



The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz

Written by Erik Larson

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The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz

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By Erik Larson

The Splendid And The Vile

The #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Devil in the White City* and *Dead Wake* delivers a fresh and compelling portrait of Winston Churchill and London during the Blitz

The Splendid And The Vile Review

On Winston Churchill's first day as prime minister, Adolf Hitler invaded Holland and Belgium. Poland and Czechoslovakia had already fallen, and the Dunkirk evacuation was just two weeks away. For the next twelve months, Hitler would wage a relentless bombing campaign, killing 45,000 Britons. It was up to Churchill to hold his country together and persuade President Franklin Roosevelt that Britain was a worthy ally—and willing to fight to the end.

The Splendid And The Vile Goodreads

In *The Splendid and the Vile*, Erik Larson shows, in cinematic detail, how Churchill taught the British people “the art of being fearless.” It is a story of political brinkmanship, but it’s also an intimate domestic drama, set against the backdrop of Churchill’s prime-ministerial country home, Chequers; his wartime retreat, Ditchley, where he and his entourage go when the moon is brightest and the bombing threat is highest; and of course 10 Downing Street in London. Drawing on diaries, original archival documents, and once-secret intelligence reports “some released only recently” Larson provides a new lens on London’s darkest year through the day-to-day experience of Churchill and his family: his wife, Clementine; their youngest daughter, Mary, who chafes against her parents’ wartime protectiveness; their son, Randolph, and his beautiful, unhappy wife, Pamela; Pamela’s illicit lover, a dashing American emissary; and the advisers in Churchill’s “Secret Circle,” to whom he turns in the hardest moments.

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The Splendid And The Vile Pdf

The Splendid and the Vile takes readers out of today's political dysfunction and back to a time of true leadership, when, in the face of unrelenting horror, Churchill's eloquence, courage, and perseverance bound a country, and a family, together.

Erik Larson is my favorite author of nonfiction. He writes books that just grab me as well as always teaching me something new.

Looking back on Churchill, it's easy to assume he was always loved and admired. But that's not the case. He had many detractors on both sides of the pond. Larson does a wonderful job of giving us a flesh and blood Churchill - kimonos and all. His strength lay in being able to give the English hope and a willingness to fight on. After his moving speech about fighting on Erik Larson is my favorite author of nonfiction. He writes books that just grab me as well as always teaching me something new.

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While Churchill provides the locus of the story, it is much more all encompassing. We learn exactly what England was up against in that first year of war. It's the details that he gives us that stick with me. On the first massive bombing of London, it's the "dust from the age of Cromwell, Dickens and Victoria" that rains down on everyone and covers everything. His choice of quotes are always striking. It's the perfect blend of the monumental facts and the minute detail so that you have a complete picture.

I came away with a much better understanding of what the Battle of Britain was all about. I had not understood how much of England, not just London, was subjected to the horrendous bombing. And it put me in awe of the English ability to withstand such horror.

My thanks to netgalley and Crown Publishing for an advance copy of this book. ...more

The Splendid And The Vile Audiobook

What a poignant read for the times we are in as the world is fighting a different type of war without the guns and bombs and those in government must make the tough decisions to keep us safe. A few Winston Churchills wouldnt go amiss in heading the Governments of today.

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few (Sir Winston Churchill)

I have always had a gra for Winston Churchill and was excited when I heard that Erik Larson was writing a book portraying What a poignant read for the times we are in as the world is fighting a different type of war without the guns and bombs and those in government must make the tough decisions to keep us safe. A few Winston Churchills wouldnâ€™t go amiss in heading the Governments of today.

Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few (Sir Winston Churchill)

I have always had a gra for Winston Churchill and was excited when I heard that Erik Larson was writing a book portraying London during the Blitz and focusing on Churchill and his family and friends. I listened to this one on audible and while itâ€™s extremely well narrated, it is not my favorite way to read non fiction and history as I am always wondering if the hard copy had maps, or photographs that I may be missing out on.

