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(Theme music)

Voiceover: The following is a production of the Pritzker Military Museum and Library. Bringing citizens and citizen soldiers together through the exploration of military history, topics, and current affairs, this is *Pritzker Military Presents*.

Williams: Welcome to *Pritzker Military Presents* with author Andrew Roberts discussing his book *Churchill: Walking With Destiny*. I'm your host Jay Williams, and this program is coming to you from the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in downtown Chicago. It's sponsored by the International Churchill Society. This program and hundreds more are available on demand at PritzkerMilitary.org. Winston Churchill is one of the iconic figures of the Second World War. As British prime minister during the war Churchill is often characterized as a visionary leader, one immune from the consensus of the day and one who stood firmly for his beliefs despite the doubts of others. One question that has fascinated historians since WWII is this: how did young Winston ultimately become the towering Churchill of wartime? In his previous book *The Storm of War*, author Andrew Roberts presented a portrait of Churchill the war leader. In his new book *Churchill: Walking With Destiny*, Roberts continues his compelling biography of one of the great leaders of modern time. To answer questions about Churchill's formative years, Roberts relies on his exclusive access to extensive new material, including the transcripts of war cabinet meetings, dairies, letters, unpublished memoirs, and detailed notes taken by King George VI after their meetings. After reading all of Churchill's letters, including deeply personal ones that Churchill's son Randolph had previously withheld and speaking to more than 100 people who knew or worked with Churchill, Roberts identifies the forces that fueled Churchill's drive. In this book, Roberts argues that Churchill's early years were shaped by his faith in the British Empire, his sense of history, and his struggles to win the approval of his father. Ultimately Roberts suggests that Churchill has much to teach us about the challenges of leadership that we face today. Andrew Roberts is a biographer and author whose books include *Salisbury*, *Victorian Titan*, *The Storm of War*, and *Napoleon the Great*. Roberts is a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and the Royal Historical Society and a trustee of the International Churchill Society. He is currently a visiting professor at the Department of War Studies at Kings College London and a visiting research fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. Please join me in welcoming Andrew Roberts to the Pritzker Military Museum and Library.

(Applause)

Roberts: Thank you very much indeed. I'd like to take you back to the 10th of May, 1940. The evening of the 10th of May 1940, a Friday, when Winston Churchill was appointed prime minister by King George VI. That morning of course Adolf Hitler had unleashed blitzkrieg on the west, invading Luxembourg and Belgium and Holland. And it was of that time of him being appointed prime minister that Churchill was to write in the last paragraph of the first volume of his war memoirs, *The Gathering Storm*. "I felt as if I were walking with destiny and that all my past life had been but preparation for this hour and for this trial." And what I tried to do in this book is to unpack that concept, to investigate the extent to which Churchill really had been prepared in his lifetime--he was sixty-five years old by the time he became prime minister--for this hour and for this trial. He had of course held many of the great offices of state. He had been chancellor of the exchequer. He had been home secretary. He had been twice been first lord of the admiralty, the political head of the Royal Navy, and he'd been minister of munitions in the First World War when he had been in charge of no fewer than 2.5 million people making munitions in the factories. So in that sense it is --he did have a great preparation for his hour and for

