



The Roar of the Lion: The Untold Story of Churchill's World War II Speeches

By Richard Toye
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Reviewed by Richard A. McConnell

It was a nation and race dwelling all around the globe that had the lion heart. I had the luck to be called upon to give the roar.”

The above passage is just one of many examples of superb oratory for which Winston Churchill is renowned during his wartime leadership of Britain. Richard Toye, a professor of modern history at the University of Exeter, examines how audiences received these now-famous speeches at the time of their delivery. Toye provides rich descriptions for readers to understand Churchill's speeches through the political and informational environment existing at the time. Using research from a wide variety of sources, ranging from Gallup polls to diaries, Toye examines audience perceptions recorded immediately following speech delivery. Remarkably, some of Churchill's most famous speeches were ill-received at the

time while some of his lesser known speeches greatly influenced audiences. Toye explores an evolution of perception as contemporary audiences seemed to reinterpret over time some of Churchill's speeches, ascribing to them mythic qualities that they did not possess when delivered. He explores this phenomenon resulting in a literary time capsule, which expertly describes this war of words over the will of a nation. Military and civilian leaders alike can learn much from this comprehensive discussion of strategic communication.

The strategic environment in which Churchill operated was extremely complex and consisted of global stakeholders beyond the United Kingdom. Churchill was constantly engaged in balancing the need to bolster the fighting spirit of the British people with encouraging international partners. Some speeches created controversy at home because addressing Russian or American interests did not always play well in Britain or vice versa. Among many controversies were priorities of effort for the Allies. On one hand, ending the war in Europe before the war in the Pacific was important to many parties. On the other hand, American, Australian, and Chinese audiences could not perceive that Britain was uncommitted to the war in the Pacific. This message was difficult to communicate effectively, and Churchill did not always succeed at it. Toye provides detailed descriptions of the political realities that Churchill had to consider in his speeches along with the process he used to create them. Churchill dictated his speeches and then painstakingly vetted them through multiple parties prior to delivery. Toye's description of this process would be informative to anyone preparing for command media engagements.

One of the most compelling discussions in this book for military leaders is Toye's description of how Churchill addressed crisis management. Churchill was adept at addressing a bad situation with “brutal frankness” without destroying the morale of people engaged in a long war. A good example of this skill is the description of how Churchill reacted the week after D-Day, when VI bombs began

striking London with deadly effects. Some leaders might have been tempted to downplay the attacks and thus potentially offend the people directly affected. Instead, Churchill presented the facts in such a way that, across Britain, empathy increased for London, spreading national unity and renewed resolve—a great example of being first with the truth.

The Roar of the Lion compellingly describes one of the most gifted orators of the last century. Churchill's speeches serve as an outstanding model because they reflect a process of evaluating environmental challenges and finding the words to motivate a society to meet those challenges. These speeches were monumental, but they were also imperfect human utterances. Toye helps readers see those speeches as they really were. It would be difficult to find a better book for the discussion of strategic communication. Commanders at all levels can find themselves involved in various forms of public engagement. This book describes not only the arguments but also how Churchill meticulously crafted them. Toye's work would also be an ideal study resource for readers engaged in information operations, or public affairs, or for anyone who would like to learn about effective communication executed by a true master. JFQ

Lieutenant Colonel Richard A. McConnell, USA (Ret.), is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Army Tactics at the Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.