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Randolph Churchill

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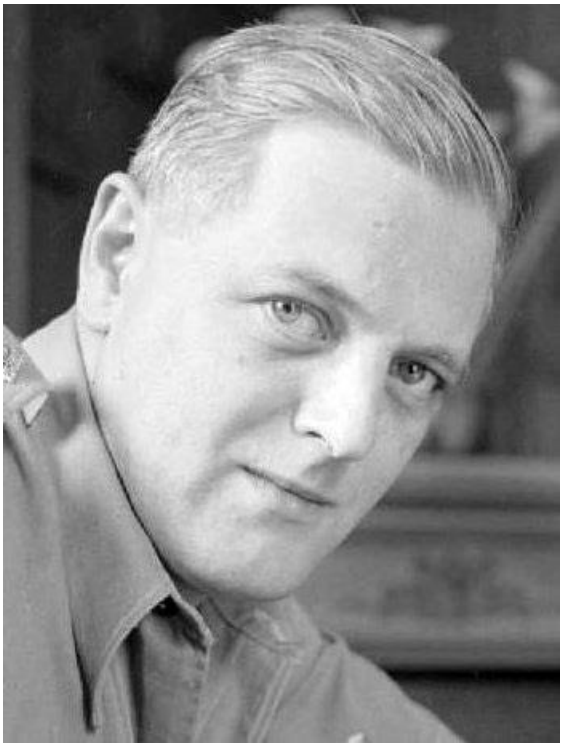
'Randolph', in Kay Halle (ed.), *Randolph Churchill: The Young Unpretender* (London, 1971: Heinemann), 278–9



Randolph Churchill during the Second World War, by Cecil Beaton

RANDOLPH, if not altogether house-trained, seemed to me altogether free from fear, almost too fearless, if it is possible to be so, both morally and physically. He was liable to suit the action to the word more or less instinctively, which led to consequences which were, at times, counter-productive.

I remember that one afternoon, just before the celebrated Fulton Address delivered by his father in the late spring of 1946, the door of my office in the British Embassy in Washington was flung open, and Randolph appeared, dishevelled, with one of his trousers slightly torn at the knee. He was violently flushed, and was pressing a handkerchief to a bleeding wound just below his left eye. In answer

to my inquiry, he said – so far as I now recollect – something like this:

> I went to see a man in the State Department called, I believe, Braden [Spruille Braden]. He seems to have occupied some kind of post in the Argentine. I believe he was American Ambassador there. I tried to interview him about Latin America. In the course of the interview he made highly offensive remarks about England and her policies. I struck him at once. I always do that to anyone who attacks my country; don't you?

Randolph was not entirely suited to peacetime conditions. But he was rich in military virtues. His views were sometimes those of a very young, ungrown-up undergraduate, but he was brave, simple, uncalculating, truthful, loyal, eccentric, and at times wildly enter**[279]**taining. There was something arrested about him; he was given to romantic fantasies both personal and political, and these seemed to me to spring from appalling frustration and misery. His violence and lack of control, which sometimes took alarming forms, were at the same time pathetic, disarming and childlike. Sober, and in the company of those with whom he felt secure, he was peaceful and courteous. He drank a good deal, and could then be a terrible bore: yet even then he could inspire affection, and was capable of deep affection himself. There was something at once disturbing and sweet about his expression in repose. His world was as black and white as his father's. He believed in the simple maxim of being amiable to his friends and appallingly rude to his opponents. He was a staunch and loyal friend; his enemies (as opposed to those who merely found his behaviour on occasion offensive or embarrassing or barbarous) were, on the whole, men a good deal inferior to himself.

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