



## ARMS AND THE COVENANT

(American Title:)  
**WHILE ENGLAND SLEPT**

**[1938]**

(Cohen A103) (Woods A44)

*"For five years I have talked to the House on these matters—not with very great success. I have watched this famous island descending incontinently, fecklessly, the stairway which leads to a dark gulf. It is a fine broad stairway at the beginning, but after a bit the carpet ends. A little farther on there are only flagstones, and a little farther on still these break beneath your feet...if mortal catastrophe should overtake the British Nation and the British Empire, historians a thousand years hence will still be baffled by the mystery of our affairs. They will never understand how it was that a victorious nation, with everything in hand, suffered themselves to be brought low, and to cast away all that they had gained*

*by measureless sacrifice and absolute victory—gone with the wind! Now the victors are the vanquished, and those who threw down their arms in the field and sued for an armistice are striding on to world mastery....We should lay aside every hindrance and endeavour by uniting the whole force and spirit of our people to raise again a great British nation standing up before all the world; for such a nation, rising in its ancient vigour, can even at this hour save civilization."*

Winston Churchill's finest (and most ominous) prewar warning occurs on the penultimate page of *Arms and the Covenant*, his collection of speeches from 1928 to 1938. It is available in no other Churchill book, for the last four paragraphs of this famous speech on 24 March 1938 are absent from the *Complete Speeches*. The words summarise the theme of this volume, a precursor to the official theme of *The Gathering Storm*: "How the English-speaking peoples through their unwisdom, carelessness, and good nature allowed the wicked to rearm." "Years later," wrote William Manchester in *The Last Lion*, Volume II (1988), "the White House revealed that a copy of *While England Slept*...had lain on President Roosevelt's bedside table, with key passages, including an analysis of the President's peace initiative, underscored."

The forty-one speeches, all but two delivered in the Commons, were collected by Churchill's son Randolph, then carefully reviewed and revised by Churchill himself. "It is common knowledge that Mr. Churchill devotes more time than any other modern orator to the preparation of his speeches," said the publisher. Imagine then the keenness and polish of these, having been subjected to Churchill's editing a second time round.

Together they remind me of a concert with three movements: a light, sometimes even humorous beginning ("Germany Disarmed"); a gathering solemnity ("Germany Rearming"); a terrible crescendo ("Germany Armed"), ending in the awful finale of March 1938. Part One begins with Churchill's 1928 "Disarmament Fable": once all the animals agreed to disarm, but the buffalo and stag wished to keep horns as defensive weapons, while the lion and tiger said teeth and claws were ancient and honorable weapons that should also be allowed. The discussion broke up and the animals "began to look at one another in a very nasty way." Part Two traces the sad, dreary progress of German

rearmament and Britain's refusal, first to see it and later to match it. Part Three recounts the accumulating result of Britain's lethargy: the lagging defence programme, the arrogance of the dictator nations, Eden's resignation as foreign secretary, the Austrian *Anschluss*.

The book appeared well before Munich, a time when prevailing opinion held that Hitler had made his last demands, and few save Churchill insisted otherwise. "The idea that dictators can be appeased by kind words and minor concessions is doomed to disappointment," he told the League of Nations Union on 2 June. "Volcanic forces are moving in Europe, and sombre figures are at the head of the most powerful races...we must stand by the League Covenant, which alone justifies a general rearmament; and on the basis of the Covenant we must unite with other countries desiring freedom and peace."

Three weeks later, *Arms and the Covenant* was published. The American Edition did not appear until late September, so its publishers had three further months and the Munich pact to contemplate a title. They titled it appropriately: *While England Slept*.

-Richard M. Langworth

### **From the Reviews**

"The vigorous and moving criticism of British international policies which Winston Churchill has been voicing, in Parliament and elsewhere, make up the text of an absorbingly interesting volume....It could hardly be more timely, for in the immediate past (and unfortunately still in the present) have come about the very threats to Anglo-French peace and freedom which Churchill has been forecasting....In all this brilliant Englishman's sharp forecasts on China, Spain, Italy, Austria, Czechoslovakia, now become history instead of prophecy, there is absorbing interest. A few years may tell how accurate are his predictions of events which fate has not yet unrolled for our inspection. A really thrilling book."

-*The Baltimore Sun*, 1938

## Comments

*Arms and the Covenant* holds a special place in the literature as the forerunner to Churchill's classic war speech volumes and really sets the stage for them. Although it is unfortunately not indexed, each speech is preceded by a useful "Diary of Events" compiled by Randolph Churchill, which helps place the speech in context. It is a shame so few were listening at the time: *Arms and the Covenant* had the lowest sale of any Churchill book in the 1930s.

