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David J. Bercuson, Holger H. Herwig

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This volume offers a fascinating look at the weeks between December 1941 and January 1942, when Churchill and Roosevelt met at the White House, forging what turned out to be the Grand Alliance--while in the background, a confused America celebrated Christmas.

One Christmas in Washington Details

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Louis says

The story of the Washington War Conference of 1941-1942 is brought to life in this book. At these meetings, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt worked out the details of the Grand Alliance between Britain and the U.S. that has lasted to the present. This book knits the details of these discussions with portraits of the players involved. Not just the two leaders, both so charismatic they could easily have drowned out the others. Eleanor Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins, Lord Beaverbrook and George Marshall are among the others whose roles are shown as well. A well-written account of one of the most important of the conferences of World War II.

Nicole Marble says

A detailed examination of the important meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941 to set the direction of the war in Europe. There is a lengthy and interesting retrospective of the careers of both men.

David Bales says

A splendid book about the five weeks that Winston Churchill spent in the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor in which he and Franklin Roosevelt planned the strategy by which the allies then defeated first Germany and then Japan in World War II. Churchill moved into the White House and brought with him diplomats, military men and luminaries from the mother country, seeking the aid of the younger, more industrially powerful upstart America; Churchill said that when he learned that the U.S. would enter the war he went to bed and "Slept the sleep of the saved." When asked how long it would take the allies to defeat the enemy he said, "If we manage it well only half as long as if we manage it badly." This is a very personal book for the Churchill or Roosevelt buff and filled with little historical sidelights, like Churchill's trip to Mount Vernon and the tomb of George Washington on Christmas Eve, 1941. A very good book.

Angela Thompson says

Powerful... vivid glimpse of the two men and the early stages of their relationship. But... I confess... at moments, quite sad. It had to be a difficult reality for a man like Churchill to deal with. Nonetheless, this book gives some excellent insight, without romanticizing or vilifying the relationship of these two great wartime leaders.

Dianne says

I read this book during the Christmas holiday season and found it to be very informative. I learned a great

deal about the second world war from the research done by the two Canadian authors. Canadians have been raised with Winston Churchill as a WW11 hero but Americans probably less so. I also learned to admire the negotiating skills of President Roosevelt as shown by the meetings held that December in Washington D.C.

Joseph J. says

What did FDR serve to Churchill every night during the British P.M.'s memorable 1941 Christmas visit to Washington? This fact is one of the fascinating details told in these pages—an annual December read for me. Two great leaders meet in the wake of the devastating Pearl Harbor attack; a British P.M. prepares to address a still somewhat isolationist Congress the day after Christmas. British military staff meet their American counterparts to plot the effort against Hitler. Dry stuff? NO! Overriding a tale of diplomatic intrigue and military strategy is Churchill's unique personality and overbearing presence in the White House. Have you seen *The Man Who Came to Dinner*? This is that Christmas classic on an international scale. And it is all real. Roosevelt introduces Churchill to FDR's favorite cocktails—well concoctions. Churchill lectures a trusted White House servant on what conditions will be now to meet Winston's comfort and gastronomical demands. Eleanor fumes at the upset of it all as the White House, Washington and the nation prepare for its first wartime Christmas in a very uncertain world. And here is the memorable Christmas Eve White House tree lighting, and Churchill's soaring and beautiful words as he calls for adults to delight in their children's gifts of "Father Christmas." Two great leaders and two powerful personalities wrapped up in a Christmas never to be forgotten.

Leigh says

Somewhat interesting, but the style was not compelling. I like my historians to know how to write.

Mark Mortensen says

Following the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor on Sunday December 7, 1941 America declared war, entering into World War II. England's Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who had long sought American assistance, requested immediate face to face military strategy meetings with Commander-in Chief President Franklin D. Roosevelt. An invitation was extended for Churchill and his close diplomatic aides to form a Grand Alliance and spend Christmas at the White House. Churchill's character traits became evident upon arrival as the bed in the Lincoln Bedroom did not suit him, he strolled the White House hallways searching for the bedroom of his choice. First Lady Eleanor was not enthralled with having the entourages live with them for 14 days, but with war the nation's priorities came first. The conferences, code named ARCADIA transformed the White House to include a special "map room". Eleanor once noticed the two world leaders alone in the room and mentioned "They seemed to be having a wonderful time—too wonderful, in fact. It made me a little sad somehow".

The author notes the holiday atmosphere with smell of evergreens and decorations of holly. Most late afternoons revolved around FDR's famous Orange-Blossom Special cocktails. Many formal dinner menus are described in detail and mention is made of gold utensils from the Cleveland administration. Following dinner, conversation continued in other smoke filled rooms with a relaxed atmosphere that included FDR inhaling Camel cigarettes through a holder and Churchill puffing on his eight-inch Coronas. An assortment

of fine liquor was always at hand including scotch, bourbon and brandy sniffers.

Churchill along with the Roosevelt's in a 1941 Christmas setting during WWII is an amazing piece of history that is well written.