his trial. But I also tried to look at the beginning of that sentence, the concept of him walking with destiny, because it's epicentral to Churchill, this concept of his own personal destiny, his belief in himself, and his certainty in what he was attempting to undertake. He was only sixteen years old when as a Harrow schoolboy he decided that he had this sense of personal destiny. He spoke to his best friend, and he said, "There are going to be great upheavals in our lifetime, there are going to be terrible struggles, and I'm going to be called upon to save London and save the country." This is an extraordinary thing for him to have said aged only sixteen and exactly half a century before he in fact did achieve precisely what he had set out for himself. He was encouraged throughout his life in this belief of his personal destiny by the extraordinary number of times that he came close to death. His close brushes with death throughout his life only served to increase this sense that he had. He was stabbed in the stomach when he was a schoolboy by a penknife. He was of course born two months prematurely. He was nearly died of pneumonia aged eleven. The doctors on that occasion administered brandy to the eleven-year-old child both orally and rectally, which you would have thought might have put you off brandy for life, ladies and gentlemen, but in his case it most certainly didn't. He escaped a near drowning in Lake Geneva, he escaped a house fire, he was nearly killed on two occasions in plane crashes and in three car crashes. In fact you can see on the front of this book this wonderful photograph by Yousuf Karsh, where right down the middle of his forehead here quite a long scar down the middle of his forehead came as a result of his being very nearly killed being run down by a car in New York on Fifth Avenue in December 1931. And these were just the occasions in peacetime. He of course had also taken part in four campaigns on-- sorry, five campaigns on four continents and had come close to death on many of those. He had taken part in the last great cavalry charge of the 21st Lancers at the battle of Omdurman, the last great cavalry charge of the British Empire, where his unit suffered no fewer than twenty-five percent casualties. And then the following year his train was ambushed in the South African War, the Boer War, and then his unit suffered thirty-four percent casualties. And then a couple of months later of course he escaped from the prisoner of war camp in Pretoria and crossed 300 miles of enemy territory. So this is a man who understood what close brushes with death meant. In the Great War when he was the lieutenant colonel of the 6th battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers he didn't need to go into the no man's land of the--between the trenches no fewer than thirty times, which he did, and he got so close to the German trenches he could actually hear the Germans speaking in them. And he could have stayed back at battalion headquarters if he'd wanted to, but that wasn't Churchill. He wanted to get right in. And it didn't actually stop these brushes with death during the First World War or in the peacetime period afterwards. During the Second World War he also used to go up onto the air ministry roof to watch the blitz as it was taking place. The king asked him not to, his wife Clementine asked him not to, but he took no notice. He would go to the front several times and come close enough to see the fighting, and he also very nearly had a serious heart attack. He had a minor heart attack when he was lifting a sash window in the White House in December 1941. And then he had a series of pneumonia attacks later on, very serious of course in a man in his late sixties and early seventies. On one occasion when he had one in May 1943 at Carthage, his doctor asked him for some blood, and Churchill said, "You can take some from my ear or my finger, and I have an almost infinite expanse of butts." (Laughter) What this sense of destiny did for him was to give him an immense sense of calmness during the most perilous moments my country has ever had to face in its long history. He was not only just able to stay calm, and of course that was good for morale to have the prime minister be calm, but also he made jokes constantly. In fact the jokes sometimes got funnier and funnier the more perilous the situation

became. It's one occasion when during one of his confidence motions, so theoretically at least his whole government could have been in danger of falling, and he was being criticized for the A22 tank, which was completely useless. And he said, "When the defects and the teething troubles of the A22 tank became apparent to all, it was appropriately rechristened The Churchill." Now the key line, the key sentence in that--key word indeed--in that gag is "appropriately," because Winston Churchill understood that he himself did have terrible teething troubles and defect when it came to his political career. He had got so many things wrong. Again and again he made errors, and some of them could be quite catastrophic. He had got the women's suffrage wrong. He had got the gold standard wrong, where he went in back onto the gold standard as chancellor of the exchequer at the wrong time at the wrong level. He had got the abdication crisis wrong when he supported King Edward VII instead of King George VI. And primarily of course he had got the Dardanelles debacle appallingly wrong. It was a brilliant concept as an idea, as a strategic idea, the idea of getting the Royal Navy through the straits of the Dardanelles, mooring it off Istanbul and thereby threatening the capital of the Ottoman Empire and hopefully therefore knocking the Ottoman Empire out of the Central Powers. That would, if it had happened, have been one of the great coups of the Great War. But in the implementation of it, everything went wrong. Winston Churchill of course wasn't personally responsible for the implementation because he was back in London as the political head of the Royal Navy, but the--as it turned out on the 18th of March 1915 the Allies lost no fewer than six ships destroyed and sunk as a result of the attempt to get through the straits. And instead of calling it a day there, Winston Churchill overrode people in the admiralty and went on to insist on a landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula. And that was the adjacent peninsula to the narrows, and that was an even greater disaster. And over the following months before the evacuation in December and January 1915-1916, no fewer than 160,000 Allied casualties were suffered. So here is a man, he was a genius, but he was a flawed genius. He was somebody who, as he told his wife Clementine, "I would have made nothing if I had not made mistakes." But as a politician one of his great strengths was that he learned the lessons of his mistakes. The classic example of course being with regard to the Dardanelles, but in the Second World War he never once overruled his chiefs of staff when he became prime minister and minister of defense. He could have. Constitutionally he had every right if he'd wanted to especially as minister of defense as well as prime minister, but he never did. Churchill was somebody who has of course attracted an enormous amount of interest, and I think partially because of this sense of his own destiny. He wasn't a Christian. In the 5.2 million words that he spoke and the 6.1 million words that he wrote, more than Dickens and Shakespeare combined, Churchill never used the words Jesus Christ. He did however believe in an almighty, an almighty which as he said had invisible wings that flapped over him and beat over him and protected him. In fact theologically if you look into the duty of the almighty in Churchill's theology, it very much is solely to take care of Winston Churchill. (Laughter) I'm often asked why would this book, which is the 1,010 biography of Winston Churchill, I should have imposed another book after 1,009 had already been written. And the answer is that over the last ten years there has been a cornucopia of new source that have opened up about Winston Churchill which throw fascinating new light on him. His own private secre--sorry, chief of staff Pug Ismay said that he didn't believe--this was when Pug Ismay in 1960 was writing his own biography, and he wrote to President Eisenhower and said that he didn't believe that it was possible for a new biography to be written of Winston Churchill, a comprehensive biography to be written of Winston Churchill, until the year 2010. And I agree with him, because it has been in the last ten years that these new sources have become available. Her Majesty the Queen has allowed me to be the first Churchill biographer to use her father King

