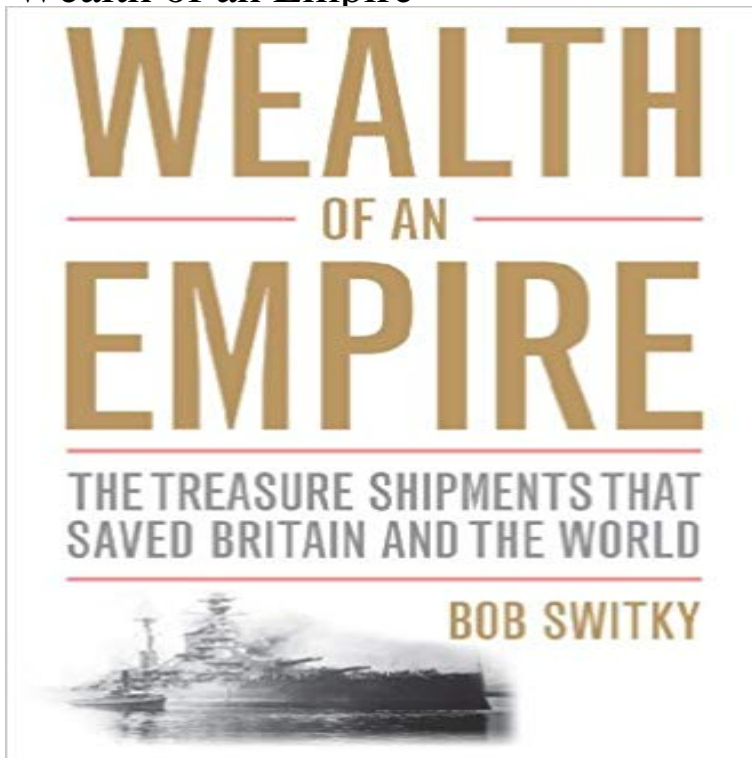


## Wealth of an Empire



Wealth of an Empire tells the dramatic true story of a top-secret mission that changed the course of World War II: Great Britain's shipment of virtually its entire treasury across the treacherous waters of the North Atlantic to safety in the United States and Canada. Had the Germans captured or sunk the treasure-laden ships, the war could have been lost more than eighteen months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. The British government authorized this immensely risky and long-running operation not only because of the obvious danger that Germany's rising militancy posed but also because of the isolationist sentiment that permeated both American society and Congress. America's refusal to sell arms and other goods without payment up front left Britain little choice but to mount this daring operation. Only a few banking, political, and military leaders were responsible for the complicated logistical and security procedures that were designed to safeguard the transfer of both gold and financial securities to North America. Although the special shipments were initially of relatively modest value, the strategic imperative changed dramatically when Germany threatened to invade Britain in the summer of 1940. Fearing that Britain's wealth might fall into German hands, in an audacious yet visionary decision newly installed prime minister Winston Churchill authorized the evacuation of nearly all of Britain's liquid assets. Wealth of an Empire uses previously unused and unavailable original documents including those from the British National Archives, the Bank of England's archives, the Imperial War Museum, and the Bank of Canada's archives to shed new light on this underexplored aspect of Britain's wartime history.

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