This is extremely well researched and written account and takes you right into those air shelters in London and the terror and fear that the majority of British folk faced during the war, I leaned so many facts and figures concerning the battle to save Britain and the early years of the war. I loved this take on Winston Churchill where his confidence, leadership and eccentricities shine through. When a country is facing the challenge of War a leader like Churchill is a necessity and Britain certainly had a leader who was fearless and could make the tough decisions needed at the time. I enjoyed reading about Rudolf Hessâ€™s trip to Scotland and about the negotiations between Churchill and Roosevelt.

Churchillâ€™s daughter Mary brings a fresh and young vide to the book as we see her excitement and fun loving escapades through snippets from her teenage to adult diaries to where she commands an anti-aircraft battery as a member of the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

I enjoyed reading about Churchillâ€™s eccentric nature and what made him tick and his love for his cat. I adored his quirky nature and his ability to not give a toss what people thought of him. And of course Clementine who was not only a wife and mother but Churchillâ€™s close advisor and confident , vetting his speeches, smoothing over his faux pas whenever he made them.

A terrific look back in history and a book I throughly enjoyed and I think readers interested in World War II and the battle of Britain might well enjoy this one. ...more

Publication day has finally arrived. Enjoy!

Be sure to set aside plenty of time to work your way through this deep exploration of one year in the life of Churchill and those close to him. It will require some patience, but if you're not inclined to read the multi-volume biographies about him, this book is an effective distillation of the man as he navigated his first year as prime minister.

May 10, 1940 through May 10, 1941 was a pivotal year, with the fate of England entirely uncertain and world Publication day has finally arrived. Enjoy!

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May 10, 1940 through May 10, 1941 was a pivotal year, with the fate of England entirely uncertain and world domination by Hitler a frightening possibility. We know now that everything eventually came out right, but at the time that outcome was by no means a given. German invasion by sea appeared likely. Would England be under Nazi occupation like the rest of Europe? Throughout this year, the English people were repeatedly traumatized by devastating bombing raids. The death toll and destruction was stunning.

What was this year like for Winston Churchill and those close to him? Larson uses diaries, letters, and other historical documents to reconstruct this time for him, his family, aides, and other government figures.

While Winston determined the fate of his country, his eighteen-year-old daughter Mary was doing all the frivolous things wealthy young girls do, war or no war. Falling in love with the wrong boy, going to dances and parties, and visiting her friends in the countryside. His son Randolph was doing what he always did, racking up gambling debts and getting drunk. John Colville, Churchill's private secretary, was suffering over unrequited love. And of course, Lord Beaverbrook tried to resign about a dozen times, when all he really wanted was for Winston to beg him to stay on.

As with any Churchill portrait, his amusing idiosyncrasies and peccadilloes are on full display here. He had to have two baths per day, and the water had to be 98 degrees. He had no body shame and shocked and embarrassed people with his full or partial nudity. Late at night, he put military marches on the gramophone and paraded up and down in his pale-blue onesie, toting his old rifle. He was a difficult man, irascible, demanding, and moody. But he was also tenderhearted, forgiving, and easily moved to tears.

I came away from this book with a feeling of relief that Churchill was the one at the helm when he was

The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz

needed most. This was the year that mattered, and he had just the right combination of skills and personality traits to stay the course, juggle strategies, and maintain high morale among the citizens. Hitler and Goring and Goebbels were repeatedly confounded by his unwillingness to surrender or sue for peace. They thought if they just dropped enough bombs, he would have to give in eventually. They severely underestimated his resolve, his resourcefulness, and his patriotism.

KBO was his motto, and KBO he did. ...more

The Splendid And The Vile Summary

Few authors are as gifted writing - non-fiction - that reads like - fiction, - as Erik Larson does.

With tenacity and sensitivity, Larson gives us an compelling account of history by humanizing the facts with the interesting array of characters.

Larson masterfully reimagines the The Blitz and the Battle of Britain, (bombs dropping & German invasion), in uniquely human terms..... filled with personal and political drama....(tragedies of war, love, family, friends, colleagues, infidelity, Few authors are as gifted writing - non-fiction - that reads like - fiction - as Erik Larson does.

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5 very strong stars! I had heard it was excellent - I was simply waiting for my library turn.