George VI's dairies. Churchill met the king at audience at Buckingham Palace every Tuesday lunchtime of the war. They served themselves from the sideboard so they didn't have to have any servants present because Churchill trusted the king with all of the most important secrets of the Second World War. He trusted him with the nuclear secret, with the ultra decrypt secret, with the grand strategy of who was going where--which countries were going to be attacked and when. He trusted him to know who the generals and ministers were who were going to be hired and fired. There's not reason why the king and Churchill should have got on. Churchill of course as I mentioned supported the king's elder brother in the abdication crisis, which the king believed showed a great lack of judgment. And the king of course had supported Neville Chamberlain on his policy of appeasement, which Churchill thought showed lack of judgment. And yet they got on extremely well immediately, which was very fortunate, certainly by the time of the battle of Britain and the blitz they had become extremely close. In fact in the king's diaries you can hear the kind talking of his friendship for Winston Churchill. He was certainly the only one of the king's four prime ministers who the king referred to by his first name. And so as a result you have this extraordinary new source of all of Winston Churchill's hopes and fears and apercu and jokes for every Tuesday of the Second World War. On top of that we have the huge number of new sources that have been delivered and deposited at Churchill College Cambridge. This is the Churchill Archive where no fewer than forty-one new sets of papers have been deposited since the last major biography of Winston Churchill, including such papers as Winston Churchill's daughter Mary Soames' diary for 1940 and '41, a wonderful filial diary of love and devotion for her father but also taking down her father's witticisms and apercu about various aspects of the war. There's one month in the blitz—sorry, in the Battle of Britain where Churchill says that he recognizes that the young are much braver in the war, were being much braver in the war than the old, even though they had much more to lose. He said, "It shouldn't necessarily be so, but it is." And when you add that to the diaries of Ivan Maisky, the Soviet ambassador in 1932 to '43, which have become available in the last four years, and the war cabinet minutes where I found the verbatim accounts of the war cabinet minutes when I was writing my book *Masters and Commanders* about six years ago. You also have these brand new sources, which I think justify a new biography of Churchill. I was very fortunate also to be allowed to have exclusive access to the love letters of Pamela Harriman, Winston Churchill's daughter-in-law. She was married to Randolph Churchill. She led a very active romantic life during the Second World War. Of course she received letters from her husband Randolph Churchill, but also love letters from her future husband Averell Harriman, with whom she was having an affair who was FDR's envoy, and then also from Ed Marrow, the great American journalist, who was also in love with her. Bill Paley from CBS, another of her lovers, John Whitney another, General Kenneth Anderson used to write love letters. They're all talking about how they were desperate to leave their wives and would love to run away with her. And we don't have the replies from that. Must have been very complicated for her at times. And I haven't finished, by the way. There's also Marshal of the Air Force, of the Royal Air Force, Sir Charles Portal, and one of the British chiefs of staff, and somebody we just known off as Jerry. I was very fortunate to have exclusive access to her love letters, but nobody had exclusive access to her.

