

CHURCHILL BOOK COLLECTOR

For five extraordinary years he led wartime Britain. He also wrote. 58 books. 260 pamphlets. 840 articles. 9,000 pages of speeches.
And won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Our job is to help Churchill's words find your shelves.

A full set of 24 publisher's exhibition posters in their original packing crate issued by LIFE Magazine in 1949 to promote LIFE's serialization of the second volume of Winston Churchill's history of the Second World War

Life Magazine, New York City, 1949

This massive and visually arresting archive of 24 large exhibition posters was issued in 1949 by the editors of LIFE magazine as a promotion for the serialization of Winston S. Churchill's *Their Finest Hour*, volume two of his six-volume memoir of *The Second World War*. Each illustrated and captioned poster measures 32 x 24 inches and weighs nearly two pounds, mounted on dense, rigid, heavy card with rounded corners, each corner with a neat, circular mounting hole to facilitate exhibition. All 24 posters remain housed together in their original wood shipping crate, which is printed "THEIR FINEST HOUR" on the side. The lid and bottom feature original "FRAGILE | HANDLE WITH CARE" stickers and the lid is printed "OPEN | THIS | SIDE". The aesthetic effect is almost archaeological, not to mention formidable; the crate measure 36 x 26 x 5 inches and, full of posters, weighs nearly 75 pounds.

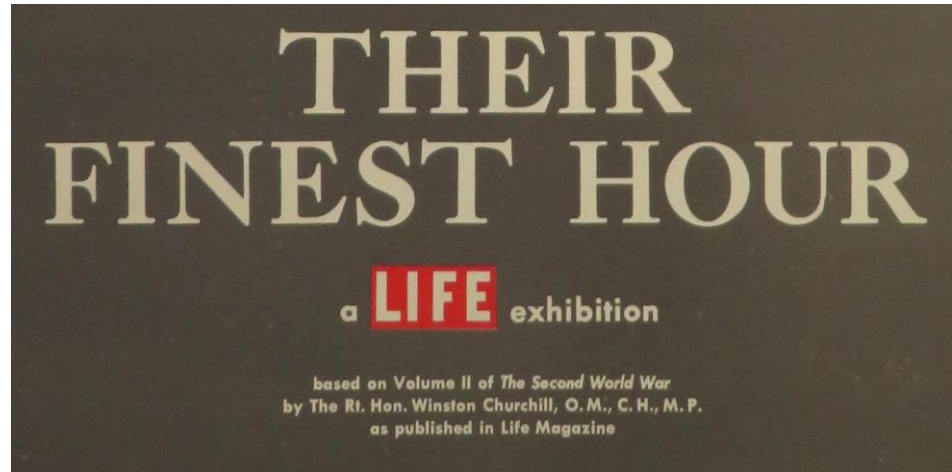


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Each poster features photographs or illustrations and accompanying captions. Posters 2-24 are numbered at the lower left. The first poster, prominently featuring Churchill at his desk reviewing proofs, announces the set as "a LIFE exhibition based on Volume II of *The Second World War* by the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, O.M., C.H., M.P. as published in Life Magazine".