"Human beings are so stupid"(from Churchill's journal). His observations were not wrong. And.....?.....

Is this history tale relevant to today's current events? You betcha!!!

Erik Larson can't do uninteresting books!

Blessings to all! ...more

In the Sources and Acknowledgements section of this book, the author states ...I set out to hunt for the stories that often get left out of the massive biographies of Churchill, either because there's no time to tell them or because they seem too frivolous. But it is in frivolity Churchill often revealed himself, the little moments that endeared him to his staff, despite the extreme demands he placed on all.

This is the kind of history that I like to read, social and political but not primarily In the Sources and Acknowledgements section of this book, the author states "...I set out to hunt for the stories that often get left out of the massive biographies of Churchill, either because there's no time to tell them or because they seem too frivolous. But it is in frivolity Churchill often revealed himself, the little moments that endeared him to his staff, despite the extreme demands he placed on all."

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covers the first year that Churchill was prime minister, from May 10, 1940 to May 10, 1941. During that time, the Luftwaffe was attempting to destroy the RAF and then it moved on to the bombing of London to destroy morale and keep England out of the war. Churchill was also trying to convince the United States to provide aid (and ultimately enter the war). This was an uphill battle due to the strong isolationist leanings of many in America. I loved the details about life at No. 10 Downing Street and in England at large. "Citizens brought gas masks to church and began wearing small metal identity disks on bracelets, in case they got blown into unidentifiable pieces. Civil defense pamphlets arrived in mailboxes, describing what to do if a Panzer tank appeared in the neighborhood." The book gives insight into Churchill's decisions and his family life. "The Prime Minister also kept snippets of poems and biblical passages in a special "keep handy" file." These snippets found their way into Churchill's speeches.

A lot of information came from the diary of John "Jock" Colville, Churchill's 25 year old private secretary. On one weekend visit to a country estate Colville saw a downed German bomber and then got his wish to witness (from the terrace of the house) an actual air battle among 20 German and British aircraft. Colville and a companion saw planes shot down, pilots parachuting to the ground and bombs setting targets ablaze. Then they played tennis.

I've read a little about Churchill, but not nearly enough. There are many (really long) biographies of Churchill, but this book gives a very interesting picture of him during this limited period. When Churchill toured a bomb site, he was described as: "Tough, yes, but at times weeping openly, overcome by the devastation and the resilience of the crowd. In one hand he held a large white handkerchief, with which he mopped his eyes; and his other he grasped the handle of his walking stick." It was said that he had the ability to transform "the despondent misery of disaster into a grimly certain steppingstone to ultimate victory". This book is entertaining, it's informative but not dry. It made me want to learn more, which is the best thing I can say about a history book.

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher. ...more

The Splendid And The Vile Epub

Leadership! Apparently King George VI felt that Churchill had something that the country needed when he appointed him to replace Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in the spring of 1940. Observers, at the time, felt Churchill was flamboyant, electric, wholly unpredictable and a questionable choice to be Prime Minister. Larson's excellent non-fiction account confirms that Churchill was all of that and more. But most of all he was a leader who knew how to move a nation with the force of his Leadership! Apparently King George VI felt that Churchill had something that the country needed when he appointed him to replace Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in the spring of 1940. Observers, at the time, felt Churchill was "flamboyant, electric, wholly unpredictable" and a questionable choice to be Prime Minister. Larson's excellent non-fiction account confirms that Churchill was all of that and more. But most of all he was a leader who knew how to move a nation with the force of his personality and stirring speeches. [I learned that Churchill often practiced certain phrases and references with family and friends before incorporating them into his speeches.]

