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Pearl Harbour!

Sunday, December 7, at Chequers—My American Guests—Nine O'Clock News on the Wireless—Japan Attacks the United States—I Call the President—My Message to Mr. de Valera—I Rejoice—The Certainty of Victory—I Decide to Go to Washington—Letter to the King—The President's Anxiety About the Return Voyage—British Declaration of War on Japan—My Letter to the Japanese Ambassador—Parliament Approves the Declaration of War Unanimously—Mr. Duff Cooper's Appointment—Magnitude of the American Disaster—The Stroke in the Philippines—Hitler's Astonishment—We Discuss the Employment of the "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse"—Admiral Phillips's Adventurous Plan—Air Support Lacking—The Admiral Withdraws—Tries Again—The Deadly Japanese Attack—"All Sunk Beneath the Wave"—The Morning Brings Fearful News—My Preparations for Departure—My Statement to the House, December 12—Mr. Eden Starts on His Mission to Moscow—I Tell Him Some News.

IT WAS SUNDAY EVENING, December 7, 1941. Winant and Averell Harriman were alone with me at the table at Chequers. I turned on my small wireless set shortly after the nine o'clock news had started. There were a number of items about the fighting on the Russian front and on the British front in Libya, at the end of which some few sentences were spoken regarding an attack by the Japanese on American shipping at Hawaii, and also Japanese attacks on British vessels in the Dutch East Indies. There followed a statement that after

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the news Mr. Somebody would make a commentary, and that the Brains Trust programme would then begin, or something like this. I did not personally sustain any direct impression, but Averell said there was something about the Japanese attacking the Americans, and, in spite of being tired and resting, we all sat up. By now the butler, Sawyers, who had heard what had passed, came into the room, saying, "It's quite true. We heard it ourselves outside. The Japanese have attacked the Americans." There was a silence. At the Mansion House luncheon on November 11 I had said that if Japan attacked the United States a British declaration of war would follow "within the hour." I got up from the table and walked through the hall to the office, which was always at work. I asked for a call to the President. The Ambassador followed me out, and, imagining I was about to take some irrevocable step, said, "Don't you think you'd better get confirmation first?"

In two or three minutes Mr. Roosevelt came through. "Mr. President, what's this about Japan?" "It's quite true," he replied. "They have attacked us at Pearl Harbour. We are all in the same boat now." I put Winant onto the line and some interchanges took place, the Ambassador at first saying, "Good," "Good"—and then, apparently graver, "Ah!" I got on again and said, "This certainly simplifies things. God be with you," or words to that effect. We then went back into the hall and tried to adjust our thoughts to the supreme world event which had occurred, which was of so startling a nature as to make even those who were near the centre gasp. My two American friends took the shock with admirable fortitude. We had no idea that any serious losses had been inflicted on the United States Navy. They did not wail or lament that their country was at war. They wasted no words in reproach or sorrow. In fact, one might almost have thought they had been delivered from a long pain.

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Parliament would not have met till Tuesday, and the

Members were scattered about the Island, with all the existing difficulties of communication. I set the office to work to ring up the Speaker, the Whips, and others concerned, to call both Houses together next day. I rang the Foreign Office to prepare to implement without a moment's delay a declaration of war upon Japan, about which there were some formalities, in time for the meeting of the House, and to make sure all members of the War Cabinet were called up and informed, and also the Chiefs of Staff and the Service Ministers, who, I rightly assumed, had had the news.

This done, my thought turned at once to what has always lain near my heart. To Mr. de Valera I sent the following message:

8 Dec. 41

Now is your chance. Now or never! A nation once again I will meet you wherever you wish.

I thought also of struggling China, and telegraphed to Chiang Kai-shek:

8 Dec. 41

The British Empire and United States have been attacked by Japan. Always we have been friends: now we face a common enemy.

We also sent the following:

Prime Minister to Mr. Harry Hopkins 8 Dec. 41

Thinking of you much at this historic moment. — WINSTON, AVERELL.

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No American will think it wrong of me if I proclaim that to have the United States at our side was to me the greatest joy. I could not foretell the course of events. I do not pretend to have measured accurately the martial might of Japan, but now at this very moment I knew the United States was in the war, up to the neck and in to the death. So we had won after all! Yes, after Dunkirk; after the fall of France; after the horrible

episode of Oran; after the threat of invasion, when, apart from the Air and the Navy, we were an almost unarmed people; after the deadly struggle of the U-boat war — the first Battle of the Atlantic, gained by a hand's-breadth; after seventeen months of lonely fighting and nineteen months of my responsibility in dire stress, we had won the war. England would live; Britain would live; the Commonwealth of Nations and the Empire would live. How long the war would last or in what fashion it would end, no man could tell, nor did I at this moment care. Once again in our long Island history we should emerge, however mauled or mutilated, safe and victorious. We should not be wiped out. Our history would not come to an end. We might not even have to die as individuals. Hitler's fate was sealed. Mussolini's fate was sealed. As for the Japanese, they would be ground to powder. All the rest was merely the proper application of overwhelming force. The British Empire, the Soviet Union, and now the United States, bound together with every scrap of their life and strength, were, according to my lights, twice or even thrice the force of their antagonists. No doubt it would take a long time. I expected terrible forfeits in the East; but all this would be merely a passing phase. United we could subdue everybody else in the world. Many disasters, immeasurable cost and tribulation lay ahead, but there was no more doubt about the end.

Silly people — and there were many, not only in enemy countries — might discount the force of the United States. Some said they were soft, others that they would never be united. They would fool around at a distance. They would never come to grips. They would never stand blood-letting. Their democracy and system of recurrent elections would paralyze their war effort. They would be just a vague blur on the horizon to friend or foe. Now we should see the weakness of this numerous but remote, wealthy, and talkative people. But I had studied the American Civil War; fought out to the last desperate inch. American blood flowed in my veins. I thought of a remark which Edward Grey had made to me