churchill. Jennie Churchill was twenty. She had passed most of her adolescence in Paris, which Mrs Jerome appeared to prefer to New York, was considered a beauty and had already attracted much admiration before she met Lord Randolph. Her looks were undoubtedly striking, but what emerges most clearly from many photographs is that she quickly assumed an appearance which was hard, imperious and increasingly self-indulgent. Her performance as a wife, and

indeed as a mother, was at least as mixed as that of the seventh Duke of Marlborough as a father. She and Randolph undoubtedly began upon a basis of mutual passion. Although they both liked a fashionable London life she accepted with calmness and even contentment the three years of virtual exile to Dublin which followed from her husband's 1876 quarrel (over a lady, but on his brother's, not his own, part) with the Prince of Wales. Her second son, Jack, was born in the Irish capital at the beginning of 1880. There has long been a strong suggestion that this boy had a different father from Winston Churchill, although this did not prevent the two brothers being close at various periods of their lives, notably in South Africa at the turn of the century and at the peak of Winston Churchill's career in the Second World War, when he accommodated the widowered Jack in 10 Downing Street. The most romantic candidate for alternative parenthood was Count Charles Kinsky, an Austrian diplomat of high aristocratic connection and of a proud elegance reminiscent of Sargent's portrait of Lord Ribblesdale. Lady Randolph was much taken up with him in the early and mid-1880s but the dates are wrong for giving him a procreative role; he did not arrive in London until 1881. If the legitimacy of Jack Churchill is challenged, a more likely candidate seems to be the Dublin-based Colonel John Strange Jocelyn, who succeeded his nephew as the fifth Earl of Roden later in the year 1880. He was thirty years older than Lady Randolph, but that was no necessary bar. She looked after her husband rather well during a protracted illness which effectively took him out of politics from the spring to the autumn of 1882, and very well during the last tragic three years or so of disintegration before his death at the beginning of 1895. But the couple were effectively estranged over much of the 1880s, including the years of his short political apogee. She, like Queen Victoria, did not know of his disastrous 1886 resignation from the Chancellorship of the Exchequer until she read it in The Times. During these years she had many suitors, more than a few of them probably lovers. They included apart from those mentioned, the Marquis de Breteuil, Lord Dunraven, the French novelist Paul Bourget and King Milan of Serbia. George Moore, the Anglo-Irish novelist, said she had 200 lovers, but apart from anything else the number is suspiciously round. She claimed to have firmly rejected the overtures of Sir Charles Dilke, which however did not prevent Lord Randolph, who appeared mostly to be more tolerant, from attempting to assault him. After Lord Randolph's death her choice of partners became more bizarre as well as more public. In 1900, at the age of forty-six, she insisted on marrying George Cornwallis-West, a Scots Guards subaltern who was twenty years her junior. The marriage lasted fourteen years before ending in divorce. Cornwallis-West clearly had considerable drawing power, for he then married Mrs Patrick Campbell. Three years later Lady Randolph made a third marriage to Montague Porch, an hitherto quiet Somerset country gentleman who had been a Colonial Service officer in Nigeria and who was even younger than Cornwallis-West. She died in 1921, aged sixty-seven. Porch survived until 1964. Was Jennie Churchill a better mother than a wife? Her elder son's most famous comment on their early relationship sounds a note at once admiring and wistful. After citing an adulatory passage (in which the most striking phrase was nonetheless more of the panther than of the woman in her look) written by the future Lord D'Abernon after first seeing her during the Irish period, Winston Churchill commented: My mother made the same brilliant impression upon my childhood's eye. She shone for me like the Evening Star. I loved her dearly but at a distance. This was in My Early Life (that is up to 1906) which he published in 1930, and is probably the most engaging of all his books, using a light and sparkling note of detached irony. The fact that these sentences were written and published nearly fifty years after the period to which they refer gives them a greater not a lesser validity. They are moreover borne out by the correspondence of the period. Throughout his two years at his first preparatory school (St George's, Ascot, which appears from the disparately independent testimonies of Churchill himself and of the art critic Roger Fry to have been a place of appalling brutality even by the flogging standards of the age), his subsequent three and a half years at a much gentler Brighton establishment, and then his nearly five years at Harrow, there is a constant hoping for visits which did not take place, of wishing for more attention in the future, and of being shunted around rather than of being automatically welcomed at home for short or long holidays. The forms of letter address are also interesting. Churchill most frequently began his My darling Mummy and ended more variously. A fairly typical second-year Harrow example was Good Bye, my own, with love I remain, Your son Winston S Churchill. She habitually wrote to him, not too infrequently but mostly shortly, Dearest Winston and ended Yr loving Mother JSC. There were two competitors for writing to him at least equally or more affectionate letters. The first was the Countess of Wilton, in the relevant years a lady in her mid- to late forties, who wrote often, mostly starting Dearest Winston and ending, more significantly With best love, Yr ever affecte, deputy mother, Laura Wilton. The other was Churchill's nurse, Mrs Everest, who was engaged to look after him (and later his brother Jack) within a month or so of his birth. Elizabeth