Larson provides a vivid account of Churchill's first year as Prime Minister when the Germans pounded the British with bombing night after night. Churchill knew that the British could not hold out forever; and Larson's account includes how Churchill wooed the United States to come to his country's aid "first through the Lend-Lease Act and then entry into the war itself after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

Highly recommend this wonderful addition to Churchill biographies. ...more

I have always admired the British for standing up to Hitler's forces in WWII, after almost all of Europe had fallen under Nazi control. How did they endure the almost nightly bombing raids? This book focuses on Churchill's first year (1940-1941) as British Prime Minister, the Battle of Britain, and what life was like for Churchill, his family, and his inner circle. As Larson states in his introductory notes to readers:

Mine is a more intimate account that delves into how Churchill and his circle I have always admired the British for standing up to Hitler's forces in WWII, after almost all of Europe had fallen under Nazi control. How did they endure the almost nightly bombing raids? This book focuses on Churchill's first year (1940-1941) as British Prime Minister, the Battle of Britain, and what life was like for Churchill, his family, and his inner circle. As Larson states in his introductory notes to readers:

"Mine is a more intimate account that delves into how Churchill and his circle went about surviving on a daily basis: the dark moments and the light, the romantic entanglements and debacles, the sorrows and laughter, and the odd little episodes that reveal how life was really lived under Hitler's tempest of steel."

Larson draws upon memoirs, diaries, letters, recently declassified material, and many other sources

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documented in the appendix. He artfully weaves personal stories into the larger tapestry of significant events, Churchill's famous speeches, and the escalating war with Nazi Germany. He shows Churchill's active pursuit of involvement by the United States, along with the obstacles. The reader gains insight into Churchill as a person, including his leadership style, daily routines, and eccentricities.

Mary Churchill's diary and previously unpublished excerpts from John Colville's journal provide material for many personal anecdotes. I found it interesting that Mary, Churchill's seventeen-year-old daughter, acts as most would expect of an adventurous teen, even while her parents try to protect her by sending her away from London. Larson also mines German sources, such as Goebbels' journal and fighter pilot Adolf Galland's recollections.

A few highlights include:

- The need to camouflage Chequers, the country house supplied to the Prime Minister, where he entertained family, colleagues, and dignitaries
- Professor Frederick Lindemann's scientific ideas to assist in the war effort
- Rudolf Hess's flight to Scotland

The Splendid and the Vile is a masterful work of narrative non-fiction and is up to the high standards I have come to expect from Erik Larson. I have previously read five of the author's works and this one is of the same superior quality. Larson puts the "æstory" in history. Highly recommended!

Many thanks to the publisher via NetGalley for an advanced reader's copy. This book is scheduled to be released February 25, 2020. ...more

The Splendid And The Vile Larson

5 outstanding stars

As always is the case, books by Erik Larson transcend the usual historical novel. This author always goes above and beyond in his books and provides the readers with a story that not only flows smoothly, but also is able to provide facts that are fascinating, erudite, and ultimately educate the reader, in a way that is fascinating and captivating.

There are multiple books about Winston Churchill, but this one merged together flawlessly pieces of his life. Winston had the 5 outstanding stars

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There are multiple books about Winston Churchill, but this one merged together flawlessly pieces of his life. Winston had the uncanny ability to unite a nation that was bombarded with everything Nazi Germany had in its arsenal, but still managed to carry through to victory. It was also a fine tribute to the men and women behind the scenes, those who carried on because of Winston, and those family members who so believed in their husband and father. Winston didn't believe in failure and though there were many, his indomitable spirit seemed to transcend defeat and inspire in the British people that spirit, and drive that nothing could or would crush them.

Winston's character, that tough cigar chomping man who had various idiosyncrasies, was a marvel among men. His spirit and determination led a beleaguered country to its ultimate goal, that of staying a free Britain. He was a masterful leader of people, who made those around him strive for things it seemed impossible to achieve. The populace adored him, as he made himself one of them, walking through the ruins of war so gallantly and heroically, delivering speeches to the people, standing tall in the face of an imminent defeat. He was the man England needed and he pushed through valiantly, providing his nation with the spirit and determination it so needed in its hour of darkness. "Victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the hard may be; for without victory there is no survival."

If you are at all interested in history, in a man, in a country that stood up to what others might have claimed as unbeatable odds this book is one for you. I recommend it most highly for its authentic look at a man and a time that should always be viewed as the epitome of the human spirit.