## Appraisal

Fine blue jacketed copies are occasionally seen with the jacket clean and unchipped—being of good stock, it often is. Red and yellow jacketed copies are much rarer and generally cost more on the antiquarian market. Fine unjacketed copies bring lower prices, but even "very good" examples have value. The binding is susceptible to fade and copies should be kept out of direct light.

## **-EDITIONS-**

**[ARMS AND THE COVENANT]**  
**First Edition: Cohen A103.1 / Woods A44(a)**

**Publisher: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London 1938**

Blue cloth blocked with thin double-line border on top board. Spine blocked gilt with title and author name within a three-line border toward the top and the Harrap logo and name toward the bottom. Top page edges stained blue. 8vo, 468 pages numbered (1)-(466) (+2), frontispiece (Steichen photo of Churchill) before title page. The verso of the half-title contains a list of 17 of the author's other works. Endpapers are white. Published 24 June 1938 at 18 shillings (\$4.50).

**Impressions and Quantities**

A single impression of 5000 was issued, but not all were sold, and the book was reissued in June 1940 at 7s. 6d. (\$1.87). According to Woods, 3381 were sold at the original price and 1,382 at the lower price, leaving 237 unaccounted for. (Contrary to Woods, there was no Odhams reprint.)

**Variants**

None encountered.

**Dust Jackets**

The original dust jacket is printed dark blue on laid blue paper, carrying the 18/ original price on the front flap. The front face carries the title, author's name and a subtitle "Speeches on Foreign Affairs and National Defence." The remainder issue (original binding) is wrapped in a new dust jacket printed red on yellow paper, carrying the 7s. 6d. price. Although some collectors insist on acquiring copies in both jackets, the books underneath are uniform throughout.

**[ARMS AND THE COVENANT]**  
**First American Edition: Cohen A103.2 / Woods A44(b)**

**Publisher: G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York 1938**

Dark blue cloth blocked silver and red. The top board bears the title in silver on a 3/8-inch high red band near the top; five similar red bands appear on the spine reading WHILE | ENGLAND SLEPT | [decorative device] |CHURCHILL toward the top and PUTNAM toward the bottom. Top page edges stained red. 8vo, 415 pages numbered (i)-xii and (1)-(404), frontispiece (Steichen photo of Churchill) before title page. The verso of the half-title contains a list of 18 Churchill works (including this one). Endpapers are white. Published 30 September 1938 at \$4.

**Impressions**

Four impressions were issued in the following quantities: 5000 (September 1938), 2500 (October 1938), 1000 (October 1940), 1000 (September 1941). *Identifying first editions:* impressions are not individually dated: all title pages contain the 1938 date. However, the title page verso of first editions contains no indication of a later impression.

**Variants**

Some books may exist with unstained top page edges. The fourth impression was bound in red-orange cases blocked blue and silver on spines only, instead of the style described above.

**Dust Jackets**

Printed black and red on white paper, with the Steichen frontispiece photo on the front face. First edition jackets contain the book description on the front flap, three English review excerpts on the back flap, and a description of *Great Contemporaries* on the back face. The second impression jacket is identical while the third impression advertises *Rufus Isaac First Marquess of Reading* on the back flap and *The Voice of Destruction* on the rear face. The fourth impression jacket contains American review excerpts on the front flap, an advert for *The Reconstruction of Europe* on the back flap, and adverts for three other books including Churchill's *Blood, Sweat, and Tears* on the back face.

## Comments

This volume was completely reset with American spelling by the publisher. Although not quite as handsome as Harrap's (who were in a class by themselves for elegant trade bindings), it is nicely produced and uniform with Putnam's *Great Contemporaries; Step by Step; and Blood, Sweat, and Tears*, with an interesting dust jacket. The quantity produced, almost double that of the English edition, suggests that the American public was readier to listen to Churchill—but note that the last two impressions came almost two years after the first two. Also, Putnam had the advantage of publishing in the aftermath of Munich, when many outside Britain began to conclude that he had been right all along.

## Appraisal

Like the *Great Contemporaries*, the American edition has never approached the price of the English, although it is encountered infrequently in the dust jacket. The binding was of high quality so fine unjacketed copies are more common; the dust jacket is susceptible to wear. Reprints cost about half , but their press runs were small and the first edition is most often encountered. *While England Slept* is the most available of only three known editions of this work.

