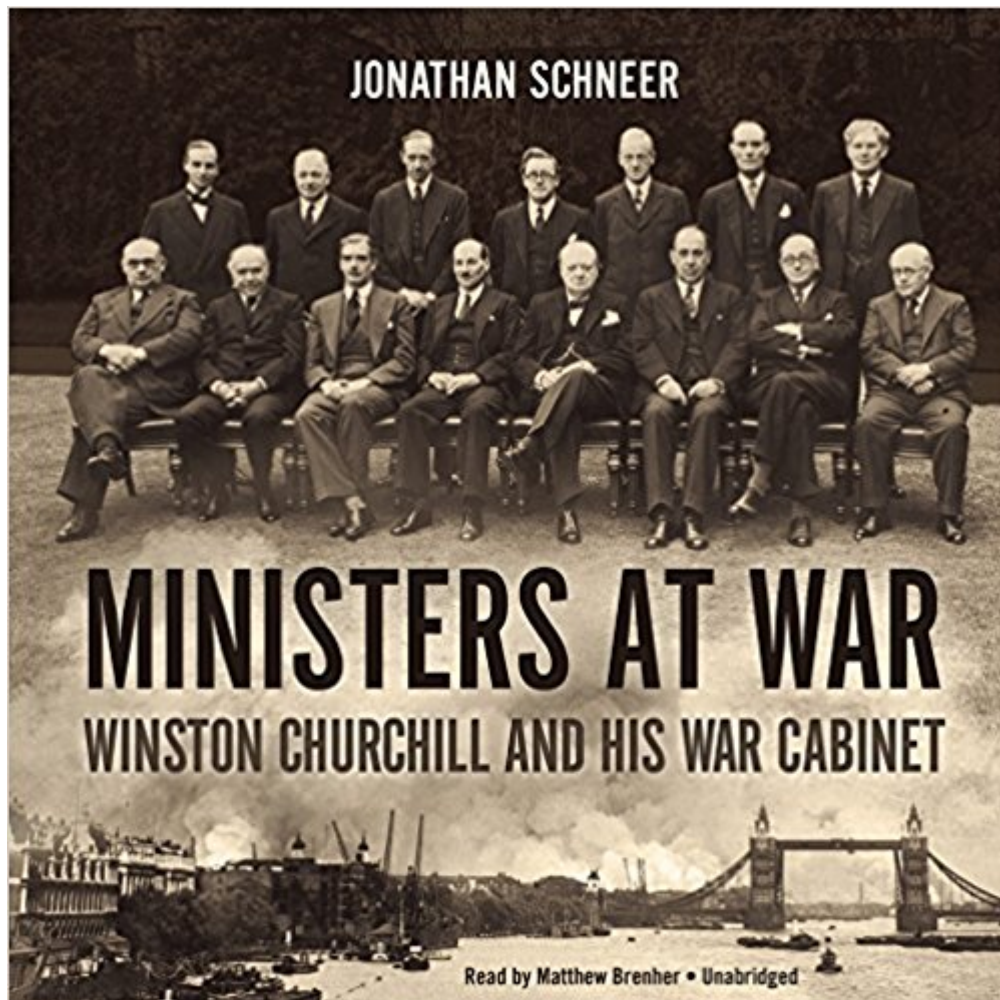




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Ministers At War: Winston Churchill And His War Cabinet



Synopsis

[Read by Matthew Brenher] In May 1940, with France on the verge of defeat, Britain alone stood in the path of the Nazi military juggernaut. Survival seemed to hinge on the leadership of Winston Churchill, whom the king reluctantly appointed prime minister as Germany invaded France. Churchill's reputation as one of the great twentieth-century leaders would be forged during the coming months and years as he worked tirelessly first to rally his country and then to defeat Hitler. But Churchill -- regarded as the savior of his nation, and of the entire continent -- could not have done it alone. As prizewinning historian Jonathan Schneer reveals in *Ministers at War*, Churchill depended on a team of powerful ministers to manage the war effort as he rallied a beleaguered nation. Selecting men from across the political spectrum -- from fellow Conservative Anthony Eden to leader of the opposing socialist Labor Party Clement Attlee -- Churchill assembled a war cabinet that balanced competing interests and bolstered support for his national coalition government. The group possessed a potent blend of talent, ambition, and egotism. Led and encouraged by Churchill, the ministers largely set aside their differences -- at least at first. As the war progressed, discord began to grow. It reached a peak in 1945. With victory seemingly assured, Churchill was forced by his ministers at war to dissolve the government and call a general election, which, in a shocking upset, he lost to his rival Attlee. Authoritatively recasting our understanding of British high politics during World War II, Schneer shows that Churchill managed the war effort by managing his team of supremely able yet contentious cabinet members. The outcome of the war lay not only in Churchill's individual brilliance but also in his skill as an executive and in the collective ability of men who muted their personal interests to save the world from barbarism.

Customer Reviews

Foreign Affairs; A lively and readable book. The basic story of how the United Kingdom's coalition government formed in 1940 and how it held together until the Allies defeated Germany is familiar. But Schneer's telling makes the tale fresh, owing to his compelling portraits of Churchill's cabinet members and his emphasis on the importance of postwar planning. • New York Review of Books; Many Americans, both at the time and since, have viewed Britain's wartime governance through a Churchillian prism. It is certainly true that the prime minister dominated his nation's affairs more than did Roosevelt those of the United States. But Jonathan Schneer's book, *Ministers at War*, provides a corrective, emphasizing the important parts played by the War Cabinet, a supporting cast of five to eight members, to whom Churchill had the good sense to delegate many matters in which

he was uninterested, and which he knew himself unqualified to arbitrate. – Weekly Standard

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