Judy says

From the fall of France to Nazi Germany in World War II until December 1941, Great Britain and the Commonwealth nations fought virtually alone (Russia was in the war because of a surprise attack by Hitler in violation of treaty commitments, but the Russians had their hands full fighting Germany in the western part of their country). After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the declaration of war by the United States, and the German declaration of war on the U.S. four days later, Churchill saw a golden opportunity. This book concerns the weeks in December 1941 to the middle of January 1942 when Winston Churchill traveled to Washington, D.C. in an attempt to develop a unified war strategy with the U.S. in order to coordinate British-American efforts in defeating Germany and Japan. This conference was nicknamed ARCADIA and the author used diaries, personal notes taken at the various meetings, letters sent by the participants, and official minutes to piece together the behind the scenes drama and negotiations that went on at multiple locations among the President, the Prime Minister, military commanders, and members of their staffs. Churchill had three goals in this visit to Washington: he wanted to maintain a "Europe-first" policy; he wanted to make sure that the U.S. get into the war as quickly and effectively as possible; and he wanted to ensure there was a close synchronization of war tactics and goals. To a large extent he was successful. However, once in Washington Churchill came to realize that Roosevelt and the Americans were going to assume the mantle of leadership and that he was going to be second-in-command. This position he chose to accept in order to facilitate an Allied victory. One of the most fascinating aspects of the book was understanding the increasingly close relationship that grew between Roosevelt and Churchill (which was resented by Eleanor Roosevelt), and how the various personalities surrounding those two individuals liked, resented, worked against, and, ultimately, cooperated with each other. A fascinating study.

Jean says

I enjoyed this book written by two Canadian historians. Much of the material of the book I was familiar with from the many books I have read about World War II. The book did provide a different perspective of the problems faced during Churchill's trip to the United States immediately after Pearl Harbor. The US was completely unready for war-actually producing fewer planes than was Britain, with a small army, and a population that was, after Pearl Harbor, just awakening from years of isolationism. The meeting was difficult on many fronts. The service chiefs from both countries met but had misconceptions and prejudices about their opposite numbers. Both leaders recognized they needed each other; Churchill was far more knowledgeable about war than Roosevelt. Roosevelt was suave and charming but Churchill had to learn that when Roosevelt nodded and said yes he did not mean he agreed. It was this trip that Churchill made his famous speech to the Congress and to the Canadian parliament in Ottawa. The book provided lots of detail about the difficulties that individuals and services groups had coming to their decisions, which included appointing a single commander of the Allied Command, General George Marshall. Lord Beaverbrook (a

Canadian business entrepreneur) who lived in Britain did wonders pushing the United States, Canada and Britain into greater and greater war material production, far beyond anyone's expectations. I was disappointed that the two Canadian historian authors did not go into more detail about Canadian production of war materials. The book did continue some misinformation about Churchill but generally was correct and informative about Churchill, Roosevelt and George Marshall. Not only did Roosevelt and Churchill develop "A grand alliance," they wrote the Charter of the United Nations at this meeting. If you are interested in World War II history you will enjoy this book. I read this book as an audio book downloaded from Audible. Lloyd James did a good job narrating the book.

Sara says

A nice little blip of a story in the grand scale of WWII, but it didn't seem to hold too much new information for me. Possibly because this is detailing the meeting of a few strong personalities.

Mikey B. says

A Meeting like No Other (not your typical office conference!)

A nicely written book that captures momentous events of over 60 years ago. The atmosphere of the meetings are brought out well. The authors do a good job of presenting the other participants besides the two primary leaders (Churchill and Roosevelt).

There was Beaverbrook, Marshall, Hopkins and of course Eleanor - all offering their opinions and having a hidden agenda. For example, Eleanor was dead-set on continuing the "New Deal" policies.

A subtitle to this book could have been "How to Win Friends and Get Them to Enter the War." The American side is initially confused and disorganized at the start of these meetings. Towards the end of the meetings in January, General Marshall sets a stronger organizational or management style platform for future operations: the structure is set for war production and allocation, and for increasing the size of the merchant fleet. Transportation was required to bring all these supplies across the treacherous Atlantic to England and North Africa to bring the Americans directly into the war.

The Americans knew in the long run that they would be providing most of the material and troops, so they began to take a more aggressive role to set-up the structure that met their requirements. The results of this conference, called "Arcadia," set the pattern for Anglo-American cooperation for the rest of the war, and years to come.

Churchill may not have succeeded in getting all he wanted - he was hoping for a bigger role for British planning and direction; but he did succeed in his overall aim which was to apply the main focus on the destruction of Nazi Germany first (Japan being secondary).

Although Churchill is eloquent and flamboyant, Roosevelt is seen as having a greater world vision. Both were determined to win the war, but Roosevelt was looking ahead - to the United Nations and, much to the

chagrin of Churchill, to the end of British colonialism and the new world emerging from this. Roosevelt had to be very careful to avoid giving the American people the impression that their boys were going overseas to rescue the British Empire. It must also be remembered that it was only until the traumatic disaster of Pearl Harbour that finally brought the American population out of its hibernation from world events. Before Pearl Harbour, a significant portion of Americans wanted nothing to do with the cataclysmic events in Europe.

Also Roosevelt used more subterfuge than Churchill. Churchill was more open and honest which left him susceptible to attack from opponents.

All this and more is brought out well in this detailed study of this monumental meeting in Washington during Christmas, 1941

Jay Atwood says

A detailed snapshot of one of the most crucial months of American involvement in WWII. Ultimately more sizzle than steak, I'm wondering why this piece couldn't have been presented as a longish essay in a historical monthly rather than in hardback. Any editor worth their salt would have told the author as much but judging from the many typos, lapses in grammar, missing pronouns & modifiers, and confusing janky sentences there either was no editor or more likely a very poor one.

Michael Delaware says

A great account of the history of the meetings between England and the USA following Pearl Harbor in Washington that ultimately set the stage for cooperation in winning the war. It is inspiring to see the powerful men that came together and were able to work through differences to unify an effort for a common cause. A fascinating read.

Chase Parsley says

FDR and Churchill, both at their best. This book flows extremely well, and WWII fans are sure to love it, as I did.
