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Paul Addison, *Churchill: The Unexpected Hero*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2005. Pp. viii, 308. ISBN 978-0-19-927934-0.

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Another book on Winston Churchill? Paul Addison, director of the Centre for Second World War Studies at the University of Edinburgh and author of several books on the history of Britain in the twentieth century,¹ is interested in answering the question of how Churchill came to be a national icon at age sixty-five after the ups and downs of a career that appeared to be at an end. He is also intrigued by the conflicting views of Churchill both during and after that political leader's lifetime. Addison attempts to address these two important topics by surveying Churchill's life and the reactions to him at the time and since his death in 1965. The resulting book is based on published works in English and several relevant collections of personal papers.

Although the author follows an essentially conventional chronological sequence from Churchill's youth to his death and the subsequent controversies over his reputation, the main focus in each chapter is on the way Churchill saw himself and others saw him at each stage of an extraordinary life. For every period of the chronological sequence, the reader is offered a brief but thoughtful summary of the main events with careful attention to the way the ruling elite and the media saw Churchill. There is a fair evaluation of the numerous controversies that surrounded Churchill's policies and actions with a reasonable emphasis on the way great ambition and enormous self-confidence moved the man who aroused such conflicting evaluations among his contemporaries. In the process, Churchill emerges as a man of both enormous talents and significant defects. Whether he is discussing Churchill's two switches of political parties, the Dardanelles operation in World War I, or his relation to the strategic bombing offensive in World War II, Addison offers brief summaries and judicious insights and evaluations. The only exception to this pattern is the account of Churchill's role in the crisis over the abdication of King Edward VIII, a role that contributed far more to Churchill's isolation in the politics of the time than the author appears to realize.

After reviewing each phase in Churchill's early political career, including his role in the Lloyd George and Asquith Liberal cabinets followed by his positions in the Conservative cabinet of Stanley Baldwin, Addison covers the years when Churchill was out of office, primarily because of his opposition to advances toward dominion status for India. Churchill's agreement with Neville Chamberlain's policy toward Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1938 is slighted to emphasize their differences over the Munich agreement. Addison shows how the swift recognition of Churchill's leadership qualities in the crisis of May-June 1940 obscured the irony that the disaster in Norway—in which Churchill had played a key role—had propelled him into the position of prime minister.

¹ E.g., *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War* (1975; rev. ed. London: Pimlico, 1994), and *Now the War is Over: A Social History of Britain, 1945–51* (London: J. Cape, 1985).

The longest chapter of the book treats Churchill's directing hand in Britain's conduct of war from May 1940 to July 1945. Although it provides a useful survey of the way Churchill actually worked, there are errors in this account that a second edition of the book could correct. The British action at Mers-el-Kebir (165) and the decision to invade Sicily (200) are described incorrectly. Addison fails to mention that it was Roosevelt who kept Churchill from recognizing the Soviet annexations of 1939–1940 (187), and that it was the Churchill government that proposed the division of Germany that placed Berlin in the Soviet zone of occupation against Roosevelt's preference for having the occupation zones meet in Berlin. It would also have been helpful if the author had engaged the continuation of the decolonization process, especially in Africa, during the years when Churchill returned to 10 Downing Street

This short book on a full and eventful life could easily serve as a good introduction to a central figure in the history of the twentieth century even if that figure retained many attitudes and preconceptions of the nineteenth. The more recent critics of Churchill who argue that it would have been safe for Britain to try to exist in a Europe, perhaps a world, dominated by Adolf Hitler's Germany are unlikely to gain a large following either among professional historians or any wider public. The role of Churchill as Britain's wartime leader will assuredly continue to be a controversial subject in its details but also one evoking admiration both inside and outside the country he loved. The strange path by which he came to that position and the qualities he brought to it are presented in this book with fairness and care.