Winston Churchill was not only a statesman and leader of historic proportions, he also possessed substantial literary talents. These two factors combine to make The Gathering Storm a unique work. The first volume of Churchills memoirs, this selection is broken into two parts. The first, From War to War, consists of Churchills critical observations on the settlement of World War I and its place in the causes of the Second World War. The second volume contains letters and memoranda from the British government--of which Churchill was part--as the country plunged unprepared into war. This stands as the best of history: written as it was made, by the man who made it.

Features:
* Notes:

"The Gathering Storm" is the initial volume of Winston Churchill's epic history of World War II. Beginning with the end of World War I, which planted the seeds of World War II, the Unnecessary War, Churchill tells the martial story through the end of the Twilight War in May 1940. He covers the story from all perspectives, military, political and personal.

Churchill brings to light many easily overlooked contributors to the great conflagration. He points out that the Versailles Treaty was the first negotiated by elected politicians who had to satisfy their publics, rather than by princes who only needed to satisfy themselves. He reveals that Germany's ability to pay war reparations was for years made possible only by large American loans. He takes the reader through the attempts to ensure safety through balance of power agreements such as the Locarno Pact and the deterioration of the League of Nations through national withdrawals. The progressive German violations of the Versailles Treaty, unchallenged by the West, paved the way for more serious breaches.
German expansion is recorded step by step as the West let each opportunity to cheaply halt its march pass by. All the while the balance of power on land and in the air tilted more and more toward the developing Axis.

Germany growth through the militarization of the Rhineland, and the annexation of the Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia and Austria set the stage for the invasion of Poland. After allowing other lands to be swallowed up the West, with the balance of power solidly swung against it, took its stand against German aggression. This led to the Twilight War in which Germany took out Poland before turning its attention to France and Britain. Northern actions included the Soviet attack on Finland and the futile British attempt to prevent Swedish iron ore from reaching Germany by the British invasion of Norway.

One service which did take action during the early phase of the war was the Royal Navy, under the direction of the author as First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. Stunned by the sinking of the Oak Royal and Rawalpindi, the Navy hunted down the surface raider, Graf Spee, until it was irreparably damaged and scuttled in Uruguay.

This book, along with the others in the series, centers on Churchill and concentrates on British involvement in the war. It definitely presents his views on developments. Although lacking the objective qualities of works by uninvolved historians, it is a highly valuable first person observation of the lead up to and early months of World War II. I first read this series while a college student, not as part of a class, but at my father's suggestion. It was very good advice. "The Gathering Storm", along with the other volumes in the series, is a classic with which every student of World War II must be familiar.

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