(Laughter)

Roberts: (Chuckling) And one of the things that we get from all these new sources, that when you add onto them the enormous number of already existing extant sources is to understand what an extraordinarily emotional man Winston Churchill was, driven far more by his passion than most British politicians of the day, especially of his aristocratic class and background and age. He was not the buttoned-up Victorian aristocrat at all. He

was a man who burst into tears, for example, fifty times during the Second World War. Must have been tremendously off-putting to have had the prime minister sitting in the House of Commons, especially when the war was going badly, just bursting into tears. But he did, and nobody minded because they appreciated that he wasn't this buttoned-up aristocrat. He was in fact a throwback to an earlier era. He was a Romantic Regency figure, somebody who wore his heart on his sleeve. He was not in my view a depressive. We hear and have heard now for fifty years since the 1968 publication of Anthony Storr's essay called "Black Dog" about how Churchill was a depressive, some people say a manic-depressive. I've even seen some biographies call him bipolar. I found no evidence for this whatsoever. He got depressed undoubtedly. He got depressed at the time of the fall of Singapore in January 1942 and also at the time of the fall of Tobruk in June 1942. He got depressed of course at the time of the Dardanelles catastrophe. Indeed at one point his wife Clementine later said that at one point he even considered committing suicide. But he was not a depressive in that he was hit by sudden and inexplicable waves of depression. The phrase Black Dog, which he uses, he only mentions once in the whole of his literary canon. It's when he was writing to his wife in July 1911, and in those days the phrase actually also was used by Edwardian matrons and governesses to explain their unruly and bad-tempered children. He was somebody who in all of the 2,194 days of the Second World War was able to chair the defense committee of the war cabinet at all times of day and night, which is something that somebody suffering from the debilitating illness that depression is could not have done. Neither was he an alcoholic. He did drink in enormous amounts, but he also had an ox-like constitution for alcohol. He famously said of course that he had taken more out of alcohol than alcohol had taken out of him. And again in that long period of the Second World War when the pressures on him, the strains and stresses on him were unlike anything that anybody in this room can imagine, he was only identifiably drunk once on one occasion during the Second World War, which was the 6th of March 1944 when the people around him recognized that he was drunk. And on that occasion they simply agreed to forget about it, and they held the meeting again the next morning and pretended it hadn't happened the night before. And so no decisions were taken as a result of Winston Churchill being drunk. There's a marvelous line from C.P. Scott, the journalist, who said that--who knew Churchill well, who said that Winston Churchill couldn't be an alcoholic because no alcoholic could drink that much. (Laughter) He was profoundly affected by his father Lord Randolph Churchill. Lord Randolph Churchill, this mercurial, disdainful, aloof but brilliant man, chancellor of the exchequer of course. It's one of the few examples in history of Winston Churchill, of a person being able to deal with the greatness of his father and not letting it wreck him. He was so harsh and unfair. Some of the most moving letters in this book come from his father and these tough, aggressive letters, and his own responses to them, asking for love and affection, and in between the lines you can read this, but never getting it. And instead of letting it destroy him or spending the rest of his life hating his father, he did the exact opposite. Churchill instead embraced his dead father when he in 1895 died at the age of forty-five when Churchill was twenty years old. He wrote his father's two-volume biography. He sought out his father's friends in order to talk and get anecdotes about his father. He adopted his father's political views, the views of Tory democracy that he inherited, that his father had got from Benjamin Disraeli. He adopted his father's speaking stance of putting his hand on his hip with his hand facing down, and he named his own son Randolph. And then in 1947 after the end of the Second World War Churchill had a strange psychological moment when he met his father's ghost, and he writes about it in his book in a short story called "The Dream." And in this dream he talks to his father's ghost, but at no stage does he let on to his father that he had been instrumental in helping win the Second World War. So his father's ghost evaporates