Thank you to Erik Larson, Crown Publishing, and NetGalley for an advanced copy of this fabulous book due out February 25, 2020. ...more

The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz

Larsen has written an intimate portrait of Churchill's first year as Prime Minister of Britain, undertaking his duties as Hitler and Germany resolve to break the island nation to their will. He writes of Churchill himself, his peculiarities, his resilience, his dogged determination to obtain assistance from Roosevelt and the United States. Additionally, he adds details from the viewpoints and the lives of Winston's daughter, Mary, a somewhat starry-eyed eighteen year old, son Randolph, a married but philandering gambler, daughter-in-law Pamela, loving wife Clementine, and private secretary John Colville, among others. All of these people left trails of information behind, whether in diaries, letters, etc., that Larsen used in pursuit of his own approach to Churchill's life.

Through this method, combining the very personal daily details with overall war strategy, we readers are allowed a close up view of the intensifying air war over Britain, the Blitz, the Battle of Britain. To counter that, we are also provided with some inkling of what is happening among German leadership.

I strongly recommend this book to all who enjoy history or just enjoy a true story of a dangerous time very well told. We know how it ended, but not how close the story came to a different ending. Here you will see a portrait of leadership at its strongest, a nation holding together in spite of horrific loss. Churchill is the linchpin who held everything and everyone together.

A copy of this book was provided by the publisher through NetGalley in return for an honest review.

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The Splendid And The Bile

Why I love it

by Jennifer Morrison

Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few. Winston Churchill

I lean toward fiction in my reading taste, but *The Splendid and the Vile*, Erik Larson's captivating and inspiring story about the twists and turns of Winston Churchill's first year as Prime Minister in 1940, grabbed me from page one. The tactics that Churchill employed truly changed the course of history. He spoke with total authority of the essential human freedoms: Why I love it

by Jennifer Morrison

“Never in the field of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.” Winston Churchill

I lean toward fiction in my reading taste, but *The Splendid and the Vile*, Erik Larson's captivating and inspiring story about the twists and turns of Winston Churchill's first year as Prime Minister in 1940, grabbed me from page one. The tactics that Churchill employed truly changed the course of history. He spoke with total authority of the essential human freedoms: speech, worship, and freedoms from want and fear. The leadership and courage that Churchill displayed in this year of his life was inspiring. His diplomatic and eloquent letters to President Roosevelt encouraging American support were incredibly insightful and proved to be the right course of action to protect the world from Hitler. He was bold enough to counterattack Berlin and not wait for the war to ravage his home. He invited the English to find their courage with one awe-inspiring speech after another.

Reading this book, you feel the rush and desperation for human connection during war time. You feel the internal pressures and struggles that Churchill and his trusted advisors faced. You feel the courage and the leadership that it took to lead a country to stop a force of evil that threatened the whole world. Never before have I realized how critical the British resistance to Nazi Germany was to protecting the entire world from Hitler's domination. As if history could be altered, my heart raced hoping that Hitler would change his mind and decide not to bomb London. The detailed diaries of Churchill family members and of Londoners at the time fill the book with seductive details.

I emerged from the book not only inspired by Winston Churchill and the way he protected the world, but also as a fascinated fan of his daughter, Mary Churchill, who deserves a book of her own. She turned 18 during the first year of the war, partied with friends despite the air raids, and fell in love for the first time. All this while her heart breaks watching her father carry the weight of the world on his shoulders. Through her journals, we get insights into her father that are far more personal and humanizing than history typically lets on.

The Splendid and the Vile: A Saga of Churchill, Family, and Defiance During the Blitz

We also meet the men who surrounded him at the time. When we look back on history, it is easy to forget that the men making these decisions were in fact human. For example, Churchill's most trusted advisor and confident Lord Beaverbrook tried to retire from his post of overseeing the construction of bombers over and over again, and Churchill would time and time again have to talk him back into an unbearably stressful position. Churchill's own son was a womanizer and chronic gambler that made enemies easily. There were family struggles to manage even within the horrors of the war.