**[ARMS AND THE COVENANT]**  
**Books for Libraries Issue: Cohen A103.3 / ICS A44c**

**Publisher: Arno Press, Inc., New York 1971**

Purple leatherette blocked gilt on spine only; an offprint of *While England Slept* with identical pagination; the frontispiece is reproduced on regular page stock. This volume was offered at \$35 until 1996 by N. W. Ayer, after which it finally, and regrettably, went out of print. It is one of the Churchill titles most in need of a reprint, for it contains many lessons that are not entirely irrelevant to later times.

**Foreign Translations**

**Danish: MENS ENGLAND SOV**

Published by Gyldendal: Copenhagen 1939, 4,000 copies unbound in bright orange-red wrappers, priced at kr8.75.

**Swedish: NÄR ENGLAND SOV**

Published by Skoglund: Stockholm 1938 in cream card wrappers (kr12.50); or in blue cloth (kr17.50). Both carried orange, white and black jackets with a quote from Churchill's 7 November 1933 speech.

## TERMINOLOGY

This guide follows John Carter's *ABC for Book Collectors* commonly used terms:

**Edition:** "All copies of a book printed at any time or times from one setting-up of type without substantial change, including copies printed from stereotype, electrotype [we must now add 'computer scanning'] or similar plates made from that setting of type."

**Impression:** "The whole number of copies of that edition printed at *one* time, i.e., without the type or plates being removed from the press." A particular conundrum was posed by the discovery that the stated third impression of the Colonial *Malakand Field Force* (pressed November 1898) carried the same extensive textual corrections of the Silver Library Edition (pressed at the same time—indeed both these books used the same sheets). How then to classify the third Colonial? It is clearly not a new impression. Our solution was to make it part of a new entry, not cited by Woods, the "Second Edition," along with the Silver Library Edition.

**State:** "When alterations, corrections, additions or excisions are effected in a book during the process of manufacture, so that copies exhibiting variations go on sale on publication day indiscriminately, these variant copies are conveniently classified as belonging to different states of the edition." Example: the two states of the first English *My Early Life*.

**Issue:** "An exception [to the above] is the regular use of issue for variant title pages, usually in respect of the publisher's imprint...[also] when similar variations can be clearly shown to have originated in some action taken after the book was published, two [or more] *issues* are distinguished." Example: the two issues of *The People's Rights*, one with an index and appendix, the other with two appendices and no index.

We occasionally sidestep Carter's strict definitions for clarity. With *Savrola*, for example, Woods states that the first English "edition" was produced from a set of electroplates made up in Boston, a duplicate set to the First American Edition. The English "edition" might therefore be called an "issue," but we do not do so because no one else does, including Woods, and because this book is quite distinct in appearance.

**Offprints:** Carter defines this as "a separate printing of a section of a larger publication," which is not exactly how modern publishers use it. To us an offprint is a reprint, sometimes reduced but sometimes same-size, of *all* the pages of an earlier printing (for example the five Canadian offprints of American war speech volumes from *The Unrelenting Struggle through Victory*. In earlier years offprinting was accomplished by using plates from the original (like the Canadian issue of *My African Journey*) or by reproducing the type on negatives (like the Australian issue of *Secret Session Speeches*) In the latter case, the offprint usually exhibits heavy looking type, not as finely printed as the original. Offprints are not usually considered separate editions, but a contretemps arises with modern reprints of long out-of-print works made by photo-reproduction.

**Proof copies:** From *The World Crisis* on, proof copies bound in paper wrappers are occasionally encountered. This is a task best left to the bibliographer, except to say that in general they tend to lack illustrations, maps and plans that appear in the published volumes. Although not widely collected, proofs do usually command high prices when they are offered for sale.

**Dust Jackets = Dust Wrappers:** We generally use the term "dust jacket" to refer to what English bibliophiles usually call a "dust wrapper." The two terms are interchangeable, though words that describe the *parts* of the dust jacket, aside from "spine," are common to both countries. These are as follows: *Flap:* The parts of the jacket that fold in around the edge of the boards, front and rear. *Face:* The front or back panel of the jacket that you see with the book lying flat in front of you.

## SIZE

Books vary—especially old books—and one finds variations between identical editions. Except where distinct size differences help identify various editions or impressions of the same title, one from another, this guide describes books by the traditional cataloguer's terms:

**Folio** (Fo.): Very large format, now commonly known as "coffee table" size; among Churchill folio works is the Time-Life two-volume *Second World War*, measuring 14 x 12 inches (365 x 305mm) which deserves this description.

**Quarto** (4to): Normally lying between folio and octavo in size, though varying considerably in this respect. A telephone directory is quarto; but so is *The Island Race*, A138(c), which measures 12 1/4 x 9 3/4 inches (310 x 248mm), although Woods calls it "octavo" and says it measures 12 x 9 1/2! Other quarto volumes are the Danish and Norwegian translations of *The Great War*, which measure 8 1/2 x 11 1/2."