without knowing this, just thinking that his son Winston had carried on life being a painter. And in a sense you can see how Churchill was driven by this attempt to impress the ghost of his, the shade of his long-dead father. His mother, Jennie Jerome, who of course was born in Brooklyn, an American, surprisingly also showed virtually no interest in her son either until age twenty he became a signatory on her trust fund, at which point she suddenly did become interested in him. But in the first six months of 1884, we have her diary, and she only showed--her diary breaking down everything she did every day, and she only saw her son for six and a half hours in those six months. And her--Winston Churchill wrote in *My Early Life*, his wonderful autobiography that his mother shone for him like the evening star: brilliant, but at a distance. Churchill was broke pretty much all his life. He only really made any money, only really got into the black when he was in his early seventies when he signed the contract for his war memoirs. Up until then he had been always teetering on the edge of bankruptcy. He very nearly had to put up his house, Chartwell, his beautiful estate in Kent up for sale on two occasions. He was a huge gambler. He used to gamble on the tables, and he also used to gamble in the stock market, a massive speculator. Sometimes he would go in and out of the same stock fourteen times in three days, and he was completely useless at it as well and tended to lose money. On the day of the Great Depression he lost half a million pounds in modern-day money, which completely wiped out his life savings. And when he finally did come into some money he did something that the classic Regency aristocrats would have done, and that is he bought the first of thirty-seven racehorses. And he put them in his father's--in yet another act of obedience to his long-dead father, he put them in his father's chocolate and pink racing colors. So why was Churchill able to be the, not just the first figure but almost the only figure how was able to spot Adolf Hitler and the Nazis for what they were? He was the first British political figure, and for much of the 1930s the only one. The first reason I think was that he was a Philo-Semite. He liked Jews, which was very unusual for his age and class and background, many of whom were anti-Semitic. He went on holiday with Jews, his father had liked Jews, he grew up with them. He represented Jews in his Manchester Northwest constituency, and he believed that the Jews gave the ethics for world civilization and socialized with them easily, and so that gave him an early warning system for what Hitler and the Nazis were genuinely like. The next thing was that he was an historian. One of the reasons I am proud to be an historian and follow my trade is that Winston Churchill was one, too. He was able to spot Hitler for the tyrant that he was, for the person who was attempting to hegemonize the continent, and he was able to place him in the long continuum of earlier tyrants who had tried to do the same things, in a way that other people who weren't so well-versed in history failed to do in those days. He saw the first of these people as being Philip II of Spain, of course, at the time of the Armada. His own great ancestor, John Churchill, the first duke of Marlborough, had prevented Louis XIV from hegemonizing the continent in the war of Spanish succession. Then you come on to Napoleon, who was a hero of Churchill's, but Churchill still understood what Napoleon was trying to do, and then the Kaiser, and as I said he had gone into no man's land thirty times during the Great War. And then Adolf Hitler. So he saw him in the broad continuum, the great sweep, of European history. The third thing was that he was able to spot the fanaticism of the Nazis in a way that many of his contemporaries also had not done. He had been present of course in the fighting on the northwest front here against Islamic fundamentalist tribesmen--the Pathids, the Talibs and others. He had taken part in this last great cavalry charge of the British Empire and had killed four dervishes in the attack of the 21st Lancers. He had come up close and personal to fanaticism in a way that the other prime ministers of the 1930s, men like Ramsay MacDonald and Neville Chamberlain and Stanley Baldwin, never had done. And so he was able to spot Hitler and not just before