Everest was from the Medway Towns, and one of her lasting influences was to make Churchill feel that Kent was the best county in England. She would have approved (more than Clementine Churchill did) of his acquiring Chartwell twenty-seven years after her death. Before coming to the Churchills she had looked after the small daughter of a Cumberland clergyman, whom Winston retrieved after twenty years to join him at her graveside. Mrs Everest obviously possessed among other attributes great descriptive power, for she made life in that northern parsonage so vivid to Churchill that, although vicarious, it was one of his most permanent early memories. There is no evidence that a spousely Mr Everest had ever existed, so that her Mrs was purely honorary, like that of many a housekeeper of the period. Although she had a sister (who was married to a prison warder in the Isle of Wight), to whose house she once took Winston to stay, thus giving him, it has been suggested, his only experience of humble life, she was able to concentrate almost all her affection upon the two Churchill boys. She was the central emotional prop of Winston's childhood, and mutual dependence continued throughout his adolescence. The Randolph Churchills had not kept her on after the end of Jack's childhood, but Winston at least maintained strong contact and visited her several times in her final illness. Mrs Everest's letters to Churchill typically began (21 January 1891, when he was sixteen) My darling Winny and ended Lots of love and kisses Fm your loving old woom. A typical topping and tailing from him to her (from Harrow, July 1890) was My darling Old Woom and Good Bye darling, I hope you will enjoy yourself, with love from Winny. One other person who used Winny (or Winnie) was Count Kinsky. On 5 February 1891 he wrote a letter from the Austro-Hungarian Embassy in Belgrave Square of which the content, as well as the salutations, was not without interest: I am sending you all the stamps I could scrape together for the moment. Do you want some more later on? If so say so. How is your old head? I hope all right again. I am off to Sandringham tomorrow until Monday. If I have a good thing racing you shall be on. I am going to lunch with Mama now so must be off. Be a good boy and write if you have nothing better to do ... Yours ever, CK. Winston Churchill's non-relationship with his father was even more wistful than was his semi-relationship with his mother. Lord Randolph was too exhilarated by politics during his period of success and too depressed by them (and by his health) during his decline to have much time for parenthood. It is one of the supreme ironies that now, more than a century after his death, he should be best known as a father. In life it was always an intensely personal fame, sought and achieved, which was his forte, just as parenthood or any other form of domestic activity certainly was not. The most poignant comment on Winston Churchill's relations with his father is that which he is reported to have made to his own son, another and by no means wholly satisfactory Randolph, in the late 1930s, when that Randolph was twenty-six or twenty-seven. They had a long and maybe fairly alcoholic dinner together, alone at Chartwell. Towards the end Churchill said: We have this evening had a longer period of continuous conversation together than the total which I ever had with my father in the whole course of his life.Revue de presse"From Roy Jenkins's masterly biography, we emerge marveling at the manifold gifts that informed Churchill's genius for leadership."Harold Evans, New York Times Book "One might wonder whether anything fresh remains to be said about Winston Churchill, but Roy Jenkins uniquely combines the skills of a master biographer with the insights of a practical politician and draws a fresh portrait of the great Englishman with authority, elegance, and wit. This is far and away Churchill's best one-volume biography."Arthur Schlesinger, Jr."This is a splendid addition to Churchillian lore, a chronicle full of revealing personal anecdotes, delightful wartime vignettes, and fascinating new insights into the critical 1939-1945 years."Milwaukee Journal-SentinelWryly astute shrewd.The Washington PostJenkins catches Churchills studied self-inspection with the sure-shot sharpness of an expert portraitist.Simon Schama,The New York of BooksChurchill stands forth with Shakespearean bravura as the necessary hero for the most testing moment of national (and world) crisis. A satisfying summation of an unsurpassed life.The San Diego Union-Tribune