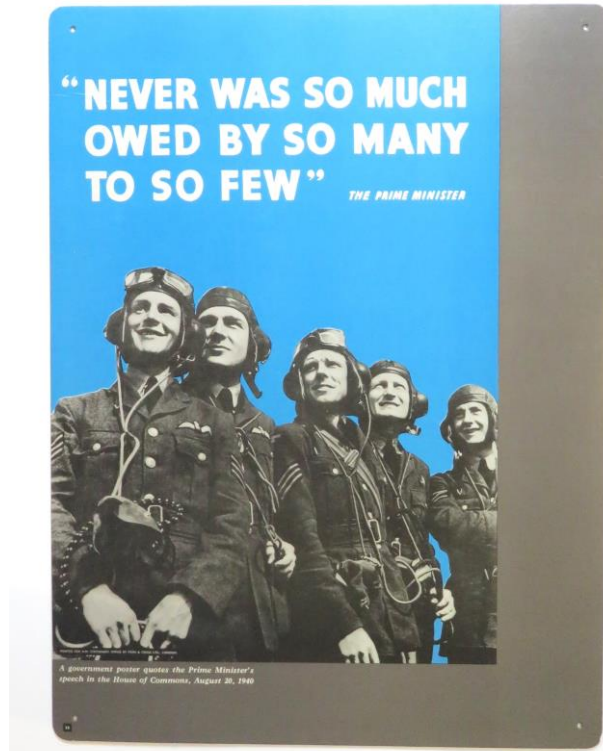


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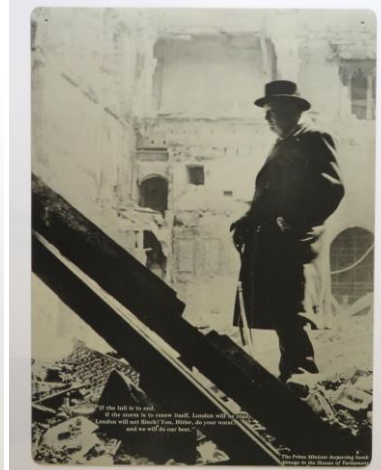
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The majority of the posters are rendered in black and white, posters 2, 5, 7, 11, and 14 featuring color. The exhibition is complete, with its full complement of 24 posters. Condition of the posters is near-fine, showing only trivial surface scuffs and minor edge wear. The wood crate is very good, variously stained, toned, and chipped, but nonetheless intact and substantially complete, still performing its task of housing and protecting its contents.



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This exhibition was presumably prepared in advance of when LIFE began serializing *Their Finest Hour* in early February 1949. LIFE was known for being visually arresting. In true LIFE style, the stunning images range from humanizing scenes of Londoners crowded into tube stations to sleep through a night of bomb raids, children crouching in trenches while watching British and German fighter planes battle overhead, gritty images of soldiers, poignant images of Home Guard, British aircraft and pilots, and destruction and endurance during The Blitz. Each poster contextualizes Britain's dire circumstances and resilience in the early days of the Second World War and of Churchill's wartime premiership. Of course, Churchill's words and image feature repeatedly, including a famous image of Churchill standing amid the bomb-damaged Houses of Parliament.

It likely goes without saying that we have never encountered another set thus. We do not know if more were produced and, if so, how many; it seems likely that the size, expense, and logistical inconveniences posed by this exhibition must have been significant limiting factors. Each poster is, individually, eminently worthy of framing. Together all 24 are exactly what they were billed by the publisher as being – an exhibition.



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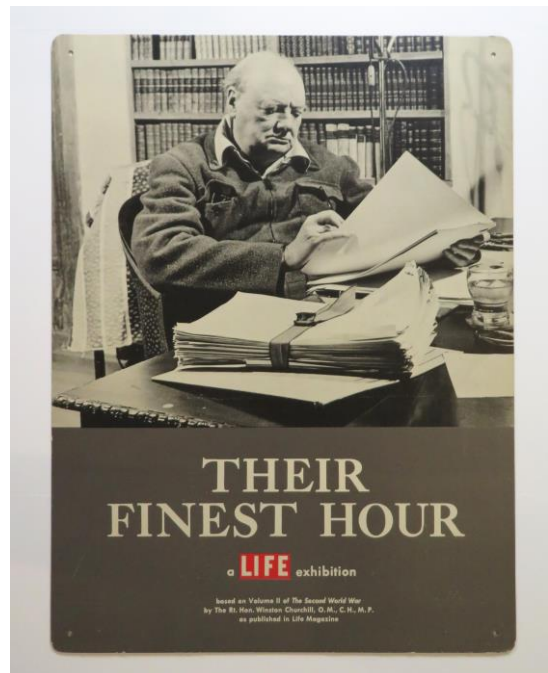
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Established by publishing magnate Henry Luce as a weekly picture magazine, LIFE was “a pioneer in photojournalism and one of the major forces in that field’s development. It was long one of the most popular and widely imitated of American magazines.” (Britannica) LIFE was big, but not too big to recognize what a big deal Churchill’s war memoirs were. So it was that, on behalf of Churchill, Emery Reves and Lord Camrose secured a then-astonishing \$1.4 million for the serialization rights from Henry Luce. When the serialization rights were secured, Andrew Heiskell, LIFE’s publisher, told his staff “Let’s always remember that the Churchill Memoirs are the biggest literary and historical project that LIFE, or for that matter any other publication, has ever undertaken.”

This remarkable artifact testifies to LIFE’s extraordinary efforts to publicize and promote their serialization in 1949.

CBC Inventory #006745
Available for sale at \$9,500 USD



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