the Second World War. Of course he also was able to spot Stalin and the Soviet threat for exactly the same threat to the continent, and of course he came here to Missouri, to the great University at Westminster at Fulton and warned on the 6th of March 1946 that an iron curtain was falling across Europe. And he was responded to with the same level of obliqui and anger and resentment and even ridicule that he had been in the years before the war. Churchill had shown enormous moral courage in making that statement. He was of course proved right, but at the time he was attacked and lambasted on both sides of the Atlantic for it, just as before the war he had been shouted down in the House of Commons, he had nearly been deselected for his seat, he had been ridiculed, and so on. He kept saying--if he believed something was true he kept saying it, and he didn't have any pollsters or didn't take notice of opinion polls, didn't have spin-doctors. He didn't have focus groups. He was somebody who was his own focus group. And so you have this moral courage allied to the physical courage that I mentioned, the physical courage that carried on in the 110,000 miles that he traveled outside the United Kingdom during the Second World War, traveling in unpressurized cabins in his late sixties and early seventies, very often within the radius of the Luftwaffe. On one occasion coming back across the Atlantic, his plane was struck by lightening, and they feared that the instrumentation was going to go down, in which case he'd have been a goner. And when he took the ships across the Atlantic, of course that was an ocean that was filled with U-boats. So you have this physical courage attached to the moral courage attached to enormous clarity of vision and also an extraordinary capacity for eloquence. Winston Churchill was twenty-three years old when he wrote an essay called "The Scaffolding of Rhetoric," and in that essay he, which I go into some detail in this book, he explains the five great aspects of how to make a public speech and try to get the audience on your side and basically the scaffolding of oratory. And the extraordinary thing about that 1897 essay is that at that point he had not given a public speech himself at all. So he actually did it from theory into practice. And you can see how he uses each of those five aspects of public speaking in his actual public speeches, of which he made thousands, quite literally thousands. He would go up and down the country from the moment that he entered parliament in 1899 all the way through to his becoming prime minister in 1940 practicing again and again. And that's how he became such a great speech giver. He always wrote his own speeches; nobody else wrote his speeches for him, so you knew that it was coming direct from him rather than from some speechwriter. He said that during the war his--he told a private secretary that during the war one of the tricks of the trade for his speeches was to use short words, use short sentences, concentrate on total clarity of what you were trying to get over in each sentence. And also if possible use Old English. Use words that go back to the Anglo Saxon because they could be automatically understood by the British people and by the English-speaking peoples indeed. And so in the paragraph, in that last great peroration in his June 1940 speech, which the peroration begins, "We shall fight on the beaches," which then goes on to talk about how we shall fight with great confidence in the air and ends, of course famously, "We shall never surrender." Of those 141 words in that last paragraph, all but two of them come from the Old English. The only two that aren't are the word confidence which comes from the Latin and surrender, which comes from the French. (Laughter) well, you invited an Englishman here. (Laughter) So to sum up then, you have a truly extraordinary figure, somebody who age sixteen believed that he was going to save the country and London, somebody who made terrible mistakes again and again in his career but was able to learn from them, somebody who had enormous physical and moral courage--sometimes people have one and not the other, but in Winston Churchill they were allied together--somebody who had all of those things but also the eloquence to express himself perfectly. And as a result, ladies and gentlemen, you have a situation

where he exceeded even what he had set out for himself, because he didn't just save London and the country, he also saved civilization itself. Thank you very much indeed. (Applause)

1: Was there ever a time during the Second World War when Churchill contemplated making a deal with Hitler?

Roberts: The answer is no, but his foreign secretary Lord Halifax and various other people in the foreign office, including the deputy foreign secretary Rab Butler did want to do this. And so there this led to a series of eight meetings over five days in the war cabinet in which Winston Churchill basically outmaneuvered Lord Halifax, brought onto his side the other members of the war cabinet--Neville Chamberlain and the labor leader Clement Attlee and the labor deputy leader Arthur Greenwood and then also went out into the wider cabinet beyond the war cabinet and made on the 28th of May an extraordinarily passionate address in which he said that sooner than make peace of any kind with Hitler all of the cabinet would prefer to be rolling senseless on the ground in their own blood. And he brought over the cabinet at that time and managed to pressurize Halifax into dropping the idea, even though Halifax had threatened to resign over it. And so it was something that was discussed. He said in his memoirs that it never reached the agenda of the war cabinet. That's simply not true. The discussions went on for days, and I go into very great deal in chapter nineteen of this book because it is tremendously important. In a sense it's more important for Britain to have stayed in the war in 1940 than anything else. Churchill was important in making sure that we weren't invaded but actually staying in the war was even more important than that. He had a sense that something good was going to come, this sense of destiny, even though there was absolutely nothing that led one to believe that Britain could ever possibly be on the winning side after the fall of France. The United States of course was still very isolationist at that time. It took Hitler to declare war on America in December 1941. Hitler had not attacked the Soviet Union at this stage. France collapsed in six weeks, and Churchill came up with some ideas about how we were going to continue the struggle in May 1940, none of which made very much sense. There were things like, there might be a bad harvest in Germany, was one of his reasons. But essentially he just hoped something would crop up, and eventually of course it did. But in that key moment in May 1940 it absolutely took Winston Churchill to be there. Had Halifax been prime minister, as he very nearly could have done--if any of those close brushes with death had gone the wrong way with Winston Churchill, then the history of Europe would be very, very different, because you would have had Hitler capable in June 1941 of unleashing Operation Barbarossa with the whole of his air force rather than just with fifty to seventy percent of it. And when you think of how he was able to subject Leningrad to a grueling thousand-day siege and to get to the subway stations of Moscow and to capture Stalingrad, what he would have been able to do if he had his whole Luftwaffe there because Britain had signed some ignoble peace, doesn't bear thinking about.

2: Can you comment on the nature of the relationship between himself, personal and professional, with Alanbrooke?