My heart raced as I journeyed through Erik Larson's expertly researched pages of *The Splendid and the Vile* and my heart melted as I experienced the courage of the soldiers, the civilians, and Mary Churchill as she came of age watching her father become a heroic leader. As Larson's story comes to an end, it seems almost impossible that it is all in fact true. If it were fiction, I would say it was too convenient: "Against all odds, Britain stood firm, its citizens more emboldened than cowed. Somehow through it all, Churchill had managed to teach the art of being fearless."

When Churchill was told that the best thing he had done was give people courage, his response was "I never gave them courage. I was able to focus theirs." *The Splendid and the Vile* is a beautiful reminder of what true leadership looks like, and the grace that humanity finds even in times of horrible crisis.

Read more at: <https://bookofthefmonth.com/the-splend...> ...more

Larson does a splendid job of utilizing primary sources, particularly the diaries of Mary Churchill and John Colville, to bring Churchill to life. Detailing Churchill's first year as Prime Minister during WWII, 'The Splendid and the Vile' captures the challenges, the bravery, the destruction, and the beauty of London during the Blitz.

Churchill is, of course, the highlight of this wonderful book. Larson pays due respect to his capabilities as a leader, but he does not ignore other aspects of his character. Larson does a splendid job of utilizing primary sources, particularly the diaries of Mary Churchill and John Colville, to bring Churchill to life. Detailing Churchill's first year as Prime Minister during WWII, 'The Splendid and the Vile' captures the challenges, the bravery, the destruction, and the beauty of London during the Blitz.

Churchill is, of course, the highlight of this wonderful book. Larson pays due respect to his capabilities as a leader, but he does not ignore other aspects of his character. He had his shortcomings, of course, but I loved the way Larson displayed Churchill's sense of humor and childlike joy. You can't turn a page without finding another memorable quote from Churchill that will bring a smile to your face.

While reading, I spent a lot of time wondering what it would be like to live in a time of such leadership, and then I asked myself, can we hope to see such a leader in my lifetime? It is pretty to think so.

"It was magnificent and terrible: the spasmodic drone of enemy aircraft overhead; the thunder of

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gunfire, sometimes close sometimes in the distance; the illumination, like that of electric trains in peace-time, as the guns fired; and the myriad stars, red and artificial, in the firmament. Never was there such a contrast of natural splendor ad human vileness." ...more

The Splendid And The Veil

I've always admired Winston Churchill and thought I would like this new take on his life by an author I enjoy-I totally was captivated by it! It will surely be my favorite non-fiction book for 2020 and maybe even favorite overall. Larson researched this very well, using fitting quotes from the people closest to the Prime Minister that filled in the harrowing story of the London Blitz. The courage and perseverance, the anguish and deprivation of the British comes through so clearly in these words. I've always admired Winston Churchill and thought I would like this new take on his life by an author I enjoy-I totally was captivated by it! It will surely be my favorite non-fiction book for 2020 and maybe even favorite overall. Larson researched this very well, using fitting quotes from the people closest to the Prime Minister that filled in the harrowing story of the London Blitz. The courage and perseverance, the anguish and deprivation of the British comes through so clearly in these words. I like that it wasn't all Churchill but a lot of side stories of the English and even some German perspectives. I am inspired to read more of Churchill's life. ...more

Erik Larson is an exceptional writer. His meticulous research, coupled with a conversational writing style, make his nonfiction books as enjoyable to read as a novel. He tells the reader about Churchill, but more importantly, we get to know people around him: his wife, his 18-year-old daughter, his spendthrift son, and most importantly, his entourage, all of whom worked tirelessly during the war years. The descriptions elicit a very visceral reaction—I felt almost as if I were a witness to the terrible bombings—but there are moments when he also injects humor. (Roosevelt sent his emissary Harry Hopkins to meet with Churchill in 1940; Churchill took him to review the fleet on a very cold, blustery day. Hopkins “looked for a place to shelter from the cold and wind” and found a spot that seemed ideal. A chief petty officer approached him, saying “Excuse me sir, I don’t think you should sit there” that, sir, is a depth charge.)

I highly recommend *The Splendid and the Vile*, not only to readers with an interest in history, but also to those who usually don’t care for nonfiction. Thanks to the publisher and to Netgalley for providing this Advance Review Copy in exchange for an honest review.

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