**Octavo** (8vo): The commonest size of book since the early 17th century. A large (demy) octavo is about the size of *Frontiers and Wars*, A142/1, which measures 9 1/2 x 6 3/8 inches (232 x 162mm). A small (crown) octavo is about the size of the English *Young Winston's Wars*, A143(a), which measures 8 3/4 x 5 5/8 inches (222 x 143mm), although Woods calls it "16mo" and says it measures 8 1/2 x 5 1/2! (You see the problem...)

**Duodecimo** (12mo, commonly called "twelvemo"): A bit smaller than 8vo but taller than 16mo: the size of a conventional paperback, say 6 7/8 x 4 1/4 inches (175 x 107mm).

**Sextodecimo** (16mo, usually pronounced "sixteenmo"): The smallest size of book covered herein, shorter but perhaps wider than a paperback, for example the 1915 edition of *Savrola*, which measures 6 5/8 x 4 1/2 inches (168 x 114mm).

My only other reference to size will be when an obvious difference can be ascertained between related editions or issues: I thought it useful to mention, for example, that the first edition *Malakand* bulks about 1 1/2 inches, while the first Colonial issue bulks only about 1 1/4 inches; or that there's about a half inch difference between the first impression Macmillan *Aftermath* and the later impressions. Even here, the key word is "about," since old books swell or shrink depending on storage conditions, and many were not uniform to begin with.

## FOREIGN TRANSLATIONS

Collectors of editions in foreign languages are enjoying a little-known but rewarding branch of Churchill bibliophilia, not the least for the sometimes magnificent bindings of these works (leading examples: the Monaco edition of *Savrola*, Scandinavian editions of *The Great War* and the Belgian French edition of *The Second World War*). Foreign translations also often differ importantly from the English editions, depending on what Churchill wished to emphasize or de-emphasize. For example, Sir Martin Gilbert's official biography records that the Dutch, through Churchill's foreign language impresario Emery Reves, were offended by no mention in *The Grand Alliance* of the activities of Dutch submarines in the Allied cause. Churchill replied that he would make no alteration in his English text but had no objection to an amplifying footnote on this subject in the Dutch edition, which was duly entered. (*Winston S. Churchill*, Vol. VIII, "Never Despair," London: Heinemann 1988 page 549). While we have not gone into great descriptive detail, we have indicated the broad reach of Churchill's foreign translations.

### **MAJOR WORKS CITED**

Three works are commonly referred to in this guide:

**Woods** is shorthand for *A Bibliography of the Works of Sir Winston Churchill, KG, OM, CH* by the late Frederick Woods, the Second Revised Edition, second issue (Godalming, Surrey: St. Paul's Bibliographies 1975). The late Mr. Woods recognized that his work badly needed updating, and was beginning work on the update before his untimely death in 1994.

Frederick Woods, the pioneer bibliographer of Sir Winston, published his first edition in 1963, astonishing not only bibliophiles but also the Churchill family with the number of items he uncovered. Dissatisfaction with the completeness and accuracy of his work was inevitable as time passed, and Fred, to whom many of us passed our corrections and suggestions, characteristically recognized this. He was hoping to rectify the situation before his death. He can truly be said to have inspired everyone who has researched or seriously collected the works of Churchill.

**Cohen** is the new Ronald Cohen Bibliography, published by Continuum, a product of more than twenty-five years' labour by the author, aided and abetted by scores of bibliophiles and, through the pages of *Finest Hour*, journal of The Churchill Centre.

Both Frederick Woods, before he died, and Ronald Cohen kindly gave permission to quote their bibliographic numbers here as a cross reference.

**ICS** refers to a publication of the International Churchill Societies, *Churchill Bibliographic Data, Part 1* ("Works by Churchill"). Pending release of the update, which he did not succeed in publishing, Mr. Woods also permitted the International Churchill Society to publish an "Amplified list" based on his numbers, but with more detailed sub-designations to pinpoint the various editions and issues. For example, *The World Crisis* has assigned three "Woods" numbers: A31(a) through A31(c). The ICS "Amplified Woods list" runs from A31a through A31k (in order to distinguish certain deservingly distinct editions and issues. Except for deleting the parentheses, in no case did ICS alter any basic Woods numbers. For example, even *Blenheim*, which undeservedly holds Woods number A40(c)—it is only an excerpt, and probably should not be among the "A" titles at all—is retained by ICS. Thus, "ICS" numbers are merely an extension of Woods numbers.

**END**