Roberts: Yes, Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke was a—who was chief of the imperial general staff from December 1941 onwards and then chairman of the British chiefs of staff from March 1942 onwards--was a tough, flinty Ulsterman, 6'2" Ulsterman who would sit across the table from Winston Churchill during their bad tempered rows trying to create Allied strategy, breaking pencils in half saying, "No, I disagree with you, Prime Minister." (Cracking sound) And yet together their tension was a creative tension. They actually together built something--the Mediterranean strategy of course, in which you draw German strength down the Mediterranean, cut off, and defeat a quarter of a million Axis troops in North Africa and then go to Sicily and then the mainland of Italy before

coming across with a great, punching blow across with Operation Overlord. And they sold that strategy to the Americans, to George Marshall and FDR. And when you think of the successes they had, actually those came at a price, a huge price, which was these catatonic rows that they would have with one another when Churchill would try to break off the other members, Charles Portal and Admiral Pound, away from Brooke, and Brooke would keep them on sight, and these arguments that would go on for hours and hours. And it was tough, but nonetheless as a result you did get the best arguments of both being put into the mix and winding up with this war-winning strategy. Completely different of course from what was going on with the Fuhrer and the Wolfsschanze, where he would listen to people who understood strategy far better than he, people like Manstein and Guderian and Rommel, and he would listen to them for hours on end. And we know everything that was said at the Fuhrer Conferences because the stenographers took down every word. And at the end of these--of him listening, he would then go back at the end of the meeting and do precisely what he originally said that he was going to do at the beginning, and that was the exact opposite way that Churchill and Alanbrooke interacted.

3: If it were evolved--I know that Churchill was deeply opposed to the Soviets taking over Eastern Europe, but what I don't know is, did he have any concrete plans for how he would have prevented it? I'm talking about before the end of WWII?

Roberts: Yes, he did have a concrete plan, which was to keep pushing up northern Italy, going via Trieste and then through what was called the Ljubljana gap. Any drawback is that there isn't a gap in Ljubljana. It's actually a Ljubljana trap if anything. The Germans were absolutely superb at counterattack and going up the Italian peninsula. In fact when my friend Professor Sir Michael Howard interviewed the general in charge of Monte Cassino, the German general in charge of Monte Cassino, General Von Eggerland--Etterlin, sorry--the old boy said to Michael, "Next time you invade Italy, don't start at the bottom." (Laughter) And so the plan that Churchill had, which was to try to capture Vienna before the Red Army, would have really broken down in the mountains in the Italian Alps. That's the drawback, really. The Dolomites were ideal defensive areas for the Germans. When I was at--when you look at German counterattack of course in the Second World War you look at Cannes, you look at the Ardennes of course primarily, you look at Salerno and Anzio and any number of places. You realize and indeed the whole of the eastern front with constant German counterattack. I was told at my first week at Cambridge University that you should never say that anything is ever inevitable in history. Nothing in history is ever inevitable, except for German counterattack.

4: Who raised Winston Churchill as a young boy if it wasn't his parents?

Roberts: It was--Churchill as a young boy was raised by Elizabeth Everest, his nanny, and to a lesser extent also his grandmother the Duchess of Marlborough. And so he did have positive maternal figures in his life, it's just that it wasn't his own mother. And he loved Elizabeth Everest who later on disgracefully was sacked by his parents. And he kept a photograph of her by his bedside for the rest of his life. He tended--he gave money to tend her grave for the rest of her life. In fact her grave is still tended by the Churchill family. And he--the letters from and to Elizabeth Everest in this book are some of the most moving in the book. So he did have--in fact it was Elizabeth Everest who was the first person to spot that he was being sadistically abused by his headmaster, who used to beat his bottom 'til the blood ran. And Winston Churchill's health was very nearly destroyed at the age of nine by this sadistic headmaster. And luckily due to Elizabeth Everest's insistence, he was taken away from the school and sent to a much kinder and better one.

5: Despite the lesson from the Dardanelles disaster in WWI, didn't Churchill approve a smaller-scale disaster in WWII where the British tried to capture the Aegean Islands and get Turkey into the war and was pretty ill conceived?

Roberts: Yes, it was. It was the Dodecanese campaign. And that's not just the only one. We had several disasters in WWII. The Norway campaign of course of 1940 was spectacularly unsuccessful. The Greek expedition as well in 1941, that didn't do very well. The Dakar expedition, it's a pretty sorry story on many fronts, but they weren't all Winston Churchill's ideas, although he did of course approve them otherwise they wouldn't have happened. The chiefs of staff, as I say, he never once overruled them. And they were also supportive. If you look at the Greek expedition, for example, Anthony Eden the foreign secretary wanted it, the chief of staff Sir John Dill then prior to Lord Alanbrooke, wanted it. And the war cabinet wanted it. So one must never make the mistake of treating Churchill as though he were some kind of dictator in the Second World War. He could only get operations if he had a support from politicians and soldiers. But I'm not for a moment saying that it was a universal success in the Second World War. Very clearly we didn't actually have a proper land victory until El Alamein in November 1942.

6: Forgetting the problems with an election and age, what would have been different if Churchill had been prime minister through the '50s and the '60s?

Roberts: Well, of course he was prime minister between October 1951 and April 1955. He did come back for what's called the Indian Summer Premiership. But he was a very old man by then. He was actually eighty years old whilst he was still prime minister. He gave up any number of opportunities to retire. He should have retired, really, after the coronation in June 1953, then the following year he--sorry, the following month he had a very severe stroke and was out of politics for three months, but they kept it secret, something that would be inconceivable today as you can imagine, but nonetheless. But he managed to keep it secret and then come back. And he didn't retire when he was eighty years old, which would have been another opportunity. He felt that he needed to keep Anthony Eden out of the premiership. He didn't think Eden was going to do particular well, which of course after the Suez Crisis made him look quite--another act of foresight, but maybe if he had moved out of the premiership in 1952 and had let Eden have four years in the job before the Suez Crisis, things might have been different. He, in the Indian Summer Premiership he said that he only had three things that he wanted to look at, which were houses, meat, and not bing scuppered. And houses meant he was keen to rebuild council houses. A million of them were built in his premiership, an enormous number. Meat was derationed. In fact all the rationing was gotten rid of in his premiership. And he wasn't scuppered. He actually--the conservatives went on to win a much bigger majority after he stepped down. So in that sense he was successful, but it wasn't a really energizing time. He was going deaf. He had to have an enormous listening device placed in the middle of the cabinet table. He never used his action this day stickers again, and he really concentrated on foreign policy. He didn't allow any of the empire to be given back, but other than that really he was--it was a pale shadow really of the great premiership of the war.

7: Why do you think Churchill did not attend Roosevelt's funeral?

Roberts: Well, because it was extremely dangerous to cross the Atlantic. The U-boats still, there were 463 U-boats still extant at the end of the Second World War. You have to remember that he of course died on April the 12th 1945, and Adolf Hitler committed suicide eighteen days later, so the whole of the western front was collapsing. And the idea of him taking that risky journey across to America simply to attend a funeral, a religious ceremony, was just simply not important enough to risk the life of the prime minister. He had already taken enormous risks as it were. The advantage of course

would have been that he would have met President Truman early on. But he was going to meet President Truman and did of course meet him at Potsdam Conference. But it was really too much to expect that at the time when he was desperately needed in London for this very fast-moving final collapse of the Third Reich that he should be put on a boat or a plane and out of circulation in order really just to pay his obeisances to the dead president.

8: Could you say something about why he was so quickly replaced after the war was over?

Roberts: Yes, he lost the general election in July 1945 largely because of the service float because of the soldiers who wanted to, after six years of war, wanted to have a better life. They wanted the welfare state. They wanted the Beveridge Report in full, they wanted the National Health Service, nationalization and various other things that the Labor Party was offering and that they didn't believe that Winston Churchill was going to deliver on. And even though he was cheered to the echo in all the great cities especially in the midlands and the north, he was not able to offer what Labor were. And he believed therefore because he had been cheered so much that he was going to win that election. And he sat there in Downing Street as the results came through of a great landslide for the Labor Party, and Clementine said to him, "Well, it might be a blessing in disguise." And he said, "Well, from where I'm sitting it's quite effectively disguised."

(Laughter)

Roberts: Thank you very much indeed.

(Applause)

Williams: Thank you to Andrew Roberts for an outstanding discussion and to the International Churchill Society for sponsoring this program. The book is *Churchill: Walking With Destiny*, published by Viking. To learn more about the Pritzker Military Museum and Library, visit us in person or online at PritzkerMilitary.org. Thank you, and please join us next time on *Pritzker Military Presents*.

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